



‘One nation, one people, one destiny’? The Ghanaian diaspora’s contribution to national development using diverse channels

Samuel Zan
SEND Foundation of West Africa
May 2004

An action research study of resource mobilization by Ghanaians
in the diaspora to three regions of Ghana

Report prepared as part of the “Hello Africa: Shifting power, tackling poverty by
connecting Africa and the African diaspora” project funded by Comic Relief

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	1
Glossary	2
Executive Summary	3
Section One – Introduction	5
1.0 Background to research	5
1.1 Purpose of research	6
1.2 Organization of report	7
Section Two – Research Process	8
2.0. Overview of research process	8
2.1. Partnership-based approach	8
2.2. Case study approach	9
2.3. Zoning the research	10
2.4. Partners’ experience sharing	11
2.5. Community-level validation	13
Section Three – Summary of Case Studies	14
3.0. Diaspora supported development initiatives through non-traditional civil society organizations	14
3.1. Diaspora-supported development initiatives through decentralised political structures	15
3.3. Diaspora-supported development initiatives through the institution of chieftaincy	16
Section Four - Emerging Issues and Policy Implications	19

Send (Social Enterprise Development) Foundation of West Africa
G11 Regimanuel Estates
Nungua Barrier
Sakumono
Accra
Ghana

Tel: +233-21-716860/1
Email: send@africaonline.com.gh

Acknowledgements

The idea of this research was conceived by the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD). They went ahead to seek partnership to realise their dream. If the result of this study helps to inform development policy and practice then AFFORD needs to be given the first acknowledgement, along with the project's funders, Comic Relief.

We benefited from the professional support of Mr. Aloysius Denkabe who was the Research Advisor in planning the research, developing research tools, conducting the literature review and providing guidance to the local research partners. His contribution is well appreciated.

The various local research partners CENCOSAD, ISODEC, and SIDSEC were responsible for conducting the field research upon which this report is based. We wish to acknowledge their contribution to this research. And they in turn have recounted the support and cooperation they each received from stakeholders in their respective research sites. We cannot name everybody but remain sincerely appreciative of their contribution to this research.

Dr. Nicholas Atampugre was so kind to offer comments on an early draft, thus contributing to improving the quality of this final report (ultimate responsibility for the contents, of course, lies with the author). Many thanks for your assistance but we cannot overlook your personal passion for the subject of this study which made you to offer very useful suggestions during the process of the research.

Samuel Zan
May 2004

Glossary

AFFORD	African Foundation for Development
CENCOSAD	Centre for Community Studies, Action and Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ISODEC	Integrated Social Development Centre
OEF	Okyeman Environmental Foundation
SEND	Social Enterprise Development Foundation of West Africa
SIDSEC	Sustainable Integrated Development Services Centre

Executive Summary

This research examines just three of the diverse ways in which Ghanaians in the diaspora effect the transfer of resources with the broad aim of improving the economic lot of their counterparts in Ghana's northern, central and coastal zones. An obvious conclusion is that the Ghanaian diaspora is already engaging in mobilizing funds for national development through various community-level development projects. The way the money comes in is in small bits, sporadic, unorganised and information about it is rather scanty. But this activity could form a key plank for a national development strategy given the appropriate policy and institutional framework.

In northern parts of Ghana we looked at diaspora engagement via non-traditional civil society organizations. Such efforts are often characterized by individual initiative working through informal, personal networks and contacts. The sustainability of these initiatives – depending upon individual commitment, passion, motivation and resources – is questionable without development of organizational structures and formalization taking place. We found evidence just this sort of evolution in Bolga demonstrating that it is feasible.

Although allegiance to hometown, clan or even school is often the basis of diaspora engagement, broader diasporic connections are also in evidence. These are characterized by more formality and the presence of shared, democratic values that could offer a model to other forms of diaspora engagement based around ethnicity. An implication for diaspora groups seems to be that in addition to self-help, home ties and trust, crucial democratic values are necessary for development interventions to transcend rather than reinforce barriers and differences such as ethnicity.

In the central zone we studied how diaspora groups were supporting Ghana's development through the District Assemblies, significant structures in a decentralized Ghana. We found that public-private/diaspora-home partnerships working with and through District Assemblies could be a viable option. But for this to happen, the District Assemblies will need the capacity to engage effectively with diaspora communities (as well, of course, as their local citizens) – to involve them in planning processes, to better account to them, to furnish them with required information. In effect, District Assemblies require their own diaspora outreach systems and mechanisms and there are perhaps creative ways of achieving these.

Ghana's venerated chieftaincy institutions enjoy something of a comparative advantage in the diaspora mobilization business, given the appeal and hold of cultural identity, especially for a diasporic community. And yet, diaspora resource mobilization for development via the chieftaincy raises intriguing challenges around accountability, participation and civic rights. These are not necessarily new themes in modern day Africa but both migration and decentralization throw them into sharp relief. How can the expectations of citizenship be reconciled with the constraints of subject-hood? What are the lines of demarcation between the roles and responsibilities of Chiefs and District Assemblies? These are broad constitutional questions of which diaspora is but one part.

Overall, the clear message from this work is that one size does not fit all. This contrasts sharply with the emerging rhetoric around "the diaspora" supporting Ghana's (or Africa's) development in two ways. First, the term diaspora should not conjure up in the mind an homogenous mass of people who can be mobilized in the service of, say, national development with no consideration of their own motivations, interests, cultures, social norms,

capacities, concerns, priorities, preferences, and expectations. Different regions, even in the same country, throw up different migratory patterns, different social challenges, and different approaches to dealing with them. Understanding this heterogeneity is essential to effective mobilization of and engagement with the diaspora in the service of development.

