

DISCAP

**COURSE ON POLICY FORMATION AND
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE
FOR MANAGERS OF DECENTRALIZATION**

A CONCEPT PAPER

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1 Introduction

There is consensus regarding the need for a course on decentralization and the management of change for senior Government of Ghana (GOG) officials involved in implementation of the policy of decentralization, broad poverty reduction initiatives and, most specifically, strategic management of water and sanitation initiatives in northern Ghana. Support for this idea comes from the most senior level of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), and from senior officials at the regional and district levels in the North. The Minister of State responsible for the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) was also consulted about the idea of such a course, when he attended a technical policy seminar on decentralization, in Tamale in mid-March 2003.

This document begins the process of developing such a course. It is a conceptual outline that sets out the intended audiences for the course, the course's broad framework, the specific modules associated with the course and the modalities of the prototype course offering and scale up. This concept paper should be read in conjunction with the draft *DISCAP Training Strategy*, developed for the remaining years of DISCAP. As the Framework indicates, this senior management initiative is intended to compliment, reinforce and build on other training and development activities related to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and gender awareness and integration into water and sanitation initiatives. This outline reflects both the results of consultations with the senior officials identified above and the results of an intensive working session, involving the Ghana DISCAP team, the Senior Local Government Advisor and a member of the Institute of Local Government Studies (Tamale).

2 National Context

At the time of the mission to outline the parameters of this course, the Government of Ghana was involved in a systematic process of reviewing and reformulating its Strategic Action Plan for Decentralization Implementation, for the period 2003 – 2007. This action plan has five main programming thrusts namely:

1. Strengthening policy and institutional arrangements for decentralization implementation;
2. Establishing a district development funding facility (which will contain basket funding for local government bodies, including District Assembly Common Fund and designated donor funds for investment at the district level)
3. Harmonized capacity building and human resources development
4. Promoting partnership and participation of civil society, private sector and traditional institutions in local governance
5. Strengthening systems, institutions and mechanisms for delivery of services to the poor, especially focusing on sanitation, environmental health and water supply, all of which are presently within the mandate of Local Government.

The proposed course for senior management addresses at least three of the five programming areas being formulated by the Government of Ghana. The need to clarify policies and refine strategies for finding synergies between the Decentralization Act and other sectoral policies has been underscored by component of the evolving national action plan. As well, the same component refers to the need for elaborating inter-governmental and inter-sectoral relations in building capacities for decentralization implementation, particularly in the relations between regional bodies, their district branches and the District Assemblies. Of particular interest to Government is the need to forge partnerships with sectoral institutions whose approach to decentralization has not always been compatible with those of the District Assemblies. Special attention has also been devoted under the national action plan to sanitation, environmental health and water supply, as initiatives that demonstrate the practical application of decentralization-policy management. The course for senior management being developed by DISCAP has taken these elements of the national strategy and action plan into consideration in proposing the framework and content of such a course.

3 Proposed Course Audience

In light of our consultations, the DISCAP team considered a number of options concerning what constitutes the most strategically important audience for this course. These options involve various combinations of elected and appointed officials at the district and regional levels. We have concluded that a carefully constructed mixture of all of the above constitute the appropriate audience for this course. There are a number of reasons for this:

- At the District level, teamwork between the District Chief Executive (DCE), District Coordinating Director (DCD), the District Assembly's Presiding Member and other senior staff is crucial to the realization of strategic initiatives for poverty alleviation and water and sanitation development.
- At the Regional level, the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) is an important nexus between central government and the districts. Over the past two years, in the three northern regions, the Regional Planning and Coordination Units (RPCUs) have played an increasingly supportive role vis-à-vis the districts, as they have assisted them in the development of district plans to localize the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS). Importantly, "ownership" of these plans remains at the district level. As implementation proceeds, the role of the RPCUs and the RCCs will likely be to provide further consultative support. Possibly more important, however, will be the regional role in connecting central, high level monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction with very focused M&E reporting on water and sanitation, undertaken by the districts. This suggests the need for regional officials' engagement in the type of professional development opportunity that this course is intended to provide.
- The RCCs themselves are centrally important catalysts for broadening initiatives related to water and sanitation in districts to draw in other ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). The potential of this catalytic role is heightened by the existence of regional ministers.
- This course is intended to focus on the management of policy. Accordingly, it is essential that elected officials and senior appointed officials participate. The central requirement is for a level of common understanding of the substance of decentralization policy (especially as it relates to water and sanitation) and the processes used to make and implement policy and, potentially, to adapt it.

