

## **Community Development in Ghana: Theory and Practice**

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### **Abstract**

*The theoretical dimensions of Community Development (CD) have been translated into practice all over the world to promote tangible development in deprived communities since the 1950s. In Ghana the practice of CD has received both state and non-state support. Whiles institutions and organizations are contributing to community development over the years, community members themselves are equally contributing with or without any state support for the development of their communities. The collective effort in this endeavour implies that the practice of CD is key for the growth and development of deprived societies. This desk top case study therefore reviewed literature on the subject, and the application of it in Ghana. The study revealed that several approaches were available for both public and private organizations in the practice of CD with Decentralization as the major driving force in Ghana. Beside, the paper established that, the role of the government and NGOs should be to inspire local initiatives that improve community wellbeing. The paper also argues that, top-down planning and implementation of development projects have to give way to bottom-up or active community participation to achieve 'development through negotiation.*

**Key Words:** Community, Theory and Practice, Community Development, Participation

### **Introduction**

During the first development decades of the 1950s and 1960s, community development (CD) was actively promoted throughout the developing world as part of the state building process and as a means of raising standards of living by governments and by the United Nations through its affiliated institutions as part of independence and decolonization movements in Africa (Briggs et. al.,1997).

During this period, community development programmes were established by the state to mobilize people in the local communities. Wharf (1999) notes that in Anglophone Africa, community development during the first half of the twentieth century was informed by the dominant modernization development theory. Provision of infrastructure was perceived as the means of modernizing the so - called primitives of the less developed realm of the world. Hence, the Gold Coast government initiated steps in the early 1940s to promote community development. This effort culminated into the setting up of the Community Development Department by the state in 1948 to focus on rural development.

In Ghana, over 50 years of development aid, strategies and efforts have apparently not succeeded in improving the standard of living of the majority of the population (Briggs et. al., 1997). The attempts by government, the IMF and the World Bank, over the last three decades, to implement programmes, policies and strategies designed to halt the declining trends of poor living standards of the people and create a conducive atmosphere to take –off to sustained economic growth and prosperity was achieved with minimal success.

In the 1980s and 1990s, governments in sub-Sahara Africa, including Ghana, increasingly downsized core public service operations, experimented with alternative ways to deliver services, and down-loaded many services from government to communities, civil society organizations and individuals through the decentralization concept (Kokor, 2001). CD programmes received substantial support from governments and donor agencies. Therefore, many governments promoted development projects that aimed at environmental security, social renewal, and income generation (Cohen, 1996). The goals of these projects were to address the poverty, hunger, disease, and apathy that were endemic among the rural and urban poor. Attempts were made to encourage citizens' groups, communities, churches, and NGOs to participate in the projects that could best be handled at the grassroots level. Over the past years, local communities have responded in large numbers to some successful CD programmes that governments and Non-government organisations (NGOs) initiated in the area of health and family planning, education, agriculture, and infrastructure etc. For example, in the 1990s the Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) – which the Provisional National Defence Council established (PNDC) – aimed, among other things, at developing and rehabilitating rural housing. The goal of this chapter is to show that community development is not just a theory on how to develop communities, but also a means and an outcome of making development practicable and possible at the level of a community. This study is based on content analysis of secondary literature and case studies of some selected government and non-government projects in northern Ghana.

This chapter examines some theories of Community Development, the notion of CD from various perspectives, participation, and mobilization as theoretical concepts and how they inform each other in terms of practice. The historical perspective of CD and the role of the state and non- state actors in CD from colonial to post-colonial periods in Ghana are examined. Two case studies on CD by the government and non-governmental sectors were examined and conclusions drawn.

### ***Historical Perspective on Community Development in Ghana***

CD in Ghana dates back to 1948, after the Second World War when the British colonial regime established the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development (Abloh and Ameyaw, 1997). The growth of CD during the 1950s was one of the most important factors in the social and economic development of the country.

The efforts of politicians, civil servants, and churches – all struggling to define an effective CD program for the country – traditional local leaders contributed through their often superior knowledge and skills in the area of village development (Abloh and Ameyaw, 1997).

Community Development (CD) gained considerable impetus in the colonial era for a number of reasons. The first reason relates to the success of the farmers' co-operatives that had been established between 1929 and 1931 (Brown, 1986). Most of the cocoa farmers who belonged to co-operatives relied on traditional techniques of self-help and mutual aids (called *nnoboa*) to prepare the cocoa beans for fermentation and drying. Also, basic services and infrastructures in rural areas (such as clinics, schools, feeder roads, and water) were poor. Their poor condition necessitated a CD strategy that relied on indigenous resources. Adult literacy was promoted through CD campaigns. The programme captured the enthusiasm of the 'educated few' in the villages – including teachers, clerks, and store-keepers – and persuaded them to act as volunteer teachers.

