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Decentralisation and Poverty Alleviation in Rural Ghana

PhD Thesis

Peter Ohene Kyei

19 JUL 2000

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the
Department of Geography, University of
Durham, England

2000

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Dedication

To Abigail my beloved wife and our lovely children

Abstract

Decentralisation of government has been a major policy direction of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) as an adjunct to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) imposed on low income countries. Decentralisation is consistent with the neo-liberal policies of the Bank aimed at liberalising the economy and reducing the control of centralised bureaucracies. The emphasis in SAPs on the reduction of public spending has in many cases increased poverty. This has led to the growth of a new emphasis on decentralisation and participatory development to reduce poverty. The link between participation and local governance has become seen as an important means of improving the effectiveness of services and of empowering the poor to participate in the development processes that affect their lives. NGOs and local government administrations have moved into prominent positions as service providers with the aim of filling the service delivery gap created by the withdrawal of the state. Ghana provides a good example of these processes.

The pivot of the local government system in Ghana is the District Assembly which has been set up to provide an enabling environment for socio-economic development. This study examines *the extent to which the District Assemblies* have achieved success. Participatory approaches are used to explore the perspectives of district elites and the rural poor on poverty and poverty alleviation under the decentralised system of Ghana. Comparative examples are provided by study of Nadowli and Adansi West districts. The rural poor's participation in the development process is assessed together with the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation.

The study argues that there are perception gaps between the elites and rural poor with respect to poverty and poverty alleviation strategies. The state has employed structures of grassroots participation without achieving active participation or conceding real power to the local people. The poor are, therefore, rendered anonymous in the design of poverty alleviation programmes. The study concludes that the voices of the poor in the study districts are unanimous in one respect: poverty alleviation programmes under the District Assemblies have hardly affected them.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I owe a debt of gratitude and thanks to my Lord and saviour Jesus Christ for his grace, mercies, strength, wisdom and sustaining me by the Holy Spirit throughout my study in Durham. To God be the glory for the great things he has done.

I am exceptionally grateful to my supervisors, Dr Gina Porter and Dr Liz Oughton, for their support and patience, throughout this period of study. This thesis has been shaped by their intellectual insight, rigour, invaluable and critical comments on the numerous drafts. I am also grateful to Dr Arthur Banister of Durham and Dr Francis Yanney of London who read the thesis and provided advice.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Ghana for granting me the award for this study. Then to the Danish International Development Agency and the Department's Board of postgraduate studies for funds for my field work in Ghana. I wish to thank the University of Science and Technology, for granting me study leave to undertake this study. I would particularly wish to thank Gilchrist, Earnest Cassell, FWA, CCOS and Northern Dairies Educational Trusts for their help during difficult moments. I also express my sincere thanks to all the members of staff and fellow postgraduate students in the Department of Geography, University of Durham for their support.

I would like to thank the rural people who received me warmly, gave me their valuable time and offered their hospitality. Sincere thanks to Mr Fidellis Zumakpeh and Vida Mensah and the teams of Nadowli and Adansi West district respectively for their help on the field, the politicians and bureaucrats in both districts, Mr Joe D. Issachar, Mr Mike Adjaloo of TCC, Mr Koomson of UST. I must also acknowledge with thanks the constant prayer support of my mother Mrs Dora Kyei, my brothers, sisters and PIWC, Kumasi members.

Special thanks to Emmanuel Church, Durham, for their warm fellowship, friendship and above all genuine Christian love, Pastor Alan Bell and Elder Andrew Westerman for the opportunity to work together in ministry and prayer, my home cell members

and Grace and Geoff Atkinson for their fervent Christian love and concern, ELICOP, London, all East Ham members for their love and prayer support. I wish to express my heart felt thanks to Mr and Mrs Afum and Mr and Mrs Antwi-Darkwa and families in London, for their kindness and love. Special thanks to my friends, Dr Martha and Bruce Scolton. Thanks to all who in their concern prayed for me.

Finally, I owe much debt of gratitude to my dear wife Abigail (for her special care for all the kids in my absence) and my beloved children. With love and appreciation of this sacrifice by my wife and children, I dedicate this thesis to them. You have been a source of encouragement that has made this work possible. Whatever blessings God gives me are yours to share for all eternity.

Acronyms

ADB	Agricultural Development Bank
ADRA	Adventist Relief Agency
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary council
AGC	Ashanti Goldfield Corporation
AWDA	Adansi West District Assembly
BWDP	Baptist Women's Development programme
CARE	American Co-operative Agency For Relief Everywhere
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CDR	Committee for the Defence of the Revolution
CPP	Convention People's Party
CEDEP	Centre for the Development of People
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COWAP	Community Water and Sanitation Programme
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DA	District Assembly
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DACF	District Assembly Common Fund
DCD	District Co-ordinating Director
DCE	District Chief Executive
DDO	Diocesan Development Office
DFID	Department for International Development
DS	District Secretary
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
GAD	Gender And Development
GAPVOD	Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations in Development
ICRA	International Centre for Development Oriented Research in

Agriculture

ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JICA	Japanese International Co-operation Agency
JSS	Junior Secondary School
KVIP	Kumasi Vented Improved Pit Latrine
NCD	National Commission on Democracy
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDA	Nadowli District Assembly
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLC	National Liberation Council
NRC	National Redemption Council
PADIC	Public Administration Restructuring and Decentralisation Implementation Committee
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PM	Presiding Member
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PP	Progress Party
PRA	Participatory Rural Assessment
RAO	Regional Administrative Officer
RCC	Regional Co-ordinating Council
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SMC	Supreme Military Council
SOFIDEP	Sombo Fian Development Programme
SSS	Senior Secondary School
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UWR	Upper West Region
VHC	Village Housing Committee
WASHT	Water and Sanitation Health Team
WDC	Workers Defence Council
WVI	World Vision International

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

After over a decade of stabilisation and adjustment programmes in the low income countries of sub-Saharan Africa, poverty continues to be of critical concern and a formidable challenge. The harsh impact of these programmes has prompted a new emphasis on popular participation through decentralisation in recent years.

According to the OECD,

“...a main requirement of poverty reduction is the promotion of popular participation in the development process and support for the development of a society based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and good governance as prerequisites to stability and economic, social and political progress” (1997:13).

This thesis examines the impact of this approach at the micro-level in two districts in rural Ghana. It is concerned with the lived experiences of the rural poor, and the extent to which the strategy of popular participation through decentralisation has brought them into the decision-making processes involved in alleviating poverty. In the following introductory sections I briefly review the poverty issues and development strategies of the 1980s and 90s in Africa, in general and with specific reference to Ghana. The aims and objectives of the thesis are then outlined. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the study areas and the thesis structure.

1.2 Poverty issues and development strategies in the 1980s and 90s in Africa

The 1980s has been described by the World Bank as the lost decade in Africa, a comment based upon the unquestionable deterioration in the living conditions of the people (Gary, 1996:152; Hengsbach, 1999:178). Much as it is widely believed that economic growth is vital for poverty alleviation, it does not necessarily result in poverty reduction or ‘offer automatic adequate trickle down benefits’ (Cox and Healey, 1998:3). The Structural Adjustment Programmes

imposed on Africa and low income countries elsewhere did not alleviate poverty (Aryeetey, 1996:28; Songsore 1992; Killick, 1999:1).

Poverty considerations were neglected or subsumed under the Structural Adjustment priorities of the 1980s. The key elements of this neo-liberal approach were market-oriented development strategies, a minimal role for the state, free trade and financial discipline, which together were expected to lead to prosperity through economic growth (Simon et al, 1995:3). These programmes introduced in the 1980s required deep cuts in public spending, public employment, reduced access to public health care, education, family planning, food and housing (West Africa, 1996:1098). Reducing the role of the state, including public expenditure on social welfare, and shifting the policy emphasis from the state to the market, has had an adverse impact on the poor (Roy, 1997:2117). Many people who were marginalised by the Structural Adjustment Programmes were pushed to the brink of survival (Aryeetey, 1996:28; Killick, 1999:1; Songsore, 1992; Sowa, 1992:23; West Africa, 1996:1098)).

The implementation of World Bank/IMF led Structural Adjustment Programmes has brought to the fore decentralisation and participatory development at the local level in many low income countries. The state is now supposed to play the role of creating an 'enabling environment' (World Bank, 1992, cited in Mohan, 1996:434), for the private sector and local governments to take up service provision. Central governments, because of the constraints placed on them, have been unable to provide adequate development services and the people cannot depend on the state to provide them with sufficient means to improve their quality of life. "What is needed therefore, is a 'self reliant approach' in which local initiatives must lead development efforts" (FAO, 1997:11). Decentralisation is considered one means of achieving national development, through popular participation in sub-national development efforts. This view is summed up in the following:

"Decentralisation of government roles and powers associated with democratic local government can be an important means of improving the effectiveness of services and enabling ordinary citizens to participate in the management of their own community" (OECD, 1997:11)

In the 1990s poverty alleviation has become the overriding development priority. The World Development Report 1990 took poverty as its theme and increased the momentum for poverty alleviation. Based on its conception of poverty, the World Bank (1996a:viii) has focused on the following core elements as a part of its strategy to reduce poverty: broad-based economic growth, developing human capital, and creating social safety nets for vulnerable groups. The United Nations declared 1996 the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and established the 'First United Nations Decade for Eradication of Poverty, 1997-2006' (World Bank, 1996a; UNDP, 1997). The intention was to create awareness and draw attention to the urgency of the poverty situation, to study seriously the possible strategies to escape from poverty and to act decisively to diminish its extent (Makinson:1996). According to the United Nations Human Development Report 1997, "eradicating poverty everywhere is more than a moral imperative - it is a practical possibility".

The objective of the quest in Africa has been to achieve reasonable rates of economic growth, while raising the living standards of the people and improving their quality of life. Virtually every government in Africa, *including Ghana*, has made pledges (usually in Development Plan documents) to reduce poverty. Yet poverty remains pervasive: "sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of people in - and the fastest growth in - human poverty. Some 220 million people in the region are income poor and it is estimated that by 2000 half of the people in sub-Saharan Africa will be in income poverty" (UNDP, 1997:2).

Some 160 million children in Africa are moderately or severely malnourished. Some 110 million are out of school (ibid.:2). Furthermore, poverty has a disproportionate effect upon women. They are obliged to spend a great deal of time not only working in the family enterprise but also in nurturing and rearing children and in important household tasks such as cooking, and fetching water and firewood. These activities are unpaid and may be undertaken in addition to their paid work. Women's lack of access to land, credit and better employment opportunities has handicapped their ability to fend off poverty for themselves and their families - or to rise out of it.

One of the main issues this thesis is set to address is the fact that those who define poverty and then formulate poverty reduction policies for that designated population have no lived experience of poverty. Poverty programmes are being designed by those who are not affected by it. They usually include the elites of the World Bank staff and their recipient country counterparts, with a predominance of economists, econometricians and statisticians. Data are extracted from large scale demographic and income surveys at the household level and subjected to quantitative analysis. By virtue of their position, these elites can only have an outsider's view of the poor, a view which is distorted (Chambers, 1983). To a great extent, statistics and quantitative analysis are used in the same way as a drunken man uses a lamp post - not for illumination but for supporting their preconceived notions (Agbenyega, 1998: 60).

1.3 Poverty issues and development strategies in Ghana

In Ghana, the majority of the poor are rural (see table 1 below) and poverty in rural Ghana is pervasive. It is characterised by hardship and suffering, illiteracy, lack of access to social and economic services, lack of opportunities for income generation, hunger, disease, and low life expectancy.

Table 1: Percentage of population below the poverty line, early 1990s

<u>Country</u>	<u>Rural (%)</u>	<u>Urban (%)</u>
Ghana	34.3	26.7
Lesotho	53.9	27.8
Kenya	46.4	29.3
Senegal	40.4	16.4

Source: World Bank, 1999

The underlying goal of development, as affirmed by the 1992 constitution of Ghana, is to improve the quality of life of all Ghanaians by reducing poverty and raising living standards through a sustained increase in national wealth and a more equitable distribution of the benefits therefrom (Ghana, 1992).

In Ghana the Structural Adjustment Programmes and associated demands for good governance imposed by the World Bank\International Monetary Fund have brought renewed interest in decentralisation and participatory development at the local level. The growing apparent shift from top-down to bottom-up approaches to development in Ghana, (as in other low income countries) has been occasioned by a number of features: centralisation of state apparatus and the failure of development projects, increasing rural poverty and political changes (particularly the demands of international organisations for good governance as a conditionality for loans). Decentralisation is perceived as a means of limiting the functions of central government and strengthening service provision at the subnational level (OECD,1997:23). The demands of structural adjustment for reductions in state expenditure have also encouraged the devolution of authority and functions to local governments with consequent opportunities for empowerment of local groups. There is a growing emphasis on the role of indigenous, grassroots, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Ghana (as elsewhere in Africa) in addition to local government. NGOs are filling the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the central government and have now moved to the centre-stage in terms of poverty alleviation interventions because of state failure (Turner and Hulme, 1997:202).

In 1988 the Provisional National Defence Council of Ghana put in place an administrative and political structure that aimed to support a greater degree of popular participation in rural development. Power has been devolved to District Assemblies to enhance service delivery for poverty alleviation, and since 1992 it has channelled not less than 5% of national revenue to these Assemblies for development. The District Assemblies (Local Government bodies in Ghana) are now the fulcrum of political and administrative authority in Ghana.

1.4 Aims and objectives of the thesis

Some important and practical questions are left unanswered by the existing body of literature on decentralisation and poverty alleviation. This study seeks to address them. The major questions are: (i) does decentralisation as a development tool advocated by the World Bank and the international community

have any positive impact on the underprivileged and marginalised rural poor? (ii) If so how, and if not what are the constraints? (iii) Can decentralisation emancipate the rural poor and give them a 'voice' to participate in the development process that affects their own lives? This study seeks to bridge this gap in the literature and analysis of decentralisation through the views and perspectives of the rural poor on poverty and decentralised development as presently practised in Ghana. The research thus aims to contribute to the theoretical debate on development administration by providing a poverty-focused dimension to current discussions of public sector reform, accountability, participation, empowerment and, more generally, problems of institutional failure in the delivery of basic services.

First it focuses on decentralisation as a tool for development at the often neglected grassroots level where poverty is pervasive. It examines the rural people's understanding of the institution of the District Assembly with the question: does the political and administrative relationship between the various levels of sub-national government help in supporting (or encouraging) a successful and satisfying participation of the rural people, so as to enhance their well-being?

Secondly, the study aims to examine the basic understanding of the rural poor people and the elites regarding the concept of poverty, with a view to identifying gaps in existing knowledge of poverty between them. The question this seeks to address is: how is the concept of poverty understood by the elites and the rural poor and what are the perspectives of each regarding the solutions to rural poverty problems.

Thirdly, it examines the performance of the District Assemblies (DAs) and their responsiveness to the needs of the rural population. It explores the relationship between the people and District Assemblies and the extent to which the rural poor are empowered and given a voice in the decision-making processes that affect the development of their areas. This seeks to answer the question: how have the District Assemblies as they presently operate in the study districts been

able to mobilise the people at the town/village and unit levels to participate in the decision-making process?

Fourthly, it aims to carry out a basic general assessment of the role and impact of NGOs in enhancing the living conditions of the rural poor under the decentralised system of Ghana. The question posed is: what is the role being played by NGOs under the District Assemblies in enhancing the well-being of the people in the rural areas?

Fifthly, it analyses the impact of the District Assemblies with particular reference to poverty alleviation as perceived by the people and aims to offer practical recommendations for an appropriate and feasible poverty alleviation strategy at the local level.

Many studies of decentralisation in Ghana divorce themselves from local influences and fail to adequately examine the poor areas and more vulnerable rural people (Asibuo, 1992; Ayee, 1993,1994; Crook, 1994; Harris, 1983; Haynes, 1991; Mohan, 1993). They have rather concentrated on the state machinery and power relations within decentralised structures, to the neglect of its impact on the local people who are the supposed beneficiaries of the programme. The impact of the decentralisation programme needs to be judged specifically in terms of its concrete effects on the poor. Since the avowed aim of decentralisation is local development, any analysis should assess the impact upon the local communities involved and should listen to local views. In this study participatory research approaches are employed to explore local people's own perceptions of poverty and the extent to which the District Assemblies are effective in delivering these services to maximise the well-being of the people in the communities. The views of the governed regarding participation in the development process and poverty alleviation are essential in evaluation of the impact and effects of the programmes on the lives of the rural poor.

1.5 The study areas

This thesis examines the performance and impact of the District Assemblies in terms of the alleviation of poverty in two contrasting rural areas of Ghana. One is in Ashanti Region in the south and one in Upper West Region in the north (see fig 4.1). There is a broad disparity between the north and south in terms of levels of economic development and the general quality of life. The north is a relatively deprived area in terms of basic services (Dickson, 1969,1984; Ewusi, 1978; Songsore, 1983, Songsore and Denkabe, 1995). About 60% of the poorest tenth of the population of Ghana are found in northern Ghana with the other 40% split between the coast and forest areas (World Bank, 1989 cited in Songsore and Denkabe, 1995). The south is relatively more developed and more affluent.

These contrasts will give an opportunity for a comparative analysis, which is necessary for a clear understanding of the impact of decentralisation policy on poverty. The other consideration for the choice of these areas is the fact that I have a good local knowledge of them. I worked in the south in Adansi West as a district planning/budget officer for two years and my activities in a local NGO in this region have given me insight into rural poverty issues. I have also conducted studies in the Upper Regions of Ghana, with students from the university where I teach. Nadowli district in the Upper West Region and the Adansi West in Ashanti region have therefore been chosen as the study areas (see fig. 4.1).

1.6 Structure of the thesis

In this first chapter I have provided a brief introduction to the research problem, an outline of the aims and objectives of the thesis, and an introduction to the study area.

Chapter two presents a survey of the relevant literature on poverty and decentralisation in order to locate the issues of poverty, the state and decentralisation in their scholarly context. Prominent positions in the contemporary poverty and decentralisation debate are identified and analysed.

Chapter three sets the research in its Ghanaian context, providing a detailed historical review of decentralisation in Ghana. It discusses the practice of decentralisation from the colonial period to the present era.

In chapter four, the background to the study area is outlined. The chapter provides a profile of Adansi West and Nadowli Districts, including a brief description of socio-economic conditions and the district administrations. The chapter also outlines and discusses the methodology for investigating the issues involved in decentralisation and poverty alleviation. It emphasises and explains the importance of a multiple method approach.

Chapter five documents in detail the voices of the rural poor collected during my fieldwork. It notes especially their perspectives of the concept of poverty and how it can be alleviated. It also provides a detailed description of the views of the rural poor on the performance of the District Assemblies.

Chapter six provides a review and analysis of elite perspectives on poverty, with particular reference to District Assembly Members, and discusses the poverty alleviation strategies of the District Assemblies.

Chapter seven makes an in-depth analysis of the issues of participation under the decentralised system for poverty alleviation. The traditional concept of participation is reviewed and participation of the rural poor under the District Assemblies is also discussed. The chapter concludes by diagnosing the major obstacles to participation.

Chapter eight outlines and discusses the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation. It particularly focuses on women's group activities under the aegis of NGOs. The importance of this chapter lies in the fact that NGOs have been recognised by the Ghana Government as partners in development, working at the grassroots level with the disadvantaged and marginalised people under the decentralised system of Ghana.

Chapter nine begins with a discussion of the constraints to poverty alleviation under the District Assemblies. It brings together the different strands of the investigation and charts the way forward with possible lessons for Ghana and Africa as a whole.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING POVERTY AND DECENTRALISATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to locate the study in its scholarly context by reviewing the main currents of thought within the poverty and decentralisation debate. It focuses on the diverse worldviews of the concept of poverty and the various conceptual issues involved in decentralised development in Ghana. Considerable research has been carried out on both poverty and decentralisation and a large body of literature has documented and analysed the relevant aspects of poverty and decentralisation from international, national, regional and local contexts. It is very important to get a clear picture of the theoretical and conceptual basis of this literature in order to understand its relevance to the rural context in Ghana. The review seeks both to build on the strengths of relevant studies, and to evaluate weaknesses against my research questions.

The first major section of the chapter (2.2) considers issues surrounding the definition, measurement and theorisation of poverty and highlights the problems associated with each endeavour. The diverse views presented in the literature have influenced the way programmes are tailored to alleviate poverty.

The second major section on decentralisation (2.3) begins with the concept of the state, both in the colonial and post-independence eras. This is very relevant to understanding the development of decentralisation and issues of power at the sub-national level in Ghana. This is followed by a discussion of decentralisation types, the role of decentralisation in colonial and post-independence Africa and power issues in decentralisation. A final section considers the linkages between decentralisation and poverty alleviation.

2.2 The Concept of Poverty

Poverty reduction programmes have been vigorously pursued in recent years, following recognition of the adverse impacts of Structural Adjustment Programmes introduced by

the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. International donors, NGOs and governments have introduced a wide range of poverty programmes in low-income countries. In order to understand the poverty alleviation programmes introduced in Ghana, and more widely in Africa, it is necessary to first gain an understanding of the various concepts of poverty. What is perceived as poverty provides the basis on which policies are designed to meet poverty alleviation goals (Greeley, 1994:50).

It is important to recognise that poverty defies precise definition. It is a portmanteau term which has different meanings to different people. 'The words 'destitution', 'ill-being', 'powerlessness' and 'vulnerability' are so frequently used in conjunction with poverty that the conceptual differences between them have become blurred' (Baulch, 1996:2). There have been many attempts at coherent definition within numerous poverty studies (see for example, Chambers, 1997,1995; Baulch, 1996; Oppenheim and Harker, 1996; Shaffer, 1996; Askwith, 1994; and Ravallion, 1992). However, perhaps inevitably, no single accepted definition exists reflecting the variety of approaches available to the social scientist. Nonetheless, unless local-level authorities have some criteria to delineate or identify the poor, the design and administration of programmes for enhancing the well-being of the poor will be extremely difficult (Prasad, 1985:3).

A general view held in most perceptions of poverty remains the notion of 'lack of' or 'deficiency'. But beyond that, there is hardly any unanimity as to what constitutes poverty. 'The notion reflects only the basic relativity of the concept, for a utopian 'complete man' would not be lacking anything. When the poor are defined as lacking a number of things necessary to life, the question could be asked; what is necessary and for whom? And who is qualified to define the basic standard?' (Rahnema 1996:159). Under this definition individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack, or are denied, the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong (Townsend, 1993:36). This points particularly to the lack of opportunity to meet basic human needs.

People are considered poor when they lack the resources to satisfy their basic needs for food, clothing, shelter and health (Yapa, 1996). A person may be poor in a monetised economy because he or she has a low income and therefore cannot afford particular amenities, even if they are available. A person may have low income because he or she is unemployed, under-employed, has low productivity or because the tasks they do are not paid in that society. Low productivity can result from low skills or poor health. There may be low skills because educational services are poor. Poor health may result from poor health services, poor sanitation, poor housing, use of unsafe water or malnutrition and associated diseases. When people are faced with food shortages they may be malnourished. Food insecurity may also arise from low household incomes and, or, an inadequate food supply (Okyere et al., 1992:1). This feeds into a circle of poverty. Poverty arises when people do not have the productive assets - skills, land, capital or labour power - needed to generate adequate income. This is frequently associated with lack of political power to participate in the development process (Donkor, 1997:213). Poverty is seen not as monetary deprivation but multi-dimensional. What is required, therefore, is a characterisation of the poor in a dynamic and multidimensional framework (Ramprakesh, 1992:37).

Chambers (1995:19-21) has maintained that poverty refers to lack of physical necessities, assets and income; it includes, but is more than, being income-poor. In addition to income, Chambers has enumerated the following as capturing some of the reality of the poor - in particular the characteristics of the poor in rural areas:

1. Social inferiority - including gender, caste, race and ethnic group, or being a 'lower' (poor local person) in terms of class, social group or occupation or even inferiority linked with age, as with children.
2. Isolation - which refers to being peripheral and cut off, e.g. living in a remote area and off- road; isolated in communication, lacking contact and information, including not being able to read; isolated in lack of access to social services and markets; and isolated in lack of social and economic support.
3. Physical weakness - that is disability, sickness, pain and suffering.

4. Vulnerability - not the same as income- poverty or poverty more broadly defined. It means not lack or want but exposure and defencelessness.
5. Seasonality - In tropical seasonality many adverse factors for the poor may coincide with the rains - for example, hard agricultural work, shortage of food, scarcity of money, indebtedness, sickness, the late stage of pregnancy and diminished access to services.
6. Powerlessness - the poor are often powerless - often physically weak and economically vulnerable, they lack influence. Subject to the power of others, they are easy to ignore or exploit.
7. Humiliation - self respect with freedom from dependence is perhaps the dimension most overlooked and undervalued by professionals, since it does not lend itself to measurement.

Chambers further maintains that poor people are capable of conducting their own analyses and have reasonably clear views about their own multiple priorities. Development activists have to give heed to the expression of priorities in the realities of the poor and be sensitive to power. He states this clearly in the following:

“For all the rhetoric about participation it is still rare enough for villagers, let alone the poorer people in villages, to be consulted about their priorities: or if they are consulted, for their preferences to be a source of learning and official action” (1985:8).

The major concern of the majority of economists (who have dominated world development organisations) is with income-poverty; with the measurable and the marketable. ‘The equation of poverty with household income, as in the poverty line approach exemplifies both the measurement as well as the institutional biases of traditional economics’ (Kabeer 1996:12). Jazairy et al (1992:xx) sum it all up in this way:

“Unfortunately, poverty alleviation still continues to be equated with welfare, as a result of misconceptions or of the defence by the elites of their vested interest”

Gaiha (1993:7) has noted that it is very important, for policy purposes, to know not only the existence of poverty but also how much poverty exist. The key questions (Gaiha, 1993:7) are:

- How do we assess individual well-being or welfare?
- At what level of measured well-being do we say that a person is not poor?
- How do we aggregate individual indicators of well-being into a measure of poverty?

The first two questions involve the issue of identification (who are the poor people and how poor are they?). And the third question relates to the aggregation problem (how much poverty is there?). The next section begins with the issue of identification of poverty. There are two main concepts of poverty in mainstream thought. These are absolute and relative poverty. These are discussed first, before moving on to look at more complex poverty measures.

2.2.1 Absolute Poverty

Much of the literature on developing countries related to policy issues on poverty is concentrated on absolute poverty. An absolute poverty threshold is determined using a living standard indicator and is fixed over the entire domain of the poverty comparison (Gaiha, 1993:11). 'Thus, an absolute poverty comparison will deem two persons at the same real consumption income level to both be either 'poor' or 'not poor', irrespective of the time or place being considered' (Ravallion, 1992:25). Absolute poverty is essentially based on the capacity to survive (Dixon, et al. 1998:4), and this means having enough food to keep one alive. A measure of absolute poverty, therefore, is almost entirely a measure of adequate nutrition (Cutler, 1984:1119). Using this method, for example, those individuals unable to purchase enough food to meet their essential nutritional requirements are classified as poor. 'An absolute definition of poverty assumes that it is possible to define a minimum standard of living based on a person's biological needs for food, water, clothing and shelter' (Oppenheim and Harker, 1996:7).

The concept of absolute poverty is plagued with a myriad of problems. The difficulty is in what constitutes the basic needs against which the absolute level is measured. For low

income countries, the most important component of a basic needs poverty line is generally the food expenditure necessary to attain some recommended food energy intake. This is then augmented by a modest allowance for non-food goods (Gaiha, 1993:12). Much of what is consumed in low-income countries is not bought on the market, however, giving serious problems of measurement and of imputing value to home production. The choice of food energy requirement remains contentious as it can vary across individuals and over time for a given individual. An absolute standard of poverty requires that nutritional needs be translated into a measurable standard. But no two researchers have agreed on the same cut off point (Cutler, 1984:1128). Furthermore, obtaining adequate nutrition is not the sole motive for human behaviour, even for most of the poor, nor is it the sole motive in food consumption (ibid.:1119). It is important to note that it is difficult, if not impossible, to use specific food intake of an individual as an indicator for poverty. 'Dietary surveys attempt to measure food actually consumed, but most of the consumption surveys used by policy planners use either consumption recall methods, sometimes asking respondents to remember consumption for as long as a month, or measure expenditure on food as a proxy for actual consumption' (Oughton, 1994:22).

Although to some extent food is probably one of the most important basic human needs it would also be ridiculous to ignore other physically vital services in any estimate of poverty. This applies especially to what are normally communally owned services, such as water, sanitation and also access to health and education and shelter. Cutler (1984:1129) therefore concludes that:

"if poverty estimates (whether based on relative or absolute criteria, upon nutritional minima or minimum needs) are to be of any practical use, they should indicate which groups or classes of people in which geographical locations are most at risk from absolute deprivation. It is then up to the government to reduce that risk".

Furthermore, as Lister, (1990 cited in Townsend 1993:31) contends:

"Within that approach human needs are interpreted as being predominantly physical needs - that is, for food shelter and clothing - rather than social needs.

People are not, it is argued, simply individual organisms requiring replacement of sources of physical energy. They are social beings expected to perform socially demanding roles as workers, citizens, parents, partners, neighbours and friends”.

People are, therefore, not only consumers of tangible goods but producers of those goods and are active participants in active complex social, economic and political associations (Townsend, 1993:31). ‘The specification of the costs of meeting minimum dietary needs in any society is as problematic as the specification of costs of fulfilling the entire roles, participative relationships and customs enjoined of a people’ (ibid.:31). Attaining the required nutrition is not the sole motive for human beings and for that matter the poor.

2.2.2 Relative Poverty

Relative poverty is defined ‘in relation to a generally accepted standard of living in a specific society at a particular time and goes beyond basic biological needs’ (Oppenheim and Harker, 1996:9). It is based upon comparison of some notion of acceptable living standards in a particular society (Dixon et al., 1998:7). According to Ravallion (1992:4), poverty can be said to exist in a given society when one or more persons do not attain a level of well-being deemed to constitute a reasonable minimum by the standards of that society. Townsend (1993:36) also pointed out that ‘people are relatively deprived if they cannot obtain, at all or sufficiently, the conditions of life - that is, the diets, amenities, standards and services - which allow them to play the roles, participate in the relationships and follow the customary behaviour which is expected of them by virtue of their membership of society’. In such cases they may be said to be in poverty. Clearly, relative poverty can only be defined in terms of the society or class to which it refers - that is in relation to a general standard of living and an accepted quality of life. Karl Marx (cited in Streeten, 1994:18) wrote about a man who felt comfortable living in his cottage till someone came to build a palace next door to him, and the cottager then began to see that he was deprived. It is only when people compare their level of living with a reference group of higher incomes or status of living that they feel relatively poor. There is a long heritage to this view of poverty. Adam Smith (1776, cited in Oppenheim and Harker, 1996:9), the eighteenth century economic philosopher, stated that:

“By necessities I understand not only commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without. A linen shirt, for example, is strictly speaking not a necessity of life. The Greeks and Romans lived, I suppose, very comfortably though they had no linen. But in the present time... a creditable day-labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt, the want of which would be supposed to denote that disgraceful state of poverty”.

These considerations underlie an explicitly relative standard of poverty.

Translation of the relative poverty concept into a concrete measure poses great difficulty. How do you define a set norm for a person or a group? These measures also rely on money income and ignore other important aspects of deprivation. The issue of quality of services is ignored, for example poor-quality housing, schools, or health care, which may or may not be associated with low incomes. Moreover, poverty may represent only one aspect of a more general powerlessness, an inability to influence one's environment (Atkinson, 1975 cited in Gaiha, 1993:21). Amartya Sen (1983, cited in Oppenheim and Harker, 1996:12) has also challenged the relative definition of poverty by suggesting that such a definition should not overlook the fact that ‘there is an irreducible absolutist core in the idea of poverty’.

These concepts discussed above are concerned mainly with income or consumption, and usually only with consumption. As a result of the various criticisms made of these approaches other non-monetary measures have been developed over the years which include the perspectives of poor people in the identification and analysis of poverty; and the formulation of strategies to reduce it (ODI, 1998:1). These are discussed next.

2.2.3 Complex approaches to the concept of poverty

According to the World Bank, 'Poverty is not just measured by income and consumption. Health, life expectancy, access to clean water, and so on are (also) central dimensions of welfare' (World Bank, 1992, cited in Askwith, 1994:9). Although, to some extent, certain government programmes attempt to take account of these indices of well-being, vulnerability and powerlessness remain neglected (Chambers, 1988:8).

An alternative approach relies on a "participation" standard for poverty, taking account of 'the many roles people play as citizens, workers, parents, householders, neighbours and members of the local community' (Cripps et.al., cited in Gaiha, 1993:21). This alternative approach emphasises the multi-dimensional nature of poverty by taking into account the various and different aspects of people's lives. Poverty is, then, seen as a whole - social, economic, psychological and political (Friedman, 1996:164).

Maxwell (1999:2) advocates more qualitative and participatory approaches appropriate to the purposes of analysis of poverty and detailed planning. This approach relies on local understanding, perception, valuing and listening to the diverse realities of the poor. This argument brings to the fore the issues of powerlessness, social exclusion, physical weakness, vulnerability, isolation, seasonality, livelihood security, self-esteem, ill-health etc. Income alone cannot be a valid measurement for poverty (Bakhit, 1996:7; ODI, 1998:1; Maxwell, 1999:1). Cox and Healey (1998:3) maintain that virtually all European agencies now recognise that poverty is broader than a lack of income and consumption.

2.2.4 Approaches to the measurement of poverty

There are a number of different conceptual approaches to the measurement of poverty. Dixon et al (1998:8-17) has noted that 'the kind of measure chosen reflects the underlying concept and definition of poverty that has been adopted. That is, our concept of poverty determines our definition and our definition determines our measure'. Gaiha (1993) has stated that poverty could be considered from "welfarist" and "non-welfarist" perspectives, with the welfarist approach considering poverty mainly in terms of 'utility'

or 'desire fulfilment'. The conventional approach is the utilisation of the poverty line which is a measure that separates the poor from the non poor. It is a means of aggregating the poor into various groups of poverty. Those whose income or consumption fall below the line are poor and those above it are non-poor (World Bank, 1993:12). In addition to these, there is the need to measure the depth of poverty. This measure - also called the poverty gap - shows not the average distance of the poor from the poverty line, but how far different groups and individuals are from it and is able, through comparisons over time, to capture a worsening of their conditions (UNDP 1997:13). It is also essential to identify the vulnerable groups and deprived areas.

The economic tradition has always employed income as a measure by which to identify and to establish the impact of policy on poverty. In most cases measures of poverty are undertaken through survey-based measurement of welfare indicators; usually income or consumption (White, 1998:1). This orthodox income definition has been used by international organisations led earlier by the World Bank (until the nineties when the Bank began the Participatory Poverty Assessment - PPA). It is largely bereft of the perspectives of key stakeholders within the countries concerned, including the poor themselves (Norton and Owen, cited by Agyarko, 1997:2). According to the World Bank (1999:1) a person is, therefore, considered poor if his or her consumption or income level falls below some minimum level necessary to meet basic needs.

There is often a preference for a specification of the poverty cut-off point based on consumption expenditure (as opposed to income-based specification). Consumption expenditure - as a living standard indicator - has the merit of being less variable than income. Poor people's incomes tend to fluctuate from year to year and from season to season within the year, depending on the weather and other hazards. People may save in good years and dissave in bad ones. Data on consumption will, therefore, be a better measure of their poverty than income (It has the additional practical advantage of being often more easily and accurately gathered than income data, which can be quite uncertain for owner-operated farms or firms, for which no books are kept and for which the concept

of net profits is often vague. Furthermore, people are usually more willing to reveal consumption than income). In the Extended Poverty Study in Ghana, the World Bank (1995a) used real household total expenditure and noted ‘... measures of household expenditure are generally more accurate and reliable than household income. For the purposes of the poverty profile, household expenditures are expressed in per capita terms measured in constant Accra (May 1992) prices’.

Relating income or expenditure to consumption raises a lot of problems: ‘there are empirical problems associated with measuring the income or expenditure of the household, particularly when incomes from a number of different sources or household purchases are made by different members. Secondly there are problems of imputing value to non-traded goods, which may be quite significant for subsistence or semi-subsistence households, or where land or labour markets are not fully monetised’ (Oughton, 1994). Ramprakesh (1995:39) has also argued strongly that, ultimately, all poverty lines are arbitrary and subjective and are matters of political or ideological choice. If income or consumption poverty is not an adequate proxy, an alternate approach to measuring poverty will have to be found, perhaps based on the constraints to the capabilities of individuals (e.g. access to health care or water).

2.2.5 The Participatory Approach

In the participatory approach the conceptions of poor people about poverty are brought to the fore, and they are expected to prioritise their needs in the complex and heterogeneous societies in which they live (Chambers 1995:36). When this approach is adopted, the top-down process in which professionals decide for the poor is discarded and the poor express what they perceive as their priorities. Although elite outsiders may know what is good for the poor, it is surely the poor themselves who know what they want best (1985:8). Giving examples from Botswana and Tanzania, Chambers (1985:8) points out that the response of the poor and the identification of their priorities may surprise and sometimes even amaze outsiders:

“In Botswana, one village wanted a South African mine recruiting agency..., in one Tanzanian region the top priority of a significant proportion of villagers was “vermin control” (that is either shotguns and cartridges or government employees with them to reduce baboon damage to crops), not, one fancies, a result anybody predicted”.

A central objective of this participatory approach is to ‘ensure that the voices of the poor or marginalised groups figure prominently in the dialogue’, (Shaffer, 1996:25). Ordinary people are frequently regarded as unimportant, ignorant, tradition-bound and inactive, although they may make a sizeable contribution to their country’s development. Even people living in absolute poverty are capable of doing something for themselves as long as they are capable of working. Chambers (1997:162) maintains that:

“Participation, empowerment and mutual respect enable lowers, and poor people in general, to express and analyse their individual and shared realities. The principles and practices of participatory appraisal facilitate this analysis and expression”

When they express, share and analyse what they know, experience, need and want, they bring to light dimensions which normal professionals tend to miss or misperceive (Chambers, 1997:163). Friedmann (1996:164) has also noted that:

“Accordingly, to be poor is defined as a form of disempowerment; conversely, solutions are sought in efforts at collective self-empowerment.”

He emphasises three relevant dimensions of disempowerment - (i) social, which refers to poor people’s relative lack of social networks and supportive structures and access to productive resources essential for self-production of their livelihood; (ii) political, referring to poor people’s lack of political power to determine the use of resources and voice to participate in decision-making; and (iii) psychological, referring to poor people’s ‘internalised sense of worthlessness and passive submission to authority’ (ibid.:164). The poor, female and male, should not be seen as passive recipients of intervention programmes, but should be fully involved in attacking their own poverty through their

own institutions. Anti-poverty programmes should use the community's own resources, and initiatives, and build on the talents and skills of the community's members. According to the UNDP Development Report 1997, the great value of popular participation is in the way it empowers communities and builds their capacity for self-help, solidarity and collective action. Such approaches, methods and behaviours enable people to express and analyse the realities of their lives and monitor and evaluate results.

"They provide ways to give poor people a voice, enabling them to express and analyse their problems and priorities. Used well, they can generate important (and often surprising) insights that can contribute to policies better fitted to serving the needs of poor people. More fundamentally they can challenge the perceptions of those in authority and begin to change attitudes and agendas" (UNDP 1997).

2.2.5.1 Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs)

The term PPA can be traced historically to the World Bank. PPAs were launched by the Bank in 1992 as a compliment to conventional poverty assessments. An attempt is made to understand poverty from the perspectives of the poor by focusing on their realities, needs and priorities. PPA can be defined as instruments for including the perspectives of the poor people in poverty analysis, leading to the formulation of strategies to reduce poverty (Chambers, 1994,1995,1997; Friedman; 1996; Shaffer, 1996; Holland and Blackburn, 1998; Maxwell, 1999). This approach enriches the poverty profile through illustrating dimensions of the experience of poverty and vulnerability which conventional poverty analysis, based on statistical data outcomes, tends to ignore.

Robb (1997 cited in Agyarko, 1997:2) has pointed out that, apart from having enabled the opinions of the poor to be included in national policy, Participatory Poverty Assessments opened up the process of policy dialogue to include a cross section of the civil organisations in the formulation of poverty assessments. It has enhanced the appreciation of participatory poverty research in the form of participatory problem identification, which includes the poor in the analysis of their own poverty using qualitative and quantitative information (Agyarko, 1997:2).

Participatory Poverty Assessments have differed from quantitative poverty assessments because they involve consultation with communities using varieties of qualitative methodologies to explore the poor's perception of poverty. In this process, the poor and the vulnerable groups regain power and control over the process by taking part and influencing it. Issues of powerlessness, social exclusion, physical weakness, vulnerability, seasonality, isolation, security, self-respect etc. are examined.

The World Bank (1995a:14) employed a qualitative participatory poverty assessment approach in addition to a quantitative approach in the extended poverty survey in Ghana in 1992. The Bank noted that surveys such as the Ghana Living Standards Survey (1987/88 and 1991/92) are unable to measure all dimensions of poverty, especially those of a qualitative nature. Household surveys of this kind have not proved effective in obtaining information on peoples' attitudes towards their circumstances and their views about how best to resolve their problems. Because of this the Extended Poverty Survey (Quantitative) was supplemented by the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) in 1994 to good effect in the analysis of the use of social services in Ghana. According to the World Bank (1995a:35),

“Incidence analysis qualified the distribution of government spending on health and education, whereas the PPA provided valuable insights into the factors underlying the use (or non-use) of government services by the poor. Additionally, many of the PPA findings are fully consistent with the Ghana Living Standards Survey results. Both point to a critical problem of access to health care services for the poor, and to the problem of quality in the provision of education services”.

In conclusion, it must be noted that the definition of poverty matters if poverty alleviation is to be successful. ‘If the poor are viewed as statistics, figures and ciphers, then the policy that is formulated to alleviate poverty will, in all likelihood, follow suit and be more relevant to the manipulation of statistics than to needs of people’ (Beck, 1994:6). Poverty cannot be treated as material shortfalls in income (or consumption proxies for income), which are easily quantified. It can also not be over simplified as it is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. In poverty assessments, the poor must be the experts on their problems and their perceptions and experiences elicited and utilised. Their priorities

and perceptions must be 'amplified'. Effectiveness in poverty alleviation will be greater if the assessment addresses issues which the poor identify as important. 'Giving poor people a stake in poverty reduction policy and programmes from the initial phase - of gathering information on the problem - enhances the likelihood that these will be taken up and will attain their goals' McGee, 1998:48). This study, therefore, will adopt the complex understanding of poverty as the theoretical framework for defining the poor in rural Ghana. In my field study I employed a combination of participatory approaches such as focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and wealth ranking to explore villagers own perceptions of poverty.

The next section discusses the concepts of the state and decentralisation and examines how they are related to the African state, development, and poverty.

2.3 Concepts of the state and decentralisation

In order to understand the concept of decentralisation it is important to consider the state from which power is devolved and which shapes the economic and political landscapes. The state is a complex and elusive institution, intriguingly difficult to define (Hoffman, 1995; Painter, 1999:1). States are not naturally derived, but are the product of social and political processes that seek to regulate (successfully or unsuccessfully) the flow of goods, money, energy, people and information (Painter, 1995:35).

To Jessop (1990:341-344) the state,

“comprises a distinctive ensemble of institutions and organisations whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on the members of a society in the name of their common interest or general will”.

States are everywhere the centre of a political system (Villanon and Huxtable, 1998:8). They consist of actions of many people of different background, associations, social relations and networks who interact within the limits set by the state. The people may include both powerful and powerless with diverse interests and the state has a duty to preserve and regulate their activities (Painter, 1995:35; Smith, 1996:173). 'A pluralistic

system of authority and pluralistic communities require a public power as the medium through which they may contain their conflicts' (Hist and Thompson, 1996:193). States are very important as they play significant role in ordering governments, distributing power and giving them shape and legitimacy (ibid.:190). At a general level, therefore, states derive their power from their territoriality, that is the identification with, and defence of, a geographically bounded space (Mohan, 1993:17). Mann (1984 cited in Mohan, 1993:17) has noted that 'the state is defined by its possession of sovereignty; so that only the state is inherently centralised over a delimited territory over which it has authoritative power'. The essence of the state is sovereignty and it is the outstanding characteristic of the state, which sets it apart from other political organisations (Pounds, 1972:1; Muir, 1987:80). This gives the state some distinctive quality by which to monitor, govern, and control the population (Painter, 1995:35). The state is, then, perceived as an arena in which conflicting interests compete for scarce resources (Smith, 1996:172). According to Painter (1995):

“states are constituted of specialised social practices which are to a greater or lesser extent institutionalised (in a ‘state apparatus’) and which secure at least partial compliance through either consent, or coercion, or both”.

Where the state comprises a geographically uneven area with scattered population spread over a substantial area of land this may lead to the formation of more or less localised systems of administration and service delivery - some degree of decentralisation will be required. Part of the local apparatus of the state may include local elections and decision-making about the provision and co-ordination of certain state activities at the local level by local politicians (Painter, 1995:83). Decentralisation involves spatially and politically demarcating the ‘collective wholeness’ which is the territorial base of the state’s power so that “dividing up the state is not a neutral technical exercise but an essentially political policy for all territorial states” (Taylor, 1992,cited in Mohan, 1993:18).

The next section discusses the concept of decentralisation in order to understand the issues involved before going on to consider the history and evolution of decentralisation in Ghana in chapter three.

2.3.1 The concept of decentralisation

Decentralisation is an 'omnibus' word widely used by practising politicians, administrators and academics with many proposing different meanings. Much ambiguity, therefore, surrounds the concept (Turner and Hulme, 1997:152; Wittenhall, 1996:24). It has been used by different people with different motivations to mean different things and is not easily defined (Conyers, 1983b; Mawhood, 1983; Rondinelli et al., 1984; Litvac et al., 1998). However one widely accepted definition is provided by Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema (1984:9); that is that decentralisation is the transfer of the responsibility for planning, decision-making, or administrative authority from central government to its field organisations. Koehn (1995:72) maintains that 'fundamentally genuine decentralisation involves the process of transferring power'. Decentralisation takes many forms: several dimensions and several variants may be operating at the same time within a country, or even within a sector (Litvac et al., 1998:4)

Rondinelli et al., (1984:10) have distinguished four major forms of decentralisation. These are primarily determined by the extent to which authority to plan, decide and manage is transferred from the central government to other organisations and the amount of autonomy the 'decentralised organisations' achieve in carrying out their tasks. The four forms of decentralisation identified are deconcentration, delegation to semi-autonomous or parastatal agencies, transfer of functions from public to non-governmental institutions and devolution.

2.3.1.1 Deconcentration

This is a form of decentralisation which is administrative. It involves the transfer of some amount of administrative authority or responsibility to sub-national levels within central government ministries and agencies (Rondinelli et al., 1984; WHO, 1990:16). It is merely a shifting of workload from a central government ministry or agency headquarters to its own field staff located in offices outside of the national capital. No transfer of authority for decision-making or exercise of discretion in carrying them out is made (ibid.:18).

Smith (1985:142-3) describes this as bureaucratic decentralisation and distinguishes it from political decentralisation:

"First, the kind of authority delegated to field officers of central ministries and agencies is bureaucratic rather than political, in the sense that field officers are part of an organisational structure and hierarchy with spheres of competence formally defined by superior officials at headquarters. ... Secondly, field administrators are usually civil servants recruited according to the normal selecting procedures used in the appropriate department or ministry. ... Thirdly, the areas within which field officers operate will be delimited by the administrative requirements of their functions rather than by local community characteristics, unless these happen to be relevant to the administrative tasks of the field staff."

Conyers (1983a:102) contends that deconcentration is regarded as a much more limited form of decentralisation in which control - particularly over 'allocative' decisions - remains at the national capital while only control over 'decision of implementation' is decentralised. It is important to note that these field officers are part of the central government bureaucratic organisation network, are guided by its rules of appointment, promotion, remuneration, control and deployment. They are responsible and accountable to the central government in the performance of their duties. Their employment is not limited to only one area as they are expected to accept rotational postings between the headquarters and the field and from area to area (Dotse, 1987).

Stevens (1995:34) contends that decentralisation in this form is a top-down broadening of accountability to the executive and thus to parliament at the capital. To Litvac et al., (1998:4) this is unlikely to lead to potential benefits or to the pitfalls of decentralisation in full, since it does not involve any transfer of authority to lower levels of government.

2.3.1.2 Delegation

Delegation of authority transfers managerial responsibility for precise defined functions to organisations that are not under the direct control of central government ministries. These organisations 'are outside the regular bureaucratic structure and are only indirectly controlled by the central government' (autonomous or semi-autonomous) (Rondinelli,

1981; Rondinelli et al., 1983:20). This form arises in response to the severe limitation to public administration in low income countries, in which some governments and international donor organisations have created special organisations (for example, public corporations, parastatal organisations, special authorities), within the state. The central government may delegate power, management authority, certain responsibilities and decision-making for the implementation of either single or multi-purpose development projects, for example, agriculture, water supply, education, hydro-electric power, highways etc. to these bodies. They may or may not have spatial boundaries within the state. Rondinelli et al. (1984:20) have noted that delegation of functions from the central government to such organisations as public corporations, regional planning and area development authorities, multi-purpose and single-purpose functional authorities and special project implementation units represents a more extensive form of deconcentration.

Delegation affords the government the opportunity to insulate development projects from burdensome procedures and to introduce business efficiency in government operation. The rationale for delegation in low income countries is to relieve the civil service of some of the crucial management tasks associated with such important change projects. It is argued that this is a good thing because the civil service may be insufficient, unresponsive and inflexible. Bureaucracies may lack the technical and administrative ability required to manage projects; whereas these special bodies are endowed with superior administrative and technical capabilities. By establishing these semi-autonomous public authorities, international donor agencies are able to separate loan and grant projects from the normal national budgeting and accounting process so that an 'audit trail' can be established for the expenditure of foreign aid funds. It also makes it easier for these projects to be "quarantined" not only for evaluation but also for further funding (Rondinelli et al., 1984:16). There is also the potential for development of employee skills. Delegated authority becomes a way of financing special development. The location of a special development project in a community also makes people feel that they have a stake in controlling and contributing to the successful outcome of the programme. It can

therefore be argued that since delegation of authority confers some decision-making responsibilities to third parties, it may also help in shifting decision-making to a more appropriate level (Jenks and Kelly, 1985, cited in Akuji, 1993:26). These organisations usually have a great deal of discretion in decision-making.

2.3.1.3 Privatisation

In privatisation the role of the government in the provision of goods and services is reduced. Governments divest themselves of some planning, administrative responsibilities or public functions and either transfer them to voluntary, private or non-governmental institutions. These authorities, such as professional groups and religious organisations, have been empowered to licence, regulate or supervise the activities of their members in their performance of functions which were previously either performed or regulated by the government (Rondinelli et al, 1984:23).

The advocates of privatisation maintain that the private sector is inherently more efficient than the public sector because it fosters more competition with multiple providers of the same services in the private sector. In addition privatisation reduces government bureaucracy and red tape, and provides information concerning the demand for the services. 'In contrast government organisations operating under monopoly conditions will have little incentive to innovate or reduce costs' (Bish and Ostrom, 1993, cited in Akuji, 1993:5). Additionally, privatisation makes it possible for the non-profit sector to provide services to needy areas. Voluntary and religious organisations may assist in the provision of social services (particularly health, water, education) in rural areas where direct government involvement is weak and private sector involvement is non-existent. In Ghana for example, the Catholic Relief Services, Salvation Army and Word Vision International have been involved in the operation of village health clinics, hospitals and education to supplement the efforts of the District Assemblies.

2.3.1.4 Devolution

'Devolution is the creation or strengthening - financially or legally - of subnational, regional and/or local units of government, the activities of which are substantially independent or outside the direct control of government with respect to a defined set of functions' (Rondinelli et al., 1984:19; WHO, 1990:19). Devolution disperses management and decision-making responsibilities from the national government to subordinate units of government. These are legally established, locally elected political authorities (Conyers, 1983a:102). Devolution, therefore, entails the delegation of political authority to formally constituted subnational units of government known as local government or area government, for example, municipalities, districts or provinces. Power is devolved to these lower level governments through either a legislative enactment or constitutional provision. In a sense, devolution is power sharing between the centre and its constituent parts. Specific functions and responsibilities are devolved to these units of government in a partnership system designed to promote national and local interests. Under devolution, there exists a miniature political system with an elected Chief Executive, styled variously as Mayor, Executive, Chairman etc. and an elected legislative body for the formulation of policies and the enactment of by-laws for the area.

The sub-national governments established have clear geographical boundaries and corporate status and are considered a separate level of government. In general they enjoy autonomy, discretion and independence; the central government exercises little or no direct influence and control over their activities (Rondinelli, 1981). However, the independence, autonomy and discretion which may be granted to area governments is never complete, 'as the discretion which area governments can exercise is limited by the influence and sometimes the control which the national government can exercise over its subordinates' (Smith, 1985). This is to ensure that local officials conform to national development policies and plans in the discharge of their functions. In order to achieve this measure of control, central governments adopt both formal and informal methods.

Financially, sub-national levels of government may be given varying degrees of freedom to raise revenue and in the expenditure of resources required, although the central government may still play a large financial role in their operation (Dotse, 1987). Being local political institutions, local residents consider them as governmental institutions capable of satisfying their local needs. 'Since governments at this level are part of the entire political system, they ideally interact with the central government and other units of government in a reciprocal, mutual, benefiting and co-ordinating manner; they are not considered as a more subordinate level of government' (Rondinelli et al., 1984)

Devolution is usually assumed to entail democracy, where elected decision makers are accountable to the electorate, who invoke one of their means of local participation in the political process by electing representatives (Smith, 1985). Smith's view on devolution is expressed in this comment, 'if area government is exercised through political authority and lay institutions, within areas defined by community characteristics, a system of devolution may be said to exist'. Devolution, therefore, requires bottom-up accountability to a local electorate (lower down the ladder) (Stevens, 1995:36). The political decision to devolve powers from central government can only be translated into actual powers being shifted if subnational governments have the fiscal, political and administrative capacity to manage this responsibility (Litvac et al., 1998:6).

2.3.2 The administrative and political decentralisation dichotomy

Two basic models can be discerned from the discussion on forms of decentralisation: the institutional (political) model implicit in devolution, and the administrative decentralisation model which manifests itself in deconcentration, delegation and, to a lesser extent, privatisation. The difference consists in the nature of what is being decentralised - political or administrative capacity - and consequently the kind of accountability that is put in place (Stevens, 1995:36). Rondinelli, Cheema and Conyers see the administrative model as a means of improving the planning and implementation of national development (especially rural development) and facilitating participation in the development process. They view decentralisation as a system of streamlining the

decision-making and planning process from the centre to the grassroots (Conyers, 1983a; 1989; 1990; Rondinelli, 1981; Rondinelli et al., 1984). In this sense, the model is aimed at distributing power and responsibility for resource allocation for the implementation of development projects to beneficiaries at the grassroots. Ideally, priorities are expected to be based on the needs of the people, to encourage participation in the development initiatives of government.

On the other hand, those supporting the institutional (political) model of decentralisation (Maddick, 1963; Samoff, 1989; Slater, 1990; Koehn, 1995) argue persuasively that it is only through strengthening and increasing the capacity of local government as an institution that development can be achieved. Samoff (1990:515) contends that the administrative orientation is liberal in that 'the authors foresee not only improvement in government but also improved standards of living for the populace at large and a more efficient administrative arrangement'. For the institutionalists, the primary concern is political decentralisation, the transfer of decision-making authority to previously under represented or marginal groups (Maddick, 1963; Mahood, 1988; Slater, 1989; Samoff, 1990; Koehn, 1995). Their concern is not with the extent of administrative arrangements but rather whether or not decision-making authority has actually been transferred. In this understanding, empowerment is central. 'If the institutional reform does not empower under-represented and disadvantaged groups, there has been no decentralisation' (Samoff, 1990:517). Mohan (1996a) noted that these normative differences are due to a lack of intellectual communication and misunderstanding. The interventionists take a top-down view of decentralisation, while the political analysts see decentralisation as a means of strengthening grassroots involvement as a more desirable devolution of power.

The following sections examine the nature of the African state and the type of decentralisation experienced by the African state before and after independence. This will give a clear picture of the context within which decentralisation programmes were undertaken up to the 1990s.

2.3.3 The African state and decentralisation in the colonial period

The development paths of modern states have not been unilinear. What the state is and does can be very different in different times and places (Painter, 1995:34). Giddens (1985 cited in Pinter, 1995) maintains that 'modern state formation was the unintended consequences of international activities'. It is, therefore, important to examine and understand the African state since it is the pivot of all political and economic transformation of the continent. As Chabal (1985,cited in Mohan, 1993:31) has noted with respect to Africa, 'our understanding of the post-colonial period inevitably depends upon our understanding of Africa before independence'. This gives an insight into the diminished sovereignty of the African state which is linked and controlled by internationally powerful nations and organisations.

One most important element that influenced the development of the African state was colonialism. Taylor (1988 cited in Mohan, 1993:57), notes that 'deeply embedded in the contemporary state are a number of characteristics and behavioural dispositions which originated in the colonial era'. Africa was incorporated into the world-system. African states with their own internal structures and dynamics were disrupted, linked with and subordinated to a set of global interactions and institutions with a dynamic of their own (Clapham, 1985:13). The principal motive was economic exploitation (Clapham, 1985; Painter, 1996). The result was a dual society with a prosperous export sector superimposed on an impoverished peasant economy (Ansah, 1991:69) with consequent economic imbalance between different regions of the country, as well as within regions, exacerbating the poverty problems of the neglected rural regions (Tordoff, 1984:48). Colonial boundaries were laid down with an arbitrariness which took no account of indigenous societies or geographical zones, dividing Africa into a considerable number of separate states (Clapham, 1985:17).

To facilitate this exploitation, administrative, economic and social arrangements were made in carefully selected settlements (Dickson, 1984:11). Therefore:

“we see that colonial state was a peculiar variant of the capitalist state. Its territory was ambiguous since it was artificially imposed, its sovereignty was imperial, there was no real national identity, its legal institutions were hybridised version of the European counterparts while its external relationships were as recipients of imperial dictates” (Mohan, 1996a:65)

The administrative structure established to rule the colonial territory was necessarily both centralised and authoritarian (Clapham, 1985:19). Power and authority came directly from the metropole and revolved around the governor, the district commissioners and other colonial agents and cadres (Clapham, 1985:19; Rothchild, 1994:46). ‘Colonialism encouraged and upheld state centralisation of power and laid the foundation for what African citizens were to experience after independence’ (Rothchild, 1994:45-56). According to Olowu and Smoke (1990 cited in Rothchild, 1994:46) ‘on philosophical grounds, in organisational constitutions, in policy-making, colonial regimes were essentially elitists, centrist and absolutist’. There was a sense of imposition of state power emanating from above (top-down) rather than below (bottom-up), to be feared and accepted by the people it governed and controlled. Young, (1988, cited in Mohan, 1993:34) talks of ‘mediated hegemony’ involving local intermediaries or, as it was formally known, ‘indirect rule’. This model was decentralised in so far as ‘it empowered the local elites’ (Mohan, 1993:34). Decentralisation in the colonial state was a peculiar brand of deconcentration which could be nothing but peculiar, given the political circumstances (ibid.:60).