Second, the actually existing ways in which Ghanaians in the diaspora engage with diverse counterparts on the ground throw up a whole host of challenges and conundrums – how to sustain these efforts over time, how to ensure community-wide accountability and benefit, how to “join up” diaspora-supported and other local initiatives, how to embrace participatory approaches to development that ensure buy-in and support not just from the diaspora but local populations as well, etc – that the Government of Ghana, development support agencies, donors, and of course diaspora communities themselves must urgently grapple with.

Among sub-Saharan African countries, the Government of Ghana has been proactive in highlighting the key role that the Ghanaian diaspora does and can play in national development. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy, the policy framework for supporting growth and poverty reduction in the short term, identifies the Ghanaian diaspora as a potential source of funds for the GPRS. The Ghana Home Coming Summit was an innovation that has inspired other countries. Individual High Commissions have undertaken their own initiatives to mobilize the Ghanaian diaspora’s resources for national development. Now though the Government needs an overarching national strategy that gives more meaning to these policy pronouncements and connects with realities on the ground. The Government needs to look two ways simultaneously: first both inwards and downwards to the grassroots to refine its policy framework to make it more coherent and enabling of diaspora initiatives. Second, outwards to the emerging Africa-wide policy framework for addressing migration and development, and internationally to bilateral and multilateral partners to ensure that they support the Government’s own policies and priorities. Meanwhile, the Government must improve upon its own accountability and governance systems, crucial to building the confidence and trust of citizens at home and the diaspora to channel their resources through Government-endorsed channels.

There is much that Ghana’s diaspora communities themselves can do to enhance the long-term impact of their contributions. Their first challenge is to build on their rich traditions of self-help mediated through trusted networks and channels to clarify the extent to which the values upon which they engage with counterparts are truly democratic and the structures they use are adapting to become more transparent, inclusive, participatory and accountable to the whole community. This is the key to sustainable development that transcends rather than reinforces barriers. Diaspora communities must also take responsibility for evolving their initiatives towards more stable, long-lasting and appropriate organizational forms that meet their needs.

By forging a collaborative environment for working, sharing and learning together, this action research has helped to sensitize the research partners – significant social actors in Ghana and the diaspora – to the importance of mainstreaming support for diaspora-home engagement into their overall work. All the participating organizations mentioned in this report are committed to taking forward the work to ensure that the Ghanaian diaspora’s resources are put to effective and long-lasting use in the interests of national development, of the well-being of Ghanaian citizens.

Section One – Introduction

1.0 Background to research

The London-based African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) has a mission to expand and enhance the contribution that the African diaspora makes to Africa's development. African diaspora organizations based in the UK mobilize their resources for development via a range of channels but little is known about how these transnational linkages operate or what scope exists to make them more effective. AFFORD initiated this action research to explore these questions in a project entitled "Hello Africa: Shifting power, tackling poverty by linking Africa and the African diaspora" that Comic Relief agreed to fund. The starting premise was that the increased involvement and visibility of the African diaspora in supporting Africa's development might provide an opportunity for the African peoples facing the daily realities of hardship, injustice and marginalization to drive the transformation of these realities supported by their counterparts in the diaspora and other agents.

The Ghanaian diaspora is created by migration of people leaving their original homes and communities for new pastures, usually in search of better livelihoods. Ghana has long witnessed different patterns of migration. For example, people from the very poor parts of the country, mainly northern Ghana, were forcibly recruited during the colonial era to work in mines, to construct the railways and to till cocoa plantations in southern Ghana. Since then there has been voluntary migration southwards in search of employment opportunities. In southern Ghana, especially among the early elites, the pattern was to migrate abroad primarily for educational purposes. Since the early years, there has been significant internal migration within the south in search of agricultural opportunities, especially fertile lands.

Although the term diaspora is linked to processes of migration, within the Ghanaian context the term (with its local variants – e.g. Hamburger) has come to be defined rather narrowly and describes mainly citizens who have migrated out of the country to Europe and America. This narrow definition has influenced the scope of the research. The Ghanaian diaspora's role in politics, especially during the pre-independence era of political struggle, is well established and they played a catalytic role in self-determination and political liberation. The 1945 Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester ushered in an intensified struggle for independence in many African countries.

However, not much is known about the role of the diaspora in community development and the economic liberation of their countries of origin. This research focuses on the diaspora's economic support for development. Literature on the subject of the Ghanaian diaspora's engagement in national and community development initiatives has been difficult to come by. This may be because it is a recent phenomenon. It is also probably because it is only recently that researchers and donor agencies have become interested in the role of the diaspora in development processes in their areas of origin.

In Ghana it was only as recently as July 2001 that an attempt was made to treat, in a formal manner, the subject of the diaspora's contribution to development. The then new Government of the New Patriotic Party convened the 'Home Coming Summit', as part of a political effort to woo Ghanaians living abroad to come home and invest in the growth of the local economy. It was estimated that 1,600 Ghanaians, mainly professionals living abroad, participated in the Home Coming Summit. This effort led to the setting up of the Non-Resident Ghanaian

Secretariat in Accra. The Summit itself identified the diaspora's contribution to national development in several key areas including the following:

- as a potential market for non traditional exportable items such as foodstuff and garments
- as a source of finance capital for investment to develop the local private sector
- as ambassadors for Ghana's culture – food, clothes, social life etc
- as a source of modern knowledge and technical know-how for development, particularly information technology
- as a link between Ghanaian communities and local foreign-based communities.

There has, however, not been any systematic follow-up to the above effort. For example, information about practical actions on the key outcomes, documentation and policy decisions from the Summit are hard to find.