Another important CD educational program was the self-help village projects initiative, which responded to the people's desire for concrete results in the form of community facilities and services such as schools and clinics. One of the most popular projects was the *Henderson Box*. This was a tank that stored water that had been directed from a stream through concrete channels into a coarse filtration tank containing sand and stone (Sautoy, 1960).

Through literacy education and adult education, community development became a useful instrument for extension campaigns. Hence, extension campaigns introduced new and improved techniques designed to enable people, to improve their general standard of living through their own efforts (Sautoy, 1960). Other government agencies adopted this approach as well. In 1953 the Department of Agriculture asked Community Development staff for help in disseminating information on rice growing, the use of fertilizer, and the production of manure for mixed farming. Also, workers were taught adult education techniques and the principles and practice of Community Development. For example, they learned agriculture, basic building techniques, and the use of visual aids. In addition, rural training centres in the country provided refresher courses. It was as a result of this that the National School of Social Welfare in Panfokrom, near Accra, conducted courses on basic building techniques, on how to conduct literacy days, and on public speaking.

Nkrumah gave CD top priority after the Convention People's Party won the general election and assumed power in 1952. In adopting the guidelines of universal education program that had been developed by the colonial administration six years before independence, a detailed plan was formulated and tabled in the legislative assembly in 1952 and approved unanimously (Abloh and Ameyaw, 1997). The plan stressed literacy education and self-help among the population and signalled the government's readiness to collaborate with those who sought to help combat illiteracy in the country (Sautoy, 1960). An experimental mass-education team, which was based at the School of Social Welfare in Accra, established a curriculum that included group discussion, drama, physical training, first aid, and music.

However, after independence, the Community Development department found itself caught in a political crossfire as government and ideologies began to change rapidly. As a result, most of the functions and structures of Community Development dramatically changed over time, though the approach remains the same. Nkrumah turned the Community Development operation into an arm of the new Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, with the goal of establishing co-operatives that would conform to the government's socialist policies (Brown, 1986).

Despite all this, community development programs such as self-help projects, adult education, and women's work and extension campaigns continued to be promoted. It is important to state that the ousting of Nkrumah's administration by the National Liberation Council (NLC) and the subsequent transfer of political power to Busia's Progress Party (PP) in 1968, did not significantly change the community development agenda and programmes.

During the early months of the National Redemption Council (NRC) administration, which ousted the Busia government in 1972, CD programs became more popular; the regime heavily promoted self-reliance and established programs such as Operation Feed Your Self and Operation Free the Industries (Donkor and Lea, 1980). In the urban areas, people began to plant cassava, plantain and vegetables in their backyards, while in the rural areas people increased their production. However, because of administrative mismanagement, the self-help ideology did not last long. The Third Republic, under President Limann, did not make any major changes to Community Development.

When the Provisional National Defence Council Party (PNDC) under J. J. Rawlings came to power in 1981, the Community Development department was separated from Social Welfare and placed under the Ministry of Local Government (Jefferies, 1992). The goal of the separation was to bring together departments that promoted local development so that the local people and their communities could have more input into decision-making and benefit directly. The prevailing conditions of poverty, disease, and apathy have led, in recent years, to the development of associations, groups, and NGOs. Among these associations, are women's groups, producers' and traders' associations, environmental organizations, and church groups, which aim to empower the poor and develop intermediate organizations. It is interesting to note that among the domestic NGOs, the Ghana Rural Reconstruction Movement has been very active in promoting adult education and self-help village projects; it also provides extension services to farmers (Gorman, 2011). In various localities in Ghana, there is an emerging proliferation of informal networks and organisations, which are involved in various aspects of Community Development initiatives (Kendi and Guri, 2006).

### ***Theories and Concepts of Community Development***

Some development theories inform the CD practice. This chapter discusses the relevant CD theories and concepts that have, over the years, guided the CD practice. Some of the relevant theories that will be discussed include the centre-periphery theory, the diffusion theory, the growth pole theory and the decentralization theory. It is also important that readers of this chapter understand some concepts that are relevant to the CD practice. Thus, the concepts that will be examined include the notion of CD, participation, empowerment and mobilization, and how they inform one another in terms of practice. The roles of the state and non-state actors in CD are also discussed.

#### **Centre-Periphery Theory**

The theory indicates development contradiction and/or structural differentiation between spatial settlement of the centre which is also term as the "metropolis" and the less developed countries - the "periphery". One of the core values of the concept is that the global economy is characterized by a structured relationship between economic centres which rely on political, and trade relations to extract the economic surplus from the subordinate, peripheral countries. This theory emphasizes the exploitation of the south from the north. Ghana's relations with, for example, the United States of American (USA) and Britain in which structural differences produce unequal development exemplify this development paradigm in terms of the relationship between the north and the south.

