

**Final Workshop of the OECD/DAC Donor-Developing Country
Dialogues on National Strategies for Sustainable Development**

**Santa Cruz, Bolivia
12-16 February, 2001**

Summary Report on Status Review in Ghana

**Prepared by Seth Vordzorgbe and Ben Caiquo
Ghana**

1. Themes of the review

1.1 Status of development strategy work

Current development efforts and direction in Ghana, reputed to have completed the first development plan in the world in 1919, are being implemented within the overall framework of the Ghana-Vision 2020 (1994) under which the country is to achieve a balanced economy and a middle-income country status and living standard by the year 2020.

Other integrated development programming processes include the Comprehensive Development Framework (1999) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 1997) that was based on the Common Country Assessment (CCA).

Key cross-cutting strategic approaches developed to ensure sustainability of the national strategy for development cover decentralization, poverty reduction, natural resource management and gender.

1.2 Context of national development frameworks

All strategic development frameworks in Ghana are national. However, regions and districts prepare their development strategies and plans under the decentralized planning system within planning guidelines derived from the Vision-2020 overall policy and strategic framework.

In terms of political context, the last decade has witnessed the emergence of democratic institutions as political liberalization finally caught up with economic liberalization a decade later. The transition to multi-party democratic governance is one of the key development trends and factors that have influenced the design of strategic frameworks for national development. Others include: (a) the pain and memory of past economic downturn, (b) the resultant economic liberalization and market-based stance of economic policy which has yielded a fragile stabilization as the economy is still prone to destabilization by external economic factors, (c) relative national peace and stability, (d) increasing population, unemployment, demand on social services and fall in living standards, (e) poor natural resource management resulting in loss of forest cover and general environmental degradation.

The administrative context for the development of national development strategy frameworks in the post-ERP era involved the establishment of: (a) organs for economic management, (b) an emerging consultative approach, (c) a development planning system including a legal framework and a planning institution (the NDPC), (d) a decentralized planning system. Despite this economic management and development-planning environment, major donors felt the need to design their own frameworks for development assistance planning, partly in response to ineffective donor coordination and integration of donor development programmes. This situation partly accounted for the development of the CDF and the UNDAF.

The effectiveness of regulations and incentives determines the nature and effect of the institutional context for the development of strategic initiatives. Broadly, in consonance with the progressive consolidation of economic and political

liberalization, the approach to internalizing economic and environmental costs, to facilitate best-practice investments, is by fiscal and regulatory frameworks, rather than bureaucratic control mechanisms. The institutionalization of parliamentary and multi-party democracy, decentralized administration, and, increased public awareness campaigns is facilitating the development of a consumer or civil-society driven society and incentives away from command and control to market-based mechanisms.

The development of the current Second Medium-Term Policy framework and plan of Vision 2020 has taken due cognizance of regional factors as it explicitly seeks to enhance the economic integration of the sub-region.

1.3 Strengths and weaknesses of Vision 2020

Vision 2020 is akin to an umbrella process that provides a broad vision of long term development goals, the big picture within which complementary strategies (such as GPRS and RNRS) can be identified as tools towards achieving the broad picture of the Vision, and the overall setting for the evolution of the institutional framework within which sector strategies and programmes are developed and integrated.

Strengths

Compared with the CDF, CCA, and the RNRS, the Vision 2020 framework: (a) is the most comprehensive development programming exercise; (b) is more of a strategic mechanism than most of the other; (c) defines the programmatic strategies required to achieve long-term goals; (d) takes the long-term view; (e) has provisions for strategic steps to achieve the vision (First Step, Second Step, etc); (f) has provisions for periodic review; (g) covers all the sectors needed to make a vision sustainable (economic, social, NRM, governance, gender, etc); (h) utilizes a participatory process of preparation

Weaknesses

Assessed against the elements identified in the Draft OECD-DAC Policy Guidance for country-level strategies for sustainable development as necessary for a strategy process to achieve sustainable development, Vision 2020 is characterized by several areas of weakness. These include the following: (a) There is no overall and integrative model that integrates macroeconomic, sectoral, spatial/physical, and, financial aspects of planning. (b) It does not specify and agree on trade-offs in integrating the various pillars of the framework, such as environment, social and economic issues. (c) There was no scenario analysis to form the basis for strategy formulation and there has been no analysis of external linkages. Hence, the exercise is less than strategic. (d) The framework does not provide ways of dealing with constant change on the path to achieving the goals of the vision. (e) Long-term policy objective priorities are not necessarily reflected in public resource allocation and incentive structures.