The specific roles of elected and appointed officials in the strategic management of policy are, of course, different. Accordingly, we propose that the course be structured to engage both groups in the policy component and the senior administrative group in the leadership and change management aspect of the course. Our approach to achieving this is as follows:

- Elected officials on the three RCCs, senior RCC appointed staff (the RCD, deputy RCD, head of the RPCU and deputy head of the RPCU), DCDs and their deputies, the senior budget officer in each district and the head of each DPCU will be the intended audience for this course. Personnel at the deputy level are included because of their current important roles and, also, because they constitute a major component of future administrative leadership at the district and regional levels. Senior budget officers at the district level are included because it is important to engage them concerning the strategic aspect of financial management – both on the expenditure and revenue sides of the ledger.
- For each offering of this course, we propose to invite a cross section of senior people from each of the three regions and their respective districts. By having a sample of participants from all three regions in each of the course cohorts, it will be more feasible for people to attend. No single region or district will be without leadership in place, as a result of course attendance. There will be cover off. Further, and equally important, by mixing participants from all three regions and many DISCAP districts in each of the cohorts, there will be an enhanced opportunity for comparison of practice and new learning from what others are doing in other parts of the North.

We estimate the total audience for this training activity to be approximately one hundred. We propose to offer the course four times, with each cohort numbering approximately twenty-five. A structured invitation list for each cohort will be developed as one of the first steps in implementing this program. There will be a somewhat unique role for participants in the first cohort. This will be elaborated in the discussion of the modalities of the prototype course.

4 Course Framework

As stated earlier, leadership and the management of change in decentralization of water and sanitation to the district level requires a strong role by elected and appointed officials at the district and regional levels. The crucible in which a successful joint effort will be forged is that of policy. The management of change is more directly in the purview of senior appointed officials, although elected people may well take an active interest. With this in mind and, also, recognizing the crammed schedules of elected officials, we are proposing a two-part approach to the course.

Part I: Strategic Overview of Decentralization Policies

This will be a one-day session involving a cross section of political and administrative leaders from the district and regional levels from each of the three regions. It will illuminate and examine the evolution of decentralization policies related to water and sanitation and the inter-action of decentralization, as rooted in Act 462, with other policies and practices. The need for this type of focused, substantive policy discussion was one of the most common themes emerging from consultations.

Part II: Leadership and Change Management

This will be a two and a half-day session, aimed at senior administrative officials at the district and regional levels. It will follow immediately on Part I. The broad objective of this part of the course is to give participants an understanding of and develop their competencies in undertaking some of the key tasks of leading and managing change. Case material from a variety of sectors and involving international, as well as Ghanaian, experience will be used. The central focus, however, will be on improving capacity to lead and manage change in the implementation of the decentralized model for water and sanitation. Earlier work undertaken with regard to development and implementation of a district M&E system for water and sanitation and to develop policy capacity that fosters the mainstreaming of gender equity into water and sanitation initiatives will be used to help sustain this central focus.

Part II: Leadership and Change Management – Proposed Modules

We propose that Part II of the course consist of five modules, each of one half day in duration. The following is a preliminary description of each module. They are discussed in sequence.

1. Impact Assessment and Policy Review

Learning Objectives: To illuminate the relationship among policy development, implementation, monitoring and the assessment of impacts and outcomes in the water and sanitation sector. To equip participants with a common understanding of the strategic role and responsibility that senior managers at the district and regional levels should play in the policy process.

Competencies Developed: Understanding of policy dynamics; ability to use information from monitoring and evaluation for strategic decision-making.

2. Strategic Planning and Budgeting

Learning Objectives: To reinforce awareness of how budgeting processes and decisions reflect the actual allocation of value to policy choices. To illuminate different strategies and tactics that enable senior managers to protect implementation of strategic choices, though the budgeting process and those that preserve needed flexibility, within a single fiscal year and over more extended periods of time.

Competencies Developed: Ability to look beyond line-item budgets and to maximize use of budget allocations and authorities in order to achieve policy objectives in the water and sanitation field.

3. Human Resource Management for Change

Learning Objectives: To permit the sharing of experience and illuminate new approaches to the acquisition, motivation, development and appraisal of staff and other available human resources

through processes of change. To examine the role of the senior manager as a leader in change. To inculcate an understanding of the differences and congruencies between management and leadership.