It is important to state that this development paradigm is also relevant in explaining development patterns in a country in terms of urban-rural divide. Hence for many studies and CD practitioners, the concern on centre-periphery paradigm “has been to assess whether there is convergence or divergence in development between the centre and the periphery and the factors associated with the ‘success’ of core regions or the atypical success-stories in peripheral areas.” (Gren, 2003: 25). The strength of this theory lies on the fact that well endowed regions will have the opportunity to develop further if they are able to marshal the economic power that they have to take advantage of the resources of other regions. There are two main weaknesses of the theory. First, it discourages competitions among spatial regions and allows the state to take total control of the distribution of resources for development. Second, the relative economic advantages of the center serve as the pull factors thereby encouraging migration from the periphery to the core. This phenomenon certainly comes with its attendant problems.

### **The Diffusion Theory**

Diffusion is the process by which members of a certain community adopt an innovation. The idea of the theory is to change the backward mindset posture of enclosed typical rural communities for development through innovative means. This is supposed to lead to community acceptance of innovative ideas in disciplines spanning from agriculture to marketing. In other words, development takes place through innovative diffusion. Yates (2001) traces the chain of reactions that is required in adopting an innovation. He states that:

*[T]here are four factors that influence adoption of an innovation. These include 1), the innovation itself 2), the communication channels used to spread information about the innovation, 3), time, and 4), the nature of the society to whom it is introduced.*

This chain of reactions places some responsibilities on CD practitioners. First, CD practitioners should be concerned about the social and cultural feasibilities of their proposed innovative ideas and projects. Second, CD practitioners must actively encourage the use of local resources and communication packages in disseminating the innovative ideas and projects. Also, whether the society is urban or rural will also affect how the innovative ideas or projects are disseminated. The main advantage of this theory is that it attacks conservatism and encourages conservative regions/districts/communities to develop. On the other hand, its main disadvantage is that it discourages the sustainability of endogenous knowledge systems and institutions. There might be collective interest to preserve some indigenous beliefs and systems which are serious targets of innovative ideas and projects.

### **The Growth Pole Theory**

The Growth Pole Theory engenders spread effect in the hierarchy of development. The theory induces development in specialized designated areas – poles with spread benefits to peripheral districts. The theory “assumes that growth does not appear everywhere at the same time, but it manifests itself in “points” or “poles” of growth with variable intensity and spreads through different channels with variable terminal effects on the whole of the economy” (Perroux, 1950). It was believed that beneficial “spread effects” from growth poles would eventually induce development in the remaining peripheral areas, and that they would have a significant relay function in the process of innovation diffusion through the urban hierarchy. It is important to stress the “functional character” of the theory in that the spatial qualities of the theory are obvious such that the cities, towns and locations that serve as growth poles are able to encourage developments in other areas. Also, another thing that underpins the theory is the importance of its “geographical base” that can bring about “structural change” in other places (Gantsho, 2008).

For example, if there is an increase in the supply of agricultural tools and implements in the manufacturing sector in a city, this can lead to an increase in agricultural productivity and inputs in other places. In the 1950 and 1960s when Nkrumah government's economic development largely targeted the industrialization of the country, the most dominant development model was the growth pole strategy. The growth poles then were Tema, Kumasi, Takoradi, Tamale, etc. that were expected to trickle down to other places. In the 1970s in Ghana, selected points that were experimented as growth poles in Northern Ghana included Wa, Bawku, Bolgatanga and Yendi. It is, however, important to note that though the theory induces satellite spatial development, the idea of the expected spread effects to other undeveloped rural communities is not always guaranteed. Evidently, some of these "poles" – especially those in Northern Ghana – actually grew, but the spread effects were minimal. Among the principal reasons for the minimal spread effects were lack of adequate finances, instability in policies in particular and political instability in general (Kokor, 2001)

### **Decentralization**

Decentralization is a process of sharing power between the central government on one hand, and the regional and local governments on the other such that the central government transfers power, functions, competencies, and means to the regional and local governments at the grassroots. Given the participatory nature of decentralization, CD is central to the practice of decentralization in Ghana since 1988. In establishing the interconnection between participatory governance and decentralization, Kokor (2001:85 ) notes that local governance:

[S]ought to establish participatory democracy in which the citizens of a locality act directly in the process of both local governance and development. The central theme and driving force of the programme was that of decentralization within which two objectives directly are: 1. Create opportunity for the majority of rural Ghanaians, in the villages and towns to take part in collective decision making and gain access to political authority. 2. Promote local development with the involvement of the people as a special preoccupation to improve living conditions in the country.

For over two decades now governments in Ghana have made serious attempt to galvanize rural communities to have their localities developed through the MMDAs. The challenges these grassroots institutions however face is fiscal decentralization which to some extent have affected their role in CD practice (Gantsho, 2008).

