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INFORMATION AND DECENTRALISED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



**PROCEEDINGS OF A WORKSHOP HELD AT AGRICULTURAL
DEPARTMENT, KINTAMPO ON 18TH JUNE 2005**

**Hosted by
Kintampo North District Assembly
&
The Decentralised Environmental Action Research Project**



**The DEAR
Project**

DECENTRALISED ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION RESEARCH

**INFORMATION AND
DECENTRALISED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**edited and transcribed by
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Acronyms

AC	Area Council
CFC	Community Forestry Committees
DA	District Assembly
DADU	District Agricultural Development Unit
DCD	District Coordinating Director
DCE	District Chief Executive
DEAR	Decentralised Environmental Action Research
DPCU	District Planning and Coordinating Unit
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPS	Geographical Positioning System
KVIP	Kumasi Ventilated Improved Pit (toilet)
MOFO	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
NDPC	National Planning Development Committee
PM	Presiding Member
RPCU	Regional Planning Coordinating Unit
UC	Unit Committee

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last two years the Decentralised Environmental Action Research (DEAR) Programme has been working in the Kintampo District (now Kintampo North and Kintampo South). It has been developing a natural resource information system which can be institutionalised within the district assembly structures. An information system allows data to be collected, stored, retrieved, analysed and updated. The natural resource information system created in Kintampo consists of a database on the natural resources in the district and the use of these natural resources by different groups in different settlements in the district. It can be used for district planning.

The DEAR Project is concerned with the lack of information used in policies on the environment at the district level. Frequently policies are made on assumptions, which are not based on empirical evidence. These assumptions are transmitted by national agencies as a series of commands. These usually take the form of prescriptions that tell users of natural resources what they should do and what they should not do, or what is banned by government. They do not explain the reasons for policy or how they were derived. They do not involve the rural people in discussing their needs and priorities in relationship to natural resources. This results in policies that are frequently inappropriate, that do not reflect existing conditions, and that do not build upon existing good practices. They often have a negative effect on people's livelihoods and on the creation of sustainable wealth within the district. The policies frequently alienate the rural people, who do not respect them or cooperate in their implementation. On the contrary, they choose to ignore and flaunt policy regulations. They do not create avenues for rural people to come together to dialogue on their needs and priorities, and to put forward their perspectives on natural resources management.

Yet the existing legislation on decentralisation makes provisions for community participation in planning. Assembly members, the elected representatives of communities in local governments are expected to discuss the agendas of District Assembly meetings with their communities and report back on the minutes of assembly meetings. However, this has not become established practice. While districts have byelaws on natural resource management and policy frameworks, they frequently have little information of the state of natural resources in the district. Policies frequently fail to correspond to the reality.

The DEAR project has been working on ways of developing information on natural resource management for policy and planning that can be institutionalised within districts, and managed and updated by the district within its own institutional structures. One of the major constraints has been that the collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of information has usually been carried out as specialised expert-led national projects that are expensive. Once the project has been completed information is not

updated for a very long period, until funds can once be collected for another national initiative. This results in much national data being redundant.

The DEAR approach builds upon the participatory foundations of decentralisation policy, and attempts to involve all levels of institutions involved in natural resource management policy. It particularly focuses on building information systems and communication at the interface between local government and rural society, within the sub-district structures of the Area Councils. It focuses on developing techniques for the collection and management of data that uses existing capabilities, that can be replicated elsewhere, and that can be easily updated.

Within the Kintampo district, the DEAR Project began working within the New Longoro Area Council. It worked with the Area Council to build their capacity to initiate a survey on natural resources using the various Unit Committees of the rural council to organise data collection. A working group was created to oversee a process of training in data collection, inputting the data in computers, analysing the data and outputting it into a Geographical Information System (GIS). This will enable data on the district to be represented as maps that show the distribution of resources between different settlements and areas. This is a useful planning tool for district management.

The survey has gone well and the New Longoro Area Council has made remarkable progress in developing an up and running information system. The local level has shown tremendous capacity in being able to network to make the information system possible and build upon its existing resources. The information system is now being transferred to the Babato Area Council and the New Longoro Area Council is taking on the responsibility of training members from the Babato Area Council in survey administration, data inputting and management. This will leave one remaining Area Council, the Kadelso Council, to implement the information system, for the whole of Kintampo North to be covered. It The Kintampo North district has expressed interest in extending the survey to this area and in taking the initiative for this, using the skills and networks that have been used and developed within the district by the DEAR Project.

There is a demand for some of the information products created by the DEAR Project. This includes demand for updated maps of the Kintampo North and South Districts that have been created and the various settlements within the district, from the administration and many departments. The Agricultural Department has also expressed interest in maps of the distribution of the various crops in the district, the different soils, and types of environment.

The creation of an information system has proved to be relatively easy to achieve. However, there are many constraints in using the information system in policy planning, and institutionalising it within the district. This largely emanates from political factors associated with top-down management, control of the planning process by a few, and the exclusion of inclusive processes of consultation, consensus building and dialogue.

Although central government recognises the importance of information in planning, it has made few practical provisions to build this capacity within the district. There have been some donor-assisted initiatives for information systems within the districts, but these have often been regional initiatives that do not attempt to build upon the participatory framework within decentralisation. For instance within Brong Ahafo, German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) have supported the Management Information System (MIS) programme. While the MIS attempts to build information capacity within the district, this is strongly associated with a particular programme in which specific information is being collected on house properties to enable a property tax to be established. Capacity building occurs for this specific objective rather than to strengthen information systems within the districts. The questionnaires are pre-defined at the regional level. The districts and the area councils merely implement the project and then the filled questionnaires are returned to the Regional level for analysis. Consultations with the districts are to ensure that the questionnaire is harmonised to account for differences. The MIS programme does not attempt to build the capacity of the Area Councils to prioritise their own information needs and develop them in consultation with their constituents. Its priorities and objectives are more likely to reflect central government and donor needs and interests rather than the planning needs of communities and the need to develop consensus and dialogue in planning.

The objectives of this workshop was to inform important stakeholders in the district policy process of the DEAR Project, its approach, and the problems it has been experiencing with institutionalising information generation and the communication of information within district structures and institutions. It was also to initiate a district level discussion on the problems of information in the policy process, the information needs of the districts, and to address the problems of what national support structures are needed to strengthen the collection, management and use of information in the policy and planning process.

The workshop was enthusiastically supported by the District Administration which identified key stakeholders who needed to participate, and provided a venue for the meeting. Representatives from the regional departments and coordinating council included the Environmental Protection Agency, the Regional Agricultural Department, and the Forestry Service Division (also representing Japanese International Co-operation Agency). The workshop was facilitated by Joseph Nketia, of the Wenchi District Agricultural Department, who brought considerable experience, from his work with DFID in its support to Districts in Brong Ahafo, to the meeting in understanding the workings of district institutions.

The discussions at the meeting were very frank and fruitful, particularly on current constraints in the district planning process.

The main findings of the workshop affirmed the importance of participation within planning process and linked the generation of information to participatory processes of involving communities and the subdistrict structures in the generation, use and communication of information.

The workshop participants affirmed the importance of information in planning and the need to develop information generating and management capabilities within the district to ensure that information was relevant, communicated and updated. They recommended that institutions and structures be put in place to identify measures that needed to be developed to build the capacities to generate and use information in the policy process and to monitor and evaluate the use of information in planning and to see that the District Policy and Coordinating Unit carried out its functions in consultation with the District Assembly. The districts need to ensure that the elected representatives played their role of representing their communities and their needs, and in informing their constituents of the policy decisions and initiatives of the assembly. They needed to hold the district administration and their committees accountable and make demands upon them.

National level institutions and the Regional Coordinating Councils need to be more proactive in building capacities at the district level for information management and planning. They need to support participatory processes rather than undermine them. They need to provide districts with information and support the building of information processing and planning processes. There are few attempts by the national level to provide information to districts, and to translate national research and data into forms appropriate for district level administration that can be institutionalised into planning at the district level. Most national level data sets and research is not communicated to the districts and the relevant data is not assembled in forms in which relevant data to particular districts can be accessed by them. National level data is often based on "guesstimates" rather than empirical research and there is little attempt to engage districts in verifying the findings. There is the need to build structures for the better communication of data and information and for the use of information in policy processes in the areas in which it was collected.

The scope of this report

The first section of this report is concerned with the role of information in the district planning process. This is addressed by Kojo Amanor, who examines the institutional issues that the DEAR approach addresses. Kwadjo Yeboah, the Town and Country Planning Officer, examines the institutional constraints on the planning process within the Kintampo District Assembly. Emmanuel Bampoe reflects on the use of information in the programmes of the Agricultural Department, and Emmanuel Yeboah examines the information needs of the Forestry Service.

In the second section of the report Opoku Pabi explains the DEAR approach to building an information system that meet the needs and addresses the capacities of the Area Council and District Administration in Kintampo. He

discusses the various stages in implementing the information system and the role of participation and capacity building at various levels including the Area Councils, the communities and the district administration. He addresses the challenges, constraints and problems that emerged in this process. Anthony Manu and Abraham Manu describe their experiences of participating in the creation of an information system within the New Longoro Area Council, and A.S. Abubakar reports about the extension of this activity to the Babato Area Council.

The third part of the report consists of the transcripts of the lively and fascinating discussions at the workshop and the reports of the three working groups that met to examine:

- the development of participatory information systems,
- minimising the constraints on the use of information,
- and institutionalising the management of information within the district.

Kojo Amanor
DEAR Project Coordinator

ROLE OF INFORMATION IN DISTRICT PLANNING PROCESSES

INFORMATION AND THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Kojo Amanor
DEAR Project Coordinator

In recent years information has emerged as one of the most important sectors of the global economy. Recent developments in computer technology and telecommunications have transformed the use of information. It has transformed the storage, retrieval, processing and speed of communication of information. Information can be retrieved and moved across the globe by the mere pressing of a key.

Information is now central to production and coexists with products. Problem solving in production is now related to information flows and information processing capabilities are accumulated in training and education for problem solving. Building human and cultural assets is now related to building information processing capabilities and flows of information.

Investors now expect to gain all information on products from specific localities at the press of a button, and when information is not readily available this is considered as raising the transaction costs. Investors prefer to do business where information is readily available, open and transparent, and where the factors they have to take into account in negotiating contracts are readily available. Investors tend to shy away from areas and localities where information is not readily available.

These factors have resulted in a growing recognition of the importance of information in Ghana and the need to have transparent information systems in place, to attract investment. Lack of information and transparency in land ownership and land markets, and the long delays in processing land transaction have scared away many investors in Ghana. This is being addressed by government in the Land Administration Programme (LAP), which aims to create a registry of all land holdings and transactions in Ghana.

The importance of information in governance

Building information systems is not merely a matter of investing in new technology or training people to use the technology. It is about managing the flow of information and communication. Information systems are about facilitating the communication of knowledge about particular localities and particular technologies to enable producers to improve on their production, understand markets better, and adapt their production to market demands. Information management is about building cultural and human capacity of producers to use their knowledge for development and for a development in which they have a stake and an interest. Knowledge is created in specific

contexts. Information is about the communication of these contexts to the wider world and the communication of knowledge from the wider world to be used within these contexts. Information is about communication. Through information closer links are built with the wider world that enable people to participate in the wider world, produce commodities and values that are relevant to this world, and get access to the latest technologies and knowledge for their production.

Building an information system starts from recognition of the different types of knowledge that exist within different units of society and creating information flows which enable different types of knowledge to be brought together and harmonised.

Information is also linked to democracy. Participatory democracy is based on the premise of people being given information on policies, and a number of policy alternatives, and participating in the deliberations for making policy. It is also based on people being supplied with information on the basis of which they exercise choice and make decisions about their lifestyle and livelihood. Participatory democracy is about people dialoguing to reach a consensus and the basis of this dialogue is communication - the communication of information through which people are able to exercise choice and vote representatives who put forward their interests to higher authorities.

Information systems and environmental management

In managing the environment information is critical. Environmental management is based upon the impact of the way people use natural resources on the common good. This includes the impact on other resource users and on the future – or what we leave as an inheritance for future generations. Environmental management involves a trade off between the rights of the present generation to use resources to enrich themselves and provide a better world for their descendants, and the need to manage resources wisely and not greedily and selfishly, so that they continue to exist for future generations. If excessive deterrents are placed on the use of natural resources this will hinder the generation of wealth and do little to alleviate poverty or promote the interests of future generations. If policies harm livelihoods then they harm the creation of wealth and work against poverty alleviation. Deterrents should only be placed on resources when it is demonstrably known that the ways in which they are being used are eroding the common good and posterity.

To be able to make these decisions intimate knowledge is needed on the way environments used to be in the past, the way they are now, and the way they are likely to be in the future. This requires precise knowledge of the way people manage resources in a particular environments, knowledge of the changes that occur in environments independent of human interventions and knowledge of the impact of people on environments. For this knowledge to be used in policy deliberations, it needs to be collected, analysed and communicated to those making decisions, including the users. It requires different actors with interests in natural resources to come together to debate

how the resources should be managed. For this to take place communication of knowledge needs to take place. On the basis of information exchange a consensus is reached which establishes a common good that is acceptable to a wide range of different resource users.

The effectiveness of environmental management in local government depends on the extent to which the environmental agendas that are promoted reflect the actual conditions at the local level, and the interests of the producers in rural communities. If rural people do not feel that the agendas meet their needs, they are likely to ignore policies and flout byelaws and regulation. There is a growing recognition that that unless communities participate in the management of the environment, regulations is going to be ineffective, since state agencies cannot have a presence on the ground at all places at all times. As the former Conservator of Forests, Jonnie Francois, aptly commented:

It was quite clear to me that we were having a difficult time on the ground, that we needed more support on the 'ground floor'. We did not have enough staff to have eyes all over the place. We needed the support of local people and yet those are the very same people who are disillusioned with us... It is only when the forest have a real value to the local people will we be able to gain their cooperation and energy for forest protection and management. Without that cooperation the future of the forests cannot be guaranteed, except at the cost of a vast army of forest guards¹.

