



Citizens' participation in governance is an essential feature of a well-functioning democracy and a key asset for fighting poverty. That is why, in order to address gaps in citizens' participation in local governance, Friends of the Nation collaborated with the Kumasi Institute of Technology, Energy and Environment (KITE) and the Jomoro District Assembly (JDA) to deepen citizens' participation in local governance through Participatory Community Interactions, Public Hearings and Validation Workshop on the District Medium Term Development Plan (2010-2013).

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FISHING IN GHANA

Danger looms: 5% of the GDP at stake

Among Ghana's innumerable natural resources, the Atlantic Ocean contends as one of the most important with its accompanying potentials in a thriving fishing industry. Over the years Ghana's fishing industry had been a source of livelihood and employment for over two-and-half million people or 10% of the total population. The industry accounts for about 5% of the agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and 10% of the country's animal protein requirements. According to the Fisheries Commission, Ghanaians consume 850,000 metric tons of fish per annum. This is one of the highest consumer rates of fish in the world. However, approximately, just about 45% of this nutritional requirement is produced locally as a result of a myriad of challenges both from government & fishermen which is threatening to entirely disintegrate the industry.

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OIL, GAS, MINING

Social Responsible Extractive Operations

It is imperative the net impact of their operations from of extractive companies from exploration to post-closure is positive for families, communities, and the country. The ecosystems should be accessed sustainably to protect local livelihoods. In the past, mining companies have often thought that they could "gain an advantage by negotiating with weak communities" according to Paul Warner, director of Community Relations and Institutional Affairs for giant Australian mining company BHP Billiton when he addressed an international forum with the theme Bringing the Best of the Private Sector to Development and supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). He added that they now recognize that "it is in our best interests to negotiate with strong communities". There is a real business case to operate responsibly and sustainably as projects have stalled due to companies' inability to obtain social license.

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Welcome! Akwaaba!

Mwananchi's theory of change, goals and ways of influencing policy are based on a rigorous approach to evidence and action research. Neither everyone nor every organisation can change the rules of the game, especially rules in favour of poor people. The programme carefully identifies and nurtures game-changing behaviour among civil society, media, traditional leaders and local communities. Interaction between stakeholders, interlocutors and audiences is multi-directional and participatory. Mwananchi aims to talk with, rather than at or for its priority stakeholder groups and audiences. In promoting this, emphasis is placed on building lasting and positive relationships and exploring areas between adversaries where mutual advantages can be identified, encouraged and used for the benefit of voiceless people.

With support from the Mwananchi-Ghana Project, FoN has sustained the momentum it has built since 1997 in the fisheries sector. This has brought and kept grassroots fisherfolk dialoguing with other stakeholders culminating in the recognition of fishers' voice, traditional norms and state regulations. The co-adoption of these, especially the voice of grassroots is highly essential in contributing to sustainable fisheries, livelihoods, environmental sustainability and food security for communities.

We hope you find pleasure and edification reading the articles in this newsletter and don't hesitate to contact us for further information related to our organization and the contents herein this publication.

Donkris Mevuta (Executive Director, FoN); April 2013.

[Photo Donkris]

[Signature Donk



Friends of the Nation

Friends of the Nation (FoN) established in 1993, is a registered service delivery, non-profit-sharing, non-governmental development-oriented organization based in Takoradi in the Western Region of Ghana.



FoN envisages a world where communities manage their environment in a sustainable and healthy manner and where equal opportunities exist for all people in the use of natural resources.

The organisation serves as a catalyst towards increased action for sustainable natural resource management and healthy environment. It provides services to institutions and communities through education, training, networking and advocacy.

Our work philosophy is guided by a rights and ecosystem based and participatory strategic planning approaches to sustainable development.

Mwananchi Programme

The Mwananchi Programme is a five-year project, part of the DFID Governance and Transparency Fund. The project learns about how civil society, media, elected representatives, and traditional leaders can enhance ordinary citizens' ability to hold their governments to account, and improve delivery of essential public services (such as health and education) in six different African countries which are Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Uganda.