1.4 Key stakeholder and processes

There is no unique steering mechanism for overseeing the preparation of the various strategic frameworks as each adopted its own mechanism. Regarding Vision 2020, the NDPC has oversight responsibilities for preparing, coordinating, implementing

and monitoring the medium-term plans and strategic plans. Constituted as Cross Sectoral Planning Groups (CSPGs), a very wide variety of governmental, non-governmental, private sector and civil society groups have been involved in developing the First and Second Step Policy Frameworks. The preparatory mechanism utilized by the NDPC involves the CSPGs preparing draft policy frameworks, the Commission reviewing and finalizing the medium term development policy framework and issuing planning guidelines to inform the actual preparation of development plans and strategies.

A similar structured approach has been adopted for steering the preparation of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) whereby the coordination and oversight responsibilities for its preparation have been ultimately entrusted to an inter-ministerial coordinating group via the Poverty Reduction Unit of the NDPC. The CDF was formulated by 14 Sectoral Coordinating Groups (SCGs) comprising ministries, agencies and development partners. The formulation of the RNR Strategy involved six steps, was based on Goal Oriented Project Planning (GOPP) approach and involved a wide array of stakeholder groups.

1.5 Some issues of integrating institutions and initiatives

1.5.1 Linkage with global conventions: The development of Vision 2020 framework for long-term development was not linked explicitly to global conventions such as on biodiversity, climate change, desertification, and the Law of the Sea, but these issues (except that relating to the sea) were considered by the CSPGs in integrating environmental concerns into the framework and medium-term plans.

1.5.2 Inter-relationships between current processes: Opportunities exist for complementarities among the various strategic approaches and for integration between them because the Ghana Vision 2020 provides the guiding framework for several of the current strategic processes while at the same time incorporating many of the processes directly within its framework. Regarding the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), its objectives informed the goals and approach adopted for poverty alleviation in the Vision 2020 while the revision of the GPRS is being undertaken within the framework of the preparation of the second medium term plan of the Vision 2020. The core development ingredients of the CDF and UNDAF have been adequately captured under Ghana - Vision 2020.

1.5.3 Aspects of enabling institutional conditions: Despite efforts at enhancing the participatory nature of strategy development, the top-down mentality persists in development programming. For example, the District Assemblies (DAs) were not represented in the Cross-Sectoral Planning Groups that prepared the Frameworks, as their role was limited to receiving and complying with Planning Guidelines from the NDPC after the preparation of the Frameworks. Similarly, the DAs were not involved in preparing the CDF and the CCA.

1.5.4 Country development framework coordination: Regarding the Vision 2020, coordination between the NDPC and MDAs in the preparation of medium-term policy framework has been fairly effective since most MDAs participated in the development of the frameworks. However, coordination between the NDPC and the MDAs regarding the preparation of sector strategic plans by the latter has been less

than effective as the MDAs often prepared their plans with little input from NDPC or notification to NDPC of their intentions and arrangements.

Coordination between strategic initiatives, particularly between Vision 2020 and the CDF and CCA has been at the level of ensuring consistency among the objectives of the various initiatives. However, since the CDF and CCA are of shorter-term duration than the Vision, it is not clear how the milestones in these two donor-driven initiatives relate empirically to the Vision 2020 targets.

A clear case of less than adequate coordination exists between the institutions responsible for strategic initiatives and those for finance and investments. Public finance programming develops a life of its own that is often unrelated to programmed requirements. Although Ghana adopted a medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) in 1999, this system is yet to be synchronized with Vision 2020.