Unfortunately, environmental policies are rarely established on the basis of information, dialogue and consensus building. Frequently, environmental policies consist of top-down directives which are implemented without factual evidence. They are based on opinions, assumptions and received wisdom - knowledge which is taken to be so evident that it does not need to be proved or discussed. Frequently these top-down directives call for the banning of particular activities such as bush burning and charcoal burning and assume that these are resulting in deforestation. They frequently produce a very simplified picture of the situation that does not accurately reflect reality. Desperate measures are put in place that cannot solve the problem. Military task forces are sent to prevent people burning, without establishing the reasons why people burn, and without understanding the scientific literature on fire ecology and the relevance of early burning and controlled burning. Chiefs are encouraged to introduce byelaws banning certain activities.

Policies are put in place that cannot work because they are not based on a proper scientific understanding of local ecologies and an understanding of the

¹ Cited in Boateng, K. "Collaborative Forest Management Programme: Work undertaken", Paper presented at the Forestry Department Symposium *The Potential for Collaboration in High Forest Management*, organised by Forest Planning Branch, Kumasi 28-29 November, 1995.

social and economic situation. Charcoal is banned without any real knowledge of its impact on the environment, without any knowledge of how robust and common the species used for charcoal are and their ability to regenerate through coppice regrowth (new shoots that develop on the roots, stem and at the base of trees when they are cut). Charcoal is banned despite the fact that charcoal production is an activity that goes hand in hand with farming, which uses cleared farm wood as its main raw material. This is a particularly pertinent to Kintampo North district, since charcoal is a major revenue generator and a ban on charcoal would lead to a drastic reduction in revenues.

Therefore, information about the environment and natural resources is critical for development policies, critical in making sure that policies do not hamper development for no good reason, and to ensure that development does not destroy the resource base of the district for the future. Top-down policies implemented without information flows do not work. They do not inspire confidence among the citizenry, who evade them, and avoid dialogue with the policy process. Under these conditions policymakers do not receive feedback from the citizenry on their conditions and policy problems. The citizenry regards policies with suspicion, and flaunts regulation with impunity. When people do not trust policies, they do not make interventions to improve things - anything goes because regulations are considered unjust, so they are nobodies business but that of the state.

Building participatory management and information systems

If environmental policies are going to be effective communities have to participate in the management of the environment, and environmental policy agendas should meet their needs and accurately reflect the conditions under which people work. This can only occur if the local level is able to influence environmental policies and regulations. To be able to influence policies four conditions need to be met:

- 1) Policies result from discussions, dialogue and consensus from the village level up to the district administration. This informs higher level policy makers of conditions in particular localities, the different interests that exist, potential conflicts and paths to developing policies that reflect consensus.
- 2) Policy decisions are based on information and the communication of different perspectives and interests.
- 3) Information is multi directional. Different resource users in communities make known their views and needs to policy makers and policy makers keep them informed about policy choices and options and they participate in finding the best solutions.
- 4) Information is shared, openly available and brought together and managed. Different institutions share information and harmonise their data sets enabling more comprehensive information and preventing the duplication of data collection.

The national framework for participatory management and information systems

The legal framework and regulations for decentralisation in Ghana create favourable structures for the development of participatory information systems for policy making.

The National Development Planning (System) Act of 1994 designates the planning functions of the assembly to include the following:

1. To carry out studies for development planning in the district, including economic, social, environmental, spatial, and settlement sectors;
2. To mobilise the human and physical resources for development within the district;
3. to coordinate planning within the district and integrate the various sectors to make sure they are compatible and create a comprehensive framework for economic and social development within the district;
4. Monitor and evaluate development programmes;
5. Provide the National Development Commission with data and information it requires

Section 3 of the National Development (System) Act of 1994 makes it obligatory for a district authority to conduct a public hearing on a proposed district development plan and to consider the views expressed at these hearings before the adoption of the proposals as a district development plans. Local communities are empowered to develop sub-district or Area Council Plans under the Act and their representatives are supposed to ratify community plans before community meetings.

The 2004 *Guidelines for Operationalisation of District and Regional Planning Coordinating Units* (National Development Planning Commission and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2004) adopts a uniform institutional structure for planning within the districts. In this structure information and planning in the district comes under the District Planning Coordinating Unit (DPCU), which is responsible for coordinating planning across the various sectors, provide technical advice to the assembly, "collating all data relevant to planning within the district" (p4) and managing a database on district development processes, activities, projects and programmes across the various sectors and to collect information from the various departments.

The DPCU is also responsible for assisting sub-districts in community planning, helping them to "review and validate their development priorities for incorporation into the overall Annual Action Plan and Budget" (p.9).

The DPCU is responsible for building a database based on the District Assemblies data demands and that from the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

The DPCU is responsible for collecting data on education, health agriculture, water and sanitation, the environment, poverty, disadvantaged groups, etc. This data shall be updated regularly - either quarterly or annually based on the nature of data and cost implications.

The District Assembly is responsible for providing the DPCU with the required logistics to electronically process, store and retrieve data. The District Assembly is also required to submit data to National Development Planning Commission, as it shall direct.

To achieve overall district development the DPCU is required to hold quarterly meetings with the Area Councils to dialogue on local development issues and inform the Area Councils on the planning and budgeting decisions of the Assembly. Within this structure the Area Councils are responsible for submitting "monthly reports and data to the DPCU Secretariat through the District Coordinating Director" (p. 13).

The sub-districts are critical to information flow since they bridge the information gap between what happens within the communities and what is conceptualised in the district planning process.

Constraints and the way forward

A national framework exists for establishing decentralised information systems. But these systems are far from being implemented. In reality, as of now, no organised basis has emerged of collecting data within the districts and using it in planning. Districts often have limited personnel and they are stretched in collecting information over the whole district. They also have limited capacity to collect, analyse and disseminate information. Frequently, existing information within districts is out of date since national data is also not comprehensive and up to date. For instance, maps of settlements in districts reflect the last national aerial survey carried out in the 1970s rather than present patterns.

The key to building district information systems is to recognise the value of the existing types of knowledge that exist within the district and to create institutional structures to bring these different types of knowledge together, to interact and create information flows within the district.

Various departments in the districts have projects that collect data on specific sectors. However, much of the information they collect has relevance to other sectors within the district. For instance, the Vitamin A project in Kintampo district is concerned with health issues, but to create effective structures it has had to collect data on settlements, using Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology. This data has a wider relevance than health which can be used by the district in planning. The collection of data on settlements by this project has involved the acquisition of new skills which other departments can learn from and use.

Building upon existing skills requires communication between different departments and coming together to discuss how the district can enhance its development planning capacities. This requires a commitment to processes of decentralisation, rather than each department attempting to protect its own sphere of influence and guard its own projects. It involves going beyond a project mentality to a commitment to the development of the district and its information and communication systems.

Although the Area Councils and Unit Committees lack a cadre of technical officers, their strength lies in an intimate knowledge of the locality, the different groups of people within the locality, and the needs of these people. While they lack sophisticated technical skills and theoretical knowledge with which to assemble information, they have the capacity to rapidly mobilise the population of the area for consultation. Armed with simple survey methods and data processing techniques, the Area Councils can rapidly carry out a survey of their whole area and assemble information on the whole Area Council that can be used in planning.

The key to building effective information systems is to adapt the information system to existing institutions and capacities within the district, and create a framework of dialogue and consultation that allows different groups to bring their knowledge and skills to build on the existing information within the district and use it in planning. The key is to start with simple information systems that enable data to be collected, processed and analysed and to adapt the information system to serve the capabilities of the users.

However this can only exist when there is a genuine framework of consultation in which policies are made to reflect the interest of citizens, and in which policy processes are transparent and inclusive. Where top-down frameworks continue to persist and attempt to impose directives from above on the rural people effective planning and information systems cannot be built, and development programmes will continue to flounder. Planning based on information is dependent upon consultation with citizens and different interest groups within communities and consensus building.

Our experiences have shown that creating a comprehensive information system at the sub-district level is relatively simple. The biggest hurdle is to create a framework in which information is used in planning and planning is based on consultation with communities.

THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE FUNCTIONS OF THE DISTRICT PLANNING COORDINATING UNIT OF THE DISTRICT ASSEMBLY

Kwadjo Yeboah
Town and Country Planning Officer,

Section 46, of Act 462 established the District Assemblies as the highest planning authority in the districts. Section 46 of the same act also established the District Planning and Coordinating Unit (DPCU) to assist the District Administration(DA) in its designated planning functions. The composition of the DPCU consists of the District Planning Officer as the secretary, the District Coordinating Director (DCD) as the chairman, the District Budget Officer as the finance officer, and the Directors of Health, Education, Agriculture, Social Welfare, Physical Planning, Works, and a nominee from the District Assembly as the other members. In Kintampo North a nominee from the District Assembly has not been represented in the DPCU. A national document exists on the district planning and coordinating functions, which came in May 2004. We have a nice proposal but on the ground we are operating differently. It is doubtful that the DPCU is truly doing the job for which it was created. The DPCU has not yet met once.

In reality, a few people have monopolised the functioning of the assembly. Currently the DA has an illusion of autonomy - that it is the highest planning authority in the district. But the absence of a legislative instrument that gives the DA the authority to hire, pay and fire staff makes it difficult to implement this. The Local Government Service Act which came out about a year ago is not in operation.

The Local Government Act and National Development Planning (Systems) Act (480- of 1994, Section 7) defines the functions of the DPCU as follows:

- To advise and provide a secretariat for the District Assembly in its planning, programming, monitoring, evaluation and coordinating functions;
- To coordinate the planning activities of sector departments in the District that are responsible for economic production, social services, technical infrastructure, and environmental management, and other agencies connected with the district's development programmes.

However, these functions are not being carried out on the ground. Currently the DPCU is essentially a one-man department manned by the District Planning Officer. But the proposal mandates the DCD as the head, with all the other heads of decentralised departments. The DPCU is supposed to synthesise the strategies relevant to the development of the district into a comprehensive framework. But the DPCU cannot even provide information on the current population in the North Kintampo District Assembly.

There is lack of information at the DPCU because a few people have assumed the position of planning for the district without involving other people. The DPCU is supposed to formulate and update data collection and information and annualise (rollback every years) - the plans prepared by the DA. However, the last Development Plan that was prepared in 2002, had plans for the renovation of teachers' bungalows at Achirensua Secondary School, which is not in the Kintampo North District Assembly. This implies that the representatives of the people were not consulted in making the plan. The planners sat somewhere and created their own information. I doubt if the Assembly members had actually gone through the plan.

The information functions of the DPCU

The DPCU is also supposed to provide information on the district as required by the NDPC, as established by Act 479 of 1994. It is supposed to assist the DA in its designated planning, implementation of programmes, monitoring and evaluation, and coordinating functions. However, this does not exist on the ground. Their activities extend to the area councils and area council sub sectors. However, in most cases where the DPCU should prepare plans for the areas, this is done from their desks rather than establishing a process of consultation.

Every DA is supposed to prepare a development plan that guides the management of the district. In Kintampo one was prepared in 2002 and it is supposed to be annualised every year to roll back the plans. Only a few people participate in the planning process. I don't know if the projects earmarked for the areas are still in the development plan because someone can sit down somewhere and cancel a lot of things and change the plans without consultation. Planning oscillates between the roles of initiating and reaction, and most of the time the actual decision-making and implementation of projects is done by the politicians and people with economic shoulder rather than as a process.

DPCU Functions and information

In the context of scarce resources, real information in the district is critical for prioritising development programmes to ensure the efficient allocation of resources to where they are needed, and an equitable distribution of resources between different areas in the district. Information is important in developing policy actions, including implementation and monitoring strategic actions for integrated development. We, therefore, cannot plan our actions without having basic information on the conditions within the district. Natural resources are variable and change over time so we are talking about both available information and the capacity to update information to track changes. Information on their status and current use will enhance both effective policies and resource management policies that are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the communities. This will enhance both the quality of life and productivity of communities and ensure the sustainability of the resources. The guidelines for the DPCU define the natural resource base as an important area for better information to guide policy.

We have sector departments, but the DPCU is not made up of all sector departments. We have sector departments that the DPCU is supposed to liaise with and work in tandem with them. The sub district includes the Unit Committees and Area Councils and even the communities. We cannot plan for them, but we have to make district plans that accommodate the interests of all the people. We need basic information from all these people. At times we go to the field. We prepare our questionnaires and even try to identify the problems they have in our questions. We tend to define the specific problems we are interested in finding out about. Thus we may ask them if they have specific problems related to water rather than to sit down with them and interact and learn about their real problems.

The DPCU is supposed to maintain an information database for the district development process, activities and programmes. In reality this is not happening in the DA. Hence, we have to establish a system that will make it possible for sector departments, departments and sub-districts and agencies to submit data and information to the DPCU on a regular basis for processing, storage and dissemination. We have to liaise with other people. We don't have to sit down and demand information from the area councils or town councils. We have to be proactive: we have to go to the communities and access the information from the people. When particular information is not available in some agencies and departments, the DPCU needs to carry out studies to collect the necessary data, for analysis and dissemination.

From the above roles in information management, it is obvious that much has to be done to equip the DPCU to measure up in terms of the capacity to generate data and information and also be able to institutionalise information for sound management policies, and for policy decisions that will ensure equitable development for all communities and sound management of environmental and natural resources. It is in the light of this that we welcome the efforts by the DEAR project and University of Ghana researchers for working with us to build up our capacity for generating data for information and we appreciate their interventions in the creation and the use of information and our management policy discussions on development.

THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE FUNCTIONS OF THE DISTRICT ASSEMBLY

James Manu
Presiding Member, Kintampo North District

The local government Act 1994, Act 462, breaks down the role of information systems from Parliament down to the DA and then to the Area Councils and Unit Committees. This is to ensure that information flows to the grassroots, unlike in those days when policies were made by central government and imposed on the people without their involvement in the decision-making.

In the decentralisation concept, the district assembly (DA) is the highest political authority in the district and it is responsible for planning in the district. However, if you look at the duties of the Assemblypersons, one can see that these functions are not working well. Information is not flowing. When these structures were put in place the notion was that the electorate should voluntarily help the Assemblypersons in carrying out their duties, since their work was also voluntary.