### ***The Notion of Community Development***

CD has been an important and effective concept to cooling off the heat and drudgery that the people in the rural communities and urban slums go through. It is about the beliefs and practices of people that play an important role in overcoming poverty and providing safety nets for them, especially the vulnerable. As Camfens (1997: 25) put it, CD is "... viewed as a means for mobilizing communities to join states or institutional initiatives that are aimed at alleviating poverty, solving social problems, strengthening families, fostering democracy and achieving modernization and socio-economic development". York (1994) also summarizes the foci of Community Development (Theory) as the organization of community agencies, the development of local competences, and political action for change. Community development, according to Mendes (2008:3) is the "employment of community structures to address social needs and empower groups of people". It is a prime mover of people because it gets people to actively participate in issues that affect them.

To support this position, Checkoway (1997:15) argues that “joining together in solidarity...facilitates community members’ understanding that their individual problems have social causes and collective solutions.”

From the perspectives of rural communities in Ghana, CD is much influence by the positive aspects of their culture in the sense that without being coerced by the leadership, community members heed the collective intentions of the larger community. Therefore, they are more likely to respond to calls for mobilization and participation in communal activities that benefit everybody. Invariably, CD becomes social capital in which people benefit from their social bonds and interactions in issues like constructing a new home, farming, organizing family marriage, naming, funeral ceremonies and so on. Indeed, CD work, at whatever level of operation, is more or less a safety net to the rich and the poor, the privileged and the less privileged (Mendes, 2008).

In other words, social capital plays a crucial role in CD because families, groups and communities remain stronger through cooperation and cordiality. As reviewed by Fukuyama (1999: 10) social capital is “an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals”. He added that social capital “must lead to cooperation in groups and therefore are related to traditional virtues like honesty, the keeping of commitments, reliable performance of duties, reciprocity and the like” (Fukuyama 1999:18). Therefore, social capital is part and parcel of CD since its virtues enable traditional structures to be formed so as to address community social needs and empower them.

Generally, CD practice is either externally or internally driven or both. In so far as State and non-State actors may have interest in the development of communities, they will influence CD in the terms of capacity building and resource flows in those communities. Canfens (1997: 25) in this sense, argues that CD’s “sponsorship may emanate from an organized citizens’ group, a particular profession, an NGO, an institution, or a state agency, or any combination of these....”. It was, therefore, based on these diverse inputs that Schiele (2005) sees the work of Community Development as collective problem solving, self-help, empowerment and participation. Some of these mentioned concepts are important tools in promoting CD.

### **Participation in Community Development**

Given that CD aims at invoking collective interests and aspirations for both individual and group benefits, participation is the driving force of CD. However, the pursuit of community participation, whether as a demand of citizenship or a strategy of governments or organizations, has a peculiar intrinsic value if community members are to own and sustain development. The quest for encouraging and promoting community participation has engaged the attention of several academics and development practitioners. Participation means different things to different people, but essentially it has to do with involving the people, who would be eventually affected by the same decisions, in contributing in making, implementing and monitoring those decisions. Numerous attempts have been made to define participation, although it is generally recognized that “[p]articipation defies any single attempt at definition or interpretation” (Oakley 1991: 6). For instance, the stream of development thinking points to participation as a process of empowering those who were previously excluded from achieving power; that is, ‘power’ in terms of access to, and control of the resources necessary to protect livelihood (Oakley and Marsden, 1984). The Human Development Report (UNDP, 1993) echoes the imperative of people participating in their own development, remarking that people’s participation is becoming the central issue in the face of current challenges for development.

As a means, the concept leads to efficiency, effectiveness and equity when community members are allowed to take part in project conception, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The ultimate end of this process is that beneficiaries become empowered and self-reliant in the quest for developing themselves and the entire community. One analyst emphasizes the central position that participation occupies in development when s/he notes that,

*Participation is concerned with human development and increases people's sense of control over issues which affect their lives, helps them to learn how to plan and implement and, on a broader front, prepares them for participation at regional or even national level. In essence, participation is a 'good thing' because it breaks people's isolation and lays the groundwork for them to have not only a more substantial influence on development, but also a greater independence and control over their lives" (Oakley 1991:17).*

Generally, communities in less developed countries like Ghana, believe in participation and for that matter project of common interest are communally executed. An example is the “nnoboa” system among the Ashanti and “Kotaa” among the Dagaaba. However, whether the community will be effective in initiating and participating in CD as a programme depends on the community dynamics and the culturally arranged leadership. The bottom line, however, is that to be effective, participatory initiatives must include a sharing of power: participation implies a more active form of public involvement, where decisions are taken jointly between the community and decision-makers. In Ghana, the government and non-governmental organizations have always facilitated communities to participate in local governance, natural resources management and other social project management either through the community representatives or the entire community members (Kendie and Guri, 2006).