Primarily, this is done through the provision of small grants and capacity development to over 50 organisations across the six countries. We investigate the context of each country in detail through political economy analysis, in order to understand which interventions work in which contexts. The grantees are often civil society and media organisations working at the grassroots and sub-national levels, with links to the national level through partner organisations. They use the grants to facilitate issue-based, change-focused relationships with state actors, the private sector, traditional leaders, social movements, and other civil society and media organisations.

We believe that by enabling these organisations to play their role more effectively, use evidence to influence policy and work better together, they can become effective 'game changers' in their diverse governance contexts, and work towards responsive and accountable interactions between governments and their citizens, ultimately reducing poverty.



OIL, GAS, MINING

Social Responsible Extractive Operations

(read from page 1) Miners don't believe they can do anything they want any more" Warner stated at the forum held in June 2009.

The international community has long recognized that extractive operations can be a major income earner for developing nations. However, it has been far from easy to guarantee that developing countries received the revenues due them, free from costly environmental or social degradation, and to ensure that the money was used to improve the lives of the "poorest

Communities' voice are stamped off the radar of engagement

of the poor" within those nations. Communities' voice are virtually stamped off the radar of engagement with concerns are relegated to the background. The government supra-impose itself as a bonafide representative of the grassroots which is often not the case but just come in to collect revenue for its own agenda but not essentially for the benefit of the host communities.

Friends of the Nation (FoN) through its Natural Resource Management Program, promotes a balance between natural resources exploitation and the need for sustainable development at the community and national level. Appropriate and adequate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs promote "live and let live" environs. In the situation where communities do not benefit, chiefs give out lands for illegal small-scale mining termed 'galamsey' to youths and foreigners because companies and governments are perceived to not doing enough for the grassroots. Concessions are allocated to

rival concessionaires (eg small-scale miners versus multi-national companies or, Chinese who indiscriminately pollute water bodies leading to pitch battles between them and local youths). Extractive activities if not well-structured to address social concerns affect all players; that is companies, governments and communities negatively, leading to conflict.

On a positive note, companies operating in Ghana's novelty oil-and-gas sector and international bilateral agencies have facilitated the establishment of the Coastal Foundation to serve coastal frontline districts of the Western Region in the face of socio-environment impact of oil-and-gas operations. Companies are contributing funds into this civil society and private sector initiative targeting four thematic areas of Health, Education, Environment and Enterprise. However, it should be noted "these voluntary mechanisms are

not an alternative to public regula-

"Voluntary mechanisms are not an alternative to public regulations"

tions," to quote Warner.

Ghana has taken numerous steps to promote both local and international investment in the country's essential extractive industry.

The whole point of attracting investors is to make sure they make a big impact with the economy and lives of the people. With the establishment of the Coastal Foundation, it appears that there is a realization among companies that their future is tied to that of local communities. But companies that do not play by the rules of social responsibility are being



Encroachment on companies' concessions lead to conflict

watched, not only by local stakeholders but also by the global community. For

Companies that do not play by the rules of social responsibility are being watched

instance, when news that a mining company operating in Ghana was not fulfilling its social obligations reached a Dutch financial institution that had invested in the company, the institution responded by sending its own representative to Ghana to investigate allegations. It is important to have as many sources of pressure as possible on companies to do the right thing.

That UN report created momentum at the global level for a process that CIDA had already formalized with its Private Sector Development Policy in July 2003, which stresses that private sector activities must meet the criteria and answer these questions:

Are they pro-poor?

Do they reduce inequity?

Do they make good business sense?

Do they embrace good governance?

Are they sustainable?