However, the structures of the electoral areas are such that some have vast areas and to do this voluntarily is a big problem. The assemblypersons are not able to go to all their communities to tap information and when they attend Assembly meetings they are unable to represent all the needs of their electoral areas. The Assemblypersons are responsible for assuring that information flows from the communities and back to them, but they are unable to carry out this role successfully, resulting in problems with information flow within the districts. The DA is responsible for many information tasks. They are supposed to sensitise the people and let them know what the government is doing. They are responsible for making sure that the people are well-informed about policies. But the Assemblypersons face a lot of problems in transmitting information to the people, and the people in the rural areas are not receiving sufficient and relevant information on policies. The DA is responsible for helping the area councils to implement the decisions they make at council meetings. But the same types of problems are occurring here since the area council members do not go to the grassroots to discuss their policies.

According to the District Assembly concept, Assemblypersons are supposed to meet with their people to discuss the agendas sent to them in letters of invitation to Assembly meetings. They are also responsible for reporting back discussions at the Assembly to their people. However, this does not materialise because the Assemblypersons are unable to get round their communities before and after assembly meetings.

The Assemblypersons are also responsible for helping in the generation of revenues from their area councils to the assembly. However, they are

handicapped in seeing to the efficient collection of revenues and local council revenues fall short of expectations. Revenue generation is a problem at the local councils. Even when the area councils are able to generate a little revenue, their share, which is supposed to be given to them, does not come because the moment the money is deposited in the DA's account it becomes very difficult for it to be released. Many Assemblypersons have brought this to my notice.

During a recent conference of presiding members, we made a suggestion to parliament that instead of the Assemblypersons doing the work voluntarily, they should get some token to support themselves so that they can devote their time to the Assembly's activities.

We are responsible for collecting data and information so that anyone who comes into the District to do development projects can get readily available information. But because people are not participating in the policy process we are not able to do this.

The DEAR project is helping a lot, for having time to go to the rural areas to know their problems, where they can tap resources and other things. We therefore welcome the DEAR project into the District.

Since I assumed office, I have suggested to my bosses that Assemblypersons should be helped to become mobile (especially those in remote areas). This will enable them to work effectively and carry information to and from the people so that the district can progress.

THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Emmanuel Bampoe
Agricultural Officer, Kintampo District

The Ministry of Food and Agriculture has over the years played its functional roles as a member of the District Planning Co-ordinating Unit (DPCU) within the Kintampo District Assembly, as prescribed by the government of Ghana's Decentralisation policy. It has continued to play these functional roles and hopes to improve upon them for the development of Agriculture in the district and the living condition of the people.

ROLES IN DISTRICT ASSEMBLY

Some of the specific roles of the Department of Agriculture in the District Assembly setup include:

- Provision of information about food and the farming situation in the district (crops and animals);
- Provision of technical advice on agricultural issues for policy formulation at the district and national levels;
- Collaboration with organizations who are working in the agricultural area;
- Advice to the District Assembly on suitable agricultural-related projects that can be undertaken in specific localities.

SECTOR ACTIVITIES

Activities undertaken by the agricultural sector includes the following:

- 1) Communities (home and field) visits to educate farmers on improved methods of farming;
- 2) Provide directions to farmer on the choice of seed to plant, method of land preparation, type of cultural practice to adopt etc. We, as the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) staff, fall short of certain relevant information for our clients. For example, we have difficulty in determining the fertility level of certain soils. If a farmer wants your advice on cultivating certain crops you only tell him what to do in a particular season, but you cannot tell him the fertility status of the soil and its suitability for different crops. I think the farmers' need these pieces of information because, as a resource person on ADARS FM radio station in Kintampo and from my own experience in the Ministry of Agriculture, farmers consistently want to know something more than what to do and what not to do. They want the whys, why certain thing are done. When you are able to provide them with this they will always come to you for more information. As a resource person you should have information at your fingertips to give to them when they require it. Agriculture is now moving into a different dimension where today's farmers need information rather than prescriptions.
- 3) Facilitate the identification and formation of farmer groups and then register them - with proper data we would not need to always visit the

communities before we know which farmer qualifies for award e.g. the National Farmers Day.

- 4) Collect data on disease and pests situations in the community;
- 5) Collect and inform the public about prices of agricultural goods;
- 6) Collect and keep information about production levels and yields of certain agricultural produce in the district;
- 7) Collect statistics on yield levels of certain crops in specific localities;
- 8) Keep records on farmers activities to measure the achievements from set targets;
- 9) Generally, we bridge the gap between the discrepancies of the farmers' practices and the improved method for optimum yield.

In order to execute the above assigned roles effectively, there is the urgent need for a prior information or data on the activities, practices and the environment in which our clients work. We as MOFA staff often lack relevant information that our clients need.

This includes knowledge of:

- Areas in the district in which particular crops are produced in large quantities;
- The suitability of the soil of particular areas for the cultivation of specific crops;
- the specific cropping activities carried out in particular localities;
- The agro-ecological conditions of different areas;
- Existing agricultural projects within the district, the localities in which they have been carried out, and their achievements;
- The number and gender composition of farmers engaged in different crop production.

MOFA is part of the environmental subcommittee of the district. Our assigned roles require that we assist in the management and the efficient use of natural resources in the district. We must therefore provide data/information for policy formulation on the management of natural resources and the environment.

To carry out these roles, the District Agricultural Development Unit (DADU) must have access to relevant information, and means of inputting, managing storing, analyzing and disseminating information.

Currently, most of the information required is either inadequate or not available. There is also a lack of skills for capturing data in the computer. My interaction with the DEAR Project, since they started work in the district, has convinced me that we can enhance our capacity for generating our own data and information for decision-making processes.

It is my hope that, this forum improves our consciousness of the need to acquire the requisite skills for generating data and information, and also to base our policies for natural Resource Management on real information.

THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN DISTRICT FOREST MANAGEMENT

Emmanuel Yeboah
Kintampo District Forest Manager

The main functions of the Forest Services Division are to protect, develop and manage the forest resources in country on a sustainable basis. This means that we have to use the resources, but we have to use them judiciously so that there will be some left for perpetuity so that the generations that are yet unborn will get some to use. We cannot protect, develop and manage the resources without credible information on the natural resource base and the demands of the people for development, and poverty levels etc. Hence, the management of natural resources information is very critical. This information should be known to the policy makers, the people at the grassroots and to the managers themselves.

Inventories and sustainable management

Since the 1970s and 1980s forestry has been carrying out national inventories on the type of timber species in the country, and the volume of timber within the country. We determine their frequencies, their occurrences and which ones are predominant in certain areas. From the inventories that are conducted an annual allowable cut can be set for the country as a whole so that sustainable management of timber can be carried out. In the early 1990s this was set at 1,000,000 cubic metres of which 500,000 was to be harvested from off reserve areas and the other 500,000 from forest reserves. Translated into the district, in Kintampo, our annual allowable cut is 14,000 cubic metres. If we maintain our cut at 14,000 cubic metres our resources can be sustained. Since these natural resources are not static, and they keep on changing we don't have to base our resources on 1970/80 inventories so we always keep data to monitor the activities that are going on and the changes that take place so that we also adjust our management to the changes. In view of this, we normally keep monthly records of trees harvested and volumes removed.

We collect and send information on annual, quarterly and monthly harvest, which is the yield. We have a central point, the Resource Support and Management Centre which monitors, and collates data, analyses it and sends the feedback. Initially, certain species including Mahogany (*Khaya gradifolia*), Odum (*Milicia excelsa*), Asanfena (*Aningeria altissima*), and Sapele (*Entadrophragma cylindricum*) were not initially endangered, so they were harvested according to a particular formula. However, we have seen that the rate at which they were being harvesting was so high that we have had to introduce controls. These trees are now endangered species and are therefore restricted. As a result, not more than 20 percent of the annual allowable cut of 14,000 cubic metres should consist of these endangered species.

Recently we have had to change the annual allowable cut as a result of conflict in the use and management of the off-reserve areas resulting from farming, chain saw operations, and mining. The annual allowable cut has been increased to 2,000,000 cubic metres, of which 1,500,000 cubic metres originates from off-reserve areas and 500,000 cubic metres from forest reserves. If we are able to maintain this, sustainability is assured but the problem is with the outside forest reserve. We are not actually managing the felling, but control the felling of trees in the off-reserve areas, because the main land-use system is farming. This means that forestry planning has to fit into the system of farming rather than farming fit into forest management. If a farmer is going to clear his farm and he has some trees to fell, he cannot be forced to maintain the trees since he needs to clear some to farm and gain a livelihood. We can only educate the farmer to at least maintain some of the trees, or we inform him that we have given out some of the timber trees to a timber contractor to remove and process it into timber, so that we do not lose its economic value.

We also carry out an inventory within the district. The predominant timber species in the Kintampo District are Papao (*Azelia Africana*) Senya (*Daniellia oliveri*, Onyina (*Ceiba pentandra*), and the savanna type Mahogany (*Kaya grandifolia*). In 2003/2004, we did not release any of the endangered species in our annual allowable cut. It is only this year we are contemplating releasing some of them. We have to account for those that are removed by farmers, those that are destroyed by fire, those that are removed illegally for timber, and those removed for charcoal before releasing them. So we need to carefully control the cut. For this we need information. However, our problem is getting information.

Information gaps

Getting information is very difficult. For instance, we know that bush fires are very rampant here but we do not know the rate of destruction? I know that the annual destruction to merchantable timber in the country is estimated to be about \$24,000,000.00 but I don't have figures for this within the district.

The Senya tree is very common, but we do not know the reasons for this. I think the DA has made some byelaws to protect it, which is very good. We are also abiding by those laws, and we don't release those trees for timber operations. It is only Papao and *Ceiba* that we have been releasing. There are some good customary practices in the district that help us and ensure the preservation of certain species. But we do not know the numbers of many species.

The Borassus palm (*Borassus aethiopicum*) is another tree which is useful, serves as wood for building purposes and its fruits are edible. Recently some people from Burkina Faso came here and wanted to remove them, but I objected to this. I had to explain the reasons why and meet a lot of people. These Borassus trees have taken thirty years to grow to a large size and because of annual uncontrolled bushfires many of the small ones are destroyed. So if you allow people to come with articulator trucks to remove

them, before we are aware - in less than 30 years - these resources will disappear, because before they get one articulator load the operators will fell not less than 100 of these trees. If we are not building up our resources but rather taking out, then the sustainability that we are talking about will not be ensured.

When we are managing forest resources, we are not only managing trees but also fauna- because they complement each other. For instance, research has shown that the Bako (*Tieghmella heckelii*) tree can only germinate when its seeds have passed through the alimentary canal of the elephant. So if the trees are there and the animals are gone we will find problems along the line. But we don't have enough capacity to manage all these different aspects of forestry.

District planning

We have always been telling the DPCU to include us in the DA development plan but we have never been invited. We have been hammering that there should be a forestry component in the management of the Kintampo waterfalls. If we do not manage the vegetation around the falls it is likely that a time will come when the river will dry up and that will be its end.

I am happy the Planning Officer and the Presiding Member are at this meeting. For the sake of posterity you need to invite the Forestry Services when you are preparing the District Development Plans. I have never seen one before and I don't know if there is a Forestry component in it. But life depends on natural resources. If the trees are gone, then there will be a problem. My advice is that you should involve us, we will discuss, share ideas and know the way forward. I was shocked when in the DA budget this year, they estimated that they were going to get ₦306,000,000.00 from charcoal production, which was about 30 percent of the revenues. When I heard this, I asked myself, how many of these trees are being replaced. While it is true that the trees are able to coppice, what is the rate of replacement from coppice growth? Every natural resource has got a level at which it is able to renew itself. If you go beyond that capacity, the thing cannot be renewed.

Tree planting

So what do we do? The Forestry Commission is doing something. We have started planting but that is not enough. The annual rate of deforestation taking both the high forest and the savanna zone into consideration is 65,000 hectares per year and in the high forest zone is 20,000 hectares per year and in the savanna zone it is 45,000 hectares. The forestry commission is planting 20,000 hectares per annum. This means that we are going to counteract deforestation in the forest zone. But what about the savanna zone? In 2002, we were given a target of 1,000 hectares in Kintampo. We exceeded our target and planted 1,073 hectares. In 2003, we were given a target of 1500 hectares, and we planted 1,550 hectares. We again exceeded our target. In 2004 we were given a target of 1,000 hectares because we were to focus on managing the trees we had planted. This year we have been given a target of 1,000 hectares.

Individuals are also engaging in tree planting, and we have to help them. There are loans available for them to manage the resource. We are collecting data on these individuals who have established private plantations. We have to note the rate at which the plantations are growing, and calculate how much timber volume they are replacing, and how much this can meet our needs.

The institutional framework

The problems we have in the District are problems that can be solved if we get the right structures in place, the right operational systems, and if we get the right people to implement and enforce the laws. Forestry has transformed itself. The old 1940 policy, in which Forestry was concerned only with policing the environment, has been replaced. We have seen that the resources are for the benefit of the people and that we have to involve them in their management and that we have to involve them in decision-making so that they have a sense of ownership. The new policy framework we are using is based on collaborative forest management or participatory forest management. We therefore have local structures, community forest committees, and reserve planning teams, among others, who are all helping us to manage the resource.

In the Kintampo Forest District (which includes the Kintampo North, Kintampo South and Nkoranza District Assemblies) we have a total of 41 employees including our watchmen, janitors and drivers. This is insufficient to manage 3 administrative districts. To achieve our objectives we need to practise collaborative forest management so that the local people will help us in management. We need to promote equity and benefit-sharing. The communities will help us in managing and maintaining forest resources when they are aware that they share in the benefits of forest management.

Why do we have illegal operations taking place in certain particular areas? What is the cause? At times I am not only interested in arresting people and persecuting them but I want to find the root cause. Many of them claim that they do not have jobs and are suffering from poverty. This is why the government has introduced the National Tree Planting Programme, through which we involve local communities in tree planting and provide them with economic opportunities and alternative livelihoods. This reduces the pressures on natural resources. I entreat all of you to help, because the problem of natural resource management and information is not only the responsibility of the forestry sector. Natural resource management is multi-faceted and multi-sectoral.

Information is very vital for our sector. The following lists the types of information required by the forestry sector in management:

Information for sustainable management:

- the resource base (stocking level), regeneration, diameter classes of species,

- frequency of occurrence, age distribution, annual allowable cut,
- vegetation type, endangered species, normal species,
- export or marketing trends, high demand, low demand, moderate demand species, lesser used species,
- number of stakeholders, key stakeholders, size of timber companies, equipment/machinery, number of workers, milling capacity of companies, revenue generation etc.