### **Empowerment**

Empowerment is an inner driven process in which individuals actively measure their own challenges and put out plans to address them, and ultimately accept responsibility for the result therein. Empowerment just like participation has variously been conceptualized. To simply put it, empowerment can be thought of as “enhancing the possibilities for people to control their own lives” (Rappaport, 1989:15). By extension it is about “enhancing an individual’s or group’s capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes” (Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005:23). An empowered person or community needs no external direction to make good choices and/or look for alternatives. Empowerment means self-consciousness and determination. Being self-determined in the empowerment continuum also largely depends on “the existence of choice, the use of choice, and the achievement of choice” (Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005:23). Within the context of CD work, the local people get empowered when they are constantly mobilized and are given the opportunity to freely participate in all communal activities embarked on to improve their lot. To measure whether a community is empowered or becoming empowered depends on the availability of elements of empowerment such as political, social, and economic criteria among others. The World Bank (2002) has identified four key elements of empowerment as follows: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability and local organizational capacity development. The four elements have been the benchmark for empowering communities by both state and non-state actors in Ghana.

### **Mobilization**

Mobilization is the process of bringing together or empowering members of the community from various sectors to raise awareness on and demand for a particular development programme (Mendes, 2008).

It facilitates change and development by taking into account the felt needs of the community. More often than not, people engage in mobilization to serve the interests of the people mobilized. In the pre-colonial era in Ghana, the chiefs and their elders mobilized their subjects to take up community projects such as farming, road and market construction, and tree planting among others. Also, after independence subsequent governments mobilized Ghanaians to undertake projects to improve their socio-economic circumstances. For example, in 1972 the National Redemption Council (NRC) under the leadership of Col. Ignatius Kutu Acheampong launched an agricultural campaign that was called “Operation Feed Yourself”, whose main objective was to boost agricultural production.

Wanderman (1981) has strongly argued that to mobilize people effectively requires a mixture of approaches, namely: “grassroots approach”; “social programme approach”; and “community development approach”. Whereas the “grassroots approach” emphasizes the need to create the necessary social bonds that are effective in knitting the people together in the service of community work, the “social programme approach” underscores the role of social hierarchy, norms and systems in enforcing collective interest. As regards the “community development approach”, it equips the people with the necessary skills needed to be receptive to change and development.

Increasingly, mobilizing people stimulate them to be aware of their potentials and be willing to take risk, and responsibility, that can be translated into action in order to effectively resolve their own problems.

### ***Partnership for Community Development***

Given the diverse interests, commitments and inputs, by government and its agencies, development practitioners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and local people, in community development, the idea of community development as a partnership can only be obvious.

#### **Government**

Ghana Government’s role in community development could be traced back to the early 1940s. Early CD efforts by the state attempted at engaging all segments of the community in collaborative efforts. Local communities were encouraged to identify their own needs and to participate in the efforts to address them. Efforts were made to nurture local leadership and the enhancement of community’s capacity. Therefore, in the 1950s the Department of Community Development and Social Welfare intensified community development activities so as to carry out social development responsibility for communities. The objectives of the two departments ranged from enhancing capacity building, promoting mass citizenship education, encouraging adult education, spreading health issues awareness, to increasing social inclusion, ensuring better livelihoods, guaranteeing cultural development, supporting environmental awareness, and advancing self-determination (Chambers, 1983). Although these objectives are sound very vague, too general and not focused, they aptly describe the nature of attempts at community development in Ghana.

The departments put up a number of mechanisms to achieve the foregoing objectives. Among the principal mechanism was the establishment of community development department, district councils and village committees, whose main responsibility was to train so as to equip development workers with the necessary skills to carry out community work. Also, the departments actively involved the communities in initiating, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development plans. In addition, they established special projects that were to create avenues for involving all the segments of the community in their community life.

Furthermore, research units were also supported to study community problems and make their findings available to the local people through training workshops (Campbell, 1994).

The state's role in CD has encountered some challenges in Ghana. First, the growth of the government since independence in 1957, which has seen increasing bureaucracy and complex methods for allocating resources to groups and individuals, has reduced the state effectiveness in developing and coordinating CD programmes that address the needs of the poor (Abloh et al., 1997). Second, the unmanageable expansion that many political, social and economic structures in Ghana have seen, is also partly responsible for the inefficiency in using the CD approach (Cohen, 1996). As a result many people, especially the poor, regard these institutions as remote and impersonal (Abloh et al., 1997). Nonetheless, for the past two decades, governments in Ghana have used the decentralization model to promote CD through the institutional framework of the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). It is important to stress that NGOs, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and private individuals are increasingly complementing the role of government in community development in recent times (Cohen, 1996).

### **Civil Society Organizations**

A number of community-based organizations and grassroots social actions groups are gaining grounds in local communities. However, this has not come about without some challenges to CD practice. Their emergence is largely the result of a growing collective awareness that a small elite class is unjustly exploiting the general population. These elites dominates the social, economic, and political scene and are perceived as contributing to the growth in mass poverty, unemployment and inequality (World Bank, 2002). Community-based groups, which are found across a wide variety of socio-economic issues, pursue various strategies to empower themselves, with the goal of changing the country's dynamics at the grass roots level.

