

**DECENTRALIZED M&E:  
REVIEW OF STATUS OF POVERTY EXERCISE  
IN THREE PILOT DISTRICTS IN NORTHERN GHANA**

Report Prepared for  
The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Ministry of Local  
Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) and DISCAP Steering Committee

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As part of its mandate to improve government programming in the three northern regions, DISCAP<sup>1</sup> has worked with RPCUs to develop a decentralized M&E system. This system has three components:

- i. Status of Poverty – a report on the core indicators established by NDPC for GPRS monitoring;
- ii. Assessment of District Development Management Capacity – to assess the gaps that exist and capacity building needs of DAs related to management issues; and
- iii. Community Assessment of Poverty Reduction – engaging with community members to involve them in discussions, planning and monitoring of poverty reduction efforts.

The system builds upon the District-Based M&E Guidelines drafted by NDPC in August 2003. Extensive consultations with NDPC, RPCUs and DAs were undertaken throughout the development process to ensure that the system was in accordance with government requirements and needs.

Accompanying the system is an operational manual entitled “Indicators for Change: Decentralized Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation.” This manual aims to guide DAs, RPCUs and other stakeholders through the decentralized M&E process by providing a step-by-step guide to the implementation process.

Upon completion and validation of the manual three Districts (Wa, UWR; Bawku West, UER; and Savelugu-Nanton, NR) were chosen to pilot the system. The pilot process began in May 2004.

This report outlines the process engaged in by the pilot Districts, with specific reference to the Status of Poverty exercise. The information in this report was gathered at a review meeting attended by District and Regional stakeholders in July 2004. The community assessment and assessment of District development management capacity was not fully implemented at this time. Once the three activities are complete a more comprehensive review of the pilot will be made available.

## 2. SELECTION AND TRAINING OF PILOT DISTRICTS

The three pilot Districts were Wa in the UWR, Bawku West in the UER, and Savelugu-Nanton in the NR. These Districts were selected by the RPCUs who felt that they had the organizational capacity to complete such an exercise.

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<sup>1</sup> DISCAP is the District Capacity Building Project being implemented jointly by CIDA and MLGRD. The five-year project has a C\$7 million budget and operates in all 24 Districts in northern Ghana.

Each of the Districts was invited to send a delegation of five persons from the District Planning and Coordination Unit (DPCU), including the Gender Desk Officer (GDO), to a one-week workshop on decentralized M&E. The objectives of the workshop were:

- To familiarize participants with the national context for M&E and the decentralised process;
- To prepare District Poverty Monitoring Groups (DPMGs) to play a *lead* role in the decentralised M&E process; and
- To provide DPMGs with skills to collect, collate and analyze data.

The workshop was designed using participatory tools and revolved around the use of the Stepwise Manual and the Bongo DA Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP) as a case study. Participants were given a broad overview of M&E generally, and more specifically in Ghana. They were then led through the seven steps related to the Status of Poverty component. The focus was on skills development to collect, analyze and present data. The workshop included a field trip to Bongo, where participants visited various departments in order to collect data on core indicators. Members of the Regional Poverty Monitoring Groups from each Region were present in order to increase their understanding of the District role, and to develop their skills to provide support to the Districts throughout the M&E Process. The training materials for the workshop are available as a separate document.

At the end of the training, Districts developed Action Plans that laid out how they planned to implement the M&E exercise on the ground. These plans were to be validated with other stakeholders when the DPMG returned to the District.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATUS OF POVERTY EXERCISE**

Each District was allocated approximately C\$2,000 to implement the exercise, and was asked to complete it in a one-month period. It was understood that the timeline was short, but it was also felt that, if lengthened, the exercise would go on too long.

RPMGs were available to the Districts if the latter required technical or other support. In all cases, the RPMGs visited the Districts, both on request to attend specific meetings, and also to monitor progress. DISCAP technical experts also visited the Districts to provide support and guidance.

The findings of the M&E process are highlighted in the next section. There was a large variance across Districts in their capacity to carry out the exercise. It was acknowledged at the training that there were likely to be gaps in the information collected, but that Districts should do their best to collect as much as possible. The emphasis on the training was on analysis and how the Districts could utilize the information collected to enhance their planning efforts. The focus was on the

use of the information at the District level, while at the same time conveying it to the national level.

Only two out of three Districts were able to complete the exercise before the Review meeting. Subsequently, all three Districts have submitted reports, which are in the process of being finalized.