Information on the development of natural resources:

- nature of deforestation, rate of deforestation, causes of deforestation,
- soil types, soil structure, soil texture/consistency, soil fertility, site specific species, terrain, rainfall pattern, fire tolerance limit, seed source, diseases, pests, growth rate of species, management objectives
- market demand,
- degraded land for tree planting/land availability.

Information on protection of natural resources:

- size of forest lands,
- staffing strength,
- local collaborators like CFC's (i.e. Community Forest Committees), NGO's , key stakeholders,
- training needs,
- equipment, motivation, expenditure.

Information for wildfire management:

- fire prone areas, causes and effects of wildfires, land use systems, temperature, intensity of sunshine, humidity, wind speed, wind direction, terrain,
- rainfall pattern, seasons (duration/ period of the seasons, i.e. dry season, rainy season,
- fire-fighting equipment needed.

Conclusion

Information flow is key to the success of every management system; hence every effort must be made to ensure that information gets to the appropriate quarters at the right time for prudent management decisions to be taken.

BUILDING INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN THE DISTRICT

BUILDING PARTICIPATORY INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN THE KINTAMPO DISTRICT

Opoku Pabi

(DEAR Project and University of Ghana)

Within the Kintampo District Assembly, policies for natural resource management have been based on assumptions rather than information and evidence based on research. Policy development lacks consultation, dialogue, consensus-building and popular participation. This results in natural resource policies that alienate rural people rather than address their concerns. They are perceived by rural people as insensitive and against their interests. This results in responses that range from non-compliance to passive and active resistance, protests and hostilities. These policies do not work because they do not address the needs of the people and mobilise popular support.

These policy constraints are not unique to Kintampo. They characterise the decentralisation programme in general. Although the framework for decentralisation makes provisions for engaging local communities in the policy process and community participation, this has failed to be implemented. The decentralisation of planning and implementation of policies to local government in Ghana should have been accompanied by a parallel strengthening of the capacity to make and manage policy. Particularly the capacity to generate information and institutionalise information in the policy making and implementing processes within the districts.

Local government and planning processes

In Ghana, the structures of decentralisation consist of local district assemblies (DAs), sub-district Area Councils (in rural areas) and Urban Councils. The Area Councils (ACs) are responsible for collecting revenues and making plans for their areas. The local government structures have been created to ensure a high degree of local participation in the policy process. This is reflected in the election of representatives to the District Assembly and Area Councils. The District Assembly is the highest authority in the district, and responsible for setting the tasks of sub-committees and ratifying their recommendations. The sub-committees comprise of technical officers from the government administrative departments and representatives from the Assembly. Local communities are represented at the Assembly by Assembly persons and in the Area by councillors, who, according to legislation, are responsible for meeting with their constituent communities, prioritising their development needs, and representing them at the district assembly. The districts are responsible for making their own plans, prioritizing development initiatives and implementing policies and projects.

The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) is the highest planning authority in Ghana. It gives responsibility to the district assemblies and the sub-districts to collect and communicate information on conditions in the areas under their authority, and the development plans and activities they

initiate, which can then be used in making development policy decisions at higher levels of administration and governance. To achieve this, districts are expected to establish information systems and databases. But it does not make provisions to create the capacity that will enable the districts to collect, manage and analyse information and institutionalize it in ways in which it plays an important role in planning and management decisions. As a result the capacity to create and use information in policy-making is practically non-existent.

Information systems and natural resource management

District Administrations make plans for communities that are characterised by a wide range of different conditions. The topography, geology, soil types, cropping systems, availability of water vary considerably between different settlements. Different areas in the same district may have different distributions of local resources, different patterns of social and economic development, and different cultures, needs and aspirations. The district needs information on the natural resources and the various ways in which they are used by producers within the district, so that it will be able to properly target its plans to meet the conditions in the various areas. To be effective, information must be freely shared and communicated between individuals and different groups and organisations within the district. Communities must have access to information and must be able to provide information to policy makers in the form of demands. Different departments must share the information and contribute the available information at their disposal towards building a common pool of information within the district.

Information systems in Ghana

Most information systems in Ghana tend to be highly technical and associated with specialised institutions such as government departments, universities, research institutions, and private companies. Training is for highly educated personnel or technical staff. It is assumed that the technology is sophisticated, complicated, high skill-based, and dependent upon good infrastructure support. The design, training and implementation are technically derived, based on highly educated and skilled personnel. The principles of building participation, dialogue, and consensus into the communication of information are not addressed. Yet this is a basic requirement for promoting democratic development and relevance of planning to human needs. It is assumed that technocrats can develop relevant solutions based on science rather than on feedback from communities and the collection of information and evidence at the community level. Many information systems, including those in the public sector of government supported institution, aim to commercialise and sell their products rather than providing services that facilitate the exchange and communication of information between government, technical staff and citizens. Within this environment of technocratic domination and commercialisation, information systems are projected as highly sophisticated tools that can only be used by highly skilled personnel.

The building of information systems at the district level becomes daunting, because districts lack highly trained staff, do not have sufficient staff to deal with the management of the district, and do not have sufficient capital to hire expert consultants to design information systems for them.

One of the objectives of the District Environmental Action Research (DEAR) Project is to develop simple information systems that can be institutionalised within the districts. These build upon existing capacities within districts. They are participatory and aim to involve all levels within the district from the community to the district administration. The information systems they create can be easily updated within the district. They are not expensive to maintain. While this has been developed by the DEAR Project within the context of natural resource management they can be easily extended to planning in other sectors. The basic principle informing the DEAR approach is that is that an information system must facilitate the exchange and communication of knowledge and data.

Information and community participation in planning

Policy processes must incorporate the needs and concerns of rural communities. Rural communities must be given the opportunity to express their concerns, and dialogue and negotiate with policy makers to reach a consensus on policy priorities. This requires the development of platforms in which different interest groups engage in policy discussions. This results in the development of two-way communication and information systems in which policy makers inform communities of potential policy solutions and interventions and users inform policymakers about their uses, perspectives and preferences.

To be effective policy prescriptions should be based on evidence and data. They should address real community concerns. There should be a process of negotiation between policy makers and rural communities that results in policies that are understood and acceptable at the community level.

Given the limitation of resources at the district level, one way of overcoming constraints is to involve the local communities in the process of data collection and the generation of information. Although there may be a lack of knowledge of information management at the community level, there is a lot of knowledge about the locality. The challenge is to build an information system that takes advantage of this local knowledge and creates a simple information system that can be managed by people who are not highly educated.

The advantages of creating a participatory information system are the following:

- It encourages consultations and informal meetings within the district. This creates avenues for communication and negotiation with communities, individuals and groups, who express their needs and seek solutions either among themselves or with local authorities.

- Access to data/information improves people knowledge and awareness of available choices of potential livelihood alternatives.
- Transfer of data/information on communities to the districts enables their concerns to be incorporated in the policy process which is an avenue for community participation.
- It enhances the self-confidence of all participants, especially the rural communities, and encourages them to take a pro-active role in policy interventions.
- Participation builds a sense of ownership among the communities and the local government institutions
- It promotes networking and multi-user information systems. It promotes data exchange, information flows, and reduces the cost of acquiring and using information.

The information system interface

In developing an information system in the Kintampo district the DEAR project used a Geographical Information System (GIS) interface. This has two important advantages:

- 1) The graphical interface is less abstract than a tabular database and enables individuals to more easily grasp the significant of the data.
- 2) Since it depicts data in spatial form it is useful as a planning tool, enabling district administrators to rapidly see the distribution of resources between different settlements and areas within the district (see the following paper for more on GIS).

Project approach

The approach of the project was to engage community, AC, DA members and other actors in developing the information system. It promoted a practical-oriented learning environment where project beneficiaries acquire skills, knowledge and hands-on experience as they are trained to carry out relevant activities for establishing their own management information system.

The objective of this approach was to ensure that:

- Communities acquire skills and knowledge that enable them repeat the process so that the database could be updated and would retain its relevance;
- They will be able to transfer the technology to other ACs and DAs with little external involvement ;
- A community-focused approach facilitates the gathering of relevant data since the communities know their area better than others;
- The cost is reduced in the implementation and the development phases, since many volunteers from the community are involved in the process, and since the district depends upon upgrading its skills rather than hiring consultants and experts;
- Communities and the district build a sense of ownership.

The project design and implementation strategy

The project design incorporated extensive involvement of local people at all levels of the local government structures, and from within the communities. The ultimate objective is to build a functional district information system. This is to be achieved through a process of scaling-up in which the initially trained AC members train other ACs in building information systems. The data sets collected by different ACs will be integrated into a district based information system managed by the district administration. Although the actual process started at the Area Council level, activities, such as consultations, determination of data flow, simultaneously took place at both the district and the sub-districts, since these were together considered as one system.

The main activities undertaken by the project include the following:

- Identification of beneficiaries, stakeholders and actors through consultations;
- Awareness creation and feasibility assessment of the interests of different partners in creating an information system;
- Analysis of existing information systems within the district;
- Analysis of sub-district and district economic activities, natural resources, and information and planning procedures;
- Prioritization of data/information needs;
- Identification of existing sources of data/information;
- Training of partners in questionnaire administration, data inputting and analysis;
- Administration of questionnaire;
- Data processing, modelling, analysis and display;
- Institutionalising of data and information in the decision-making processes;
- Scaling up.



Figure 1 DEAR research team in consultation with an Area Council

Consultations with the district and area councils

The process started with visits to a number of potential beneficiary sub-districts in the Wenchi and the Kintampo districts in the Brong Ahafo Region. The purposes were to make known the objectives of the project and explore the interests of the various Area Councils (ACs) in establishing a participatory information system that incorporated feedback from the communities. Some of the considerations were the commitment to information at the sub-district level, the commitment to democratic environmental management based on dialogue and consensus, and the consciousness of the relevance of information/data for management decisions. Eventually the New Longoro Area (NLAC) in the Kintampo District was selected. They had already designed a questionnaire to gather socio-economic and demographic data for their programmes. On their own, they had also made a sketch map of the council area, indicating communities, roads, bridges, rivers, etc. This prior interest in information created a suitable basis for building a participatory information system that was to be driven by the interests of the ACs and communities.

Building partnerships

The project focused on the ACs as the main research partners in data collection and information system building, since this was the lowest administrative unit at which local government had a direct relations with communities. The ACs are relatively small. Elected representatives of communities and community members frequently have a detailed knowledge of the area. This familiarity with the area in which they lived meant that much knowledge within the community was readily present and it was relatively easy for the Area Council to assemble data.

The DAs play a central role in making environmental policy and in creating environmental byelaws. Therefore the Kintampo District Assembly² became a central partner in building the information systems in the district and its involvement and commitment to the project was sought. In the DA, various departments, sub-committees and individuals were contacted, and involved to varied degrees at different times. The individuals included the District Chief Executive, District Coordinating Director, Deputy Coordinating Director, Environmental Sub-Committee chairperson, Budget Officer, District Information Officer, District Town and Country Planning Officer, District Electoral Officer, and the District Revenue officer, Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), and Forestry Services. The District Statistical Service and Kintampo Health Research Institute also were involved and provided useful information. A district administration reference group was initiated, which met regularly to discuss the development of the project. At the regional level, the Management Information Systems Project of the Regional Coordinating Council was contacted and discussions held on our various initiatives in building information systems, and the potential of integrating information systems.

² The project started working with the Kintampo District Assembly. However in 2004 the district was divided into two – The Kintampo North and Kintampo South Districts.

The purpose of building these partnerships was to:

- Inform key district personnel of the project;
- Investigate the nature of data management within the DA, and the availability of data/information on natural resources and the sources through which the DA could gain access to information;
- Investigate potential linkages between the ACs and the district administration in planning and the communication of information;
- Identification of potential users of the information system we were creating, and the information needs of the various users;
- Build a network of potential collaborators, actors and partners that would facilitate the institutionalisation of the information system in the district.

Building capacity for participatory information systems

The new Longoro AC and the DEAR Project agreed that the AC members would be involved in as many activities as possible. Discussions were held on the data which would be collected and the processes involved in collecting, inputting and analysing this data. Where practicable, the communities would be trained to enable them carry out most of the activities on their own. Since the DA, ACs and other departments and institutions would, ultimately, collectively own the information system, the AC needed to be empowered to develop a sense of ownership and ability to manage the processes of establishing the information system. It was expected that they would acquire skills and knowledge that will enable them transfer the technology to other ACs and possibly, the DA in the scaling-up process.

A working group of councillors who would directly represent the New Longoro AC and actively collaborate with the researchers in developing the system was formed.

Determination of information needs

The first task of the Area Council Working Group involved assisting the DEAR researchers in the determination of the main data and information needs. This involved a series of consultations between the researchers and the working group. The first consideration was to make an inventory of available natural resources, physical infrastructure, demographic factors, and socio-economic activities and their impact on natural resources. The development priorities and programmes of the sub-district were also examined. A questionnaire was developed out of these discussions reflecting both the interests of the New Longoro AC and of the DEAR Project in managing natural resources.

The working group also provided a list of their communities and electoral areas. The list was later found not to be exhaustive. Some communities with sizable populations were not on the list.

Data collection

The working group selected members from the communities who were trained to administer the questionnaires. More than 30 volunteers took part in the exercise. The objective of allowing them to conduct the survey was to ensure that they acquire the skills and experience that will enable them to repeat this activity to update their database at regular intervals in the future. This is important for sustaining the relevance of the system. The management of the survey was placed under the AC Chairperson, who played a very active role in the administration of the survey. The survey was rapidly completed by the AC within one month, covering all the communities within the Area, including newly discovered isolated settlements.