GHANA'S OIL

A Potential Economic Blessing

Credit: Joseph Stiglitz,
Columbia University, professor of economics & Nobel laureate

The novelty oil industry in Ghana raises an important question: will this boon be a blessing that brings prosperity and hope, or a political and economic curse, as has been the case in many countries. On average, resource-rich countries have done even poorer than countries that did not have. They have grown more slowly, and with greater inequality. Check out Nigeria, just the

opposite of what one would expect. After all, taxing natural resources at high rates will not cause them to disappear, which means that countries whose major source of revenue is natural resources can use them to finance education, healthcare, development and redistribution. Resource-rich countries tend to have strong currencies, which impede other exports. Because resource extraction often entails little job creation, unemployment rises. Volatile resource prices cause growth to be unstable, aided by international banks that rush in when commodity prices

Natural Resources

are high and rush out in the downturns (reflecting the time-honored principle that bankers lend only to those who do not need their money). Resource-rich countries often do not pursue sustainable growth strategies. They fail to recognize that if they do not reinvest their resource wealth into productive investments

Conflict over access to resource rents gives rise to corrupt and undemocratic governments

above ground, they are actually becoming poorer. Political dysfunction intensifies the problem, as conflict over access to resource rents gives rise to corrupt and undemocratic governments. Luckily, Ghana is a relatively stable democracy. It is however worth paying attention to request by chiefs from the Western Region who are advocating for 10% of profits to be channeled into addressing development needs of the area that is the "goose that lays the golden egg" yet relegated to the back-burner of resource allocation over the decades.

There are well-known antidotes to each of these problems: a low exchange rate, a stabilization fund, careful investment of resource revenues (including in the country's people), a ban on borrowing, and transparency (so citizens can at least see the money coming in and going out). But there is a growing consensus that these measures, while necessary, are insufficient. Newly enriched countries need to take several more steps in order to increase the likelihood of a "resource blessing". Ghana must do more to ensure that citizens get the full value of the resources. There is an unavoidable conflict of interest between (usually foreign) natural-resource companies and host countries: the former want to minimize what they pay, while the latter need to max-



Oilrig in Sekondi-Takoradi, Western Region

imize it. Well-designed, competitive, transparent auctions can generate much more revenue than "sweetheart deals". Contracts, too, should be transparent, and should ensure that if prices soar – as they have repeatedly, the windfall gain does not go only to the company. Many countries have already signed bad contracts that give a disproportionate share of the resources' value to private foreign companies. But there is a simple answer: renegotiate; if that is impossible, impose a windfall-profit tax. Countries have been doing this all over the world. Of course, natural-resource companies will push back, emphasize the sanctity of contracts, and threaten to leave. But the outcome is typically otherwise. A fair renegotiation can be the basis of a better long-term relationship.

Botswana's renegotiations of such contracts laid the foundations of its remarkable growth for the last four decades.

Real development requires exploring all possible linkages

Moreover, it is not only developing countries, such as Bolivia and Venezuela, that renegotiate; developed countries such as Israel and Australia have done so as well. Even the United States has imposed a windfall-profits tax. Equally important, the money gained through natural resources must be used to promote development.

The old colonial powers regarded Africa simply as a place from which to extract resources. Some of the new purchasers have a similar attitude. Infrastructure (roads, railroads and ports) has been built with one goal in mind: getting the resources out of the country at as low a price as possible, with no effort to process the resources in the country, let alone to develop local industries based on them. Real development requires exploring all possible linkages: training local workers, developing small and medium-size enterprises to provide inputs extractive operations companies, domestic processing, and integrating the natural resources into the country's economic structure. Of course, today, these countries may not have a comparative advantage in many of these activities and some will argue that countries should stick to their strengths. From this perspective, these countries' 'comparative advantage' is having other countries exploit their resources.

That is wrong. What really matters is

dynamic comparative advantage, or a comparative advantage in the long run, which can be shaped. Forty years ago, South Korea had a comparative advantage in growing rice. Had it stuck to

Resources should be a blessing, not a curse

that strength, it would not be the industrial giant it is today. It might be the world's most efficient rice grower, but it would still be poor. Companies will tell Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, and Mozambique to act quickly, but there is good reason for them to move more deliberately. The resources will not disappear, and commodity prices hardly dip. In the meantime, these countries can put in place the institutions, policies, and laws needed to ensure that the resources benefit all of their citizens. Resources should be a blessing, not a curse. They can be, but it will not happen on its own. And it will not happen easily.

BENEFITS OF REVENUE TRACKING ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Communities' development within a district is a topmost priority. However, infrastructure, sanitation and other facilities in most small communities in many districts are underdeveloped though the Assemblies regularly generate revenues from various sources such as the District Assembly's Common Fund and the Internally Generated Funds.