International NGOs such UNICEF, and OXFAM among others have played a major role in bringing the issue of poverty alleviation to the attention of government and donor agencies (Bell, 1995). This introduced a regime of cooperation between governments' activities and NGOs' involvements. For example, the heightened awareness that some NGOs created was very instrumental in the designing, planning and implementation of PAMSCAD under the government of the National Provisional Defence Council (PNDC).

Some NGOs and Church groups emphasized the need for personal development, stressing that the first step towards empowerment must be when the competencies of individuals as members of community change. In this light, a number of training programmes in life skills and leadership were introduced (Hallett, 1997). For example, the 31<sup>st</sup> December Women's Movement designed various programmes that enlisted CD officers to educate and train women, particularly in areas of research methods and the planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects (Ablohetal., 1997). Therefore, the main idea was for the participants to become effective problem solvers, leaders, and mobilizers in their communities. It is also important to state that the relationship between the government and NGOs has not always been cordial. There is a number of factors for this. In 2004, Ghana government issued strong warnings to all NGOs to register and ensure that they submit their reports annually. This came about as a result of government's suspicion that there were incredible NGOs in Ghana that were carrying out unlawful activities. Also, there has not been any coherent national policy to regulate the activities of NGOs. In addition, there are allegations that NGOs wear a mask of humanitarianism while corruption characterizes their activities.

The NGOs, on their part, maintain that government policies largely stand in their way of humanitarian assistance. Also, they stress that a distinction must always be made between NGOs and businesses that are mainly operating for profits (SAIIA, 2004).

### **Traditional Authorities**

The partnership between the government and the traditional authorities in the service of governance and community development started during the colonial era. Realizing that the British empire had grown so large that its administration was posing increasing difficulties to the British, they quickly devised innovative ways to address the problem. One of the mechanisms they devised was to reinvent tradition in what has come to be known as indirect rule. With this rule, the traditional political authorities were co-opted into the governance. In the chiefly communities, this cooption was not much of a problem since the British only superimposed their authority on the traditional structures. However, in the communities where political authority was not in the form of a central authority taking decisions for their people and where Tindaamas were much more prominent, the British had to create chiefdoms for these communities. Given that this innovation challenged the social structures of these communities and given that the British favoured their favourites in the creation of the new chiefdoms, the colonial intervention provoked conflicts between the British and their antagonists on one hand, and clan-based conflicts on the other (Awedoba, 2010). Yet, even under that indirect rule, some accomplishments were made. For instance, the Native Authorities that came into force after the promulgation of the Native Authorities Act, saw the formalization of the role of chiefs in the formal administration and community development. By that promulgation, the traditional authorities were able to mobilize their people to undertake projects in the form of the establishment of schools which were collectively called the Native Authority and which after colonial rule became the Local Council Schools (Prah and Yeboah, 2011).

In recent decades, however, the traditional authorities, especially the chiefs, have, increasingly been important partners in community development (Odotei&Awedoba, 2006). In the development practitioners' use of participatory approaches to development, where community ownership has been promoted, the traditional authorities and their people are critical partners in the drive for development of their community. Even at the national level, structures such as the Houses of Chiefs, Stool Lands Secretariat, Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture, National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC), Centre for National Culture, have all, in varied and related ways, contributed to giving prominence to the role of traditional authorities in national and local politics and governance. Chiefs are represented in various public boards and committees such as the Council of State, GES Council and Lands Valuation Boards. All these have been put in place so as to ensure that their voices are heard in issues of community development.

Nonetheless, Ghana, particularly its northern part, has had an unfortunate series of chieftaincy, communal, and land-related conflicts, which have claimed many lives and led to enormous material loss (Prah and Yeboah, 2011). These conflicts have greatly compromised the critical role that the traditional authorities play in community development. It is for this unfortunate compromise that Brempong (2006: 28) calls upon the traditional authorities to play the role of what he terms the "national integration function". This entails taking on mediatory and advisory roles in national policy and policies. The National House of Chiefs continues to play that role, although it has been reserved for only male chiefs. Indeed, the functions of other traditional authorities such as the priestly classes (i.e. tindaama), queenmothers and magazia remain localized and largely focus on community-level mobilizations for development.

## **Women**

Women are important partners in community development. Traditionally, women remain an essential part of the household socio-economy. Their productive, reproductive and community roles have been found to be crucial to the development of their families and communities. Women's involvement in farm and non-farm activities complements and even sometimes supplements domestic production (Duncan, 2006). Their reproductive roles, such as housekeeping, child care and palliative care, sustain families and households, while their community roles unify and maintain the communities, their traditions, welfare and organizations. Women are increasingly taking on community development roles as members of committees such as the Water and Sanitation Committees (WATSANs), community animators, promoters, volunteers, and organizers (source).