At the close of colonial rule in 1957 in Ghana, decentralised administration was put in place as a means of removing some of the burden of providing local services from the central government, and of encouraging political education and involvement at the local level (Conyers, 1983a:99; Kasfir, 1994; Rothchild, 1994). This change in administrative structure was a means to involve the people and ward off local resistance by the indigenous population. This is discussed more fully in chapter 3.

2.3.4 The independent state and decentralisation in Africa

Colonial rule systematically bequeathed on independent African governments a bureaucracy that emphasised hierarchy, compliance and discipline, devoid of public accountability, responsiveness, participation and empowerment of the people (Clapham, 1985:18; Olowu, 1994:21). In the post-independence period African leaders perpetuated the pattern of centralised political and administrative institutions (Rondinelli, 1983; Olowu, 1994; Rothchild, 1994:). African socio-economic development was modelled after the experiences of the western nations. The emphasis was on modernisation - massive importation of western capital to propel stagnant societies to 'take -off'.

The international economic framework also favoured the continued dominance of the state and of centralised rule in Africa. Donor agencies prescribed and funded the governments' large-scale public sector planning (Olowu, 1994:21). The grid of power radiated from the capital to territorial sub-regions with limited or no autonomy. A one party state or military rule became the norm in Africa. It was an expression of the centralist forces that were bent on monopolising decision-making, economic and political power (Rothchild, 1994:48). This gives credence to Olowu's view that 'the African state is strong in those areas in which it ought to be weak (repressive power) and weak where it ought to be strong (popular mobilisation, responsiveness, participation etc.' (1994:22). African ruling elites expanded the government's power by political penetration of society via regional and local levels of the state (Mohan, 1993:73).

With recession in the 1970s and 80s, Africa was drawn into a higher form of world regulation by the international donor agencies led by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They associated the state with unproductive 'rent-seeking' and began to advocate policies that more or less reflected the neo-liberal paradigm (Kiely and Marfleet, 1998:31)

2.3.5 Decentralisation and governance

In the 1990s in Africa there has been a shift in emphasis from 'government' to 'governance', which indicates the changing role of government from service provider to 'enabler' or facilitator of economic development (in line with the 'rolling back' of the state) (Edralin, 1997:1). Smith (1998:85) maintains that interest in the democratisation process both at the national and local levels has been given new impetus by the transition from authoritarianism to democracy currently with varying levels of success in most regions of the world. This calls for the need for evolution of a governmental regime that provides opportunities for all to have input into the governing process, without compromising the integrity and effectiveness of those processes (Olowu, 1994:19). Good governance, therefore, represents a pre-eminent challenge of the decade. It calls for greater participation by ordinary people in decisions which shape and affect their daily lives. Blair (1997:1) has noted that decentralisation has had a long history as a donor-assisted initiative, and as an administrative enterprise, but as a democratisation strategy (devolution of power) it is relatively new and deserving of evaluation.

Political decision-making must involve, and be as close to the people as possible; decentralisation of government is, therefore, closely interlinked with improved governance. Central governments around the world are being encouraged by donors to decentralise fiscal, political, planning and administrative responsibilities to lower-level governments and to the private sector (Litvac et al., 1998:1), as discussed in the following section.

2.3.6 Decentralisation and development

Decentralisation is by no means a new concept to African policy makers (De Wit, 1997; Olowu, 1994:2) As has been shown above, it has been a major policy focus in the development agendas of low income countries for over fifty years (Olowu, 1994:1). Decentralisation has enormous potential for service delivery, for improving over-all governmental effectiveness and the administration of decentralised planning. There has been a growing awareness among governments of Africa of 'the potentially productive

role of local government in raising resources, providing services, expanding rural-urban linkages, stimulating private investment and implementing national development policies' (Olowu and Smoke, 1992).

Since the late 1950s and early 1960s (i.e. the period of decolonisation) decentralisation has received considerable attention as a strategy for change in African countries. This attention has come from independent, concerned governments and, more recently, from the World Bank/IMF (in the context of Structural Adjustment Programmes), which sees decentralisation as a means of undermining the strength of centralised bureaucracies. 'The 1990s have brought a new, determined support for decentralisation as part of the general thrust towards building democratic and legitimate institutions' (Rothchild, 1994:8). Decentralisation in Africa prior to the 1990s mainly took the form of deconcentration. A new form of decentralisation has now emerged which is linked to political reform and a movement from top-down to bottom-up development. It emphasises popular participation and empowerment. This promotes a self reliant development approach in which local initiatives should lead to development efforts (FAO, 1997:12; Olowu, 1994:2; World Bank, 1989:60; 1998). The FAO (1997) describe this as a:

"development from within, which depends on the decentralisation and devolution of structure of government, and on the education and sensitisation of local communities to decide their own development priorities and to mobilise the resources needed to solve their development problems".

2.3.7 Decentralisation and power

Decentralisation, therefore, raises a crucial and fundamental question of power.

Ademolakum et al., (1990:3) have noted that:

'any reform to achieve some form of decentralisation is not merely a technical or administrative undertaking; the nature and degree of power transferred within such a efforts to achieve decentralisation .Decentralisation underlies the stakes inherent to power and the tensions created by it'.

The transfer of responsibilities, roles or functions always involves some degree of power-sharing. Conyers (1990:23) contends that the fundamental issue, in terms of participation, is the question of who holds power at any particular level. Power may be decentralised to

individuals or groups. 'Who participates (in the decision making process) will depend very much on which of these individuals holds the power and what sort of links they have within the local community as a whole and with particular sections or interest groups within it' (ibid.:23). Samoff (1990:515) has strongly argued that deconcentration does not empower the poor and marginalised but reinforces and intensifies central authority, and that what is needed is popular empowerment which should be reckoned as the likely outcome of successful decentralisation.

Rondinelli (1990:492), in response to Slater's (1989) article 'Decentralisation, territorial power and the state', argues that decentralisation, as an organisational concept, is inevitably a political issue. He noted that

'Although it is a mistake to assess any form of decentralisation only in its administrative or organisational dimensions or only from a technical perspective, it is misleading to assess decentralisation only by its contribution to promoting political democracy a concept in any case which means different things to different societies'

It must be noted that, in any case, elite groups or vested interests can easily capture local government if they are unwilling to share power or to allow greater participation in decision making and empowerment of rural people. Decentralisation must be understood as an identification of who is to rule, which includes who is to have access to decision-making and how that access to decision-making is determined (Samoff, 1990:522).

The most important issue is whether the rural people at the grassroots are empowered to undertake development to improve their well-being. Implementation of devolution at a level closer to the people must focus attention on who participates, who benefits and who controls (Koehn, 1995:78). Indeed, the empowerment of poor villagers will continue to present major challenges for development management in Africa (ibid.:78). Many NGOs are successful in dealing with the poor because of the recognition of the central importance of the poor's participation in governance, planning and decision-making, distribution of benefits, and sustaining development projects. And some do manage to get

beneficiaries involved in the project conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation (Koehn: 1995).

2.3.8 Decentralisation and poverty alleviation

At the most obvious and general level, poverty is the outcome of the lack of economic, social, and political power of the poor (Goetz and O'Brien, 1995:17). The sustained interest in decentralisation (notwithstanding its varied problems), since independence in Africa, is an indication that, in principle, it holds promise to involve local people in the development process. So, for example, problems of neglected areas or of diverse ethnic groups can be better addressed. Decentralisation may empower minorities and vulnerable groups to get involved in the development process at the local level (De Wit, 1997:3). Rondinelli (1981:136), for example, argues that:

by creating alternative means of decision-making, decentralisation can offset the influence or control over development activities by entrenched local elites who are often unsympathetic to national policies and insensitive to the needs of the poor groups in rural communities.

There are significant arguments against this, however. Conyers (1985:36 cited in Khan, 1988:27) has noted that decentralisation may not alleviate rural poverty, especially if captured by local elites.

Smith similarly argues that decentralisation will not necessarily lead to poverty reduction and that the main issues of relevance to the poor (and often neglected) are low incomes, poor housing, planning blight and high unemployment: group mobilisation, self-help approaches and increased political power and awareness will not lift the poor out of poverty (Smith, 1985:181). Central governments manage the macro level economic policies for economic growth, and provide infrastructure for development, but there is the need for further provision for the poor to enhance their well-being. He maintains that 'participation designed to alleviate multiple deprivation and poverty in a decentralised context is limited to the ballot box which benefits the politicians' (ibid.:181). The people's involvement may be seen in terms of voting, with limited 'voice' and

involvement afterwards. Smith is not optimistic about combating poverty through decentralised development.

The ambiguity around whether decentralisation helps the rural poor is due to the fact that policy makers and bureaucrats continue to exercise control and dominate the development agenda. There is little inclination towards involvement of the rural poor in the development process. However, 'there is reason to expect that, over time, poor groups may become better able to exert political leverage within democratic authorities at lower levels' (Manor, 1997:2). Manor is of the opinion that 'when it works well, decentralisation has much to recommend it' and points to its particular value in assisting remote, underdeveloped and under-represented sub-regions.

2.4 Conclusion

The review of poverty has shown that the conceptualisation and measurement of poverty are complex issues. The question is, who defines poverty - the poor themselves, donors or governments (Lipton, 1999:83)? Decentralisation is no less complex and entails a redistribution of power relations which may still work against the poor. It is argued that the World Bank is actively involved with decentralisation policy in many developing countries because it believes that it can greatly affect economic development and poverty reduction. According to Litvac et al. (1998:1), the Bank is of the opinion that institutional development is critical to poverty reduction. Strengthened government institutions at the central and local levels are needed to improve the capability for analysis and programme implementation, especially for poverty reduction (Litvac et al., 1998:40). The emphasis is on accountability at the local level to be achieved through decentralisation, competition and participation, and its success relies on each interest group's capacities to exercise effective 'voice' to influence service provision (Goetz and O'Brien, 1995:18). Litvac et al (1998:2) stated:

"one reason decentralisation has attracted so much attention is that it is often a cross-cutting reform that can relate to such important Bank concerns as the relation between fiscal development; micro-economic stability; poverty

alleviation and the social safety-net institutional capacity, corruption and governance; investment in infrastructure; and the provision of social services”.

According to the World Bank, decentralisation can affect a wide range of issues from service delivery to poverty reduction to macro economic stability (ibid.:7). De Wit (1997:6) suggests decentralisation does not appear to be the most logical choice as a strategy for poverty alleviation. He contends that decentralisation and political participation are difficult to achieve precisely because they address the major issues of control by powerful elites, which include politicians and administrators (Devas et al., 1993:204, cited in De Wit 1997: 6). An analysis of older case studies of decentralisation in Africa by Rondinelli and Cheema (1983:100) suggested that services provision barely increased and most of the decentralised organisations did not prove to be viable mechanisms for popular participation. As a consequence, many poverty alleviation programmes presently focus on the empowerment of the poor (ibid.:7). The urgent question is whether this new round of decentralisation encouraged by the World Bank will be of more positive benefit to the marginalised, underprivileged and excluded.

CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DECENTRALISATION IN GHANA

3.1 Introduction

This historical review covers the colonial and post independence periods through to the institution of the present local government system by the PNDC in 1988 (enshrined in the 1992 constitution of Ghana). The aim of this chapter is to provide a fairly detailed historical survey of the progress of decentralisation in Ghana, from the colonial period onwards, based on a review of government reports and relevant literature. It is only through such a survey that one can understand the current practice of, and attitudes to, decentralisation in Ghana. Special attention is given to the potential of various programmes for poverty alleviation and, where available, conclusions on the success of their implementation are reported. The review thus provides essential context for the detailed analysis of conditions in the specific case study districts which follows in ensuing chapters.

3.2 The Colonial Period

This period was characterised by the practice of indirect rule in the then Gold Coast. The British colonial administration did not disturb the existing traditional institutions but recognised their utility and made use of the decentralised structures in the form of native administrative institutions (Mohan, 1993; Asibuo, 1992). Indirect rule was established in 1879 when the first Native Jurisdiction Ordinance was passed and lasted until 1944 (Schiffer, 1970 cited in Ayee, 1994:14). The Chieftaincy institution ‘was widespread and deeply rooted in the social traditions of the people. Though some chieftancies enjoyed a local quasi-sovereignty, the traditional system of native rule, at least in the colony and Ashanti areas, was not intrinsically alien to democratic methods of representation and consent’ (Asibuo, 1989:87). Indirect rule was, therefore, a political stratagem to involve the indigenous political actors and their social system and politics of their local areas; and to elicit some degree of local participation. The British made use of the existing traditional rulers at the local level, and even where non existed, created them under the so-called indirect rule system (Boahen, 1987). Eminent chiefs were recruited and charged with the responsibility of maintaining law and order,

collecting taxes, settling disputes and managing essential socio-economic services (Asibuo, 1992). This activity was subject to the overriding authority of the central government. The Governor thus ruled the indigenous people through their traditional leaders. This system also allowed the traditional rulers to continue to rule their people according to native laws and customs, subject to British law. However, where native law conflicted with British law the latter took precedence (Kaul, 1989:2).

Native authorities and treasuries were established in 1927 and their functions were clearly defined. For the establishment of Native Authorities a paramount chief, native court and an independent treasury had to be present (Asibuo, 1989:93). A group of these authorities was constituted into a district under a district commissioner. Through a series of ordinances¹ the colonial administration sought to improve the structure of administration in the country. This was by gradually introducing modifications of the ancient institution of chieftaincy to suit “modern” conditions (Ayee, 1994). Ayee maintains that Native Administration was an agency for maintenance of stool government; the agency responsible for effecting local improvement was the central government. Andoh, therefore, noted:

It was this ineffectiveness as local government agencies that bred the habit which persisted into post-independence Ghana, of chiefs presenting addresses of welcome to central government officers and ministers, requesting local development from the central government. The distance which exists between the mass of people and the government, which makes the latter something external to the former, can be traced to the relationship which was engendered between the District Commissioner and the chief and his people by the system of indirect rule (1951 cited in Ayee, 1994:26).

Seeking recognition from central government was more important to the chiefs than the support of their people. Significantly, the democratic ideals underlying chieftaincy in Ghana which made chiefs accountable to their people suffered under indirect rule (Nkrumah, 1995a:3).

The early post-war era (1945-1948) saw the urban based *elites and workers agitating* for political reforms which culminated in the 1948 riots. Local government during this period came under serious attack from the nationalists (Nkrumah: 1995a:3: Ayee,

¹ Early legislation on local government included the Municipal Ordinance 1859, Native Jurisdiction Ordinance 1927, Native Administration Ordinance 1927, Native Administrative Treasuries ordinance 1937 and Native Authority (colony) Ordinance 1944 (Ayee, 1994; Nkrumah, 1995).

1994:28; Asibuo, 1992:65). It was considered to be undemocratic, firstly because it was mainly the chief and his elders who were involved without any accountability to their people. Secondly, financial control by the chiefs made it difficult to distinguish between their personal and local authority monies, breeding corruption and inefficiency. Thirdly, the staffing situation of local government 'was extremely weak, consisting of narrowly based and mostly illiterate and semi-illiterate hangers-on of the chiefs, with old-fashioned procedures' (Nkrumah, 1995a). The educated nationalists were largely ignored.

From 1950/51 reports of various commissions recognised the need for central government and the regional institutions to share functions. The Watson Commission was set up to investigate the causes of the 1948 riots. The Coussey Committee was also appointed in 1949 to consider issues of constitutional reform. The Commissions found the government to be highly centralised, remote from the people and recommended a measure of devolution of power to the local government units and to regional assemblies (which might weaken the power of the chiefs).

In 1951, the Local Government Ordinance was passed towards self-government status, but not independence of the Gold Coast. It was a transition period, with the main objectives being to broaden participation in government decision-making and to provide a training ground for the people about the realities of democracy. Under the 1951 Local Government Ordinance, a more modern, more democratic system of local government was introduced. The ordinance created a two-tier system of local government - District Councils and, below them, Urban and Local Councils. Two-thirds of the members of the Urban and Local Councils were democratically elected and one-third represented the traditional authorities. A total of 26 multi-purpose district councils and 252 urban and local councils were established. The first local government elections were held on 1st April 1952 and the Convention People's Party of Kwame Nkrumah captured over 90% of the seats throughout the country (Asibuo, 1992:66). The need, as revealed by the various commissions, was for democratic and representative government and so very little consideration was given to efficiency and economic viability of the various local units established. The local councils were too

many and were administratively and financially non-viable. At the time of independence on 6 March 1957 Ghanaians inherited this unstable and unviable system of local government (Ayee, 1994:43).

3.3 Decentralisation since independence

Successive governments after independence have undertaken decentralisation programmes ranging from deconcentration to devolution of power. These programmes have been implemented with different goals and objectives. These are discussed in the following sections.

3.3.1 The Nkrumah Regime (1957-1966)

Decentralisation in Ghana after independence is characterised by many Commissions/Committees of enquiry as shown in Table 3.1

Table 3.1: Commissions/Committees of Enquiry into Local Government Reforms in Ghana, 1957-1982

Regime	Head of State	Year	Name
CPP	Dr Kwame Nkrumah	1957	Greenwood
CPP	“ “ “	1958	Van Lare
CPP	“ “ “	1965	Boison
NLC	Gen. J. A. Ankrah	1967	Mills-Odoi
NLC	“ “ “	1968	Akuffo-Addo
NLC	“ “ “	1968	Siriboe
SMCI	Gen Acheampong	1974	Okoh
PNDC	Ft. Lt. Rawlings	1982	Kuffour
PNDC	“ “ “	1982	Sowu
PNDC	Ft. Lt. Rawlings	1982	Kaku-Kyiama

Source: Ayee, 1994 p. 49.

The fragmentation of local councils in the 1951 ordinance certainly affected their development potential. Asibuo (1992:66) noted that Nkrumah's acceptance of the fragmentation of local councils (to coincide with traditional boundaries) was politically motivated. It was meant to win the political support of the traditional authorities, weaken its political rivals and build grassroots support for CPP.

Many of the local government units survived only by virtue of grants from the government or the Cocoa Marketing Board. Nkrumah (1989:87), argues strongly that any local government unit that survives exclusively on external generosity or just manages to break even from its own resources, without providing any appreciable local services to its people, is not worthy of its name. And it is a contradiction to the basic tenets of local government - the capability of undertaking basic local services primarily out of its own resources.

The Greenwood Commission was appointed (just prior to independence) to undertake a review of the existing local government structure and finance and to come out with a viable system of local government. The Commission found that there were numerous scattered councils with no clearly focused functions and responsibilities between the central government agencies and local authorities in fields such as roads and health provision. Finance to the councils was also found to be inadequate with numerous cases of financial abuse. There was also lack of understanding, co-operation, trust and consensus between the chiefs, local elites and the people (Ghana, 1957 cited in Ayee, 1994:51).

The Commission in 1957 recommended a structure with each individual local government unit based on larger populations. It was aimed at reducing the number of local authorities and improving the financial position of the councils. Two alternative structures were proposed by the Commission. Firstly, a one-tiered local government structure with greater local responsibilities and power. Secondly, a two-tiered structure giving greater responsibility and control to the regional authority - which in turn could delegate some of its functions to certain categories of local authority. The Greenwood Commission recommended the reduction of the number of local authorities from 252 to 59. The CPP government opted for the acceptance of the single-tiered structure in theory but was never seriously committed to the reforms. 'The government was anxious to neutralise local loyalties which it considered too narrow and intransigent and also which might develop too powerful a position vis - a - vis the centre' (Ayee, 1994:53).

Nkrumah and his CPP rejected the provision of regional assemblies fearing that it might promote regional/ethnic separatism, though the reduction in the number of local authorities was accepted (Haynes, 1991:284). There was, therefore, a high degree of centralisation in the capital, Accra. The structure accepted was in consonance with the centralist state machinery in that all levels of the hierarchy had central government control in order to consolidate its power. In order to deal with problems encountered in large councils, (as recommended by Greenwood), town, village and area committees were also established. This was to engender local initiatives through local self-help projects and communal activities, while the larger units concentrated on local government functions of larger magnitude. Nkrumah and his CPP administration were concerned with and committed to big national and Pan-African projects (Nkrumah, 1989) 'rather than the mundane business of local government' (Ayee, 1994:73).

In 1961, the Local Government Act was passed and with it the Chiefs' Law, which gave statutory recognition to the chiefs' ceremonial and traditional functions, but completely 'banished' them from any responsibilities of the local government units. This was a confirmation of the great dislike Nkrumah had for the institution of Chieftaincy. 'Local councils then were deemed to have been completely constituted of elected members, although in practice, they were actually composed of CPP appointed members' (Ayee, 1994:56). The local government system was overhauled again in 1962 and the number of local authorities was arbitrarily increased from 59 to 66. Nkrumah apparently had a solid grip on power (Petchenkine, 1993:3). The government at this period had become authoritarian as the Republican constitution of 1960 vested the president with enormous executive powers.

By 1962, the government was experiencing severe economic hardships - especially the high rate of inflation - which gradually eroded the popularity of the government. In 1962, The Nkrumah government directed that development committees should be formed in every village. They were to be known as Village Committees and were to organise the development aspects of the life of the community. But they were also made organs of the CPP. The Village Committees were, however, development oriented and, at the end of 1962, about 900 projects were under construction and over

1000 were at the processing stage (Ayee, 1994:67). The projects include school buildings, community centres, rest houses, dams, wells, health posts, latrines, day nurseries, lorry parks, culverts, bridges and feeder roads. These enhanced the socio-economic well-being of the rural people while the local governments remained alienated from the local people, and the central government had nothing concrete to show by way of development. As Ayee noted:

“it is this ability of community development to satisfy local needs... that has partly contributed to the high esteem accorded community development by successive governments and Ghanaians as a whole and the low esteem given to local government units, which were and are unable to undertake development projects of comparable proficiency” (1994).

By 1964, Ghana had become a one-party socialist state and only members of the ruling CPP could be elected to the local government council. The number of local authorities was again increased from 66 to 155 and this fragmentation was exacerbated by the establishment in 1965 of as many as 183 local authorities, ‘which did little more than pay some staff salaries’ (Asibuo, 1992:66).

Surprisingly, the government which had earlier banished the traditional authorities from any active role in local government, now openly sought their support in order to enhance its fragile legitimacy. The CPP government paid a price since ‘the chiefs also requested the break-up of the larger council units so that they would correspond with the area of jurisdiction of the traditional state councils’ (Asibuo, 1992:66). The fragmentation was also due to the fact that people felt alienated from the inaccessible larger councils. But political expediency held greater persuasion for fragmentation. Declining popularity compelled the CPP to seek and consolidate its position and popularity. Jobs were easily provided for party activists and patronage networks used to woo various people to the party. The creation of new local councils, through fragmentation, therefore, “became an important political resource with which the government elite could satisfy alienated rank and file supporters, soothe local traditional demands and ease central-local tension” (Shiffer, 1970 cited in Asibuo, 1992:66).

Local Authorities committed financial irregularities with impunity, mostly under political duress from councillors, District Commissioners and party executives. The situation degenerated so much that staff of the councils were recruited on a party ward basis. District Commissioners wielded so much power that counsellors had to accede to their wishes or be refused renomination and re-election leading to discontent among the counsellors. According to Amonoo, (1981, cited in Asibuo, 1992:67) local authorities had become stooges and did what they were directed to do.

The CPP penetrated the fabric of life of the society, and drastically clamped down on any opposition to its rule. It required total loyalty, thus, the dissolution of regional assemblies took place to ensure total control. Under Nkrumah's CPP local authorities were brought under the ambit of the party and rigid control of the capital, Accra. At best, local authorities were in a miserable state. It is evident from this review that when Nkrumah was overthrown in February 1966, there was much discontent among the people as a result of the ineffective local government system and overcentralised government machinery. The Daily Graphic in an Editorial on June 7th 1966 commented:

“The multiplicity of local authorities resulted from giving too much consideration to political exigencies in their establishment, with politicians considering compact local councils with viable resources a threat to their personal security” (cited in Asibuo, 1992:67).

The Commission of Enquiry into Electoral and Local Government Reform, (Siriboe Commission) of 1968, summed it all up in these words:

“Local Government in Ghana is at present in a state of chaos; the reputation of local authorities has reached its nadir in spite of the excellent proposals for the reform of the system submitted by successive commissions and committees of enquiry. ... Local authority administration is associated with financial irregularities, incompetence, nepotism and waste: and there is understandably a strong body of opinion in favour of the total abolition of local government (Ghana, 1968 cited in Ayee, 1994:73).

It is important to note that authoritarianism, politicisation of the councils and the concentration of authority in the centre, resulted in crises in the administration of local government. This is the legacy Nkrumah bequeathed to post-1966 coup Ghana.

3.3.2 The National Liberation Council (NLC) 1966-1969

Nkrumah's CPP was overthrown in a military coup on 24 February 1966 and replaced by the National Liberation Council (NLC) made up of military and police officers. The NLC now made a serious search for a viable system of local government in Ghana as a result of the disappointing performance of local government during the previous regime. Their main concern was a form of decentralisation for local development. Consequently, the NLC took steps to revise the existing centralised administrative structure. The number of administrative districts was reduced from 185 to 40 and the discredited local government councils were dissolved. Control of the districts was exercised by the government-appointed District Administrative Officer (DAO), 'a generalist drawn from the elite administrative class of the civil service' (Harris, 1983). The number of ministries was reduced from 31 to 17, secretariats from 23 to 8 and the number of non-viable local councils reduced from 161 to 47 (Asibuo, 1992:67). A separate Ministry of Rural Development was created by the NLC to emphasise the government's priority and commitment to the well-being of the rural communities. Ayee, (1994:75) maintains that 'the guiding decentralisation policy of the NLC was not only to lay firm foundations for a sound and effective system of government but also to ensure economy'. The NLC, therefore, established the Commission on the Structure and Remuneration of the Public Service (Mills-Odoi Commission, 1967), the Constitutional Commission (Akuffo-Addo Commission, 1968) and the Commission on Electoral and Local Government Reform (Siriboe Commission, 1968). They were charged with the responsibility, among others, of studying the present machinery of government and formulating proposals for the reform of organs of government capable of meeting the needs of their respective areas. The Mills-Odoi Commission found that the local government system was weak, ineffective, in a sordid state and also found that the machinery of government and the resources were highly centralised in the capital. The Commission recommended that:

“... in order to improve efficiency and to provide a machinery of government better designed to accomplish programmes for a rapid social and economic development, there should be the radical decentralisation of many of the functions undertaken by the central government (Ghana, 1967 cited in Asibuo, 1992:67).

These commissions' reports, provide us with a general model of decentralisation of the machinery of government that marks an important watershed in the administrative thinking of Ghana; they also serve as a constant source of reference for reforms to the present time (Harris, 1983:203). Decentralisation policies and programmes up to 1993 were a synthesis of the recommendations of the three commission reports. The major changes proposed by the three commissions are summarised below (Ayee, 1994:78; Haynes, 1991:285; Harris, 1983:205):

- A four-tiered local government consisting of Regional, District, Local Councils and Town and Village Development Committees. The main departure from the Nkrumah period was the range of functions and powers that was to be given to them.
- The district was the fulcrum - the basic unit of local government and the sole rating authority. But the various government departments were to be divisions of the District Councils.
- The District Councils, therefore, represented a fusion of local government activities, (such as provision of markets, lorry parks, primary and middle schools, health and sanitation) with those previously controlled by the central government (including health, education, agriculture, treasury and public works), to facilitate rapid development of the district. For administrative efficiency the Local Government Service was to be absorbed into the civil service.
- District councils were to come under the supervision and management of a chief executive who would be appointed from the Public Service Commission. Two-thirds of the council would be made up of elected representatives with the remainder traditionally appointed.
- Traditional boundaries were to be coterminous with the Local Councils for effective participation of chiefs. Projects which met the felt needs of the people in the towns and villages were to be delegated to the local councils. This would be expected to increase popular grassroots participation at that level.
- Town/Village Development Committees were to function in their usual manner but were to be incorporated into the local government structure.
- The Regional Councils at the head of the structure, were to primarily plan and co-ordinate development efforts in the district. The Regional Councils were "an outgrowth of the planning activities begun by the NLC and they were to include a consultative and

deliberative council made up of two representatives elected from each of the District Councils as well as two senior chiefs from the region” (Ghana, 1967 cited in Ayee, 1994:79).

When the Mills-Odoi Commission (1967) critically examined the basis of local government failure in the past regime, ‘it saw the particularly debilitating effects of local authority staff being dominated by councillors who were generally of a poor calibre but who had secured connections with the CPP’ (Ayee, 1994:80). In the reform, the answer was envisaged in professional management - ‘in, so to speak, a chairman and a managing director of a Council’s business’ (Wraith, 1970:172). The report of the Mills-Odoi Commission is regarded as very significant in the history of decentralisation in Ghana, for it was this Commission which has made the most far-reaching recommendations towards decentralisation. Recommendations were accepted by the NLC and some were enshrined in the Constitution of the Second Republic.

The NLC could not, however, implement them before handing over the administration to the Progress Party in 1969. It was a ‘caretaker’ government which purposely attempted to put in order the ‘destruction’ resulting from the Nkrumah regime and to take steps to return the country to civilian rule. It was expected then that the government which succeeded it would implement the accepted recommendations.

3.3.3 The Second Republic (1969-1972)

The Constituent Assembly, meeting in Accra in 1969, adopted the constitution of the second Republic which came into force in October 1969. The Progress Party (PP) led by Dr Busia won the election organised by the NLC and was ushered into power in 1969. It is important to note that, while in exile in Britain, Busia had continuously criticised Nkrumah’s centralisation of power and authority (Ayee, 1994; Harris, 1983:206). But the PP administration, even though it expressed acceptance of decentralisation in principle, did not demonstrate the political commitment necessary to make it work (Asibuo, 1989:197). Within two years what may be called the “liberal democratic” atmosphere had eroded and been replaced by increasing evidence of a return to centralisation. According to Asibuo (1992:68), decentralisation was opposed

by the parliamentarians who saw it as a threat to their influence at the local level. The bureaucrats at the Central Ministry opposed it because it would undermine their influence over field staff. And finally Cabinet Ministers felt they would lose power and influence.

3.3.4 The 1971 Local Administration Act (Act 357)

The PP government passed the Local Administration Act in a bid to implement most of the recommendations of the Commissions set up by the NLC. While the Siriboe Commission (1967) advocated that the chairman of the Regional and District Councils be elected from among the members of the council (in order to achieve political neutrality), the Akuffo-Addo Commission (1968) proposed that the chairman should be appointed by the Prime Minister because of the political decisions involved. It was this latter proposal that was adopted by the constitution (Harris , 1983:206).

The act in the main followed the lines prescribed by the Siriboe Commission on Local Government. It provided for a three-tier structure - the Regional, District and Local Councils. The Regional Councils according to the Act were to be composed of two elected members from the District Councils, two chiefs from the Regional House of Chiefs and the Regional Administrative Officer and regional heads of ministries and departments as ex-officio members.

The Regional Council was primarily a planning body with the responsibilities of:

- approval, co-ordination and supervision of the development plans and programmes of the District Councils;
- planning at the regional level, and the integration and approval of departmental programmes in the region;
- allocation of public funds to District Councils on behalf of the Local Government Grants Commission;
- review and co-ordination of public services in the region.

District Councils were also established with two-thirds of District Council members elected and one-third appointed by the traditional authorities. The District Councils

were to be responsible for the administration and development of their area of authority and for the provision of public services in the area (Atinga, 1982:50).

The last tier was the Local Councils. They were to have elected members from the chieftaincy and the number of the chiefs in the local council was not at any time to exceed half of the number of the elected members (Asibuo, 1989:207). The Local Councils were to assist the District Councils in their area in the discharge of the functions of the District Councils in particular in the collection of rates. The council could also delegate to the local councils or request them to perform such functions as were capable of being performed by the local councils. They were established as avenues for stimulating grassroots participation.

Having passed the Local Administration Act, with these efforts towards decentralisation, one might conclude that the PP government was serious in its decentralisation programme. However, a critical appraisal of performance revealed that decentralisation as a development tool in the Second Republic was not carried far enough. The Siriboe Commission advocated that the chairman of the Regional and District Councils should be elected from among the members of the councils (for the sake of political neutrality), the PP government insisted that the power to appoint a chairman should be with the Prime Minister. This would, in fact, minimise the power of the council for they would only be able to decide on matters favoured by the government (Atinga, 1982:57). In reality they would be translating government policies and implementing them, since the person who presides over such meetings was to be appointed by the government and would continue in office at the pleasure of the Prime Minister.

The inability of the Busia government to allow democratic means of choosing chairmen of the regional and district councils was due to the inherent perpetual fear of governments: that is, the need for an effective and powerful public service for the implementation of government policies and yet the fear that such handing over of power might result in having a technocratically competent but politically uncontrollable public service (ibid.:57). 'Indeed a council which may neither elect its

chairman nor appoint its secretary comes close to being part of the apparatus of the central government' (Ayee, 1994:88). It could be argued, therefore, that political control was the main concern of the PP government. Ministers took over personnel administration, discharging responsibilities which were formerly undertaken by regional heads of ministries and agencies. They began to appoint, promote and discipline civil servants - a return to centralisation (Asibuo, 1992:68).

The Prime Minister demonstrated evidence of centralisation in the "Apollo 568" crisis when he decided to sack some 568 senior public servants in early 1970 for incompetence, against the Supreme Court's ruling (Asibuo, 1989; Atinga, 1982). By the end of 1970 the PP government had sunk in support resulting from its inability to salvage the deteriorating economic conditions in the country. Economic crisis at the end of 1971 forced a devaluation of the currency by 44%. Consequently, prices of consumer items soared high, creating general discontent and unrest, and cocoa incomes declined in the rural areas (Ayee, 1994:89; Asibuo, 1992:69; Harris, 1983:206). 'Devaluation was taken as a sign of government's inability to carry through an efficient economic policy and it indeed led to a drop in real income' (Petchenkine, 1993:54). The Busia government's popularity began to wane and it lost its social and political base. These events culminated in the coup of 13 January 1972 when the Busia regime was ousted by the National Redemption Council (NRC) led by Colonel I K Acheampong. 'The decentralisation policies of the Busia Administration, although not implemented, were reminiscent of the policies pursued by the Nkrumah and NLC regimes. The policies were not only aimed at administrative decentralisation but also control and direction of the local government' (Ayee, 1994:89).

3.3.5 The National Redemption Council (NRC)/Supreme Military Council (SMC) 1972-1978

The euphoria that had accompanied the previous coup was absent in the military take-over of 1972. The NRC had to consolidate its power and made sure it was secure enough to undertake any reform. The first two years of the NRC was concentrated on salvaging the deteriorating economic situation. The so-called "Operation Feed Yourself" campaign was introduced to improve food production and agricultural raw

materials. These policies brought improvements in the economy, redressed the most pressing of government's difficulties and resulted in achievement of trade surpluses in 1972 and 1973. The economic improvements combined with a relatively liberal political climate increased the popularity of the NRC (Aryee, 1994:90; Harris, 1983:208; Mohan, 1993:156).

The NRC was of the view that the over-centralisation that had characterised the previous administration not only hampered the formulation and implementation of development programmes at the grassroots but also resulted in a "complete lack of involvement of the local people in the development efforts of the country" (Ghana, 1972 cited in Asibuo, 1992:69).

In June 1974 the NRC introduced a new Local Government system by promulgating the local Administration (Amendment) Decree (NRCD 258). The main aim of this decree "was to take, just as every government had claimed to be doing, the decision-making function in respect of purely local significance away from Accra and bring it closer to the areas where the decisions were implemented" (Ayee, 1994:91). The 1974 Local Administration (Amendment) Decree was an amendment of the 1971 Law and saw the more complete implementation of the Mills-Odoi and Siriboe recommendations (Mohan, 1993:157).

The new structure was four-tier: Regional Council, District Councils, Municipal/Urban/Local and Area Councils, Town and Village Development Committees. Members of the District Council were not elected but two-third appointed by the NRC and one-third were traditional authority representatives. 'The power of the central government to appoint two-thirds of the District Council members emphasised the reality of central control' (Asibuo, 1992:71). The District Councils were to be deliberative and consultative bodies concerned with determining the broad policy objectives of the Council and critically assessing the programmes placed before them by the professional staff and monitoring the performance of the professional staff in the implementation of the programme (Ghana, 1974 cited in Atinga, 1982:72). The decree empowered the District Administrative Officer (a career civil servant as the chairman

of the district council) with the executive authority. It was not to be a political appointment and thereby strengthen the position of management against the members of the council. In addition, local government employees were integrated into the civil service or central government personnel, creating a single administrative structure. But the council had no control whatsoever over the civil service personnel. It was doubtful if the government could undertake development of the rural areas through merely deconcentrating its personnel to the districts.

The Regional Commissioner, a political representative of the central government, was appointed chairman of the Regional Council. He wielded enormous power and was responsible for maintenance of good government and of development in the region. The District Chief Executive was also politically appointed and owed no allegiance to the local people. He/she was to arrange for the vetting and selection of persons to the Town/Village Committees, which means that central government controls extended to the affairs of the rural areas of Ghana. The NRC failed to establish the Regional and Local Councils throughout its period in office. This stemmed from lack of political commitment to the decentralisation programme. The District Councils were left without upper and lower tiers (Asibuo, 1992:70).

In the prevailing economic deterioration, shortages and corruption became rampant. Money supply increased by an average of 80% per annum, and, with stringent import controls and low agricultural and industrial production, the resultant inflationary spiral threw the economy into crisis (Aryee, 1994:98; Harris, 1983:216). The NRC was transformed into the Supreme Military Council (SMC) in 1975. This change was made to ensure total control over the political situation. As economic and political conditions showed no signs of abating, there was a clarion call for a return to civilian rule by the mass of the people. The SMC, however, proposed a non party government composed of the military, police and non-party civilian representatives known as "Union Government", or "Unigov". This was to be tested by a referendum in March 1978. The government mobilised the regional and district apparatus and the various ministries, especially the Ministry of Information, into propaganda machinery throughout the country. This led to the politicisation of the District Councils. The much discredited

Unigov referendum of March 1978 was won by the SMC through vote rigging (Chazan and Le Vine, 1979 cited in Ayee, 1994:99). But the economic crises continued in intensity. “The chronic shortages continued, as did an inflation rate of 200% and on 19 June 1978 the SMC took the long-delayed but inevitable step of devaluation” (ibid.:99). Pressure from the populace became unbearable and on 5 July 1978 General Acheampong was removed from office in the palace coup by Lieutenant General Fred Akuffo and the Supreme Military Council II (SMCII) was born.

3.3.6 The Supreme Military Council II (SMC II) 1978-1979

The SMC II regime, similar to its predecessors, revealed an inability to remedy the economic crisis of the country. As a result of a series of strikes and disturbances by urban workers, civil servants and students, a state of emergency was declared in November 1978. General Akuffo, then, announced a non-partisan government election to gain some political credibility. The SMC II government, therefore, promulgated a new Local Government (Amendment) Decree, SMCD 194 of 1978. The four-tier structure was maintained by SMCII but councillors were to be elected and not appointed as in the Acheampong era. It stipulated that District Councils should consist of two-thirds of elected members and one-third nominated by the traditional authorities.

The voter turnout in the elections was very low, with a national average of 18.4%. The effect was that the proposed ‘national government’ was withdrawn and general elections were to take place in June 1979, contested on a party basis. As the preparations were being made for the elections Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings led a military “mutiny” by junior army officers in March 1979 and was arrested. While in prison, the SMCII regime was overthrown on June 4 1979 and Rawlings was released from custody to become the leader. Rawlings, however, indicated that his intention was to remain briefly in power to undertake a “house cleaning exercise”. His Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) allowed the national elections to proceed as planned in September 1979.

Unlike previous regimes, decentralisation policies of SMCII involved both deconcentration and devolution. The election proved that General Akuffo was

committed to devolution of power to the districts. 'The army coup of June 1979 may have nipped in the bud a potential decentralisation programme' (Ayee, 1994:103).

3.3.7 The Third Republic 1979-1981

The AFRC did not interfere with the arrangement for constitutional rule. The Peoples' National Party (PNP) of Dr Hilla Limann won a decisive victory and the Third Republic came into being on 24 September 1979. The constitution of the Third Republic made detailed provision for local government arrangements. It included a policy priority termed "Directive Principles of State Policy" which meant that when Dr Limann's PNP took office, it did so with certain goals clearly established by the constitution (Harris, 1983:218). It was obliged to:

"decentralise the administrative machinery to regions and districts in order to permit, to an extent...consistent with sound and effective administration and control, the transaction of government business at the regional and district levels" (Ghana, 1979 cited in Ayee, 1994:103).

Within six months, as provided for in the constitution, Regional Councils were established, headed by Regional Ministers appointed by the president. A Local Government Grants Commission was also established. But according to Harris (1983:219), 'neither the establishment of Regional Councils nor of the Local Government Grants Commission has had any impact on such centralisation...because of their lack of a meaningful policy role and preoccupation with more parochial matters'.

An early turn-around in the economic decline (caused by decline in cocoa output and general shortages) eluded the Limann administration. The economic chaos left behind by the SMC/AFRC was enormous. Financial pressures from district councils' demands mounted. The impact of the decline was evident from the appeal of the chairman of the Grants Commission, Professor J. K. Nsarko, for remedies to the falling rate receipts and for a resuscitation of the district commercial activities in order to ease the burden on grants-in-aid (Ghanaian Times, 1981 cited in Ayee, 1994:105). In August 1981 the PNP government announced the creation of an additional forty districts, bringing the total number to 105, whereas the number envisaged by the Mills-Odoi Commission was 47 - it had increased the number to 58 in 1973 and 65 by 1978 because of pressure

from powerful chiefs (Harris, 1983:220). The PNP government of Dr Hilla Limann could not implement the proposal as, on 31 December 1981, it was removed from office in a military coup led again by Ft. Lt. Rawlings' Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC).

3.3.8 A review of decentralisation to 1981

Decentralisation as a tool for development, as evidenced in this review, has suffered many setbacks since the early colonial period. Mohan (1993:161) has noted that 'the colonial period was successful in establishing a centralised state structure...in promoting the development of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie which could become part of the elite at independence'. Decentralisation during the colonial period and post-independence period was a means of strengthening central political control. The creation of districts was based on political expediency. 'The creation of spatial units is not enough in itself since the accompanying political and administrative infrastructure is not forthcoming' (ibid.:166). Political commitment to decentralisation has been limited to rhetoric and not translated into reality - reflected in ambiguities in decentralisation policies.

Bureaucrats and politicians have successfully opposed any devolution of power to the local areas. Devolution would imply loss of power and influence so they have 'fought' to maintain the status quo. Decentralisation has also suffered from shortages of trained manpower and financial resources. Trained, skilled, technical and managerial personnel were retained at the centre, chronically starving local administrative units of skilled labour.

One of the most important trends evident from this historical survey is the fact that participation in development, where local communities have control over their financial resources, was not practised to any appreciable extent. Local people were not directly involved in the identification, design, implementation and management of development activities. Decision-making to the local communities was never transferred from the centre and resources and finance for development were also restricted. Successive governments since the colonial era have largely ignored these important issues in local

development. Decentralisation was used merely as a means of deflecting development problems away from the centre (Mohan, 1993:167).

The neglect of the rural areas of Ghana since colonial times has exacerbated the rural/urban dichotomy in all areas of development. It is in the light of this situation that the PNDC came to power. The devolution of power put in place by the PNDC over the subsequent 10 years is examined in the next section.

3.4 Decentralisation under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) 1981-1992

The PNDC was in power from 1981-1992 and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the party which won the 1992 elections, has been in power from 1993 to date under the same leader, J.J. Rawlings. He was the Chairman of the PNDC and is currently the President of Ghana. In his 'second coming' in 1981, Rawlings declared a revolution and called for a 'holy war' against corruption and exploitation of the people. The issue of decentralisation was shelved when Limann's PNP government was removed from office on 31 December 1981, and the struggle with the chronic economic hardships in Ghana continued. The economy was in a shambles and there was much suffering in the country.

3.4.1 Populist mobilisation

The chairman of the PNDC, Flt.Lt. Rawlings, announced to the nation after the coup that centralisation of power at the top had ended and that no one at the top should enslave the people (Yeebo, 1985 cited in Mohan, 1993). For a successful revolution, he needed the support of the people. He drew support among the urban masses and the socialist groups by openly declaring his sentiments against western domination through their investments, devaluation, trade liberalisation, and called for self-reliance, popular mobilisation and participation for development. To pursue its populist policies of a new form of "peoples' democracy", "participatory democracy", or "power to the people", the PNDC created organs of popular power. Among the numerous organs formed were the Peoples Defence Committees (PDCs) and Workers Defence Committees (WDCs), patterned according to the Libyan Jamahiriyya system and Cuban revolution. These

organs of the revolution were responsible for the control of corruption and other “anti-state” activities in the workplaces and throughout the country. The PDCs were primarily organised in both the urban and rural areas for a dynamic transformation through development programmes. WDCs were set up in the workplaces as part of the decision-making process and as an ‘instrument of mobilisation in the structure of production and to some extent in distribution’ (Hansen, 1991:30). These organs of the revolution, according to the PNDC, were created to actively involve the people in the processes of political, social and economic change, to create economic opportunities for all categories of workers and peasants, to distribute wealth. In addition, they were to remove various corrupt practices such as hoarding, over-pricing, smuggling and usury and to end neo-colonial influence (Ray, 1986; Shillington, 1992 cited in Ayee, 1994:107).

The overzealousness with which the revolutionary organs initially conducted their activities created widespread discontent. Many people could not stand the brutalities meted out to various professionals, businessmen/women and managers. Because of a lack of effective co-ordination to control the overzealousness of WDCs and PDCs nation-wide, there was the need for a reorganisation of these groups. Busia (1992:128) maintains that the transformation of PDCs/WDCs to Committees For the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs), marked an important shift from the PNDC emphasis on “popular power” to “productivity”. There was greater emphasis on hard work as Rawlings (1983:1) stressed :

“Fellow citizens, production and efficiency must be our watchwords. Populist nonsense must give way to popular sense”.

The PDCs/WDCs were, therefore, replaced by the CDRs which were mainly involved in grassroots mobilisation in the country. The PNDC sought to popularise self-help efforts and emphasised the need to mobilise local resources for development. People were to take their destiny into their own hands.

3.4.2 Initial Plans to decentralise

The PNDC found the highly centralised system with administrative and political power centred in the national capital unacceptable. It noted that one of the main development

problems of the districts was delay in the execution of development projects. The government observed that overcentralisation of the machinery of government also contributed to the mass drift of rural people to the urban centres. It was suggested that previous governments had failed in their decentralisation programmes because they lacked the political will to push the programme through (Ghana, 1983). 'Having vocalised its goal of empowering the people, particularly at the local level, the PNDC soon seized the opportunity to implement plans and proposals for administrative and political decentralisation that had been discussed in Ghana for years' (Busia, 1992:136). Based on this fact, the PNDC stressed that "Openness and the involvement of the people in the process of decision-making are the most effective ways of enforcing accountability (and that these) can be better achieved by ensuring popular supervision at the district level" (Ghana, 1983:1). In March 1982 the Kuffour and Sowu Committees were established to work on the various aspects of its decentralisation programme.

To achieve the objectives of administrative decentralisation, PNDC Law 14 (June 1982) was passed and the District Councils (elected in 1978) were dissolved. In their place were established Interim Management Committees, nominated by a District Secretary who was appointed by the PNDC. The Public Administration Restructuring and Decentralisation Implementation Committee (PARDIC) was set up in 1983 and, in December 1983, the government launched its decentralisation plan in a pamphlet publication "Decentralisation in Ghana". The plan aimed at fundamental restructuring of the machinery of government. Its three main objectives were (Ghana, 1983:1):

- To reduce the massive gulf between the rural people and urban dwellers
- To end the drift of people from the countryside to the towns
- To increase initiative and development at the sub-national level.

In line with post-independence governments, discussed earlier, the PNDC was not interested in devolution of power to the people. In this plan, decentralisation was defined as "devolution of central administrative (not political authority) to the local level ... in order to ensure popular grassroots participation in administration including planning, implementation, monitoring and achievement for the purposes of all round

local development” (Ghana, 1983:3). The focus was on decentralisation for more efficient service delivery to support democratisation efforts through the (subsequently discredited) defence committees (Mohan, 1996a:81).

The PNDC failed to implement the 1983 decentralisation programme because throughout this period, the economy was in a complete shambles. The populist stance of the PNDC regime could not improve the ailing economy of Ghana. “Its anti-imperialistic rhetoric meant that aid arranged by the Limann government was temporarily suspended as Western capitalists and banks hesitated to risk capital in such a volatile situation”(Shillington, 1992 cited in Ayee, 1994:107). The overzealousness with which the organs of revolution carried out some of their revolutionary activities brought problems bordering on anarchy (Codjoe, 1988:45). This further brought decline in the agricultural and industrial sectors.

The PNDC decided that so called “power to the people” or “true” democracy was impossible without improvement in the disastrous economic conditions. In 1983, both internal and external circumstances in the country forced the PNDC to take radical action on the economy. These factors included drought, bushfires and famine in the country. Many cocoa farms and food crops were burnt. According to the FAO (1985), Ghana’s food supply in 1981-1983 was better than only war-torn Chad (Anyemedu, 1993:13). Infant mortality had risen from 80 per 1000 to 120 per 1000 in seven years, roads were impassable and telephone systems were down (Chazan, 1991:27). There were dwindling foreign exchange receipts, a Nigerian oil embargo, and to make matters worse, over a million Ghanaians were expelled from Nigeria to be added to those already in Ghana who could not be adequately supported. The Eastern block failed to help Rawlings meet the foreign exchange needs of the country. The PNDC was, therefore, without option but to reverse its anti-Western stance, by adopting an IMF/World Bank backed Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) (Ayee, 1994:104). The Government admitted that an improved economy was essential if democracy was to succeed. Rawlings noted, “Ghana should know from the history of this country and other countries that the greatest enemy of democracy is a weak and chaotic economy ... Democracy can be

secured only on the foundation of a strong, viable and efficient economy” (Peoples Daily Graphic, 2 Jan 1988 cited in Ayee, 1994:108).

3.4.3 Decentralisation and the Economic Recovery Programme 1983-1988

The first decentralisation plan formulated by the PNDC in 1983 was shelved for five years. This delay was primarily from problems emanating from the ailing economy. The policy actions designed by the ERP to reverse the decline of the economy included massive devaluation, trade liberalisation, privatisation of public enterprises, drastic subsidy withdrawal and expenditure cuts in all sectors by the state. There was also a credit and wage freeze together with increases in interest rates. The state was disengaged from any leading role in the development process (Codjoe, 1988:100). According to the World Bank (1989:5), ‘Africa needs not just less government but better government that concentrates its efforts less on direct interventions and more on enabling others to be productive’.

Mohan (1996a:82), maintains that ‘the PNDC was being squeezed between the donor and key sections of Ghanaian society, therefore, it had to placate two different sets of demands whilst retaining power’. The Government had to ensure the success of the ERP. Its organisation and effective management meant everything for the regime (Ayee, 1993:127). There is a strong link between the ERP and the inception of the decentralisation programme of the PNDC in 1988. Gould (1990:216), has argued that the state was less able to provide an appropriate range of quality services than the private sector. Previously centrally planned social services, which were supply led, should become demand led and should be the responsibility of local communities, organised around their own felt needs and priorities. ‘A decentralised social structure is therefore consistent with the general range of structural adjustment measures, and further undermines the strength of the centralised bureaucracy’ (Ibid.:216). There was a political dimension to the ERP:

Sustained work at both economic and political levels will be required since success in establishing new democratic structures will ultimately be found on our overall capacity in the coming years to satisfy our basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, etc. An important element in the Government’s planned and co-ordinated programme of economic and social development is the decentralised programme. It is not merely a political programme to ensure

grassroots participation in decision making. Rather it is an expression of a fundamental principle that it is those who participate in the productivity of society who can also lay claim to participate in the political institutions through which society determines its course and takes decision for its well being (Republic of Ghana, 1987:21).

Accordingly, the PNDC promulgated its decentralisation programme with the launching of the 'Blue Book' on District Political Authority and Modalities for District Level Elections in July 1987. The "Blue Book" spelt out the proposals for the decentralisation programme (Ghana, 1987). It outlined the structure, functions and composition of local government. The Blue Book was extensively discussed in the nation in 1987/88. After discussion in all the regions, it was subsequently revised by the PNDC and the Local Government Law was promulgated in November 1988.

3.4.4 The 1988/89 District Assembly Elections

The National Commission for Democracy (NCD) was created in order to prepare for the District Assembly elections. It was responsible for the education of the populace about the functions of the District Assemblies (DAs) and the need for the elections. Elections were held in two stages, in 1988 and early 1989, in order to minimise administrative costs. They were to be non partisan and funded by the state. Candidates campaigned for votes on government-sponsored platforms only, and were required to declare their objectives and outline their programmes in public meetings. Only photographs of the candidates and not symbols were reproduced on the ballot papers, for ease of identification by the illiterates who formed the majority. English was also not required as a means of qualification to contest the elections and no financial deposit was required. These measures were taken to encourage all ordinary people to contest the elections. The turnout of 59.1% registered voters was the highest of the three elections held over a decade between 1978 and 1988/89 (as compared to 35.25% in the 1979 Parliamentary elections and 18.4% in the 1978 District Council elections respectively) (Ayee, 1994:118). The high turn out may be due to the extensive public education campaign undertaken by the PNDC chairman, members, Secretaries of State, NCD, CDRs and 31 December Women's Movement. The main message, throughout the election period, was the importance and benefits of the DAs.

The Upper West Region had the highest percentage (67.4) of voter turnout, apparently as “a sign of gratitude” to the PNDC for creating the region in 1983 (Ayee, 1994:118). ‘Greater Accra recorded the lowest turnout, probably because of apathy and the fact that the region has the cream of the upper middle class opposed to the elections’ (Ayee, 1994:118). A total of 112 women were elected to all District Assemblies compared to 17 during the 1978 elections.

3.4.5 Policy Objectives

The local government reform and decentralisation was provided for in the PNDC Law 207. Subsequently, important provisions of the law were entrenched in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana and the Local Government Act of 1993, Act 462. These laws provide the legal framework for the current local government in Ghana. As a result, some changes have been made but the 1988 local government structure is still in operation. For example, the constitution did not make any provision for the CDRs and these were subsequently phased out of the DAs. They have been reconstituted into the Association of Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (a government ‘NGO’), obviously to support the government’s political activities. The changes are discussed in section 3.8.

The decentralisation programme of the PNDC provided for both devolution and deconcentration. It is the only regime (except SMCII of 1978/79) which embarked on devolution geared towards promotion of grassroots participation in planning, implementation, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability in the development process. The aim, according to government publications, was to improve the living conditions of the people, and in an orderly way provide a fair and balanced development of the whole country. Speeches of top government agents reflected some of the objectives. For instance, on popular participation: ‘effective participation in the productivity and development of our society and participation in decision making are the responsibilities of all of us’ (Annan, 1987). On efficiency and effectiveness, ‘the policy was seen as bringing qualitative changes to the country’s administration’ (Acquah 1988 cited in Ayee, 1994:110). On stability, the policy would ‘bring into being institutions which will become the pillars upon which the people’s power will be

created and prevent a descent into chaos and disintegration' (Annan, 1987 cited in Ayee, 1994:110). On issues of development, the decentralisation policy would not only 'ensure development at the grassroots' (Ocansey, 1988 cited in Ayee, 1994:110), but also reduce rural-urban drift of the youth, rural unemployment and improve resource generation for development (Rawlings, 1989 cited in Ayee, 1994:110).

This local government reform (Ghana, 1996a:7) was based on the premise that:

- development is that which responds to people's problems and represents their goals, objectives and priorities;
- development is a shared responsibility between central government, local governments, parastatals, non-governmental organisations and the people (ultimate beneficiaries of development) all of whom must be closely linked;
- virile local government institutions are necessary to provide focal points or nuclei of local energies, enthusiasm, initiative and organisation to demonstrate new skills and leadership.

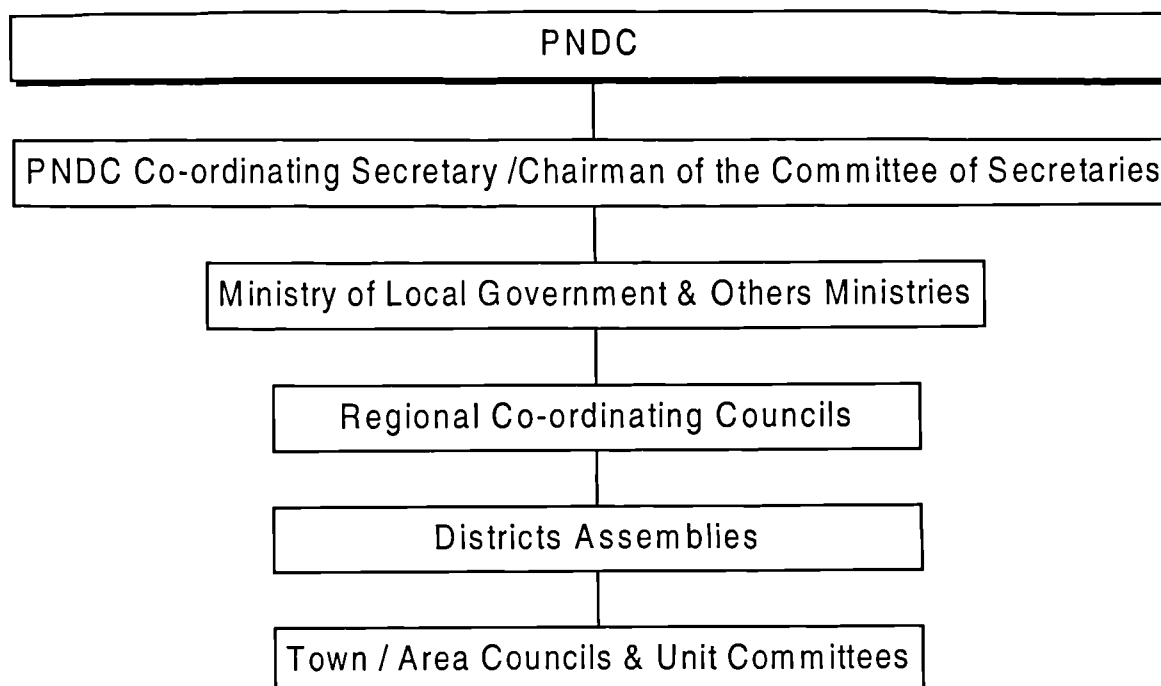
The policy fuses governmental agencies in any given region, district or locality together into administrative unity, through the process of institutional integration, manpower absorption, composite budgeting and central provision of funds for the decentralisation services. The District Assemblies are to be responsible for the overall development policies and programmes to be co-ordinated by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC). Decentralisation is thus envisioned to transfer functions, power, means, and competence to the *District Assemblies* from the central government ministries and departments.