Ironically, the Western Region which is noted as a resource-rich area records a high level of poverty, coupled with the adverse effects of not benefitting from the extraction of these natural resources. Unfortunately, citizens within such districts lack information as to how much the Assembly budgets within a given period, how much is generated and how much is actually expended. This has created 'windows' of opportunities for some personnel to mismanage funds which could have gone a long way to improving the developmental projects. Empowering citizens to monitor revenue and expenditure of the district is therefore very crucial in the developmental process. This would incite many citizens to demand accountability from the District Assemblies, thus strengthening Transparency, Responsiveness and eventually leading to increased development within the district.

FISHERIES IN GHANA

Danger looms: 5% of the GDP at stake!

(read from page 1) The Western Region of Ghana which accounts for over 300,000 of tones of the country's fish for years clamored for a fishing harbor but in vain till the Albert Bosumtwi-Sam Fishing Harbour in Sekondi was constructed in the mid-90s. There had been many reports where fishing inputs including subsidized premix fuel meant for fishermen were diverted. The plight of Ghanaian fishermen, mostly artisanal had been worsened by the practice of pair-

The fishing industry accounts for about 5% of the agricultural GDP and 10% of the country's animal protein

trawling by highly sophisticated, industrialized fishing vessels who had in the last decade drastically depleted Ghana's marine fish stocks while government seemingly looks on helplessly. Fishermen nationwide have been reporting of low harvests and in some cases no harvest due to the depletion of fisheries resources. This has worsened the poverty situation in coastal fishing communities which are ranked among the poorest in the country.

Consequently, in a desperate act to survive, local fishermen had also resorted to the use of bad fishing methods which include fishing application of dangerous chemicals like the banned DDT and dynamite; and also light fishing. Fishermen are also using small-mesh sizes which harvest juvenile fish whilst at the same time resorting to extracting mangroves for use as firewood. Mangroves serve as spawning grounds for many fish species. These last two practices contribute to many species of fish going extinct. With enforcement of fisheries regulations facing serious challenges because of inadequate human and material resources on the part the navy, the police and the judiciary, the governance aspect of fisheries has become daunting. Voluntary compliance by the local fishermen is also not forthcoming because they see the big trawlers breaking the law with impunity and virtually going scot free all the time. Fish-

ermen say "if they stop their bad practices, we shall also stop". Meanwhile the law will deal with whoever is apprehended irrespective of whatever justification one has for indulging in illegality. This scenario and high cost of fishing inputs has translated into price hikes of fish and its related products on the market. Generally, this has deepened the poverty level of fisher folks and their dependants, resulting in very high school dropouts, child prostitution and teenage pregnancy in the fishing communities. In Shama district for example, whilst Ghana's population growth rate is put at 2.2% per annum, that of the district is recorded at 3.5% per annum. Most of these births are by unmarried teenage and young mothers who trade sex for fish because of poverty. Substance abuse and alcoholism and use of stimulants abound in many other coastal fishing communities.

Although the future of the country's artisanal fishing industry looks bleak, there is a ray of hope as civil society and few individuals in state institutions that are strategically placed and market players have formed alliances and collaborating to address the situation and reverse the process in the Western Region. One example is the Hen Mpoano (Our Coast) Initiative led by the Coastal Resources Centre of University of Rhode Island (CRC-URI) supported by USAID. Another is the 'Friends of the Nation (FoN) in collaboration with Participatory Development Asso-

ciates (PDA), implementers of the 'Mwananchi-Ghana Programme' implemented the Improved Decentralized Fisheries pilot project. In the Shama District and the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Area (STMA). This is supported by the

Fishermen nationwide have been reporting of low harvests due to the depletion of fisheries resources

Overseas Development Institute (ODA) and funded by UKAid. FoN carried out a series of advocacy programmes and training workshops with all local stakeholders including the media on the need to ensure best practices in fishing and environmental protection. Local government authorities, government agencies, policymakers and the communities were brought on board. Broadly, these include District Assemblies, Fisheries Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Navy, and the Ghana Police Service Marine Unit.