Competencies Developed: Ability to lead and manage staff and others involved in change processes. Understanding of gender equity issues in the management of human resources and appreciation of the positive role of gender sensitive approaches in achieving goals for change.

4. Communications and Citizen Engagement

Learning Objectives: To instill understanding of the importance of communications throughout the policy process and in the management of change. To explore the elements of citizen engagement that go beyond dissemination of information about what government intends to create a productive relationship between citizen views and government action in the water and sanitation sector.

Competencies Developed: Good communications skills with a variety of audiences. Ability to draw local communities and civil society organizations, as well as the private sector into constructive interactions with local government on water and sanitation matters.

5. Negotiating Inter-governmental Relations and Inter-sectoral Relations

Learning Objectives: To build understanding of the increasingly important role that district assemblies and sub-districts should play in policy and program development at the regional and central government levels. To examine institutional approaches and processes that will help make this role a reality. To explore issues and develop strategies for ensuring that local government realizes appropriate and constructive relationships with sectoral MDAs, civil society organizations and the private sector in the development and implementation of water and sanitation initiatives.

Competencies Developed: Capacity to think about the institutional and process implications of the strategic management of decentralization in the water and sanitation field that cross governmental and sectoral lines. Ability to design and work within an inter-governmental and inter-sectoral milieu.

5 Modalities of the Prototype Offering

Any new training initiative requires testing and modification. In addition, adequate and appropriate capacity must be present to move any prototype into the scale-up phase. There are individuals at senior levels in Ghana's Northern regions and elsewhere, in academia, central government, civil society organizations and the private sector, who may contribute to the sustained offering of this course. We propose that the prototype offering of this course be designed both to test the curriculum and to ensure that there is a team of people resident in Ghana who can act as key resource people over a sustained period.

The model that we propose is to engage DISCAP and other resource people, particularly from the districts and regions, in development and delivery of the first course offering. From the point when this course syllabus is finalized, the identified team would work collaboratively to design and develop course content and materials. The district and regional officials identified as resource people would have a dual role in this first offering, as participants in the entire course and as leaders of a specific module. Thus, they would be deemed to have "completed" the course at the end of the first three and a half-day session. This cohort would also be the first group of participants in the Gender Policy Seminar that is planned as part of the overall training strategy. As indicated in the Draft *DISCAP Training Strategy*, the Gender Policy Seminar will precede each offering of the senior management course, as a preparatory step in mainstreaming gender into the latter course. Following evaluation and modification of the course, based on feedback received from the first cohort of participants, the DISCAP resource people would withdraw.

DISCAP would undertake logistical support for the first offering, possibly in collaboration with the Institute of Local Government Studies (Tamale). Subsequent responsibility for this role will likely be the subject of discussions between DISCAP and ILGS (Tamale). Assuming that there will be a continuing demand for a course similar to this, the question of lodging capacity to offer the course as DISCAP phases out will need to be addressed.

6 Timetable and Scale Up

Delivery of this Senior Management course will most appropriately be undertaken after completion of other DISCAP training and development activities related to M&E and gender policy that are planned for the first three quarters of 2003-04. These are discussed in the overall training strategy document, referred to in the Introduction. The diagram showing the strategic relationship among all of the planned activities is particularly important. Accordingly, delivery of the first session for this course is planned late in the third quarter or early in the fourth quarter of 2003-04. The remaining three modules will be offered shortly thereafter. The goal will be to complete all of this training by the end of 2003-04.

7 Next Steps

This paper concludes with some operational suggestions to help move the course to implementation. The following steps are envisioned:

- a) Table the Draft *DISCAP Training Strategy* and this course outline to the Project Steering Committee at its May 2003 meeting.
- b) Identify and establish the core team that will be asked to participate in development and delivery of the first offering. Designate the course coordinator(s).
- c) Develop the overall participation list for the first offering.
- d) Under the leadership of the course coordinator(s), the core team engages in a discussion that elaborates approaches for achieving the learning objectives for each module and identifies suitable course materials. The content of the Gender Policy Seminar should become part of this discussion.
- e) Individuals responsible for specific modules gather and collate course material, with the assistance of DISCAP and any collaborating institution, such as the Institute of Local Government Studies (Tamale).
- f) The course moves to the delivery stage (including the Gender Policy Seminar), under the guidance of the course coordinator(s) and the rest of the core team.