The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) has recognised the importance of the Ghanaian diaspora as a source of mobilizing funds to finance the GPRS (GPRS February 19, 2003). The level of importance is underscored by the establishment of the 'Non-Resident Ghanaian Fund'. However, the GPRS itself is lacking in any concrete analysis that links assumptions about Ghana's diaspora to the earlier efforts of the Home Coming Summit.

Notwithstanding this apparent lack of serious attention to Ghanaian diaspora issues in Ghana's political discourse and policy formulation, Ghanaians in the diaspora¹ continue to engage with their Ghana-based communities using diverse mechanisms, approaches and means. These are as varied as the motivations driving those same engagements. It is against the above context that this research was conducted.

1.1 Purpose of research

The overall goal of the research is to enhance the quality of partnerships between African civil society organizations in the diaspora, in particular United Kingdom-based African civil society organizations, and Ghana-based civil society organizations aimed at poverty reduction and the promotion of equity and social justice. Towards the above goal the specific objectives set were:

- To identify and document existing development partnerships involving UK-based African civil society organizations in three geographical zones (Northern, Central and Coastal) in Ghana. Key areas of focus for documentation was to include, but not be limited to: programming areas and activities; forms of organization; best practice; experiences and obstacles; constraints and problems encountered.
- To identify and document avenues and opportunities for development partnerships in the three zones between civil society organizations in Ghana and the diaspora.
- To identify new areas of interest and opportunities to increase partnerships between Ghanaians in the diaspora and communities in Ghana.
- To develop strategies for strengthening development partnerships involving AFFORD and West Africa based civil society organizations engaged in diaspora linkages.

This was conceived as an action research project with a view to generating information, exploring practical solutions to emerging problems and flagging implications for broader policy reform and/or formulation. Consequently, the following expected outcomes were agreed as part of the research design process:

¹ The Ghanaian diaspora here refers to those in the global north – the so-called developed countries.

- Country report on Ghanaian diaspora-supported development initiatives in rural Ghana
- Increased awareness within the development community in Ghana of the role and contributions of Ghanaians in the diaspora to poverty alleviation in Ghana.
- Increased development partnership involving Ghanaian civil society organizations and Ghanaians in the diaspora.
- Agreed framework for the SEND/AFFORD partnership.

1.2 Organization of report

This report is divided into four sections. This first section has outlined the context of the subject of study, established the objectives and the study's rationale.

The second section explains the various approaches used to conduct the research, how they complemented one another and why these approaches were preferred to others. It starts with an explanation of the partnership approach employed and the overall value of that approach. The contribution of each partner to the research process is made explicit in this chapter, so also is their motivation. The case for using the case study approach adopted in this action research is further explained.

In the third section, a summary of the case studies is presented. The significant findings from each case study, reflecting the peculiar form of diaspora engagement in the particular zone, are explained in order to highlight the opportunities that exist for strengthening the diaspora's contribution to development processes. The challenges facing such an endeavour are also highlighted.

Section four presents the policy implications of the research. This chapter challenges some existing policy assumptions especially the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS). Questions requiring further investigation because of their importance for broader development processes and policy debates are also raised. This chapter raises some broader challenges that the research poses to all the partners in this action-research, AFFORD, SEND and other civil society organizations represented by ISODEC, CENCOSAD and SIDSEC.

Section Two – Research Process

2.0. Overview of research process

The research was planned around the following processes:

- Partnership-based
- Case study approach
- Zoning the research
- Partners sharing experiences
- Community-level validation

2.1. Partnership-based approach

There were two levels of partnership involving the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) and the Social Enterprise Development Foundation of West Africa (SEND) at one level and the local partners comprising CENCOSAD, ISODEC and SIDSEC at the other level.

Box 1: Regional research partners

Centre for Community Studies, Action and Development (CENCOSAD)

CENCOSAD is one of the earliest national development NGOs in Ghana having started as far back as 1977. It is a capacity building social development agency, which works through action research and resource mobilization with the mission ‘to empower and enable poor communities to realise their own development’. Over the years, it has been promoting bottom-up approaches to development and felt very much that this research process is very much part of the bottom-up strategy to development where the people are defining the agenda and dictating the process of development. CENCOSAD was founded as an action research organization, researching into what people are doing and mainstreaming the lessons learnt to both governmental and non-governmental agencies. As an organization, CENCOSAD is always looking for best practices for dissemination, hence interest in this research. According to CENCOSAD, ‘in our people-centred and bottom-up approach, we look at traditional approaches and institutions of which chieftaincy is a key element.’ CENCOSAD also had the expectation to use the research to broaden their network of partnership.

Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC)

ISODEC is one of the biggest Ghanaian development NGOs. It is committed to sustainable human development through the empowerment of the poor. ISODEC believes in research as a key instrument and means for generating policy-relevant information for advocacy action and campaigning. Networking and coalition building are some of the strategies that ISODEC employs in its various development interventions. All of these are opportunities that were envisaged in the research, hence their involvement. Besides, ISODEC – Sunyani has been involved in working with some District Assemblies in the Brong Ahafo Region in the area of education and saw the action research as a further leverage for their work.