Programmes were put in place and implemented with the view of ensuring that Ghana's coastal and marine ecosystems are sustainably managed to continue to provide goods and services which would generate a long-term socio-economic benefits.



A typical scene in a fishing harbour

CONNECTING THE DISCONNECT

Community and Fisheries

Though fisheries contribute to coastal economies significantly be it direct or indirect in terms of revenue, issues of the sector are hardly placed on the agenda of District Assemblies. Increased stakeholder participation is generally agreed in present development trends as an important ingredient for good governance especially for achieving sustainable resource management, livelihood and food security.

According to the Local Government Act 1993, Act 462, the Assembly is the highest planning, political and administrative authority in its geographical area. Subject to Article 245 of the Constitution and to this Act, a District Assembly shall exercise political and administrative authority in the district, provide guidance, give

Assemblies should promote and support productive activities and social development

direction to, and supervise the other administrative authorities in the district. Pursuant to this, the goals and mission statements of most assemblies commit them to promote and support productive activities and social development within their jurisdictions and remove obstacles to initiatives and development; (for example; "To improve the living conditions of the people in the district through sustainable growth and equitable Poverty reduction measures that will enhance access to Basic Social and Economic Services."

However, to a large extent there is a disconnect of this in local fisheries governance. The Fisheries Act 625 of 2002 in line with the decentralization process grants Assemblies space to be involved in governing the sector at the local level in collaboration with fishing communities, ensure the enforcement of the fisheries laws. This includes by-laws made by the Assemblies; and by recognizing them as co-managers in canoe registrations, markings and identifying of artisanal fishing vessels, being part of the application process for fishing licensing and registration, as well as involvement in establishing marine reserves within seascapes in their jurisdictions. Regrettably, Assemblies find these responsibilities difficult to exercise and therefore to a



Fisherman mending a net

large extent, have been very inactive in the sector. This situation contributes to poor governance, non-compliance by practitioners, and non-enforcement of the Act and regulations in the sector. factors for the inactions are incomplete decentralised and uncoordinated structures of Ministries and Agencies, inadequate knowledge about fisheries sector, ignorance of policy provisions, limitation on establishment of sector sub-committees in addition to mandated five sub-committees, absence of agenda on fisheries, polarization of sector issues, etc.

Considering the importance of fishing and the potential it has in creating employment, reducing poverty, contributions to other services and revenue generation, the need for change in mindset and proper attention given for the sector in local governance cannot be over-emphasised. District Assemblies should as a matter of urgency take advantage of the opportunities in the Fisheries Act and other relevant legal instruments to participate in fisheries governance to guarantee livelihood and food security, maximize revenue generation and reduce poverty.

There is a need for re-establishment of local co-management structures

Assemblies should facilitate the establishment of dialogue platforms at the district level for fisheries governance (Fisheries Sub-committees, District Fisheries Dialogue meeting, Maritime and Coastal Committees, etc). There is the need for re-establishment of local co-management structures involving the fishers and other stakeholders like an expansion of the erstwhile Community

Based Fisheries Management Committees (CBMFCs) where Landing Beach Committees (LBC) are integrated and empowered to manage beach level issues with the involvement of Assemblies. Through such an 'awakening', and exercising its role in local fisheries governance, Assemblies would be contributing to effective and sustainable management of this important resource in ensuring food security, business growth and poverty reduction locally as envisioned and expected of them in Ghana's Decentralization Program.

NO FISH, NO FOOD

Fish catch data suggests fish stocks off Ghana's coast have dwindled over the years. Conversations with fisher-folk confirm this. Not only does this negatively affect the livelihoods and nutrition of coastal people but also the lives of millions of others in the food chain.

One of the reasons for the decline has been the unsustainable fishing methods adopted by some fishermen. Let's fish responsibly to ensure sustainable stocks because no fish means no food. For millennia, the world's expansive oceans have served as a vast food source for the planet earth. Unfortunately, overfishing now gravely threatens the ability of the oceans to continue this essential role. Overfishing affects the structure, functioning and resilience of the ocean ecosystem, threatens food security and economic development and reduces long-term social welfare.