3.5 The Local Government Structure

A three-tier structure was adopted by the PNDC. It comprises the Regional Co-ordination Council (RCC), District Assemblies (DAs) (as the fulcrum of the decentralisation programme), Town/Area councils and Unit Committees (See fig 3.1). The number of districts was increased from 65 to 110 (see Fig 4.1) because 'it underscores the government's determination to ensure grassroots participation in the decision-making process' (Yeboah, 1988 cited in Ayee, 1994:111). Ayee, however, argues that the increase in the number of districts may be a political strategy by the

PNDC to gain support in the rural areas of the country. This is borne out by the fact that many of the districts are not viable enough in terms of finance and manpower resources to enable them perform the numerous tasks given to them.

Fig 3.1: 1988 Local Government Structure (still current in Ghana, 1999)



3.5.1 Regional Co-ordinating Councils (RCC)

The Regional Co-ordinating Councils (RCCs) which replaced the Regional Consultative Councils consist of PNDC Regional Secretaries (RSs), as chairmen, all deputy Regional Secretaries, all District Secretaries, (all appointed by the PNDC), all presiding members of the DAs in the regions and also the Regional Administrative Officers (RAOs) (experienced career civil servants), as secretaries. All regional heads of the 22 so-called decentralised departments and institutions listed in PNDC Law 207 were ex-officio without voting powers. The RCC is an administrative and co-ordinating rather than a political and policy making body.

The RCC functions (Ghana, 1988; Ghana, 1996a) include:

- 1) to co-ordinate and to formulate the integrated programmes of the DAs in the region, for approval by the PNDC.
- 2) to allocate public funds to the districts.
- 3) to monitor, co-ordinate and evaluate performance of District Assemblies in the region.

4) to monitor the use of all monies allocated to the District Assemblies by any agency of the central government.

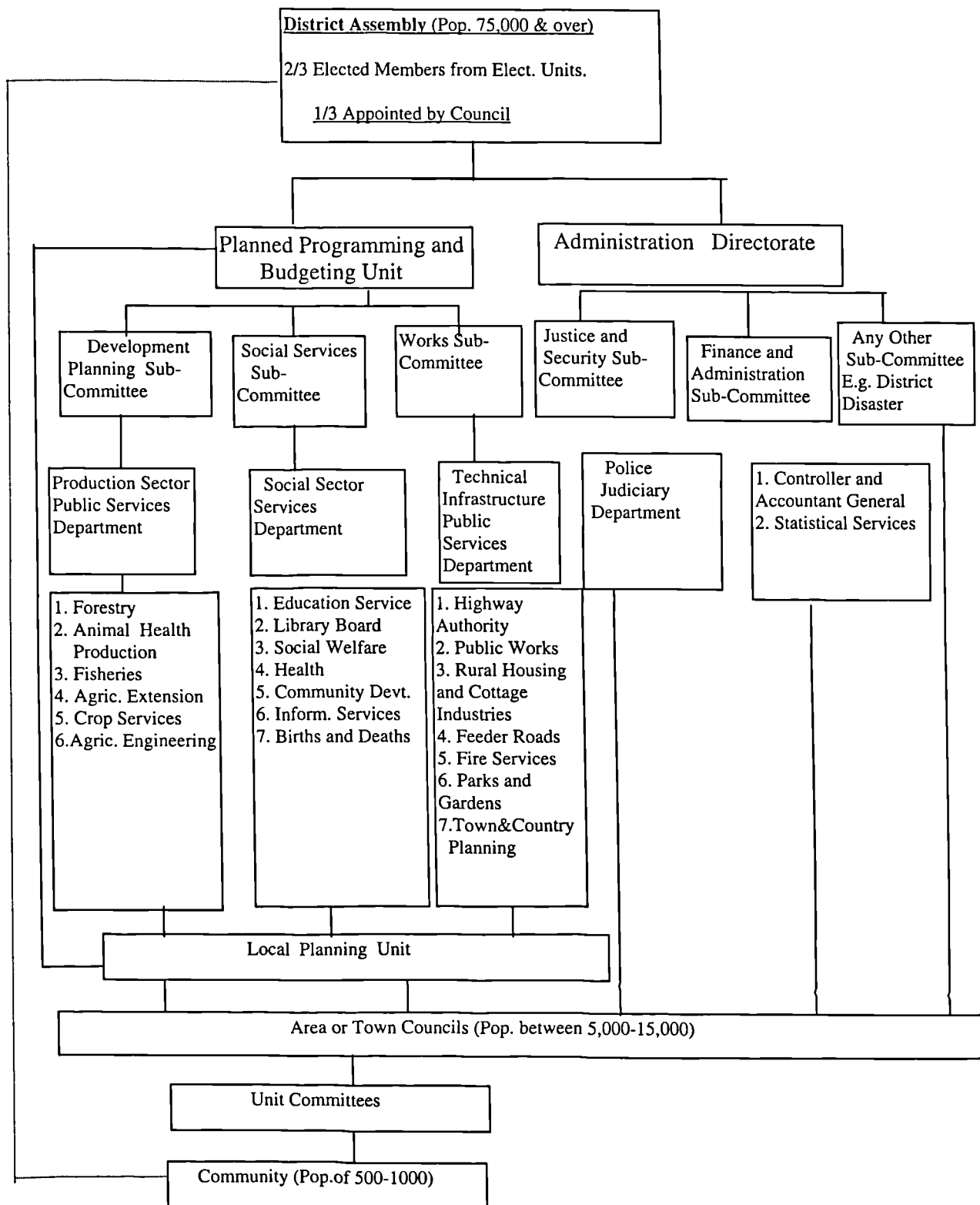
5) to review and co-ordinate public services generally in the regions; and perform such other functions as may be assigned to it by or under any enactment.

Thus the RCCs were established mainly to co-ordinate, they were not granted decision-making powers, and unlike the case in previous regimes and governments, therefore, could not become additional bureaucratic “roadblocks” to government attempts to further decentralisation down to the local level. However, since the RCC was not elected it was impossible for the electorate to influence their operations (Haynes, 1991:293). It may as well be argued that the composition and functions of the RCCs portray some centralisation, ‘since the appointments of District Secretaries depended on the ‘benevolence’ of the Regional Secretary - they became stooges, making the Regional Secretary very powerful and authoritarian’ (Ayee, 1994:114).

3.5.2 The District Assemblies (DAs):

In 1988 the District Assembly became (and remains to date), the highest political authority in each district. A presiding member (speaker) was elected from among the members of the assembly by at least two-thirds of all the members present and voting, to be the chairman of the District Assembly. The DA consisted of the District Secretary (DS), appointed by the PNDC, 70% of members elected and 30% of the members appointed by the PNDC in consultation with identifiable social and economic groupings in the district (see fig 3.2). The nomination right of the PNDC was much criticised by the opposition groups, the Ghana Bar Association and other groups within the civil society as a politicisation of the DA, since 65% of presiding members subsequently elected by the DAs throughout the country turned out to be PNDC nominees. The PNDC, however, justified the nomination on the grounds that it would “enable the country to make use of skilled, dedicated and patriotic people who do not want to go forward for election” (Dadzie, 1988 cited in Ayee, 1994:114). Haynes (1992:294), on the other hand, noted that those nominated were not necessarily PNDC supporters; ‘they were primarily acknowledged experts in such fields as law, medicine, accounting, soil erosion, education etc., and were selected for that reason’.

FIG. 3.2 : ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF DISTRICT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT MACHINERY (GOVERNMENT OF GHANA 1988).



As the highest political authority in the district, the District Assemblies exercise statutory, deliberative, legislative and consultative functions, and are concerned with the determination of broad policy objectives and the critical assessment of development progress. Among their unprecedented 86 functions (Ghana, 1996a, Ghana, 1988a, Ghana, 1988b), are the following:

1. responsibility for the overall development of the district and to ensure the preparation of the development plan (and its submission through the RCC for approval) to the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and budget to the Minister of Finance for the district;
2. formulation and support of productive activity and social development in the district and removal of any obstacle to initiative and development;
3. initiation of programmes for the development of basic infrastructure and provision of municipal works and services in the district; and
4. responsibility for the development, *improvement and management of human settlements* and the environment in the district; also to maintain security and public safety, to ensure ready access to courts and public tribunals; and to sponsor or carry out such studies as may be necessary for the discharge of any of the functions conferred by the Act or any other enactment.

Most of the functions assigned to the DAs are related to the provision of services at the local level.

The Assemblies consisted, and still consist, of both a political body and an administrative body comprising 22 government departments (see fig 3.2). The objective was to co-ordinate the activities of the departments through fused organisational structure. Previous local governments in Ghana had inherited 'the colonial legacy of "institutional dualism" whereby the political body only weakly interacted with the administrative body, which was itself tied into the rigid ministerial hierarchies' (Tordoff, 1980; Amonoo, 1981 cited in Mohan, 1996:84). The Executive Committee, created as head of the District Assembly, was to co-ordinate the functions of the DA. It was also responsible for the day-to-day administration as well as implementing all resolutions of the DA. The Executive Committee consisted of the District Secretary (DS) as the chairman, and not more than one-third of the total number of the members

of the DA, elected by members from among themselves. The presiding member of the DA was, however, excluded from membership of the Executive Committee in order to avoid conflict between him and the DS (Ayee, 1994:115). The powers of the Executive Committee were limited in PNDC Law 207, which empowered the DA by a resolution of two-thirds of its members to dissolve it, if it was not performing its functions efficiently. Each assembly had to have five sector committees: finance and administration, economic development (now development planning committee), justice and security, technical infrastructure (now works committee), and social services. To ensure participation in the affairs of the DA, every member of the DA was required to serve in at least one of its sub-committees.

3.5.3 Town/Area Councils and Unit Committees

The PNDC Secretary for Local Government was empowered by Section 20 of the PNDC Law 207 (1988) to establish Area/Town councils or Unit committees on the recommendation of a DA and with the prior approval of the PNDC. It must be noted that it took the PNDC three years after the promulgation of the PNDC Law 207 to establish the third tier structure, in 1991. The main issue behind the delay was the fact that the PNDC already had in operation unit committees of its so-called revolutionary organ, the CDRs. It was, therefore, not politically convenient to create separate unit committees for the DAs. This amounted to destroying the 'embryo' of the CDRs with attendant repercussions on the support base of the regime (Ayee 1994:116). Nonetheless, the Unit Committees were established because of opposition demands and the failure of the constitution to recognise the CDRs.

A Unit Committee represents a settlement or group of settlements with a population of between 500-1000 in the rural areas and a higher population (1,500) in the urban areas (Ghana, 1998:3). The principle of participation and consultation underpins the Unit Committees, which are now the base structure of the local government system. The main purpose of the Unit Committees is, inter alia, to encourage effective participation of citizens in the administration of their local area and to provide functional linkages for the decentralisation policy, to gather statistics for use in planning, to collect revenues, to assist in the prevention of bush fires and to explain the policies of the

government to the local people. They are also to mobilise the people to discharge their constitutional and democratic roles at the base level (Ghana, 1998:8).

The Unit Committees were not put in place until recently, because of a 1995 court injunction which prevented the holding of Unit Committee elections based on the disputed 1984 electoral register. With the preparation of a new voter's register, authorisation for the elections was given. After a series of postponements by the electoral commission, the Unit Committee and the DA elections were finally held on the 23 June 1998.

3.6 Planning under the District Assemblies

The National Development Planning (System) Act, 1994 (Act 480) makes the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) the national co-ordinating body of the development planning system. The NDPC is directly responsible to the government (president). The Commission is responsible for providing guidelines for the preparation of development plans at local level and harmonising these plans as well as sectoral plans into National Development Plans (Boakye-Boateng, 1997:31; NDPC, 1995).

The Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462), designates each DA as a District Planning Authority. A District Planning Co-ordinating Unit (DPCU) acts as a secretariat to the District Planning Authority. The District Planning Authority is required to hold open, democratically-conducted public hearings on any proposed district development plan or components of the plan, including development projects (NDPC, 1995:5). All members of the country are required to participate in the quest for the determination of the collective choice and hence, contribute to effective participatory decision-making. "Every individual in the community must have 'the right to be heard' " (Ibid.:6). This bottom-up planning and composite budgeting system has not as yet materialised, however.

3.7 Implementation problems

The implementation of the decentralisation programme instituted in 1988 has been fraught with problems. The lack of qualified staff in many districts during the implementation of the programme has been one of the major obstacles faced by the District Assemblies. An interim measure to strengthen the management capacity and planning skills at the district level was conceived and funded with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1988/89. The programme included: a) training Mobile Planning Teams to facilitate district development management; b) short training courses for district public servants in planning and development management; c) the preparation and issuing of a development planning manual; and d) the organisation of induction courses and training on decentralisation and financial management for the core staff of DAs throughout the 10 regions (Ahwoi, 1991).

In order to strengthen the human resource capacity of the DAs, budget and planning officers were posted by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the National Development Planning Commission, respectively, to some of the districts.

An attempt to establish as many as 22 departments under the DAs is probably too ambitious and unrealistic a target to be achieved in the short-term. These departments and other heads continue to owe allegiance to their parent ministries in regional headquarters and Accra; the PNDC's programme has failed to resolve this issue. Department heads have to report to Accra through the regions because they were not employed by the District Assembly. The staff of the departments are appointed, paid, promoted and disciplined by the Public Service Commission in Accra. The District Assemblies do not have the financial means to 'hire and fire'.

One of the main problems of local government in Ghana, as has been illustrated through this chapter has been, and continues to be, its weak financial position. The major traditional revenue sources available to the Assemblies are made up of local taxes and central grants. Shares of seven central government revenues, including casino revenue tax, betting and gambling, entertainment duty, daily transport taxes, income tax

(registration of trade and vocation) and advertisement tax, have been ceded to the DAs. Ceded revenue is an innovation introduced in 1988 by the PNDC. It is collected by the Internal Revenue Services and shared among the 110 districts. It added 271.3 million cedis to the total revenues of the DAs in 1989, 303 million cedis in 1990, 594 million cedis in 1991 and 2.1 billion cedis for 1992 (Ayee, 1994:121). In some cases, the yield from the ceded revenue even exceeded the total revenue mobilised from the district itself. But it must be noted that the ceded revenue was not able to absolve District Assemblies from their financial constraints. Many of them remain incapable of performing their statutory functions, even with the ceded revenue (Ayee, 1992:34). A significant change, introduced in 1994, is the setting up of a District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) which will channel not less than 5% of national revenue to the districts (see section 3.10).

A large proportion of the revenue generated by DAs has gone into recurrent expenditure. In a study conducted in 1992, Ayee (1994) found in the Ho and Keta districts that the two DAs spent 85% of their budget on recurrent expenditure. DAs were also plagued with embezzlement of funds: the then Regional Secretary of the Upper East Region lamented in September 1989 that one-quarter of the revenue collected in Bolgatanga and Bongo districts went into private pockets. (Peoples Daily Graphic, 1989, cited in Ayee 1994:123). The Auditor General's report in 1996 shows evidence of embezzlement, financial malpractice and other irregularities in financial management in the districts. Instances of misapplication of proceeds of the DACF are high. These include inefficient Tender Boards, over reliance on selective and negotiated contracts, wide variations/disparities in costs of projects with similar designs in different districts. There has also been improper documentation of contract awards with, for example, no contract register being kept by some districts and some have not used the standard form for payment certificates to prepare claims for work done. The Ashanti Regional Minister, for example, refused to commission a court building in Ejura-Sekyeredumasi district, costing over 40 million cedis, on grounds of shoddy work done by the contractor. It was revealed that the contractor was a constituency chairman of the NDC party (the party in power) in the area (Pioneer, Thursday, December 1997). In the National Commission on Civic Education survey in 1997, a large number of assembly

members in the country showed resentment regarding the disbursement of the DACF: about 40% of respondents felt the disbursement of the fund lacked transparency.

The financial irregularities are partly due to personnel problems, another major challenge to the decentralisation programme. The Assemblies are not able to attract high calibre personnel because of lack of finance and incentives. With the increase in the number of districts to 110, appointment of experienced personnel to these new districts has been a problem. Nadowli district in Upper West, for example, only obtained a budget officer in 1998 and is yet to appoint a Local Government Inspector and other clerical staff.

Another problem has been conflict and power struggles between the District Chief Executives (appointed representatives of central government) and Presiding Members (chairmen) and elected members of the District Assemblies. The District Chief Executive (until 1992 known as the District Secretary) has dual allegiance which, because of his office, is tilted towards the central government. Ayee (1997) has observed that:

“Neither in law or practice does the Presiding Member (PM), the chairman of the DA, ever present a real threat to the dominant role and preminence of the DCE. The PM and members of parliament in the district are specifically excluded from membership of the Executive Committee, on the assumption that this would provide a check or balance when the DCE makes his report on activities of the Executive Committee to the full DA” (p.45).

There are also conflicts between assembly members and chiefs; and assembly members and Committees for the Defence of the Revolution which were at the grassroots until 1992 in the absence of the establishment of the Unit Committees.

The medium of expression has also become a problem. Some of the members of the Assembly do not speak and comprehend English well and are at a loss at meetings when issues such as budgets are being discussed in English. All reports are also written and circulated in English, thus limiting their contribution during Assembly proceedings. Some Assemblies have adopted both the local and the English languages but effective communication is still hampered when people choose to express

themselves in English. Recorders, who in some cases do not fully understand the local language, have a problem with recording the proceedings.

It must also be mentioned that the 'elimination' of the traditional leaders, the chiefs, from the formal local government system further creates problems. There are many areas in Ghana where no development is possible unless it is rooted through and backed by the traditional authorities. With the traditional authorities cut off from the Assembly, mobilisation of the people becomes difficult. There are some areas where there has been division and litigation as a result of the relationship between the chiefs and the assemblyman. Ayee (1993:128), for example, reported that some assembly members claimed to have powers to destool chiefs and in Ashanti region one assembly man bought his own gong-gong (which is traditionally the domain of chiefs) to prove that he also has power to mobilise the people.

3.8 The Fourth Republic (1992 to date)

After eleven years of military rule, the PNDC returned Ghana to constitutional rule in 1992 'despite Rawlings' known antipathy to multi-party democracy which he often associated with corruption and elitism' (Ayee, 1994:127). Constitutional rule in Ghana was prompted by pressure from opposition groups in the country, external donor agencies and the wave of democratisation around the world in the 1990s. Rawlings' National Democratic Congress (NDC) won the elections in November 1992 and he was installed as president under the 1992 constitution.

Decentralisation and local government was enshrined in Article 240 of the constitution. Some of the changes made in the 1992 constitution included the following:

1. Members of parliament became non-voting members of the District Assemblies
2. The District Secretary was renamed District Chief Executive (DCE) and is now appointed by the President (in consultation with chiefs and other interest groups) with a prior approval of two-thirds of District Assembly members present and voting.
3. The DCE can be removed from office if two-thirds of the District Assembly members pass a vote of no confidence in him/her. This is to make him/her accountable to the electorate.

4. The composition of the RCC was also increased with the addition of two chiefs from the National House of Chiefs.

Article 252 of the constitution, established a District Assemblies Common Fund, into which not less than 5% of the total revenues of Ghana is paid in quarterly instalments to the District Assemblies for the development of the districts. This is one of the greatest innovations of the constitution aimed at helping to overcome the financial weaknesses that have plagued local governments since independence. Allocations from the fund are made on the basis of a formula prepared by the Administrator and approved by parliament. The common fund is to assist District Assemblies in their development efforts in health, education, local administration and rural development. The formula for sharing the fund since it was instituted is shown below:

Table 3.2: Formula for Sharing The District Assemblies Common Fund

Factors	Weight (%)
Need (GDP - 30% and Population - 5%)	35
Equality	30
Responsiveness (Per capita revenue 15% and Improvement 5%)	20
Service Pressure (Population Density)	15

Source: Ministry of Local Government, Accra

The “Need Factor”(see table 3.2) sought to address the imbalances in the level of development in the districts. The Gross Domestic Product per capita was used as an indicator for the level of development and to establish relative need among the districts. “Responsiveness Factor” is a means to motivate the districts to generate more income locally. The per capita revenue collected was used to determine the responsiveness factor. The “Equality Factor” ensures that each district has access to a specified minimum sum from the fund. The rationale for the “Service Pressure Factor” is to assist to improve existing services and facilities which, as a result of population pressure, are deteriorating faster than envisaged. Population densities (based on the 1984 population census) were the main basis for determining this factor. The development of the sharing formula has been constrained by a dearth of relevant and reliable data on the socio-economic characteristics of the districts. The Common Fund Administrator, therefore, has to review the formula with a view to improving it before parliamentary approval

each year (Nyarko et al, 1997:5). The developmental implications of the Common Fund are discussed in chapter 6.

The use of revenue in sharing 20% of the fund is a problem for the Assemblies since more fiscal resources are directed at Assemblies with the highest revenues at the expense of poor districts (Nsiah, 1997:65). The greatest problem, however, is the delay in releasing the Common Fund to the District Assemblies. This affects the programmes of the Assemblies, especially their award of contracts. It must be noted that disbursement of the funds is strictly top-down as guidelines are issued from the Ministry of Local Government in Accra and the districts have to comply. The DAs are as yet obliged to use allocations from the Common Fund solely for development (capital projects) and locally generated revenue for recurrent costs. Under section six of Act 455 of the constitution, the Ministry of Finance, in consultation with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, defines the areas of development which could be funded with the Common Fund. The reasons are firstly to avoid the temptation of using the Fund on recurrent expenditure of the DAs and secondly for effective monitoring.

The 1992 constitutional provision on decentralisation seems to have gone further than any other post-independence constitution. It has provided for the transfer of functions, powers and authority to the District Assemblies. Implementation is what matters, however, and this depends on the commitment of the NDC government to effective rural development. There is the dominant position of the national and regional capitals to take into consideration. DCEs, DCDs and other district officials frequently travel to Accra and the regional capitals to chase funds, documents or ask for favours. One would have hoped that the decentralisation programme would have discouraged this practice, which suggests that centralisation still holds sway. 'The government has in fact brought about a form of centralised decentralisation in which the central government is omnipotent and has the last say not only in important issues but in a wide variety of matters relating to day-to-day running of the DAs' (Ayee, 1997:49).

3.9 Conclusion

Decentralisation during the colonial period in Ghana was characterised by mere deconcentration of central administrative structure. It was a means which the colonial government employed to consolidate its control over the entire nation. There was no conscious effort at devolution of power and involvement of the rural people in the decision-making process. Post-independence governments have never deviated from the practice of central control and use of local government for their political advantage. The review has shown that there has been a lack of real political commitment to decentralise and successive governments have 'subordinated administrative efficiency to political expediency as a means of consolidating their own power base' (Asibuo, 1989:546).

It is evident from the review that whenever governments' popularity begins to decline and they become politically insecure, local government has been used as a means of seeking legitimacy. This has been done through a strategy of fragmentation and refragmentation of the districts, apparently for political support.

The review has clearly revealed the inadequate supply of material and financial resources to local government units in Ghana. This has seriously undermined development programmes and further exacerbated the rural-urban divide. The ambiguous position of traditional authorities (chiefs) in the local government system in Ghana continues. Various governments have recognised the importance and influence of chiefs only when their legitimacy has begun to decline: they then begin to seek chiefly support. Nkrumah banned chiefs from local government, Busia restored their local government roles and presently they play only a consultative role under the District Assemblies.

Admittedly, the 1988 decentralisation programme of the Rawlings regime was received with enthusiasm and it awakened the spirit of self-help and 'awareness' among communities. Communities accepted the fact that they were responsible for the development of their areas. Projects undertaken by the District Assemblies include the construction and maintenance of feeder roads, school classroom blocks and provision of water, electricity and KVIPs. The District Assembly concept initially (1989-1992) generated patriotism not only among the rural population but the Assembly members. In

some of the most deprived districts in Ghana such as Tolon/Kunbungu and Zabugu/Tatale in the Northern Region, Kwahu North in the Eastern Region and Nadowli, in Upper West Region, assembly members decided to forgo their allowances for the cause of development in their districts (Ayee, 1993:129). Crook (1994:361) asserts that:

Democratisation of district government in Ghana between 1989 and 1992 did achieve some success in political terms - as might have been predicted given the vigour of Ghanaian civil society. But the very success of this democratisation process produced deep frustrations at the institutional level, frustrations which were reflected in the only marginal improvements in development performance ... lack of tangible development outputs in turn undermined the other missions of the assemblies, which was to create a more legitimate and responsive form of government at the local level.

Highly centralised government administration with regions and districts still taking directives from Accra, the nation's capital, does not seem to have dwindled. In Ayee's (1996:31) view, therefore, the PNDC has used its decentralisation programme as a mask to hide its political agenda of building a rural power base. Mohan (1996a:89) also concluded that:

the PNDC government was forced into a dual ideology play whereby it attempted to satisfy local and global calls for political restructuring. The decentralisation programme gave the impression of democracy and the assemblies offered an avenue for a national democratic body that would prolong the tenure of the PNDC. Hence, neo-liberal discourse became internalised by political leaders.

Massing (1994:121) concluded his study on the 1988 local government reform in Ghana with a note that 'the national government used reform of local government as an excuse to shift the burden of social expenditure (education, unemployment, social security and social welfare) to the local communities under the pretext of giving more responsibility to citizens and local institutions. Therefore the exact opposite of decentralisation is accomplished, namely a firmer grip on power by central government and its bureaucracy'.

Successful implementation of decentralisation does not simply imply declaring a policy of "bottom-up" decision-making, administrative reform and fragmentation of districts. There is the need to build confidence in local and central government officials and a commitment to the philosophy of decentralisation and popular participation in decision-

making. At the grassroots level, local administrative units and governments need a network of local institutions to support them in carrying out development activities (Haynes, 1991:303). Gradual building of clearly visible local competence and expertise is also imperative.

The increased enthusiasm generated at the inception of the District Assemblies in 1988 has died down, as local government could not sustain the aspirations of the rural people for participation in local development. The current decentralisation programme was initiated:

“to promote popular grassroots participation in the administration of the various areas concerned from the stand points of planning, implementation, monitoring and delivery of those services which go to improve the living conditions of the people and the orderly, fair and balanced development of the whole country... it was aimed at creating a forum at the district (local) level where a team of development agents, the representatives of the people and other agencies will agree on the development problems of the district or area, their underlying causative factors and decide on the combined actions necessary to deal with them” (Ghana,1996a:7).

The government has noted that deliberate and concerted efforts will be made to eradicate the economic, social, cultural and political factors that contribute to mass poverty in the country, within the framework of sustainable rural development (NDPC, 1995:8). In order to effectively undertake poverty alleviation activities, District Assemblies will be required to co-ordinate district level sectoral programmes/projects directed towards poverty alleviation, with support of donors, Non-governmental Organisations and Community-Base Organisations and private sector enterprises (Ghana, 1996:77). No clear assessment has yet been made of their success in achieving these goals.

It is important that decentralisation and its intended poverty alleviation programme in rural Ghana is evaluated with reference to the rural poor themselves (see chapter 5). It would appear that poverty alleviation in rural Ghana through the local government structure has not been a principal objective in the colonial and post-independence periods. A broad view of the evidence suggests that the needs of the rural poor, seem never to have occupied a central position in the development programmes of governments in Ghana. The case studies which follows in this thesis provide an opportunity for assessing, in considerable detail, that general perception.

CHAPTER 4: BACKGROUND OF STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides essential background information on the study districts, describing and examining the socio-economic and cultural setting of the villages studied. It also discusses, in a second major section, the strategy employed in gathering data in the two districts and the basis for adopting the methods employed.

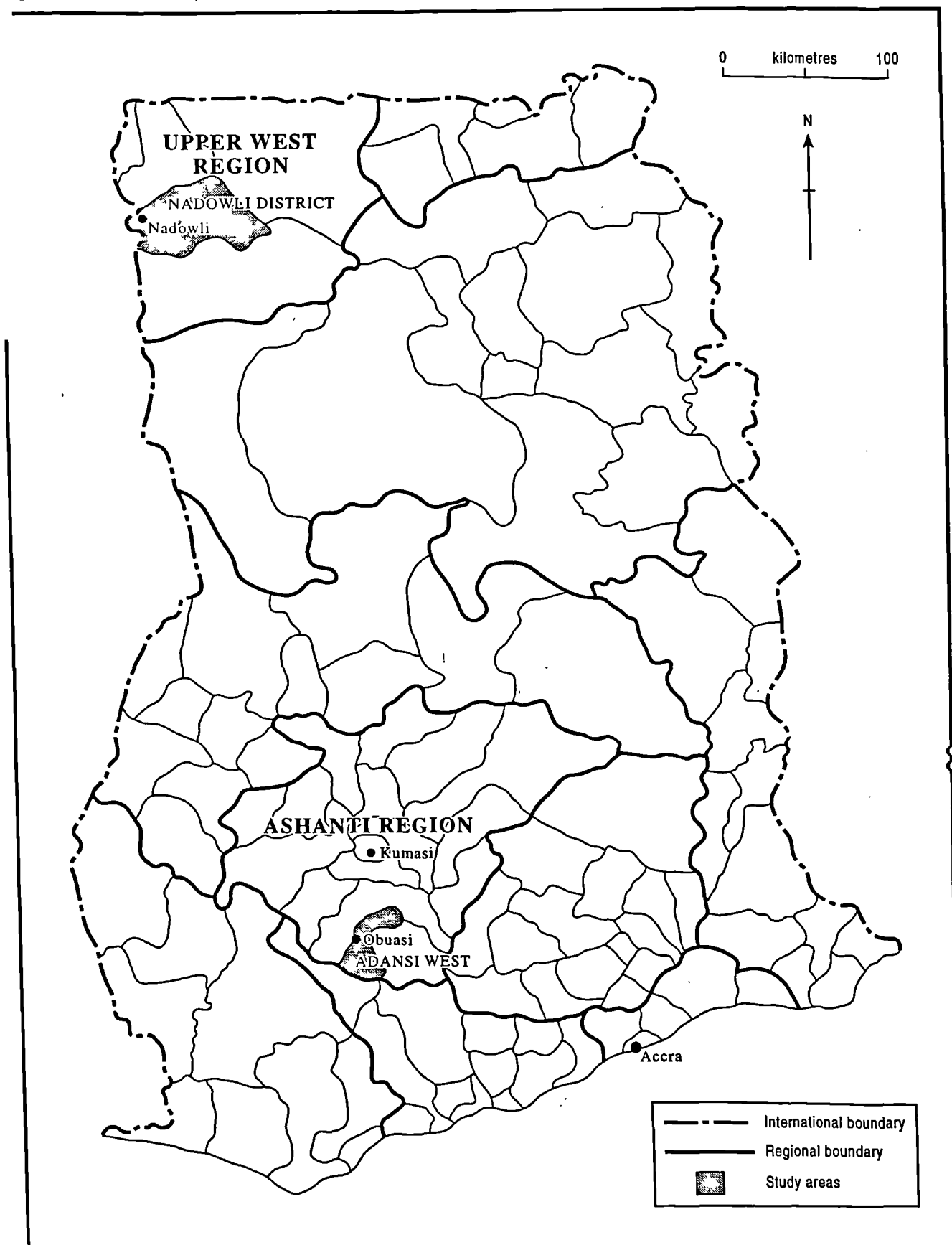
4.2 The study areas

Nadowli district in the Upper West region of northern Ghana and Adansi West district in Ashanti region of southern Ghana, were chosen for study (see fig 4.1). There is a broad disparity between northern and southern Ghana in terms of level of economic development and general quality of life. The north of Ghana is a relatively deprived area in terms of basic services (Dickson, 1969,1984; Ewusi, 1978; Songsoore and Denkabe, 1995). Through the selection of districts in contrasting regions I aim to provide a more nuanced view of poverty alleviation issues than could have been achieved by restricting research to one region.

4.2.1 Overview of the Upper West Region

The Upper West Region (UWR) of Northern Ghana lies within the savannah belt, between latitudes 9° 35' N and 11° N and longitudes 1° 25' W and 2° 50' W (ICRA, 1993) (see fig. 4.1). It covers a total area of 18,476 square kilometres with a total population of 588,661 (RCC, 1997). The population density is 31 persons per square kilometre, which is far lower than the national average of 55 persons per square kilometre (ibid, 1997:3). It is Ghana's youngest administrative region and was carved out of the former Upper Region in 1983. This separation was an attempt by the government to bridge the gap in development between the lagging Upper West area and the rest of the country. The region is generally rural; Wa, the regional capital, has an estimated population of 54,410. Most people in the UWR depend on farming and produce mainly for subsistence. The combination of high

Fig. 4.1: District Map of Ghana



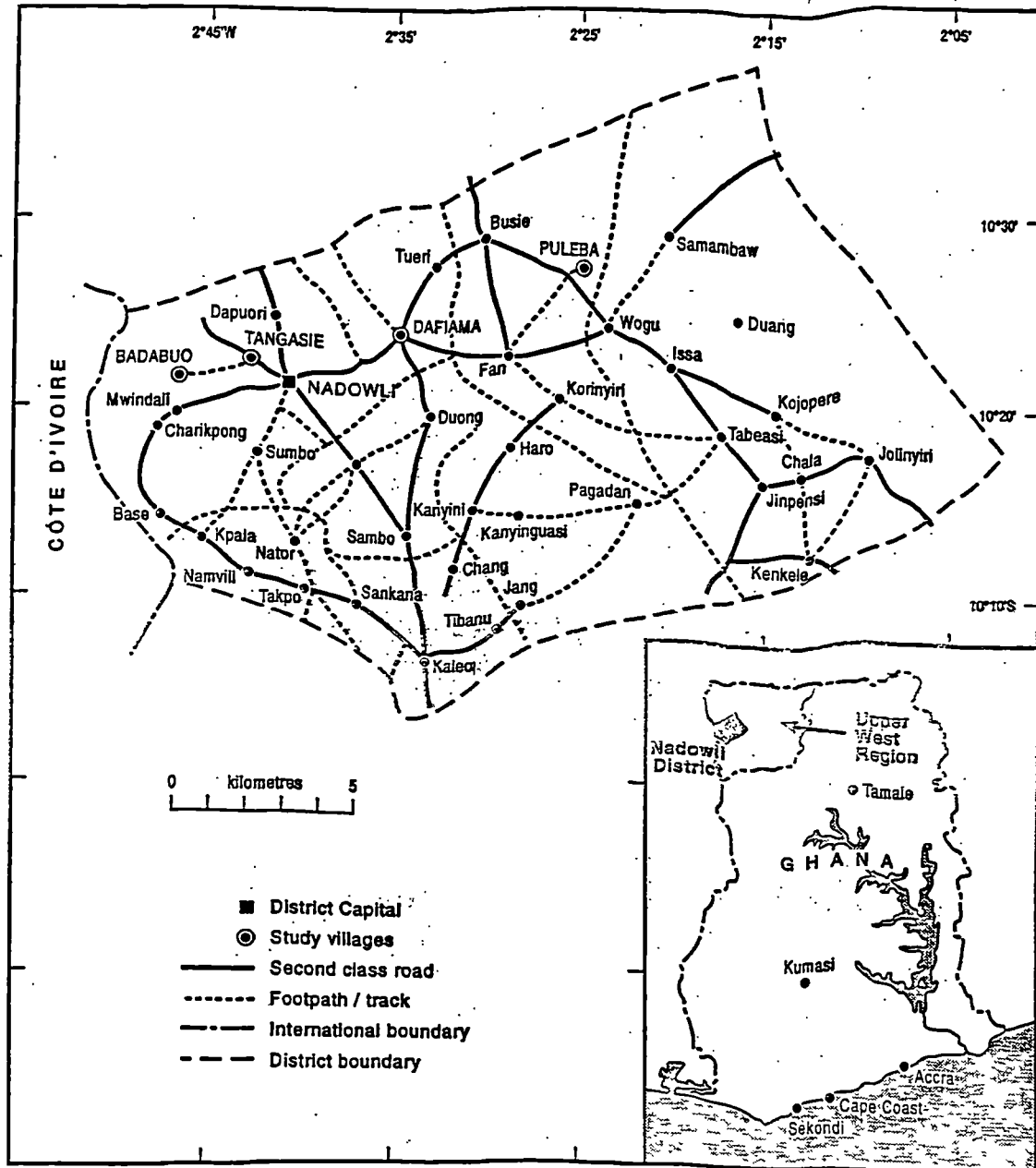
dependency on agriculture, erratic rainfall and dwindling vegetative cover have resulted in low food production and low domestic incomes (NDA, 1996:5). This has perpetuated annual household food shortages in the area, commonly known as the 'hunger gap'. Almost 90% of the population depend on farming in the rural areas, while the region is still a net importer of food. Educational and health facilities are, on the whole, over stretched: one doctor serves 54,000 people in the Upper West, compared to an average of 1:20,000 in the rest of Ghana. Similarly, the average literacy rate in the UWR is 20%, half of the national average. There is also a high rate of infant mortality, 22.2% for UWR compared to 14.8% for Ghana as a whole (Songsore and Denkabe, 1995).

4.2.2 Nadowli District

This district is basically rural and one of the newly created districts, carved out of Wa and Lawra districts as an autonomous district in 1988 as part of the government's decentralisation programme (see fig 4.2). It has an estimated population of 97,777 (1996: Nadowli District Development Plan, based on the 1984 census and an annual growth rate of 3.1%). It covers a total land area of 2,742.50 km² (NDA, 1996:5). It lies between latitudes 10° 13' N and 10° 20' N and longitudes 2° 05' W and 2° 10' W. The land is low lying but generally gently undulating, with an average height of between 180 and 300 metres above sea level. The rolling nature of the landscape implies that topography is no barrier to agriculture (Dickson and Benneh, 1970:18). The soil types are laterite, sandy and sandy loam (savannah ochrosols). They are generally poor in organic matter and nutrients as a result of the absence of dense vegetative cover, due to over-grazing, cultivation and protracted erosion (NDA, 1996:5). The soils are consequently heavily leached. Relatively fertile soils (sandy loams) occur to the south-east of the district around Issah and Tabiesi and support crops such as yams, cereals, legumes and rice.

Nadowli falls within the tropical continental or interior savannah zone, with a mean annual temperature of 32°C and a mean monthly temperature ranging between 27° C in August and 36° C in March. Annual rainfall is restricted to six months, April to September, and is unevenly distributed; confined to about 87 rainy days. Mean annual rainfall is about

Fig. 4.2: Map Showing Nadowli District



Source: District Planning and Coordinating Unit, Nadowli

1100mm with the maximum around August. The long dry season is rendered harsh by the dry north-easterly harmattan winds. Relative humidity is between 70% and 90% during the rainy season but falls as low as 20% during the dry season (NDA, 1996:6). This climatic condition has given rise to the guinea savannah woodland characterised by shrubs and grassland with scattered medium-sized trees. The trees are short and widely dispersed with varying degrees of grass cover in between. Common economic trees include sheanut (*Vitellaria paradoxa*), dawadawa (*Parkia biglobosa*), the baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) and kapok (*Ceiba pentandra*) which are resistant to both fire and drought. The natural vegetation has been subject to disturbance through bushfires, felling of trees for fuel wood, over-grazing and continuous cultivation.

The district is considered one of the most deprived districts in the country, as basic facilities and infrastructure such as water, schools, roads, health services and power supply are woefully lacking, limited or deteriorated. The standard of living of the population is low: about 55% of the population is estimated to be living below the national poverty line of 13,200 cedis per annum (about 34 pounds sterling - £1 = 3,850 cedis in December 1997-June 1998).

4.2.2.1 District administration

A preliminary distinction must be made, when considering district administration, between traditional authorities and the District Assembly. The District Assembly is the highest political and administrative body in the district and is responsible for the socio-economic development of the district (see chapter 3, section 3.5.2). The District is thus administered by its assembly, composed of 58 members as follows:

- 36 elected (no elected woman)
- 19 appointed, including 3 women (selected by central government)
- 2 parliamentarians (both males)
- 1 District Chief Executive (appointed by the President) (male).

The district has ten area councils and 91 unit committees and has no urban council. Local government elections have been held in 1989, 1994 and 1998 to elect representatives in the electoral areas in the districts. The electorate voted for candidates who were believed to have the community at heart, not people of wealth and means - people they believe would bring development (according to interviews with villagers in Nadowli and Adansi West districts, 1998). Assembly members who could not deliver were voted out. Most of the assembly members were voted out in 1994 and 1998 and replaced by new ones.

Traditional authorities are responsible for the traditional and cultural lives of the people. Each village in the study area is headed by the village chief. Village chiefs are normally nominated from 'royal families' within the village. The chiefs have a system of justice to protect community members and preserve society norms. There are Paramount Chiefs that oversee groups of villages in traditional administrative areas. The Regional House of Chiefs co-ordinates the activities of paramount chiefs and the presidency rotates each year. Even though the traditional leaders are not part of the formal local government system, the assembly members are supposed to work in close contact with them "for peace, harmony and development" (Nkrumah, 1992,1995).

4.2.2.2 Cultural background

The major indigenous ethnic group in the district is the Dagaaba who comprise 96% of the total population. The minority Sissalas, who form the remaining 4% of the population, inhabit the south-eastern parts of the district. There is inter-tribal marriage, and in general, peaceful co-existence, mutual understanding and tolerance between the two ethnic groups. There are three major religious groups as follows: Christians 59%, Muslims 18%, and traditional worshippers 23% of the total population (NDA, 1996:8). The Dagaabas tend to be Christians (mostly Catholics), while the Sissalas tend to be Muslims (Orthodox and Ahmadiya).

The current village organisation is a continuation of the system of clan rule, with each clan being headed by an earth-priest or *Tindaana*. The Tindaana is responsible for land-matters, while the chief handles the administration. The practice of polygamy is part of the Daagaba culture and still common in the Upper West Region. Many households, therefore, will include two or more adult women. People in the rural areas prefer larger families to compensate for the high mortality rate, to help them with farm work and to give them the security of knowing they will be cared for in their old age.

4.2.2.3 Economic background

The economy of Nadowli district is driven by rainfed agriculture and rearing of ruminants. About 85% of the total population is engaged in agriculture. The rainfall regime permits only one harvest per year, unlike southern Ghana. The limitations arising out of these bio-climatic conditions on the output of peasant agriculture give rise to a long hunger gap, producing a seasonal character to the regime of poverty. In such times some depend on eating leaves and drinking *Pito* (local beer); children are most affected and contract a wide range of diseases. Government policy of withdrawal of subsidies on agricultural inputs has worsened the plight of farmers in the villages. Peasant food intake levels tend to be at their lowest in the months of March/April to June/July, at a time when people are also required to put maximum effort into their farm work. Major crops cultivated are groundnuts, millet, maize, yams, rice cowpea, soybean, cotton cassava and cashew. Farming in the district is at a subsistence level. The high dependency on agriculture, unreliable rainfall, low soil fertility in certain areas, lack of credit and inputs has resulted in low food production and domestic incomes. This has led to seasonal household food shortages in the area.

Livestock production in the district is, by comparison with the Upper West region as a whole, low. Per capita holding of cattle, sheep and goats for the district is 2.3, 1.2 and 1.4 respectively, compared to the regional average of 3, 2, and 4 respectively (NDA, 1996:23). Cattle, goat and sheep production is fairly high compared to production of pigs, fowls, ducks and rabbits. Animals are reared in practically every home, but there is no

large scale ranching in the district except for one cattle farm at Bussie. Low levels of livestock production are blamed on poor animal husbandry practice, theft of animals (especially by nomadic Fulani herdsmen) and diseases such as Newcastle disease (poultry) and anthrax (cattle) (ibid, 1996:23).

Lack of electricity and an appropriate resource base have made it impossible to establish modern industry in Nadowli. There has always existed a fairly well-defined sexual division of labour with women specialising in broad range of food processing industries such as *pito* brewing, shea butter and groundnut oil extraction and *dawadawa* processing. The seeds of shea and dawadawa are harvested and processed exclusively by women, for whom they are important sources of cash. The fruits of both species also have a sweet, edible pulp which is eaten as a snack food. The nuts of dawadawa are dried and processed into local food and spices whilst oil (sheanut 'butter') is extracted from shea (ICRA, 1993). Other local women's industries include basket weaving, pottery and sewing. Men, on the other hand, specialise in the making of tools for farm production, carpentry and tailoring.

All the villages studied are linked to market centres where their agricultural products are sold. There is a six-day periodic market system and marketing of foodcrops is carried out by women on an individual basis. The markets are dominated by female middlemen, mostly from Wa, the regional capital and some from southern Ghana. Tangasie has one of the biggest markets in the district. The markets are generally small, however, and do not have the strong market queen system developed in the south. Market structures consist of simple wooden sheds and in many places, including Nadowli, many traders simply display their wares on the ground under trees.

The villages off the main roads are linked to the major roads by minor roads or tracks. The main roads are laterite roads which are graded regularly. Bicycles are an important means of transport for farmers and, in almost every compound, somebody (male) owns one. While women are increasingly using bicycles, especially around Wa, head portage

is still the predominant method of transportation in and between the villages. Women carry goods to market and from the field to the village whilst men ride their bicycles.

Given the hardship of economic conditions in Nadowli, there has been a perennial problem of seasonal population migration to southern Ghana. This movement originated early in the advent of colonialism. Development of infrastructure at this time, was, in the main, guided by the desire to develop such resources as were needed in the industries of Europe. The 'centre' was situated in southern Ghana, especially in those regions rich in natural resources. Northern Ghana was regarded as being devoid of any resource endowment but labour (Konings, 1986:140). Consequently, northern Ghana was relatively ignored: its role in the general scheme of things was to supply labour to the gold mines and cocoa farms in the south. No persistent efforts were made to develop the resources of the region (Dickson, 1984:12). By the end of colonial rule, a steady flow of northern labour to the south was in place. Even though there has been a relative decrease in migration, this pattern has persisted, with Brong Ahafo and Ashanti regions having the largest share of in-migration (Songsore and Denkabe, 1995). Migration mainly involves males between 15-40 years. Women within this age group also migrate but they are comparatively few. Even though there are no statistical data on migration, this trend in the district is evident everywhere. The result is a diminishing labour force, which affects development efforts since some of the migrants never return.

4.2.2.4 Social Service infrastructure

The inadequacy of social services such as health, education, water, sanitation etc., is one of the major factors that characterises rural areas in Ghana. The level of social infrastructure development in any district also reflects the quality of life of its people. Where such services are available, they may not be readily accessible.

In Nadowli district, there is a total of ten health delivery outlets with more than 80 outreach points. There is no hospital in the district. The health centre in the district capital, Nadowli, has no doctor and serious cases are referred to Jirapa hospital, 22 km

away. The average distance to a health facility in the district is 16 km, as against the national figure of 5 km (NDA, 1996). Because of the remoteness of the area, doctors refuse to take up postings. The regional medical officer of health reported: 'Five doctors and two pharmacists posted to this region this year to improve the staffing position refused to report. This has always been the trend' (Ghanaian Times, 1998). The general staffing situation in the district is very poor. The doctor /patient ratio is 1:84,391, the nurse/patient ratio is 1:3,836 compared with the regional average of 1:43,460 for doctor/patient and 1:650 for nurse/patient respectively (NDA, 1996:6). As a result of the presence of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), there has been a considerable improvement in medical supplies to the health sector and upgrading of the available health infrastructure over the last five years.

Educational institutions include four day nurseries, 61 primary schools, 28 junior secondary schools (JSS), two senior secondary schools (SSS), one vocational institute and one Youth Leadership Institute. Most existing school buildings - that is dormitories, classrooms, libraries and staff bungalows/quarters - are in a deplorable state and need renovation. Nadowli town has no senior secondary school. There are other settlements with large catchment areas and growing communities which require new schools. Only three out of the 28 JSS in the district have both adequate classrooms and workshops. School intake shows boys outnumbering girls at each level. According to the educational authorities, only an estimated 40% of children within the primary school age attend school (NDA, 1996:13). This contrasts with an enrolment rate in the country as a whole in 1990 of 75% - 67% for males and 83% for females (World Bank, 1993). There are no private schools in the district. It would be difficult for people to bear the cost of private tuition.

The major sources of water in the district are boreholes, wells, dug-outs and streams/rivers. Research conducted in 1994 by World Vision International on the water sources of 120 communities in the district indicated that 45,234 or 62% of the people have access to safe drinking water (pipe and borehole sources). The rest depend on wells,

rivers, streams and dug-out water. Provision of water is undertaken by Non-Governmental Organisations.

Most of the houses in the district are built with mud and thatched or have a soil roof reinforced with forked sticks and beams. The dominant type of housing is rectangular shaped, not circular as in the rest of northern Ghana. The materials/structures are of poor quality, characterised by eroded foundation, leaking roofs, cracked walls and poor drainage, yet these houses serve the needs of the people such as adequate space, security and privacy, and promote a sense of identity in the various vernacular styles adopted. The few cement block houses roofed with corrugated aluminium sheets are owned mostly by people resident outside the district.

4.2.2.5 Rural settlements studied in Nadowli district

Two villages were selected for study in both the northern and southern constituencies in the district: four villages in all. In each constituency one village was located on the main gravelled road and the other 5 km or more beyond it. The following villages were chosen - Tangasie (on a main road), 5 km from Nadowli, the district capital; Badabuo (on a minor road), 10 km from Nadowli (also in the southern constituency); Dafiama (on a main road) and Puleba (on a minor road) 14 km and 30 km respectively from Nadowli, both in the northern constituency (See fig 4.2).

The largest settlement among the study villages, Dafiama, has a population of 2,663 (NDA, 1998) and, unusually, exhibits a nucleated settlement pattern because of pressure for land to build¹. It is on the main road and linked to Nadowli and other villages by laterite roads. Tall trees along the roads in the village give shade to women who sell food to pupils and students. The whole village has a busy, bustling air. In the middle of the village is an imposing Catholic Church. The church operates a Credit Union, co-operative

¹ Villages in Nadowli District, as generally in northern Ghana, often take a dispersed form because of the compound farming system where land immediately around the compound is cropped every year. The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) undertook a population census in the district in

store, grain bank and has provided a dugout water supply for farmers and livestock. There are a few small shops where one can buy basic items.

Puleba with a population of 459 (NDA, 1998) is about two kilometres off the road and is linked to it only by a footpath. Settlement here is more dispersed with each house surrounded by a large compound which is used for farming. Women and girls pound their cereals under trees in the afternoons and evenings. There are no shops, and *pito* is sold from individual compounds by the women.

Tangasie is located on a laterite road and has a population of 988 (NDA, 1998). It has the biggest market of all the survey settlements; this is located near the Nadowli-Tumu road. The market covers about an acre, with wooden structures and thatched roofs. Tangasie exhibits both dispersed and nucleated settlement. Areas around the market are nucleated, while those on the outskirts continue with their compound farming.

Badabuo has a population of 250 (NDA, 1998) and is 5km off the main gravelled road. It is linked to Tangasie by a footpath. It exhibits a typical compound farming settlement pattern with each house on a large compound farm. Most of the houses are hidden within the farms during the farming season. There are no shops, schools, wells, or clinics in the village.

In all communities, the earth-priest - *Tindaana* - and the village chief form the core of the administrative system. Each of the villages is headed by a village chief, who is supported and advised by elders who come from different sections of the village. Chiefs are well respected and are the centre of all festivals. They arbitrate over disputes within and between villages and attend traditional rituals. They receive visitors to the village and mobilise the people for development activities. In fact, in all the villages, the Assembly

1994. This was computerised and has been upgraded each year. The population for the district was last calculated in April 1998.

member must, if contacted first, introduce all visitors to the chief before any transaction/activity can be undertaken.

Land is the most important resource because it is the farmer's source of livelihood. In the study villages there is no indication that there is pressure on land. Land ownership is usually communal, with individual user rights. Private ownership is non-existent. Traditionally, tenurial rights are only leased to farmers by the *Tindaana* and are usually hereditary. He handles land administration and all sacrifices to the land god, but day to day administration on behalf of the community is handled by the chief. Land is usually given free of charge and therefore re-selling is strictly forbidden. Young men and women are allocated land through their fathers and husbands, respectively. It is important to note that women are not allocated land to grow crops by the *Tindaana* but borrow from their husbands.

Individual villages are a conglomeration of several large residential units called sections. Each section encompasses a cluster of interconnected compounds, members of which originate from one ancestor. Usually, the senior man in the section is the leader. In each compound, there may be two or more brothers living together with their wives, children, unmarried brothers and sisters, and other dependants. Men may detach themselves from the main section, because of lack of space, but this does not detach their family from the main section organisation. The compound forms the basic unit of social organisation at household level, in the sense that members cooperate in social, political and economic aspects of life. Led by the compound head, they control and decide on property, labour, sanctions, production, consumption and religious rituals. The final decision on all major issues comes from the compound head. Compared to southern Ghana, therefore, traditional socio-economic differentiation is narrower, since the northern pattern of kinship obligation is expressed through distributive mechanisms which reduce the individual's opportunity for personal accumulation (Saris and Shams, 1989).

The main economic and livelihood activities in the villages are food and cash crop farming, food processing, trading, *pito* brewing, charcoal burning and sheanut processing. Farming is dominated by small holders at subsistence level and is not very rewarding in monetary terms, making it unattractive to the youth. Technology is traditional and unimproved. Land is mainly cleared using the hoe and cutlass. The hoe is the main implement used for seedbed preparation. A few individuals and women's groups, particularly in Dafiama, employ tractor services. Agriculture is mostly rainfed and seasonal. The rainy season is unreliable and punctuated with intermittent droughts, resulting in frequent crop failure. Major crops grown are those widely cultivated across the district: groundnuts, millet, maize, yams, rice, cowpea, soybean, cotton, cassava and cashew. Sheep, goats, pigs and fowl are reared in virtually every home in the villages on a small scale. Food production, however, is unable to provide for the nutritional needs of the people. The main constraints expressed by the farmers (NDA, 1996:31) include the following:

- unreliable rainfall pattern
- one cropping season
- traditional production methods (crops and animal husbandary)
- low soil fertility
- poor marketing infrastructure
- high cost of inputs and inadequate supply of extension services
- lack of credit facilities

There is little difference in the farming activities between the villages. Farmers in all four villages studied practice the two farming systems prevalent in the region: bush fallowing and intensive compound farming. Under the intensive compound farming system, land immediately surrounding the household is manured and cultivated continuously. The compound farming system is based on the principle of permanent cultivation, and is found not only in the study area, but also throughout northern Ghana. The fields in compound farms are more fertile and crops like early millet, special varieties of corn and guinea corn with a shorter maturity period are grown here. The bush farms are located

about 3 -6 km away from the houses and farmers have to spend a considerable amount of time walking to and from these areas. Bush farms are larger than compound farms, and, whereas special attention is paid to maintenance of soil fertility on compound farms, that of bush farms is left to nature to restore it through the fallow system (Benneh, 1972; Koning, 1986; Panin, 1988).

Social service provision in the study villages is very poor (see table 4.1). Regarding health services, of the four villages studied, only the roadside settlement of Dafiama has a health post and a mobile clinic. This is because of the activities of the Catholic church. The church was established in Dafiama in 1952 and has since provided basic social services in the village. These include primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools. The dispensary, opened in 1952, was upgraded to a health post in 1973/74 by the Ministry of Health. People in the other villages have to walk long distances to attend clinics. People from Badabuo, for instance, walk about 10km to attend clinic in Nadowli. The cost recovery system of the government, resulting from the Structural Adjustment Programmes, has made orthodox medical consultations very expensive. Most of the people, therefore, rely on herbalists and only occasionally go to clinics.

Apart from Badabuo (which is located off-road), all the villages have primary schools, with roadside Dafiama having four JSS and one of the two SSS in the district. However, there are sizeable numbers of children of school-going age who are not in school because they are needed to assist in agricultural and household work. Long walking distances to schools also discourage school attendance in villages without their own school. Fifteen pupils from Badabuo walked about 10km each day to school at Tangasie in March 1998, and this number dwindles each school term. In Tangasie, the classroom block is in a particularly deplorable condition. Classes 1 and 2, 3 and 4 and 5 and 6 have been combined. Most of the children sit on mud chairs and on the floor and some of them have one exercise book for all their exercises. Only a few have the formal school uniform; they are mostly dressed in old T-shirts and house wear. Getting a child to school means the cost of uniforms, books, furniture and development fees which makes education not so

easily accessible to the rural communities. The Catholic Relief Services provide lunch each day for schools in Tangasie and Pulebaa, boosting attendance slightly. Teachers, more especially those teaching technical skills, are lacking.

Access to clean, piped water is mostly lacking in the four villages and this exacerbates health problems. Water resources and facilities available to these rural communities are rainwater, rivers, hand-dug wells and boreholes fitted with pumps. In Badabuo, the stream is about 3km distant and women and girls spend much time fetching water because men and boys are culturally proscribed from carrying things. Pulbaa has only one bore hole with a hand pump which is not adequate. Tangasie and Dafiama have boreholes and wells. The boreholes were built through the Community Water and Sanitation Project (COWAP), sponsored by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The communities are trained to manage and repair the pumps. They do not pay for the cost of water.

Although refuse dumps tend to develop near public toilets, these villages appear to be relatively neater than urban settlements. Toilet facilities include KVIPs (Kumasi Vented Improved Pit Latrine) and pit-latrines. The KVIPs have been built through communal labour with assistance from the District Assembly. Nadowli (the district capital) and Dafiama have three each, Tangasie has one which is very old and untidy. There is no payment of money for the use of the KVIPs but they are not able to meet the demand of the population. Pit-latrines have also been constructed and are managed entirely through community initiative and action. Many people still prefer 'free range' because they do not like going to queue and also, basically, because this is what they are used to. Badabuo and Pulebaa, the off road villages, have no toilet facilities.



Table 4.1: Provision of Social Services in the Study Villages

<u>Nadowli District</u>		Primary	JSS	SSS	Clinic	KVIP	Pit Latrine	Borehole
Dafiama		7	4	1	1	3	-	3
Tangasie		1	-	-	-	1		3
Puleba		1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Badabuo		-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Adansi</u>	<u>West</u>							
<u>District</u>								
Akrokerri ¹		4	2	2	1	2	3	3
Wioso		1	-	-	1	-	1	1
Kusa		1	-	-	-	-	2	1
Kwabentakwa		1	-	-	-	1	1	1
Domeabra		1	-	-	-	1	-	1

4.2.3 Overview of Ashanti Region

Ashanti region is the most heavily populated region in Ghana with a total estimated population of 2,924,237 for 1995 (RCC, 1995 based on projections from the 1984 census). It has a population density of 120 people per km². Ashanti Region is located in the central part of Ghana with a transport network connecting it to all the other regions of the country (see fig 4.1). Kumasi, the regional capital, is centrally located in the region and is easily accessible by road, rail, and air to the major towns of the country and by road within the region itself. Ashanti region has one of the best road systems in the country. Most of the roads linking the various towns in the region have been rehabilitated and all the main roads in Kumasi are now asphalted. A fifty kilometre stretch of the national railway system passes through the region but the railways are poorly maintained and organised and carry only a small proportion of regional freight. Kumasi metropolis has an estimated population of 732,263 (Kessey, 1995, using a projection of 2.7% growth per annum based on 1984 census data). The region has 18 administrative districts and 33 electoral constituencies.

¹ Akrokerri has the only post-secondary Teacher Training College in the two districts studied.

This is predominantly a moist semi-deciduous forest area and experiences two heavy rainfall periods, with peaks in June and July for the major rains and September and October for the minor ones. The vegetation is tropical rain forest but, apart from forest reserves and some sacred groves, what remains is secondary forest. Trees of economic value in this area are odum (*Milicia excelsa*), wawa (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*), mahogany (*Khaya spp.*), sapale (*Entandophragma cylindricum*) and ofram (*Terminalia superba*). Major forest products are cocoa, oil palm, cola and timber, but food crops (cassava, plantain, yams, cocoyams and vegetables) are also grown in the forest areas.