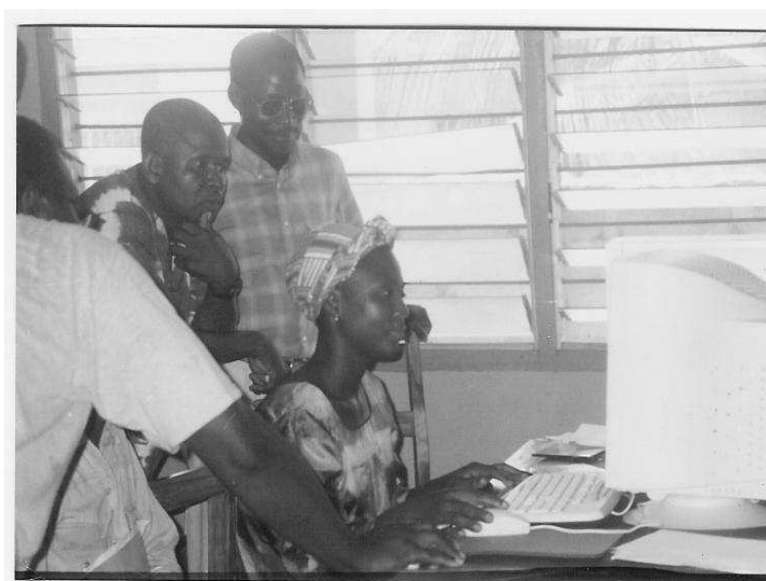


Figure 2 Community members entering data

Training for data input and analysis

Eight people from the New Longoro communities have been successfully trained for data entry in SPSS and ArcView. They are, mainly, not highly educated individuals. Among them are farmers and hunters and people who have not completed secondary school. Gender balance was taken into consideration and half of the trainees are women. Of the eight, two women and one man have been able to advance to the extent of being able to carry out descriptive statistical analysis using SPSS and to teach others to use SPSS. On their own, the new Longoro team have entered more than 7,500 cases of individuals of the surveyed data. They have also been involved in analysing the data on the communities and are able to provide statistics on many aspects of the survey.

Three people have also received training in Arcview (a GIS programme). They can enter data in tables and generate maps. They have entered the data based on settlements into Arcview.

Synthesis of data and using other data

The data collected from the survey was supplemented by other existing data sets. This included:

- soil types and land suitability,
- land –use/cover and change,
- drainage systems(rivers, marshy areas, flood-prone areas),
- contours, topography(digital elevation model) and slopes,
- geology,
- settlements,
- roads, etc.

The land-use/cover information was derived from satellite data captured in 2000/1, and classified into various land-use/cover categories. The drainage system, settlements, roads and tracks, contours and other geographical features were digitised from topographic maps of a scale, 1:50,000. The topographic maps were originally generated from aerial photos flown in the early 1970s. The data on settlements and roads were outdated. A few settlements have been deserted whereas many new ones have sprung up. It was noted that many settlements with sizeable populations were not on the list that was provided by the NLAC at the beginning of the study. The existence of some communities was unknown to the councillors. The list of communities was updated from data from the results of the household survey and records collected from the 2000 national census. The use of satellite data is one aspect which cannot be managed by the communities. This is one area which needs more consideration in creating linkages which would enable districts to access the services of research institutions without exorbitant costs.

Members of the communities were trained to use geographic position system (GPS) receiver to collect the coordinates of the communities. They visited communities, most of which were inaccessible by road. In some cases canoes were used to reach the communities. The satellite data also provided information. New roads have been constructed, whereas others have been improved. The road network was updated from satellite information and field visits. The Kintampo Health Research Institute also provided some spatial data for the settlement record that it had collected. The project has created an updated digital map of the two Kintampo districts, which reflects current conditions rather than those of the 1970s.

The digital elevation model (DTM) topography was generated from line elevation contours. It was converted to grid and then to an elevation model.

The soil types were obtained from the Soil Research Institute. It included both maps and textual information on soil associations and their land suitability of the area, which were digitised



Figure 3 A farmer using GPS

Data generated from the survey and the 2000 census has been analyzed and presented in thematic maps, tables and charts for the New Longoro Area. These include populations (males and females), number of people of different ethnic groups, crops grown, animals reared, number of farmers with exotic timber and fruit plantations, and supplementary livelihoods, such as charcoal, beekeeping, snail-rearing.

Data dissemination

Due to awareness creation through discussions and exhibiting of samples of the data and information to individuals and departments, several departments have requested for information collected by the project, including, the Town and Country Planning Department, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Forestry Service. Others have requested for demographic information, which is currently not in the district at the level of detail collected for the project. Copies of the map of settlements within the district have also been widely requested.

Scaling-up

The project has been extended to the Babato Area Council. The transfer of skills and knowledge has been carried out by members of the New Longoro Working Group under the supervision of the DEAR Project, which has also provided technical backstopping. The survey is being successfully implemented by the Babato Area Council with minimum intervention from the DEAR Project.



Figure 4 Consultations between members of Babato and New Longoro ACs on survey design.

Although the DA and Government Departments have been involved in the project from its inception, their personnel have not taken advantage of the project to acquire practical skills in data entry and analysis. However, they are interested in taking the project forward by extending the information system to the remaining Area Council in the Kintampo District, the Kadelso AC, and in providing a home for the information system in the district assembly.

Observations and lessons

- Contrary to the general perception, rural communities at the sub-districts have a keen appreciation for the need of data and information;
- Engaging communities from the very beginning of the information systems projects generates high social participation and ownership;
- It is spurious to assume that rural folks with minimal formal educational background cannot be trained to perform simple tasks in computer-based information system management;
- Personal commitment and the sense of ownership are higher at the lowest level of the local government structure than the higher levels. At the local level development work is essentially carried out by voluntary elected representatives with commitments to local developments. At the higher levels within the district administration it is carried out by understaffed bureaucrats often working with poor salary structures.

- The sub-districts know their communities better than the district. With their collaboration, it becomes easier to identify data sources, establish gaps in information flow in terms of community representation in what is expected to be a seamless two-way information flow between the communities and the sub-districts. They are also able to identify inaccurate information and information problems in data collection based on their knowledge of the localities. On a number of occasions those inputting questionnaires were able to identify inaccurate information and send the questionnaires back for correction.
- It is more cost-effective to establish a community information system at the sub-district level since members are ready to work on a voluntary basis and are familiar with the communities. The trained individuals are more likely to offer their services in future when the database needs to be updated.
- Creation of an information system using the various linkages between institutions within the district is relatively easy. It is more difficult to institutionalise the use of information and consultation for planning purposes.

Main challenges

- Adapting the training and teaching to people with relatively low formal educational background – this included hunters, farmers and youth who had not completed junior secondary school.
- Teaching people who have no prior knowledge of computers and software.

Constraints to information use

- Political factors. At the Area Council level political factionalism often undermines planning and leads to an impasse in the implementation of policies. Within the District Administration officers are often reluctant to take up initiatives for fear of reprisals from their superiors.
- Lack of transparency and openness in local government which results in poor planning processes, lack of use of information in planning and top-down management.
- Inadequate institutional capacity to introduce planning based on the information about the conditions within the district, and implementing feedback and consultations between different levels of local government and local communities.
- Poor communication between different levels of local government structures and between government departments and sectors resulting in the failure to collate and synthesis information on the district.
- Low capacity to institutionalize data/information for planning purposes and decision-making.

Some important achievements and level of up-take

In spite of the above challenges and constraints, some of the most notable achievements of the project include:

- ❖ Being able to decentralise GIS application to the level of the District, Area Council and rural community;
- ❖ Improved level of awareness of the importance of data/information in policy planning among policy makers and of informed decision-making;
- ❖ Getting youth and women in local communities involved in the execution of the project;
- ❖ Improving the quality data/information at the Kintampo Districts;
- ❖ Building local level capacities to manage information and train others in the management of data and information with little external assistance.

GIS AND ITS RELEVANCE TO DISTRICT PLANNING

Opoku Pabi

DEAR Project

Geographic information system (GIS) is a computer-base management decision support system capable of assisting decision-making process made on issues that have spatial references. This may be addressing questions such as:

- Which are the main charcoal burning/rice farming/cashew cultivating localities in Kintampo North District?
- Which crops are most important for women in different areas of Kintampo north?
- What are the different types of soil in Kintampo and where do they occur?
- Which localities in the Kintampo Districts have the most suitable soils for rice cultivation?
- Who are the main individual farmers engaged in bee keeping and teak cultivations in the district?
- How has the pattern of vegetation covering the land changed in the last ten years?
- How close are people farming to the banks of water bodies?

Geographic information system enables the collection, storage modelling, analysis, integration and display of data on objects and activities distributed in space.

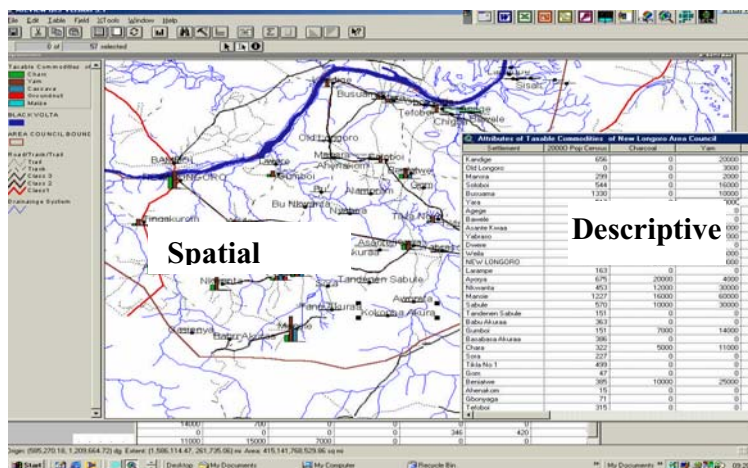


Figure 1 GIS handles both spatial and descriptive data/information

The main difference between GIS and other data/information management systems is that GIS can handle spatial or local -specific data/information on objects and activities, whereas the others cannot. GIS enables maps to be created in which different resource uses in different settlements can be viewed enabling comparisons between different areas. This can be used to identify different conditions in different areas, patterns of resource uses and livelihoods, allowing plans to be made to fit specific areas. It can also be used for monitoring, allowing planners to view the impact of their policies on different areas and enable them to identify areas in which planning processes are not working. It can be used to identify areas which need to be prioritised in planning. It is this capacity to handle management issues with spatial dimension that makes GIS a suitable information system that can be used for management policies on land and environmental resources at the local government level.

GIS applications also provide opportunities and conditions for initiating community participation and consultations in policy processes to enable policies to reflect community concerns through:

- Dialogue and consensus building;
- Openness;
- Community empowerment through better knowledge of the distribution of available resources, livelihoods, threats to livelihoods, etc.;
- Policy ownership through participation in information collection and policy consultations;
- Improved communication across the various levels of administration as more accurate information become available and communities and the administrative authorities engage in teamwork.
- Networking between stakeholders

Application of GIS at the local government level has the potential to improve the building of information infrastructure for improved natural resource management policy decisions.

The following maps give some examples of the use of GIS in processing information. The maps were generated from information supplied by people in the communities in the New Longoro area on their livelihood activities on comprehensive surveys administered to all the adult population in the area.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of yam and groundnut farming between men and women. In the New Longoro area men traditionally cultivated yam and women groundnut. However, this is changing and growing numbers of men now cultivated groundnuts and women yam. Such maps on gender composition of crops enables changes in cultivation patterns in different areas to be seen and enables us to understand which farmers are cultivating particular crops in particular areas. Extension services can orient their services towards the main groups cultivating particular crops, and make sure

that women are targeted for the main crops that they cultivate or are interested in cultivating.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of yam farming and charcoal burning. This enables us to see where these, the two most important commodities produced in the rural areas of the Kintampo North district, are concentrated. Since a lot of charcoal is also produced from old yam farms we can also examine the extent to which there is a relationship between charcoal burning and yam farming.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of youth in the settlements in the New Longoro AC and the distribution of charcoal burning. Since charcoal is an important activity for youth we can examine the extent to which bans on charcoal result in a movement of youth away from the villages. Most of the settlements without charcoal production result from a ban on charcoal in those settlements. Does this result in the decline in the numbers of youth remaining in the villages? Important policy issues can be addressed and discussed around these maps.