The huge increase in numbers of fishing boats working in our waters is fuelling this crisis. Alternative sources of livelihood in coastal communities are needed to reduce dependence on fishing and to contribute to fishing the oceans sustainably.



THE FISHERIES WORKING GROUP

Benefits of Local FWG Activities

The fisheries industry in Ghana since the mid-90s has been riddled with lots of misfortunes, from dwindling fish catch to increase in misunderstandings at sea between various fishing group to confrontation between fishermen and naval officers who police the seas, there seemed to be no light at the end of the tunnel. Interventions to help solve the problems bedevilling the fisheries sector were sometimes sporadic and ad hoc therefore failing to stand the test of time. This resulted in the perpetuation of these problems and the emergence of more problems did do much to help the lot of fishermen.

Several bodies have responded to several aspects of the problems. Governments have instituted several policies with the aim of curbing these problems. In its attempt to bring all stakeholders on board the management of the fisheries sector, the government instituted a co-management scheme of bringing in stakeholders at the grassroots level to manage the fisheries at the beach level. This led to the setting up of the Community Based Fisheries Management Committees (CBFMCs) which was made up of chief fishermen, their secretaries, leaders of fishmongers and processors etc. These committees were found in most landing beaches across the coast of Ghana. Most committees however collapsed when funding from the World Bank which was used to set up these committees ended.

With the collapse of this form of co-management and an influx of businessmen into fishing came the struggle to "catch the last fish". There were a lot of practices that were negatively affecting the sector which were being adapted by fishermen. They included pair-trawling, the use of chemicals and dynamite for fishing, the use of small mesh sized nets for fishing and many more. The passage of the Fisheries Act did little to curtail the ever increasing spate of illegalities. It was not until the passage of the Legislative Instrument (LI 1968) that it dawned on fishermen that the authorities were serious in curtailing this menace.

There have been a lot of actions undertaken by all concerned stakeholders in making the LI work, some of it helpful, others not so helpful. It was in the spirit of encouraging an all-inclusive form of governance of the fisheries sector and in particular the enforcement and compliance to the LI that the Hen Mpoano initiative of which FoN is a partner facilitated the



Artisanal Fishing in Elmina, Central Region

formation of the fisheries working group.

The Fisheries Working Group (FWG) is a group made up of representatives of the various fishing groups found in the Western Region of Ghana namely the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen's Council, the Western Region Corporative Fishermen Service Centre Union, the Ghana Trawlers Association, the Ghana Inshore Fisheries Association and two representatives of women's groups. They are also representatives from state institutions that have something to do with fisheries namely the Environmental Protection Agency, the Ghana Police Service, the Ghana Navy and the Attorney General's Department.

The mandate of the group is to advise the fisheries Directorate in the region on pertinent issues affecting the sector in the region and also to be a link between the associations and institutions, and the Fisheries Directorate in terms of information dissemination.



Industrial fishermen at work

The FWG also undertakes education of fishers to promote voluntary compliance of the Fisheries LI as opposed to enforcement. They are however not against enforcement.

In the short time of its existence the group has received rave reviews from all including the Fisheries Directorate at the national level who have called for such a group to be set up in all the coastal regions of Ghana.

Through the work of the FWG, there is efficient information exchange amongst stakeholders. Worries and concerns of fishermen are carried to the doorsteps of the Directorate whilst information from there is made available to the fishers through their representatives within the group.

Through its education on the Fisheries LI, and the strengthening of the prosecution chain, the FWG has been able to help fishermen to see the need to voluntarily comply with the provision in the LI rather than being hauled before the law courts to be punished.

It is the hope of all stakeholders that with the help of the group, the lot of fishermen within and outside the region will be bettered.

Communities and Participation

PARTICIPATORY LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Communities in Action

A key facet of poverty is social exclusion and a lack of participation in governance. The poor are either not aware that they have a right to participate or do not know how. At the local level, authorities including District Assemblies and Traditional rulers do not always see the value of citizen participation and even when they do, they are not sure how to go about it. Ultimately, citizen participation is fundamental, as a right in itself, but also in ensuring appropriate service delivery for poverty reduction.