The region is relatively well served in terms of social service infrastructure. It has one of the two teaching hospitals in the country, the Okomfo Anokye Hospital in Kumasi. There are hospitals and health centres in all the district centres. The private sector is strongly involved in the delivery of medical services in the region too; for example, the sector owns about 95% of the general clinics and 99% of the maternity clinics in Kumasi (Kessey, 1995).

Ashanti region has three tertiary educational institutions, with the country's only science university located in Kumasi. There are junior and senior secondary schools in all the districts; Kumasi itself has about 310 primary schools. The principal problem of education in the region is an inadequate number of classrooms.

Market places in this region are very important and Kumasi's daily market is one of the biggest in West Africa. The market traders in Kumasi have formidable associations, with elected heads called market 'Queens'. These associations are used to pursue defined objectives including negotiations with the Metropolitan Assembly (Clark, 1994).

The Ashantis have a matrilineal kinship system. Their legal institutions and political organisation are amongst the most highly developed in Africa, with the concept of rank and chieftainship in the forefront (Fortes et.al, 1947:149). In Ashanti Region, all lands traditionally belong to the Golden Stool which is acknowledged as the repository of the

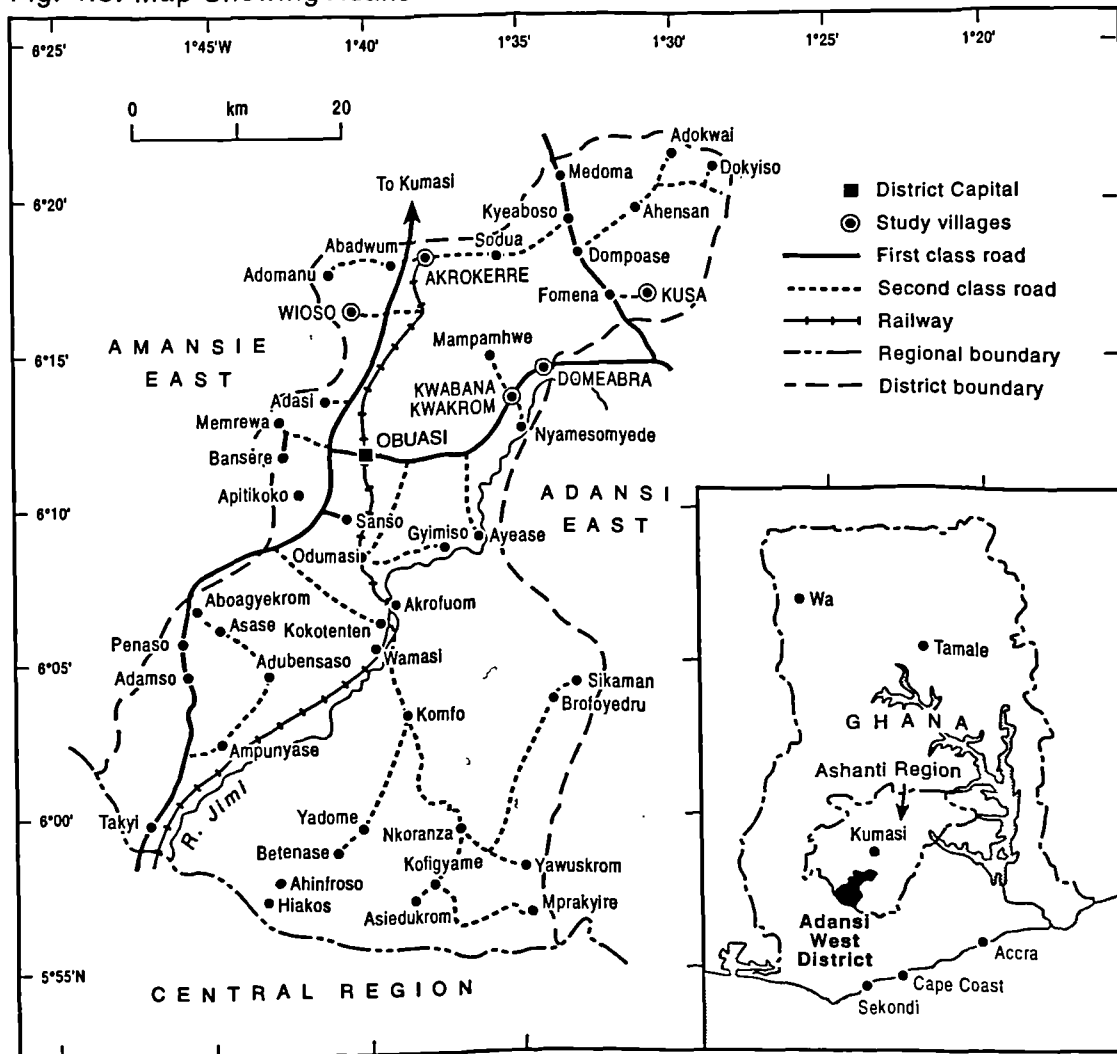
souls of the ancestors who originally owned the stool. The Asantehene, as the occupant of the Golden Stool, administers all the land in trust, and on behalf of his people. There is a distinct hierarchical structure for the decentralisation and transmission of obligations with respect to the allocation of land in the various paramountcies. Each chief holds the land, and the proprietor interests in the land, in trust for his subjects or members of the family. Because the various caretaker chiefs are in fiduciary positions, they are accountable to their subjects and their superior chiefs. They are, therefore, liable to punishment or even destoolment if they mismanage the lands held by them in trust, or misappropriate revenue from stool lands (Amissah, 1996).

4.2.4 Adansi West District

Adansi West district is one of the eighteen districts in the Ashanti Region and is second to Kumasi Metropolitan area in terms of growth of population and volume of economic activities (see fig 4.3). It is located in the southern part of the Ashanti Region within latitudes 5° 25' N and 6° 25' N and longitude 1° 50' W and 1° 25' W. Obuasi is the district capital and it is the focal point of a radiating network of roads to other parts of the district with a series of second class and feeder roads making all areas of the district easily accessible. It is linked by air, rail and road with the rest of the country and surrounded by many food-growing villages. The central position of Ashanti Goldfields Company (AGC), the largest and most prosperous mining company in Ghana, in Adansi West District, makes it relatively richer than other districts in Ashanti region.

The district has an undulating terrain, with more than half the total area rising to around 500m above sea level. The highest point is located on the Pompo range at 634 meters near Obuasi. Mean annual temperature is 25° C and relative humidity is highest - 75% - in the

Fig. 4.3: Map Showing Adansi West District



Source: The Adansi West District Assembly

wet season (Adansi West District Assembly (AWDA), 1996). The soils are forest ochrosols, rich in humus and suitable for agriculture. The soils support the cultivation of cocoa, kolanuts, cashew, ginger, oil palm, coffee, and staple food crops like cassava, plantain, maize and cocoyam. Vegetables like pepper and tomatoes are also cultivated on a large scale in sandy soils around Akrokerri and Dadwen. Vegetation is predominantly semi-deciduous and the forests contain species of hardwood which are harvested as timber for logging and lumbering. There are six forest reserves in the district and AGC also maintains large tracts of teak plantation, known as green-belts, within its concession areas in and around Obuasi.

The population of the district was estimated at 250,215 in 1994 (AWDA, estimated from a projected annual growth rate of 3.1% based on 1984 data). Out of this, 165,763 (66%) were resident in the urban areas whilst 84,763 (34%) were in the rural areas (AWDA, 1996). Almost all the inhabitants are Ashantis, with a very small percentage being Fantis and people of northern origin. Most of these migrant populations work in the mines at Obuasi and a few in the rural settlements as farmers. However, the non-Ashantis have generally stayed in the district long enough to be able to speak and understand the Twi language.

Even though there is lack of statistical data, migration is known to be a serious problem affecting the rural communities of Obuasi. Many people, especially the youth, leave the rural communities for Obuasi town to look for employment in the mines and other related occupations. This, the rural dwellers believe, has affected the development and growth of their communities. Obuasi also receives migrants from all over the country, including the north, because of the mines.

4.2.4.1 District administration

In considering administrative issues it is important, as in Nadowli, to distinguish between traditional authorities and the District Assemblies. As stated in section 4.2.2.1, the traditional authorities are responsible for the traditional and cultural lives of the people.

These include chieftancy matters, festivals, land and other related issues. The district is the seat of the Adansi Traditional Council and thus boasts of one paramount chief and four divisional chiefs. The traditional capital of the district is Fomena, where the paramount chief heads the traditional authority system. Before a chief is installed in the district, he has to swear an oath of allegiance to the Fomena chief. He then chooses a linguist to take that chief to the Asantehene in Kumasi to swear allegiance to the Asantehene. The various towns and villages are headed by chiefs (*adikro*) who are well respected and play an important development role in their respective areas.

The District Assembly (as previously noted in chapter3, section 3.5.2) is the highest political and administrative body in the district *and is responsible for the socio-economic development of the district*. Adansi West Assembly is one of the 18 districts in the Ashanti region. It is part of the old district (Adansi District Council) which was divided into two in 1988. The district is divided into two constituencies - Obuasi and Fomena. The AWDA has a total membership of 81, composed of the following:

- 54 elected, including 5 women
- 27 appointed, including 4 women
- 2 parliamentarians (males)
- 1 District Chief Executive (male)

The district has 6 urban/area councils and 178 Unit Committees. Elections to the District Assembly first occurred in 1989 and subsequently in 1994 and 1998. Most of the original assembly members were voted out since they could not meet the needs of the electorates. The electorate want to select people who are committed to the development of the area. The assembly members are supposed to work together with the traditional chiefs in order to promote peace and development in the area.

4.2.4.2 Condition of the environment

Human activities - agriculture, logging, mining, and sand winning - have had a serious impact on the natural environment. The bush fallow system of farming has reduced most natural forest into secondary forest in this district. Extensive logging in the forest areas of the southern sector of the district has also contributed to the rapid deforestation which is occurring. The vegetation cover of many hill tops in and around Obuasi has been destroyed by toxic arsenic trioxide in emissions from the ore treatment plant of AGC, while the surface of others has been laid bare through surface mining.

4.2.4.3 Structure of the local economy

Mining of gold (both underground and surface) is the main industrial activity in Obuasi. The AGC employs 10,000 people, categorised into senior staff, junior staff and labourers. Mining, together with its related subsidiary and ancillary sectors, thus provides an important source of income for quite a substantial number of people, especially in the district capital. Mining activities aside, other industrial activities range from small scale fabrication to manufacturing. These include auto-mechanic works, blacksmithing, sawmilling and carpentry.

Agriculture accounts for 51% of the total labour force, compared with 57% at the national level (AWDA, 1996) and 85% in Nadowli district (see section 4.2.2.3). Crops grown are maize, cassava, plantain, cocoyam and pepper. These are produced for local markets and exported to other parts of the country especially the coastal areas. Industrial crops in the district are oil palm, citrus (oranges), cocoa, coffee, and kolanuts. Palm oil and palm kernel oil extraction is undertaken by a number of small scale processors, whilst one large-scale palm oil processing plant operates in Dompase. Cocoa is also produced extensively in the southern parts of the district.

An important component of the development of both rural and urban economies is the traditional market. Markets in the district are organised on a daily and periodic basis. Obuasi, Fomena, Dompasi, Akrokerri and Amponyasi are towns with daily markets

while other markets are organised on a periodic basis. Markets in the villages consist merely of a small open space without sheds or stalls. Due to the high concentration of people in Obuasi, the service sector is very important. Commercial activities include banking, hotel operations, restaurants, wholesale and retail trade. Farmers from surrounding areas obtain a ready market here for their produce. They either send their produce to the market or market women go to the rural areas to buy from them. In return, the farmers obtain their needs from Obuasi: agricultural inputs like cutlasses, hoes, insecticides and fertilisers plus household necessities such as kerosene, soap, clothing and batteries.

4.2.4.4 Social service infrastructure

There is a skewed distribution of infrastructure facilities in favour of the northern part of the district, with the district capital exhibiting the greatest concentration. These facilities taper off to lower levels in the peripheral areas.

Adansi West District abounds in both public and private schools though most of the schools are in Obuasi. In 1995, there were 90 public and 27 privately managed primary schools, 48 public and 4 private JSS schools, and 6 public SSS. The only vocational/commercial institute, Christ the King, in Obuasi is managed by the Roman Catholic church. There is also a Training College at Akrokerri (AWDA, 1996). Outside Obuasi, many villages do not have the full complement of six classrooms for the primary school, whilst others have classrooms consisting of dilapidated mud structures.

There is one major hospital in Adansi West District; it is owned and operated by AGC in Obuasi. It primarily serves the company's workers and their dependants, treating them free of charge, but is open to the general public. Other people, however, are treated at exorbitant prices far beyond the reach of the poor. The Ministry of Health operates three health centres at Obuasi, Akrokerri and Fomena. There are two maternal, child health and family planning centres at Akrokerri and Amponyasi. All the other three privately

managed health centres are located at Obuasi. People in the villages find it very difficult to meet the cost of hospital bills and therefore continue to use traditional medicine.

The Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation operates four pipe-borne water systems in Obuasi Fomena, Akrokerri and Akrofuom. The District Assembly's Water and Sanitation Health Team (WASHT), supported by NGOs, has since 1992 sunk 88 boreholes and 36 hand-dug wells in various settlements in the district. AGC operates and manages its own water system for its industrial and domestic needs. KVIPs and pit-latrines have been constructed in the district but most of the villages use pit latrines. They cannot afford the construction of KVIPs without any external assistance. Electric power in the district is tapped from the national grid with a major substation at Obuasi. However, not all villages have electricity.

4.2.4.5 Villages studied in Adansi West district

In Adansi West district, three villages in Fomena constituency and two in Obuasi constituency were selected for study. In Fomena constituency the villages selected were Kusa, where people do not commute daily to work in the Obuasi mines, and Akrokerri and Wioso where miners commute to work daily in the mines at Obuasi. The two villages selected in Obuasi constituency are Kwabenakwa and Domeabra (see fig 4.3). Miners commute to work in the Obuasi mines from both these villages. Currently population figures for these villages are unknown, and projections from 1984 difficult to calculate, given the complexity of migration patterns in this district. The District Assembly has no current estimated data.

Kusa is about three kilometres from the road that links Ashanti to the Central Region. It is surrounded by the Kusa mountains, within a forest area. In 1984 it had a population of 670. Its houses are built with mud and roofed with corrugated roofing sheets which have rusted. A very old two-storey building belonging to the chief stands in the middle of the village, opposite a small market with wooden structures roofed with aluminium sheets. Access to the main road is along a narrow gravelled track. There are no shops and basic

items must be obtained either from the small market or from Fomena a bigger town which is walking distance (2km) away.

Wioso is also off-road and had a population of 153 (1984). It is linked to the main Obuasi- Kumasi road with a small gravelled footpath. There is no shop and market in this village. Purchases are made in Kwapia, a relatively larger village which is a quarter of a kilometre away.

Kwabentakwa had a population of 922 (1984) and is located on the main road to Obuasi. This road divides the village into two and those on the one side have to cross it to fetch water, as there is only one borehole fitted with a pump. People near the former stream continue using it because of distance to the borehole and queuing entailed in using the borehole. There are three small shops, and women sell food near the road. The market is near the borehole in the centre of the village and it is made up of four small sheds roofed with grass.

Domeabra is a small village about five kilometres from Kwabentakwa. It had a population of 65 (1984) and is on the main road to Obuasi off the Kumasi-Cape Coast road. This road divides Domeabra into two. The houses are built with mud, close together with a few narrow pathways between them. As in all the villages, deep gullies have developed near paths and this has left many houses with exposed foundations from erosion resulting from rainfall. Domeabra has no market and shops and shares a school with Kwabentakwa. A hand-pump well and place of convenience has been built with assistance from European Union funds.

With a population of 3894 (1984), Akrokerri is the largest of all the settlements. It is linked to the main road with a tarred road and is a well laid out town with shops. There are many miners in Akrokerri who commute each day to Obuasi. The 'Zion Train' - the big trucks which pick up workers to and from Obuasi - is free for all who join it.

It must be noted that the mining company does not undertake development activities in the villages. Mining, however, offers employment to the 'lucky' men. Most young men, if not all, dream of working in the mines and so flock to the district capital in search of mining jobs.

The people in all these villages depend directly on farming for their livelihood. Miners in these villages are not so many as to dominate the local economy since they constitute less than 10% of the population. Some of them undertake farming activities in addition to their work in the mines. Both subsistence and cash crops are produced. Local staples grown are plantain, cocoyam, maize, yams, rice, and vegetables, especially pepper. Cash crops include cocoa, oil palm, and citrus. The increasing demands of the urban centres, especially Obuasi, have given incentives for food farming, so commercial farmers cultivating cocoa also engage in food farming.

In the study villages farming is dominated by many small holders and is mostly on a subsistence basis, but many farmers have recently started to expand farms to take advantage of the urban market. With regard to the traditional structures of food production, the individual household and basic production unit is made up of a man, his wife, children, and one or two members of a spouse's kinfolk. This group may either be the sole production unit, occupying a house or compound, or it may form part of a large group occupying a compound (Dei, 1992). There are also partnerships such as *nnoboa*, collective self-help groups of age mates who help each other in farming activities (Arhin, 1983 cited in Dei, 1992).

Cutlasses are the main farming implements. Big trees are felled when land is cleared for farming by dormer machines by those who can afford them and axes are used by the poor. The main problems¹ facing farmers include the following:

- High cost of inputs
- Traditional production methods

- Lack of credit facilities
- Poor marketing infrastructure

Communal ownership of land is an important feature of the traditional village community. Family land is vested in the matrilineage and every member of the lineage has the right to farm freely and to build on such land. The individual owns only the usufruct of the land and cannot alienate it. Transfer of rights to use family land or farms follows matrilineal inheritance. Any person who does not, by birth, belong to that particular 'stool' or 'family' is considered a 'stranger' whether he is an Ashanti or not (Dei, 1992, Amissah, 1996).

Social services in the study villages are relatively good by comparison with Nadowli District in the Upper West region (see table 4.1). Domeabra and Kusa have no clinics, but clinics are within two to three kilometres reach and transportation is not a major problem. Major cases are referred to the AGC hospital or the Okomfo Anokye Hospital in Kumasi. There is a doctor at the Akrokerri and Fomena clinics. However, in all the villages, there was grave concern expressed about the cost of medical bills. Many self medicate and rely on traditional medicines, which are far cheaper.

All the villages have primary schools and Akrokerri, Kwabenakwa and Wioso each have a junior secondary school. Kusa and Domeabra have a JSS within walking distance. Classrooms in Domeabra are in a very deplorable condition. Kusa school, which was mud, is now being built with sandcrete by the residents, with the help of the District Assembly. Wioso is presently adding another classroom block, with funding from the Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA), with the people providing communal labour. In all the villages, people complain of the high cost of education. There are some children who are not in school because parents are unable to afford school fees (but this is a smaller percentage than that in Nadowli).

¹ Interview with farmers and extension officer at Obuasi

Water is a problem in Adansi West district. Bore holes fitted with pumps are used in all the villages but Akrokerri, the largest settlement, has only three boreholes, and the others have one each. Long queues are to be found at the water points at most times of the day.

It must be emphasised that people are poor in these villages. Much farming is at subsistence level and dominated by small holders with low incomes. Social services are not readily available to most people in the villages because of the cost involved. It is not uncommon to find people dropping out of school for financial reasons and people who are unable to find jobs after school coming back to the village. This increases the dependency ratio in the communities with attendant economic stress.

Compared to Nadowli District, the study villages in Adansi West district are better served with social services. They have a good network of transportation, schools and clinics within walking distance. However, in both districts, access to social services are not readily available to the poor. This is evident throughout the villages as the cost of education and medical facilities are beyond the rural people. Use of traditional medicine, self-medication, and non-attendance at school of children for financial reasons persists in both districts. The level of non-participation is, however, higher in the Nadowli district. Average incomes are higher in Adansi West *than in Nadowli*. While farmers in Nadowli district are engaged mainly in cereal production, some Adansi West farmers produce cocoa and food crops like plantain, cassava, cocoyam and vegetables, providing a monetary income higher than that obtained through cereal production. Farming activities can be undertaken throughout the year in Adansi West district. The district is the net receiver of migrants from the north who work in the mines and the farms.

Despite the relative advantages of Adansi West district, even a cursory tour of its constituent areas indicates the existence of considerable poverty.

4.3 Methodological framework

This study employed a qualitative methodology. Qualitative data are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts (Miles and Huberman, 1994:1). The strength of the qualitative method is that it relies on multiple information sources and emphasises diversity of techniques. It emphasises the complexity of human life - how people understand their worlds and how they create and share meanings about their lives. It seeks to examine meanings that have been socially constructed and consequently accepts that values and views differ from place to place and group to group. The qualitative method thereby elicits in-depth answers about culture, meanings, processes and problems (Rubin and Rubin, 1995:33-35).

It has been suggested (Binns et al 1997:1), that the key reasons for the failure of many rural development schemes stem from the fact that they are derived from inappropriate methodologies through which planners have failed fully to comprehend the dynamics of rural life and, in particular, ignore local people's perceptions, needs and understanding. More specifically, quantitative methodologies have failed to understand the complexities of the socio-economic and cultural contexts in which indigenous livelihood and production systems function. Such limitations have sometimes arisen through the utilisation of methodologies with a strong economic bias (Hill, 1989 cited in Chambers, 1994) or an obsession with the search for universal solutions, rather than trying to identify appropriate strategies for the particular local context (Binns et al., 1997:1). In qualitative research, outsiders should be facilitators, learners and consultants. Ideally, they watch, listen and learn (Chambers, 1994:1253). Metaphorically, and sometimes actually, they hand over the stick of authority. Morse (1994:1) has noted that the laboratory of qualitative research is everyday life which cannot be contained in a test-tube, started, stopped and manipulated, or washed down the sink.

Thus, using qualitative methods to elicit perspectives about how people make sense of their lives, experiences and structures of the world was central to this study. I employed a variety of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) approaches during my eight months of

fieldwork to explore the rural poor's perceptions of poverty and the role of the District Assemblies in the two contrasting districts of Ghana described above.

4.3.1 Participatory Rural Appraisal

The PRA techniques used included in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and direct observation. Supporting techniques included documentary review. Such mixed methods have several purposes: to triangulate or converge findings, to elaborate on results, to use one method to inform the other, to discover paradox or contradiction, and to extend the breadth of the enquiry (Green et al., 1989 cited in Creswell, 1994). This multiple methodology has the overriding advantage of jointly cross-checking reliability and qualitative depth. As Mitchell (1989:3) states "...evidence based on a variety of cross-checking methods has a higher probability of representing the reality of a problem than based upon a single method".

PRA is part of a growing and now well-established action-oriented approach to research. It draws its strength from five main threads: activist participatory research, agro-ecosystem analysis, applied anthropology, field research on farming systems and rapid rural appraisal, and attempts to overcome the biased nature of 'rural development tourism and questionnaire surveys' (Chambers, 1992:2,7). It stresses changes in the behaviour and attitudes of outsiders, to become not teachers but facilitators, not lecturers but listeners and learners. 'Hand over the stick', 'Use your own best judgement at all times' and 'they can do it' (having confidence in the abilities of local people whether literate or not) are among its precepts (Holland et al., 1998:xv). PRA is based on the premise that local people have the expertise, analytical skills and knowledge, which should be incorporated in the decision-making process that affects them. It uses a combination of visual and verbal methods. Chambers (1994:1437) describes PRA as a term that "is being used to describe a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act". The methodology seeks practical research and planning approaches that can support more decentralised planning and more democratic decision making, as well as placing value on

social diversity, work towards sustainability, and enhance community participation and empowerment (Agyarko, 1997:5). Chambers (1997:162) maintains that participatory approaches and practices enable the poor to express and analyse their multiple and complex realities. In practical terms, it enables rural people to have a say in what they want for themselves, develop their latent and inherent capacity to analyse and evolve their own plan. Such a plan has a higher chance of being effective, sustainable and being scaled up compared to a plan evolved by outsiders (Shah, et al., 1991:71). However, it is important to recognise that participatory approaches may raise the expectations of local people, and in this project it was necessary to emphasise to participating villages the research focus of the work and that no developmental projects were planned to follow the project.

Through PRA techniques, participatory poverty appraisals have elicited the views of poor people, concerning their understanding and experience of poverty, by illustrating their classifications of poverty, vulnerability, priorities and concerns. They have also drawn attention to interrelationships between poverty and other issues and created a better understanding of poor people's strategies to alleviate their predicament. *PRA and other* participatory approaches in social policy research received a boost with the inclusion of participatory poverty assessments in the World Bank country poverty assessments. About 40 of such participatory studies have been conducted at country, regional and district levels by the World Bank (with support from other donor agencies) to investigate poor people's conception of poverty and identify their strategies to ameliorate the situation (Robb, 1997 cited in Agyarko, 1997:1). In Ghana, a major Participatory Poverty Assessment took place between 1994 and 1995 (Norton, et al., 1995; World Bank, 1995).

Even though PRA is becoming an increasingly adaptable and flexible research tool with a wide range of applications, it is not without limitations. Kapila and Lyon (1994:25) maintains that, in its rapidity, PRA can miss some of the 'social dynamics and cultural complexities'. There is often the problem of insufficient time being allowed for the team to relax with the local people, to listen to them and learn about the more sensitive issues

under consideration. Rushing will also often mean missing the views of the poorest and least articulate members of the communities visited (McCracken et al., 1997:6). According to Hinton (1998), the method has been adopted by some as a 'fast' means of analysing a situation and legitimising entry into the field or projects which have 'listened to the voice of the people'. It has also become fashionable in many development situations for use by development planners to train staff in the use of PRA as an economic way of conducting surveys. In this way, the anthropological aspects of the method that were its great strength may be slowly eroded. It may produce as shallow a response as the survey questionnaire.

Inadequately trained PRA teams may use techniques which are not relevant to the issues/topics at hand. Although PRA has been developed in response to the limitations of conventional research, it can easily tend towards biases without careful control (Kapila and Lyon, 1994:25). These include:

- elite bias - giving more weight to the articulate and educated and failing to listen and even respect poorly educated members.
- "concreteness" bias - generalisations leading from detailed answers of one individual or group. It will not be possible to generalise findings because members are selected from localities. Nor should one try to quantify responses or generalise them to the population (O'Brian, 1991).
- gender bias - working with women often tends to take much longer time and they are often unwilling to talk freely. Consequently, more time may have to be spent eliciting women's views and knowledge. (This can be alleviated by having female researchers and interpreters in the team).
- "helping" the interviewees with leading questions (McCracken et al, 1988 cited in Kapila and Lyon, 1994:25). Interviewees may be guided with leading questions so as to gain predetermined answers.

4.3.2 Selection of research assistants

In this study efforts were made to avoid the potential disadvantages of a PRA/qualitative methodology focus by careful training of research assistants prior to field work, making a

conscious effort to avoid elite/gender biases, and by avoiding leading questions in discussions. Selection of research assistants was an important preliminary task, particularly in my study area in northern Ghana, since I do not speak or understand the local language. Fortunately, because of financial assistance from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), who are keen to support District Assemblies and to promote research on decentralisation in Ghana, it was possible to employ such research assistants to provide limited field assistance. Devereux (1993:44) has noted that the ability to conduct interviews on one's own adds texture and depth to the data collected, while enjoyment of social conversation with local people adds a rich dimension to life in the field which is denied to those who are cut off from everyone around them by the language barrier. It must be noted, however, that understanding the structure of communication and colloquial usage is more important than merely 'learning the language' - knowledge of vocabulary is not understanding meaning. Local people will always be better at handling their language than outsiders (ibid: 45).

In Nadowli in northern Ghana, I had to find research assistants who were competent enough to translate¹ and also had knowledge of PRA approaches. There was also the important criterion of adequate knowledge of, and experience in, the locality. Moreover they had to command respect in the area so that people would take the exercise seriously. Through the Ministry of Health regional headquarters, I was introduced to the district head of the National Mobilisation Programme who, with others, has conducted research for the Ministry of Health using PRA approaches. I obtained the assistance of five men and a woman between the ages of twenty-six and sixty from Community Development and Health ministries and the District Assembly. They have lived in the district long enough to be familiar with the detailed setting. They were employed to help with the introductions into the villages, translation and focus group discussions. I organised a two-day training session, during which we discussed the checklist and I was briefed about the cultural practices of the area.

In the Adansi West District where I had worked in the past, and could speak and understand the local language, it was difficult to get competent people to help with the research. Most of those I knew were busy and were not available. With their help, however, I obtained the assistance of three men and two women from the Town and Country Planning department and the Commission for Human Rights. A former teaching assistant, who had completed his post graduate studies and with whom I have worked in the same department, led the team of five members in this district. This team was trained for three days.

The two teams in each district were responsible for logistics and arrangements for meetings in the villages. It must be noted that the various approaches viz. focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were conducted according to the time suitable for particular villages and individuals. After the training sessions, each team undertook preliminary interviews in the various suburbs (Obuasi) and sections (Nadowli) in the district capitals. This took two weeks. Apart from giving the research assistants experience and confidence, it also provided preliminary information about the operation of the District Assemblies, peoples' perceptions of the District Assemblies and poverty in the capital. These interviews were done without supervision but reports were discussed in preparation for entering the villages. The research assistants subsequently helped me with the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews in the villages.

4.3.3 In-depth interviews

Such interviews were mainly semi-structured, and based not on questionnaires but on a checklist of issues. They were, therefore, more like conversations guided informally by the interviewers (McCracken and Narnyan, 1997:4). This approach has the advantage of being flexible enough to allow certain questions to be rephrased or irrelevant ones skipped (see Appendix A). They took place in formal and informal settings at the national, regional, district and local levels. Formal interviews were pre-arranged, with

¹ I discovered, however, that some of the people in the region could either speak English or Twi (my local language in the Akan area of southern Ghana) or both. This is due to the seasonal migration to the south for

letters of introduction, and a personal follow-up to book appointments with interviewees (especially bureaucrats and politicians). Informal interviews took place in the offices of government departments, on farms, in markets and homes in the villages without any prior arrangement with the interviewees.

At the national level, policy makers and bureaucrats at the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, National Development Planning Commission, Office of the Common Fund Administrator and National Institutional Renewal Programme were interviewed. The main topics of discussion included government policies on decentralisation, participation, finance and accountability. The interviews also covered practical issues involved in the government's poverty alleviation policy, the role of the District Assemblies in assisting the rural poor, the monitoring of the decentralisation programme, and future policy. Staff of the World Bank and donor agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation were interviewed to ascertain the extent of involvement of these organisations in the decentralisation programme and the extent of their work with rural poor people. Academics in the departments of geography and resource development, political science, planning, and public administration, at the University of Ghana, Legon (Accra), and at the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi and the Institute of Management and Public Administration, Accra, were interviewed to establish their past and current research programmes, current debates and views on decentralisation and poverty in Ghana. A small number of development and planning consultants were also interviewed.

At the regional level, the Regional Co-ordinating Directors and their deputies, and the Regional Planning Officers and Budget Analysts were interviewed to obtain information about their co-ordinating responsibilities, relationship to the districts and their responsibilities in rural poverty alleviation. The favourable and adverse implications of

economic reasons.

their present role (compared with their former role within the District Councils) were also discussed.

Those interviewed at the district level included both political and administrative (civil service) heads - the District Chief Executives (the political heads of the districts), the District Co-ordinating Directors (chief civil servants of the districts) and their deputies, administrative officers in the planning and budget units, departments of agriculture, community development and education, the presiding members (elected or appointed heads of the District Assemblies), and some assembly members both male and female (both elected and government appointed members). At this level the questions were geared towards gaining insight into major political, economic and financial issues at the assembly level, and type of participation in decision making, perceptions of poverty, district efforts at rural poverty alleviation and the extent of district-level monitoring of the decentralisation programme. Some heads and officers of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Nadowli district were also interviewed to learn about their programmes and areas of operation, relationships with the District Assemblies and poverty alleviation strategies. I familiarised myself with operations at Word Vision International, Suntaa Nuntaa (a local NGO), the Catholic Development Office and the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP). Some of the beneficiaries of their projects were also interviewed. There were no such NGOs in the Adansi West district.

Individuals interviewed in the villages included traditional authorities (chiefs, elders and other office holders), extension and health workers, traders, farmers, unemployed men and women. They were interviewed to establish their conception of poverty, evaluation of the District Assembly activities, and their own proposed solutions to the rural poverty predicament.

We had one initial key informant in each of the villages. Among them was a teacher, one elected assembly woman, an ex-assembly woman (appointed), a farmer and a miner who is also an assembly man. They had all lived in the villages long enough to supply detailed

preliminary information on the inhabitants and development issues. The assembly members were easy to work with for two main reasons: firstly, they were enthusiastic about the fact that the research was going on in their area and, secondly, it was an opportunity to tell about what they had been doing and the problems they were encountering. However, whatever they and other key informants said was cross-checked in subsequent interviews and discussions among the people in the settlement.

Most of the village interviews were not recorded on tape due to the fact that circumstances often did not allow tape recorders. This was so especially in busy markets, along roadsides etc. where traders and farmers were often encountered. With such respondents, a field notebook was used. Most of the interviews with the District Chief Executives, assembly members, presiding members, bureaucrats and department officials, however, were recorded without any difficulty.

4.3.4 Focus group discussions

Focus groups provide access to forms of information that are not obtained easily through semi-structured interviews and direct observation. Although individual interviewing obviously involves interaction, focus groups offer a stronger mechanism for placing the control over this interaction in the hands of participants rather than the researcher (Morgan, 1988; O'Brien, 1991:36; Patton, 1990:335). A group is not just a way of collecting multiple individual statements, but a means of setting up a negotiation of meanings through intra and inter-personal debates: a situation where groups of people meet to discuss their experiences and thoughts about specific topics (Cook and Crang, 1995:56) (see Appendix A). With proper guidance from the moderator, group members can describe the rich detail of complex experiences and the reasoning behind their actions, beliefs/perceptions and attitudes (Kruger, 1988; Morgan, 1988; Patton, 1990:337). Data regarding perceptions and opinions are enriched through group interaction because individual participation can be enhanced in a group setting (Carey, 1994:225).

Focus groups were therefore intended to capture local peoples' perception of poverty, their basic needs, access to social facilities and the extent to which their needs are being met by the District Assemblies. There was a particular aim to establish a broad idea of poverty as defined by those most affected by it: the rural poor. In addition, focus group discussions gave people an opportunity to air their views about ways to remedy the current situation where this was unsatisfactory. Numbers in the focus groups ranged from between six and fifteen. (see table 4.2 below) for the number of focus groups conducted in different locations).

Table 4.2: Focus groups in the study districts

<u>Nadowli District</u>	No. of Groups	Male	Female	Mixed
Nadowli (Assembly members)	2	-	1	1
Badabuo	4	2	2	-
Dafiama	3	1	2	-
Pulbaa	3	1	2	-
Tangasie	4	2	2	-
TOTAL	16	6	9	1
<u>Adansi West District</u>				
Obuasi (Assembly Members)	2	1	-	1
Akrokerri	5	2	1	2
Wioso	2	1	1	-
Kusa	2	1	-	1
Domeabra	2	1	1	-
Kwabenakwa	1	-	-	1
TOTAL	14	6	3	5

Ideally, a focus group should comprise 6-8 members (Cook and Crang, 1995:59) but in Ghana it is often difficult to control either the number or composition of the group. In groups involving village women, for example, it is likely that numbers will fluctuate as women are distracted by their children, called away to attend to household tasks etc. and other women return to join the group. In some of the villages there were many people trying to join at different times. Others stood behind and contributed when the opportunity arose. This necessitated dividing the groups into four and five respectively at Badabou in Nadowli district and Akrokerri in Adansi West district.

At the district level there were focus group discussions with District Assembly members in one of the offices or the assembly hall. These generally consisted of a mixed group of men and women because there are few women in the District Assemblies. Discussions were mainly on their responsibilities to the District Assemblies and the electorate, governance structures and accountability, their concept of poverty and the District Assemblies involvement in the well-being of the rural people. In these discussions, both the researcher and the group simultaneously obtained insights and understanding of particular social and political situations (Goss and Leinbach, 1996:117).

All the other focus group discussions took place in the villages, under baobab and neem trees in the Nadowli district, and in the chiefs' houses and open spaces in the Adansi West district. In setting up the groups the aim was to include people with similar characteristics and occupation (Chambers 1994:103). In the villages in Nadowli district, there were separate groups for men and women and no mixed groups since women, for cultural reasons, would hardly speak in a group with men. All focus group participants were farmers. In Adansi West district, by contrast, in addition to separate groups for men and women there were some mixed groups with women who were teachers and traders. In both districts the main issues discussed included perceptions of cultural, economic and political dynamics of poverty, strategies identified for poverty reduction as voiced by the rural poor and the role of the District Assemblies in the poverty situation of the rural people. All focus group discussions were recorded on tape after a brief explanation of the purpose of the recording to participants. A series of exercises were performed during the focus group meetings including preference ranking and wealth ranking.

4.3.5 Preference ranking

Preference ranking, or scoring, involves participants assessing different items or options, using criteria which they themselves identify (McCracken and Nyaryan, 1997:30). In the villages studied, groups were asked to rank the priorities of the community in terms of social services. This generated some interesting outcomes particularly in Nadowli district since women and men had very different priorities. Participants usually used pebbles and

sometimes voting to rank these services. They discuss and brainstorm to elicit items they consider important to be ranked. After much discussion, they are asked to choose the most important and they vote to show their preference (Theis and Grady, 1991). Preference ranking allowed me to determine quickly the main problems and preferences of individual villages or groups and enabled these priorities to be easily compared (see tables 5.8, 5.10 and 6.12).

4.3.6 Wealth ranking

Wealth ranking was used to establish a broad idea of poverty as defined by those who are most affected by it. It focused on getting the poor's lived experiences and conception of poverty, wealth and well-being. A simple method of wealth ranking was conducted in the focus groups (for more details in wealth ranking see, for example, Grandin, 1992, Theis and Grady, 1991 and PRA notes 1992). Members within the group were asked to give a definition of the local concept of wealth, well-being and poverty. Within each category defined, members were asked to name anyone in the community who fell into that category. There was no wealth ranking of the whole community.

It was important to stress that names would not be recorded: that names written would be destroyed. This was necessary to avoid suspicion, for poverty and wealth identification is a sensitive exercise (Gradin, 1988:1). Throughout this work with the groups there was much shouting/laughter and discussion about how well-off and poor various community members were. Group members, however, agreed on the names to be placed in each category before they moved on. There were various categories of poverty and wealth and well-being. Members also gave reasons for the indicators of wealth as well as why each person had been put in each category.

4.3.7 Direct observation

This is a systematic method of watching or observing people's behaviour or other phenomena and recording observation (O'Brien, 1991:49). Detailed observation of events, people, relationships and processes was made during the course of the field

research in both districts. I had the opportunity to attend District Assembly general meetings of the two districts, and made visits to farms and markets. The nature of social services in the areas was also observed, which gave me insights into their accessibility and availability to the rural people. Direct observation is a good way to cross-check respondents' answers (Theis and Grady, 1991:50). It also helped me to generate on-the-spot questions and initiate informal discussions with community members.

4.3.8 Document review

The main areas of documentary research concerned institutional changes and poverty in Ghana. On institutional change in Ghana, research was conducted in the library of Ghana's Institute of Management and Public Administration, the School of Administration (University of Ghana, Legon), and the Political Science Department (University of Ghana, Legon), all located in Accra. The World Bank library in Accra and Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana, Legon, provided extensive material on poverty. The library of the Department of Planning at the University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, was also consulted, to review documents on planning under the District Assembly system.

At the district level, a number of documents were consulted including district annual budget trial balances, speeches of district officials and Five-Year Development Plans. The Five-Year Development Plans were required by the National Development Planning Commission in 1996 as a basis for a co-ordinated development programme for all the districts. Unfortunately, districts were given short notice of just three months to submit these plans. Both Nadowli and Adansi West districts engaged consultants for the plans. It is doubtful if the consultants were able to involve the rural poor in the drawing up of these plans given the short preparation time. Nonetheless, the plans gave an overview of district conditions (climate, soils, physical infrastructure, agriculture, industry, population etc.) and development aims. The desk studies were undertaken concurrently with other field work activities in the two districts.

4.4 Difficulties, limitations and opportunities

Many of the limitations and difficulties of the methodology used are not unique to this study alone. They are inherent in any research method which aims to investigate local conditions, using participatory methods. This section outlines some of the problems encountered on the field.

After the enthusiasm generated through learning about participatory rural approaches, this was the first time I was employing it on the field. This is best carried out with a full multi-disciplinary team and I was limited in this respect as only one of my research assistants had knowledge of PRA approaches. I chose four and five villages in Nadowli and Adansi West districts respectively in order to have a broad spectrum of the people in the villages to discuss poverty issues as it affected their lives, their priorities and their perspectives on the DAs. In each, I conducted focus groups (see tables 5.1 to 5.11, 6.12, 8.4 and 8.5). However, I found the process time consuming in all the villages and certain important aspects of PRA such as participatory mapping and seasonal calendars (which are visible to the people and can generate a good deal of discussion) could not be undertaken. While this weakened my evidence, the larger number of villages covered gave a broader perspective both of concepts of poverty and of attitudes of DAs. In discussions subsequent to the fieldwork, and through a further review of the literature, I have realised that I would have selected only two villages from each district for in-depth study and an all-round PRA research. Nevertheless, Theis and Grady (1991:36) have noted that 'the key to successful PRA is not to avoid superficiality and error' completely, and that it is only through practice and accumulation of experience in the field to receive much information that PRA skills can be developed. It must be explained that both research areas are very homogeneous from village to village, Nadowli to a remarkable degree.

There was also the difficulty of raising the expectations of the rural people. To them, the exercise is guaranteed to lead on to action by a donor agency, NGOs, DAs or the government. It takes so much of the villagers' time that it raises ethical problems of

extraction of information without planning an intervention which would be of benefit to the community. Robert Chambers has noted in a workshop in London on 'Ethical PRA' that it is unethical to conduct a proper PRA unless action will follow, in the form of a project or some other benefit for the village or group (Janet Townsend, personal communication). To have conducted full PRAs in two villages in each district would have been methodologically but not ethically sound.

The farmers and traders had to spend so much of their precious time for the discussions. In Badabuo for example, the women were generally already at their daily routine of fetching water when we arrived in the village and they had to stop for the discussions. In the evening men and women farmers had come from their farms and were already tired; the women still had to prepare the evening meal. The main difficulty was not making the interview and focus group discussions so short that they compromised the methodological rigour, or so long and intensive as to make excessive demands on the time and goodwill of the villagers. However, participants in both districts continued discussions enthusiastically; closing them even became difficult at times. Participatory rural appraisal if carefully undertaken is not necessarily 'rapid'.

In view of the above, given the opportunity in future, I would work with fewer focus groups (about 10 in all), instead of 16 and 14 groups in Nadowli and Adansi West districts respectively. I would also seek assistance from NGOs or donors for the possibility of a project or payments to rural people who spend their time on the research. Doing thirty focus group discussions gave diverse views, greater emphasis on issues and priorities of the poor, as well as insightful and fruitful discussions. This choice was aimed at having many villagers from different parts of the districts to express their views and priorities on the issues raised in my research questions. Yet time constraints meant that I could not do other PRA research methods like transect walks, which generate much discussion and insightful outcome

Controlling the size and composition of the focus groups was a problem encountered in both districts. People of both sexes tried to join at different times while others stood

behind not quietly but contributing as and when necessary. Women left and returned to their groups at random, to attend family tasks (see section 4.3.4). Apart from distracting attention, this also does not give them the concentration to get into the discussion, thus limiting the vital flow of information and tending to engender unreliable answers.

I was also perceived by the rural people in both districts as an 'outsider' from the University capable of helping them with their numerous problems or getting their views across to the higher authorities for action to be taken. This could adversely affect their response to questions and discussions, since they could give responses which they envisaged could attract help to themselves or their community. They had to be reminded frequently that this research was strictly an academic exercise. In spite of this, I was constantly asked to 'let the government be aware that...' 'inform the DCE that...' 'tell those in Accra that...'. Even though I often saw the need for action, there was little I could do in practical terms. It was also very difficult when rural people offered gifts and bought drinks. In Badabuo, Nadowli district for instance, yam and *pito* was offered. My research assistants signalled to me to accept them, since such gifts are culturally not to be rejected. Accepting four tubers of yams from the chief of Badabuo was a most difficult thing to do considering the fact that these are poor people with many children going about hungry. Fortunately I had lots of second-hand clothes for the women and children. On my second visit, I took second-hand clothes for the men and boys.

Another difficulty I encountered was that I did not speak or understand the local language in Nadowli district. Speaking through interpreters was difficult and, no matter how good they may be, it limits the depth to data gathering. Translation of a conversation allows room for reinterpretation and the selection of what facts they think the researcher wants to know. In Adansi West district, on the other hand, I was dealing with my own language and was, therefore, able to detect conflicts and contradictions in information. However, I often 'played ignorant' in order to explore implied meanings by further probing. Data gathering in Adansi West district was, therefore, easier than in Nadowli district.

There was also the problem of restricted access to official documents at the DAs. In Adansi West district, I was instructed to formally apply in writing for the documents and when granted I should be supervised. Vital information could have been withheld and could adversely affect my findings and analysis. I overcame this by working closely with the authorities which generated trust among us and gave me access to some of the important documents.

I also found out that Assembly members in focus group discussions were overcautious about sensitive political and internal bureaucratic issues despite my promise of confidentiality. This was solved in my in-depth interviews with individual Assembly members who talked freely and gave a wealth of information.

Unforeseen circumstances such as funerals raised challenges on the field. In Dafiama in Nadowli district, for example, a funeral in a nearby village meant the focus group discussion for that day had to be postponed. Some of the people who could not attend the funeral because of sickness, old age etc. were, however, interviewed. This raised difficulties in terms of the time I had to spend in this district since the research was time bound.

In the north, I could interview only one of the three Assembly women so that it was not possible to check the views of 'Assembly women against 'Assembly men'. What might be considered the views of the women on the Assembly was, therefore, not obtained. The other two appointed women live and work outside the Upper West Region.

Triangulation played such a vital role in all the villages in the two districts. Cross-checking through interviews and observation was achieved through visiting farms, houses and observing the assets and livelihood systems of the people. This gave great strength to the participatory approaches as a tool for data gathering. Where my triangulation confirmed what interviews and focus groups had said, my confidence comes from the strong convergence of information from different sources. In my field notes, I did record

opinions which differed, but did not itemise all the agreement. Next time, I shall know to itemise all the evidence each day, not only the conclusions.

It must be noted that the nature of research questions and participatory approaches were not meant for quantitative measurements or for ranking villages in terms of poverty within either of the study districts. However, participatory approaches revealed the views and in-depth knowledge of the rural people regarding poverty and enabled the extraction of attitudes to the work of the DAs. Some of my triangulation was a series of confirmation of what people and groups have said and confidence comes from the strong convergence of information from different sources. I did record opinions which differed, but did not itemise all the agreement. However, the results are generalisations about commonalities which cannot be applied to the whole country.

The empowering nature of PRA was evident when, in Akrokerri in Adansi West district, the young men asked that “this type of discussion should be held for us every month”. Some of the men in the focus group had realised that they were capable of offering themselves for election to the District Assembly after going through the discussions. In Adansi West district, names and addresses of Non-Governmental Organisations were requested and I made them available. This is because there were no NGOs operating in the area. In both districts, but particularly in the north, women seemed to take satisfaction in the meetings because they were given - in some cases perhaps for the first time - a voice to express their views, concerns and hopes.

Overall, this use of PRA was a learning exercise for me. Qualitative research was new to me. I was deeply concerned to cross-check all my conclusions very thoroughly, but insufficiently concerned to record all the steps by which I did so. To do so will be an important concern of my next research.

CHAPTER 5: VOICES OF THE RURAL POOR

5.1 Introduction

For many decades poverty has been defined and categorised by those who have never been affected by it. 'They apply top-down schemes to elicit data that fit into preset boxes' (Chambers and Conway, 1992:4). These concepts and measurements fail to capture the complex and diverse realities of rural life, and account for the many failures of intervention programmes. Rahnema (1996:170) is of the opinion that the poor ('victim') want to define their poverty, or riches, by themselves, and to deal with it, free from unwanted pressures. Poverty is an extremely complex issue, multi-dimensional and multi-layered in nature. It is therefore important to consult those affected by poverty so they can unwrap the complex issues involved.

International donor agencies are encouraging participatory poverty assessment as an instrument for including the perspectives of the poor people in the analysis of poverty and the formulation of strategies to reduce it (DfID, 1999:2 and see section 2.2.5). Communities are best placed to determine their own priorities and implement programmes, seeking to improve their well-being and security in a sustainable way (Korboe, 1998). A qualitative methodology was employed in this study to establish a broad idea of poverty defined by those directly affected by it (see section 4.3). Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used. These involved men alone, women alone, and groups containing both. (see table 4.2). 'The use of participatory methods has greatly encouraged an epistemology of poverty which relies on local understanding and perceptions' (Maxwell, 1999:5).

This chapter aims at exploring the perceptions of the rural poor about poverty. It examines their own understanding of poverty, their needs, desires, and the difficulties they face. Their coping strategies and the solutions they envisage to their problems are also examined. The chapter dwells on the voice of the rural people who are the best judge of their experiences and the solutions to their problems.

5.2 The concept of poverty as perceived by rural communities

A wide variety of conceptual perspectives were elaborated in the communities studied. Wealth, well-being, and poverty were appraised from individual, community, economic, social, environmental, as well as gender perspectives. These distinctions were made in village discussions of poverty. Rural people in the study villages in both districts brought to the fore the differences in wealth, well-being and poverty (see tables 5.1 and 5.2). They were not obsessed with monetary deprivation alone, but also referred to social factors which are equally important and relevant to understanding poverty in rural Ghana.

Poverty in the survey districts was variously perceived by the rural poor as the individuals' inability to engage in gainful economic activity, earn income, acquire basic necessities (clothing, food, housing etc.), have access to productive assets such as land and cattle and access to basic social services. Local understandings of poverty also include the inability to make contributions towards community development programmes, offer assistance to the poor and needy in the community and to attend and contribute to funerals, especially those of in-laws.

In Adansi West district (Ashanti Region), rural communities perceive poverty as an individual's inability to obtain gainful employment in order to secure enough income to care for the family, having very small or no land, laziness, ill-health, disability, not being able to clothe oneself or contributing to community needs and being ignored and not listened to. The concepts of wealth, well-being and of poverty were described by the people in terms of individual employment status (economic activity), income, health, physical assets, such as land, sheep, cattle, bicycle, cars etc., ability to save, help community development and other people, adequately care for the family in terms of provision of food, shelter, clothing, access to social services - water, education, health and sanitation etc. (see table 5.1). It is important to note that this thesis is about the voices of the rural poor – their perception of poverty and perspectives on the performance of the DAs. It is not about measurement of poverty.

It clearly expresses the views of the poor but does not provide a means of ranking villages in terms of poverty within either of the research areas.

Table 5.1: Criteria for Poverty, Wealth and Well-being in Adansi West District

Wealth	Well-being	Poverty
Ownership of good land (for cereals, cocoa, food crops etc.)	Have money	Unemployed
Ownership of cattle, sheep, goats, poultry	Being in good health	Disabled
Ownership of buildings	Not being disabled	Unhealthy
Having children and/or relatives abroad who remit regularly	Take good care of family	Inability to take good care of family
Ownership of consumer durables -car, motorbikes, fridges, bicycles etc	Having one's peace in the environment	Hungry most of the time
Able to afford good clothes		No one listens to you
Being philanthropic		Being lazy

Source: Focus group discussions with two male, a female and two mixed groups (Akrokerri); a male and a female group (Domeabra); a mixed group (Kwabenakwa); one mixed and one male group (Kusa) and a male and a female group (Wioso) (see table 4.2) (not in rank order), 1998.

It is important to note that in the Adansi West District, all the village communities identified various categories of poverty:

1. Very poor - '*ohiani*' - those who are unable to work and earn income and therefore cannot afford basic necessities and services and have to depend on others for their livelihood (that is the disabled, chronically sick and aged).
2. Those in hardship - '*ahokyereni*' (unemployed or underemployed in low paid casual labour).
3. Those with productive assets, able to manage and afford basic necessities, such as shelter, clothing and two meals a day - '*osikani*'.

People in this area hold the view that if they do not fall within the first category they are capable, with perseverance, of coming out of their hardships.

Villagers emphasised that a greater proportion of the people in the area are in the hardship (*ahokyere*) category. Participants in focus group discussions were asked to

indicate the largest group of the various categories identified in each village. After much discussions participants voted as to which was the largest group and a ranking was derived from this. The result is presented in table 5.2 below according to the order discussed and ranked by the people.

Table 5.2: Response as to which economic group is the largest in each study village (Adansi West district)

	Study villages/scores						
Category	Akrokerri	Domeabra	Kusa	Kwabenakwa	Wioso	Total	Rank
Very poor (<i>Ohiani</i>)	5	7	2	2	6	23	3
Hardship (<i>ahokyere</i>)	11	12	4	6	11	44	1
Hardworking (<i>Modenbofo</i>)	8	9	3	4	7	31	2
Rich (<i>Osikani</i>)	3	2	1	2	-	8	4
Total	27	30	10	14	24	106	

Source: Focus group discussion with a mixed group of 6 men and 8 women, Kwabenakwa; 3 women and 7 men, Kusa; 16 men and 14 women, Domeabra; 16 men and 11 women, Akrokerri and 9 men and 15 women, Wioso, 1998.

Villagers in the study area maintain that a greater proportion of the people are in the hardship category, followed by the hardworking and the very poor. There are very few rich people in the communities studied and this is shown in the ranking in table 5.2 above. The various categories are discussed in detail below.

The disabled, chronically ill, and the aged in this poor '*ohiani*' category are cared for by their relatives, without any help from the Government's Social Welfare Department. These include the disabled, the mentally retarded, the unhealthy, old men and women, widows without sources of income and orphans. They have to be fed, clothed and medically provided for by their relatives.

The very poor, *ohiani*, may also include the landless, especially migrant farmers who do not own land. In Adansi West district land is a big problem because much land has been leased to the AGC for gold exploration. Lands are taken over by the company as and when necessary and compensation (compulsory purchase) is paid to the family. In

such areas, many people are left with only a small parcel of land for their farming activities, the youth migrate to the district capital and the cities for employment opportunities, and others travel outside the country.

Those within the hardship category, *ahokyereni*, are the subsistence farmers who are not able, for financial reasons, to expand their farms. They may also have very little land for farming activities. Such people do not have access to agricultural extension assistance, which local people perceive to be an important aspect in agricultural development.

In all the study villages, there was emphasis on the absence of extension officers to whom the older people in the focus group discussion stated they had had access in the past. Most people in this hardship category are underemployed and live on low paid casual labour - 'by-day' labour - which provides a wage of about a pound sterling a day if available. They are, therefore, unable to save but are able to meet their barest basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. These '*ahokyere*' category people are also referred to as "*from hand to mouth*", meaning that they consume whatever they earn without any ability to save.

Between the rich (those able to manage and afford basic necessities such as shelter, clothing and two meals a day) and those in hardship, another category was identified by the people as '*mmodenbofo*' - the hardworking. These are men and women who, in the face of limited resources, work hard to get themselves out of the poverty trap. They could be regarded as 'innovative' because they undertake many jobs and are able to move into areas of opportunity in both farm and non-farm activities not easily perceived by others. By dint of hardwork, they crawl out of poverty. Such people are ahead of those suffering hardship but are yet to move into the rich bracket.

In Adansi West district, lazy people were perceived to be poor people. They idle about even if they have access to productive assets. Others in this category of the lazy include the alcoholics and drug addicts who become a burden on their families. People in the villages don't seem to have patience with such people but a woman noted,

‘there is nothing we can do; we have to care for all such people - they are also human beings’. Rural people, especially relatives, friends and neighbours, are prepared to take responsibility for those they consider very poor. It is important to note though the distinction between the poor and the lazy. Not all poor people are lazy but the villagers maintain that there are people who should have moved out of poverty, considering the resources at their disposal. But because of laziness they are not able to make it and they are known in the community, even though their attitude is not openly discussed.

Asikafo - there are others in the communities who have been able to accumulate or inherited landed property (wealth). They are perceived by the people as gainfully employed, with money, and able to care for their family and, therefore, rich. They are used as a reference point for wealth and well-being. These well-off people have well educated children and some of the children are supported to do business in the commercial sector. Many men in this category have more than one wife. They are able to give freely towards community development projects in the town/village, give to church harvests and to the needy in the village. ‘*Asikafo*’ are generally described as being able to feed and clothe their children properly, and live in good houses which will be bequeathed to their dependants (Afenyadu et al, 1996; Korboe, 1998; Norton et al, 1995). Very few in this category could be named in the study villages.

In the Nadowli District (Upper West Region), the word ‘*nan*’, alone describes poverty, without any of the additional categories found in Adansi West district (see table 5.4). Poverty is evidently more severe than in Adansi West District and participants were not interested in semantics; they identified the situation more easily as poverty (Korboe, 1994). Poverty appears to be very severe in the villages studied as most children are barely clothed, don’t have enough to eat and very few have any footwear. Poverty was perceived by villagers largely in terms of frequency of hunger (and its causal factors), lack of access to fertile land, lack of sheep, goats or cattle, disability, old age and ill health. Frequent hunger is the result of food insecurity at community level in the region as a whole. In all the study villages, participants reported declining productivity of the soil and the prolonged dry season as of great

concern. In addition to this, the increasingly unpredictable rainfall pattern makes agricultural activities precarious. Each community considers food availability throughout the year, or at least to the next farming season, as of paramount importance. During the lean season, April-July, many face serious food problems. Energetic young men and women migrate to the south, especially Brong Ahafo and Ashanti regions, to seek employment on the farms and in other sectors. Women, children and the aged are left behind to fend for themselves (see section 4.2.2.3).

Table 5.3: Criteria for Poverty, Wealth and Well-being in Nadowli District

Wealth	Well-being	Poverty
Ownership of good land (for cereals, cotton, cowpea etc)	Gainfully employed	Working on poor land
Ownership of buildings (with blocks and roofing sheets)	Good harvest	Unemployed
Ownership of motorbikes, TVs, bicycles etc	Have money	Disabled
Able to afford good clothes and food throughout the year	Not being disabled	Unhealthy
Contribute to funerals especially in-laws	Taking good care of family	Inability to take care of family
	Having one's peace in the environment	Cannot afford clothes, food and hungry most of the time
		No one listens to you
		Being lazy
		Not having a supportive family
		Death of husband

Source: Focus group discussion of two males and two females in Badabuo; a male and two female groups in Daffiama; a male and two female groups in Puleba and two female and two male groups in Tangasie (see table 4.2) (not in rank order)

Although 'nan' - poverty- is described as poverty in general, without any categories, in Nadowli, hunger, poor arable land, lack of family and demise of husband were the main distinguishing features differentiating poverty in that district from poverty in Adansi West.