Sustainable Integrated Development Services Centre (SIDSEC)

SIDSEC is a community-based organization promoting development in Ghana’s Upper West Region. SIDSEC builds strong and authentic relationships with both local and international organizations in a manner that creates the necessary synergy for experience sharing and learning during project design, planning and implementation. The organization respects and upholds the total integration of the values and norms of its beneficiaries in all the stages of

work. Furthermore, SIDSEC encourages and supports project beneficiaries to bring out their immense potential to bear on the opportunities within their environment for their own self-actualization. For SIDSEC, the research was an opportunity to collaborate with other partners for 'cross-fertilization of ideas', which they as an organization essentially believe in. The request for their involvement in the research quite fitted in with the organization's plans to establish a research and development unit. Participation in this research thus acted as a catalyst and initial capacity building for future research work. Opportunity for self-generated income is the core of sustainable development and therefore SIDSEC was pleased to have this opportunity for itself but also hoping that the outcome of the research was likely to have the same opportunity for communities through their citizens in the diaspora. SIDSEC also says that its very foundations had links with one of their citizens in Canada who provided useful encouragement, advice and support for fundraising. It was therefore of great interest to be involved in a research on a subject for which they as an organization have been a beneficiary.

The first levels of partnership between AFFORD and SEND involved an inception meeting in January 2001. The research was initially meant to be a West Africa based initiative hence the initial meeting involved two other civil society organizations from Sierra Leone and Nigeria. At the inception meeting, AFFORD shared the idea of the research with SEND and the two other partners from Sierra Leone and Nigeria. The idea was further elaborated in the form of research questions, a timetable and workplan for the research. Contractual issues relating to roles, responsibilities, budget etc were also discussed and agreed upon. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between AFFORD and SEND. A joint ownership was assumed for the research in Ghana from thereon.

The next level of partnership involved SEND and the three Ghanaian civil society organizations mentioned above. SEND developed criteria to identify and select the local partners, which included the following considerations:

- regional presence
- involvement in community development initiatives
- research experience within the organization
- knowledge of key development actors in the particular geographical region and
- willingness to engage in collaborative effort.

SEND held a research-planning meeting with the local partners (CENCOSAD, ISODEC and SIDSEC) in August, 2002 to brief them on the research proposal, develop the methodology and tools, agree work plan and discuss roles and responsibilities. SEND had by this time hired the services of an experienced researcher as Research Advisor to guide the entire research process. The local partners then used the framework developed to prepare their respective research proposals which were the basis of the MoU signed between SEND on the one hand and each of the partners on the other.

2.2. Case study approach

The research was based on the assumption that there are diverse forms of Ghanaian diaspora engagement with their local communities for development activities. The case study approach was used to get in-depth understanding of broader issues, and to compare and extrapolate the findings. We were also interested in looking at existing organizational forms that mediate community development. There was a further assumption that various organizational forms had different strengths depending on how well developed or not they are in any particular location. For example, NGOs are the main organizational forms promoting development in Northern Ghana. In contrast, the institution of chieftaincy is more developed in Southern

Ghana and is a powerful force engaged in diverse development activities. In the Brong Ahafo Region, ISODEC, the partner organization was already working with some District Assemblies who are mediating various development initiatives through public-private partnerships.

Finally, it was felt that the case study approach is one of the ways of doing participatory research, and participation was a key consideration in this research. It was not also possible within resource and time constraints to investigate all organizational forms mediating community development with the diaspora.

The first case study explored how Ghanaians in the diaspora are organizing their linkages and channelling community development resources through civil society organizations. SIDSEC hosted this case study investigation while ISODEC – Sunyani investigated diaspora organizations' engagement with the decentralised political structure of the District Assembly in the Brong Ahafo Region. CENCOSAD, using the Okyeman state in the Eastern Region as an example, explored the role of Ghanaians in the diaspora, working through the traditional institution of chieftaincy.

The case study approach has helped the research to draw lessons from diverse and complex forms of diaspora engagement mainly focussing on those that occur in the global south. This means that not all forms of diaspora engagement were investigated. For example, the role of diaspora old students associations in promoting education in their former schools was not explored. However, the approach used broadened the scope of understanding of a rather complex subject and allowed for more informed conclusions. It also drew attention to the potential that exists for promoting community development, poverty reduction and national economic development.

2.3. Zoning the research

This research was conducted in a country that prided itself, at independence, on being 'one nation, one people, one destiny'. Yet there are disparities in Ghana in terms of ethnicity, economic potential, forms of social organization, and natural resource endowment. There are also variations in culture and cultural expressions, values and perspectives, political organization and participation, as well as historical circumstances. Even though some of these differences exist within regions as well, it is common and in deed easy to delineate them in geographical blocks.

The purpose of the zoning approach was to contextualise the research. For the purpose of this research, three zones were considered: the Savannah zone – comprising the three Northern Regions (Northern, Upper East and Upper West), the Central zone – comprising Brong Ahafo and Ashanti Regions, and the Coastal Region comprising Eastern, Greater Accra, Central, Western and Volta Regions.

The zoning approach enabled the research to cover the whole country in a reasonably representative manner, which reflects distinctive characteristics that are likely to influence the nature of diaspora linkages. For example, the North is generally regarded as the poorest geographical zone in Ghana (GPRS February, 2003) and migratory patterns tend to be largely southbound. This trend typifies the assertion that in spite of efforts at integrating the North with the rest of the country, it still serves as little more than a labour market for the south, which was the case prior to independence. The environment in Northern Ghana remains very harsh and communities are less organized. External migratory patterns are relatively recent in

the North. In the South, the economy and household food basket is different, the zone is relatively more endowed and internal migration is fairly minimal. Migratory patterns in Southern Ghana tend to be external and fairly old.

By zoning the research, it also allowed us to identify, as partners in the research, local civil society organizations that operate in the particular area and are familiar with the development challenges. For example, SIDSEC is a community-based organization promoting development in the Upper West Region. Similarly, CENCOSAD focuses on the coastal areas of Southern Ghana and ISODEC – Sunyani has been working with selected District Assemblies in the Brong Ahafo Region to implement various support programmes for education, especially girl-child education.