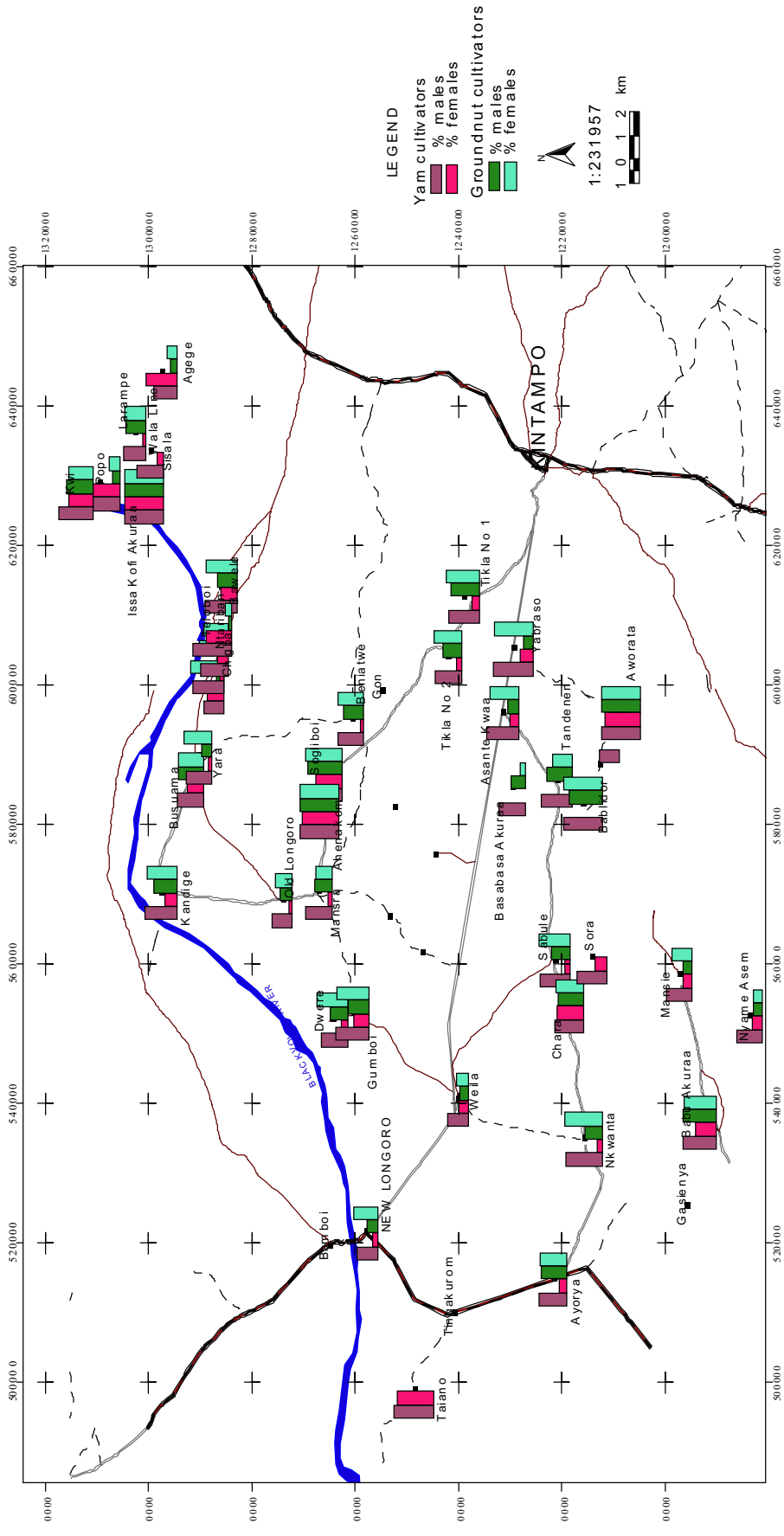


Figure 2 Males and females cultivating yams and groundnuts in the New Longoro AC

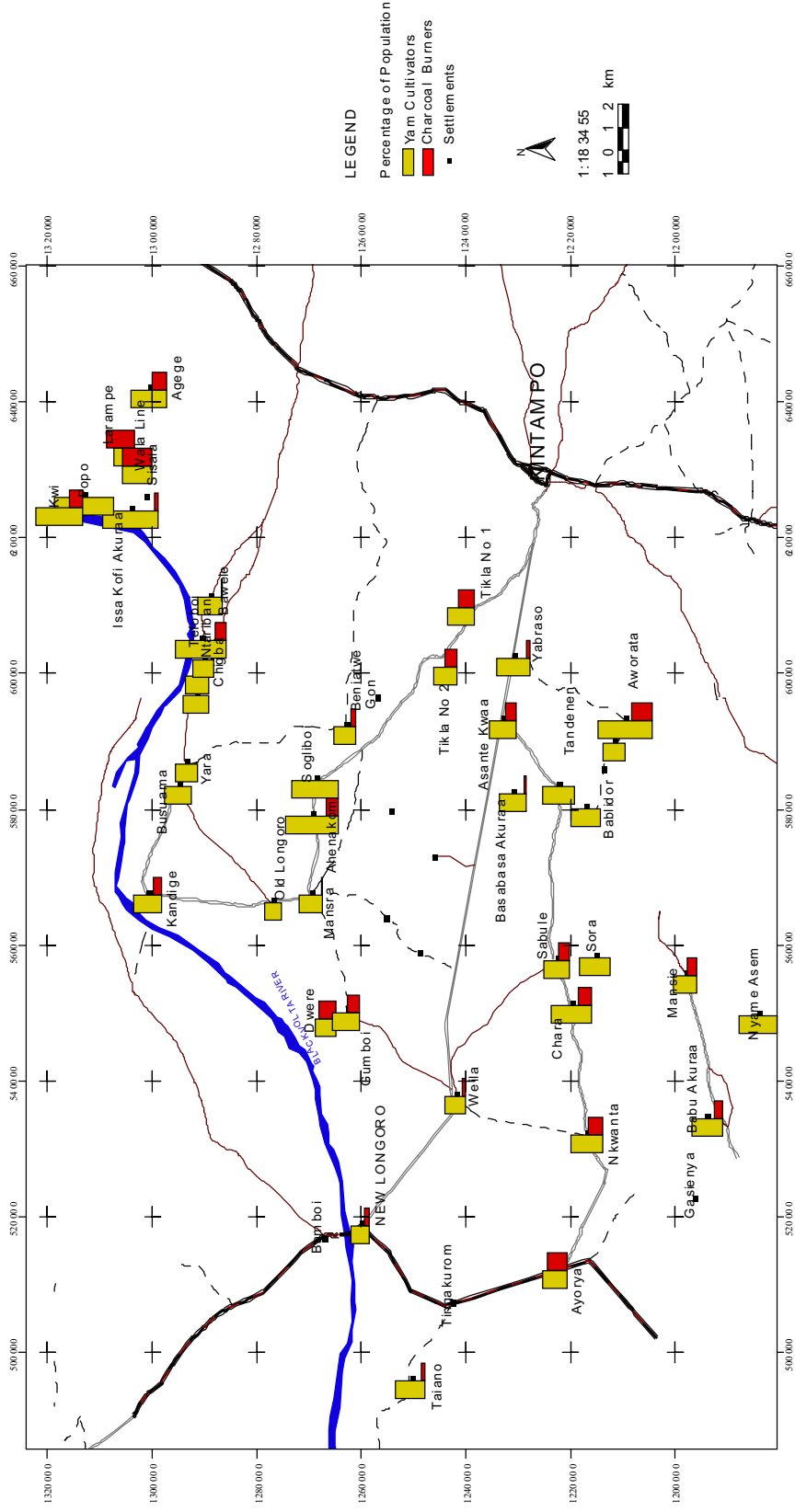


Figure 3 Yam cultivation and charcoal burning in the New Longoro AC

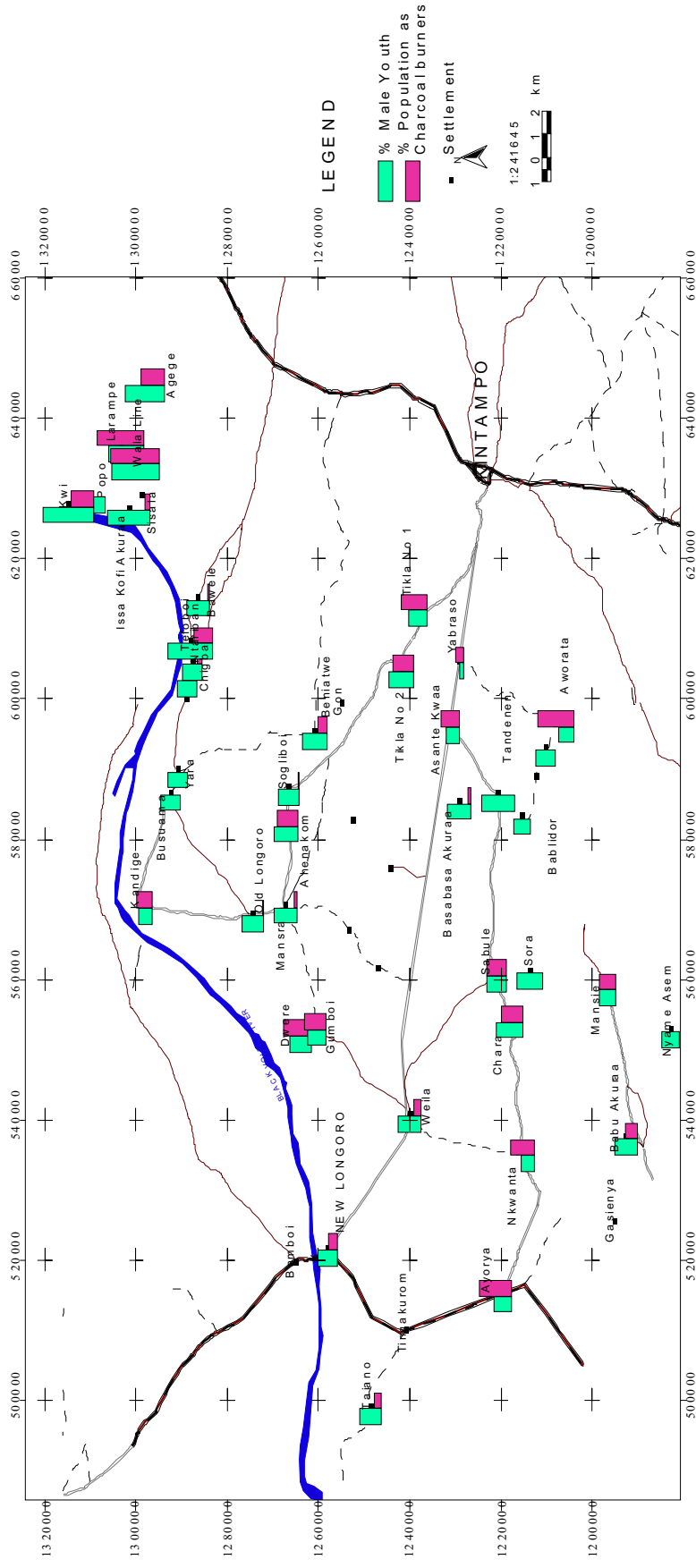


Figure 4 Extent of charcoal burning and male youth population in the New Longoro AC

DATA COLLECTION IN THE NEW LONGORO AREA COUNCIL

Anthony Manu
(Assembly Member)

Almost two years ago, the Decentralised Environmental Action Research came to New Longoro area council to launch a research programme in the area. A six-member working group was formed in the New Longoro Area Council to design a questionnaire for the project. The questionnaire consisted of four parts, namely, personal information such as name, sex, age, ethnic group, etc. The second part deals with occupation of the person and crop production, while the third part is on livestock. The last section is on tree planting, including teak and cashew.

About thirty people were trained to administer the questionnaire, and people were trained to enter the data and carry out analyses. Data collected was on people of working age, eighteen years and above. So far, 7,506 entries have been made in 56 settlements. Credit must be given to two girls, Liticia Korkor and Rebbca who, after a short training, in spite of their educational background, picked up very fast to assist me in entering the data.

This data collected will help the Area Council in deciding what to do and where to do it. Some of the settlements within the Area Council were unknown, such as Popo, Kalan, Chigba, Kwi. The Area Council was not collecting revenues from these settlements. The Area Council is now doing everything possible to be able to collect revenue from those settlements.

Some of the settlements will need to be re-demarcated in the electoral areas because they have large populations and will need two Assembly persons to adequately represent them. With this data the Area Council has decided to write to the District Assembly to inform them of the places with bigger population before the next assembly elections are held.

Again, it will help us to know the ethnic groups within the district and the crops they cultivate. On gender specialisation in different crops we have seen that women cultivate groundnut more than men while men also do livestock farming and yam production than women. All these pieces of information are here in the computer, so when you go into the communities you will know the major crops they cultivate, the ethnic groups doing it, the types of soils etc. In short the information is here for anyone who wants to access it

Some problems were encountered in entering the data, such as inaccurate information. For instance in one settlement only one cow was found to be entered in the database, whereas the place is known to be a livestock producing area. Wrong ages were also given to us. Contradictory information was also a problem, for example, for instance some individuals were recorded as farmers but were entered as farming no crops. On the whole, the data will go a long way to help the Area Council.

THE NEW LONGORO AREA COUNCIL SURVEY

Abraham Manu
Former New Longoro Area Council Chairperson

After having decided to participate in the DEAR programme on information systems, we were trained to go to households and administer questionnaires. This included settlements, occupation and other pieces of information. Later I was trained on how to use the Geographical Position System (GPS) to pick points which have all been captured on maps to show settlements, the soil types, the types of crops and the vegetation of the areas. Through this exercise we have been able to map out settlements in some areas that are not on the district's maps. I covered 45 settlements in New Longoro and other areas. All these relevant information have been documented in a database and local people (men and women) who were trained on how to use SPSS and GIS entered all the data. I see the DEAR project as a relevant developmental process for our Area and District Councils.

DATA COLLECTION AT THE BABATOKUMA AREA COUNCIL

A.S. Abubakar
Secretary of Babato Area Council

The Decentralised Environmental Action Research (DEAR) aims to promote local level democratic development, so that people would be involved in decision making for sustainable development. By so doing all the natural resources e.g. forest, crops, and the earth will be protected for the enjoyment of all. There will be no monopoly of natural resources by a person or group of persons.

After discussions with the DEAR project a letter of invitation was written to councillors of the Babato Area Council to meet on 6th December 2004 to discuss the setting up of a programme to collect information on natural resources from the communities, using a questionnaire.

Under the supervision of the Chairman of the Area Council, the Data collection was completed in three weeks and was submitted to the Area Council Secretariat for onward transmission to the DEAR project office. About twenty people undertook the Data collection exercise. Representatives from the New Longoro Area Council where a similar exercise took place helped in the training.

After the Data collection, the Secretariat looked for some dedicated persons to be trained in computer data processing by the DEAR project. Six people were trained including four women and two men. However two of the women later dropped out. The training started on 27 April 2005. After a weeks training, the trainees were able to start entering data from the questionnaire on the computers. The two women are Mariama Siedu and Rahafiatu Tahiru, while the two men are A.S. Abubakar (Secretary of the Area Council) and Haruna Sadiq.

The exercise will enable the Area Council to collect information on the area and present this information to NGOs and other organizations working within the district.

DISCUSSIONS AND WORKING GROUP REPORTS

DISCUSSIONS

Institutional framework for information in the district

Joseph Nketia (Workshop Facilitator and Agricultural Officer, Wenchi): When there are policies that are not trusted it does not make people act and we don't progress. There are established institutions but the capacities are not there. Proper decisions cannot be taken without proper information. Something essential must be done to push our development forward..... The DA is responsible for the functioning of the DPCU but the DPCU hasn't functioned over the last year. It is the responsibility of the Assembly members to make demands on the DA. But they do not do this.

Anthony Manu (Assembly Member): We the assembly members have made demands but we haven't any orders (budget for other operations) so what do we do? We even invited the budget officer but he said he was busy.

Albert Amankwa (Brong Ahafo Regional Ministry of Agriculture): Mr. Yeboah has made a very good statement in his presentation, which I would like my good friend Assemblyman to capitalise on. The fact remains that if anything is bothering you the Presiding Member (PM) is the man to listen to you. So you must go by law and ask him about whatever is bothering your mind. If you go in to look for any information and there is any obstacle on your way, the only thing you will have to do is to go back to the PM and he will be able to take it up with the Assembly for you.

Kwame Okae (Tropenbos Foundation): From the presentations and what the Assemblyman has just said, it is obvious that certain things are not going on well in the Assembly. This is due to the fact that people don't know the roles of others. For example, if I am supposed to report to him then I will find it very difficult to also send my complaints to him. So I think we need to know more clearly what people are supposed to do.