Lack of family support was particularly damaging for the disabled, and old men and women who cannot fend for themselves and are at the mercy of others. A middle aged man at Badabuo explained with deep sorrow:

“do you want to know what poverty is, do you hope to see one? Then look at me. I represent poverty. Leprosy has made me dependent on other people throughout my life. I am not lazy or weak but I cannot do anything now, I represent poverty” (focus group discussion, 1998)

The disabled, unhealthy, and aged are the poorest of the poor, especially if they do not have any family to support them. Thus being childless and not having family is considered a terrible thing in Nadowli.

Poverty in this district has a real woman's face, since women are highly discriminated against (this is fully discussed in chapter 8). Death of a husband is considered as poverty, not only by women but also by men. Since men control and own assets including children, death of husband means the woman may leave the house with nothing. The assets go to the brother of the husband who is traditionally expected to marry and care for the woman. If the woman objects to such a marriage, she leaves without anything.

Poverty is also perceived as inability to attend and contribute to an in-law's funeral. Funerals are very important in these communities and it takes weeks to complete the rites and ceremonies. It also costs a great deal of money in the form of food and donations. One's inability to attend and perform the funeral celebration of in-laws is a clear sign of poverty. A young man from Daffiama noted:

“ if someone dies , especially your in-law, and you have to attend and you know what is expected of you and what the community demands from you and you just can't do anything and things go on badly then it can be terrible. Nothing but poverty can let this happen to you”(interview, in Daffiama, Nadowli district, 1998)

Dress is often a visible sign of poverty. During important functions and market days, dressing up becomes important, and lack of good clothes affects ones ability to mix well with others, thus reinforcing isolation. Children could be seen going to school without shoes and school uniforms.

Care for the family entails provision of good food, good clothes especially for the children, payment of school fees and other educational demands. It also involves having access to the basic social services such as hospitals, and good water. Poverty is perceived as having little capacity to care for your family. A fifteen-year-old boy who had come to represent his mother in a women's group farm noted:

“my senior brother and I were both in school together. When I was in JSS1, my brother passed his examination and gained admission to the senior secondary school. My parents could not afford the school fees for both of us so I was asked to end my education for my brother (who is in school now) to continue. I am now farming and hope to learn a trade in future” (interview in Tangasie, Nadowli district, 1998)

The view of poverty as having a dynamic impact on entire communities was particularly strong in the Nadowli district villages, vulnerable to drought and to ‘hungry season’ shortages. The fact that access to food predominates in local views of poverty indicates the depth of poverty and vulnerability in the rural north compared to other areas of Ghana. In some settlements serious food insecurity prevails for at least part of the year for virtually every community member (Norton et al, 1995).

In the study villages in both districts, wealth was generally seen as owning primarily landed property such as buildings, fertile and large tracts of land, farms and animals. The ownership of movable property such as cars, motorbikes, televisions, fridges etc. which are non productive materials but show a higher standard of living and social status is also important. Wealth is also appraised in terms of having children and relatives in the village and those in the city or abroad *who remit regularly*. The remittance factor was particularly important in Adansi West district where every home seeks to get a child abroad for this reason. The ability to financially assist community projects, church harvest, and to lend a helping hand to others in the community including the disadvantaged kin, was considered as wealth in the study districts.

It was interesting to note that in the study districts, well-being was perceived as being gainfully employed with enough income, with good health and able to afford food and other goods required. Peace of mind was consistently emphasised as including absence of tribal animosities, peace with neighbours and security of one’s dependants. This gives the opportunity to care for one’s family, bringing up children in a way one desires by giving them good food, clothes and the best education available.

In both districts there were no direct distinction made with respect to causes and characteristics of poverty. In Nadowli district villagers made it clear that their poverty

stems from the loss of fertility of their land. This has led to difficulty in producing to meet their food requirement throughout the year. Other contributory causes include unemployment, death of husband and health problems. In Adansi West district on the other hand, unemployment, poor health and laziness were perceived as the main causes of poverty. Many people 'fight' health problems with their money and property and in extreme cases, family property is sold to care for the sick member of the family (especially when it demands expensive operations and/or drugs). For the rural poor in Nadowli district this is not an option.

Important in the perceptions of poverty of the people in both districts is the issue of no one listening to the poor. The poor are perceived as people who are isolated. They hardly come in front of the crowd and are always hidden. The main reason that their words are not valued is because they are poor. In funeral and other gatherings the poor are not given prominence when decisions are being taken. Prominence is given to those who are capable of helping the community, the family and individuals financially. A woman in Adansi West noted:

“your input in any decision making even at family level is not valued; young men/women who are far younger than you are brought into the decision making process at all levels. Their voices are even sought after because they are rich. You are not heard at all and you recognise your position”(interview, in Kusa, Adansi West district, 1998)

This makes the poor withdraw into themselves and 'mind their own business' leading to low self-esteem, powerlessness and a sense of hopelessness. In this way, the poor are seen to insulate themselves, having little faith in their ability to transform their situation (Korboe, 1998).

It is important to note that poverty was perceived by men, women and the youth in the same way. What was significant was that there was a general consensus that poverty affected women more than men. Women in Nadowli district appear to experience greater poverty than their counterparts in Adansi West district (see section 8.5). And they transmit the disadvantages more readily to children, thus perpetuating the poverty cycle. Nonetheless they are considered better able than men to protect children from the consequences of poverty.

The issue of poverty affecting women and men differently was discussed in all the villages in Adansi West district. In 15 of the 16 focus group discussions in the district it was accepted that poverty affected men more than women. However people from Kusa departed from this view. At Kusa a mixed focus group of three women and seven men voted that women were richer than men, after a relatively long discussion, as shown in table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4: Voting on who is poor – women or men?

	Score	Rank
Women	1	2
Men	9	1
Equal(women and men)	0	0

Source: Focus group discussion of 3 women and 7 men at Kusa

Participants overall were of the view that women in Kusa work as hard as men on their own farms and at the same time depend on multiple sources of livelihoods. These included trading, in foodstuffs, vegetables and cooked food and agro-processing garri and oil palm. These are not available to men for cultural reasons. Land, they contended is available for both men and women. The only woman who maintained that poverty affected women more than men was of the view that men own a greater proportion of land and farms. Additionally, a greater proportion of women's income generated from all the above economic activities goes to cater for the needs of the family including the men themselves. The Assembly woman (the only assembly member in the study villages to be re-elected) in an in-depth interview maintained that the varied economic activities available to women give them much advantage.

5.3 Coping (survival) strategies

Coping strategies 'are the bundle of poor people's responses to declining food availability and entitlements in abnormal seasons or years' (Davies, 1993:60). People whose main sources of income (and food) are at recurrent risk, like villagers in Nadowli district, develop strategies to minimise that risk (Frankenberger and

Goldstein, 1990 cited in Davis, 1996:45). Drought, crop failure and other similar crises are 'conceptualised as production or income shocks, which threaten the individual's or household's access to food' (Devereux, 1993:52). Coping strategies become imperative when the principal source of production has failed to meet expected levels and producers have literally to cope until the next harvest (Davies, 1996:48). Rural people in Nadowli district find it extremely difficult to meet their food requirement throughout the year. There are, therefore, various measures put in place by the people to cope till the next harvest. Devereux (1993) in his work in Bawku district, Upper East region of Ghana, maintains that people convert household non-food resources (incomes and assets) into food to enable them cope with the decline in production and income.

Davies, (1996:55) makes a clear distinction between coping and adapting: coping is a short-term/temporary response to an immediate and inhabitual decline in access to food. Most of the strategies adopted during difficult seasons of the year in Nadowli and Adansi West districts fall into the coping strategy type. Adapting, on the other hand, implies a 'permanent change in the mix of ways in which food is acquired, irrespective of the years in question' (Davies, 1993:60). Mortimore (1989:111) worked in a drought stricken district in northern Nigeria and noted that mat and rope making were some of the adaptive responses of the people in the villages in Dambatta district. Migration in the Nadowli district could be regarded as an adaptive strategy, since some men and women do not come back but remain in the south to work. People will have to cope in order to survive by meeting their food security needs. The first response of a poor household facing food shortage in a lean season will be the 'curtailment in current consumption' (Jodha, 1975 cited in Devereux, 1993:52). This was also observed in Nadowli district where people went hungry in order to reduce consumption of the stock of grain available. Davies, (1993:60) in her work in the Malian Sahel and the Inner Delta district maintains that, contrary to conventional wisdom, and irrespective of the consequences, people will always satisfy food security needs first, before any other aspects of their livelihoods security. It is important to note that people may be locked in a 'vicious circle of subsistence and coping if coping strategies simply allow people to stand still or fall back more slowly' (Davies, 1996:54). In the study villages in the two districts people endure the strains resulting

from poverty in various ways. Both districts experience periods of severe hardships within the year when domestic food stocks are lowest, but such periods are particularly extended and difficult in the drier north. In Nadowli district, food insecurity exists in all the communities every year. Food begins to run low in the barns from February to May, and June to August is the lean period (see table 5.5). However, people have developed strategies to cope with these seasonal stresses and shocks which arise during the year. Livestock, mainly sheep and goats (as security only), and poultry sales become the major source of income to buy food when households run out of food. Devereux (1993:54) observed that in Upper East region of Ghana, rationing begins as soon as people begin to buy food on the market; selling assets and rationing to protect consumption are economic and nutritional adjustments respectively. In poorer households, as in Nadowli, austerity measures during a severe period in the year

Table 5.5: Seasonal condition in Daffiama

Month	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Seasonal condition			DRY			RAIN		HEAVY RAINS		End of Rainy Season		DRY
Food Situation		Food is Available but declining		HUNGER		HUNGER (sowing)		Hunger Reduced The Early Millet is harvested	Improved food situation. Harvest, storage and sale		Availability of food	

SOURCE: Focus group of fourteen women in Daffiama – Nadowli district. Discussion and agreement, 1998.

include sale of major assets to maintain a minimum level of consumption (Devereux, 1993:54). Consumption of food, mainly maize, millet and sorghum is reduced (see fig 5.6). Many young men (and sometimes women) migrate to the south in search of employment (see section 4.2.2.3).

The rural poor people indicated that they employ a combination of coping strategies during difficult times of food shortages. Additionally, men and women differ in their response to such hardships. Participants in Daffiama were, therefore, asked which coping strategy is most important? The group began by discussion to elicit the various strategies after which they voted to choose the most important coping strategy as shown in table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6 Coping strategies by women and men in Daffiama (Nadowli district)

	Women	Men
Coping strategy	Rank	Rank
Reduction of maize, millet, sorghum meal	2	2
Leaves, little or no shea butter, maize, millet etc., wild fruits, hunger most of the time	1	1
Migration	4	3
Sale of ruminants	3	4

Source: Focus group discussions of 15 females and 12 males in Daffiama (each group voted), 1998.

As in the study villages in Nadowli district women and men in Daffiama would go hungry most of the time and live on leaves with and/or without maize, millet, sorghum etc. Men would rather migrate than sell all their ruminants. The ranking, however, showed that both women and men reduce their food intake, and more men than women would migrate (see fig 5.6).

Women intensify the numerous economic activities to provide for the family when the situation gets bad: these include processing of shea butter, pito preparation, firewood

collecting and charcoal making. This supplements incomes from those husbands who do not migrate to the south. During the peak period of the hunger season i.e. July to August, wild fruits and leaves like '*gyagboro*', '*bire*', '*kankyil*', '*tenkore*', pumpkins, and okro are eaten. In most homes, the leaves are cooked and a little ground groundnut is added to make a thick soup. Others simply add shea butter, pepper and salt to it and this is served as the main meal. This meal is called '*gyogyo*' (Sarpong-Kumankuma, 1997). A woman in Nadowli district, noted that:

“Those without oil eat the leaves. If you have some money, you can buy some corn or millet dough and mix it with the leaves as your main meal for the family. We deliberately go hungry during such periods” (interview, Badabuo 1998).

Jodha (1975 cited in Devereux, 1993) found in India that poor people choose to go hungry rather than sell their productive assets. People choose hunger in Nadowli, as in the Upper East (ibid, 54), rather than sell off all assets because of the desire to retain assets for alternative uses the next farming season. They always expect a good farming season. These food shortages come at the crucial period when farmers are busy and most need food to cope with the heavy work in the fields. Those who are able to afford it purchase rice, cassava and bambara beans (which are not major local food items). The school feeding programme by the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Nadowli district has been a major incentive for parents to retain their children in school during the hungry season.

Norton et al, (1995:36) maintain that the long-standing coping strategies that are known to resource poor communities in Ghana are becoming less useful for combating the stress periods. This is explained by the fact that most of these strategies are themselves under threat because of worsening ecological conditions and the escalating cost of living.

Government safety nets were not mentioned by the villagers interviewed as part of their coping strategy, because it appears they mostly benefit the rich. The government sent tons of rice and beans to the northern regions of Ghana between April and July 1998 to avert a possible famine. This need arose as a result of drought and bad harvest in the northern regions which had left many people without food. A consignment of 3,900

mini-bags of maize and beans arrived in Wa, the capital of Upper West Region, in April. The region was to receive a total of 6,300 mini-bags at a cost of 141 million cedis (Graphic, 1998). More food was to be sent in batches until the harvesting season begin. These goods were to be sold at a subsidised price to the people. Arthur (1998:7) reported 'indications are that the relief supplies are not getting to the disabled, the aged (the poor) who are among the worst hit by the crisis'. According to the head of the department of agriculture in the University of Development Studies, Tamale, however, the problem was not availability of food in most parts of the region, but the fact that the majority of people could not afford to purchase the food available (GTV interview, June 1998). He advocated a long-term solution of greater attention to agricultural and off-farm activities of the poor people rather than the short-term measures which do not benefit the rural poor people. This lends support to Davies (1993:62), who is of the opinion that the focus on short-term alleviation with its notion of 'coping', does not solve the problem but creates the very 'conditions of dependency rural producers are often blamed for having'.

In Adansi West District there are three main strategies to cope with the periods of stress which occur in the months of May to July. July, in the local dialect, is "*kitawonsa*" meaning "hold fast your hands" (so you do not steal someone else's food).

It must be noted that different people within the poor (*ohiani*) category adopt different coping strategies. Women in Akrokerri outlined the various strategies employed by the various categories of poor people to cope during hardship period. This is shown in table 5.7 below.

Table 5.7 Coping strategies for women in Akrokerri

Category	Coping strategy
Very Poor (<i>Ohiani</i>)	Reduction or absence of meat/fish, feeding mainly on cassava, wild yam
Hardship (<i>Ahokyereni</i>)	Reduction or absence of meat/fish, cassava, wild yam, palm fruits, produce from mixed farming
Hard working (<i>Mmodenbofo</i>)	Reduction of meat/fish, oil palm extraction, trading etc.

Source: Focus group discussion with eleven women in Akrokerri, 1998 (established by agreement)

The first strategy is that households cut back on their food portions (see fig 5.7) above. Women in Akrokerri within the very poor *ohiani* category reduce intake of meat and fish and live mainly on cassava to reduce cost. Women in the villages normally would respond to ‘how are you’ after greeting, with the response “poverty and same soup”. An old woman in Adansi West district noted that:

“we do all we can to reduce expensive ingredients such as meat, fish, and the main meal too. The harsh economic conditions these days has made things worse so sometimes hunger is visibly written on people’s faces. Children suffer a lot during these times which actually vary from year to year; but we manage to survive” (interview, Wioso, 1998).

The second strategy is the extraction of oil palm. In addition to reducing meat and fish intake, those in hardships *ahokyereni* category search for palm fruits for sale and for soup as well as some produce from their farms (mixed cropping). Palm trees grow in the wild and in abundance in Adansi West district. During the lean season poor people, especially women, go in search of palm fruits to be sold in the market. *Modenbofo*, however, may extract oil palm for sale and engage in other income generating activities such as trading. The bulk of it is processed locally into palm oil (see table 5.6). This is sold for income which enables the people to cope during this period. Men also intensify their palm wine tapping activities for income through sale of palm wine. In addition to

this, *akpeteshie*, a local gin brewed from palm wine, is exported to other parts of the country. Women additionally also undertake food processing for sale and engage in other commercial activities.

People of this forest region of Ghana also take advantage of mixed cropping and sell pepper and garden eggs during hard times. Farmers have a saying that 'if you support plantain with a stick, do same to banana for you don't know which one of them will be your saviour during famine'. Plantain is one of the most important staple foods for the Ashantis who cultivate plantain each year and not banana. But once banana is found among plantain you have to support it in case the plantain fails. So many farmers undertake mixed farming to ensure that at least she or he will receive some support even in hard times. Many others who find it difficult to undertake any of the above activities, struggle to live on cassava, but much of this goes bad at this time of the year when cooked because of the intensity of the heat and the length of time it has been in the soil.

The third strategy is when people in the rural areas hunt for *ahabayere* (wild yam) when the hunger situation becomes intensified. They comb through the forest in search of this type of yam and other root crops which are not eaten during normal periods of food abundance. In addition to all the above coping strategies, children may be temporarily withdrawn from school, or withdrawn from a private school (as in Akrokerri) to a government school, in order to enjoy free tuition fees but a lower academic standard.

It is important to note that, as in most parts of Africa, one of the survival strategies for the poor in both districts is the informal social support network. These networks link relatives, friends, neighbours and people through economic, cultural and political activities (Bamberger et al, 1996:76). In Ghanaian communities, the semi-communal nature of traditional lifestyle and social asset value of kin networks, mutual assistance transactions and welfare linkages are common (Korboe, 1994). And within the extended-family context, they assist the marginalised poor and the needy to cope better. Such family networks have powerful poverty-mitigating value and so individuation is frowned upon in the villages (ibid.:8). A thirty-eight year old woman in Nadowli described one instance of such informal social support;

“our group *suntaa* (love) gives assistance when you are sick, bereaved or in any form of crisis. Small contributions are made monthly and we also do group farming for income. The group is a source of strength and security. We sometimes assist needy women in the community (non-members) by providing food, clothes and money for medical bills” (interview, Tangasie, 1998).

These social networks bind them together and strengthen them to be able to withstand whatever the hardship may bring.

In both Nadowli and Adansi West districts, people in the study villages participate in the networks and assist other network members, in the expectation that they will also receive some benefit in return or have a source of assistance in time of need. These are mostly womens’ groups, trade associations, the extended family system, youth football associations and *susu* groups.

Discussing hardships and survival in a rural community in eastern Ghana during hardships in the early 1980s, Dei (1992:102) noted:

“rural communities have traditional institutions and social devices in place to ease the burden of economic hardships on their citizens, particularly the poor. Basically, the strong sense of sharing responsibilities which exists within households and the wider community must be seen as an adaptive strategy enabling the town inhabitants to cope with economic stress. Re-distributive networks in the community were expanding rather than shrinking during the times of hardships”.

Rahnama (1996:168) has also noted that this network of human relationships still shapes and satisfies the needs of the poor. ‘It is preserved in their vernacular spaces with forms of solidarity, co-operation and reciprocity developed within their communities. Their activities are generally concrete responses to concrete and immediate problems, enabling the people involved to produce both the changes and the things they need’. The leprous middle aged man in Badabuo (see section 5.2) for instance, maintained that:

“but for the generosity of my family members, friends and basically people in this community, I would have died. They feed me, care for my health needs and make me happy. They neither discriminate against me nor get fed up with me - and they respect me too”.

Such networks that exist among the rural communities serve as an important aspect of their coping strategy against all forms of crisis in life.

5.4 Access to and utilisation of social services by the poor

Poverty has dimensions that apply at different levels of social organisation. There are differences in the understanding of poverty at the individual, household and community levels. A child's access to education, for example, may have the following dimensions (Norton et al, 1995): at the level of the household, lack of money for fees and other costs, then missing the child's productive and domestic labour. At the community level poverty is expressed in the lack of social facilities and infrastructure including schools and good roads for transportation of pupils to school (if they could afford the cost).

Oti-Boateng et al. (1990) has stated that poverty in Ghana is a composite personal and community life situation. On the personal level, it is manifested by the inability of the individual or the household to acquire basic necessities of life in terms of food, shelter, and clothing, while on the community level poverty is manifested by the absence or low level of basic community services such as health, education and water. These are issues that affect everyone in the community. Poverty at the community level is a more comfortable topic for general discussion than individual or household level poverty; it avoids the uncomfortable sense of judgement of individual worth and demeaning connotations of dependency which frequently underlie such discussions.

The following sub-sections review the poor's perception of social services especially health, education, water and sanitation in the community. Poor rural communities have woefully low level of access to quality social services and it is perceived as such by the rural people (see, section 6.8.1).

5.4.1 Health

Two medical systems exist in Ghana - the modern orthodox medical system and the traditional system (Twumasi, 1975). The traditional system has existed for centuries and is operated by individuals in villages, towns and cities. The modern system was introduced during the colonial period and is under the purview of the government.

Poor people in the study villages in both districts do not have access to modern orthodox health care. Even though they perceive the modern orthodox system as better equipped

for diagnosis and treatment of diseases, it is not accessible to them. They perceive cost of the orthodox medical consultation to be high because of the government's 'cash and carry system' (see section 6.8.1). Ohene-Konadu (1996:58) has noted that in addition to the high cost, the rural people overstretch themselves to enjoy the facilities amidst erratic transportation and poor access to roads.

Many people in the study districts, therefore, rely on the traditional medicinal system which they perceive as affordable and accessible. This includes herbalists, fetish priests, soothsayers, spiritualists and bone setters. They also rely on house remedies i.e. as practiced by those in the households who have knowledge of medicinal plants. Rural poor people consult drug sellers (usually referred to as 'doctors') with their minor ailments, in villages where they are available. A woman in Akrokerri summed it all:

"the hospital fees and drugs are so expensive that you in most cases have to depend on traditional medicine with your children. People even do away with their prescription because they just cannot afford to purchase the drugs".

Traditional medicine is particularly important in Nadowli district because Badabuo, Tangasie, and Puleba do not have clinics. Fourteen women in Tangasie were asked to score with 5 pebbles and rank access to health facilities available in the village. The result is shown in table 5.8 below.

Table 5.8 Matrix scoring and ranking of Access to healthcare in study villages

Facility	Access criterion					Score	Rank
	Affordability	Accessibility	Availability	Effectiveness	Flexibility		
Herbalists	5	4	3	3	4	19	1
Hospital/Clinic (Public)	1	2	1	5	2	11	4
Spiritualists	3	3	2	2	3	13	3
Traditional birth attendants	4	3	3	3	4	17	2

Source: Focus group discussion with 14 women in Tangasie scoring with 5 pebbles – (5 = good and 1 = poor)

Poor people maintain that there is flexibility of payments to herbalists and spiritualists. They are more likely to accept deferred payments or payments in kind. This is particularly appreciated during periods of extreme hardship, when cash is not easily available (Korboe, 1994:11). Health authorities interviewed in Nadowli clinic (two

female nurses and one male nurse) consistently confirmed villagers' claim that the greater proportion of the rural population find orthodox healthcare very expensive and inaccessible. Villagers in the focus group discussion maintain that social services such as clinics are highly patronised by the rich including the chiefs, successful traders, large scale farmers, employees in the public sector like teachers and nurses (who also engage in farming and trading activities) and those with relatives working in the south or abroad who remit them regularly. The poor would seek help from herbalists and spiritualists and would be sent to the clinic when the sickness becomes worse, beyond the capabilities of the herbalists. Money may be borrowed for the cost or in some case property sold by the family to defray the cost

5.4.2 Education

The Ghana Living Standard Survey (1992) confirmed a substantial rise in household expenditure on education due to cost sharing under the government's Structural Adjustment Programme (see section 6.8.1). Many rural poor people perceive education as important, but the cost involved is so much that they do not have the financial resources to see their children through. A parent in Tangasie in Nadowli district lamented:

“Getting a child to school, which they say is free, means the cost of uniforms, books, furniture and development fees which is not easy and even impossible for some of us to pay” (interview, 1998)

The main problems indicated by villagers as contributing to the high drop-out rate include long distances to and from school especially in Nadowli district, uniform, books, furniture and development fees (see fig 5.7 below). The Junior Secondary Schools are located in the towns and larger settlements. If the location is not within walking distance from the village, then most children end their education at the primary school level.

Women in a focus group discussion in Badabuo stated that walking distance of children to school and financial difficulties were the main constraints to educating their children. They selected two groups of four women among the 14 participants used pebbles to score and rank the main obstacles to educating their children. The result is shown in table 5.9 below.

Fig 5.9 Constraints on access to Education in Badabuo

Constraints	Group 1	Group 2	Total	Rank
Physical (accessibility)	5	4	9	2
Financial	5	5	10	1
Tradition	0	0	0	0
Marriage/Teenage pregnancy (girls)	2	1	3	3
Peer pressure/ migration	0	0	0	0
Gender	1	2	3	3

1= Least, 5= Highest

Source Focus group discussion with 14 women in Badabuo, 1998

Out of the 14 women in the group above, only three had their children in school at Tangasie. All the others had children of school going age who were not in school for financial reasons. When I visited Tangasie school in November 1997 the number of children from Badabuo was 14. During my second visit in June 1998 the number had reduced to eight. Apart from finance, walking 10 km each day by children also acted as a disincentive to attend school. On other hand, Daffiama has a greater number of schools from primary to senior secondary schools (see table 4.1). Physical accessibility is not as a great problem as financial constraints to educating their children.

Many community members, however, were concerned about the quality of education in the rural areas. Where schools are accessible, rural communities tend to have few qualified teachers, textbooks and equipment. The result is poor performance due to the poor conditions of the rural schools. It thus further exacerbates the problems of the widening educational gap between the rural and urban areas. For example, all the 45 Junior Secondary School pupils of Assin-Kushea who sat for the Basic Education Certificate Examination failed to obtain a pass, recording a zero percent as a result. Assin-Kushea is a rural settlement in the Central region of Ghana and lack of teachers and inadequately equipped workshops were the main reasons (Ghanaian Times, 1998).

5.5 Gender differentiation in education

It came out strongly that where resources were limited, there was a preference in both districts for educating boys over girls. Education for girls is not highly valued. Parents think it worthwhile to invest in the education of sons. They would rather prefer to keep their daughters at home to help with housework and other duties such as care of younger siblings. School intake also showed boys outnumbering girls at each level. Teenage pregnancy, general attitudes towards girls helping parents at home, and early marriages, apart from poverty, are the main reasons in both districts. Honourable Katoule, an Assembly member and Assistant Director of Education in Nadowli district noted:

“poverty is a major factor in high-drop out rate in this area. And many parents prefer to educate the boys than girls because most fathers are still of the traditional notion that if you spent your scarce resources to care for your daughter, she finally ends up in another man’s kitchen” (interview, Nadowli district, 1998).

He however maintained that because of the numerous women’s groups and education received from NGOs, women are now serious about educating their daughters

5.6 Water and Sanitation

In Ghana, access to clean, piped water is better in urban than in rural areas. Water resources and facilities available to the rural communities studied are rainwater, rivers, hand-dug wells and bore-holes fitted with pumps. Thus, in the rural communities people drink and use untreated water and, as a result, many suffer from water-borne and water-related diseases. In Badabuo (Nadowli district), the stream is about 4km away from the village and women and girls spend much time fetching water because men and boys are culturally proscribed from carrying things. The chief of Badabuo reported;

“the women have gone for water and they would return soon to join their groups (focus groups). We came to meet this tradition of women /girls carrying water, so it is part of our culture” (interview, Badabuo, 1998).

They make several trips each day to the riverside in order to get the required quantity. Queuing at the boreholes fitted with pumps and hand-dug wells is often disheartening in all the communities as they are few and serve large populations. A former Assemblywoman at Kwabenakwa in Adansi West district noted:

“We have only one borehole with a pump in this village. The queue for water has been a matter of grave concern, with children spending so much time queuing for water. Because of this people living near streams continue to use it instead of the frequent queuing” (interview, 1998)

Although refuse dumps tend to develop near public toilets, rural settlements generally appear to be relatively neater than urban settlements. Toilet facilities include KVIP and pit-latrines. In the rural communities studied, toilet facilities were constructed and managed entirely through community initiative and action. Many people, however, still prefer ‘free range’ especially in the Nadowli district.

5.7 Preference for social services

Preferences of people for social services in the villages differed depending upon which services were already available. Puleba is the only village in all the study villages where the Assembly member was present during the preference ranking of social services. He encouraged the women to recognise the importance of education and for that matter, their school building (under construction). After an interesting discussion among themselves, the women came out with a ranking that surprised the Assembly member. This is shown in the table 5.10 below. It clearly showed the strength of the women together and the fact that they have not been involved in the decision-making process in the village.

Table 5.10: Voting on the most important social service, men and women in Puleba

Part 1 - women

Services	Score	% score	Rank
Water	4	23.5	2
School	0	0	0
Market	9	52.9	1
Road	3	17.6	3
Tractor services	0	0	0
Clinic	1	5.9	4
Total	17	99.9	

Source: Focus group discussions of 17 women in Puleba

Women maintained that they have been carrying their ware to the various markets in the area each week on foot (men go on their bikes) and that development of market will not only give them rest but bring people to Puleba to patronise greater goods. Provision of water will also relieve them of the time and burden of walking distances to draw water and also queuing for water. They further noted that during the raining season the roads are very bad and need repairs. None voted for the school

Men on the other hand wanted the roads to be repaired followed by the school before water. The market was not even mentioned by the men's group as seen below.

Part 2 - men

Services	Score	% score	Rank
School	3	27.2	2
Water	1	9	3
Road	6	54.5	1
Tractor services	0	0	0
Clinic	1	9	3
Total	11	99.7	

Source: Focus group discussion of 11 men in Puleba, each giving vote as to what is the most important service.

5.8 Perceptions of poverty alleviation

People in both study districts were unanimous in their response to questions about poverty alleviation measures, wishing for a long-term solution to their poverty problems rather than short-term interventions. Priorities, however, varied between Nadowli and Adansi West districts. Generally, poor people's major concerns were with the strengthening of their livelihood systems. In their perceived poverty alleviation strategies (see table 5.11) people in the study villages in Nadowli district advocated among others, provision of water (small dams in the villages and farming areas) for dry season farming, ploughing services, micro-credit, livestock rearing, and extension services. They noted that individuals, the community, government and NGOs must play their part consistently to get people out of the poverty trap.

A young man in Daffiama in Nadowli district maintained that:

“small dams in the farming areas will give us the opportunity to undertake all year round agriculture. This is what we need to keep us from going to the south. If this and other inputs are provided, we can escape poverty through hardwork” (interview, 1998).

They were of the view that this would enable them to farm throughout the year and also reduce, if not stop, the annual migration of the youth to the south.

Table 5.11: . Moving out of poverty – Perceived poverty alleviation strategies in Nadowli district

Main Strategy	Responsibilities for the strategy			NGOs
	Individuals/ households	Community	Government	
Micro-credit	Assess loans for expansion of farms and other income generating activities	Encourage people to pay back to ensure continuity. Act as a check on fraud	Get involved in giving micro-credit	Increase the amount and number of people given and extend micro-credit facilities to other villages and groups
Ploughing services	Expand farms (cultivated area)	Ensure security of machines	Provide more tractor services and ploughs at reduced rates and with credit facilities	Loans for group purchase of tractors and ploughs. Provide services for groups and individuals
Livestock rearing	Buy best breed and take good care of their health (drugs) and feeding (fodder) etc.	Work together to ensure safety of animals from theft (security)	Good veterinary services at reduced cost.	Loans to buy best breeding stock
Extension services	Enhance farming practices and use of other inputs	Encourage facilities	Make the services available	Extend services to all others
Dams/wells	For dry season farming-agriculture through out the year. To help keep young men in the villages and reduce migration to the south.	Communal labour to build dams and wells. Contribute towards construction cost. Keep regulations on use and maintenance	Provide inputs (cement etc.) and experts if necessary	Build dams/well and also provide inputs for communities to build
Fertiliser/seed/	Expansion of farms (cultivated area on to overused land)	Form groups to increase farmlands	Provide adequately at the right time. Credit facilities for purchase	Help with cheaper but good quality fertiliser. Extend credit facilities for purchase
Improved marketing		Ensure regulations are adhered to. Guard against exploitation	Good roads, prices of produce. Introduce grain banking through Rural Banks	Help with Capital for grain banking

Source: 25 in-depth interviews (individuals) and 16 focus group discussions in the study villages. All agreed that these activities are profitable given the support.

In Adansi West, on the other hand, emphasis was on generation of employment in the rural areas to enable the youth to stay and continue with farming. They also stressed the importance to their sources of livelihoods of agricultural inputs and financial support to expand their farms. A middle aged man in Akrokerri noted that:

“the solution to poverty in this area is agriculture and employment for our youth to keep them in this area. The government and District Assembly should give us resources to expand our farms. Human strength has limits, but if credit facilities are provided we could do more and this would lower the rate at which our children are leaving to the cities (interview, Adansi West district, 1998).

There was also concern for the development of good marketing infrastructure and linking farmers to markets that will increase their profit margins. Rural people in both districts maintain that if their livelihood systems were strengthened they would be able to have access to the social services available. Many in the Adansi West district were of the opinion that the communities would be in a position to provide for themselves social services if attention was given to strengthen their sources of livelihood. On the contrary, in Nadowli district, labour could be mobilised but not finance to support the development of social services. This is due to the level of poverty in the area.

The design of realistic, responsive plans that take into consideration the perceptions and priorities of the poor is imperative in the development process at the district level. The next chapter examines the extent to which the rural poor are involved in the development process to alleviate poverty under the District Assembly.

CHAPTER 6: DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines and assesses the role of the District Assemblies in improving the well-being of the people in the study districts. Poverty alleviation is a principal aim of any genuine interpretation of development. Ghana's rural sector lacks basic amenities such as health care, schools, agricultural extension services, transport and communication infrastructure. This was illustrated with reference to the study districts in chapter four. According to Kwamena Ahwoi (1991:97) the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development:

“it is clear that the centralised form of government that has been practised in the pre and post Independence era has been largely responsible for this gross injustice in the distribution of social and utility facilities”.

It might be then, that a decentralised form of government holds the key to human development and redistribution with justice. Certainly, as I have argued in chapter one, the World Bank and other international agencies now perceive decentralisation as a critical tool in achieving more effective government and development in low income countries like Ghana.

The District Assemblies were established in Ghana with the onerous task of promoting development in their areas. The District Assembly is a forum where the representatives of the people and a team of development agents, discuss, the development problems of the district. Their objective is to identify the underlying causes, and to decide on the collective actions necessary to deal with them. They have been given the responsibility for the overall development of their districts: formulation of the district composite budget; mobilisation of the district resources; development of basic infrastructure and provision of municipal works and services; development and management of human settlements and the environment; and maintenance of security in the district. According to Ahwoi (1991:92) the task of the District Assemblies is to work out how to :

- bridge the disparity between the district headquarters and the rest of the district

- reduce poverty, unemployment, underemployment and inequality in their respective areas of jurisdiction
- provide the villages with the amenities of modern living
- halt rural to urban drift of the population, especially the youth
- put an end to environmental degradation, and
- generate enough revenue on their own to finance development projects

The District Assemblies are therefore to take their own decisions, determine their own priorities, and organise their activities, mobilising the people and resources at their disposal for development, in order to uplift the well-being of the people. There is a clear mandate for the District Assemblies to reduce poverty through a consultative and participatory process. To what extent have they been - and, indeed, could they be - successful? The chapter begins with a brief review of the historical context. This is followed by a careful examination of the source of poverty perspectives among district decision-makers and the differences between their views of poverty and those of the poor themselves. The second half of the chapter then considers the DA in action: its record to date in poverty alleviation and the impact of its strategies on the rural poor.

6.2 Local Authorities and rural development in Ghana: a historical perspective

In order to understand attitudes and approaches to poverty alleviation under the District Assemblies, it is important to briefly review the history of rural development in Ghana under Local Authorities. The centralised nature of public service decision-making in Ghana dates back to the colonial period (see section 2.3.3). There was a basic authoritarianism in colonial administration which was inconsistent with responsiveness; and elitist notions were prevalent not only among expatriate senior administrators but among the native clerks and messengers who distanced themselves from the people (Lungu, 1985:45). The colonial system had no need for a more flexible system since governmental objectives were very much limited to getting out of the economic system the maximum resources (Aryeetey, 1985). From the very onset, therefore, development was concentrated in a few centres.

Ghana's efforts at infrastructure development date back to this period with the famous ten year Development Plan by Sir Gordon Guggisburg. The main concern was to lay out the country's basic infrastructure. The modern networks of transportation were geared towards tapping the mineral, cocoa and timber resources in the southern part of the country (Songsore and Denkabe, 1996:103). Distribution of basic social amenities was skewed towards the few major urban centres. In spite of these early attempts at improving the living conditions of the people of Ghana, and in spite of several other development plans that were published after the second World War for the development of the country, the general level of development in the rural areas has remained predominantly low (Kudiabour, 1986:26). The British policies were not intended to develop Ghana into an independent economy. Lord Lugard (cited in Mohiddin, 1997:15) declared: "Let it be admitted at the outset that European brains, capital, and energy have not been and never will be, expended in developing the resources of Africa from pure philanthropy; that Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of native races in their progress to a higher plane..."

After Independence, Ghana's regional development strategy was based on the modernisation paradigm of the big push. Planning in the centralised system tended to favour large scale, accelerated industrial activities centred on growth poles for rapid urbanisation. The government also continued with investment in infrastructure. These developments were, however, concentrated, as before, in the so-called golden triangle enclosed by Kumasi, Accra and Takoradi and north-south streams of migration continued. As a result of colonial and post-independence policies the population of the Northern Ghana fell from 25% of the total population in 1890 to 16% in 1960 (Okonjo, 1986:4).

The inhabitants of rural areas in Ghana have been exposed to harsh conditions. The indirect incomes which the urban dwellers have enjoyed for many years - in the form of electricity and water supply, subsidised energy products, specialist and general medical treatment, basic technical and vocational education etc. - have always been denied to the majority of rural inhabitants. Poverty, illiteracy, disease, malnutrition, short life expectancy and high

rates of infant mortality are particularly malignant here as elsewhere in rural Africa (Balogun, 1989). Many administrators and politicians in developing countries have developed strong anti-rural and anti-participation attitudes. The elitist attitudes inherited from the colonial administration have persisted but have taken on a new characteristic. Quick (1977 cited in Lungu, 1985:46) observed that:

“bureaucrats are personally and ideologically unsuited to play the role of rural mobilisers. Their elite status in the colonial system separated them from the rest of society and encouraged attitudes of superiority over illiterate ‘bush’ Africans. After independence... young, well educated public servants generally dislike - or even fear - working closely with the rural population; and this leads to the kind of formalism, distance and avoidance in the relationship between bureaucrats and clients”.

Given such attitudes, it is difficult for bureaucrats in general to be responsive in the sense of being devoted to and serving the rural masses. In Ghana, as in other African states, administrators are a socially and economically privileged group (Lungu, 1985:4), an issue taken up in section 6.4 below.

Various national governments, both civilian and military, in Ghana have given considerable attention to the issue of improving the living conditions of the rural poor. Policy makers and planners came to the realisation that despite the efforts made to stimulate economic growth, the results, in terms of improved quality of life, have been negligible. In an attempt to correct the situation, the basic needs development approach was pursued in the 1970s as the answer to the rural problems (Gaiha, 1977 cited in Conyers, 1983b:101). This was very appealing and acceptable to politicians and bureaucrats since it basically centred on the tangible aspects of development at the community level. It was, however, silent on individual accessibility to services, participation, and political involvement in the rural areas. The basis for this approach was the fact that the rural areas had made considerable contributions to the overall development of the national economies of the country by the production of cocoa and other raw materials for export, and food for domestic consumption. They had contributed immensely to foreign exchange earnings but had been completely neglected in the distribution of infrastructure and social services. The rationale, therefore, was that through the provision of social amenities and services, the gap in the living

conditions between the urban and rural residents could be bridged (Brown, 1986:203). This was borne out of international development thinking in the 1970s. The ILO statement on basic needs in the 1970s indicated that:

“The satisfaction of basic needs means meeting of the minimum requirements of a family for personal consumption: food, shelter, clothing; it implies access to essential services, such as safe drinking water, sanitation, transport, health and education; it implies that each person available for and willing to work should have an adequately remunerated job” (ILO, 1976 cited in Chambers, 1985:7).

Chambers (1985:7) maintains that this subjective list by the ILO, especially the “adequately remunerated job”, shows their limited awareness of the rural setting since, for most of the rural poor, such a concept of work is irrelevant. Most of the rural poor are either subsistence or sub-subsistence cultivators, and many of them piece together their uncertain livelihoods through performance of different activities at different seasons of the year.

Local authorities under various regimes continued to pursue the provision of social services infrastructure. Acheampong (1994:228) noted that development in a local authority context in Ghana has had two basic meanings since independence:

“the provision of services and provision of infrastructural facilities. The former occurs in the urban centre (usually the district capital) and a few large villages. It consists mainly of collection and disposal of refuse, and cleaning of public places and drains. The latter is undertaken in the district as a whole, and comprises the building of schools, markets, clinics, public toilets and latrines, sources of drinking water etc.”.

Even though most of these services were provided by the rural people through self-help, the district councils concentrated their activities on the provision of infrastructure. Rural areas were denied even minimum investment, however, to stimulate self generating growth. They, therefore, remained weak and unstructured.

This situation has been inherited by the District Assemblies. There has not been a dramatic departure from such provision since the establishment of the District Assemblies in 1988. In the study districts, development activities continue to be centred on the provision of social services infrastructure. Against the background of an infrastructure provision mentality,

there have been rising expectations and unfulfilled promises. It must be noted that popular participation at the local level could not grow in an atmosphere of paternalism. All communities looked to the councils and central government as 'Father Christmas' to supply their social service infrastructure. This has led to a dependency syndrome which the District Assembly is yet to break. The priorities of the district administrators and political leaders in the District Assembly are, in general, infrastructure rather than human-centred. In the interviews and focus group discussions with these groups, there was a consistent focus on clinics, school buildings, market structures, toilets etc. as opposed to, for example, accessibility to health, education/knowledge, economic livelihood, which communities tended to focus on. The developmental priorities of the District Assemblies are similarly oriented. The next section examines further the nature of dependency on central government.

6.3 The dependency on central government

Dependency has been defined as a kind of relationship that binds two parties or entities of varying status or capabilities and which defines their modes of interaction, attitudes or orientations to one another (Nketia, 1993:38). 'A culture of dependence emerges when there is habitual reliance on others and may be evident not only in ways of life but also in the policies and actions of organised groups and institutions, including government institutions, while new forms of dependency may emerge in future from the policies and actions of the present' (ibid,:38). Nketia (1993:46) further maintains that the colonial legacy perpetuating dependency includes the central government being the biggest employer, and the biggest provider of amenities and resources for development. This has created a pattern of dependency to this present day.

The colonial and post-independence inflexibility and over-centralisation in decision-making widened the gap between the government and the people. The rural people were left at the mercy of the ruling party of politicians, the military and top bureaucrats and the technocrats in Accra. The national administrative system absorbed the dependency traits of traditional society as government officials and functionaries offered not just services to the community but also authority and power. This resulted in increasing concentration of power in these

groups. Due mainly to the dissatisfaction of the majority of population, and the very low level of literacy among them, they tended to support any change in government which they believed would bring them closer to it and ensure their daily bread (Aryeetey, 1985:3). The people became dependent on the government in Accra for a wide range of social services and infrastructure development.

The idea of dependency was officially endorsed by the more influential in the administrative and political hierarchy in the country. They promoted and implemented it through promises to towns, villages and village areas which would pledge their allegiance and support. It has become a daily occurrence to hear people talking about what government or particular institutions should be doing for them in their area, rather than what individuals can do or achieve through the mobilisation of local effort and resources. A constituency may be victimised if it votes for the wrong party and one's ethnicity may place one at a disadvantage in certain areas (Nketia, 1993). There is hardly any durbar at which a chief does not present a list of the amenities he needs in his area to a head of state or his representative, in much the same way as his predecessors used to do in the colonial era. "Although there are established administrative channels for making such needs known, a chief who does not make an open speech to the hearing of his people makes a bad impression on his people. They may regard him as a timid, not courageous or not out-spoken and literally 'not doing anything for his people'" (Nketia, 1993:42). Parties also used such relationships to win votes in election times and in periods of civilian government, to *gain the support of the people*. Military governments also used this as a means of legitimising their rule and thus received the support of the masses. This dependency syndrome persisted through the various periods of the District Councils since independence. Regional and District Administrative officers were often invited to traditional durbars to listen to chiefs, elders and leaders enumerate the number of 'developments' they needed, which were predictably, good drinking water, toilet facilities, schools, market structures, clinics, roads, etc. or a renovation of any of these facilities.

This traditional notion of development has been perpetuated over the years and has dominated the thinking of bureaucrats and moved them to define poverty mainly as lack of

basic services. It is important to point out that the development orientation of this elite, though restricted to infrastructure, agrees with the people's own demands and perceived needs in their communities. This implies that these services are needed in the villages to reduce the deplorable conditions in which the people find themselves. However, and more importantly, the rural people perceive that there is more to poverty than these services (see chapter 5). They have also observed over the years that the district administration has not gone beyond provision of infrastructure, to the intangible aspects such as involving them practically and giving them a voice in the development process and to concrete improvements in their livelihood sources. The issue of participation will be examined in chapter 7.

What has largely remained missing in developmental efforts is the provision of the rural population with sources of livelihood - development of sound rural economic bases that would offer economic security of life. This also entails responding to the local needs of private productive forces - agricultural development required for raising productivity, allowing markets to function effectively and creating opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Chambers (1985:9) defines livelihood as "a level of wealth and of stocks and flows of food and cash which provide for physical and social well-being and for security against impoverishment". For the people in the villages in Nadowli and Adansi West districts, issues of major importance to livelihood include: ownership of land, micro-credit, micro-capital like tools and equipment, some livestock, remunerative activities in the lean seasons of the year, health to be able to work at the peak season, and markets and good prices for whatever they are able to produce. What the District Assemblies have failed through the years to realise is the fact that basic goods and income are fundamental for the rural people to enable them expand their livelihoods and to have access to the social services available.

6.4 District elite and their educational and social background

The depth of poverty apparent in the study districts, despite poverty reduction interventions, seems to perhaps also point to a gap in understanding poverty between District Assembly members and other elites and the target group, the poor (see Lungu's (1985:45-46) observation in section 6.2). We need to examine the elite's perception and understanding of poverty because how they conceptualise and describe the poor will shape the potential solutions to poverty they identify. This then requires a brief discussion of the elite's educational and social background and its effects on their perception. This section is an attempt to look at the origin of the elite's perception of poverty and its shaping by international development orientations, and the recent political and development history of the country.

In his study of the elite in Ghana, Busia (1956, cited in Assimeng, 1997) suggested five defining criteria:

1. Persons of pre-eminence over others
2. Who have some degree of corporateness or group character
3. Have some consciousness of the position they occupy within a society
4. Enjoy high status and
5. Are considered imitable, in the sense that their style and behaviour set a standard which others try to accept and follow

The elite in this study are the dominant, influential and powerful in the district - those who have direct influence on policy which affects poverty levels. It includes the bureaucrats and the politicians who interact within the framework of the District Assembly for the realisation of certain set goals.

Bureaucrats have an important role because effective administration is clearly a vital ingredient in the development of the district. They constitute an important arm of government intervention in the rural areas (Wallis, 1989:79). Politically, the District Chief

Executives have been appointed by the President and wield enormous political power and influence in their districts. The appointed members of the Assembly have been selected by the President, in consultation with chiefs and interest groups in the district, in theory, for their expertise and abilities to help in the development efforts of the district. The elected members have the mandate of their people in the electoral areas and are held in high esteem. In the decentralised system of power and decision making, political leaders have assumed a significant role as vital links between the government and the people. They are supposed to articulate the needs and aspirations of the people and effectively relate them to policy making and the developmental programmes, thus acquiring a critical position in the system (Chaturvedi, 1977:9). Hence for a full understanding of their role, status and perceptions of poverty and poverty alleviation, it is helpful to know their educational and social background. In this study the discussion of the educational and social background of the district political leaders is limited to the Assembly members in the study villages, the District Chief Executives and the Presiding members. Discussion of the educational and social background of district officials (i.e. civil servants) is limited to the officers (excluding the executive class in the administration). Their perceptions are very important since they influence the way they behave towards the rural poor and the way they conceive and develop poverty reduction programmes.

Table 6.1 illustrates the educational level of bureaucrats and politicians in the study districts and indicates that a sizeable number of officials are graduates. All bureaucrats in both districts have had a university education. Courses studied include public administration, social sciences, and postgraduate courses in management, finance and regional planning. The District Co-ordinating Directors and their immediate deputies, for example, have post graduate degrees in public administration. It is evident that, as expected, people entering the administrative and technical class have the minimum qualifications prescribed for recruitment.

Table 6.1: Educational levels of bureaucrats and politicians in the study districts

Level of Education	Bureaucrats		Political Leaders		Total
	Adansi West	Nadowli	Adansi West	Nadowli	
Post-Graduate	5	1	-	-	6
Graduate	2	2	2	1	7
Post-secondary	-	-	3	3	6
Secondary	-	-	1	-	1
Vocational/Technical	-	-	1	-	1
Middle School	-	-	1	-	1
Illiterate	-	-	-	1	1

In politics, however, there is no prescribed qualification and there are far fewer educationally qualified people who become leaders in the district. However, only one Assemblyman interviewed, in the Nadowli District Assembly, is an illiterate; the majority have elementary school education. The presiding members in the two districts (appointed members) have had university education. The presiding member from Nadowli District Assembly is presently the director of the Institute of Adult Education at Wa, while his counterpart at Adansi West District Assembly retired as Deputy Director of Education in Brong Ahafo Region.

Another important aspect of social background relevant to this study is the rural/urban exposure of political leaders and the bureaucrats. As a consequence of their educational background, as shown in table 6.1, the majority particularly the bureaucrats, have spent most of their lives in urban areas. This is because most secondary and post secondary schools are located in the urban centres. There is also a heavy concentration of government services in the urban areas and urban-oriented training exacerbates this problem. All tertiary institutions are also located in the cities. Even though, culturally, every Ghanaian has ancestral roots in a

village, most educated people live the greater part of their lives in the urban centres. All the bureaucrats interviewed have worked only in urban centres or towns which are district capitals. The majority of political leaders, however, especially Assembly members, now live in the rural areas and are retired officers, teachers, health workers, farmers and traders. These have also had considerable urban exposure.

To summarise:

- Bureaucrats are brought up in an urban atmosphere and are better educated than politicians who are mostly of rural origin and less educated
- More bureaucrats have urban exposure than political leaders.

6.5 Elite perceptions of poverty

There is no doubt that the backgrounds of the district elite, described above, have important influences on their perception of poverty. Elite perceptions were gathered through a series of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in the two study districts, Nadowli and Adansi West. The interviews and focus groups included the District Chief Executives, District Co-ordinating Directors, district budget and planning officers, some heads of departments, and Assembly members including the presiding members.

Poverty was generally perceived by this district elite as lack of basic necessities of life. These include shelter, education, health, clothing and ability to afford three meals a day. It was also perceived as inability to engage in ‘decent’ employment for income to enable one to care for the family - payment of school fees and hospital bills (see table 6.2), and as those who are below the poverty line as set by the Ghana Statistical Service in the Ghana Living Standard Survey documents. An elected Assembly woman in Adansi West District Assembly summarised this perspective in presenting her view of poverty:

“having limited choices because of lack of good employment, with meagre income. There is also little or no access to basic necessities of life such as food, clinic, school, shelter, good drinking water etc.”

Table 6.2: Perceptions of poverty by the District Administration officials and political leaders in Adansi West and Nadowli districts

RESPONDENTS	MEANING OF POVERTY
District Co-ordinating Directors	Lack of basic necessities of life: shelter, food, clothes, clean water, health, education etc. One does not have them and cannot have them because of one's peculiar circumstances. Hunger - cannot afford three meals a day. Difficulty to afford hospital bills and school fees of family. Cannot afford good clothes. Infertile land resulting in weak economic base.
District Chief Executives	Unable to enjoy basic necessities of life - shelter, food, good drinking water, health facilities etc. Lack of employment. Not able to make ends meet, resulting in limited choices.
Assembly members (appointed and elected: male and female)	Lack of basic necessities of life such as clean water, health facilities, food, shelter etc. Unemployment: lack of income to care for one and family and to afford basic necessities of life. Employed but may earn so little as not to make ends meet.
Other district officers: planning/budget officers and other Department heads	Lack of basic amenities in life such as food, shelter, clean water, good roads, school, health. Living below the acceptable means of the society (poverty line). Cannot afford three meals a day and cannot provide for school fees, hospital bills of family and other bills including electricity bills.

Source: Focus group discussion and in-depth interviews in study districts, 1998.

There was virtually no difference in the conception of poverty among assembly members in the two districts. The only difference could be discerned from the emphasis on social services particularly lacking in the Nadowli district.

An Assembly member in Nadowli District Assembly's perception of poverty was:

“Lack of basic social amenities that brings minimum enjoyment to life - good drinking water, food, shelter, school, clinic, electricity etc. with these, women and children will not walk long distances for water, children will not walk long hours to school in empty stomach, sick people will not be carried on mats to clinics and rains won't be a threat to our sleep”

Interviews with other Assembly members reveal a similar pattern, which confirm their promises to the electorate if voted to power. Their ambition in their tenure of office in the Assembly is to 'fight' for one of the social services in villages; an essential action if they are to continue in the Assembly. There is no marked departure from the perception of poverty by the civil servants in the districts. The District Chief Executive in Obuasi (Adansi West) perceived poverty as:

Difficulty in making ends meet. Striving hard to have access to basic necessities of life such as shelter, potable water, food, clinics, schools, good roads and even payment of school fees and maintenance of ones family. And virtually having no choice or limited choices for basic things in life, for example, constantly living on cassava¹ for long periods

There is no doubt that, having trained and lived in the urban setting for a considerable period of their lives, they want to see those social amenities available in the urban areas made available in the rural areas.

The elite's perception of the nature of poverty in the study districts, as shown in Table 6.2 reveals a predominant lack of provision of social services infrastructure as defining poverty. The elite are generally of the opinion that:

- access to healthcare, safe drinking water, shelter, good roads and schools etc. are limited in the rural areas.

¹ Cassava is a staple food which is generally one of the cheapest and commonest foods in the food growing areas of Ghana.

- this condition has adversely affected the social well-being of the rural populace, exacerbating rural-urban migration.
- deplorable rural conditions have also contributed to the inability of the districts to attract private sector investments. For the Local Government sector, partnership with the private sector is now seen as a means of mobilising private capital for district development.

Investments in social services infrastructure are high on the agenda of both districts. The creation of employment to improve the economic base of the poor is seen as of secondary importance.

There is no doubt that infrastructure improves quality of life by easing time constraints and providing health benefits, with income spin-offs enabling poor people to overcome mobility problems and to gain access to markets, services and employment. It is, however, only one aspect of poverty. The elite perception of poverty conforms to what Chambers et al (1992:3) has described as “conventional professional analysis”. This is production, employment, and poverty-line thinking. With production thinking, problems are defined variously as ‘hunger’, undernutrition, malnutrition, and famine. These are seen as problems of production of enough food. According to Chambers, there is overwhelming evidence (for example Sen, 1981) ‘that these are much more problems of entitlement, of being able to command food supplies, than of production or supply’. With respect to employment, *the elites perceive the* problems of the poor as lack of employment, leading to the prescription of generating large numbers of new ‘work places’. The result is the ideal full employment. Poverty is defined in terms of a single continuum, the poverty line, measured in monetary terms (especially wages or salaries) or consumption. The aim is to enable more people to rise above the line, and to stop people from sinking below it (Chambers et. al., 1992:3).

It must be noted that poverty and well-being, as perceived by the rural people (see chapter 5), is multi-dimensional and does not correspond with this measure. So the analysis of poverty issues has been narrowed by the elites to what has been measured. This is supposed to allow planners to make comparisons between regions, but entails double simplification.

Only one dimension of poverty is assessed when there are so many. Chambers (1997:46) maintain that:

“the simple definition of the bad condition - poverty - is made, then, not by the poor, from their experience, but by the ‘well-off, (elite) for their convenience. Planners and academics need for a single scale of numbers narrows, distorts and simplifies their perception”.

The elite justify their claim for appraising the needs of the poor on the grounds that it provides the planners with a ‘scientific’ basis for their anti-poverty planning. This largely ignores the location, condition, perceptions and priorities of the poor themselves and is enough to indicate the bureaucratic and highly ineffective nature of the exercise. Rahnema (1996) has noted that “after separating the poor person’s ‘needs’ from him as an active and living human being, it reduces him to only an inadequate ingredient of economic growth”.

6.6 The Perception gap between the elites and poor

Poverty means many things to many people in different countries, cultures and backgrounds. Within a particular community there may be many words for naming those perceived as poor (see section 5.2). Many aspects of poverty may be a reflection of failure or inability of government to provide an adequate supply of public goods or services or their deliberate or inadvertent denial to certain groups within the rural areas. Where the whole or significant parts of the rural community are deprived or *starved of certain essential services*, this affects that community’s long term productive potential and becomes a significant contributory cause of rural poverty (Bibangambah, 1985:46). This is equally recognised by the poor and the elite.

However, there is a perception gap between the elite and rural poor which obstructs positive change for the poor. This has three facets:

a) The political gap: the elite fail to recognise the crucial importance of power relations in the poverty issue. The poor in the villages studied in Nadowli and Adansi West districts established the fact that powerlessness and voicelessness are, in part, facets of poverty (see chapter 5). The poor, therefore, seek to be heard and participate in the decision making

process. They want their voices to be amplified in the policy arena of the District Assemblies. This would make them active contributors to the development process and give meaning and form to participation: not only as beneficiaries but initiators, implementers and owners. People in the villages studied maintained that “no one listening to you” is one of the important dimensions of poverty. Distribution of power in the rural areas is rarely considered by the elite, putting the poor into a powerless position. This means that the poor lack capacity to bring about an alteration in the behaviour and actions of others or to influence events. They are rather the objects of power (Kiros, 1985).

b) The economic gap: the elite define poverty by the income/consumption standard, hence being obsessed with poverty lines, which oversimplifies the challenge of poverty reduction. A poverty line is drawn, being the minimal amount of money needed to keep a person out of poverty, and the numbers of people who fall below this line can then be ascertained (White, 1998). This, according to the elite, enables precise quantitative assessment of the poverty problem. But it clearly reveals the inadequate knowledge they have about the rural environment since the rural poor not only require money but voice to air their priorities, peace of mind and food security. The ideas of the elite on poverty have also been shaped by national policies. The Central Government's links with international organisations like the World Bank has profound influence on the state's perception of poverty. The World Bank focuses on poverty lines but poverty, as discussed above, involves not just economics but also power and voice to the poor.

c) The social gap: The elite has lost sight of the fact that people interact with each other within a group or community. Within the rural areas, community life and dependency links tend to be very high. The disabled, the old, the infirm, the young, orphaned, social misfits and chronically disturbed are not neglected by the rural poor. Even the ‘disreputable poor’ - the lazy, beggars and alcoholics - are cared for (see chapter 5). The elites do not normally concern themselves with these social obligations in the villages, but live with the reductionist approach which tries to comprehend a complex phenomenon in terms of only one dimension. In these villages there are virtually no social welfare services to support the poor people. The poor have a very limited view of the Department of Social Welfare. Their

knowledge of this department is limited to settling of marriage disputes, dealing with irresponsible fathers and teenage delinquency.