2.4. Partners' experience sharing

Regular meetings of the partners involved in the research acted as the oil that lubricated the partnership. It was essentially the means that kept the partners together and provided a forum for sharing and learning which is so crucial in any action research process. These sessions were used as building blocks for participation and ownership of the research process. The sessions facilitated:

- the development of research tools
- a collective analysis of data and findings
- a determination of key policy issues
- the provision of input and guidance from the Research Advisor
- a collective exploration of options and solutions to emerging problems in the research process.

Over all, four experience sharing sessions were held with partner organizations and the Research Advisor. Each session made a distinctive contribution to the research, as summarised below.

Box 2: Selected comments from partners' experience sharing workshops

'Opportunity for information sharing is making the partnership worthwhile'

'By providing direction to one another, we are collectively forging ahead as a team'

'We are drawing closer as a team in this research through our regular meetings'

'Forum helped reaffirm the focus of each partner's area of research and the research as a whole'

'We are collectively finding ways by which the research information could be improved'

The first experience-sharing meeting achieved commitment from the local partners to engage in the research process and agreed on a framework for their participation. The research methodology and tools were also discussed and agreed at this meeting. Above all, it was an opportunity to get to know each of the local partners in some detail in terms of organizational structure and capacity to do research. This process of getting to know each other provided a first glimpse of the research potential in the various research sites. Finally, a workplan with key milestones in the research process was adopted at the meeting.

A second meeting of partners provided the opportunity to review each partner's research proposal to ensure that each case study was clearly understood and the scope of the proposal

submitted was likely to investigate the issues at stake. The meeting also further refined the research questions and tools and helped ascertain whether partners were sufficiently conversant with the tools agreed. All partners confirmed their knowledge of the tools proposed and called on the Research Advisor to provide support to any partner who had special need. Field research was effectively launched after this meeting.

The third experience-sharing meeting was meant to get feedback on progress of fieldwork and to address any emerging issues together as a team. At the third meeting, the following were identified as key emerging issues and challenges:

- Need to profile the key actors: those in diaspora, local partners and beneficiaries.
- Nature of partnership and projects so far investigated were one-off.
- Paucity of documentation of experiences
- Very few UK-based diaspora linkages in most of the research communities.
- Reticence about giving information on diaspora.

The main lessons learnt from the experience sharing were:

- Triangulation is important due to the paucity of documentation and reticence of people to provide information and data.
- Diaspora populations resource themselves through multiplicity of funding means.
- Nature of interventions were varied but tend to concentrate on very basic welfare and livelihood needs like education, health, sanitation credit etc.
- Professional individuals in the diaspora tend to be in the frontline in promoting engagement with their home communities.
- Interventions tend to be informal in nature because of the personalised nature, demonstrated by the use of relatives and friends.
- Trust is a key factor because it is personalised and informal but also because of the lack of accountability within community structures.

The collective lessons were used to guide the direction and areas of emphasis for the next phase of the field research. The meeting also agreed on the schedule for the community-level validation workshops.

The fourth meeting, which benefited from the participation of representatives of AFFORD, also focussed on reporting on progress of work and how the previous lessons were applied to address the emerging problems. Researchers fed back from the community-level validation sessions. Emerging issues flagged at the meeting were:

- Researching diaspora linkages in development is extremely challenging not least because of too many undocumented actors and processes; informal nature of the relationships and lack of accountability mechanisms in the relationship.
- The distance between the actors (diaspora and local communities) remains a great obstacle to communication. Differences between the working environment both technological and cultural can generate misunderstanding.
- Diaspora linkages using civil society organizations and District Assemblies tend to offer a lot more opportunity and endeavour for productive engagement by diaspora based organizations with their indigenous communities.
- Traditional authority linkages provide opportunity for articulating divergent interests, e.g. the desire of people in the diaspora to engage for cultural purposes whereas the traditional authorities are keen on economic opportunities.

2.5. Community-level validation

The purpose of the community level validation was to cross check findings with the communities and obtain their input into the final report. Only CENCOSAD reported difficulties of getting the Okyehene to sit in the same forum with ordinary subjects for the validation exercise. Although the Okyehene did not attend the session other ways were used to include him by getting his key advisors to attend and provide him with feedback. All partners reported that the validation largely confirmed their findings.

Section Three – Summary of Case Studies

3.0. Diaspora supported development initiatives through non-traditional civil society organizations

A total of eight diaspora projects, three in the Upper West and five in the Upper East Region were studied across the two regions. These projects are located in the Jirapa and Nadowli districts of the Upper West Region and in the Bolgatanga, Bongo and Builsa districts of the Upper East Region. The specific projects studied were:

- Education support project, Jirapa
- Rehabilitation centre for the physically challenged, Jirapa
- Kaleo Health project
- Bonaboto skills training initiative, Bolgatanga
- Pwalugu Women's Micro-Finance and Education projects
- Pwalugu Basic Education Project
- Support to Anafobisi JSS, Bongo
- FISTRAD Education Project.

As the title of the projects above suggest, the nature of interventions using civil society organizations, is varied but mainly focus on basic welfare and livelihood needs of the people like education, health, micro-finance and training. The process used commonly takes this pattern: an individual in the diaspora who is concerned about the problems facing his community usually starts these projects. He or she works through family members to address specific community needs. Most of the projects studied in this case clearly illustrate this pattern. Though the activities address felt needs and yield benefits, the process relies on informal and personal ties. The sustainability of such initiatives is highly dependent on the commitment, motivation and circumstances (especially access to resources) of the individual driving the process. The Anafobisi JSS, Bongo and Pwalugu Women's Micro finance projects illustrate this model.