1.5.5 Monitoring: The NDPC has developed monitoring formats to collect feedback information but is unable to implement this system, as it expected the agencies and Assemblies to regularly submit monitoring information. Furthermore, most of the indicators developed to monitor the First Step framework were implementation steps or output variables keyed to the Action Plans and could not be used to track progress on achieving the main Vision 2020 goals and targets.

1.6 Shared vision and commitment to strategy process

Political support for Vision 2020 is more partisan than broad-based, the citizenry is unaware of the contents of the Vision or what it takes to achieve it while the private sector feels that agreed outcomes at consultative forums it participates in are not being effectively implemented as the environment for private sector growth remains weak. In terms of continuity of political commitment to the Vision 2020, it is not clear what the likely attitude and posture of the new government would be.

2. **Key lessons learned**

1. The pace of Ghana's development has not matched the depth of its experience with development programming due to several reasons: (a) the concept of implementing development programmes within the framework of a long-term vision is relatively new as the previous development planning efforts were basically medium term planning, (b) very few of the previous development plans were fully implemented over their planned timeframes, (c) there was relatively little commitment by most previous governments to the development plans they themselves formulated; (d) stakeholder participation in the design of the development plans was either non-existent or very low and ineffective.
2. There is the need to state up-front the expected output in the design of a national strategy. The developers of Ghana-Vision 2020 set out to prepare a medium-term plan but realized they needed a long-term framework, hence they prepared the NDPF. They did not set out to produce a long-term vision.
3. For a nation to develop an effective and sustainable strategy for development, it needs to apply the appropriate methodology for its visioning process. For

example, the use of GOPP methodology does not directly address the issue of scenarios (forecasting) of the future.

4. A NSSD needs to contain fall-backs as part of the strategy content to address vulnerabilities to assure resilient and sustainable national livelihood. It is not enough to provide for reviews or implementation steps, as in the Ghana-Vision 2020 as the major corrective or re-aligning feature. The Ghana-Vision 2020 does not provide alternatives or fall-backs based on scenario analysis.
5. To achieve effective participation and quality of work, terms such as ‘strategy’ need to be clearly defined.
6. For enhanced shared vision, the ownership factor has to be raised through appropriate participatory processes.
7. A key finding was that the process of participation in the design of strategy work has been dominated by the ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). More direct participation by other stakeholders would have enhanced the ownership and commitment to the Vision.
8. For effective commitment and participation, stakeholders need time to prepare for their participation in forums and workshops held to elicit their support.
9. For participation to be effective, outcomes need to be actualized to enhance commitment. For example, the private sector feels that results from consultative sessions on the economy have not been completely or effectively implemented resulting in a less-than optimal environment for private sector development.
10. The use of ‘brainstorming’ as the key approach to participation has limitations in ensuring total participation. The nominal group technique is more effective in eliciting response from all participants in a group session.
11. Full participation by all social or pressure groups is enhanced by advance information, education and communication campaigns on the process, objectives, methodology and expected outcomes to all potential participants.
12. Although political parties were not in existence in Ghana at the time the NDPF was being formulated, efforts should have been made at the earliest opportunity to seek their views on the methodology, processes and participation of stakeholders involved to facilitate broad-based political commitment to the Vision.
13. In terms of donor versus government-led processes, donor-led processes are not necessarily less participatory than home-grown processes. In addition, there is variation in the participatory nature of different donor-led processes. For example, the Sustainable Natural Resource Management Strategy (supported by DFID) was more participatory than the Comprehensive Development Framework (World Bank promoted) whose participation was limited only to ministries and departments.

3. Future plans

The Country Team intends to hold another stakeholders workshop to finalize the Report. The Team hopes to secure funding to publish it and formally launch it in Ghana. The launching will involve government, private sector and civil society stakeholder with wide media publicity. The Report will be disseminated widely nationwide for it to play a key role in informing the strategy process in Ghana.