One therefore sees a great gulf between policy makers and policy 'objects' (the poor) with little sign of convergence. The study has shown that perspectives of the elite fail to capture social and power relations of any kind. Poverty is perceived almost exclusively as economic, with a token concern for gender inequalities and experiences of poverty as powerlessness, vulnerability, isolation, etc.

The rural poor in the study districts, as might be expected, provide a more embracing, insightful, realistic, integrated and multi-dimensional view of poverty than the elite. These perspectives of the elite are reflected in practical terms, however, when we look at what the District Assemblies have been doing about poverty alleviation in the next section.

6.7 Poverty alleviation strategies of the District Assembly

This section seeks to examine the strategies of poverty alleviation introduced after the Local Government reforms which established the District Assemblies in 1988. The major question this study set out to investigate was what changes have been introduced to reduce poverty at the local level under the decentralisation programme.

The design and ultimate implementation of poverty alleviation programmes is shaped and directed by the understanding of poverty among those designing and implementing the programmes. Such perceptions of poverty determine the appropriate strategies selected to eradicate it (Mullen, 1996:90). As discussed in chapter three, the District Assembly is the foremost decentralised political institution responsible for identifying poverty problems at the local level and for implementing policies and strategies that address the problems. The District Assemblies are physically closer to the people and their development problems than central government so that the assembly members should, theoretically, routinely identify their problems and attempt to solve them. Kwamena Ahwoi (1992:51) noted that:

“Development must be seen in terms of how well you have been able to contain poverty in your districts; how well you have been able to create or generate employment; and in purely physical terms, whether you have been able to improve the quality of life of your people with the provision of basic educational facilities, good drinking water, community facilities and services such as improved sanitation facilities for up-grading housing units, increased access to health facilities, improved roads and conscious creation of awareness among the people for appreciation of their social and economic responsibilities”

This statement by the Minister responsible for Local Government and Rural Development clearly portrays the understanding of the ministry about the solution of the poverty problems in the villages. This includes job creation and participation of the people in the decision making process, but the ministry emphasises the tangible aspects of the strategy. The overriding objective of the District Assemblies, therefore, is to transform the social lives of the people through the provision of social services and infrastructure. This was emphasised by the Deputy Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, Johnson (1997):

“The government has allocated 116 billion cedis in this year’s budget to finance programmes which will significantly contribute to poverty reduction. Some of the programmes are education, (formal and informal) primary health care and rural infrastructure”

There is a continuation of the old local council emphasis on social services provision in the rural areas. That notion of poverty alleviation has not seen any dramatic change with the establishment of the District Assemblies. What is new, however, is the directive in 1997, by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development for the District Assemblies, to use 20% of the District Assembly Common Fund for poverty alleviation. This is discussed in section 6.7.3 of this chapter.

It is important to note that the District Assembly members interviewed in the study districts recognised themselves as seriously focused on poverty alleviation efforts and thereby meeting the developmental needs of the people. The District Chief Executives and District Co-ordinating Directors and other officials confidently emphasised their poverty alleviation efforts. The District Co-ordinating Director of Adansi West District Assembly maintained that:

“We are doing our best to reduce the burden of the rural people by providing them with much needed social services, thereby reducing poverty in these areas...these are what they need”

He was of the opinion that the quality of life of the people has been enhanced by the provision of these social services. Nadowli District Chief Executive emphasised that in solving the poverty problem of his people:

“it is better to teach someone how to fish than give him fish to eat. Our Assembly tractor is made available to our people to plough their land during the farming season so they can cultivate large acreage of land. We are also making greater strides in the provision of development projects in all the villages; these include new school buildings, rehabilitation of old school buildings, markets, clinics, hand-dug wells, bore holes fitted with pumps etc.”

It is significant to note that, in Nadowli District Assembly, members realised the need for dams, fertiliser, extension services etc. for farming to help in the poverty situation of the people. This is because ‘land is the life of our people’ noted one member. However, in practice, as has already been emphasised, social services and infrastructural development dominate in the solution of the poverty problems. The district tractor had broken down at the time of the interview. And with only one tractor service for the district, it did not serve the rural poor as suggested by the DCE. Cost of service was equivalent to that of the private services of 40,000 cedis (£11 at 3,850 cedis to a pound sterling in 1998) per acre which was far beyond the reach of the poor people. Most of the people in the study villages were not aware of the district tractor services and many do not have sufficient land to make mechanised land preparation appropriate.

Assembly members in Adansi West District Assembly also expressed the view that development projects are the main strategy for poverty alleviation; even though they recognised the fact that creation of jobs in the villages is vital for poverty alleviation. An assembly member noted that:

“Before we are voted to power we make the people aware that we are capable of ‘fighting’ for social services that are lacking in the villages. This is the trend of politics we have inherited and if the people are satisfied that you are able to deliver, they vote

for you. So I do all my best to make sure that my election promises are fulfilled else I am in trouble.”

Interviews with 15 DA bureaucrats and 12 Assembly members confirmed the fact that provision of social services was high on the DA agenda of poverty alleviation in the Adansi West district. Table 6.3 below, shows the single most important strategy perceived by Assembly members and District Assembly officials to reduce poverty.

Table 6.3: Response of Assembly members and DA officials on their perception of poverty alleviation strategies

Strategies	Bureaucrats		Assembly members	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Employment	3	20	-	-
Social services (clinics, boreholes, schools etc)	8	53.3	9	75
Agriculture (improvements)	2	13.3	1	8.3
Mobilisation/education	1	6.7	-	-
Micro-credit	1	6.7	2	16.7
Total	15	100	12	100

Source: Interviews with 15 officials and 12 Assembly members, Adansi West District, 1998

The District Assembly, therefore, has as its poverty alleviation strategy: the provision of social services and infrastructure, which are basically lacking in rural areas and which show such differences between rural and urban areas. The livelihood of the people is still not high on their agenda.

6.7.1 Provision of development projects in the study districts

Provision of social services and infrastructure to a greater proportion of the rural communities depends upon the inflow of revenue into the District Assembly. The Adansi West District Assembly enjoys a greater financial advantage than the Nadowli District Assembly because it receives mineral royalties from the Ashanti Goldfield Limited and huge sums of money as property rate from the surface and underground plant and machinery of the mining company. This district also receives a bigger share of the District Assembly

Common Fund (DACF), in addition to the substantial urban revenue received from major commercial activities associated with the operation of the mining company.

Access to information on revenue and expenditure in both districts was very difficult. In the Adansi West District, I was instructed to write a formal letter to request for data on revenue and expenditure. The final instruction by the District Chief Executive directed that the books should not be sent out and that all data which I intended to take out should be discussed with the authorities for permission to be granted. In this Assembly, records appeared to be properly kept and are computerised. Data on revenue are shown in table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Information on the level of revenue from Adansi West District Assembly from 1993-1997

Local Sources	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Rates	106,256,820	107,051,820	107,602,872	168,312,293	215,715,000
Fees/Fines	69,578,700	5,397,080	62,067,035	71,635,230	76,470,000
Licences	16,045,300	16,349,480	20,652,460	43,509,700	47,771,000
Lands/others	903,000	25,629,740	27,044,978	48,206,620	150,000,000
Trading/Investment	2,372,000	8,165,145	27,222,709	42,513,7000	42,000,000
Rent (Assembly Prop.)	512,300	11,232,700	10,342,700	18,818,456	20,691,600
Miscellaneous	2,403,418	22,796,061	889,606	385,500	400,400
Sub-Total (Local)	198,071,534	244,621,976	255,822,360	393,381,449	553,047,600
External Sources					
Stool Lands	4,500,000	5,957,642	4,321,405	21,988,219	25,000,000
Grants (Salaries)	39,514,483	40,279,983	100,249,340	183,562,212	216,000,000
Ceded Revenue		12,051,210	18,742,543	19,696,426	20,000,000
Common Fund		392,100,000	547,100,000	795,590,000	1,049,770,000
Mineral Royalties	259,570,459	244,946,990	765,917,193	777,796,341	800,000,000
E.U. Micro Projects					240,000,000
Sub Total (External)	303,584,939	695,335,825	1,436,330,481	1,798,633,198	2,350,770,000
Grand Total	501,656,477	939,957,801	1,692,152,841	2,192,014,647	2,903,817,600

Source: Adansi West District Assembly

One important hindrance to effective local government in Ghana since independence has always been the inadequacy of internal revenue to meet the recurrent and development needs of the district, thus making them dependent on central government and consequent financial control from the centre. This undermines their ability to exercise their devolved powers. In Adansi West district, external sources of revenue have exceeded internal sources throughout

the period (1993-97) shown in table 6.4. The same situation pertains in Nadowli district, (see table 6.5) even though it has a much lower revenue than Adansi West district.

Table 6.5: Information on the level of revenue from Nadowli District Assembly, for 1994, 1996 and 1997 (data for 1993 and 1995 is not available).

Local Sources	1994	1996	1997
Rates	6,304,420	5,661,850	8,045,250
Fees/Fines	4,172,750	5,649,300	17,995,938
Licences	639,550	6,611,200	6,934,500
Lands/others	20,000	784,380	-
Trading/Invt.	166,000	1,962,456	28,265,437
Rent (Assembly Prop.)	3,690	67,200	971,700
Miscellaneous	650,000	1,471,960	7,575,301
Sub-Total (Local)	11,956,410	22,208,346	69,788,126
External Sources			
Grants (Salaries)	-	-	67,071,844
Ceeded Revenue	12,867,386	22,585,502	20,083,333
Common Fund	-	40,606,162	679,571,000
NGO Support	-	-	25,000,000
Sub-Total (External)	12,867,386	63,191,664	761,736,177
Grand Total	24,823,796	85,400,010	831,524,303

Source: Nadowli District Assembly

Adansi West district Assembly is able to extend projects to many villages in the district because of its mineral royalties and related revenue. It must be noted, however, that there is no directive, to promote even distribution of projects in all areas in the districts. Allocation of projects depends upon the seriousness and commitment of the assembly member to development of the area and to some extent his/her political leaning and association with the District Chief Executive. In a focus group discussion in Adansi West district, a sub-chief remarked:

“I have told our representatives to get nearer to the ‘Power Base’ and if need be, align him/herself with them politically so we can also have more projects to help our people. After all at the end of the day, it is the welfare of our people and not our political allegiance that matter”

In addition to assisting community-initiated projects, there are also projects from the District Assembly Common Fund, NGO Support Fund (in Nadowli district) and the European Union

Fund, provided through its decentralised co-operation programme. All these are thinly spread in the districts in order to reach many communities. Unlike the Nadowli district, development activities in the Adansi West district are very well documented. Projects from the contract register for 1994-1998 in Adansi West district are shown in table 6.6. Projects in Nadowli District are shown in table 6.7 for the years 1994,1996 and 1997.

Table 6.6: Location and cost of projects undertaken in Adansi West District Assembly 1994-1998

Local Government Sector

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>COST(Cedis)</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
Construction of Drains	14,866,635	Obuasi	Completed
FM.Station	108,611,497	Obuasi	---do---
Open-Sided Market Sheds	52,677,240	Obuasi	---do---
Structure: Oil-Palm Processing	9,300,000	Akrokerri	---do---
Market Sheds (Wawase)	35,804,571	Obuasi	on-going
Market Sheds (Kwabrafoso)	28,882,430	Obuasi	Completed
Administration Block (Annex)	682,886,4340	Obuasi	---do---
Administ. Block (Gd. Floor II)	492,720,808	Obuasi	---do---
Community centre	35,630,000	Fomena	---do---
Administration Blk.- Inter-com	65,408,000	Obuasi	on-going
Staff Bungalows (Site)	17,999,000	Obuasi	Completed
Staff Bungalows (construction)	600,000,000	Obuasi	on-going
Income Generating activities	40,000,000	District-wide	---do---
Computer Hardware	5,000,000	Obuasi	Supplied
Office Curtains	39,124,300	Obuasi	Supplied

Source: Adansi West District Assembly

**Table 6.7: Location and cost of projects undertaken in Nadowli District Assembly
1996-1997**

Local Government Sector

PROJECT	COST (Cedis)	LOCATION	STATUS
Area Council (constr.)	18,400,000	Sombo	completed
“ “ “	“	Sankana	-----do-----
“ “ “	“	Jang	-----d0-----
Area Council (Rehab.)	14,400,400	Nadowli	-----do-----
“ “ “	14,400,000	Daffiama	-----do-----
Police Post (Rehab)	11,420,855	Nadowli	-----do-----
Social Sevice Centre	11,800,000	Duong	-----do-----
District Admin. Blook	78,400,000	Nadowli	-----do-----

Source: Nadowli District Assembly

A cursory glance at the expenditure pattern may suggest that the District Assemblies are supporting the villages with development projects popular with the people; but certain factors cast serious doubt on their programme. They are the distribution of projects in favour of the district capitals, monies spent on, and the scale of rural and urban (district capital) projects (Acheampong, 1994:235).

The expenditure pattern in table 6.6 reveals that almost all the local government sector projects in Adansi West were undertaken in the district capital - Obuasi. Huge sums of money, amounting to more than that spent on all other towns together were spent on these projects. In the health and education sectors, as shown in tables 6.8 and 6.10 respectively, big projects with the highest cost components were established in Obuasi. The District capital and other major towns have by far the best range of services and infrastructure. Out of the 15 projects in the local government sector in Adansi West, only two were undertaken outside Obuasi. This shows how urban-biased development continues to be given prominence at the expense of the rural areas. In the health sector (table 6.8) projects were distributed to a few smaller towns but the urban bias is still clearly visible. The projects in the villages were small scale in nature, with costs ranging between 3 million cedis and 34 million cedis. The three projects in Obuasi ranged between 8 million cedis and 116 million

cedis. In the education sector (table 6.10), large scale projects, constituting about half of the total contract sum in this sector, were spent on projects in Obuasi. Almost all the Obuasi projects were large-scale and comprehensive.

The situation in Nadowli District Assembly shows a similar pattern in tables 6.7, 6.9 and 6.11. Even though there were relatively more projects numerically, in the villages, in both districts, they are small scale while those in the towns and district capitals are large scale projects. The cost of the Nadowli health centre, the junior secondary school, staff bungalows and District Assembly offices and halls are not reflected in the tables. These together confirm the notion that big and expensive projects are established in the district centres at the expense of projects in the numerous villages.

Table 6.8: Health Sector - Adansi West District Assembly

PROJECT	COST (Cedis)	LOCATION	STATUS
24-bed Ward	39,603,675	Obuasi	Completed
Staff Bungalow	8,882,331	---do---	---do---
Semi-detached Staff Quarters	25,462,290	---do---	---do---
Adansiman Clinic (Electrical Works)	2,561,500	Fomena	---do---
Renovation of MCH and Lab.	9,985,714	Akrokerri	---do---
Renovation of Health Centre	16,328,140	Akrofuom	---do---
24-bed Ward (Electrical Installation)	16,133,900	Obuasi	---do---
1 no. 125KVA Transformer for Clinic	7,000,000	Fomena	---do---
48-bed Hospital Ward	116,937,768	Obuasi	---do---
40 ft. Fence Wall (Health Centre)	10,792,350	Akrofuom	---do---
Plumbing Works (Health Centre)	3,682,500	Fomena	---do---
Security Fence (Health Centre)	83,299,067	Obuasi	---do---
Construction of Clinic	34,225,914	Mensonso	---do---
TOTAL	375,985,149		

Source: Adansi West District Assembly

Table 6.9: Health Sector/Sanitation - Nadowli District Assembly

PROJECT	COST	LOCATION	STATUS
Nurses quarters	22,827,645	Daffiama	Completed
--do--	24,127,654	Charikpong	--do--
--do--	21,127,654	Jang	--do--
Construction of 10-seater KVIP	13,500,000 each	Tabiesi, Bussie, Issa, Kaleo, Daffiama SSS, Kaleo SSS	All completed
		Kojoperi, Golli, Wogu, Jang	
		Dafiama, Nadowli SSS,	
		Nadowli Workers, Nadowli village, Nanvilli, Duong, Fian,	
		Takpo, Nator, Cherikpong,	
		Serekpere, Naro, Tabiesi,	
		Bussie, Sombo	

Source: Nadowli District Assembly

Table 6.10: Education Sector - Adansi West District Assembly

PROJECT	COST (Cedis)	LOCATION	STATUS
2 Unit Classroom Block	11,598,040	Akrokerri S.S	Completed
3 Unit Classroom Block	15,900,000	Ayaasi J.S.S.	---do---
Furniture for Primary Schools	32,753,000	Sikaman/Adam/Nkora.	Supplied
Headmaster's Bungalow - renovation	22,683,426	Dompase S.S.	---do---
4 Primary School Pavilions (open)	55,848,600	Ampunyase	---do---
3 Unit Classroom Block	23,742,257	Medoma	---do---
Completion of Bungalow	14,886,500	Akrokerri	---do---
2 Primary School Pavillions (open)	41,886,500	Mensonso/Dadwen	---do---
3 " " "	41,878,7000	Agogso/Ahensan/Anyi.	---do---
9 Unit Classroom Block	75,356,807	Medoma/Takyikrom	---do---
3 Unit Classroom block	37,935,850	Obuasi	---do---
2 Day-care Centres (Renovation)	2,900,050	Obuasi/Akrokerri	---do---
Cladding of Pavilions (6 villages)	53,474,020	Menso/Ahen/Adaase	---do---
6 Unit Classroom Block & Office	64,228,5960	Akrokerri/Takyikrom	---do---
12 Unit Single Storey - J.S.S	225,539,800	Obuasi	On-going
6 Unit Classroom Block	71,912,190	Kokotenten	completed
12 Unit Single Storey J.S.S. (Tutuka)	248,000,000	Obuasi	On-going
3 Unit school pavilion	29,962,040	Adukrom/Asasebombes	completed
Cladding of existing Pavilions	16,858,480	Anyinabrem/Amponyas	---do---
Cladding of existing Pavilions	16,580,000	Adukroba/Kubikwanta	---do---

Source: Adansi West District Assembly

Table 6.11: Education Sector - Nadowli District Assembly

PROJECT	COST (Cedis)	LOCATION	STATUS
Classroom Block 3-Units (Construction)	39,500,000	Gbanko, Damba, Takpo, Tabani, Daffiama, Kanyiguase	Completed
SSS Block	85,000,000	Nadowli	
SSS- Offices	23,500,000	Nadowli	
Day Care Centre	35,497,246	Nadowli	
JSS Workshop	33,450,000	Cherikpon, Kaleo, Nanvilli, Issa	
Dual Desk for District	60,000,000	Nadowli	
Cladding of Pavillions	13,074,253	Touri (A and B), Kanyini (A and B), Serekpere (A and B), Kojoperi	
Primary School	30,613,000	Puleba, Kalsegra	
Teachers Quarters	10,800,000	Yiziri, Loho, Gyili	
Staff Quarters	27,135,713	Nadowli	

Source: Nadowli District Assembly

6.7.2 Policy of the District Assemblies on poverty alleviation

Since the inception of the new Local Government System in Ghana, there has been no clear cut policy on poverty reduction. The main guidelines for the District Assemblies are stated in the booklet, 'New Local Government System' (Ghana, 1996a:12). It stipulates that the functions of the District Assemblies shall be as follows:

- be responsible for the over all development of the district and shall ensure the preparation and submission through the Regional Co-ordinating Council for approval of the development plans to the National Development Planning Committee and budget to the Ministry of Finance for the district.
- Formulate and execute plans, programmes and strategies for the effective mobilisation of the resources necessary for the overall development of the district.
- promote and support productive and social development in the district and remove any obstacle to initiative and development.
- initiate programmes for the development of basic infrastructure and services in the district.

There is no specific reference to rural poverty alleviation in the booklet which only sets out the institutional framework and general functions. The Ghana Government policy on poverty reduction was prepared by a Technical Committee on poverty and financed by the Ministry of Finance. This Report - 'Policy Focus for Poverty Reduction 1996' - suggests, among other things, that focus is needed to guide sectoral ministries/departments/agencies and other actors to prepare programmes, action plans and projects for poverty reduction. It also includes recommendations for institutional and co-ordinated arrangements for poverty-reduction activities, and poverty indicators and monitoring.

According to the report; 'District Assemblies shall improve their role in the provision of social services, maximise collection of local revenues and play a dynamic and catalytic role in strengthening the economic base of their communities and minimise their dependency on the central government'. The District Assemblies are therefore to strengthen the capacity of the sub-district organs to integrate poverty reduction programmes/projects into district plans and sub-district action plans. They are also to provide an enabling environment to assist the private sector, including communities and Non-Governmental Organisations, to contribute to the economic growth and social well-being of the local economy; protect vulnerable groups, particularly women and children; facilitate public participation as an integral part of the development process and enhance the ability of communities to engender social and economic change.

This policy document on poverty reduction specifically emphasises that the District Assemblies will;

- provide support for community initiatives directed towards the provision of social services and other development efforts.
- promote private investments with the aim of enhancing employment in the local economy, and
- improve the quality of the housing stock.

It is very doubtful if the District Assemblies have access to this national document since none of the bureaucrats or politicians in the study districts referred to it. They all, however, made mention of a recent directive from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to the effect that 20% of the District Assembly Common Fund should be used for poverty alleviation in the districts.

It is important to note that there was emphasis on social services and infrastructure in the document. Such documents are normally prepared at the instance of donors for grants and loans. Nothing has changed significantly in the activities of the District Assemblies on poverty alleviation. Over the past ten years the only change, perhaps, has been the recent directive from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to the Assemblies, on guidelines for the utilisation of the District Assemblies Common Fund, for poverty alleviation. This is examined in detail in the next section.

6.7.3 District Assemblies Common Fund and poverty alleviation in the study districts.

The underdevelopment of the rural areas and the problem of inadequate local fiscal resources to enable local governments to improve their situation, have persisted throughout the twentieth century in Ghana. With the general and specific functions to be performed by the District Assembly under the decentralisation programme since 1988, however, expectations of the people and the District Assembly have increased. There was unfortunately disappointment and frustration as the expectations aroused could not be fulfilled because of the limited financial resources available to the District Assemblies. Ayee (1994) noted that recurrent expenditure of all the District Assemblies accounted for between 85% and 87% of their expenditure. The District Assemblies generally fell far short of both their general and their specific statutory functions. Ayee (1995) maintained that:

“Given this record popular disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the District Assembly’s performance were high. In this regard, 80% of respondents of mass surveys conducted in Ho and the Keta districts in 1992 felt that the District Assemblies were incapable of addressing their development needs, while only 20% thought that the District Assemblies were an improvement on the former District Councils”.

The financial package under the Provisional National Defence Council did not improve the capacity of the District Assemblies to perform the functions assigned to them. It is unquestionably the weakness of local fiscal empowerment and the inability of the District Assemblies to initiate and finance numerous local developments, that led to the introduction of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) in 1994 to address the problem of inadequate finance of the District Assemblies.

The DACF is a constitutionally guaranteed fund providing not less than 5% of total government collected revenue. It is apportioned by a revenue-sharing formula approved by parliament (see section 3.8). It is a form of grant, from the central government, to empower fiscally the District Assemblies to carry out their development tasks. The District Assemblies, however, have very limited control over the utilisation of the Common Fund. Since its inception in 1994, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Accra has been issuing guidelines to District Assemblies, sector ministries and departments on how and what it has to be used for, including the selection and implementation of projects and budgeting and accounting for the funds.

In the 1997 guidelines to the District Assemblies on the utilisation of The Common Fund, three main policy directives which are supposed to reduce poverty were given:

1. Productivity improvement, employment and income generation.
2. Promoting and sustaining self-help initiatives
3. Rural housing improvement scheme.

6.7.3.1 Productivity improvement, employment and income generation

A directive from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development on the 14 March 1997 on the utilisation of the District Assemblies Common Fund (Ghana, 1997b:1) states that the District Assemblies may allocate not less than 20% of their shares of the DACF to support productivity improvement, employment and income generation in the district. Such allocations are to be lodged with a bank, appointed by the District Assembly to

administer the allocation as a Revolving Line of Credit on behalf of the Assembly, and the District Assembly is to extend credit to micro, small and medium size enterprises which have the potential to increase productivity, expand employment and improve incomes.

This policy is an attempt to put into practice one of the functions of the District Assembly which requires them to “promote and support productive and social development in the district and remove any obstacles to initiative and development”. The pattern of expenditure since the operation of the DACF has shown a marked absence of allocation to “promote and support productive ... development”. The ministry recognises the fact that the District Assemblies have concentrated on the provision of projects particularly in the health and education sectors. It therefore noted that

“Although the provision of basic infrastructure for District Administration, health, education, water and sanitation stands out as valid priority area in most districts, the growing incidence of poverty resulting from lack of significant expansion in productivity and employment opportunities give rise to serious concern and the need to design appropriate policy interventions to guide the District Assemblies to take affirmative actions to expand the economic base of their Districts and in so doing generate new revenues for the District Assembly”.

The main objective of the policy is to remove the obstacle of lack of access to credit for self employed, micro, small and medium scale entrepreneurs and to promote the development of micro, small and medium scale enterprises which have potential, but are constrained by lack of access to formal finance, to enhance productivity, create employment and improve incomes of the population. The Credit Approval Committee, which has to approve all proposed credits out of the Revolving and Credit Fund (as directed by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development) includes the following:

1. Presiding Member	-	chairman
2. District Chief Executive	-	member
3. Chairman of economic sub-committee	-	member
4. One farmer	-	member
5. One woman entrepreneur	-	member

Credit and loans will be made available for viable productive chain activities (farming, fishing, agro-processing, cottage industries, etc.). Activities which generate employment and which use indigenous inputs are to be given preference:

1. Viable service activities that form a vital link in the economic chain, for example, haulage of produce to market and trading centres and repairs of machinery, vehicles and equipment.
2. Viable private sector initiative which enhance access to priority public works and services, health, sanitation and education (for example, crèches/day nurseries, primary schools etc.) and the promotion of culture and tourism.

Beneficiaries, according to the directives, should be highly motivated individuals and groups of persons who propose viable projects. They may include:

- Entrepreneurs engaged in micro, small and medium scale enterprise which has the potential to employ 1 - 20 persons.
- Low-income women's groups.
- Registered self-employed persons and self-motivated groups of artisans who propose to undertake the development and delivery of sustainable priority public works and services.
- Crop specific farmers and fishermen (groups or individuals).
- Youth groups with potential to develop and deliver sustainable community services.

The credit may be given in cash or in kind or combined in the form of investment capital or working capital for enterprises and seasonal cash advances for farming and fishing activities.

Prospective beneficiaries of the credit scheme are required to make initial financial commitments equivalent to 20% or more of the total cost of their projects out of their own sources. A bank within the district is to be responsible for the credit delivery and recovery and no District Assembly is to directly manage the delivery and recovery of credit within its bureaucracy or directly establish, own or operate any enterprise or site and services scheme under this scheme.

6.7.3.2 Promoting and sustaining self-help initiatives

The District Assemblies may set aside not less than 10% of their allocation of the DACF to support and sustain self-help initiatives of communities in the district. This is targeted for disbursement to the 16,000 Unit Committees, and is meant to revive the old spirit of self-help in the rural communities which has waned as a result of a breakdown in institutional support, emanating from the general economic failures of the seventies. Projects to be supported must have a strong poverty focus, aimed at benefiting the most vulnerable groups in the district. Communities are to determine their own priorities in project selection, which are mainly water and sanitation, improvement to basic educational and health care infrastructure, rehabilitation and improvement of access to existing basic services. Participating communities will bear 30%-40% of the project cost in locally available materials or cash. Self-help projects could further be enhanced by donor official development assistance, targeted at community initiated projects - for example the European Union micro-projects, and the District Assemblies own generated revenue specifically earmarked for the purpose.

6.7.3.3 Rural housing improvement scheme

District Assemblies may also set aside not less than 5% of their share of the DACF for a special poverty reduction programme aimed at rural housing improvement. 'The overall vision of this initiative is to improve the quality of housing in the rural areas through the use of improved owner participation, financing and construction methods'. The beneficiaries are to be:

- farmers (including livestock raising and fishing)
- informal manufacturing, retailing and service (including labourers, street sweepers, food sellers etc.) sectors in the rural areas.

The project is targeted at areas identified as hard core poverty areas, with individual income per annum below 16,491 cedis in 1991, as assessed by the Ghana Living Standards Survey. Such hard core poverty areas were found to exist in all the districts especially the rural areas.

Estimated cost for rehabilitation requirements in respect of existing houses should not exceed 3 million cedis per beneficiary, while construction of a new house (two rooms, toilet, bath and kitchen) should not exceed 6 million cedis per beneficiary. But applicants must be gainfully employed in agriculture (farming, livestock rearing and fishing), informal sector manufacturing, retailing, or service delivery, public sector employment or their own income generating activity.

A Village Housing Committee (VHC) is to be responsible for the selection which must then be approved by a district housing committee. They will also assist in loan recovery. Membership of the VHC are as follows:

1. Two representatives of village traditional council - one of whom shall be chairman.
2. One Assembly man/woman
3. Two representatives of the Unit Committee
4. Two women leaders from the community.

A District Housing Committee is to provide supervisory technical and management assistance to VHCs and monitor projects in the villages. The Regional Co-ordinating Council is to also monitor implementation, and evaluate effectiveness of, the policy and propose revisions to the National Technical Committee. The National Housing Committee must ensure that the programme stays a poverty reduction one and does not get hijacked by the rich like previous low income housing schemes.

6.7.3.4 The impact of the DACF on the rural poor

It is very clear that the first policy - productivity improvement, employment and income generation - is not for the poor in the district. It is directed towards the richer elements who need access to credit for enhancing the capacity of existing and new micro, small and medium scale enterprises. This, it is hoped, will boost the district economy with expansion in productivity and employment opportunities. The policy completely excludes the poor, because beneficiaries must make initial financial commitments equivalent to 20% or more of the total cost of their project out of their own resources. The poor are grappling with the

problem of how to feed themselves and their families and do not have savings enough to be able to access the credit facility

The composition of the Credit Approval Committee makes it a continuation of the top-down process. It could be politically oriented if the presiding member and chairman of the Economic Development Sub-Committee are appointed members (which is usually the case). The appointment of the farmer and woman entrepreneur is likely to be directed by the District Chief Executive. The chief farmers for both districts have been appointed to serve on the committee. The whole process can be politically hijacked, thereby ruining the intended objectives to the detriment of the district economy. The Adansi West District Chief Executive intimated that the district spent 20 million cedis on poverty alleviation, mainly on poor farmers. It was, however, revealed during my fieldwork in the villages that this amount went to party members and the 31 December Women's Movement. 1996 was an election year and the money was given out to the supposed farmers mainly to win political support. It is, therefore, doubtful whether this micro finance from the Common Fund is likely to be anything other than another means for securing political capital. In both districts, people in the study villages did not know anything about the loan facilities but many applications had already been received in the district offices! In Adansi West District, allocations to prospective beneficiaries had been made. Nadowli and Adansi West districts had allocated an initial amount of 20 million and 40 million cedis respectively to the programme.

The third policy (provision of credit to rehabilitate existing houses or construct new ones) had the rural poor as its target. Because of the top-down bureaucratic nature of the policy and lack of knowledge of rural priorities and realities, rehabilitation and construction of houses is what the ministry think the poor need. But the very nature of the policy deselects the poor. How can a 'hard core' poor person in a village, earning 16,491 cedis per annum (1991/92) (i.e. £4 - at 3850 cedis to a pound sterling (1997/98) be given a loan of 3 million cedis for rehabilitation and 6 million cedis for building a new house. How does s/he repay the loan since she or he makes no savings? Applicants must also be gainfully employed. This is contradictory, since the target group, the poor, are engaged in subsistence agriculture.

The target group are those mostly engaged in farming (subsistence, livestock raising and fishing) and informal manufacturing, retailing and service including labourers, street sweepers, food sellers etc. in the rural areas. This category of people in Ghana for the most part cannot be said to be gainfully employed. The programme for the poor, therefore, excludes the poor by the criteria to disburse the funds. The funds for rural housing could also be hijacked by the rural and urban rich as well as the political elites. Even though most people in the study villages, especially Nadowli district, live in predominantly sub-standard mud houses, none of them mentioned housing as their priority in poverty alleviation. This is a clear indication of top-down planning and thinking for the poor which derails poverty alleviation programmes.

6.8 Overall Impact of poverty alleviation strategies implemented since 1988

It is important at this point in the chapter to discuss the impact on the rural people of the poverty alleviation policies of the District Assemblies. This is an attempt to investigate the role of the District Assemblies in affecting the well-being of the people - provision of social services, infrastructure, levels of productivity and incomes. The study has so far shown that the developmental priorities of the District Assemblies are social services and infrastructure oriented.

There is much talk about poverty and reducing poverty by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the District Assemblies, but it often seems that very little is done in practical terms about it. The District Assembly officials in both study districts maintain that they are meeting the needs of the people through a variety of projects in various communities. They are of the opinion that progress has been made in the provision of services by the District Assembly compared to the District Councils of the past. What the District Assembly has consistently failed to recognise is the fact that the push to provide social services is not matched with efforts to ensure accessibility by the poor people. The provision of these social services to some extent becomes a blessing and at the same time a curse: a blessing because the people appreciate the fact that there has been a relative

increase in the number of projects in the districts even though they are not evenly distributed. A curse because they are not easily accessible to the poor people. This can be seen with reference to basic social services.

6.8.1 Health and education

In Nadowli District Assembly the health centre in the district capital, Nadowli, has no doctor and serious cases are referred to Jirapa hospital 22 miles away. Of the four villages studied in Nadowli district, only Dafiama has a health post and there is no doubt that accessibility to health services is very poor. The current cost recovery system of the government, resulting from Structural Adjustment Programmes, is laden with a myriad of hidden costs such as travelling costs in rural areas to health centres, under the counter payment to receive medical services, and the non-exemption of those who officially should be exempted from paying health care services. This has made orthodox medical consultation very high. As indicated in section 5.4.1 most of the rural people, therefore, rely on herbalists and only occasionally go to clinics.

In the Adansi West district, two of the five villages studied have no clinics but clinics are within two to five kilometres reach. However, as in the north, some depend on traditional medicine. In Obuasi the district capital, the Ashanti Goldfield hospital treats spouses and close relatives of workers free of charge but other people are treated at very exorbitant prices far beyond the reach of the poor. In both Nadowli and Adansi West districts people were concerned about the high cost of medical bills. A nursing sister at Nadowli Health Centre noted that:

“As a result of the enforcement of the exemption of the aged from payment of fees, we have recorded 60% attendance rate by the old people”.

However, such exemption enforcement is rarely implemented.

A review of education provides a similar story. Apart from Badabuo in Nadowli district, all the villages in both districts have primary schools (see table 4.1). In all the villages in both districts there were many children of school going age who were not in school (see section 5.4.2). Parents are not able to afford the cost of education despite the government’s ‘Free

Compulsory Universal Basic Education policy.” A parent in Tangasie in Nadowli district lamented:

“Getting a child to school which they say it’s free means the cost of uniforms, books, furniture and development fees which is not easy and even impossible for some of us to pay”

Predictably, large numbers of children drop out of school owing to the inability of their parents to finance their educational needs. Cost sharing in education and its consequences for the poor involve more than tuition. While tuition fees may be kept low or even eliminated for primary school, parents are often asked to pay fees for school development funds, exercise books, uniforms, personal equipment, and to provide in-kind services for the construction and maintenance of primary schools (Adams and Hartnett, 1996:23).

The steps taken by the government of Ghana to diversify the financing of social services and share the cost with communities and users (to lower the demand for government spending) have produced their own risks for the poor’s access to basic social services (Adams and Hartnett, 1996:5). Indications of the study, so far, are that even though the District Assemblies purport to concentrate on poverty alleviation (and the rural people appreciate the projects implemented by the District Assemblies), it is not having its desired impact on the rural people. The Assemblies do not seem to care about the enormous human potential that is being permitted to depreciate through this policy. Whereas the Ghana Living Standard Survey findings suggested an improvement in basic education, measured by the increase in physical school structures (the pride of the District Assemblies), the Participatory Poverty Assessment (Korboe, 1994; Norton et al., 1995) pointed out conclusively that the quality of education was declining. This was attributed partly to the fact that while there has been an increase in physical structures, and possibly in school attendance rates, this has not been accompanied by an equal increase in training of more teachers, leading to high teacher pupil ratios in the villages. In Tangasie in Nadowli district for example, classes 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6 had been combined for lack of teachers. According to the Deputy Director of education in Nadowli:

“out of the 77 teachers posted to the district in 1997/98 as many as 31 have not reported and a sizeable number of those who reported had gone back”.

Producing the desired impact on the health, education, water and sanitation of the rural poor goes beyond littering the villages with District Assembly and European Union construction projects. Buildings do not produce quality care and high education standards or, above all, income for easy access to the services. Concern for improving the quality of education will prove elusive unless the government, through the District Assemblies, looks to improving the provision of textbooks, teachers and other inputs.

6.8.2 Livelihoods

The District Assemblies in the study districts have not been able to reach poor communities and specific social groups within those communities (differentiated by gender, income, age etc.) and to do so in a manner that responds to the needs and priorities of the poor. Care for the poor has, therefore, been generally carried out by institutions of kinship or community. The District Assemblies in both districts are not seen as contributing to improvement in the local economic condition. A woman in Puleba (Nadowli district) lamented:

"We continue to face extreme hardships day after day as we do not have any access to credit facilities, we continue to sell most of our grains immediately after harvest with low prices and there seems to be no help from any where.

We do all we can to pay our children's fees and provide other needs too - we are suffering. The District Assembly is not a helper at all in our poverty predicament".

In both districts there was a unanimous response from the rural poor that the District Assemblies have had no beneficial impact on their livelihood systems. Poor farmers find it difficult to have access to such inputs as cutlass, seeds, fertiliser, insecticides and extension services, the cost of which are very high because of privatisation resulting from the Structural Adjustment Programmes. Marketing is also a problem for them. The District Assemblies do not have their livelihood as their priority. A middle aged man in Akrokerri noted:

“Poverty?, the District Assembly has done nothing about it, we have to struggle to get out of poverty ourselves. I have used my physical strength all my life in farming without any help (credit facilities and inputs) to expand my farm and harvest more for sale. At the moment none of my children is in this village - they have gone to the city to work. They hate farming because of the problems we have gone through. If we villagers are helped to expand our farms and get more money we could provide good school buildings, toilets etc. for our villages. After all we have been contributing for a long time to cater for our community needs. Tell them we need help to expand our farms” (interview, Adansi West District, 1998).

At a personal level, the rural people in the two study districts see the root to the solution of the poverty problem as enhancement of their livelihood. This, the District Assemblies have ignored; they are rather committed to the alleviation of poverty through community level provision of social services but these are not easily accessible to the people.

Chambers et al (1992:6-8) define livelihood in its simplest form as a means of gaining a living. ‘A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation’. This definition does not wholly emphasise employment or a job, but rather command over flows of food and cash, over productive assets and over assets which can be buffers against contingencies, enabling poor people to meet sudden or major needs (Chambers: 1985:9).

The main livelihood activities in the two study districts, as described in sections 4.2.2.3 and 4.2.4.3 comes from arable farming, small scale agro-processing, petty trading and in Nadowli livestock rearing. Teachers and other government workers (and miners in Adansi West district) as well as traders engage in agricultural activities in addition to their full time jobs.

Livelihood priorities or preferences, however, are varied in the study villages (see fig 6.12) below. In Puleba in Nadowli district and Wioso in Adansi West district, participants in a focus group discussion were asked to indicate the most important livelihood activities they preferred. Pebbles were used for the scoring.

Table 6.12: Preference (priorities) of women and men regarding interventions for livelihood improvement

Inputs	Men's (Puleba)		Women (Puleba)		Men (Wioso)		Women (Wioso)	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Micro/start-up capital	4	4	10	1	9	1	10	1
Wage employment	1	5	2	6	6	3	1	4
High farm gate price (improved marketing)	6	3	3	5	5	4	6	2
Equipment/tools/ extension services	9	2	4	4	8	2	3	3
Land for farming	0	6	6	2	2	5	0	5
Small scale dams	10	1	5	3	0	6	0	6

10 = High; 1 = Low

Source: Focus group discussion in two off-road villages – Puleba (Nadowli district) involving 11 men aged between 19 and 70 years. and 14 women aged between 22-62 years and Wioso (Adansi West district) involving 9 men and 15 women (ages not taken)

Villagers in Nadowli district were more concerned about intensification of production of food for consumption (food security) before marketing the remaining to improve income and wealth accumulation. Men wanted small scale dams to be provided in the villages and bush farms for farming throughout the year to increase their incomes and also halt the seasonal migration in the area. Women on the other hand were particularly keen on credit to start/expand their off-farm economic activities. As clearly shown in fig 6.12 - small scale dams and agricultural inputs, including extension services occupied men's priorities for all year round farming for good harvest. Women, however, desire to own land, intensify their farming and combine it with other income generating activities.

In Adansi West district support for agricultural activities was also the priority. Rural men mainly sought agrochemicals, tools, extension services or know-how/skills and credit for the expansion of farms. As shown in fig 6.11 men in Wioso ranked agricultural inputs and micro

capital to expand farms high in their ranking . They were concerned about increased productivity at farm level. Korboe (1998) has noted that:

“while acknowledging the wealth of indigenous knowledge exhibited by deprived people, the enhancing value of education cannot be ignored. In this kind of situation, some sensitivity would be necessary when introducing and executing skill-strengthening activities. A deliberate and explicit linking of skills bridging activities to credit may be helpful in encouraging participation in the former”.

Women in Adansi West district, as shown in (see fig 6.11) desire start-up capital for both farming and income generating activities such as trading. Improved marketing was also important to the women in Wioso. It is significant to note that there was similarities between villages in both districts but much difference between the districts because of their natural endowments and different economic activities.

In both districts, there is overwhelming evidence from field interviews that communities lack access to, and control of, vital production inputs and face a range of other constraints to improve livelihood. These are summarised as follows:

- Lack of access to land. Women do not own land and they can only access land through the generosity and goodwill of their husbands who control the land. Single women are therefore faced with significant barriers to access land. There is reportedly persistent reduction in fertility of land in Nadowli district and, coupled with unreliable rainfall, this is a major problem.
- Lack of micro-capital in both districts to provide animal traction, simple machines for processing crops, good agricultural tools, subsidised tractor services.
- Start-up capital especially for women to earn extra incomes. There is also delayed delivery of capital for farming purposes to the farmers who have access to capital.
- Prices and marketing - post harvest prices are so low but farmers in Nadowli district have to sell a greater proportion of the grains immediately after harvest to survive. Consequent seasonal price dips leave them with little grain through the rest of the year. There is a lack of powerful negotiating bodies to face the strong city-based market queens, who take advantage of the rural sellers through their powerful networks, to offer them lower prices. Virtually unmotorable roads during the rainy season are another problem which leaves

only few vehicles, if any, to ply such roads with high fares. Higher farmgate prices and improved marketing could be two of the best routes to help rural farmers, though these are complex issues.

- Persistent outmigration of the rural youth. This is a problem in both districts but the seasonal outmigration of people in Nadowli is a major issue. It is becoming a permanent feature, and it entrenches further the vicious circle of poverty in which women and children are left behind. The main reason is lack of access to alternative livelihood sources for the dry season when vulnerability is highest in northern Ghana.
- Lack of access to wage opportunities in the villages.
- Entrenched vulnerability in the northern savannah means that livestock are perceived as an insurance against extreme adversity rather than as business capital. In some communities, labour intensive smallholder agriculture is similarly undermined by the poor health and nutritional status of the farming populations (Korboe, 1998).

As the foregoing discussion has shown, the District Assemblies have very little to do with the livelihood of the people. They have failed to view development and poverty alleviation holistically because they have put projects first instead of putting people first. It is, therefore, not surprising that the bureaucratic intervention from the District Assemblies has not had its desired impact on poverty. The neglect of the livelihood issue by District Assemblies will certainly make it difficult to improve the poverty situation of the rural people. There is the need for a bottom-up approach based on local (sub-district) social organisations working at community level that are compatible with the norms, values and traditions of the poor and which enjoy their trust (particularly regarding avoidance of excessive risks) (Bakhit, 1996:30). The poor have to come to grips with their changing environment. They have to develop a vision of the goals they want to achieve and of what they can do to reach them (Munkner, 1996).

6.9 Conclusion

In low income countries like Ghana, the poor must be identified, and policies must be chosen by the poor that best help them, given the available resources. Information on the socio-economic characteristics of the poor and the population as a whole is crucial. Given the political will to confront poverty, one of the most important tasks is to gather accurate information on the poor from the poor. It is important to have a district poverty-focused data set which expresses the voice of the people in its communities. This the District Assemblies have failed to do, therefore rendering their poverty alleviation policies ineffective. Munkner (1998:53) has asserted that:

“the ultimate goal of all efforts to alleviate poverty by better use of locally available resources must be seen in the development of self-confidence and self-reliance, local leadership elected and controlled by the local people, an enhanced capacity of local people to make possible and prudent uses of local resources for local development”

This involves bottom-up reliance on local leadership where the people take control. It involves training to impart problem solving skills and goal achievement strategies to complement relevant local knowledge; it also involves use of local resources. Such an approach would be of great help to the District Assemblies in their efforts to alleviate poverty in rural Ghana. The next chapter examines in detail the issue of participation of the rural people in the development process under the DAs

CHAPTER 7: RURAL PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION: VIEWS FROM THE GRASSROOTS

7.1 Introduction

In Ghana, popular participation in which the local people are actively involved in the development process constitutes one of the major official objectives of the Local Government Reforms. Ayee (1994:124) emphasised that one of the main objectives of the decentralisation policy of the PNDC was to give “power to the people” who had been marginalised over the years in national politics.

Ghana's public administration reform which is currently being pursued with the District Assembly (as part of the reforms) is part of the nation's approach to poverty reduction. The following measures have been adopted (Kobieh, 1997):

- to devolve authority to the district level.
- to divest the centre of implementation responsibilities and transfer same to the districts.
- to promote popular grassroots participation in the administration of the various areas concerned from the stand points of planning, implementation, monitoring and delivery of those services which go to improve the living conditions of the people; and achieve the orderly, fair and balanced development of the whole country.

Many past failures of external development planning are now ascribed to failure to perceive the prevailing economic and political context of low income countries. Lack of consultation and ignorance of local conditions is perceived to have led to a lack of commitment on the part of intended beneficiaries. Participation as a prescription for amending past failures has become a ‘holy cow’ among most of the world's governments, traditional international financial institutions, bilateral donor agencies and NGOs. It is seen as the most effective tool for delivering development (Feeney, 1998:9). ‘This enthusiasm may be related to the fact that participation is a nebulous term which does not impose any specific set of obligations on donors and governments’ (ibid:9). Participation has, therefore, become a ‘Hurray’ word which radiates warmth to its users and hearers

(Turbyne, 1992,cited in White, 1996:7), and a “mantra” articulated by NGO staff, donors, and development agencies alike (Hailey, 1998).

The concept of popular participation in development is not new; it emerged as a result of the search for alternative development strategies in the 1970s (Mulwa, 1994:18). Under the Structural Adjustment Programmes self-help and/through participation has become a substitute for the direct state provision of basic social services. Concepts such as ‘participation’, ‘empowerment’, ‘bottom-up planning’ and ‘indigenous knowledge’, have become so popular that many development projects claim to adopt a form of participatory approach encompassing ‘bottom up’ planning and ‘beneficiary involvement; in order to ‘empower’ local people and thus provide a greater sense of ownership (Henkel and Stirrat, 1998:1).

This chapter examines participation in the development process prior to and under the District Assemblies. It briefly looks at the traditional ways of decision making and participatory action at community level and assesses voices and views from the grassroots to ascertain their level of involvement in the decision making process. It considers the extent to which the rural people have been empowered to take their destiny into their own hands in socio-economic development at the sub-district level. The chapter concludes with the perceptions of the rural people of the District Assemblies and obstacles to effective participation under the current local government system.

7.2 The concept of participation

Participation is a difficult word to define. It defies precise definition and it is used by a variety of people and groups in different circumstances to mean different things. White (1996:7) maintains that ‘its seeming transparency - appealing to ‘the people’ - masks the fact that participation can take on multiple forms and serve many different purposes. In fact it is precisely this ability to accommodate such a broad range of interests that explains why participation can command such widespread acclaim’.

Participation connotes involvement and the act of taking part in some activities with other people. Some may understand it to be the contribution of material and financial

resources. To the politician 'it implies manipulative rhetoric, trying to woo and capture people's approval of their leadership and representation in a higher bureaucratic consultative position' (Mulwa, 1994:16). Government bureaucrats have often perceived participation as synonymous with people's contribution of free labour and money for the implementation of imposed government development plans and policies. This becomes the surest way of supplementing scarce government resources (ibid.:16).

According to the World Bank (1996c:3), participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and decisions and resources which affect them. The Bank emphasises participation of disadvantaged people (those disadvantaged in terms of wealth, education, ethnicity or gender), to influence decisions that affect their lives. Participation then implies influence on and involvement in development decisions, not just involvement in the implementation of benefits of development programmes or projects (Feeney, 1998:15). Oxfam, an international NGO, gives support to and advocates wider participation of poor communities in development. Oxfam maintains that:

"participation is a fundamental right. It is a means of engaging poor people in joint analysis and the development of priorities. It's ultimate goal should be to foster the existing capacities of local poor women and men to increase their self-reliance in ways that outlast specific projects. The purpose of participation is to give a permanent voice to the poor or the marginalised people and integrate them into the decision making structures and processes that shape their lives" (Feeney, 1998:8)

White (1996:7) has emphasised the issue of politics in development planning and asks two important questions: who participates, and what is the level of participation? The former question relates to the issue of the very disadvantaged, the poor, being brought into the process. The latter relates to full participation in management and decision-making. White (1996), makes important distinctions in the participation spectrum which are relevant to the Ghanaian situation, (though they may not appear in 'pure' form): these are nominal, instrumental, representative and transformative participation.

Nominal participation is participation where individuals or groups exist in name, without being part of the decision making, financial contribution, implementation and evaluation. Zambia's women's groups provides a good example. They have been formed for many

years, but women do not attend meetings and the groups mainly serve the function of display (White, 1996:8). Many people in Ghanaian villages are nominal participants in the District Assemblies' activities, since they are hardly involved in anything at all. (They may, however, participate in their own self-help projects).

Instrumental participation operates under the District Assemblies in Ghana. This operates because, under the Structural Adjustment Programmes, there is a restriction on government funding for essential infrastructure and social services. People's participation may, therefore, be necessary to provide the labour for local schools. The people's labour is regarded as 'local counterpart funds' (White, 1996:7), which becomes a means of ensuring their commitment to the project. 'Its function is a means to achieve cost-effectiveness, on the one hand, and a local facility, on the other' (ibid.:8).

Representative participation involves giving people a voice in shaping the character of development projects. In Ghana this is done through voting representatives to the District Assembly. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section. Participation thus takes on a representative form, being a means through which the people may express their own views, interest and priorities.

Transformative participation conveys the idea of empowerment where the people are involved in

“considering options, making decisions and taking collective action to fight injustice. It leads on to greater consciousness of what makes and keeps people poor, and greater confidence in their ability to make a difference (White, 1996:9).

In Ghana, politicians and bureaucrats have been rhetorical about empowerment, but it is far from a reality.

Following from the above discussion of participation, it is clear that participation is a progression (Acheampong. 1994:26):

- firstly, mobilisation of the people in socio-economic development projects to enhance the living conditions of the poor people,

- then, participation under the District Assemblies with decentralisation of decision-making process and resources to sub-district units. Elected representatives influence policy at the district level on behalf of the people.
- subsequently, the above two may proceed further into empowerment of the people who have been politically and economically neglected.

Mobilisation of the people to undertake development projects has been practised in Ghana since the advent of colonisation. People in villages and towns, led by their development committees and chiefs, collect levies among themselves to finance development projects. They contribute their own labour and implement their own development projects. Crook (1991) correctly recognised the enduring significance of the idea of participation in local communities when he noted that, 'in Ghana, a sense of local community and a willingness to participate have not been destroyed in spite of the crises of the central state'.

7.3 Traditional participation in rural Ghana

Since independence (and before), internally generated participation at the village level has been aimed at development projects which are of benefit to the communities. This is undertaken under the chiefs and elders, Village Development Committees and other such youth recreation and social clubs, occupational and social associations. These Community Based Organisations (CBOs) 'tend to focus on narrower peer-centred interests, ideas generated at this level are usually implemented unilaterally as the intended benefits are perceived to be internal to the group' (Korboe, 1998). Interaction among groups (sometimes as pressure groups) may lead to development of ideas which may be perceived as relevant and useful to the larger community. These may be transmitted through various existing structures through group leaders to the Town/Village Development Committees. Youth and social club leaders may be members of the committees.

The chief and his elders are then informed to solicit support. The chief and elders wield enough power to uphold or dismiss a new idea if they think it will not be in the interest of the community or a priority. If found worthy, the chief instructs the 'town crier' to summon the people in the village to a meeting, usually on a 'sacred day', market day, or

festive occasion when residents do not go to farm. The chief and /or his elders and the community leaders meet the people and invite opinions about their decision. This may result in the modifications of the original idea (Acheampong, 1994:179). In a united community with a highly respected chief who is trusted and committed to their welfare, the only recurring echoes are of concur and gratitude. If it is deemed that assistance is needed from the council or local authority, the leaders led by the chief send a message to or seek audience with the authorities. Financial obligations of members are also discussed and time for collection and communal labour is also agreed upon.

Korboe (1998) maintains that, when conducted in an open and skilful manner, these meetings are a powerful medium for dispelling suspicion, achieving common understanding of the problems, and agreeing on objectives and prospects for change. Much importance is attached to consensus building in these communities despite the associated cost in time. Maximum participation in meetings and communal labour is ensured by clan, family or area-based sections of the community. However, although 'the public forum introduces an element of consultation and it is an open invitation for people to be part of the determination of community affairs... its efficacy as a procedure of participation in decision-making is limited' (Acheampong, 1994:181). The decision making process continues to be dominated by the elite which wields power at that level. It must be noted that, in such meetings, the less influential (reckoned as the poorest, women, children and those on the lowest rung of the social ladder) do not speak. However, interaction within the clan and family broadens the base of participation at this level, giving voice to the poorest and weak in the village. Levies to finance projects are mobilised, with women usually paying half the rate levied from men. Non-resident citizens living in towns and cities are considered to be richer and are required to pay significantly higher rates. 'No matter how small levies are, they remain a powerful mechanism for consolidating community commitment to the projects' (Korboe, 1998). With the enthusiasm generated by the coming into being of the District Assembly and election of the Assembly man/woman, communities expected greater involvement in the decision-making process.

7.4 Assembly members and participation

One of the novel features of the District Assembly system was the introduction of non-party elections for Assembly members (one from each village area) as a mechanism of encouraging popular participation. Assembly members were elected with the view that power would thus not be narrowly concentrated in the hands of bureaucrats at the district capitals. People would be involved in the decision-making process and share considerable power with officials at the district level. The government emphasised that it was concerned about rural problems and that, through the District Assemblies, self-help and community initiatives would be encouraged. This was to be accompanied by resources to boost local development. Expectations of the local people of community development were, therefore, high. Voting the Assembly member was just one of the forms of participation. Ahwoi (1995:9) the Minister for Local Government noted that

“we have been careful to ensure that popular participation does not begin and end with the election into office of our bodies of local authorities, that is the District Assemblies, only”.

Since the Assembly member was elected to cater for the interest of the people, to achieve this, she or he:

1. must be in constant touch with the people, interact with them frequently and explain government policies in a language easily understood by them.
2. interact with the people on issues to be sent to the Assembly meetings. She or he collates these views and proposals to be presented at Assembly meetings.
3. is expected to meet with the electorate at least once in every three months to interact with those in his/her electoral area and receive information, complaints etc.
4. must report to the electorate on issues discussed at the Assembly and policies of the Executive Committee and practical actions taken by the Assembly to solve some of the problems previously raised by the people.

The Assembly members are then seen to represent the views of the people; and see themselves as implementers of the people's views, hopes and aspirations (Ahwoi, 1992:25). They have been voted by their people to fight for their share of the resources of

the district and as community leaders, animators of local self-efforts. The Assembly Members are locally rooted, community leaders, ordinary people and community activists, mostly politically uncommitted 'except for the small core of well-known regime sympathisers on each Assembly. They were not the dominant 'absentee' urban elite which characterised local politics in Ghana' (Crook and Manor, 1998:215).

Other formal bodies through which the people can interact with the District Assembly - Unit Committees located in the villages, - could not be put in place until recently (May, 1998) (see. section 3.5.3). It is important to note that the only opportunities for popular participation prior to the Unit Committee elections at the village level were between the Assembly member and his/her electorate (either through meetings with village groups or individuals) or through actually developing and implementing local projects, mostly self-help (Ayee, 1994:125).

Acheampong (1994:165) is of the view that the state of interaction between people and their representative Assembly men/women by 1993/94 contrasted with what existed in the very early stages of the District Assembly operations. Members in the late 1980s were then in regular contact with the people in their electoral areas, giving credence to the element of accountability inherent in the Assembly system. Acheampong noted that the activities of the Assemblies have gradually deviated from this pattern. Enthusiasm generated in the late 1980s began to be eroded when the needs of the people were not met in relation to development projects. This was because the Assembly's revenue could not cope with the increasing demands made by the people.

The insolvent financial position of many of the District Assemblies had rendered them incapable of becoming the promoters of socio-economic development in their areas. Many Assembly members began to encourage their people to undertake self-help projects instead of waiting for Assembly-managed development. Self-help initiatives received tremendous emphasis from the government. Rural communities had to undertake self-help programmes in order to receive help from the Assembly. The crux of the problem, in a political sense, was that self-help came to be seen by the people as the 'shortcoming' of the Assembly, not a triumph of the decentralisation policy as such

(Crook and Manor, 1998:222). As a result of their inability to assist their people, many Assembly Members and their people felt demoralised and Assembly Members were embarrassed to meet their constituents. This disappointment has played a vital role in reducing electoral participation (which has persisted till now). With the introduction of the District Assembly Common Fund (see, section 6.7.3.4) to boost the finances of the Assembly, projects are too restricted spatially within the districts (not reaching many dispersed villages) to actually realise the desired impact; and of these few projects the greater proportion are centred in the district capital.