A variation of the above is persons in the diaspora work through a friend or friends in their areas of origin in order to undertake development initiatives. The Pwalugu education project and the Bonaboto skills training initiative belong to this category. In the case of the latter, the efforts of the diaspora feed into processes of organizational development. For example, although the skills training initiative initially involved friends and headmasters of schools in the Bolga municipality, a branch of BONABOTO has now been established in Bolga and has moved from its informal origins and is now characterised by established structures and formal decision making processes.

There is yet a third variation that involves persons in the diaspora who are not indigenous to the region but who are nevertheless keen to promote development in communities they have come into contact with. They collaborate with an indigene of the area and develop an organizational basis for promoting development activity. FISTRAD illustrates this model. Partnership is not based on hometown ties and is bereft of the kind of informality noted in earlier models with regard to management of the development activities. Organizational practices are on the basis of established functioning structures. Planned activities are yielding benefits but also creating new demands. However the values that drive this partnership seem crucial to the possibility of long-term development.

A number of challenges have been raised by this case study. The nature of engagement using family or personal ties raises questions of sustainability, legitimacy and the extent to which the intervention is for the good of the community as a whole. Yet diaspora initiatives usually start on that basis. The challenge is how to move the process forward based on formal structures and mechanisms of accountability to the broader community.

There is also the issue of the limited development of organizational structures, systems and procedures in planning and implementation of initiatives. Although the initiatives spearheaded by non-indigenous actors in the diaspora tend to push for the development of such structures, systems and procedures early on, by and large processes and decision-making are usually informal. The challenge here is how to develop an organizational culture and operational structures that promote transparency and accountability. Indeed the FISTRAD example suggests that beyond self-help, home ties and trust, crucial democratic values are necessary for development interventions to transcend rather than reinforce barriers and differences such as ethnicity.

There is also the issue of a general lack of community participation in diaspora supported projects as well as their failure to engage with District Assemblies and other development partners. Yet this zone is noted for the multiplicity of civil society organizations fighting poverty in the Northern savannah. The challenge here is how to ensure that diaspora initiated projects complement on-going development activities being promoted by other development actors.

In conclusion, civil society organizations offer a wider platform for the diaspora to engage in various development activities, especially focusing on socio-economic concerns. There are, however, significant challenges to be overcome such as community participation, sustainability, and integration into existing national or district development initiatives.

3.1. Diaspora-supported development initiatives through decentralised political structures

In Ghana the District Assembly is the basic decentralised political administrative structure. The case study in the central zone looked at how hometown diaspora associations are leveraging support to their home communities working through the District Assembly. The three District Assemblies that were studied were Tano, Nkoranza and Berekum. Yamfo and Duayaw Nkwanta communities in the Tano District Assembly have vibrant diaspora associations actively implementing development projects in the communities. The Yamfoman Association is implementing a place of convenience at Yamfo and two three-classroom blocks with reading room and place of convenience for the Yamfo Roman Catholic primary A & D School. The Berekum District Assembly advertised on the radio for interested individuals to deposit money for the construction of market stalls and WC latrines. Family members informed their relatives abroad who organized and sent money for the construction of the facilities. The Nkoranza Association of the United Kingdom donated hospital equipment to the St Theresa's Hospital through the District Assembly, which took responsibility for clearing the equipment from the port.

As regards focus, diaspora supported activities have in this case study centred on the development of social and economic infrastructure. There exist here too diverse forms of engagement between the diaspora community and the home community as noted below:

- Village/community and diaspora based organization start an initiative followed by collaboration with the District Assembly. The Yamfoman Association and their project in the Tano area illustrate this form of engagement.
- Public and private partnership to develop community infrastructure, the agent being either the District Assembly or a diaspora organization. The market stall project in Berekum exemplifies this model.
- Diaspora organizations directly approach the District Assembly seeking support and collaboration for development initiatives. The Nkoranza project illustrates this model.

This case study clearly demonstrates how public and private partnership can help mobilize resources, which is mutually rewarding for the diaspora and their communities. There is, however, a greater challenge here because this kind of engagement requires better planning, packaging and management, which is sometimes not forthcoming due to the weaknesses in the bureaucracy of the District Assembly. For instance, the District Assembly should be able to provide development information to their citizens in the diaspora, which is reliable and regular. Also diaspora communities need to be involved in District Assembly planning in order that they can truly sign up to the development plans and accept to support, through funding or otherwise, the implementation of those plans. It is also important to strengthen District Assembly accountability mechanisms in order to win the confidence of the diaspora to invest their resources in the Assembly. By and large, there is a need for policies that seek to formalise the relations between diaspora organizations and District Assembly structures and facilitate the engagement of the diaspora in development processes in their areas of origin. Such policies could draw from experiences of “twinning” between cities in the global north and their counterparts in the south.

3.3. Diaspora-supported development initiatives through the institution of chieftaincy

The Okyeman state, which has a long-standing and elaborate chieftaincy institution, was studied to see how the diaspora is linking up with their home communities through their traditional authority. Okyeman occupies much of the western half of the Eastern Region of Ghana. It covers six districts – East Akim, Birim North, Kwabebirim, Fantekwa, Suhum Kraboa-Coaltar, and West Akim. Kibi, the seat of traditional authority is also the capital of East Akim District and is the primary link with diaspora Akyem organizations. It houses the Okyehene’s palace and Okyeman Environmental Foundation (OEF), which is the main focus of this study. The Okyeman Environmental Foundation was initiated with the aim of protecting the Okyeman natural environment about which the Okyehene himself felt strongly. The initiative followed the Okyehene’s tour of the US in 2001 during which meetings were held with Akyem citizens. The OEF has billboards describing the various ways in which the wildlife can be protected.