Recognizing the limitations that women face given their potential for driving community development, NGOs have been mobilizing and collaborating with women and their groups to enhance their participation. In the eastern corridor, which stretches from Salaga through Bimbilla to KeteKrachi, the Social Enterprise Development (SEND) – Ghana has mobilized women in the areas of reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, credit savings, and economic literacy. On its part, the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD) has worked with queen mothers to advocate greater inclusion in national politics and also to enhance their leadership roles in the communities. In addition, the Upper West Rural Women's Organization (UWRUWA), the Sirigu Women's Organization for Pottery and Art (SWOPA), the Windows and Orphans Movement (WOM), the Single Mothers Association (SMA), the Centre for Rural Women Empowerment (CERWED), and the Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation have, for years, mobilized women toward greater participation in the areas of politics, legal literacy, economic justice, and human rights (Apusigah, Tsikata and Mukhopadyay, 2011). However, some teething challenges that women encounter in Ghana, such as: low adult literacy; low educational achievement; low enrolment rate for women at the tertiary level and the consequent low progression to science and technology; low participation in macro-economic growth interventions; policy neglect and marginalization; and socio-cultural inhibitions, stand in their way of contributing more to community development (Awumbila, 2001; Kwapong, 2009; Apusigah, 2009; and Tsikata, 2010).

## **Youth**

Youth often do participate in community development such as offering labour, mobilizing protests, and actively engaging in the socio-economic activities of the community. Also, they engage in agriculture, trade, construction as well as welfare services such as running errands and taking care of the sick and the elderly people in the community. However, despite the active roles they play in community development, they often do not play decision-making roles. Often the elders of the community make decisions and instruct young people to execute them. Indeed, this followership role of the youth has often benefited many communities in that the youth have credibly carried out community development projects such as the construction of schools, clinics, water systems, and road works. However, when they have been ill-informed they have contributed to causing mayhem. For instance, politicians and litigants have successfully mobilized youths and their groups into engaging in violent action against their opponents. In chieftaincy struggles such as we witness in Dagbon and Bawku, the youth are found at the forefront of the clashes by attacking, maiming or killing people, setting fire to property, and causing general unrests, while their sponsors and the families keep their distance from the conflict hotspots (Prah and Yeboah, 2011). The vulnerability of the youth to adult manipulation is an important factor in examining the nature of partnership in community development.

The youth requires knowledge and skills for analysing community issues and taking informed decisions on community matters. A well-informed youth is an asset rather than a tool of manipulation. The youthful exuberance and energies of the youth can also be channelled into development-enhancing attitudes rather than detracting roles some youth unfortunately play (Mendes, 2008)

### ***Contemporary Community Development Practice in Ghana***

The Ghana government (under the various regimes), the community members themselves, and NGOs have promoted the CD practice in several ways since independence in 1957. Preceding governments in Ghana through the Department of Community Development have played a central role in the exercise of CD work. In the past three decades or more, government has been the sole initiator of community development work. For instance, in the early months of the NRC administration, CD activities were very prominent. It promoted self-reliance through the Operation Feed Your Self programme where individual farmers and farmers' associations increased their production levels. Since the PNDC era, decentralisation concept has been central in the promotion of community development in which local leadership takes active part in the local development projects, such as: schools, clinics, water points, KVIP construction, and road construction and maintenance among others.

This decentralized institutional arrangement operates in tandem with the Department of Community Development. However, public sector led CD initiatives have suffered in Ghana due to mismanagement, coup d'états, and politicization of such programmes. Sometimes, the practice of CD is also community led. In Ghana CD work has brought many communities together and made them stronger. As self-driven concept (CD), community leadership (especially in the form of the chiefs and Assembly members) often mobilizes their people to undertake communal work to meet the needs of the community members. Such initiatives often include local roads construction, clearing weeds and forests in the community, enacting and enforcing traditional byelaws and so on. Also, such initiatives include social capital issues such as the coming together to mourn and bury the dead of one's family member. Some of the community self-driven initiatives often attract government's and/or NGOs' interests in coming to support the communities. For example, the Nandom traditional area in the Upper West Region of Ghana has passed bye-laws banning bush burning for over 15 years now. The government and the Care International, an NGO, have given their support for the initiative. It is important to note that the CBOs and other indigenous established power structures influence the mobilization of the community members for work. Several NGOs, CBOs, Faith-Based Organizations actively engage in CD work. Their approach is often to facilitate the process so that the beneficiary communities can lead the development process. The following case studies provide some insights into the practice of community development in Ghana.