In the study villages in Nadowli and Adansi West districts, response to questions about participation in the District Assembly at the time of my fieldwork was unanimous. In all the villages interaction between the Assembly members and the electorates has waned considerably, to the point that, in some areas such as Kwabenakwa and Domeabra, they have never seen their Assembly member since the last election. A woman in Kwabenakwa (1998) noted with anger:

“He has never stepped here since the election and we do not know what is happening. He has got us nothing. But for Nana (the chief), his elders and committee, we would not have had this (pointing to the direction) borehole with pump. We have vowed to vote him out this coming elections”

There has been considerable awareness among the electorate about the significance of interaction with their representatives at the District Assembly. Failure of an Assembly Member to meet and *discuss with the people incurs their displeasure. In Adansi West*, and Nadowli districts 32 and 25 people respectively were interviewed and the question; how high is the involvement of the people in decision- making? received the responses in table 7.1 and 7.2 below. Involvement of the people is generally low but better in villages in which the Assembly member resides (with exception of Akrokerri - discussed below)

Table 7.1 *Level of Participation in the DA, Nadowli district

Villages	Interviews	High	Medium	Low	None	Assembly man/woman
Badabuo	5	-	1	4	-	Non resident
Daffiama	8	-	5	3	-	Resident
Puleba	5	-	1	4	-	Resident
Tangasie	7	-	3	4	-	Resident
Total	25		10	15		

Source In-depth interviews with 25 rural people, Nadowli district, 1998

Table 7.2 *Level of participation in the DA, Adansi West district

Villages	Interviews	High	Medium	Low	None	Assembly man/woman
Akrokerri	10	-	-	-	10	Resident
Domeabra	5	-	-	-	5	Non resident
Kwabenakwa	7	-	-	-	7	Non resident
Kusa	5	-	1	4	-	Non resident
Wioso	5	-	3	2	-	Resident
Total	32		4	6	23	

Source: in-depth interviews with 32 rural people, Adansi West districts, 1998

*High signifies involvement of the people in decision-making (meeting for discussions and priorities sought for action) Medium – occasional meeting with people /visits to interact with them. Low – Visit (very few)/occasional information about project etc. None – no meetings no visits

In the recent District Assembly elections, held in May 1998, all the former Assembly members in both Nadowli and Adansi West Districts were voted out for failing to deliver, with the one exception of the Assembly woman at Kusa in Adansi West. The electoral returns give ample evidence that the electorate have been alert and voted for candidates who were believed to have community interest at heart, not people of wealth and means - people they believed would bring development (Essuman Johnson, 1994, cited in Nkrumah, 1995:12). In Kwapia and Wioso area, in Adansi West, legal action was taken by community leaders against one outgoing assembly member to retrieve money owed to the people. In Akrokerri, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions confirmed that their Assembly member was ineffective. A young man shouted:

“our assemblyman has never met us all these years to discuss development issues or inform us of what they are doing at the assembly. We are not satisfied with the projects he has undertaken in the town - rehabilitation of the community centre. We need good drinking water, place of convenience and jobs and he has done nothing about these. There is no development in this town”.

The Assembly man, a headteacher, was summoned to the chief's palace to explain his inability to meet the people and to attract projects to the town (see table 7.2). He did not contest the recent elections (June 1998).

Interestingly, people in both districts believe that the District Assembly concept is good, if an area or town has an energetic, committed and development-oriented Assembly man or woman. And so they prefer the District Assembly to the former District Councils, except that they have not been 'lucky to get committed and serious assembly person' (interview with a young man in Akrokerri, 1998).

It follows from the above that interaction between the Assembly member and the electorate (either through meetings with village groups or individuals or through actually developing and implementing local projects) has depended upon the Assembly member. Evidence shows that where the Assembly members are resident in a particular village or town, interaction between the Assembly member and residents is very high (at the expense of other villages s/he is overseeing). Villages overseen by Assembly members in both districts are scattered over distances ranging from five to thirty miles. Issues involved in such interaction span from personal needs to development, making the work of an assembly member more difficult for them than originally intended. An assembly man from Nadowli noted:

“the work is really involving than I thought; an assembly person is everything in the village, you are an arbitrator, marriage counsellor, sometimes a bank and even sick children and strangers are referred to you”

This is evidenced in a survey conducted by the National Commission of Civic Education in April 1997; 4692 respondents in 57 districts were interviewed. The report showed that 93% had interacted with their Assembly members (presumably resident in the same village) on a number of issues (Daily Graphic, 1998). The number of individuals

contacting the Assembly member resident in their town or village was also found to be high in the study districts. Evidence from Nadowli district shows that some (particularly those representing and resident in the village/town) visit and interact with the people. But others who oversee many villages (above 5 villages spread over distances of not less than 10 miles), and those working in towns and cities outside their district and region, are not able to interact with the electorate. Financial constraints limits their visits to and interaction with the people. One assembly member, a trained teacher in Nadowli, lamented:

“visiting my villages entails a lot of financial responsibilities, transportation and at least buying pots of pito for many. But my meagre income makes me incapable of doing so”.

This view is exacerbated by the fact that the communities have put the assembly member on a pedestal. S/he is required to attend functions such as funerals, outdooring of babies, weddings and church harvests, and to ‘do something’ as a ‘big man’. Transportation expenses on his/her visit to the villages under his/her jurisdiction and money spent on such functions are not covered by the Assembly. Commenting on the responsibilities of an Assembly member, Wood concluded that,

“if one wanted to make good job out of being an Assembly person, then one must have time - time to prepare for, attend and participate in the meetings of the Assembly and its committees; time to meet the people collectively and individually; and time to participate in community development and productive work” (1989:17).

People who want to be Assembly members should be those who have the desire and feel it a duty to sacrifice their time to serve others and their communities. This requires a modicum of wealth.

Examination of the system of participation in the District Assembly indicates that its effectiveness in terms of enhancing participation of rural people is limited. Crook and Manor (1998:233) sum the situation up; “regardless of the level of popular participation, or the degree to which elected representatives genuinely consult with and ‘represent’ their constituents, the impact of enhanced participation can only be felt through the work of elected representatives at the institutional level”. This implies that participation in Assembly/Committee meetings has to become the most important activity of the

Assembly members. It is the elected representatives of the people who not only represent their priorities but are supposed to see to their successful implementation. This demands effective accountability at the District Assembly level. It is becoming increasingly clear that, for many people in the villages, election of representatives to the District Assembly constitutes their only means of participation. If high turnout in elections were the measure of success, then the Local Government system in Ghana would have been one of the most successful in the world. But this is just an aspect of participation. Many individuals and/or groups who were promised involvement in the decision-making process, planning and implementation of development projects in the euphoria of the first Assembly election have become disenchanted with the system.

The preparation of the Five-Year Development Plans, required by government under Act 480 section 5 (NDPC Act, 1994), provides a good example of the limited participation of rural people. The National Development Planning Commission gave all the District Assemblies three months to submit their five-year Development Plans. Adansi West and Nadowli Districts contracted the services of consulting firms in the cities, not locals, to undertake this important exercise. Each consulting firm pointed to the limitations of the exercise in their preface to the plan, given the restricted period (three months) allowed for completion of the work. It is very doubtful whether the people in the rural areas were involved in the three-month exercise. The very institution (NDPC) that advocated the involvement of the people in the decision-making process for 'bottom-up' planning seems to have barred the people from participation by restricting the time for plan development to a very short period.

Many projects are awarded on contract by the District Assemblies, without notice to local communities where the projects are located, "All you sometimes see is a contractor and his workers removing the roof of a school building, you question them and the answer is simple, it has been given on contract to them". In these circumstances, the people feel left out in the Assembly system which promised participation. A man in Adansi West district vehemently criticised the award of contracts to outsiders. He noted:

"There are a lot of artisans and workers in this village and this would have been a means of gaining income for them. It would also have made them proud of having played a role in the project in the village. Income would have remained in the

village; yet all we see is that the contractor arrives with his workers and at the end of it all they take the money away”

This state of affairs is also adversely affecting participation and involvement in the Assembly. Often only self-help projects, partly financed by the people, use the artisans of the village or town in which they are located. Mulwa (1994:29) maintains that if staff have to be hired, it is “advisable to recruit the local people as an on-the-job training opportunity and employment for the rural people”. With contracts being awarded for assembly projects, especially Common Fund projects, the rural people are denied this employment avenue.

In the light of the above, the much talked about ‘empowerment of the rural people’ by politicians and bureaucrats is a myth. Acheampong has observed that:

“Politicians and bureaucrats at the district level do not sufficiently recognise the need to encourage local people to build their own capacity and attempt to solve their own pertinent problems. They regard themselves only as assisting the rural people; helping the communities complete their development projects. They have not gone beyond this notion, to be able to ‘empower’ the people” (1994:175).

7.5 District Assemblies and empowerment

Genuine participation, according to Mulwa (1994:27), empowers the weak and marginalised towards assuming full responsibility over their own destiny within the framework of their cultural and socio-economic realities. It is usually seen as an agenda controlled from the grassroots. This is because empowerment must involve action from below and, however supportive, outsiders can only facilitate it but cannot bring it about (White, 1996:9). Empowerment, therefore, goes beyond decision-making, implementation, sharing of benefit/loss and evaluation. It involves ‘the sharing of power and scarce resources, deliberate efforts by social groups to control their own destinies and improve their living conditions, and opening up opportunities from ‘below’ (Dillon and Stiefel, 1997 cited in Acheampong, 1994). Empowerment means building up the capacity of the people to play an active and effective role in the decision-making process, and influence the course of action taken by those in authority, who determine public policy, to serve people’s specific and collective interests and aspirations (Mulwa, 1994:31). This will spur them on to take active responsibility for their own decisions and

any consequences thereof. This reduces the likelihood of any form of paternalism or the development of a dependency syndrome.

Rowlands (1995:102) maintains that the meaning of empowerment can be seen to relate to the user's interpretation of power.

“Empowerment must be about bringing people who are outside the decision - making process into it. This puts a strong emphasis on access to political structures and formal decision-making and, in the economic sphere, on access to markets and incomes that enable people to participate in economic decision-making. It is about individuals being able to maximise the opportunities available to them without or despite constraints of structure and the State” (Rowlands, 1995)

It entails undoing negative social constructions, so that poor people affected come to see themselves as having the capacity and right to act and have influence. Rowlands (1995:103) explains three important dimensions of empowerment which could be utilised in making an assessment of the District Assemblies and their relations with the rural people they administer in relation to participation.

- at personal level: development of the individual's confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalised oppressions.
- in close relationships: development of the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of the relationship and decisions made within it.
- collectively: working together to achieve a more extensive impact than could have been done individually. This includes involvement in political structures, collective action based on co-operation rather than competition, for example, village groups.

Critical to empowerment, therefore, is a conscientisation programme for the rural poor to raise their awareness and move communities to action. This must seek to raise the productivity of the poorest and the least productive. ‘Conscientisation that does not seek to strengthen the economic base of the poor is highly deficient and remains fragile’ (Mulwa, 1994:36). Without corresponding initiatives by the poor to improve their economic strength conscientisation may, after a point, erode the enthusiasm of the rural poor and create further frustration.

The District Assemblies in both study districts have achieved only limited involvement of the people, which does not move them into the realm of empowerment. Relations between the people and the district political and bureaucratic elite further strengthens the paternalistic and dependency syndrome. The district elite take pride in a “master - servant relationship”, where they have the power to distribute development projects and generate revenue through taxation. There has not been any conscious effort to expand the economic base of the localities with effective utilisation of local resource endowments. The people must have a combination of confidence, self-esteem, information, analytical skills, ability to identify and tap into available resources and political and social influence (Rowlands, 1995). The Assemblies are saddled with their recurrent and development expenditure concerns, distribution of projects, annual meetings and commissioning of completed projects. Training for Assembly members is non-existent, apart from an initial orientation session. The potential for empowering local populations is ignored.

7.6 The rural poor's perception of the District Assembly

This section examines how the poor people regard the District Assembly in the performance of their activities. Overall, there seems to be a wide gulf between the District Assemblies and the rural poor, not reduced even during the various District Assembly elections. Many illiterate poor in the villages studied have only heard about the District Assembly. The majority are ignorant about the District Assembly concept. They have not been educated about the functions of the Assemblies and their own civic responsibilities. ‘Though participation in village development projects in Ghana is generally high, this has not aided popular awareness and acceptance of the whole gamut of the District Assembly concept’ (Acheampong, 1994:169). The District Assemblies are merely perceived as the provider of social services and master of taxes. Most of the villagers in Nadowli district could not distinguish between projects developed by the District Assembly and by other organisations such as the European Union or NGOs, since they perceive all projects as having been built by the District Assemblies. The literate among them, however, perceive the District Assemblies as the district government, for mobilisation of the people for participatory development, but conceive that development does not go beyond provision of social services.

Communities therefore express frustration with the District Assemblies which do not consult them or interact with them. The District Assemblies are seen as not having the well-being of the poor at heart. This feeling was quite strong in the Adansi West District where villages studied express disappointment at the inability of the Assembly to respond to their development needs. They concede that development projects have occurred but argue that they are concentrated in the district capital which already has more services provided than the rest of the district. They are of the opinion, however, that the District Assemblies have more potential to bring improvements than the former District Councils. Since they can vote out their representatives if they are not delivering (unlike the District Council situation where members were appointed). None of the study villages was satisfied, however, with the responsiveness of the District Assembly to their needs.

In Nadowli District, participants were more patient with the District Assembly, perceiving it to be on a slow development path which will eventually reach every village. The chief of Badabuo, for example, a village lacking in social amenities, noted:

“we have received nothing - no development project since the coming into being of the District Assembly; yet we see the gradual transformation of our district capital, Nadowli, and take consolation in the fact that it will be our turn in the not too distant future”.

With this perspective there is no urge to put pressure on the Assembly to demand what might be considered due to the village. Nonetheless many rural poor perceive the District Assembly bureaucrats and politicians in the district capital as self seekers who visit them when they first arrive or there is a durbar or commissioning of a project. ‘They have never visited us to even interact with us for us to know that they are interested in our welfare’ (interview with two men in Domeabra, AdansiWest district and Puleba in Nadowli district, 1998). Apart from Badabuo other study villages in the district have had a small development project in place, from hand-dug wells, rehabilitation of school buildings, KVIP, construction to a new school or clinic. Ayee (1996) maintains that the District Secretaries (now DCEs) travel more to Accra, the capital, for political expediency than to the towns and villages they are supposed to oversee.

The rural poor do not see the District Assemblies as being capable of reducing their poverty. A village chief in Adansi West district recounted the history of the former District Councils and the present District Assemblies and drew the logical conclusion:

“ the District Assemblies cannot help us in our poverty. They have never done so and they cannot do that for us. Our local leaders are better placed to help us if they had the opportunity”

Many individuals are so disenchanted with the District Assemblies, with its bureaucrats and their own representatives, that they have lost hope in the Assembly's ability to go beyond small project provision to real poverty alleviation. Indeed, there is a sense of hostility towards the local political process, because it is not matching their desired outcomes. It is the logical outcome of the difference between perceptions of poverty among the rural poor and those of the district elite. None of the poverty issues perceived by the poor has been dealt with, and this gives them the assurance that their poverty situation (which is more than development projects) cannot be dealt with by the District Assemblies. They would prefer their local leadership (Village Development Committees, now Unit Committees) to care for their personal poverty needs. In all the study villages, the people were surprised to hear about poverty alleviation funds.

So, why is genuine involvement of the people in the development process so difficult under the District Assemblies? The following section considers the obstacles to effective participation.

7.7 Obstacles to effective participation

Major obstacles to effective and meaningful participation include lack of local capacity i.e. low quality of local leadership, weaknesses of the District Assembly staff, lack of social awareness, and failure to build on the economic base for the poor.

7.7.1 Local capacity

Community leadership plays a vital role in the organisation of all forms of participatory development activity. But there is a dearth of articulate leadership at the local level. Efforts at capacity building in Ghana have been centred at the district, regional and national levels. There has never been an occasion in Ghana's development history where attention has been paid to leadership at the town and village levels. Good quality

leadership encourages participation. The attributes of such leadership include charisma, motivation, honesty, accountability, openness, patience, inclusive decision-making and feedback (Korboe, 1998). There is, therefore, the need to train local leadership (ie. the Unit Committee members and Assembly members), in order to develop problem solving, planning and facilitation skills and awareness in community programmes. In Adansi West district the Assembly Member at Wioso, who had received training from the NGO Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), was able, during his tenure of office, to write a proposal for funding from Japanese International Development Agency. He mobilised his people to construct a clinic, accommodation for the nurse and a school. He was voted out of office, subsequently, by other villages in his constituency because all the projects were centred in his own village, Wioso! Care must be taken to engage all segments of the community rather than relying on a few leaders who may represent special interests and not the interest of the whole people.

In order to avoid creation of a new dominant leadership elite, training must be broadened to include many types of Community Based Organisations such as youth associations and women's groups which are now very common in many communities. It must be emphasised again that Town and Village Development Committees and leaders of Community Based Organisations are usually highly respected and enjoy broad-based support such that training them will enhance their competence and increase their capabilities to mobilise the people for development.

7.7.2 Weaknesses of District Assembly staff

Until the political appointment of District Secretaries, now District Chief Executives, the District Administration had been dominated by bureaucrats. The attitude of bureaucrats has been one of control and a 'top-down' approach to development. There has been an overdependence on bureaucratised professional services, which does not encourage participation. The attitudes of bureaucrats have not changed much to allow their accountability to councillors. The Assembly members have not been able to assert their authority as representatives of the people (perhaps partly due to lower educational attainment). The dominant position of the District Chief Executive as well as his role in the bureaucracy, as the chairman of the Executive Committee (see section 3.5.2), makes

it difficult for the representatives of the people to established their authority at the institutional level.

The District Assembly seem to be subservient to the district bureaucracy, “thus through the district bureaucracy, the Assemblies are gradually becoming paternalistic and command oriented in the local development administration” (Acheampong, 1994:184). This does not in any way encourage participation; on the other hand, it clearly portrays the inability of the District Assembly system to transfer real power to the people and their representatives. One has to get near to the District Chief Executive to receive favours. This is one of the political problems at a supposedly non-political level, which favours central control rather than participation.

The core of the problem is that bureaucrats and politicians are keen to maintain the status quo with regard to roles and power relationships. They only pay lip-service to participatory approaches to satisfy their political ends. Schmidt (1996:22), reporting on forty-eight World Bank-supported projects and Economic and Sector activities, maintains that the required attributes of staff (which will be relevant to District Assembly staff) include:

- a service orientation
- an open collegial management style that builds confidence and instils trust among beneficiaries
- empathy towards the disadvantaged
- an ability to speak the language of the poor
- technical, organisational and social skills to listen and respond to beneficiaries

In addition to the above, the District Assembly staff need to be trained in participatory approaches, emphasising the importance of allowing beneficiaries to prioritise their needs rather than imposing priorities on them.

7.7.3 Social Awareness

The rural poor are virtually ignorant about the District Assembly concept and its operations. Conscious efforts must be made in this direction to make transparent the operations of the District Assembly to the people. This will avoid the current feeling of alienation and lead to more united efforts, with the people rising up to their civic

responsibilities for development. In addition, people must be enabled to see through their own reality. This entails first, identifying obstacles which militate against their development that could be handled without external involvement and secondly, recognising that they possess the capacity and potential for transforming their situation. They must be encouraged to see that they are capable of coming out from their poverty and that they don't have to accept living in poverty. This further leads the poor to access their own needs from their own perspectives and to see themselves as individuals, with their own identity as people, to be listened to; to be people who can dialogue (Mulwa, 1994).

7.7.4 Building an economic base for the poor

Neglecting the livelihood sources of the rural poor and concentrating on infrastructure development projects (see chapters 5 and 6), breeds apathy. People are concerned about their survival in the face of the harsh economic realities in the country. The Adansi West District Co-ordinating Director lamented the drastic fall in enthusiasm of people in the district for communal labour especially when it involves Assembly projects. This gives credence to the fact that the neglect of the economic base of the people erodes their enthusiasm for participation: they are too busy thinking about where their next meal will come from. Evidence from this study (see chapter 5) has shown that the poor do not have access to social services due, in part, to their inability to pay for the services. To generate participation, therefore, efforts must be made to improve the economic well-being of the people. People living at the margins of survival will rekindle their participation if concrete efforts are made to improve their sources of livelihood. The District Assemblies must take this seriously if they are to revive the spirit of participation which has been generated from generation to generation.

It must be stated that where projects have been successfully implemented, as at Wioso in Adansi West, participation is encouraged. This means that success breeds success, but where there is persistent failure or inability to interact with Assembly members, as in Akrokerri, disappointments and frustration of the people negatively influence participation. Beneficiary trust needs to be built or restored before people will be willing to invest their time and resources in participation (Holmes and Krishna, 1996:33).

NGOs in Nadowli District have been able to surmount some of these obstacles and their activities have led to greater participation by the people. NGOs have challenged the people through training to analyse their own situation, diagnose their development problems and means of improving their lot. With the financial and other input support of the NGOs there is greater participation among the people in NGO projects which is readily perceived to enhance their living conditions. This is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

7.8 Conclusion:

The level of participation in the District Assemblies is less than what institutional change in the direction of participatory democracy promised. Popular participation at the moment is defined and directed by the District Assembly, not the rural people. A new perspective is needed in Ghana which brings District Assemblies and their people together in a new, more equal and more positive relationship. 'Human dignity can't be given to a person by the kindness of others. But it can be destroyed by kindness which emanates from an action of charity, for human dignity involves equality, freedom and relations of mutual respect' (Nyerere, 1973 cited in Mulwa, 1994:46). Politicians must move beyond rhetoric and mere sloganizing of participation and empowerment and take concrete steps to make it a reality in rural Ghana.

CHAPTER 8: NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

8.1 Introduction

For the last two to three decades, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Africa have been involved in assisting rural communities with socio-economic development and the provision of relief services. 'Agencies and practitioners have increasingly found both market and the state wanting as vehicles for development' (Cherrett et al, 1995:26). Because civil society has been slow in emerging to take up the challenge of development, NGOs are seen to have filled the gap (ibid.:26). In Ghana, the government has embraced NGOs and not only commends them but appreciates their role as collaborators in development (Katsriku, 1996:43). This is due to the immense perceived contribution of NGOs to poverty alleviation programmes.

It is clear from the previous chapter that the District Assemblies' involvement in poverty alleviation is mainly centred on provision of social services infrastructure. This would have left the livelihood security of the rural communities virtually untouched, had it not been for the interventions of other stakeholders whose actions have had significant influence on poverty-reduction, most notably the NGOs. Considering the immense role NGOs play and their contribution towards rural communities, it is impossible to discuss poverty alleviation in Ghana without reference to the role of NGOs in the development process. In recent years, the role of NGOs has expanded and in Africa they are widely recognised for their potential to alleviate poverty and enhance decentralisation through mobilising local participation in the development process (Matovu et al, 1996:59). NGOs spent US\$46 billion in 1989 in developing countries and this constituted 12% of all Western aid and more than what the World Bank disbursed in developing countries in the same year (Clark, 1991:47). As far as this study is concerned NGOs are significant, in particular, in that they can interact closely with the District Assemblies and play a strong role in local development to alleviate poverty.

This chapter (drawing extensively on my fieldwork) examines the activities and operations of NGOs in Ghana and my study areas, particularly in Nadowli district where their activities are considerable (NGO activities in Ghana are mostly concentrated in northern Ghana). It looks at the growth of NGOs in Ghana, their activities with women's groups in Nadowli district, and it outlines their main problems in the discharge of their duties among the rural communities. This chapter concludes with a review of the variation in performance between NGOs and the District Assemblies.

8.2 Defining NGOs

NGOs are private voluntary, non-profit organisations with altruistic and philanthropic motives which promote socio-economic development especially at the grassroots level (Raffer and Singer, 1996:136). They may be set up by individuals, groups and organisations and are controlled by them. This include women's groups, traditional self-help associations, churches, Northern NGOs such as OXFAM with branches in the South etc. They may operate with a high degree of autonomy and may work to bring about change in government policy. The World Bank (1989; 1995) defines NGOs as private organisations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services or undertake community development. Although the NGO sector has grown in scope and operation the principles of altruism and voluntarism remain key defining characteristics (the World Bank, 1995). Clark (1991:40) has divided NGOs into six main categories:

1. Relief and welfare agencies such as the Catholic Relief Services, and missionary societies etc.
2. Technical innovation organisations, for example, the Intermediate Technology Development Group and the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh.
3. Public Service Contractors, for example NGOs which receive their funds from Northern governments (industrialised countries), work closely with Southern governments (low income countries) their officials and agencies, like CARE.

4. Popular Development Agencies, for example, Northern NGOs and their southern intermediary counterparts whose focus is on self-help, social development and grassroots democracy, for example OXFAM.
5. Grassroots Development Organisations, for example, locally-based southern NGOs (constituting mainly the poor and oppressed themselves), which attempt to shape a popular development process.
6. Advocacy Groups without field projects but which exist primarily for education and lobbying, for example Freedom from Debt Coalition in the Philippines.

The avowed aim of NGOs is often to represent the voice of the weak and oppressed and help them organise themselves so as to achieve a more coherent and powerful voice in the making of decisions and the allocation of resources (Clark, 1997:43). They may create an enabling environment for communities at the grassroots to express their needs and preferences. This encourages the people to be active participants in the development process. Drabo et al. (1996) have noted that:

NGOs commonly enlist traditional structures at the village level as the core development entity, thereby demonstrating a recognition of traditional values and empowering local communities to take charge of their own development. Local community development then becomes a catalyst for popular participation in decision making. Through self-management, communities gain self-confidence and thus recognition by wider communities, through informal meetings initiated in traditional settings" (p.87).

The effectiveness and importance of NGOs in development assistance to the vulnerable for alleviating poverty (Clark, 1997; Collier, 1996; Drabo et al, 1996; Fowler, 1988) is their ability to:

- reach the poor, providing assistance to groups who are neglected and may be in less accessible areas.
- have close contact with the poor and the communities they live in. This enables them to mobilise the intended beneficiaries in order to participate in development projects.
- be flexible and respond speedily to identified needs.

- have a high capacity for innovation and experimentation with unorthodox ideas and practices.
- work with high levels of commitment and dedication and achieve outcomes at less cost
- work with and strengthen local institutions.
- be more manageable, as a result of their size and better ability to articulate rural reality.
- concentrate on identified problems of their target groups, without the responsibilities and constraints imposed upon government organisations to ensure national coverage.

Clad and Stone (1993 cited in Collier, 1996:245) expressed a commonly held view that:

“while any aid programme will experience a level of waste and corruption, funds sent straight to the field, often in relatively small amounts via NGOs, are far more likely to be better spent (to help the poor) than those flowing into the treasuries of countries”

The stated goal of most NGOs is therefore to enable the poor to take control of the decision making processes which affect their lives. The paramount issue is to provide major avenues for participation, enabling the poor to own the project and take control. They act as facilitators or catalysts of local development efforts (Drabek, 1987:x).

The recent emergence to prominence of NGOs is, in part, due to ‘rolling back’ of the state resulting from World Bank sponsored Structural Adjustment Programmes already noted in chapter one. These programmes usually include privatisation, liberalisation, withdrawal of subsidies and cost sharing of social services with beneficiaries. Moreover, the emphasis within Structural Adjustment Programmes on ‘good governance’ has highlighted the need for devolution of power to sub-national units to promote participatory development. Government involvement in the provision of public goods has therefore dwindled, with NGOs filling the gaps left by the state (Cherrett, 1995:26;Clark, 1997:46). They have played central roles in efforts to alleviate the poverty associated with Structural Adjustment Programmes, the consolidation of neo-liberal economic policies, and the resulting reorganisation of the state. NGOs may therefore be regarded as development partners interacting closely with local government, involved in micro

development, thus becoming active participants in the development process. Within Ghana they have provided water, schools, health facilities, training, credit facilities for agriculture and commerce, and institutional support. In remote usually neglected geographical areas, NGO programmes have the ability to reach the poor more effectively than government services can (Drabo et al. 1996:86). They have participatory problem solving approaches, for vital issues affecting the poor, and operate between the poor and the state bureaucracy. The imposition of Structural Adjustment Programmes in Ghana has placed NGOs in a very conspicuous position.

8.3 The growth of Non-Governmental Organisations in Ghana

Ghana has a long history of indigenous voluntary activities (section 7.3). Rural mobilisation efforts existed during the colonial period; however traditional forms of associations and group activity date back to the pre-colonial period. Such traditional associations and groups were grounded in institutions indigenous to Ghanaian society and culture and included community-based organisations (Atingdui, 1997:374 and see chapter 7). These rural voluntary organisations existed mainly for mutual aid or self-help.

In southern Ghana, particularly Akan speaking farming areas including the Ashanti Region, the famous '*nnoboa*' system has been in active operation to the present period. *Nnoboa* is a traditional system of farmer association (males and females) with groups of three to ten farmers gathering and helping each other on a rotational basis to cultivate their respective farms. The distinctive feature about *nnoboa* is that, though several men/women gather to help a particular farmer at a particular village to develop his/her land, the farm is not collectively owned and remains the property of the individual (Katsriku, 1996:42). In some traditional farming communities in Ghana *nnoboa* was one of the first self-help actions where groups of people worked together to solve common problems.

Village and town associations were also charged with the responsibility of overseeing of the communities' social amenities including sanitation, roads, footpaths and water (wells

and rivers) (Amanor et al, 1993:183). Mobilising financial and human support from men and women for development initiatives has a long traditional heritage. New and rehabilitated projects such as clinics, schools, markets water supplies etc. have been undertaken by collecting money and materials and employing community resources of labour and management. This has been supplemented in recent years by the resurrection of kinship and community ties needed to survive the long period of economic hardship associated with economic crisis (structural adjustment and drought in the 1980s and notably the severe drought in 1983) (Dei, 1992; Dennis and Peprah, 1996).

In the Upper West Region there has always been organised mass mobilisation of men and women in villages, primarily to support community improvement schemes. Songsore et al (1996:89) has noted that, 'in every community, there was always a youth leader, whose authority had been conferred by consensus'. The youth leader served (and serves) as the local focus for the youth engaged in communal actions such as the excavation of dug-outs in the dry season, the construction of earth dams, the clearing of village paths, mutual assistance tasks and, in times of inter-community conflicts, they play leading roles (ibid.:98).

Ghana's NGO sector is a combination of a rich diversity of indigenous and Western, traditional and modern types of organisations. Apart from the traditional self-help groups, the pre-independence era was dominated by various religious groups, with missionaries operating in the remote rural settlements (Amanor, 1993: Antingdui, 1997). Religious groups and missionary societies established their own schools, hospitals, and agricultural centres throughout the country, often in collaboration with the colonial administration, but typically with little government assistance and interference (Atingdui et al, 1997:158). Foreign organisations established in Ghana in this period included the Red Cross Society, the Society for the Blind, and the Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis. These NGOs were typically set up to respond to the deteriorating conditions in the urban areas - social destitution, disease and poverty among vulnerable

groups (Katsriku, 1996:42). After independence, these voluntary organisations became more involved in rural areas and the problems of rural poverty.

NGO activities in Ghana saw a dramatic rise from the 1970s to the 1980s. There was serious economic and political decay in Ghana at this time, culminating in the adoption of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programmes in 1983 (see section 3.4.3). The benefits of the programme were not evenly distributed, thus leaving segments of the society vulnerable and the poor still suffering hardship (Katsriku, 1996:43). As the weak state retrenched, local organisations were more or less tolerated. In order to organise the people to help themselves out of poverty, there was a focus on the role of indigenous, grassroots, intermediary and professional NGOs as well as local government. These began to fill the vacuums left by the withdrawal of the state.

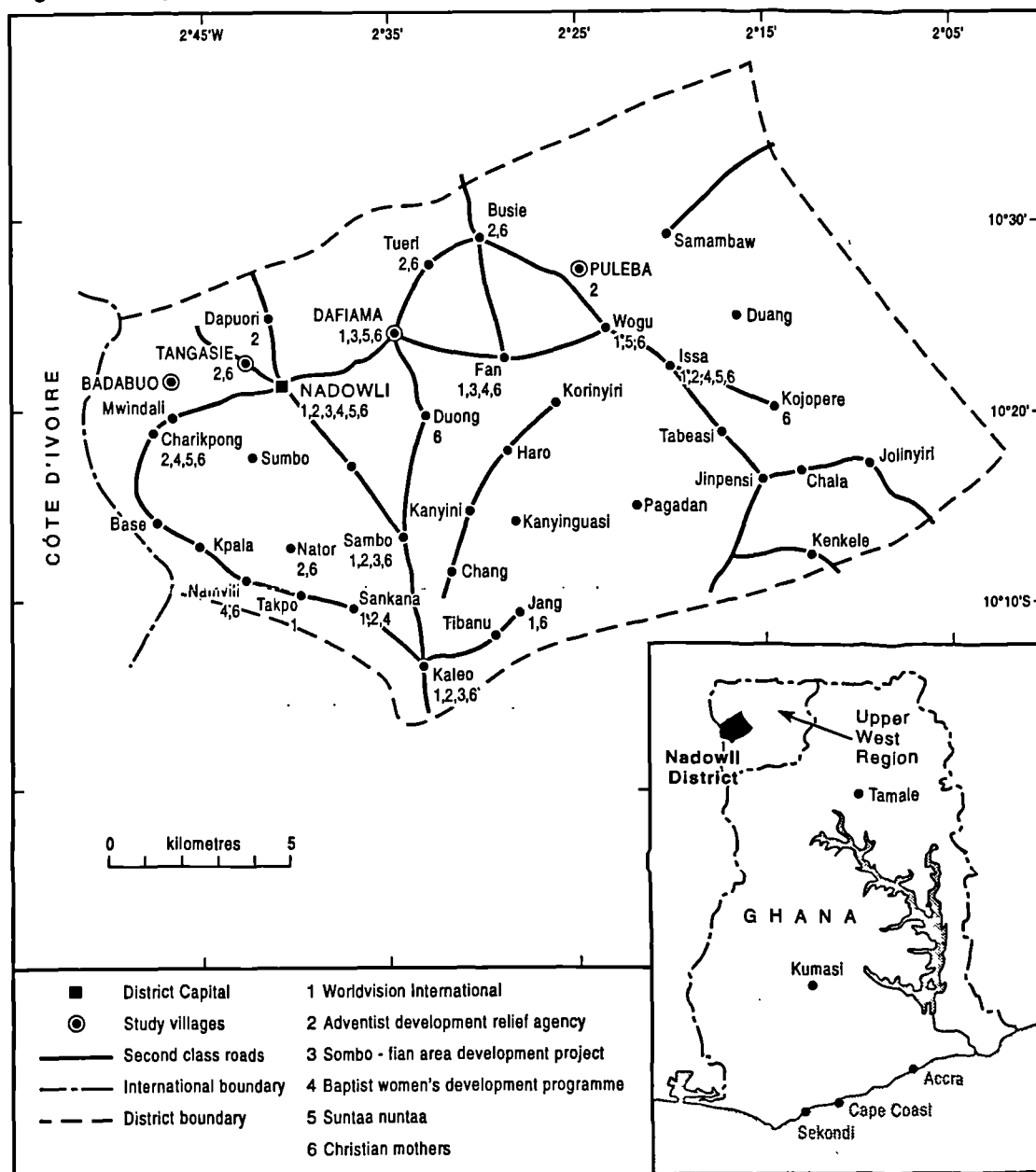
At present, NGOs in Ghana include indigenous community based organisations, government-sponsored community development organisations, religious organisations, international development and relief organisations, professional and business associations, local crafts unions, market women's organisations, migrant groups and village associations (Atingdui, 1997:369). The Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare is officially responsible for registering all NGOs in Ghana. They must register with the department to be officially recognised. In the early 1980s there were about 80 registered NGOs; by 1990 there were 350. Between 1993 and June 1996, 302 more were registered, and by October 1996 there were 900, including community based organisations and 45 foreign NGOs (Katsiku, 1996:59). NGOs in Ghana provide various services in diverse fields including: water development, education, health, agriculture, vocational skills, sanitation, environmental protection, food security, human resource development and research and recently, services for women, the elderly and children and capacity building.

8.4 NGOs and poverty alleviation in the districts

NGO activity in Ghana is concentrated in the three northern regions. NGOs are virtually absent in the rural areas of Adansi West district (where the European Union is the only donor and Water Aid the only NGO). They are involved mainly in construction of classrooms, sanitation and boreholes in the rural communities. Water Aid, a British NGO, has provided 86 boreholes and hand dug wells to various communities in Adansi West district. The 31st December Women's movement, led by the First Lady of Ghana, which is highly political (though ostensibly an NGO), has a nursery school in Obuasi but undertakes no activities in any of the rural areas.

By contrast, in the Nadowli District of Upper West region, as in many parts of northern Ghana, there is a strong presence of bilateral and multilateral donors, and foreign and local NGOs, because of the relatively deprived nature of the area. For example, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) has, since 1994, provided 22 new health centres with nurses' quarters, and has rehabilitated 22 existing centres in the region. Some of this work is done through local NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs). Consequently, 84% of the region's population now have reasonable access to health facilities compared to 50% a few years ago. Vehicles, motorbikes, computers and other office equipment have also been provided by DANIDA. Immunisation of children against childhood diseases has improved significantly from 40% to 70%, again associated with DANIDA assistance (Graphic, 1997:13). NGOs include World Vision International (WVI), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA), Christian Mothers, Suntaa - Nuntaa, Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), Diocesan Development Office (DDO), and Baptist Agricultural Projects (see fig. 8.1). World Vision, for example, provided two thousand school chairs for pupil in schools in 1996 and has helped in the renovation of several schools that were collapsing. Present work (1998) on a science resource centre in Nadowli has reached an advanced stage. The Catholic Relief Services also provides lunch as at some primary schools in the district, helping to increase school enrolment.

Fig. 8.1: Major settlements in which NGO activity is taking place



Source: District Planning and Coordinating Unit, Nadowli

By far the most impressive activities of the NGOs in Nadowli district are their gender sensitive activities. Most, if not all, NGOs deal with women's groups in the district. The peculiar nature of cultural influence on gender roles makes it imperative to focus on women in development activities. An Assemblyman in Nadowli (1998) noted, with a sense of urgency and concern:

“In our district, if you want to alleviate poverty, then you have to extend a helping hand to our women. They are industrious and they care for the children. Under these harsh environmental and economic conditions, it is the women who toil to cater for the family. Most men either migrate to the south, and spend much on drinking or are simply irresponsible. The women mean business and they must be helped to render services to the family and the society”

The next section therefore examines the gender roles and discrimination against women which explain the emphasis of NGO support on women in this district.

8.5 Gender roles and poverty issues

While male dominance prevails in every ethnic group in Ghana, there is a markedly different situation between Adansi West and Nadowli districts. *In Adansi West District*, both males and females own and control assets (see chapter 4). While 32% of women in agriculture in Ghana own land by inheritance, only 5% own land in the three Northern regions. Fifty-five percent and 22 % of women in *Ashanti and Northern regions*, respectively, have rights of use over their husband's lands (WIA cited in Duncan, 1997). Fieldwork in the Nadowli district confirms this north/south contrast and it is discussed in detail in this section. In Nadowli district, men generally own and control land, livestock, poultry, farm produce, buildings, bicycles, radios, cash, water bodies and bullocks. Thus men have control over the most important resources of the households (see chapter 4). A woman in Nadowli lamented:

“when you are married into the house of a man, he owns everything including you. He is in control so how can a woman own something? A woman only has her children in so far as the marriage succeeds; when there is separation or divorce, you lose them to the man - he owns everything, it's unfair” (interview, February 1998).

The family is the basic co-operation unit in Nadowli and each person (male and female) has their obligation towards their families. Marriage is central to social life and the family is built on the concept of kinship which follows a patrilineal line. A woman who marries into a family is regarded as wife not only to the husband but also as a wife to the husband's male relations in so far as delivery of services is concerned. She is expected to cook, wash clothes, and fetch water for her husband, his brothers, cousins and sometimes his sisters. The dowry system (in the form of cows, cowries and cash provided by the man) to a large extent reinforces the subservient position of the woman, since the man and his family consider themselves as not only having a right to her services, but actually to owning her (Mahama, 1996). Property holdings, inheritance and family decision-making are organised around blood relationships rather than matrimonial linkages. Women cannot inherit property from their husbands. The husband's brother inherits the property and the responsibility for taking care of the widow and her children. Wives do not have any right to their husbands' property and, if a widow refuses to marry her husband's brother, she must give up her rights to everything, including her children. This puts women at a great disadvantage, since they do not have capital to purchase resources such as land and cattle.

Women in Nadowli district, as in other parts of the country, work daily on two full-time jobs - taking care of the house and children - in addition to working on the farm and in productive activities to earn income. They therefore work longer hours than men because of their dual responsibilities. Bandie (1990, cited in Livingstone, 1995:7) found that rural women in the Upper West region work on average seventeen hours a day, while the average is fourteen hours for men. Men spend their off-time activities at pito gatherings, visiting peer groups and elders. Men are mostly responsible for clearing the land and weeding. The women are also expected to help in the weeding and, in addition, are responsible for all other jobs on the farm like planting and harvesting. During the farming season many women, after working on the family farms, also go to work on their own small farm or garden where they are growing food to supplement the family diet (groundnuts and bambara beans). Additionally, women must still do all the household

chores such as cooking, washing, cleaning, fetching water from far distances, and taking care of the children (see table 8.1). So women have obviously little time for rest, yet men have time for leisure and social activities. During the dry season, when there is less work for the women, they will be engaged in several other income generating activities such as burning and selling of charcoal, pito brewing, soap making, extraction of oil and selling of stored products. The money made by these activities is used for household goods, medicine, school fees and sometimes investing in produce to be resold for a higher price in the wet season. The inequality in the position of men and women is clearly illustrated in the following example. In the dry season, women wake before sunrise to go search for water for the household and, when they bring the water often after walking for miles, the younger males in the house have more rights over its use than the women who have transported it.

Table 8.1: Gender roles in Nadowli District

LEVEL	MALES	FEMALES
Household	Construction of new houses, maintenance of old houses, feeding of poultry, selling of poultry, sheep, goats, pigs and cows.	Taking care of children, cooking for family, fetching water and firewood, selling food crops, making charcoal, washing of cooking utensils, brewing and selling pito, making various earthenwares, oil extraction, feeding animals, plastering and maintenance of walls and roofs of houses, winnowing of thrashed farm produce, grinding grains.
Farm	Preparation of land, transplanting of sorghum/millet, making mounds for yams etc. harvesting of variety of crops.	Transplanting millet/sorghum, carrying farm produce, carrying manure and applying on farm, weeding of farms, sending water and prepared food to the farm, collecting stalks from the field, carrying farm produce to and from the farm and the house, harvesting of crops.
Community	Celebration of social and religious festivals, for example, sacrifice to gods and performing funeral rites etc.	Maintaining good sanitary conditions around the house, boreholes, toilets and footpaths.

Source: Author's fieldwork, 1998

Men dominate the local political structures. The traditional authorities, chiefs, elders and *tendanas* (see section 4.2.2.2) are all males. The village development organisations, such as Village Development Committees, are also dominated by men. Women are generally not represented in these organisations. A few women, due to their status in the social hierarchy either as chiefs' wives or as successful traders (*magaziahs*), have access to the labour of other women and young girls to support them in both their domestic and productive activities. They may represent women on such committees and may be able to articulate their own views and needs, but these may not necessarily reflect the views of the vulnerable women and the poor or young girls in the communities.

The prime decision-makers in the family and household are either the father or another senior male relative of the household (his father or senior brother), who is also frequently the landlord of the compound. All illness must be reported to him for permission to go to the hospital (Livingston, 1995:26). These roles and responsibilities are culturally defined. Women in each of the focus group discussions and interviews confirmed the extent of male dominance, but think it is changing (albiet at a slow pace) as a result of education and contact with NGOs.

Women in Nadowli district, therefore, suffer from poverty and also exclusion from resource ownership. While poverty affects both men and women, women's experience of poverty is different and usually more severe - because of "gender-based forms of exclusion" (Heyzer, 1992 cited in Bamberger et al 1996:69)

Hardships experienced by women in Nadowli district are exacerbated by alcoholism among the men. Drinking and alcoholism are a growing problem among males and has led to a neglect of male responsibilities towards their families; the money they have goes into drinking instead of food, clothes, school fees etc. (Livingstone, 1996:32). Alcohol-induced violence to wives is a growing problem. A middle aged woman in Nadowli noted 'in the past a small amount of money bought plenty of pito, now it is more costly and yet

they continue to drink. When they drink they lose their head and neglect the family'. A religious leader in Nadowli (1998) also lamented:

“drink is a problem here, all their money goes into it. They overdrink and misbehave. Now they combine pito and akpeteshie (a locally brewed alcoholic drink from southern Ghana), to make it stronger. Money and energy are used up and the family suffers”

With the seasonal migration of men to the south, women are left to care for the children and other members of the family. Not surprisingly, therefore, all the assembly persons and bureaucrats interviewed unanimously agreed that any poverty strategy must put women at the forefront. Women represent a clear majority among the very poor. Given the distressing conditions of women in this district, almost all NGOs work with women in agriculture, microfinance, healthcare, training etc.

8.6 NGOs and changes in gender roles

The need to enhance gender awareness for meaningful development has been a crucial issue in the Nadowli district. In addition to the situation discussed in 8.5 above, yields from farming have been declining over the years and men have been less able to meet their family obligations. Fewer women today are able to depend entirely on their husband for support. Men are no longer the sole providers for the family. There are a growing number of women who are being forced to take care of their own needs and those of the household. Women have become providers of food for the family, especially during the lean season when they use the income generated from the activities introduced by NGOs for food, school fees, medical bills, clothes and other family requirements (which had traditionally been considered the domain of men). Women's income is particularly crucial for poor rural households since women are co-breadwinners or sole supporters of the family when men migrate.

NGOs in the district now deal with women's groups, mobilising economically active women's groups for assistance in many parts of the district (see table 8.2). Women easily come together to form groups for friendship and mutual help to mitigate the

discrimination they suffer. Many operate the Ghanaian '*susu*' system in which a group of people contribute money daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly, and one group member, in turn, receives the total amount. This is a means of saving capital for trading, buying capital items etc. Other women have long come together to provide bowls of maize and sorghum each week, on a rotational basis for a group member to brew pito. Various NGOs have taken advantage of the existing groups to offer microcredit, inputs and training which are being successfully operated in Nadowli, giving credence to the fact that 'women mean business'. NGOs in Nadowli district and their activities are shown in Table III.

Table 8.2: NGOs and their activities with women's groups in Nadowli district.

NGO	ACTIVITIES
World Vision International	Agriculture: Crops include maize, sorghum and food banking. Micro-finance: Loans for shea-butter extraction, pito brewing, petty trading
Adventist Development Relief Agency	Micro-finance, agriculture, commerce
Development Programme (SOFIDEP)	Micro-finance, agriculture
Baptist Women's Development Programme	Agriculture: donkey traction and carting services, microfinance, commerce, training, agroforestry and reproductive health education
Suntaa -Nuntaa	Agroforestry, agriculture and micro-finance
Christian Mothers Association	Agriculture, commerce, microfinance, maternal child care education
Centre For the Development of the People (CEDEP)	Training, research and microfinance

Source: Author's fieldwork, 1998

In its Gender and Development (GAD) programme, World Vision International (WVI) seeks to enhance the role of women in community development and reduce their socio-economic dependency through increased participation in decision making and equal opportunities within the social system (WVI, 1998; see table 8.3). The objective of the programme is to mobilise rural women and assist them to build their income generation capacity in order to improve access to basic services for themselves and their children. The key activity consists of granting revolving loans to members of organised groups. It is envisaged that these loans will provide a capital base for micro enterprise development.

There is also an emphasis on training for efficient management of their revolving loans. Loans received are invested in food processing, shea-butter extraction, pito brewing, petty trading, farming ventures and food banking. These activities are largely undertaken on an individual basis, but there are a few groups who use part of their loan capital to undertake food banking, piggeries and farming ventures. The loans among the groups are summarised below.

Table 8.3: WVI credit facilities to women's groups in Nadowli district, 1998 (in million cedis - 3850 cedis to one pound sterling).

GROUP	LOAN CAPITAL	ACCUMULATED EARNINGS	TOTAL
Nadowli Women's Development Association	6	2	8
Wogu Women's Group	6	2	8
Jang Women's Group	6	1	7
Dafiama Rural Women's Development Association	6	1	7
Takpo Women's Association	4	0.2	4
TOTAL	28	6.2	34

Source: WVI regional office, Wa (1998)

Groups decide on the amount of money to be loaned to members, which ranges from 10,000 to 40,000 cedis. The amount may exceed this in a few cases. Interest rates vary between 20% for new groups and a little higher for some old groups. Over 500 women in the district have benefited from this loan scheme, which has recorded a recovery rate of between 90% and 100% (WVI, 1998).

This programme has empowered women to make decisions of their own in managing the group and the loans. It has enhanced gender awareness in the district and offered a forum for education which makes the women more capable of meeting the challenges in their environment. Beneficiaries are also committed to repayment of loans with interest. The main handicap is illiteracy among the women, which affects record - keeping. The NGO's limited capital also affects the potential for expanding facilities to other women in remote villages.

A second NGO, the Baptist Women's Development Programme (BWDP), has its headquarters in Kaleo in Nadowli district. A broad programme put in place includes the following:

- Donkey traction and carting services. It is much easier for women to handle donkeys than bullocks, and cultural beliefs prevent donkeys from being stolen or killed.
- Improvement upon and strengthening of the loan schemes of women's groups.
- Promotion of agro-forestry and other related activities among women's groups.
- Provision of reproductive health care and related services to women's groups.
- Empowerment of women through training in business management, leadership and group dynamics.

BWDP is funded by two Northern NGOs from the United Kingdom: Save the Children Fund, UK, supports the programme on reproductive health, whilst Christian Aid, London, supports the donkey traction, loan scheme and general administration. In 1997 BWDP received an amount of 120 million cedis and 420 women benefited from its programmes (NGO News, 1998:7). This support enabled the programme to be extended to ten women's groups in ten communities in Nadowli and Wa districts. The programme now covers fifteen women's groups in three of the five districts of the region. A total of 198 women and two men were beneficiaries. The latter benefited because they served as secretaries to the women's groups. In 1997, 182 women received training from the NGO programme.

Trainers adopted participatory approaches which motivated participants to get involved in all discussions and share their experiences freely. They were trained in membership roles and responsibilities, meeting procedures, leadership, problem solving skills, loans management and repayment, managing one's business and maternal child care. These training sessions inspire confidence in the women to manage their family affairs and business. It also gives them insight into appropriate storage facilities, good marketing strategies, management of expenditure and income accounts and the purchase of raw materials during the harvest period. In the area of health, they were trained in health

needs of children, personal hygiene, and common sicknesses that affect children and how to deal with them. Women were also educated to take seriously the education of the girl-child and to understand the fact that there is no difference between the boys and girls in terms of intelligence and need for education. The recovery rate for the credit scheme is 80%. The founder, a Baptist minister (Bagonluri, 1998), noted that: 'our failure to achieve 100% recovery rate was the result of a group's inability to withdraw its money from a bank that was going bankrupt, and we are working on that'.

A third NGO, Sombo-Fian Area Development project (SOFIDEP), started in 1993 as an effort to help the poor people of that area. This was initiated by an Agricultural Science teacher who hails from Sombo. The objective was to "help our poor people in the village" in the form of credit facilities. People from Sombo-Fian area are eligible for SOFIDEP credit. Loans are given to identifiable groups in the village, who are expected to pay back in twelve months. SOFIDEP has been supported by OXFAM and, in 1997, it received a credit line from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). Three hundred and twelve people have benefited so far and loans range from 16,000 cedis to 50,000 cedis per person for twelve months with a 25% interest rate. The recovery rate has ranged from 89%-99.5% (Dere: 1997:49). Members of each group meet monthly and pay dues ranging between 200-400 cedis for different groups. To remain in the group and benefit from credit facilities, group meetings and payment of monthly dues is obligatory. Members are educated on loan management during disbursement and repayment durbar days.

The fourth NGO, Suntaa-Nuntaa (help one another, love one another), was founded in 1990 with the general goal of assisting the rural poor with their development efforts in order to raise their standard of living. Its main purpose is to empower the rural people to fight hunger, ignorance and suffering and to bring about positive sustainable impacts in the lives of the poor people. Suntaa-Nuntaa's promotion of agroforestry in Upper West is well known. It is also involved in education and training through the use of Theatre for Development, in cottage industries, income generating activities, health education,

poultry and animal rearing. The organisation places special emphasis on women in agroforestry and income generation. For its involvement in environmental protection, Suntaa-Nuntaa received an award by the UNDP Global Environmental Facility during a national workshop for environmental NGOs in 1995. It works in collaboration with the African Development Bank (ADB)/International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD), in an Agroforestry Project in the Region. In 1996 it also had support from DANIDA for credit facilities for women's groups. The organisation holds the view that 'failure is not defeat unless we stop trying'. It therefore encourages the women to keep on trying and work hard till they succeed.

A fifth NGO, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has its regional headquarters in Wa and is linked with ADRA bodies in Accra, USA and other parts of the world. ADRA, which also works mainly with women's groups, is making efforts to alleviate poverty through food security programmes so as to enhance the well-being of the rural people. Their programmes include agroforestry, farming, nutrition, education and training. ADRA provides women's groups with input loans which include improved seed, fertiliser and money for farming and petty trading. Selection of the poorest of the poor is based on households and done through community leaders and women leaders. The project officer noted that;

"the issue is how to get the maximum yield from the land and that is what we have set ourselves to do with the women's groups" (interview in Nadowli district, 1997)

ADRA operates three-year weaning period projects. This means that credit facilities are provided for three consecutive years, within which the group or individual's activity is supposed to become self-supporting. However, they continue to provide extension services. They have twenty groups of twenty members each in Nadowli district. The nutrition programme involves trained community health motivators who educate farmers on sanitation, childcare and good nutrition. ADRA maintains that the programmes are moving smoothly.

The sixth NGO is Christian Mothers Association, one of the oldest women's groups which operates under the Diocesan Development Organisation of the Catholic Church in Wa in the Upper West region. Its main objective is to organise the women through education and training for productive income generating activities in the area and to improve the well-being of the women. They have groups in all the districts in the region. The Christian Mothers Association provide education and training for women and credit facilities for agriculture and other income generating activities including pito brewing, oil extraction, and trading.

Finally, the Centre for the Development of the People was founded in 1983 in Kumasi and seeks to redress the socio-economic problems bedevilling the country through participatory development and capacity building. CEDEP has conducted many World Bank funded research programmes including the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) in 1995, Extended Poverty Research (EPR) and Structural Adjustment Review Initiative (SAPRI). It has been working with the District Assemblies by helping to build their management and organisational capacities. Currently, CEDEP organises training courses for organisations and individuals, in gender in development, resource and project management, leadership skills, financial management of NGOs, effective use of consultants, introduction to PRA and fundamentals of fund raising. DANIDA funded NGOs in Upper West region through CEDEP after providing research activities and training in the region.

From my fieldwork (focus group discussion and interviews with women's groups and beneficiaries), I conclude that NGO support shows remarkable benefits to women. Household incomes have been improved and the impact on men is so profound that most men attend meetings for their wives if they are indisposed or have travelled. Other men will go and work on group farms or send their sons to do the work on behalf of their wives or mothers. This is significant in addressing, in a small way, some of the cultural problems faced by women. Women appear to be gradually coming into the decision-

making process of the household because they contribute immensely to the household's economic upkeep. A woman in Tangasie noted:

“I am now able to buy good food for the household, school uniform and school fees for the children, observed: good clothes and good cooking utensils. How could I have had the means for all these?”. (focus group discussion, 1998)

Responses detailing positive benefits of NGO programmes were ubiquitous among the women interviewed, although the magnitude of impact varied from group to group and individual to individual. Those enjoying bigger credit facilities make more profits and are even able to repair houses. A disabled woman in Tangasie (1998) noted:

“NGOs have been very helpful to me for I could not have raised money up to 10,000 cedis to buy malt for pito brewing. With this amount I now brew pito, have repaid the loan with interest, saved 15,000 cedis and I now have my own capital and I am in business”.

The high recovery rate achieved by women is attributed by them to the following:

- they do not want to remain in debt so they work hard to beat the deadline for repayment, and also to save the group from disgrace and denial of further loans.
- there is so much community or peer pressure working in such a way that husbands do not want them to default so as not to hear their names at a pito-drinking gathering or be insulted as having posed a problem to a group.
- members of loan groups trust each other and would do their best not to default, or may help each other out of difficulty to ensure repayment.

In most cases the last day of loan repayment is a durbar day where people complete payment and enjoy a pito party, congratulating themselves for a successful season and then begin again. No one wants to be left out of this occasion. These factors encourage the women to repay their loans on time. Dare (1997:34) maintains that:

“the recent and past political and economic history of the people from Upper West bear ample evidence that though traditional in thinking, they are known to be very receptive to new ideas. In their various folk songs, they express that ‘every new thing is always sweet’ but quickly discard it if it doesn’t prove sweet after all. In search for ways of escape from their poverty trap, the Upper Westerners seem not to have much time to spend on things, the outcome of which is doubtful”.

Farming and other income generating activities supported by NGOs in Nadowli district have helped rural women in various ways. Some of the income generating activities are listed (ranked) below by the women with the question: which is the most important income generating activity? The ranking was derived from group agreement after discussion. The response is shown in table 8.4 below.

Fig 8.4: Ranking of sources of income of women with activities supported by NGOs

Income-generating activities	Tangasie	Daffiama	Total	Overall Ranking
Trading	4	3	7	3
Pito brewing	1	1	2	1
Sheanut/dadawa processing	3	4	4	2
Charcoal/firewood	5	5	10	4
Farming	2	2	4	2

Source: Focus group discussions with 10 women in Tangasie and 15 women in Daffiama, aged between 22 - 50 years.

Pito brewing is the major source of income for the women as shown in fig 8.4. Many women, however, combine two or three economic activities within the year. The outcome of this is a chain of mostly positive effects. It has not only enhanced the *status of women* in the household and outside, but also increased their self-esteem. A woman with good self-esteem is more likely to take better care of her household, be more productive and take care of her children (Dapaah, 1996:23). This was confirmed in a focus group discussion with Assembly members who maintain that it is vital for women to be supported if poverty is to be reduced in the district. Asked to indicate what they mostly spend their income on, the women ranked their expenditure pattern as shown below.

Table 8.5: Ranking of Expenditure pattern of 25 women working with NGOs

	Tangasie	Daffiama	Total	Overall Ranking
Food including soup ingredients - fish and meat	1	1	2	1
Health and Education	2	2	4	2
Farm inputs and labour	3	4	7	3
Consumer goods, example, clothes /soap	4	3	7	3

Source: Focus group discussion with 10 women in Tangasie and 15 women in Daffiama, aged between 22 - 50 years compounded because rankings are very similar

Women, as shown in table 8.5 above, generally spend their income on vital items as food for the family and the education and health of the children. Increased income has given women the opportunity to spend on relatively more nutritious food such as fish and meat for the family, especially the children, thus improving their health. With increased income, they are also able to obtain access to social services provided in the community. Women are able to spend on their children's education by paying school fees, buying school uniforms, books and the required stationery for the children (see table 8.5). The women are now more particular about the education of their daughters than before. For example, a woman in Nadowli reported her husband to the Assistant Director of Education for giving her junior secondary school daughter in marriage. Traditionally, the man owns the children and so he can give the girl out in marriage at any time for the dowry. The Assistant Director remarked 'I have to do my best to convince this man, else there is nothing I can do, that is the culture here'. The social welfare department was informed and the girl has been back at school since the husband was told of a court action against him.

The education and training provided by NGOs are, therefore, having a positive impact on the women, confirming yet again that the women mean business. Men are now aware that

if you ‘elope’¹ with a girl, court action may be taken against you. This is expected to reduce the rate of elopement, giving many girls the opportunity to further their education. Summers (1992 cited in Dapaah, 1996:14) has stressed that, when women earn income, they can influence the household decision to educate daughters. Women, most importantly, are gradually becoming part of the decision making processes in the household. They cannot be relegated to the background because of their economic power. Women have been empowered (their powerlessness has been reduced) through NGO activities, through strengthening of their economic and social position.