Akyem diaspora organizations came into existence as Okyeman Cultural Associations with chapters located in Toronto (Canada), Washington DC (USA) and London (United Kingdom). They are organized as non-profit organizations, formed to unite all Akyem residents overseas and assert their shared historical and cultural identity. They adopt constitutions, follow regular meeting schedules and at the same time seek to reproduce the formal traditional structures, ritual observances and ceremonies wherever they live. In terms of focus, interventions from the diaspora in this case study have tended to centre on culture, identity and heritage issues. Okyeman Cultural Associations are reinventing themselves in the diaspora and are engaging the local Okyeman state in programmes of cultural identity and environmental protection

The nature of support these associations give to broader development processes in their home communities has not been thoroughly investigated as part of this case study. There is however a basis for assuming that they contribute in several ways to development in their area of origin. Through the effort of the Washington chapter, for instance, all three chiefs of the Akyem traditional area have visited and toured the Washington metropolitan area. During such visits the development of the area usually comes up for discussion.

This form of engagement has facilitated resource mobilization for various developmental activities but within the framework that raises questions about accountability, participation and civic rights. This is essentially due to the nature of chieftaincy itself, which is very hierarchical and based on subject-king relations. The legitimacy of the office holder frequently has implications for information sharing and flow. It further raises questions about the relationship between traditional institutions and evolving decentralised democratic local governance institutions. For example, it is not very clear how the OEF integrates with the mandate of the District Assembly to plan and execute development programmes within their areas of jurisdiction. More broadly, when the institution of chieftaincy undertakes significant development initiatives it raises the question of dual authority (District Assembly vs. Chiefs) and responsibility for the well being of the people of the area. There is a potential for conflict between traditional institutions, their values systems and procedures and those of existing governance structures exemplified by the District Assembly.

The partnership between home and diaspora for the re-invention of Akyem cultural identity strengthens traditional authority in ways that leave open the possibility of the resurrection of subject-hood and the closure of space for the growth of a citizenship culture. We recall that this case study encountered problems of having the Okyehene personally at the validation workshop, which would suggest that he is not ordinarily at the same level as other Akyem citizens. In the same measure, it is supposed that the Chief can not be easily submitted to questioning by his own subjects in ways that may be clearly in line with their rights as citizens to be informed about matters affecting their common well-being.

Box 3: Promising examples from case studies

For culture and identity promotion, the Chieftaincy institution has a comparative advantage in facilitating diaspora linkages. Exchanges using the chieftaincy institution provide diaspora citizens the opportunity to reinvent themselves through diverse forms of cultural expression. It then provides incentives for diaspora citizens to want to contribute to the consolidation of their common heritage.

The FISTRAD experience is more formalised, participatory and involves capacity building. This is demonstrated in the setting up of a formal organization to leverage development possibilities through diaspora support. It also transcends ethnicity, as the diaspora citizens are not from Sandema where the organization is working. By setting up a formal structure, which works on skills training, the engagement has focussed on capacity building through social mobilization.

The BONABOTO experience mobilizes both local and diaspora youth from the same area for development initiatives. The heartbeat of the initiative being the development of the common heritage rather than a transfer of resources from citizens from a well-endowed economic environment. The main defining factor is that the youth involved, both locally

and from the diaspora, are reasonably well-educated and come from a geographic area rather than a specific hometown. This also has the potential for promoting a region-wide agenda rather than narrow sectarian interests such as ethnic or hometown.

Promotion of private-public engagement in development is demonstrated in the construction of the market stalls and public places of convenience in the Districts in Brong Ahafo region.

Section Four - Emerging Issues and Policy Implications

It was noted in the early chapters of this report that the primary interest of the research is the role that Ghanaians in the diaspora play in the development efforts of their local communities. Such a process, if widespread, does become the bedrock of national development. However, true national development requires priority setting, planning, coordination and political will. All of these can only happen when there is an agreed framework within which all the actors will actualise themselves and complement each other. It is in this sense that there is a strong case for a conducive policy environment to facilitate the contribution of Ghanaians in the diaspora.

This research has generated findings that are significant in terms of the Ghanaian diaspora's actual and potential contribution to national development. It has also shown that there are equally significant weaknesses and challenges in the nature of engagement of the diaspora with their local communities for development activities. The overall goal of the research is to enhance the quality of the partnership between diaspora organizations and their local communities towards poverty reduction, equity and social justice. Government's interest or lack of it, what Government decides to do or not to do depends, first and foremost, on perceptions, assumptions and information about the process. Ultimately this will either maximise or diminish the inherent potential of Ghanaians in the diaspora.

The opening statement of this report alluded to the fact that diasporas are created through migration. It is therefore conceivable that national perceptions about migration are likely to influence the level of seriousness given to issues of migration, and for that matter, how the Ghanaian diaspora is treated. There seems to be a contradiction in Ghana about diaspora issues because whereas the benefits from diaspora resources are evident in both the private and public spheres, Government pronouncements about migration continue to be negative. For example, the commonest expressions associated with migration are 'brain drain', 'exodus of the intelligentsia' etc. There is also the narrow perception that migration is from the global South to the North. There has not been much consideration of the nature and benefits of South-South and internal migration.

The Ghana Poverty Reduction strategy (February, 2003, Page 199), which is the policy framework for supporting growth and poverty reduction in the short term, identifies the Ghanaian diaspora (referred to as foreign based Ghanaians) as a potential source of funds for the GPRS. Contrary to this assumption, the research demonstrates that the Ghanaian diaspora is already engaging in mobilizing funds for national development through various community-level development projects. The way the money comes in is in small bits, sporadic, unorganized and information about it is rather scanty. There is need to develop policies that clarify, systematise and strengthen the contribution that Ghanaians in the diaspora make to national development. (In similar vein but at an even higher and more general level, the New Partnership for Africa's Development or NEPAD also suffers from the same lack of indepth consideration of precisely how the African diaspora's contributions for Africa's development are to be harnessed.)