Ghana embarked on a decentralisation programme in 1988 as a key element in the process of democratisation and the search for a more participatory approach to development. The implementation of decentralisation programme has engendered some significant development results which have also impacted on national poverty levels. Consequently, Ghana has achieved a high level of poverty reduction; from 51.7% in 1991, 39.5% in 1999 and eventually to 28.5% in 2006. Poverty, however, continues to be high in certain regions, including the Western and three regions in Northern belt. To contribute to addressing the gaps in citizens' participation in local governance, Friends of the Nation collaborated with the Kumasi Institute of Technology, Energy and Environment and the Jomoro District Assembly to deepen citizens' participation in local governance through Participatory Community

*Community Development Plans
as a tool to influence decisions*

Interactions; Public Hearings; Validation Workshop on the District Medium Term Development Plan (2010-2013). The Community Interactions were conducted in 20 communities to identify key community development challenges, available community resources, needs and aspirations and how to address these challenges through participatory processes. The output of this exercise was Community Development Plans to use a tool to influence decisions in the DMTDP and also used to solicit for funds from other development partners or agencies. Public Hearings on



Community Voting in Jomoro District

the DMTDP were done in all the ten Area Councils in the District to provide the platform for citizens to be sensitised on the content on the Plan and make their inputs.

The Public Hearings also served as

*„The communities know now
what we plan to do for them
and they will be very
expectant“*

opportunities for citizens to know whether the content of the Plan reflect their needs and aspirations. To authenticate the document and consequently adopt it, a two-day General Assembly meeting was organised to validate the DMTDP and adopt it. The usefulness of the exercise is no in doubt, as it provided the opportunity for about 3,150 citizens to be abreast with the content of the DMTDP, as well as make their inputs. For the Jomoro District Assembly, the exercise contributed in fulfilling the requirements of preparing the DMTDP and challenging them to deliver better results. The District Planning Officer said, *“This is the first time in my over twenty-year experience as a Local Government official that Public Hearings on the DMTDPs have been done”*. *“This exercise has really thrown a bigger challenge to us (District Assembly) as the communities now know what we plan to do for them and they will be very expectant”*.

The exercise revealed some of the community development needs that were discussed during the consultative process in preparation of the DMTDP were not captured. For example, during the Elubo Area Council Public Hearing, the Assemblyman of Elubo-West Electoral Area remarked that, *“had it not been this exercise, we wouldn't have known that what we discussed with the Assembly officials as our critical felt needs are not what have been*

put in the Development Plan. We are going to be seen as liars by our community members. We are grateful to KITE and FoN for supporting the District Assembly to organise such a programme, without which we wouldn't have known this”.

Participation and Good Governance

Transparency, accountability and participation are widely agreed upon as being the key elements for Good Governance. These three features are mutually dependent on each other. Participation plays an essential role in this scheme: Public participation is a pre-condition for a functioning and healthy civil society within a nation state. Participation can be motivated by an administrative perspective (in order to build public support), however, the citizens' perspective is most important: Participation is needed to foster a vibrant civil society in order to watch, moderate and influence state decisions. If a civil society is weak or non-existent, nobody will hold political incumbents accountable for providing transparency for state incomes such as taxes and oil revenues, as it happens in many authoritarian systems around the world. The patterns of public participation differ from country to country, but particularly in states depending mainly on agriculture (such as Ghana), one has to find participatory methods supporting the rural population: Especially they must not be lost in the scheme of political decision-making, since their future and well-being are highly dependent on political decisions in the resource-based sectors. Participation schemes in Ghanaian communities include participatory mapping, the facilitation of working groups, community councils, community radio stations or even drama groups.