Mahamadu Mahama (District Environmental Health Officer): Some of us have been in the system for a time and I think all of us are very guilty off what is happening. I think the NDPC has the duty to ensure that the Regional Planning Coordinating Unit does its work. The Regional Planning Coordinating Unit (RPCU) has an oversight responsibility over the districts. The DA also has a mandatory function to ensure that the DPCU works. What I have observed here is that, some heads of departments are often guilty because when you go to the sub-committee meetings some heads of departments are not there. We are supposed to be the technical advisors and secretaries to the sub-committees but when we are invited to attend meetings we delegate authority to sometimes even junior officers to attend the sub-committee meetings, as policy makers. It is at the sub-committee meetings that policies are made and drawn up. You will agree that at the District level heads of departments underrate some of these sub-committees. The DA also underrates the functions of the Town and Area Councils. The Area Councils also underrate the Unit

Committees. Accusations and counter accusations won't help what we have to think of. What is the way forward?

Nketia: As an Assembly, if you are not planning, then you are planning to fail. Even when you have a plan, you hardly implement the District plan. If there is no monitoring and evaluation at the end of the year then where are we going? How do people take decisions? Based on what information? It must be there so that you can tell the people that it is because of this information that we took a particular decision. It is important to recognise the usefulness of information to make decisions such that people will not mistrust us as policy-makers. The man in the village is burning charcoal.... You don't go there to find out why he is doing it or about his problems but sit here [in Kintampo] and ban it. Do you think he will respect your decisions? He will be there and continue doing what he has been doing, and your laws and regulations will not work. This is because you haven't taken time to sit with him and work out a solution.

Building and institutionalising information systems in the district

Nketia: It is often better to get information on maps than as figures on a sheet, although its not easy and it costs a lot to arrive at such simple diagrams. Amanor mentioned that sometimes investors come in and the delays in getting information and other things put them off. In 1988, some international development experts came in and wanted to know the swampy areas in the district. I was new then and did not know. They wondered why as an agricultural officer didn't know where there was swampy land. They entered their vehicle and went away and it was the district that lost. If this information had been recorded on maps it would have been easy to provide.

Comment: The information on the GIS, as far as I know, is very expensive and as a district if we are to commit our funds to this, then there will be nothing left to tackle other issues. I want to know if some of the GIS data will be available for us?

Opoku Pabi: There are some databases, which everybody can access. But the idea is to have a common database, which everybody can access. And the cost, if you are able to pay something initially, is just once and you don't pay anything again. With the satellite images the impression being suggested is that it costs so much. At the moment it is not so much and some of it is free. The only issue is learning to interpret information from them. When you come together you can get something. Maybe you can cover the whole district with satellite images for about \$2000.

Kojo Amanor: It can be expensive if you get an outsider to come and do your data system for you, because people can make a lot of money from this. If you do it yourself it is not so expensive. Clearly, some of the most sophisticated things like satellite imagery are impossible to do yourself , but there is a lot of relevant data that can be collected and collated from the communities and existing data within the district yourself.

Nketia: We have to identify our needs and constraints. That is why the two questions posed at the end are about knowing our constraints and limitations.

Pabi: In Amanor's presentation he mentioned the fact that the Vitamin A project in Kintampo engage in some of these activities. In actual fact we took some data from them, which we incorporated into our data set. At times you do not need to go and do that again. We share the information.

Amankwa: Every country has got their problems and aspirations. That is why institutions are put in place to make and implement policies. But that alone doesn't solve the problems or merit the aspirations. What we have to do is establish linkages for the institutions established to develop the human resources in terms of training and motivation and then provide the resources that will enable us to develop the information we are all talking about. We also need to put an effective monitoring and evaluation system in place to make sure that people actually do their job. If you look carefully, of all the arguments that have been advanced, you would agree that we don't lack the institutions neither do we lack the policies. Personally, I think in things like providing the human resources, the Assembly member was all over the place saying we do not know whom to talk to. Do we actually know what is required of us? Are we resourced enough to do the jobs we are supposed to do? Do we even know the responsibilities of others? You see, we don't know these things because the linkages are not there. Because the monitoring and evaluation is not strong enough, we have a few people monopolising the resources. I was reading an article that says for all ministries, departments and agencies in Ghana, about 60% of the budget remains in Accra. You see, that is part of the problem because after Accra has taken its pound of flesh, the rest of the funds do not flow. What happens downstream? You can have DPCU or whatever having a chunk of money but no one seem to know what they do with it. If you give an opportunity for a few individuals to sit on a huge chunk of money, they will say thank you. Pabi was talking about how much money it will require to do satellite imagery,. When he mentioned \$ 2,000, I heard people say that is too expensive. Compare that with how much monies come into the District. You will realise that it is not a big amount. What is ₵20,000,000.00 to a DA? But we won't use it because we don't seem to know what our responsibilities are and where we can even chip in to make sure that other people do what is required of them , so that we can also do our job. That is the crunch of the matter.

Amanor: If we take an example like, supposing we want to know all the crops grown in the District. You can get an outside consultant to come and do it for you and that will cost a lot. But we can decide to do it ourselves and all we have to do is to ask everyone in the district what they grow. If you ask everyone in the District what they are growing and they answer honestly, then you will have accurate information. This can be carried out by the Unit Committees with support in the communities. They are also aware of what is happening in the communities so it is an easy task for them to perform. If they have done that then all the data is there and all what you have to do is analyse the data and you can represent it on a map, using software which you can learn quite easily. This is not a costly process. It only requires commitment.

Nketia: Let me give you an example. When we are talking about the development of our district plans, students from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology will come to do it for us as consultants. That is why you saw Acherensua Secondary School appears on your books - it is cut and paste by people who are not familiar with the district. They will come on contract and do a plan for a District. As far back as 2000, it was costing about ₵60 million. And sometimes they will hardly spend anytime on preparing the plan and we will willingly pay them without questions. But when it comes to picking people from among us to do it and it will even cost less they won't agree. Why? Let us find a reason for this. We can do it cheaper here, but the people in administration will not agree. One person sitting down, will prepare a ₵60million check and he will get ₵5 million in his pocket. But he will not agree to local people doing it for ₵30million, so that the ₵30million could be invested elsewhere. Why? This is because he knows he will get some kick back and can get away with it. If some heads of departments here can sacrifice their time to do it at a cheaper cost, then their will be reluctance event to pay for their allowance. In the last planning session, the NDPC recommended that districts should do their own planning and not hire outside consultants. They should use people who are on the ground. At most they should hire a facilitator to help them with developing the plans, They should not hire a consultant to come and just move through the District without knowing the needs and aspirations of the people and write up a beautiful plan that does not reflect the conditions. We do not monitor. At the end of the day we don't even implement 20 percent of our plans because the needs and aspirations of the people are not taken into consideration by those who plan and we sit down unconcerned. We are our own enemies. Some of these things we do not cost much – that somebody can even pay ₵20 million within a day. He will just sign a cheque. Presiding Member we are serious, our eyes are on you seriously. You have the power to act.

Comment (Unidentified speaker): The PM in his presentation mentioned that the ACs are not well resourced. I want to ask who is supposed to resource them? Is it the DA or the Ministry of Local Government?

Nketia: Let us get this thing clear. There is a policy that when the Area Councils collect the revenue, they have a percentage. Why is it that they find it very difficult to retrieve their share when the money is lodged in the DA's account? If this is being done how can they function? You formulated that policy that they should struggle to collect the money and you will give them 50 percent. But when they bring the money here, it is gone. Why? If you don't give them a pesewa, how can they continue to bring you that revenue? It is only when there is somebody on the ground who sees that the Area Council chairman gets something, that he will continue to bring the money to the DA. He will not bring the money here if the DA cannot pay them there 50 percent.

Comment: The Assemblypersons are supposed to help in the generation of revenue and bring it here so that they give you your 50 percent. But the ACs don't get their fifty percent, so we can't function.

Comment: It is just like government workers. The government say work hard to increase productivity and then we will pay you well, forgetting that the man has to eat first before he can work hard. The same way you say they should go and collect the money, bring it, and then come back later for their 50 percent. With which resources are they going to collect the revenue?

Nketia: Let me tell you what Dormaa people did. The revenue collectors don't pay the money directly to the DA. They pay the ACs 50 percent directly into the ACs account and take the pay slip to the DA. That is what should be done. The Assembly has its own problems so when the money gets there, it will not come back.

Mahama: My problem is on our understanding of development. I have the tendency to think that, as Ghanaians, when we talk of development we mean putting up so many schools and KVIPs (Kumasi Ventilated Improved Pit). We even go to the extent of commissioning a KVIP. Why should this make news in Ghana? I don't understand. But investing in information or GIS, we don't see that as development. If I have to give you as a facilitator ₵60million to help facilitate the collection of data, we don't see it as development. Our concept for development must change. I don't see the reason why we can't collect information that is relevant. When we collect it ourselves, we have taken part in collecting it ourselves and we will make sure that it is used because it is ours. However, if you employ somebody who might not be more competent than somebody at the district level, people will accept his findings more. People tend to believe people who come from outside. Even if they come and tell them lies they will believe it. So our concept of development must change.

Comment: I think my main concern is about decision-making. You will all bear me out that. It is the culture in Ghana that decisions have to be made from top-bottom. So since we are trying to find a lasting solution to the dissemination of information, I think it is better we all try to change our style towards information that come from the bottom. It is high time the big man too accept and also come to term with those decisions coming from the man from the bottom because they are the real people in the field. It is high time we involve the people at the base so that this time round we make decisions from bottom to the top and abandon the old order.

Nketia: That is very true. You see we can forgive people who sit in Accra and take decisions about our District, because maybe they don't know what is happening here. But when power is brought from Accra to the DA here and people sit here and take decisions and make these serious mistakes without consulting the people. What do we do? The days when a few people sat in Accra and made decisions is past now. Decision-making is in our own hands. Today the country is partitioned into over 100 districts and decision-making is in our hands. And yet we can't take control of that Assembly man when he is voted for. He will just refuse to understand that concept of representation - that he is there for the people. When he is going for a meeting, instead of consulting the people he forgets about them. When a decision is taken here, instead of going to tell them, he forgets about them. His only interest at the meeting is in

collecting his allowance. You cut off the people who elected you. You don't share anything with them. Have you seen all the gaps that are there in participation? Some Assemblymen are becoming so arrogant. They do not consult their constituents. They think the whole place is only for them. When he goes to an Assembly meeting, he just gets up and goes and sits there, and does not talk. He has tied the tongue of all the 500 people who elected him to that position. Do not let the so-called big men intimidate you. They are your servants. You the Assemblypersons are the bigger men. If you tell them you are no longer going to sit down, they will shake.

Bampoe (Agricultural Officer): I think we want some sort of holistic approach to this problem, along the line somebody mentioned, monitoring and evaluation. The question is who is there to ensure that the right thing is done. We want to empower people and we by-pass the most superior officer, who has been there all this while, and we empower his subordinate to question why certain things are not done right. For instance, the DCE is not here, but we the junior officers are here being empowered. If we were to go and question him now why certain things are not being done would he be receptive? He wasn't here and therefore he did not hear the information.

Nketia: When we talk about the technical officers, there is little we can do. But the Assembly members are not just ordinary people. They are not subordinate like you are. They have been elected. They have to demand accountability, responsibility and other things. That is what they are supposed to do. And if they don't do all of us will suffer - that is why we are suffering. So if they do not do it, what we have to do is to prepare them to take their responsibility. They have put us all together in the DPCU. That means that our jobs are very serious.

Harris Venkumini (radio commentator and political activist in Kintampo): I think we are making a very good move but at the time we have to look at the structure of the DA. The power of the Assembly has been taken away by the executive committee of the assembly. The executive committee has been made the final decision-making body and this role boils down to politics and political control. Until this is righted we are going nowhere. We must understand that in the DA the highest person is the DCE, followed by the DCD. The next body that should take decision is the DPCU. So if you make the executive committee to be the final body that approve projects and policy then the function of the DPCU is useless.

Nketia: The executive committee proposes but the final decision is with the DA.

James Manu: That is so but the executive committee can subvert the assembly by calling emergency meetings. At this moment the PM is not on the tender board, He only presides over assembly meetings and after that there is no role.

Nketia: In fact you can agree to one emergency meeting but you don't agree to second, third, fourth or fifth emergency.

Comment: There is a big knowledge gap. The PM has been attending PM meetings so he knows about how the assembly is supposed to function. Do the Assembly members have similar opportunities? You see, you went and you came back and the information hasn't flowed back to them. From the little discussion we have had so far, it looks as if some Assembly members do not even know that they have the power to go and question some decisions. That is something that needs to be to be addressed. You see you make someone a head and he doesn't know the rights of his position. How can he supervise you?

Nketia: If you refer to the budget, there is money allocated for capacity building, millions of cedis, and what is capacity building? They only build the capacity of those at the top. They don't build the capacity of other structures, and the sub-committees. They won't put you together to explain things to you. Someone in the Finance and Administration does not know the columns in the trial balance. There are even some people in Finance and Administration who cannot pronounce figures when the zeros are beyond 6.

James Manu: At times the problem comes from us the electorate. Instead of us voting for someone who can understand and interpret things, because of politics they put anybody there. They can't contribute to discussions. This capacity building, there is allocation for it, but, if you ask them, they will tell you there is no money. When we went to the PMs Workshop we told them this is what is happening. If the Ministry of Local Government can take it upon itself to see that we train our people from time to time so that they know what they are supposed to do. It is a big problem.

Nketia: So that is one of the challenges. You must have your share of the capacity building fund and make sure that your committees are trained. You can put anybody there but if the persons are trained they can perform.