Three case studies of NGOs and GOs in CD work are presented below:

**Case 1: FARM PLUS Project**

*The Nandom Denary Rural Integrated Development Project (NADRIDEP), in partnership with the community members in the Lawra District of the Upper West Region, facilitates the Food and Agricultural Recovery Management Programme (FARMPLUS) project. The project allows the beneficiary communities to select volunteers (among themselves) to lead the communities in implementing the various activities by themselves. The project, whose main objectives were to promote food security among families who were victims of the 2007 flood/disasters and also to reconstruct their collapsed houses, receives financial support from the CARE International, Ghana. At the field level, the project is termed FOOD FOR WORK. This field work is organised through community mobilization. Community members get themselves together into groups as required by the project. They work for one another, especially in the construction of houses for families, after which they ration foodstuff to all persons who participated in the communal work. Another benefit, which the members enjoy, is in the form of provision of seeds to members through the supervision of the NADRIDEP. Also, the farmers who lose their livestock get assistance from the project in the form of provision of new livestock so that they can continue with their animal husbandry. The affected communities during the 2007 Northern flood and the subsequent drought – whose plight brought the project into being – still benefit from the project through CD work in its respective areas. For instance, through the communal spirit (voluntarism), which the project tries to reinvigorate amongst the people, many family houses have been rebuilt with communal support and many livelihoods have been promoted. At the communal level too, the project has promoted some degree of capacity building to the extent that the community leaders are able to identify vulnerable persons and notify the project for appropriate interventions.*

**Lessons:** *The project worked to perfection as a result of community members' involvement in the planning and execution of all activities. The project has also reinvigorated the spirit of voluntarism amongst the people.*

**Weakness:** *The project has, however, raised higher expectations because some beneficiary community members have relaxed in carrying out their annual farming activities. The main reason for this shortfall is that they believe that the project will provide them with foodstuff when they participate in communal work.*

*Many neighbouring communities are also agitating for inclusion in the project. If this call is heeded, then the project will go beyond its 40 registered communities. .*

**Source:** *Project Report, August, 2010.*

### **Case 2: ProNet and Sustainable Livelihoods Project**

*In 2008, the Professional-North (ProNet), an NGO based in Wa, introduced a water project into a number of communities in the Lawra district, which included communities such as Kunyukuo, Bilegangn and Brutu. Prior to the ProNet's intervention, some members of these communities who were interested in dry season gardening, had mobilized themselves into women's groups so as to enhance their livelihoods. The ProNet took advantage of the women's initiatives and supported them as part of the emergency response to the northern Ghana floods in 2007. The ProNet introduced the water system called the "Tube-well", a manually drilled borehole which uses the equipment known as the Auger. The borehole is fitted with a locally manufactured hand pump called the rope pump. The main motivation for the ProNet's support was that the women had taken a giant step to provide themselves and their households with alternative livelihoods. The ProNet gave training to the groups on micro-finance management so that they could effectively manage the proceeds from their gardens. It is interesting to note that the project chalked some successes. For instance, an assessment report indicated that proceeds from the dry season garden help the women to register with the national health insurance and to pay children school fees and clothes. The most important benefit that these communities enjoyed was the availability of vegetables for household consumption and potable drinking water, thereby improving their health status. The women, however, faced both internal and external challenges. Some of the women are losing the farms because their husbands and other male family members have taken over. Also, the women are not technically efficient to fix the tubes back to work when they break down. Externally, the ProNet has run out of funds to continuously monitor the performance of the groups. The funding period has elapsed and it has not been able to source more funds to further build their capacity and stand on their own.*

**Lessons:** *it is clear from the case study that total reliance on external funding of community projects is not ideal for project sustainability and that funding for NGOs is not permanent.*

**Weakness:** *the ProNet did not show cultural sensitivity in that it did not involve and solicit the support of the men for the project to succeed since the men own the farm lands.*

*Source: Project Report, November, 2010.*

### **CEDEP and the Adolescent Reproductive Health Project**

*Since 2006, the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP) has been implementing a project in eight communities in the Wa West District. The project's approach has been through the organisation of community fora in which the youth discuss issues of adolescent reproductive health and parents are also given training on parent-child communication methodology. At the end of each session, people who participated are given C5 each to motivate them. This attracted more people to participate in the community fora.*

*In 2008, a different project on gender was introduced in the same communities using the same approach, but without cash benefit. However, this project did not attract patronage because of the absence of cash incentives.*

**Lesson:** *the Case study demonstrates that the financial inducement for project participation does not sustain it.*

**Weakness:** *The project implementation approach was wrong.*

*Source: Project Report, June, 2009.*

## **Conclusion**

Although several development activities were carried out in the past and numerous others are being implemented, the results so far indicate that community development will continue to receive central attention. The main reason for this contention is that accessing essential social services such as health, education, transport and safe water, and sanitation among others will continue to be problematic in many communities. In theory, the roles of the government and other outside agents have been to inspire and stimulate local initiatives that have the potential of improving community welfare. Nonetheless, given that many projects are unable to stimulate the required local participation, the top-down approach to planning and implementation of development projects has to give way to the bottom-up approach that will be able to stimulate active community participation to achieve what Neocosmos (1998) termed 'development through negotiation'. With this, the development practitioners see community development not as a theory of development, but a practice of development that emphasizes emancipation from any debilitating situations that may lead to anti-development.

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