IMPROVED DECENTRALISED FISHERIES

Improved voice for fishers

FoN's Mwananchi project has been an interesting ride of grassroots Fisherfolk requesting for their voices to be heard and getting their local laws gazetted to make them enforceable. Building on the gains had from engaging fishing communities in 2007-2009 on the Rights and Voice Initiative (RAVI) project in eleven coastal fishing communities in the four coastal regions of Ghana, the Improved Decentralised Fisheries Project was designed to further enhance the voices of fisherfolks and create enabling environments for them to exercise their voices at the local government level. The project was implemented in the Shama District

and the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Area (STMA), advocated for fisherfolks inclusion in decision-making, since fisheries contributed significantly to local coastal economies. When it comes to revenue for the government, fisheries by far is the largest contributor. Whenever fishermen came back from expedition without fish, economic activities dwindled to a halt and the whole community goes to sleep on an empty stomach. This is the influence artisanal fishing has on local economies and beyond. Yet After 3 years of the project, two sub-committees responsible for fisheries duty of ensuring that fisheries issues at the grassroots level are no relegated to the back burner. They got the Assemblies to recognize fisheries contributions and allowed them participation and involvement in decision-making processes of their meetings.

These two sub-committees of the two respective Assemblies had their capacities developed on the Fisheries Act 625, Fisheries LI 1968 and relevant portions of Local Government Act 462. By these efforts, sub-committees together with fisher-

folks were able to draft fisheries bye-laws for the consideration and adoption of the Assemblies. This draft is currently under-going legal procedures to be fine-tuned as a legally enforceable document. It will also empower the chief fishermen whose authority has eroded due to modernism amongst other issues.

In an attempt to scale up fishery sector issues, the project in the run-up to Election 2012, brought together all aspiring parliamentary candidates in three constituencies of the project area in a healthy electoral debate in which they stated their positions on what they will be doing in the areas of fisheries, coastal and oil-and-gas management if given the mandate. FoN intends to support them with facts and figures from the grassroots in their work in far away Accra, and also continue to provide regular interface between them and the local fisherfolks for dialogue. By this exposition, fishery sector issues will be prominent on the national agenda.

GRASSROOT VOICE FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Participatory Spatial Planning in Shama

Historically, land use decision making has remained a technically driven process with the intended beneficiaries of key land use decisions exempted from the process. With an objective to empower coastal inhabitants to be part of the process and foster greater partnerships between local authorities and communities, Friends of the Nation (FoN) facilitated participatory land use mapping activities that elicited perceptions of risk to flooding, exposures and sensitivity to coastal erosion and anticipated sea level rise from coastal communities.

Coastal communities in the Shama district are being impacted by flooding, coastal



Participatory land use mapping with local communities

erosion and other coastal hazards. These impacts and changes will likely accelerate in the next few decades due to evolving sea level rise and extremes in rainfall events. This call for capacity building at the district and community levels for shorefront utilization and decision making that anticipate these impacts and changes. Central to the process was the identification of fundamental land use and socio-economic issues likely to be magnified by climate change. The use of aerial photos in participatory land use mapping exercises stimulated discussions among key stakeholders – chiefs and elders, elderly men, elderly women and the youth – on the vulnerability of their landscape to the impacts of recurrent flooding as well as potential threats posed to settlements and economic infrastructure by potential sea level rise. Integrated into this activity was awareness raising and education of community members. Involvement of community people in participatory mapping and characterization of the features on the landscape as well as their exposures and sensitivities to coastal hazards and climate change improved their understanding of the issues and instigated willingness to relocate to new areas that guaranteed public safety

and hence ensured better adaptation to the impacts of climate change. The par-



Product of participatory planning

ticipatory mapping exercises generated local knowledge and information on present, expected and preference land uses which was processed with and integrated into Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This approach has opened up the planning process to citizen involvement and empowered communities to actively participate in land use decision making processes at the district level and contributed towards climate change adaptation and building resilience.

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Upcoming Events

- Dialogue on Hen Mpoano Policy Briefs
(Date: 20-22nd of May 2013,
Venue: Akroma Plaza, Takoradi)
- National Editors Forum on Oil and Gas
(Date: May, Venue: to be determined)
- Amanzule Focal Area conservation planning re-
treat
(Date: May, Venue: to be determined)

Best team member, Jan-Mar 2013



Richard Adupong serves as a Research Officer of Friends of the Nation. Richard exhibits, and is noted for dedication, zeal, tenacity, and courage in discharge of his duties. He serves a model for colleagues. We appreciate his contribution to our collective effort & mission.

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