Pabi: The young women who participated in data inputting and analyse are here. If you ask them about their educational background, you will find that they are not well educated. However the computer is here, and as you will see they are able to do analysis based on gender and other variables. I mentioned scaling up. It means getting the technology to others and we are now considering the DA and also Babato AC. The idea is that first the New Longoro AC people will help the Babato people and train them in the process of creating an information system. We will only supervise the process: the New Longoro people do the transfer. We had a meeting with the Babato people to train them on questionnaires administration and it was Abraham Manu who explained questionnaire development and administration to them. The DEAR members were just standing there observing the process. So far the Babato people have also finished administering their questionnaires and are being trained to enter their data in the computer. The four people sitting there from New Longoro are now going to teach them how to input and analyse the data. The benefit of including the District and Sub-Districts in the development of the information system is that they can also pass on the knowledge. In future they can also update their own database rather than we doing it for

them. I don't think it costs so much. Even though they have the information now, there are some constraints which prevent the use of the information. I have noted a few down, including:

- 1) The top-down approach to development is a problem. Even though now they can generate their own information and pass it on to be considered in the general plan of the district, the top-down approach is still there and people do not engage in dialogue.
- 2) There is low capacity in using information in make rational decisions in the district. This is something they will have to be trained for.
- 3) We also see communication problems. As has been mentioned here, there is suspicion and poor linkages between the DA and the ACs. So even if the information is there if there are not good working relations for implementing policies then there is going to be a problem in using this information in management.
- 4) There is lack of openness, transparency and democracy.
- 5) Inclusive meetings are not held. If you don't hold meetings then you can't use information and make proper plans for communities based on feedback. The information will be there and you will not use it.

These are the constraints. These are some of the issues we will look at to see how some of these can be minimised.

Nketia: It is not difficult, that is the experiences they have shared with us. We have had a lot of presentations. These are all putting us in the frame to also input, contribute in our discussions groups to the way forward to some of the constraints they have mentioned so that the Assembly will sit-up very well and look at these things and may be their intervention will help us strategise and bring this to fruition. I am praying that it does not end in the District here alone, may be go across the region and through the nation so that we see development in our country. Without data we don't have information and without the information, we are killing ourselves. You can't to the hospital and without telling the doctor your ailment, he first looks at your face and conjures your medication. It is not possible. Why do we want to develop without information, you can't do that.

Mahama: After the analysis, were the communities given the opportunity to make suggestions on how they can improve upon the structure at the Area Council level because I could see that they think they will not have that fair representation at the Area Council level. I know that each electoral area is supposed to have somebody representing that community at the area council level.

Pabi: You are right. Actually when we went to the Area Council they gave us a list of some of the communities in their area and when we went for the questionnaire administration, we realised that some of the communities were not on the list they originally gave us. I believe that the District didn't know that some of these communities were existing. It means that some of these communities may not be represented in the analysis. We also realised some of the communities have even grown

bigger and therefore should have their own representatives instead of sharing Assemblypersons with other settlements.

Amanor: We also have a problem with feedback. After we have done the exercise in New Longoro there has been no report because the Area Council has not had a single meeting.

Mathew Ayimadu (Chairperson New Longoro AC): It is true. Why we have not been able to hold a meeting is due to finance. With the forming of two Kintampo districts some of our communities have been cut off from the New Longoro AC to join the Kintampo South district. These were our most prosperous communities and about 90 percent of our revenue came from them. Now it has become very difficult for us at the area council. For the past two months we have not been able to pay the secretary. That is why we find it difficult to hold meetings. It is very appalling for somebody to come from Agege and Chigba to attend meetings and you cannot give him a single meal let alone his transportation fair and sitting allowance. So finance is a problem that is why we have not been able to meet.

Nketia: The membership of the Area Council includes the Assembly Members in that locality. They will come to the place and they will not fight for anything for them. The AC chairperson is not calling a meeting because they don't have money to give at least a bottle of Fanta for their members who will come to the meeting. New Longoro is not a deprived area. The whole district and every AC is deprived because no AC is getting what they are supposed to get. But ACs play a key role in this information process. We don't regard what they do down there, that is why the decision-makers can sit here and allocate resources without reference to any document. If you don't challenge what is happening you open up a gap for the system to be manipulated, so that funds get allocated to political supporters who voted for those in power rather than to those who need facilities. But if the area councils were operating very well, they will take decisions, prioritise their own development needs, and it would be difficult for people in high positions to ignore them and change them. SO there is a calculated attempt to make sure that the ACs are not functioning, because that is where pressures for accountability and responsibility can be most effectively put forward. That is where you people can be prepared. If they are not functioning, they don't have any strength. But when the Assembly members' function, then they can demand accountability.

Amanor: That is why I said, to create the information system is quite easy but the problem is to get it to be used in planning. The capacity is there but the problem is the will to use it. The problem is the will: the capacity exists.

Ayimadu: To add to what has just been said, somebody may ask, if we are lacking finance what has been done about it? In fact we wrote on application to the DA for a grant. The PM will attest to that but still we have not got anything yet. This is the step we have taken.

Amankwa: A grant for what?

Ayimadu: We are undertaking a project in the AC but since part of the area was cut off, the project has grounded to a halt. There is the need for us to continue work on that project so we made the budget and submitted it to the DA.

Amanor: But have you written to the DA that we have started building this information system at the AC, the first in the country?

Ayimadu: The Assembly is aware of that.

Amanor: Not through the Area Council. Write it straight to the DA. that this is what we have started, the first in the country. You get the response and give us a copy.

Comment: I want to know if after these presentations there is any mechanism designed to monitor and evaluate the project or it will be left like that. If there is, how long do we expect the project to impact on the community.

Pabi: The project is still on going.

Amanor: In fact the project is coming to an end so we have to generate the support from you so that it can continue in some form or other.

WORKING GROUP REPORTS

Group one:

Developing participatory information systems

1. Advantages of collecting data at community level and at area council level:
 - a) It creates ownership,
 - b) It reduces statistical errors,
 - c) It makes it cheaper to collect data at community level,
 - d) It is easier to update data;
 - e) It also helps the community to know its needs at any point in time.

2. Advantages of community and user group participation in information system development:
 - a) Easy utilisation of information,
 - b) It enhances self-initiatives,
 - c) It makes planning pro-active that re-active,
 - d) It helps promote fast development initiatives,
 - e) It is cost effectiveness.

3. Identifying different information activities that can be handled at different levels, including:
 - a) District assembly
 - b) The executive committee
 - c) The DCE
 - d) The D,
 - e) Area council
 - f) Unit committee

In terms of socio-economic development should start at the area council. The DPCU should be able to collect and coordinate data from all state agencies on their activities.

4. The rights of citizens to information and to put their needs to policy makers are contained in several acts and documents including:
 - a) The Constitution
 - b) The N.D.P.C Act 479
 - c) The N.D.P.S Act 480
 - d) The local government Act 462

Discussion

Nketia: Don't you see that it is very necessary for the DPCU to be able to collect data on all state agencies and their activities? The Assembly is acting like they do not need the departments. Government has brought these people here. They are not from here, but they here to help you go forward. They will bring an officer here and people sit down unconcerned

and nobody cares about his office accommodation. Everybody's job is important. Anybody sent down here has a role to play if we are going to go forward. Honourable, PM, I am stressing this point - when the forestry man was presenting his paper he shared some information here and if this is shared in all the communities it will be of help to us. Some people came from Burkina Faso to harvest Borassus palm (mmaa kube). The community does not see the essence of that tree standing there, But the forestry officer is saying that the wood is timber and the fruit is also edible. It is also not easy to bring them up because of the perennial bushfires. If we allow the trees to be cut, in the next 10 to 20 years you will not see a single tree here. This is information, which should be shared with everybody in the community so that we get the understanding that these trees are ours. They should be there at least for our children to see. However if people do not have this information, the forestry officer will be seen as an enemy. What will be said is the man is standing against development. If he doesn't get the platform to share this information with you, you will see him as an enemy. But he is protecting these trees for posterity. He might even go on transfer tomorrow. Not allowing people to harvest the trees is a wise way of using resources. That is why he is here. Talking of all these Acts which has been mentioned if you go to the DA and you want copies you will not even see them. Go to the DA and ask for a copy of Act 462 and it will not be there. You see, if I am an officer out there and I get hold of this document when I am going on transfer, I go with them. I think we have also contributed. We have made an input.

Group two:

Identifying and minimising constraints to information use

1. The impact of poorly developed information systems on natural resource management:
 - a) Lack of interest in issues,
 - b) Scares away interested investors,
 - c) Retards development,
 - d) Future generations will suffer for poorly disseminated information.

2. Factors that constrain the flow of information within the district:
 - a) Ineffective use of unit committees in information dissemination. The unit committees are everywhere and if you fail to use them effectively our information will not go down well as we wish.
 - b) Failure to break down information so that is understood by local people with minimum education people results in difficulty of communication
 - c) Rules not properly spelt out within the information chain. Within the information chain from the DA, through the assembly members to the ACs to the UCs somewhere along the line there are certain breaks which prevent information flows.
 - d) Two-way communication system is not working. The Assembly members fail to take information from the

community to the Assembly and fail to sending information back to the communities.

3. Institutional constraints to the development of information systems:
 - a) Lack of finance for assembly activities,
 - b) Unnecessary bureaucracy,
 - c) Lack of co-operation on the part of technical staff, who sit on information rather than working to facilitate it s exchange. This can undermine programmes.
- 4 The rights of citizens to information and to put their needs to policy makers:
 1. Ignorance of rights is one key factor - because the local man does not know that if he is put behind bars beyond 48hrs it is an offence by the man who put him there.
 2. Lack of Education.
 3. Over-politicisation of issues.
5. Identifying measures to minimise constraints in information:
 - a) Effective use of unit committees;
 - b) Effective interactions with opinion leaders;
 - c) Constant education on issues.

Discussion

Comment: I would like you to explain the proposal: Lack of interest on issues.

Harris Venkumini: if information does not go down well, apathy sets in. People lose interest in the issues that you are raising. If the information is not right people will lose interest in it.

Nketia: In Amanor's presentation all these things were spelt out. As at now there a lot of people in the District who do not show any interest in Local Administration. They do not trust anybody out there. They think they are cheats. Assembly members, if you go to your communities and you do not take care, the people will beat you. People have lost interest in the whole concept of decentralization. We are supposed to involve them in decisions that affect their lives. We put them aside, we go there, see them as empty barrels and then victimize them and a whole lot of things; so they have lost confidence in the whole concept and that is why the people who are enjoying are enjoying out there as if people have closed their eyes. Nobody is demanding accountability and responsibility because nobody is interested but I think we have to get convinced and get concerned, otherwise we will regret things later. A challenge for all of us is to make sure that we see that government is brought down to us, to our level.

Mahama: It may also be that probably people are not being involved in developing the issues.

Harris Venkumini: That is the result of poor management of information.

Nketia: The information in the first place is not there to be shared. At the end of it all nobody cares about anybody.

Group three: Institutionalising the management of information in the district

The main recommendations are the following:

1. An information management sub-committee should be established under the executive committee of the DA.
2. Membership of this committee should include:
 - Information Service
 - Statistical service
 - Meteorological Department
3. A budget line should be established for their activities.
4. Establish an information desk or secretariat to collate and prepare information for accessibility to the public.
5. Establish libraries and resource them with copies of relevant information documents so that people who want information could go for them.
6. Ministries, Departments and Agencies should budget to establish user fees for information which libraries / information desk may charge. The Information Committee should decide which types of information to attract a charge.
7. Information storage and retrieval should fall under the information desk.
8. In the long term, information desks should be replicated at Area Council level.

Discussion

Amankwa: We are talking of a central body within the administration that will put together all these pieces of information. We have to bear in mind that preparing data will be their sole responsibility. When they take personal information from you, it should not be made available to everybody.

Kwadjo Yeboah: I want clarification on the proposal to establish an information management sub-committee by the Executive Committee of the DA.

Amankwa: You told us that the Executive Committee is the supreme body within the workings of the Assembly. Because of that we think that this institution should fall under the body so that it won't be like they don't have power to implement decisions.

Kwadjo Yeboah: To establish the information management sub-committee, which you have proposed is it not going to be in conflict with the functions of the DPCU? Because if you go to the Municipal Assemblies, the statistical officer is a member of the DPCU and even at the district level officers can be co-opted into the DPCU. Information is the function of the DPCU. I therefore think the body you are proposing will bring about duplication of functions.

Amankwa: We have heard here that the DPCU is not functioning. So if we can get a smaller body that will gather information from the grassroots may be that will be a first step towards making the DPCU itself function.

Comment: Are you telling us to get a Public Relations Officer, because all these people are advisors to the sub-committees?

Harris Venkumini: The executive committee itself is duplicating another function, like Mr. Yeboah rightly said, the DPCU. So putting this body under it means a lot, because the DPCU can refuse to give the necessary information to make this body work.

Amankwa: What we don't want is the situation where the sub-committee will be put in place and say that someone is not giving it power to function. We therefore want this body to be placed in the highest-ranking authority in the District.

Comment: We have heard that structures are already in place, so why don't we resource the DPCU to perform its function because forming another committee is adding another structure, which may also end up not functioning.

Harris Venkumini: The problem is the DPCU does not lack resources, according to the presentation here. But the issue is either its functions have been taken over by political manoeuvring or other intrigues, because the Executive Committee now has the final authority over whatever the Assembly does, instead of the DPCU in both planning and approving plans.

Amankwa: Let us get things straight. We don't know the workings of the Assembly. All we are saying is that whether it is the DPCU or whatever, there should be a body whose main aim is gathering the necessary data to prepare the necessary information that will go round. It doesn't matter who does it. The matter is that it should be done. Whatever body is responsible for this must have the resources to ensure that the work is done.

Nketia: Let me tell you how the DPCU and the Assembly Sub-Committees function. The Assembly can decide to establish a committee if it deems it fit. That is a statutory body. Then a functional body, like the DPCU, is not directly under any sub-committee. What they deliberate on can be tackled at the committee level or it may not be. Sometimes it cannot even go to the assembly. But when you have a sub-committee put up by the assembly to tackle specific issues at one point in time the report will surface at the Executive Committee and will be reflected in assembly sessions. So sub-committees are higher bodies that can make changes to

policy. If we see information as very essential we can put up a team to do this specific job, even if it is going to be temporary, so that we see results.

Summary of the working group recommendations

(by Joseph Nketia – Workshop facilitator)

1. Information is central for good decision-making.
2. The DPCUs should be revived.
3. A committee for information and education of the electorate on the functions of the Assembly should be initiated and placed under the Executive Committee.
4. There should be effective collaboration amongst the Ministries, Departments and other agencies.
5. Building participatory information systems should be our objective.
6. The use of local people in collecting and managing information is more economical and sustainable.
7. The DA should be totally committed to ensuring the sustainability of the activities initiated by the DEAR Project.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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