#### **4. REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF POVERTY PROCESS**

The Status of Poverty process was reviewed with the RPMGs and DPMGs on July 29, 2004. Only two of three Districts were in attendance (Savelugu-Nanton did not attend). Participants in the meeting were asked to rate the pilot on eight different indicators. The indicators are reported in Appendix A. The following issues were raised by the Districts in their reports:

- Both Districts were able to convene meetings with additional stakeholders upon their return to the District.
- RPMGs were useful in their provision of technical support.
- Both Districts were able to apply some analysis to the data and identify trends and reasons for the increase or decrease in indicators, e.g. in Bawku West the # of Out-Patient cases of malaria increased substantially, even though BedNet distribution went from 500 to 10,500 nets provided to the Districts. The DPMG feels there are two problems: first the high subsidy on the nets makes them much less expensive than nets available in neighbouring countries so instead of being used, nets are being sold; and second, there is low understanding as to the benefits of BedNets.)
- Collection of data was difficult in both Districts. Numerous trips had to be made to decentralized departments (particularly education and health) before they were able to obtain the necessary data. The storage of data is a problem. The information was often found in boxes kept on the ground in a disorderly fashion. Very little (if any) data were stored electronically.
- DPMGs were challenged by the busy timelines of their members. It was difficult to schedule times for them to meet, and to come together for analysis. Bawku West District is highly understaffed and this made it even more challenging to collect, analyze, and present data.
- Data collected were often not gender disaggregated. Education does keep enrolment and retention statistics by gender, but does not

disaggregate other data such as teacher statistics. Health generally does not disaggregate data.

- At the time of the review meeting, the Districts had not been able to disseminate the results to the communities. Districts understood this to be a critical part of the exercise and were to proceed with dissemination.
- The process was useful because it allows for close tracking of inputs and outputs and allows them to feed those into future planning.
- The commitment of senior administrative and political management was raised. It was felt that this would enhance the ability of the DPMG to carry out their work by increasing the credibility of and commitment to the exercise.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are being made to enhance the Status of Poverty component of the Decentralized M&E system, and also the system as a whole. The recommendations were developed by District and Regional stakeholders as well as DISCAP staff.

- ⇒ The training should include not just members of the core DPCU, but also high-level representatives of Education, Health and Agriculture. The involvement of these stakeholders from the beginning will enhance their participation in the exercise. This is critical, as those three sector ministries are collecting the majority of the required data. It is anticipated that this will be easier with NDPCs commitment to the expanded DPCU and their training on roles and responsibilities of the same.
- ⇒ Data management is a key area for intervention. It was discovered throughout the exercise that data were being stored in different places within the same Ministry, that it was dumped in boxes and put aside and that electronic storage of data was minimal. Additional training should be delivered in this area, perhaps on an individual District basis. This training could also incorporate electronic data management that would aid in analysis.
- ⇒ Districts need additional capacity building in report writing and presentation of data. The District reports that have been presented are extremely long, even though it was stressed in the training they should be concise. Additional skills in analysis and presentation will enhance the use of the data.

- ⇒ Sex disaggregated data is still not being collected by all Ministries. A directive from central government to Health to start disaggregating data is needed, in particular. In addition, further training on sex disaggregated data and their use is needed, for GDOs, planning and budget officers.
- ⇒ Sensitization of DCEs and DCDs to the exercise should be undertaken. As indicated above, their commitment to the exercise is fundamental to success.
- ⇒ A comprehensive approach to capacity building could be undertaken that would use the NDPC schedule for District planning and M&E. By building capacity in the two areas Districts will be in a position to enhance their planning through the use of M&E data. If a comprehensive system is developed, it should build upon existing systems, such as the ones being supported by JICA, UNICEF and DANIDA. The potential for donor collaboration in this area is great, as is the potential for duplication.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

There is excellent potential at the District and Regional levels for good M&E processes and data. Districts are now starting to understand how M&E can be a valuable process for them. However, the existing systems do not support M&E, and make it an extremely difficult process.

The results of this Status of Poverty exercise indicate that, with some support and a few refinements to the process, Districts can start generating useful data. However, if those data are to be used, District planning processes also need to be enhanced.

## APPENDIX A

### Summary of Scores of Review Meeting Indicators July 29, 2004

Indicator	5 strongly agree	4 agree somewhat	3 agree	2 disagree somewhat	1 disagree strongly	Avg. score <sup>2</sup>
The skills developed in the training program were adequate to carry out the M&E Exercise	10	9	1	1	0	4.3
Senior management of the DA were supportive to the exercise	8	6	6	1	0	4.0
The data were available from the MDAs and decentralized departments	1	7	10	2	1	3.2
Adequate skills exist within the DA to collect and analyze the data	2	10	7	1	1	3.5
Data were analyzed for trends and recommendations made for strategies to address gaps	2	7	12	0	0	3.5
Data collected were done so in a sex disaggregated manner	1	5	11	3	1	3.1
Support from the RPMG was forthcoming and adequate	1	3	14	2	1	3.0
The findings were disseminated throughout the DA and community		1	3	7	10	1.8

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<sup>2</sup> The average score was calculated by multiplying the number of respondents per score, adding them together, and dividing them by 21, which was the total number of participants.