In recent years, some Ghanaian Embassies and foreign missions have tried to help Ghana's diaspora to direct their resources through more formal channels for national development. Examples include the 'A Dollar a month for Ghana' initiative by the High Commission in Sierra Leone, the 'Five Pounds No Balance Police' initiative by the High Commission in the United Kingdom to raise funds from the Ghanaian diaspora to purchase basic tools for the

Ghana Police Service. While these are innovative and commendable, they are primarily products of individual initiative and are not necessarily sustainable. Although they have the potential of facilitating transfer of diaspora resources for national development they are not the answer to the basic question of systematising the process of resource mobilization from the generality of Ghanaian diaspora in a national policy framework.

Therefore, the policy consideration for the Government is to clarify the kind of institutional arrangements needed to facilitate the process of the Ghanaian diaspora's transfer and effective use of resources. This may require bi-lateral discussions with foreign governments and probably consideration of an Africa-wide or regional framework. Government should also be interested in exploring other ways by which the current weaknesses in the process could be addressed to maximise effectiveness. These considerations should also include strengthening the organizational capacity of diaspora organizations as they seek to contribute to the national or local development efforts.

The research has also raised questions of the sustainability of the engagement in terms of planning. Most of the cases studied were largely driven by passion to do something to mitigate the suffering of the rural community. That is why most projects tended to support the provision of basic livelihood needs like education, water and sanitation. Such processes tend to run parallel to decentralised planning processes. They are often not integrated with efforts of relevant national and district institutions. This has serious implications for priority setting and the sustainability of service provision. There is therefore an urgent need for policy intervention to co-ordinate and harmonise the efforts of the diaspora with those undertaken by national and district institutions. The District Assemblies are the locus of all development planning at the district level yet their capacity to engage in bottom up participatory planning approaches is weak. Unless a way is found to enhance their capacity to broadly engage their citizens, including those in the diaspora, in development planning and trustworthy monitoring mechanisms, the diaspora will continue to circumvent the District Assembly in leveraging their contributions to their communities.

Lack of community accountability mechanisms seems to be a phenomenon in the nature of engagements examined. This has undermined essential values of participation and ownership in the development activities. Ghanaians in the diaspora resort to 'trust' and use friends and family relations as key drivers. Yet the yardstick for determining trust is not fixed; the means to monitor its functionality is vague and illusive. The fate of the poor should not be determined mainly by trust. It is important that Government find ways and means to integrate the process of diaspora resource mobilization into the national accountability mechanisms. Certainly, Government will need to improve upon its own governance and accountability systems. Only then will those in the diaspora have the confidence to channel their resources through such processes and institutions.

There has also been the question of development agenda setting. Who drives it and with what motives? The emerging importance of the Ghanaian diaspora which has been occasioned by access to resources, intellectual and academic attainment and further bolstered by their technical know-how, raises fears of new forms of paternalistic relationship in which Ghanaian diaspora become the nouveau 'Bretton Woods' institution. How true or potentially likely is this perception? In what ways can Ghanaian communities and their priorities become the determinants of the priorities and agenda of diaspora organizations? What are the specific capacity gaps that confront diaspora organizations and individuals as they seek to promote development in their areas of origin? What are the levels and capacity of organizations in

communities that benefit from support from the sister organizations in the diaspora? In what ways can the relationship between organizations in the diaspora and those in their counterpart areas be nurtured and strengthened? Questions of this type were not investigated and therefore this research has no answers to them. Nevertheless, it is important to flag them in order to stimulate discussion and ultimately lead to a more constructive and productive contribution of the diaspora in national development.

Even though this research was limited to investigating just one way of engaging the Ghanaian diaspora for nation building – via mobilization and transfer of economic resources – there may be other possibilities that could be further explored in any policy consideration. For instance, what role can Ghanaians in the diaspora play in policy discussions on Ghana such as the GPRS? What is the environment and channels for individuals and organizations in the diaspora to contribute ideas to Government? It is also possible to look beyond national borders and explore interventions that could be useful to supra-national organizations like NEPAD, Africa Union, and ECOWAS.

For civil society organizations like SEND and AFFORD our interest should be around the following questions:

- What can be done to address the institutional level weaknesses discussed above?
- What role can advocacy play and at what level?
- In what ways can the contribution of diaspora to national development be optimised and made more effective? For example, some of the case studies have exposed some innovative approaches to capacity building and social mobilization. What are the possibilities of scaling up and mainstreaming these approaches?

Ultimately, the key to unlocking the potential of the diaspora is the creation of an enabling environment and the institutionalization of policies that facilitate an effective contribution of Ghanaians to national development. To do this requires:

- a clarification of existing laws and policies,
- the development of appropriate new laws and policies,
- the creation of appropriate institutions to facilitate the above
- and provision of appropriate incentives to stimulate a more sustained involvement of the diaspora in national development.

Box 4: Hello Africa Project: The next steps

The experiences and lessons from this research have encouraged SEND as an organization to look forward to possible next steps in the area of programming. The following tentative plans will be explored:

- *Research partners' internal evaluation of the research process and how the networking opportunities could be further deepened.*
- *National dissemination of the research report.*
- *Engagement with selected District Assemblies with the report to explore ways by which their capacity can be built to take advantage of the potential of their citizens in the diaspora.*
- *Integration of the lessons of the research into our current work on the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy.*
- *Workshop with civil society in Ghana to share results of research and explore how these could be mainstreamed in development work*