There is also a strong case that the credit programmes have reduced the relative isolation of women. They are now brought together and take great delight in their regular meetings where they freely discuss their experiences, ideas and there is opportunity to share information. Such opportunities rarely existed before for large numbers of poor women.

8.7 The main problems associated with NGO operations

A number of problems can be identified with respect to the operations of NGOs in Nadowli district.

- The neglect of men, in trying to reverse the cultural, economic, social and political discrimination against women, is not only a problem for the women but is slowing down the process of change. There is much evidence that men contribute substantially to the problems of the women. NGOs must also target men in the district and, through education and training, gradually bring men to the realities of gender discrimination and its impact on the household, community and the nation. Men also need to be educated on alcoholism, violence against women and behaving more responsibly towards their family, especially through the education of their children, both boys and girls. This could help, perhaps, change some of their cultural perceptions on the issue of gender.

¹ Elopement is a system where a father receives all or part of the dowry from a man who is unknown to the girl, she is one day forcibly taken away by the suitors and his friends. The suitor can also forcibly take the girl away without the knowledge of the parents and then negotiate later with them.

- There is little co-ordination among the NGOs. Since they are quick and eager to work with existing groups, more than one NGO may be funding the same group. Since the people know that group formation attracts credit facilities they keep on forming groups in order to enjoy loans.
- It is unlikely that NGOs are really reaching most of the very poor people. They are operating only in big towns and bigger villages in the district and not the numerous scattered small villages (and off-road villages) where many poor and vulnerable women reside. For example, women interviewed in Badabuo had not had any help from NGOs. Both Badabuo and Pulebaa, the two off-road villages studied do not enjoy the presence of NGOs. By contrast, Dafiama and Tangasie, both on the major roads are served by World Vision International, Christian Mothers, Sombo-Fian area Development Project, Suntaa Nuntaa and Adventist Development Relief Agency (see Fig. 8.1). Moreover, the leaders of the groups (*magaziahs*) are actually not poor women.
- Dealing with existing groups and women in big towns means that the most vulnerable among the disadvantaged groups of women without businesses, (in whose name many poverty alleviation schemes/organisations have solicited foreign and government assistance), are in fact left out of NGO programmes.
- The NGOs have failed to recognise the fact that women comprise heterogeneous groups which calls for investigation and understanding before the design and implementation of poverty reduction interventions. Different women have different needs, different survival strategies and their welfare will be affected differently by stereotyped or rigid and uniform intervention. Certain social, economic, political and religious factors are governed by wider circumstances that influence the socio-economic status of women and therefore create and consolidate differences in the already disadvantaged group of women (Kyeyune et al, 1998:7).
- The NGOs look for rapid progress and success to report to their donors in order to attract more support. Therefore, they tend to avoid the time consuming and laborious task of going to villages in the hinterland to form new groups, train them and help them out of the poverty trap.

- The above factor stems from a major concern of local NGOs with regard to timing of withdrawal of support by donors (Northern NGOs). Poverty alleviation and empowerment programmes for the rural poor takes time. Project termination, or rather withdrawal (Farrington et al., 1993:116), creates problems for the local NGOs and the rural poor. It must be noted that internal mobilisation of resources by local NGOs in Ghana and other low income countries is most difficult if not impossible. State support may engender control and politicisation.
- The amount of money given is so small that profits are minimal. All women suggested that if loans could be increased to a minimum of 50,000 cedis (13 pounds sterling) it would be of great help.
- The belief that credit is the complete answer to poverty is a notion that, I would argue, needs to be dispelled. There is the need for further intensification of training of beneficiaries in order to eliminate the traditional paternalism. NGOs must spend time and resources in training rural households and communities with a view to improving their own situation, relying on their own potential and on the resources available to them. Training is defined by Hague (1973 cited in Wereko, 1998:35) as modification of behaviour through experience. Training needs to be intensified to enable the people to define the gap between what they can do now and what they are capable of doing.

Development has to mobilise and to rely on local potential. The locally available resources have to be used more effectively in favour of the local poor. Munkner (1996:6) maintains that:

“To change or improve the socio-economic conditions in favour of the poor, for example, grant access to credit or to land, does not bring about development but can rather lead to new problems (for example, indebtedness). Development will only be sustainable, if it is geared to the entire living and working conditions of the people concerned; if it takes account of their spiritual, and social as well as of their economic needs, if it takes both culture and nature in account, if it is addressed to all actors at all levels and in particular to the women as those who contribute up to 80% of all work done on the farms, in the households, in trade and small scale industries, by applying a multi-pronged development approach.”

The emphasis, therefore, should be on a strategy of consensus-building which will be complemented by a sharper focus on increasing the incomes and participation of the rural

poor and other vulnerable groups in assistance programmes. Family farms and non-farm enterprises will provide remunerative employment opportunities for men and women, and assist in the reduction of rural-urban migration. This, however, should not be the domain only of NGOs; the District Assemblies must play a major role. NGOs alone cannot bring about the increased well-being and prosperous lives desired for the neglected and poor rural people. It is a national issue in which the government must begin a national struggle (with realistic objectives and strategies), spearheaded by the District Assemblies in collaboration with NGOs. The poor need the necessary resources and training to empower them to make their legitimate demands on the state system, so that ultimately self-reliance can be achieved. Shorts (1999:5) maintains that:

“the most pressing challenge for international NGOs is to give greater focus in their work within developing countries to ways of genuinely empowering the poor - and to acknowledge, as must governments - that the role of external players should be a transitional one. The ultimate aim of all of us - development departments and international development NGOs - should be to make ourselves redundant and success should be measured by how soon we leave, and not how long we stay”.

8.8 NGOs and District Assemblies: gaps in performance and poverty alleviation

NGOs in Nadowli district have achieved such importance that it is impossible for the District Assembly to ignore their role in the development process of the district. They are major actors since they have much greater resources than the DA for their programmes. This section examines the achievements of NGOs in Nadowli district and assesses the basis for their success and whether, given the same resources, the District Assemblies would be in a position to achieve something similar.

8.8.1 Achievements of NGOs in Nadowli district

NGOs in Nadowli district are notably concerned with poor people. There is a genuine commitment to the poor in the towns and larger villages. They are therefore, committed to implementing pro-poor measures to help with the livelihood sources of the rural poor (see chapter 6). Their impact may be localised and have limited reach, as discussed

earlier, but their programmes have had positive impact on the poor. This has been confirmed by women's groups and the District Assemblies.

NGOs in this district are gender biased. They recognise the suffering of women in the Upper West Region and, therefore, work mainly with women. It is very rare to find an NGO in Nadowli district which does not express its commitment to gender issues. Both local and international NGOs in the district work to enhance not only local standards of living but the status of women in the society. This is done through credit facilities to enhance their livelihood security, participatory training and extension services. Women maintain that there has been tangible gain for them and slow improvements in the discriminatory aspects of their culture. Training in business skills and management, child care and environmental issues have been beneficial to them.

Another achievement is in the area of participatory approaches to development. NGOs employ these methods in undertaking research to identify their target group, its needs (in some cases) and necessary training programmes. Beneficiaries are also involved at each stage of the project and women's groups are also given a voice during meetings and discussions. Problem solving skills, through stimulating participation which motivates, are passed on to beneficiaries. This gives credence to what Fowler (1988:13) has noted; 'the benefits of NGO comparative advantage have to be organised and worked for, they don't just happen. NGOs pay detailed attention to how they interact with their intended beneficiaries and to the ability of their organisations to match the demands which micro-development presents'.

NGOs have been successful for the following reasons.

1. NGOs use highly qualified and trained staff. They take advantage of training abroad and receive a broad range of poverty-relevant skills, management, mobilisation and facilitation skills. They are therefore, very enthusiastic and generally highly committed to their work as defined in NGO mission statements. Their objectives are clearly spelt out, widely shared and believed in their bid to effect changes in the society. They are

highly committed and are prepared to work for long hours and sometimes, especially religious NGOs, for low pay (Clark, 1991:61).

2. Such competent and committed workers are full of new ideas which they are prepared to put into practice. 'They are not scared of innovation and, therefore, less subject to the straightjacket of development orthodoxy, than are official aid agencies and governments' (Clark, 1991:59). The Baptist Women Development Programme's experiment with donkey traction and carting, for example, is getting on well and may extend to the whole district.
3. As already discussed, participation is the key in NGO intervention processes. The poor are involved from the very outset of the programmes and this gives them a better understanding of the true nature of poverty. 'Local Knowledge' is also not discarded and beneficiary involvement is recognised as critical for effectiveness. 'This is critical in gaining meaningful participation in articulation of rural reality in choosing the right type of assistance, in targeting, in people-centred research' (Fowler, 1988:10).
4. The goals of NGOs are poor-focused and they diligently pursue this approach throughout their programmes. This keeps them in touch with the disadvantaged women and children. They are, in most cases, not just involved in social service provision but concentrate more on the livelihoods of the poor people. Their involvement with the poor in remote areas has given them a deeper insight in recognising that poverty is broader than a lack of income or consumption. And they seek to tackle the other areas of vulnerability, livelihood security, powerlessness, physical isolation, and discrimination against women. It is no wonder therefore that they are trusted by the poor in the district.
5. NGOs tend to have a better monitoring of programmes. There is periodic monitoring of actual performance against set strategy objectives and these are 'essential both as a management (incentive) tool and to improve accountability' (Cox and Healey, 1998). In such evaluation, there is great emphasis on evaluation as a learning tool, thus the feedback of results is incorporated into the overall strategic planning (Kyllonen, 1999:2). Kyllonen, further writes: 'in NGO evaluations, major emphasis is placed on the need to incorporate more participatory methods into evaluation, including

especially the need to incorporate the beneficiaries in the evaluation process, though there remains still a considerable gap between intention and practice’.

The discussion has emphasised the scale of NGO’s development activities to the extent that one cannot think about development of the northern regions of Ghana without the NGO presence. This review of Nadowli district has presented NGOs as highly virtuous; however, there is growing evidence that many NGOs are unsatisfactory in performance (Turner and Hulme, 1997:206). Even within Nadowli district, there are some reservations about NGO operations. For example, an Assembly woman in Nadowli commented with concern ‘the NGOs come with what they can offer not what we need (our priority), but our area is so deprived that we accept whatever they bring’. Many NGOs have their own agendas which do not depend upon the expressed needs of the poor themselves. They come with their own ‘agenda on the table’ and it has to be taken or rejected. This casts doubts on the participatory aspects of NGO activities, an issue discussed by Edwards, Hulme and Wallace (1999:13) :

“participatory approaches... are often used as a tool to involve communities in NGO- driven agendas: few NGOs have developed structures that respond to grassroots demands. Although NGOs talk consistently of ‘partnership’, control over funds and decision-making remains highly unequal”

Because of this, many local NGOs shelve their own agendas and simply respond to donor demands. NGOs are also developing into mammoth career cartels dominated by the middle class (Gary, 1996; Oquaye, 1996:21) This raises the fears of governments and politicians who are concerned and complain about NGO’s money and power without accountability. Gary (1996:162) observed that, in Ghana, government and donor influence on the Ghana Association of Private Organisations in Development (GAPVOD) became stronger when GAPVOD received overUS\$600,000 through a special UNDP project. The organisation which was supposed to become a collective voice of NGOs in Ghana now represents the views of the government and donors. This has been used as a tool of control rather than co-ordination by the government and international donor communities (Gary, 1996:162; Oquaye, 1996:22).

Gary also points to the growing significance of GONGOs – governmental non-governmental organisations established by many African governments, politicians and bureaucrats which are supposed to be independent but are in practice under government control. They may be employed to siphon off resources meant for NGOs engaged in development. An example is the 31st December Women’s Movement established by Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings, the wife of the President (formerly Chairman of the revolutionary PNDC) and named after her husband’s coup in 31st December 1981. Even though it has been registered as a NGO and receives external funding (support for women’s groups), it is highly political and its development activities are subordinated to the political support and activities of ruling party.

NGOs work in collaboration with District Assemblies and do not seek to take over their functions. District Assemblies are supposed to be nearer to the rural poor and, therefore, easily identify their felt needs. But the question is why the DAs are so close yet too far away from the rural poor, compared to the NGOs. This is a very sensitive issue that has to be looked at in the context of the present District Assembly framework under the decentralised structure. This can be critically reviewed from the perspectives discussed below.

8.8.2 Political Interference

Political influence at the level of policy implementation is one of the major obstacles that makes it difficult for District Assemblies to improve the lives of the rural poor as effectively as NGOs. ‘Administration and policy implementation are highly political processes and so centrally formulated policies are not simply implemented in an uncontested neutral manner’ (Clayton, 1998:17). Theoretically, the District Assemblies are supposed to be non-partisan but this does not obtain in practice. The appointment by the president of the District Chief Executive to head the district bureaucracy makes political interference a reality. Implementation of development projects and allocations of other resources are not devoid of politics.

Underneath the non-political District Assemblies are factional policies, patron-client relationships and local elites as well as traditional leaders. Grindle (1980) cited in Clayton (1998:18) noted that 'the implementation process is especially central to politics and in developing countries most contestation takes place at the implementation stage'. This makes it very difficult for a focused plan to be followed through in a consistent manner in the development process at the district level. Many development activities are undertaken not on the basis of real need, but on the basis of political expediency when a politician is eager to be (re) elected.

8.8.3 Control by government officials

Bureaucrats are generally characterised by a centralised 'top-down approach' to work. The bureaucracy is hierarchical in nature; it is inflexible with fixed procedures and rules. This form of bureaucratic control (a colonial inheritance) has not been broken to date and operates in the District Assemblies, although it is incompatible with participatory approaches adopted by the NGOs. In many cases, elected members of the District Assemblies are far removed from the electorate. Participatory development (except voting), where the voice of the rural poor matters, is yet to be achieved under the District Assemblies (see section 7.5). Government sector ministries under the District Assemblies are also characterised by a centralised way of working, and by strong hierarchies. It is therefore unlikely that the District Assemblies could achieve what the NGOs have, in terms of participatory approaches, without major changes in their attitude and modes of operation.

8.8.4 Service Provision

The District Assemblies have never moved far beyond an interpretation of development as physical infrastructure provision, a view which they have inherited from various Local Governments since independence. The emphasis placed on social services and infrastructure (visible tangible improvements) is due to the fact that they are easy to provide. These tangible developments satisfy their political ends, as a means of attracting

votes. This project-centred development approach makes it difficult for Local Governments to actually touch the lives of the rural poor. Participatory awareness and community mobilisation activities are perceived as very time consuming, difficult to implement and resulting in delays in programme implementation (De Wit, 1997:22). In the same vein, nurturing the livelihood sources of the rural people entails enormous efforts and greater understanding of rural reality. District Assemblies are not prepared to undertake such projects with long gestation periods at the expense of their political ambitions.

8.8.5 Capacity building

This has always been a problem for Local Governments in Ghana. They have failed to attract skilled personnel because of financial reasons and many graduates continue to use them as a launching pad for better jobs elsewhere (including employment with NGOs!). District Assemblies have not been able to build their capacity to take on the task of micro-development. In Nadowli, for example, the District Assembly had a Planning Officer posted only four years ago and a budget officer arrived in 1998. Other administrative and technical staff are lacking. District Assemblies, therefore, lack the expertise and skills to be able to manage resources and transform the living conditions of the people. The available staff are not given the necessary training to equip them for development activities, resulting in *lack of enthusiasm for and commitment* to local development. Training is given to top level managers but not to those under them. In both study districts, none of the Assembly members have had any training since their orientation courses. Their activities continue to be dominated by Central Government control and a consequent master-servant relationship. There is no poverty-focused training and no emphasis on participatory approaches and the mobilisation of rural people for development.

Government officials are also prone to frequent transfers from one area to another and one post to another. For example the District Co-ordinating Directors of Nadowli and Adansi West District and the District Chief Executive of Adansi West district, had

recently been transferred to the district at the time of my field work. This gives rise to problems of discontinuity and lack of adequate knowledge of the areas. The idea that they might be transferred very soon, engenders very loose commitment among staff. In addition to this, there are few or no incentives (compared to NGOs) with low salaries, leading to low morale and lack of commitment to hard work. Many workers look for alternative and/or additional jobs (for example, within NGOs) to get their 'heads above water' which results in divided attention and allegiance, seriously affecting performance.

There is no effective monitoring and evaluation system within the District Assembly except for bureaucratic reporting and occasional inspection of projects by the District Chief Executive (who is a member of the contract award committee). Political expediency take precedence over other considerations.

Finance is another area that limits the ability of Local Governments to perform. District Assemblies, especially in areas with limited resource like Nadowli, find it difficult to generate enough income to finance their activities. A greater proportion of the income generated goes into the district's recurrent account rather than into development expenditure. The development needs of the district are, therefore, difficult to achieve. The District Assembly Common Fund, which far exceeds revenue generated in the districts, is meant for projects as and when directed by the Ministry of Local Government in Accra. NGOs, on the other hand, have finance available for designated projects and programmes within an agreed time frame.

8.9 Conclusion

NGOs now interact closely with the DAs and play major role in poverty alleviation in Nadowli district. This link between local government and NGOs is strengthened by the disappointing performance of the state in service provision (Farrington et al. 1993:5). NGOs under the DAs are making a valuable contribution to the socio-economic development of the district. The role and poverty alleviation impact on the poor cannot be

overemphasised. Their presence at the grassroots is greatly felt and their training in participatory approaches appreciated by the rural people.

District Assemblies are far less well placed than NGOs to take on the challenge of development in rural Ghana. What needs to be done is a re-orientation to improve the relationship between District Assemblies and the local people. This calls for a more participatory approach to development.

Capacity-building among DAs by the central government and donor community must aim at developing leadership within DAs capable of responding to the felt needs of the rural poor. This requires leadership with vision, capable of building a new relationship between the DAs and their constituency. People have to be at the centre of development and there needs to be concern for equity, respect for local knowledge and capacities, and social accountability to the community (Edralin, 1997:127).

CHAPTER.9:CONCLUSION: CONSTRAINTS TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION UNDER THE DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES

9.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis by examining the main constraints to poverty alleviation under the DAs and reviews the research questions posed in chapter one, in the light of the thesis findings. Finally, recommendations for rural poverty alleviation under the decentralised structures are suggested.

Decentralisation as a government policy in Ghana has a chequered history with its roots dating back to the late 1940s. Successive governments in Ghana since independence in 1957 have at least paid-lip service to the need to implement a decentralisation programme as a development tool. It has been seen by development activists, planners, bureaucrats and politicians as a potential catalyst for socio-economic development of the entire country. This is evidenced by the numerous commissions and committees of enquiry on decentralisation which have been appointed and the amount of legislation enacted since independence. Local government reform policies in post-independence Ghana have aimed at making government effective and responsive to local needs, within an efficient and balanced national development. It was envisaged that creation of such a democratic society would encourage popular participation, local commitment and make development activities and programmes more relevant to local needs. However, the practice of decentralisation in Ghana has resulted mainly in local government legislation, commissions, committee reports and political rhetoric rather than effective action. The result has been continued disparities in levels of development between and within rural and urban areas. Decentralisation in Ghana faces numerous obstacles, which must be overcome, if it is to play a meaningful role in alleviating poverty.

9.2 Constraints to poverty alleviation under the District Assemblies

Decentralisation since independence has become a political seesaw with the same problems recurring from one regime to another. Challenges faced by DAs under the decentralisation programme established by the Provisional National Defence Council

(PNDC) are similar to those faced by previous post-independence governments. These include insufficient powers devolved to the subnational units, insufficient financial and material resources, inadequate administrative capacity, an excessively bureaucratic attitude, inability to find an effective role for traditional authorities, a lack of clear-cut monitoring and evaluation methods, and a dearth of accountability to stakeholders within the decentralised system.

One of the questions this research sought to address (see section 1.4) was: *does the relationship between the various levels of sub-national government help in supporting (or encouraging) successful and satisfying participation of the rural people so as to enhance their well-being?* As discussed in chapter 5, the DA is the highest political authority at the district level. It is supposed to facilitate effective decision-making and to encourage bold initiatives, imagination and innovation in local development efforts. However, a closer examination of the processes and power relations involved in the DAs reveal that they have insufficient power and authority to realise the intended benefit.

a) The towering presence and powerful position occupied by the District Chief Executive as the representative of central government, and his or her central role as the Chairman of the Executive Committee (the heart of the DA), means that he or she exercises executive and co-ordinating functions in the Assembly which engenders greater central government control (see section 3.5.2). The Presiding Member, who enjoys the mandate of the people, is excluded from membership of the Executive Committee, presumably because he or she would act as a check on the DCE when presenting Executive Committee reports to the DA. This has given the DCEs greater influence and power over decision-making in the DA and ensures the dominance of the central government in the DA. Critically viewed, therefore, assembly members reckon vital decisions are made in the interest of the DCE and the central government rather than in the interest of the public (Acheampong, 1995:191).

The prominent position of the DCE with regard to central government power makes him or her virtually 'untouchable' in the district. He or she is not accountable to the

local people and his/her position as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the DA strengthens the position of the bureaucrats and makes the accountability of the bureaucrats to the DA very ambiguous. This does not auger well for the principle of accountability which was one of the cardinal points associated with the decentralisation programme of Ghana. It breeds a lack of transparency, which leads to corruption. As Manor (1999:73) has recognised, greater transparency in the workings of government institutions contributes to enhanced accountability.

b) Appointment of a third of the DA members on the grounds of skill and expertise for the most part further enhances central government presence in the DAs. It was meant to give political supervision in the Assembly, which means watchdogs for the central government. However, Ayee (1997:47) and Acheampong (1995:191) have observed that some of the appointed members have provided expertise to their DAs and have even been vocal as the most active critics of the local administration and the central government.

It is evident from this study (see section 3.9) that various central governments have sought an over-powering presence in their local government programmes in order to maintain close supervision and control. This persists in the present DA system and casts doubts on the realities of any devolution of decision-making to *supposedly* democratic and autonomous bodies like the DAs. This study adds to the body of evidence (see section 2.3.7) that establishment of decentralisation structures with its legal backing etc. does not essentially result in devolution of genuine power and authority to the local level structures.

c) One of the greatest challenges to decentralisation in Ghana is the absence of competent personnel to run the local authorities. Conyers (1989:24) has noted that decentralisation tends to generate demand for an increase in competent manpower and constraints in the availability of such manpower adversely affect the decentralisation programme. There has always been a dearth of district officers with the training and background to equip them for work in areas such as accounting, economic, scientific and technical knowledge and finance, planning and general management, all of which

are needed for effective supervision of the DAs' activities (see section 3.7). A tradition of teamwork, which generates experience in making decisions and managing activities at the district level without constant supervision from the centre, is also in great want.

Inability to exercise positive leadership frustrates local initiative and the generation of enthusiasm in local development, and encourages apathy and corruption at the local level. The rate at which DAs have received trained planning, budget and administrative personnel has been slow; the bulk of the staff have little training, technical skills and competence to relate effectively to the local population and, therefore, to encourage participatory development activities. This explains why, when the National Development Planning Commission requested DAs to submit their Five-Year Development Plans in 1996, many DAs, including those in Adansi West and Nadowli, engaged consultants to prepare these Development Plans, for which they paid huge sums of money.

d) The personnel issue became more complex and problematic when the 22 government departments and organisations in each district were placed under the 'control' of the DA while the staff remained directed by central government ministries. The departments continue to report to Accra through their regions. The Civil Service Law 1993 (under which the control, discipline and career progression of civil servants at the district level are the responsibility of the DA) is yet to be passed and central government departments at the district level have refused allegiance to the DA, preferring rather to remain staff of the central government. A department head in Nadowli noted that 'the devil you know is better than the angel you do not know', (meaning they prefer to remain with their departments rather than the evolving DAs). This puts the issue of allegiance and control of staff at the district level into jeopardy.

e) Following from the personnel problems of decentralised units is the often neglected problem of bureaucratic attitude. This does not only emanate from government officials' lack of interest in implementing decentralisation programmes, but also from the elitist tradition exhibited by these officials. 'Centralism is a tendency within bureaucracies to reserve decision-making and control powers to centres of

departments' (Lungu,1985 :47). Bureaucrats and technical officials at the district level exhibit inherent tendencies to insulate themselves from external influences, especially the rural poor. Such exclusivist orientations inherited from colonial rulers (ibid:54 and section 6.2) persist and breed indifference and apathy among people in the rural areas. Transferring power to the rural people and involving them in the decision-making process is viewed with serious misgivings. This is manifested by officials purporting to know what the needs of the poor are and defining poverty for them. This bureaucratic attitude embedded in the DA has contributed to withdrawal among the rural people and adversely affects self-help in the local areas.

f) Financial constraints appear to be a major obstacle to the effective operation of DAs in Ghana. This has made the DAs unable to take care of the numerous responsibilities given to them. In addition to the traditional taxes collected by District Councils in previous regimes, the PNDC ceded shares of seven central government revenues like casinos, betting and gambling, entertainment, daily transport taxes and income tax (registration of trade and vocation) to the DAs. In some cases, such as Nadowli DA, the yield from ceded revenue even exceeded the *total revenue mobilised from the district itself* by the DA (Ahowi, 1992:9). Despite the addition of the ceded revenue to the traditional sources of finance, however, the DAs were incapable of performing their statutory functions. Poor areas like Nadowli found it difficult to meet their recurrent expenditure. Assembly members in Nadowli decided to forgo their allowances in order to help in the development programme of their district (Ayee, 1993:129), not only because of their high sense of patriotism but because of the inadequate revenue generated from this poor area by the DA.

Finance, the lifeblood of decentralisation, has always made local governments in Ghana dependent on central government. Kaufman (1963 cited in Ayee, 1992:35) noted that 'when parts of an organisation have their own sources of revenue, their own credit and expand their resources as they see fit, the organisation is called decentralised'. Dependence on central government funds engenders fear of central control, even though Smith (1985:120) maintains that there is no consistent relationship between financial dependence and central control. The important issue is

that 'sub-national governments need resources commensurate with their responsibilities' (World Bank, 1999:117).

Inadequate finance under the decentralised system of Ghana has been a major constraint to poverty alleviation. Central government funds in the form of grants-in-aid and ceded revenue available for the DAs in 1989, were not enough to complement local resources for the DAs to pursue their numerous functions even though such funds promised to be more favourable than those of the previous District Council era. Financial resources to transform the poor image of development activities in the DAs into practical favourable development that improved the lives of the rural poor were limited. With such limited resources people became disillusioned and this resulted in apathy towards DA activities.

The introduction of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) in 1993 helped to ease the financial burden of the DAs. The DACF has been tied to development projects by the Ministry of Local Government (see section 6.7.3). However, the DACF has exceeded locally generated revenue and has unfortunately led to a corresponding decline in local revenue mobilisation efforts (Ayee, 1997:48). The Assemblies are still financially weak and therefore restricted in their ability to deliver to the satisfaction of their people, confirming Rondinelli's (1989:69) assertion that 'financial responsibility is at the core of the concept of decentralisation'.

g) The poverty alleviation programme presently in progress through the DACF (see section 6.7.3) is a top-down approach without any involvement of the poor. It is not transparent as it is located in the DA, and chaired by the Presiding Member with the DCE as a member. Politicians on their platforms have been encouraging people to apply for the poverty alleviation funds and potential beneficiaries are required to open bank accounts. This shows how ignorant bureaucrats and politicians are with regards to the rural environment. Even though this programme started in 1998, it is doubtful whether it will benefit the poorest. Many of the villagers had not heard about the poverty alleviation fund. A woman in Badabuo noted 'we don't know anything about it and we don't think we will benefit from it' (interview, 1998). It is highly probable that

people, as always, will regard it as a government handout and see no need or urgency to repay, and for politicians to use it for political advantage. A poverty alleviation programme without the requisite training of staff, without the opportunity for the poor to voice their demands and to give their input in decision-making will have limited success. This has been demonstrated by the activities of the DAs in Ghana.

Other constraints to poverty alleviation under the DAs include:

h) The position of chiefs in the decentralised system of Ghana poses a great challenge to the DA (see section 3.7). Since independence, chieftancy in Ghana has gone through various phases within decentralisation programmes. Chiefs are the traditional leaders of the people and, in almost every traditional area in Ghana, they are recognised and respected. Chieftancy is perhaps the only indigenous institution which has been able to persist in the face of the onslaught of alien cultures in Ghana (Abayie-Boateng, 1997:9).

The current local government system has clearly sidelined chiefs from the DAs. They have not been duly recognised or given any specific responsibility in participatory development at the local level. But chiefs, particularly in the villages, play major roles in the development of their areas. They are much closer to their people at the grassroots than many elected parliamentarians (ibid.:36). Villagers were unanimous on the impact of involvement of their chiefs. In the men's focus group in Puleba a man maintained that 'our chiefs and elders and the unit committees (formally Village Development Committees) lead us in our development; they mobilise us to finance and work on our projects' (interview, 1998). The Assemblyman of Wioso was of the view that 'our chiefs must be involved in development as we Assemblymen and women cannot ignore them if we are serious about mobilising the people for development'. Since independence, governments have been unable to integrate this important traditional system into the local administration so that it can play a meaningful role in the development process. In practice, the chieftaincy institution has been plagued with unnecessary bickering, corruption, enstoolment and destoolment disputes and litigation among chiefs. No attempt has been made to redirect the institution of chieftancy to play its traditional role of development at the grassroots.

i) The weak monitoring and evaluation methods of the DAs pose another major obstacle. Monitoring and evaluation capacities of central and regional government in Ghana are very limited and this has given district level politicians and bureaucrats much opportunity for dismal performance and for corruption. The RCCs which are supposed to co-ordinate and monitor activities of the DAs have not been given enough resources to undertake the exercise. The first evaluation and monitoring of activities by the RCCs in Ashanti region in 1996 revealed numerous irregularities in the award of contracts and disbursement of funds in the DAs, but because of logistical problems they have not been able to continue with the monitoring. The RCC is, therefore, unable to function as an effective regional co-ordinating mechanism. It is imperative that effective monitoring and evaluation be conducted to avoid abuse of office and misuse of resources.

j) A major challenge in the DA is the accountability to stakeholders within the system. At the village level the PNDC Law 207 provides that Assembly Members are to maintain close contact with the electorate and be responsible for the development of the area. Assembly Members are supposed to meet the electorate periodically (once a month), discuss issues relating to the development of the area, and collate their views, opinions and proposals. Meeting the people in their constituency has become a big problem for the Assembly Members because they cannot afford the cost of transport from their place of residence to the towns and villages in the electoral areas. Financial resources have not been provided for them to make monthly travel to areas under their jurisdiction.

k) Even though Law 207 provides for the revocation of the mandate of an elected member by the electorate (if they lose confidence in him or her), none of the people in the rural areas in the study districts were aware of this. Additionally, the procedure for the removal of an unsatisfactory member seems to be so cumbersome and laborious that in practice it will deter the people from taking action even if they are aware of the law. If a quarter of the electorate have lost confidence in an elected member, they may petition the DCE for the recall of that member from the Assembly. It is, then, the

responsibility of the DCE to determine whether a case has been made for the recall of that member. The DCE organises a referendum if he or she is satisfied with the people's demands. The Law provides that at least 40% of the electorate vote on the issue; and 60% of the votes cast must be in favour of the revocation of such mandate (Ayee, 1996:46). Rural people hardly have the time for this. They can and do, however, exercise their franchise by voting such an Assembly Member out after his or her term of office.

Finally a basic, underlying constraint to poverty alleviation has been the delay in the establishment of the sub-district units (see section 3.5.3). The base structure, the Unit Committee, was only established in May 1998. Their possible training and involvement in the DAs' development process was shelved for nine years. It could be argued that this was one of the principal reasons why the rural people had only been loosely linked to the DA.

9.3 Perception gaps between the elites and the rural poor

The Ghana government's decentralisation programme (see section 3.4.5), sought to empower the poor to participate locally in the identification, planning, implementation and evaluation of projects that affect their lives. Their living standards were to be improved through the provision of lower level administrative structures to make decisions and implement appropriate local development programmes (Ahwoi, 1996).

Ahwoi, Ghana's Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, has noted:

“Top-down approaches to poverty reduction are giving way to bottom-up and participatory approaches. Low income groups and poor rural communities are now empowered (through transfer of power, means, functions and competence) to achieve participation in poverty reduction programmes, which hitherto was the preserve of bureaucrats and technocrats” (1996:1)

In chapters 5 and 6 this aspect of the decentralisation process was investigated through the question: *how is the concept of poverty understood by the elites and the rural poor, and what are the perspectives of each regarding the solutions to rural poverty problems?*

The findings of this study have shown a gulf in understanding and perception of the concept of poverty, between the elites and the rural poor in both Nadowli and Adansi West Districts Assemblies (see section 6.6). The elites oversimplified poverty to only what is visible and what may be quantified, which reduces the image of the poor to a homogeneous set of material characteristics. The issues of voice and power do not feature in the perceptions of the elite group. McGee (1998:306) has correctly noted

‘that existence of a perception gap is politically expedient because by fixing distance between experts and people and exaggerating the differences in analytical and exclusive capacity between the parts on each side, it helps retain for the overclass the monopoly on knowledge, expertise, resources and control over implementation, while fulfilling the political imperative of being seen to do something about poverty’.

Additionally, such a conception of poverty does not recognise wide disparities among the poor. Yet differences exist among them, they are not a homogenous entity (see section 5.2). Poverty is selective and affects certain categories of people more than others (Daly, 1998 cited in Kyeyune, 1998:1). An old woman from Wioso summed it up ‘we women suffer most as we care for the children left behind by migrant youth, teenage mothers and their children - men would not do it; we have little land and resources. Yet we have no help and the men and authorities don’t even listen to us’ (interview, 1998)

Since the understanding of poverty shapes programmes to alleviate it, the DAs equate the solution to the provision of social services infrastructure. This obviously excludes giving a voice to the rural masses and power for them to prioritise and act by themselves to solve their own problems. It rather maintains the status quo and so upholds the top-down approaches and reliance on income trickle down - which hardly challenges the position of the elites. As an example, there is virtually no pro poor element in the recently implemented top-down poverty alleviation programme by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to benefit the vulnerable groups particularly women and children.

One of the greatest objectives of the decentralisation programme was to devolve ‘power to the people,’ a catch-phrase at the time of the 31 December 1981 revolution.

Their song ‘we no go sit down make them cheat us everyday’ was aired on the radio and TV each day with the involvement of the ordinary people in PDCs, WDCs and CDRs in all areas of the country’s development (see section 3.4.1). Participation was, therefore, to make devolution of ‘power to the people’ work. Local peoples’ voices and knowledge were to be accepted, highly valued and they were to be encouraged to group themselves into self-reliant organisations and begin to solve their problems. Ahwoi (1995:9) made it known that popular participation would not end after the election of the DAs (see section 7.4).

A third question set out in the introduction of the thesis was: *how have the DAs been able to mobilise the people at the town/village and unit levels to participate in the decision-making process?* Participation of the rural poor under the DAs seems to have been eroded after the ballot box. Assembly members are unable to meet their people in their constituency and the people are frustrated and have withdrawn. They organise themselves, however, for their usual self-help activities and continue to contribute finance to projects they consider to meet their felt needs. At the Assembly level, Assembly members attend meetings but bureaucrats and the DCE retain power. The Assembly members’ ‘respect’ for the bureaucrats is so high that accountability of the bureaucrats to Assembly members continues to be low. Sometimes contracts are awarded without the knowledge of the Assembly Member. ‘A contractor appears with his workers and begins to work in your constituency. You question him and he produces his contract documents. Artisans in the village are not even employed and the people are not involved. So they always think it is government project and not theirs - there is no real participation’ (An Assembly member who pleaded anonymity, interview, 1998).

Ghana’s experience confirms an often neglected issue of power at the local level. Government planners, bureaucrats and politicians who enthusiastically advocate decentralisation (Bibangambah, 1985:55; Slater, 1989:507; Smith, 1986:460) rarely consider the distribution of state power. Conyers (1990:518) has noted that the basic question is, ‘who holds power at any level in the decentralised system?’ Samoff (1990:518, and see section 2.3.7) similarly maintains that decentralisation has to do

with power - who rules - which includes 'who is to have access to decision-making and how is that access to decision-making determined'. Empowering the rural people remains a dream and power relations within the DAs have tended to tilt increasingly in favour of the central government. DAs could be simply described as a re-centralisation at the district level. The rural people are still far from achieving their promised responsibilities in decision-making - conceptualising, planning, implementing and monitoring their development activities through their sub-district structures. The Assembly has rather boosted the power of bureaucrats and the DCE, and has benefited the central government which has extended its control through the Assemblies.

As a result of the perception gap between the elite and the poor on poverty and its alleviation, the DAs have concentrated on the provision of social services. This is because of their inability to recognise that poverty is multi-dimensional and multi-faceted (Chambers, 1997; Bibangambah, 1996 et al.; Rahnema, 1996; and see section 5.2). The economic well-being expected from the DAs has neither matched the rural poor's expectations nor given them hope for the future. 'We have to struggle on our own and not to rely on the DA - they would not help us with our farming; in fact we do not even mention our economic needs to them' (interview with a young man at Akrokerri, 1998). The livelihood sources of the rural people have been neglected. These include farming activities, and off-farm and non-farm income generating activities (Ellis, 1998:54). If the DAs gave attention to sustainable rural livelihood sources, it would put the people and projects at the centre of its programme for action (Goldman, 1998:48, and see section 6.8.2). The study has shown that in an era of state cut back on services, rural poverty alleviation cannot be self-generated and sustained in areas where the majority of the people are poor and struggling for their daily meal. Without the elite listening to the rural poor in Adansi West and Nadowli districts talking about their needs, there is little hope of the DAs adequately ameliorating their poverty situation.

9.4 The role of NGOs

NGOs and poverty alleviation has been discussed in chapter 8. Their development activities are restricted to Nadowli district (within the study areas). The research question posed was: *what is the role being played by NGOs under the DAs in enhancing the well-being of the people in the rural areas?* NGOs are development partners and operate under the DA. Their activities in Nadowli district appear to affect the rural people since they are in touch with them at the grassroots level. They are effective in dealing with the 'human factor' in development and are, therefore, able to secure villagers' participation in development (Vorathepputipong, 1988:408). However, as an Assembly woman in Nadowli expressed 'we take whatever they offer us'; suggesting that many of the development activities of NGOs are not community-driven. Each NGO has its own 'hidden agenda'. Nevertheless, in spite of their selectivity, their training and support for women's groups is highly appreciated by the people and the Assembly (see section 8.6).

NGOs need to note that what works for the poor (their priorities) need to be their concern and must supersede the NGOs' own agenda. Poverty alleviation is also not a 'one day wonder', it takes years of hard work and relationship building with the poor to get them out of the poverty trap. Withdrawal of funding by donors at short intervals worsens the poverty situation since it breeds mistrust and suspicion between local NGOs and the rural poor communities. According to an Ashanti saying, 'those born on a mountain (the rich) easily grow tall and touch the sky'; meaning the poor are born in a deep pit, and need to be gradually helped to the surface before the journey out of poverty begins. What needs to prevail is partnership to fight poverty and not coercion (Lockwood, 1999:12). NGOs need to expand to remote smaller settlements in the Nadowli district. They need to give attention to off-road villages, which are usually at a disadvantage in terms of social amenities because of their location (see section 9.6). One area of necessary further research, I suggest, is the investigation of the perceptions of men regarding women's groups and NGOs and an analysis of who controls funds in the family in Nadowli District. This will reveal whether women have been brought into decision-making in the family and the impact NGO activities have on the family.

9.5 Findings in the two study districts and their implications

This thesis has shown evidence of socio-economic differences between Nadowli and Adansi West districts. The regional economy shows a lower level of development of productive activities in Nadowli district than in Adansi West district (see chapter 4). The rural poor in the study villages in different environmental contexts identified both tangible and intangible aspects of poverty (see chapter 5). The main differences in their analysis of poverty alleviation are the result of disparities in natural resource endowments. The harsh climatic conditions with unreliable rainfall makes the development of water management for all year round farming imperative for the rural poor in Nadowli district. The people of Adansi West district on the other hand required inputs and capital to expand their farms (see section 6.8.2). Seasonal migration tends to be higher in Nadowli district with many young men and women migrating to southern Ghana during the lean difficult seasons (see section 4.2.2.3). This situation exacerbates the food insecurity problem in this area and puts women and children under considerable hardship.

Gender issues also contribute significant differences between the two districts. While a greater proportion of women in Adansi West district can inherit and own property including land, women in Nadowli district do not own property for cultural reasons (see section 8.5). Additionally poverty is greatest and pervasive especially among women in Nadowli district. NGOs, therefore, have focused their work in Nadowli district with women's groups. There is a marked absence of NGOs in the Adansi West district.

A further important difference between the districts was the issue of revenue generated by the DAs. The low level of revenue generated in Nadowli district reflects the low level of economic activities and high incidence of poverty. To an extent this was counteracted by higher levels of NGO support funds. In contrast, Adansi West generates more revenue and enjoys mineral royalties from the Ashanti Goldfield Corporation.

The above disparities do not, however, affect any of the activities of the DAs regarding poverty alleviation. In both districts DAs are predominantly project-oriented (see chapter 6) and do not involve the rural poor in decision-making processes (see chapter 7). It is evident from this study that poverty is context specific, and strategies to alleviate poverty should take prevailing conditions of the area into consideration. The DAs need to target poor farming communities, and support off-farm income generating activities in their poverty alleviation programmes. It is important for the DAs to consider seriously demand-oriented attitudes towards the poor in their programmes. Additionally, more resources should be released to the deprived areas. It is imperative that women and children be explicitly given prominence in their poverty alleviation programmes.

9.6 Off-road and on-road villages

Off-road villages (defined as those villages away from the main tarred or paved road) in both districts do not attract the attention of the DAs (Porter, 1997). As a result they do not benefit from many of the social services enjoyed by their on-road counterparts (see 4.2.2.5). NGOs also prefer on-road villages at the expense of the off-road villages. Badabuo, for example, does not have any NGO at all and Puleba has only one operating in the village. This shows how many off-road settlements have been neglected over the years. It is apparent that many off-road settlements do not benefit from activities of DAs or most NGOs. There is, therefore, the need for more attention to fairer geographical distribution of development in the districts. DAs could move sittings from one geographical area to another. Sector committee meetings could also rotate from one part of the district to another, sometimes meeting in off-road settlements. This would raise awareness of Assembly members and bureaucrats for the need to bring off-road villages into the development programmes of the DAs. Assembly members could also be given village travelling allowances to allow them to interact with villagers in remote areas.

9.7 Future prospects

The issues outlined above raise an important question as to whether there is any scope for improving the current decentralisation programme to benefit the rural poor. The

rural areas have not seen themselves as partners in the development process since the distribution of development output by the DAs and central government has fallen drastically short of their expectations.

It must be noted that enhanced and stabilised financial resources of Assemblies will, by and large, depend on the growing strength of the rural economy. It is in this light that immediate action on the perceived solutions to poverty by the rural poor is imperative. As a man in Akrokerri noted with all seriousness 'we need inputs to expand our farms' (see section 6.8.2), this was also intended as a means of employment for their children to stay and work on the farms. This gives credence to what Husein and Nelson (1998:1) have noted, that rural people construct their livelihoods through agricultural intensification, livelihood diversification and migration. DAs should approach the issue of rural poverty alleviation in a holistic manner instead of emphasising the construction and maintenance of social services and small-scale infrastructure (Goldman, 1998:47). This could help arrest the rural-urban migration which has plagued both Nadowli and Adansi West districts for decades. A young man in Dafiama in Nadowli district also noted they need 'small dams in farming areas... for all year round agriculture' (see section 5.7). This reinforces already held views that a prosperous agriculture is the engine without which poverty cannot be eradicated and food security cannot be assured (World Bank, 1996b:20). Agriculture, the largest sector in the rural economy and the enterprise which sustains the socio-economic life of the rural population, must be given serious attention if poverty is to be alleviated (see section 6.8.2). This study recommends that if the poor are to be reached and their lives bettered, agricultural reform must be pursued in tandem with other livelihood strategies such as support for cottage or agro-based industrial activities. Pursuing such policies could strengthen the rural economic sector and widen the taxable resource base for the Assemblies. Serious cognisance must be taken of the fact that in rural Ghana, poor people's access to better health, education, etc, depends on raising employment incomes (Lipton, 1999:184) through widening their livelihood sources. Such a people-centred development strategy in the rural areas will promote grassroots initiatives and encourage real participation, shape the sense of responsibility of the rural people and foster links with the DAs.

Related to this area of development, emphasis must be given to rural women in the development process under the DAs. Women in Africa perform about 90% of the work of preparing food for consumption and providing household water and fuel, 80% of the work of food storage and transport, 90% of the work of hoeing and weeding and 60% of the work of harvesting and marketing (World Bank, 1996b:6). This condition prevails to varying degrees in the study districts (see section 8.5). Poverty is gender biased and women continue to suffer in deplorable rural conditions. It is, therefore, surprising that neither District Assembly has any special programme for women to assist in ameliorating their economic and cultural conditions. DAs need to give special priority to women and their activities, though such action needs careful planning. Lip-service continues to be paid to enhancing the lives of women. Women in Ghana form an estimated 52% of agricultural labour force and produce 70% of subsistence crops. Women also constitute 90% of the labour force in the marketing of farm produce (NDPC, 1994 cited in Duncan, 1997:1). It is, therefore, recommended that a specific percentage of the District Assembly poverty alleviation fund (for example 50% for a start, based on their contribution to the agricultural sector) should be allocated to women's groups, for the mobilisation and training of vulnerable and marginalised women to enhance their on-farm and off-farm income generating ventures. DAs could be an important avenue for addressing the needs of women if political hijacking of the programme could be avoided. The need for education and training of men regarding cultural and economic constraints on women would play a major role in solving this problem, which has often been neglected by government and NGOs. Further research is recommended into the perceptions and attitudes of men with regard to cultural and economic constraints on women and to possible solutions.

One key focus is the problem of identifying the poor in order to know who are more needy and in what area of their lives. Research and data on various categories of the poor should be compiled in each district if rural poverty programmes are to be more effective. Programmes need to take into account the perspectives of the poor on poverty and its alleviation, and these views need to be incorporated into a District Poverty Alleviation Plan. If development programmes are undertaken in a transparent

and open manner, focusing on the felt needs of the poor and their priorities, it would be easier to get the trust and involvement of the rural poor for successful poverty alleviation programmes.

Ghana's basic capacity-building programme has been to provide training for officials in the areas of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives (Ahwoi,1998:20). Central government and district bureaucrats have received, and continue to receive, traditional didactic, top-down training to equip them for local government. Very little training beyond orientation has been given to the district Assembly Members. Training has to be linked closely to the internal change processes if it is to have a lasting impact (Thompson,1995:1523). Reform to achieve popular participation must, therefore, expose bureaucrats to people-centred approaches in training such as participatory rural approaches. The content of training programmes should address practical rural problems. Bureaucrats and politicians need to be exposed to the realities of rural life. Capacity building must also go beyond the district to the sub-districts. Central and local government and donor communities could concentrate more effort on building the capacity of the rural people at the village unit level who have 'governed' themselves in the face of harsh economic and environmental realities since the colonial era. Teams of leaders at the unit level could be identified and trained so they can mobilise the people to make legitimate demands on the DA.

The rural poor lack power and voice and they are geographically dispersed with limited transport and communication. They cannot spontaneously organise themselves and so may require an outside catalyst agency to promote their organisation. Traditional bureaucratic agencies have, so far, not been able to shoulder this responsibility (Khan, 1988:35). NGOs (see chapter 8) have made some progress but have a limited area of operation. Mobilisation of the rural people could be done through the traditional community organisations (see section 7.3). Their development into organs of independent, strong community action (Songsore and Denkabe, 1996:127) for poverty alleviation should be the concern of the DA. This will open avenues for raising the awareness of the rural poor to the obstacles to rural

development. It will also help in the development of their self-esteem and understanding of the need to eschew paternalism and take control of their own destiny. This, of course, needs to happen in tandem with improvements in economic welfare. Further research into the present role of traditional Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) in rural Ghana is suggested since they could play a vital role in poverty alleviation at that level.

In this direction, the role of traditional authorities should be re-examined so they that can play an effective mobilisation and development role under the DA. It must be possible to integrate traditional rulers in the villages into the DA, giving them mobilisation and development roles and offering them training and direction to fulfil their obligations. Chiefs continue to influence the views and behaviour of people in rural areas and could, therefore, be trained to cope with the requirements of modern local administration (Massing, 1994:120). Nkrumah (1995a:29), is of the view that chieftaincy in Ghana is atrophying from lack of use and that rural royalties could be converted into instruments of modern administration. Further research into chieftaincy and local government would help redirect the institution to meet the challenges of modern times.

Financial resources play a vital role in the success of decentralisation of power to the districts. The Common Fund created by constitutional provision is a means through which an increased share could be raised for DA development. If the DACF was raised to a larger percentage of national revenue it might enable the DAs to effectively discharge their shared responsibilities with the central government. A careful assessment of DA operating costs by an external accounting agency would assist in the proper estimation of appropriate DACF allocations.

Recruitment of staff by local government in Ghana has been one of the major obstacles to effective decentralisation. It is important that DAs have the power to hire and fire their staff so that they look to the DA for career progression and are accountable to them. They must be able to recruit and keep competent qualified personnel by providing them with incentives. This avoids the practice of qualified personnel just

using the DA as a stepping stone to better jobs in the future. The promulgation of the Civil Service Law 1996 would resolve this problem so that, as in Uganda, staff from different line ministries working in the districts are made accountable to the District Council, rather than their central ministries (Clayton, 1998:24; Villadsen, 1996 et al.: 62).

9.8 Conclusion

Decentralisation must be critically and realistically designed and implemented; it is not, by itself, a panacea for the numerous socio-economic problems of low-income countries. The World Bank (1999/2000:107) maintains that the success of decentralisation depends on its design ‘but decentralisation is often implemented haphazardly’.

This thesis has shown that the DAs in Ghana are not supportive of self-reliant, people-centred development. Participatory development, which empowers rural people by giving them a stake in the development process, has not been achieved under the DAs. Local ownership of programmes has also not been achieved under the DAs due to lack of involvement of the poor. No avenue has been created to empower Ghana’s rural people. They are likely to remain poor because the current decentralised system does not provide them with power and resources to act and participate in decision-making about issues that affect their lives.

Given a voice, resources, awareness of government commitment to poverty alleviation, and transparency and responsiveness of DAs to their felt needs, the rural poor could wage a relentless war against poverty under the DAs. The seriousness in their voices testifies to this, as a middle aged man at Akrokerri summed up:

“if they listen to us, provide us with inputs, support our economic activities in the village, and offer help in marketing our products, we could finance and build our own schools, clinics, good drinking water and maintain them better and we could live better lives”.

A much stronger commitment from central government to decentralisation - in terms of power-sharing and financial provision - will be required, if Ghana's rural poor are to experience the benefits which devolution, in theory, promises.

Appendix A: Check-lists of Questions for Interviews

I. Interviews with District Chief Executive (political head of the district)

1. System of 1/3 appointment and 2/3 elected members (how has it been working).
2. Heads of decentralised departments in the district (composite budgeting)
(Implementation and how it is working)
3. Relationship with presiding member/Assembly members (enthusiasm slipping?).
4. Sub-committees (influencing policy?)/relationships.
5. Revenue generation/diversification/investments/partnership with private companies.
6. District Assembly Common Fund.
7. Allocation of development projects (political influences).
8. NGOs in the district (opportunities and constraints)
9. Perception of poverty. - level and pattern of poverty in the district.
10. What makes the people poor? Poverty alleviation in the district
11. DA and poverty alleviation in the district.
12. Corruption
 - Disbursement of moneys allocated to various projects? Area preferences for allocation of projects? - Financial accountability in the assembly?
 - Main complaints against the Assembly?
13. Performance of Assembly.

II Interviews with District Co-ordinating Officer (Administrative head of the district)

1. Relationship between and level of performance of:
 - a) The Assembly and the decentralised departments
 - b) Appointed and elected members
 - c) District Chief Executive and all the others
 - d) NGOs
2. Main activities of the District Assemblies
- 3 Any poverty focused activities (particularly in the rural areas).
- 4 Finances of the district (- revenue generation)
- 5 Do people complain about the finances of the Assembly?).
- 6 District Assembly Common Fund/Financial Administration of the district.
- 7 Involvement of the people in development of the district?
- 8 Who are the poorest in the district? /poorest settlements?
- 9 What makes them poor?
- 10 How is the District Assembly helping in poverty alleviation in the district?
- 11 Has the Quality of life of the people changed through the DAs activities?
- 12 Best approaches to poverty alleviation.
- 13 NGOs in the district (opportunities and constraints). Level of involvement.
- 14 Main issues people talk about against the Assembly.
- 15 Performance of the Assembly

III. Interviews with Assembly Members (elected and appointed)

1. Non-partisan elections.
2. Duties as assembly member/constraints to performance of duties.
3. Training received (poverty focused?).
4. Membership of sub-committees/responsibilities/decision making.
5. Problems of elected and appointed members (level of performance/political inclinations/advantages).
6. Meeting and interaction with electorate (attendance-gender). Main issues discussed and process of reaching decisions.
7. Responsibilities for development projects in the area.

Poverty Issues

1. Perception of poverty
2. Who are the poorest in the district?
3. What makes them poor?
4. Level/pattern of poverty in the district/area
5. Best approaches to poverty alleviation

District Assembly and Development

1. Arriving at decisions on allocation of resources/development projects/political influences.
2. District assembly and poverty alleviation in the area.
3. What more could the DA do?
4. NGOs in the area (opportunities and constraints).
5. Are moneys released, used for their intended purposes?
6. Financial administration of the district?
7. District Assembly Common Fund
8. Conflicts: District Chief Executive, Presiding Member, Traditional Authorities
9. Things people talk about against the Assembly?
10. Performance of Assembly (constraints and improvements).

IV. Interviews with Assembly man/woman (from study villages)

Participation of the people in decision-making

1. Nature and frequency of meetings; involvement of the people in discussions/expression of opinions and arrival at decisions.
2. Main issues discussed at meetings/involvement of women
3. Channelling of decisions to the Assembly-acceptance or rejection.
4. Involvement in project planning, execution, completion and monitoring.
5. Functions of Assemblyman/woman and chiefs - any conflicts?

Poverty in the area

1. Perception of poverty
2. Who are the poorest in your area?
3. Where are the poorest settlements?
4. What makes them poor?
5. Best approaches to poverty alleviation (personal views).

Involvement of District Assembly, NGOs etc

1. District Assemblies and poverty alleviation in your area/effectiveness (meeting specific needs of the people) of poverty alleviation strategies/involvement of the people.
2. What more could the Assembly do.
3. Any other organisations working on poverty alleviation in the area - level of involvement of the people in the area and performance.
4. Responsibility of the development of the local areas (DAs, central government, NGOs Village Development Committees, chiefs etc.)
5. Finances of the Assembly - District Assembly Common Fund.
6. Performance of Assembly.

V. Focus group discussions in study villages

The District Assembly (DA) concept

1. What is the DA (understanding of the DA concept)
2. The role of the District Assembly in community/promotion of development.
3. Capabilities of the District Assembly; partners in development or otherwise.
4. Projects of the assembly in the village.
 - Level of community involvement in development projects.
 - Consultation/participation in initiation, completion and monitoring of projects.
 - Role/contribution to the development of the projects
5. Performance of the Assembly.
6. Finances of the District Assembly - Assembly Common Fund.
7. District Chief Executive and his capabilities.
8. Corruption
- 9 Importance of payment of taxes e.g. basic rates?
 - Benefit from payment of the taxes?
 - Money allocated and spent on projects?
 - Complaints about the use of money in the Assembly?
- 10 How important is it to pay special levy to Town Development Committees (TDCs)?
- 11 Responsibility for the development of the local area (DAs, TDCs, Chiefs, any other)
- 12 Effective ways of provision of services.

VI. Focus group discussion in study villages

Poverty (personal level)

1. Main economic activities in the village (opportunities and constraints).
2. Extreme hardships within the year.
3. Coping strategies in the village:
 - Any particular time of the year when economic hardship is greatest and why?
 - What people do at such times/any help or assistance and from whom?
4. Access to credit, sources, requirements etc.
5. The concept of poverty, wealth and well-being. (identification of people in each group).
6. Basic individual needs and how they are being met (ranking)
7. Best solutions to the poverty problems (immediate and long-term).
8. Direct or indirect role of the Assembly in poverty alleviation in the village and in what specific areas.
9. Identification of some organisations other than the assembly, in any socio-economic activity (NGOs contribution to the village).
10. How could the Assembly do better?

VII. Focus group discussion in the study villages

Poverty (community level)

1. Development needs of the village (ranking).
2. Existing services (access and affordability).
3. Meeting development needs (Assembly-moral and financial support, technical advice).
4. Other organisations and development projects.
5. Strategies and effectiveness (meeting of specific needs of the people) of provision of services by Assembly and other organisations.
6. Provision of services - the people, central government, district assembly, people and government, or other organisations. How should they do this.
7. Effective ways of provision of services.
8. District Assemblies a change for the better or same as the former district councils.

VIII. Focus groups discussion with women in the study villages

1. Perceptions of poverty, wealth and well-being in this area (identification of people in each group).
2. Who is poorest, men or women?
3. Basic needs and how are they met
4. Particular problems facing women.
5. Main economic activities in the village (opportunities and constraints).
6. Child care: problems /help?
7. Help from the District Assembly?
8. Any women's groups/main activities/benefits and problems.
9. Identification of some organisations other than the Assembly, in any socio-economic activity
10. Which of these are helping in poverty alleviation (how and why)
11. Direct or indirect role of the assembly in poverty alleviation.
12. How could the District Assembly do better?

APPENDIX B: LIST OF FOCUS GROUPS IN THE STUDY DISTRICTS

VILLAGE/GENDER	TOPICS DISCUSSED	EXERCISES CONDUCTED
Badabuo (4 groups)	<u>Nadowli district</u>	
Women: Group 1 - 16 Group 2 - 14	Perceptions of poverty, wealth, well-being, Coping strategies,, livelihood sources, seasonal stress, food security poverty alleviation, access to credit and social services. The DA concept, participation in decision making, Assembly project, performance of DA, Assembly member; the Common Fund	RANKING OF CONSTRAINTS ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION (mainly using pebbles; some voted as to the greatest constraints and the votes were used to rank)
Men : Group 1 - 14 Group 2 - 13	Economic activities in the area, problems encountered, poverty and poverty alleviation strategies, NGOs and poverty alleviation. The DA and development, poverty alleviation strategies, involvement of the people in decision making, performance of the Assembly	
Daffiama (3 groups)		
Women: Group 1 - 15 Group 2 - 14	Poverty, wealth, well-being, hardships within the year, coping strategy, women and poverty, help available to women, NGOs and poverty alleviation, poverty alleviation strategy. DA and development, DA projects, participation in the DAs development activities, performance of the DA	PREFERENCE RANKING OF INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES (pebbles); EXPENDITURE PATTERN (voting as to which expenditure is biggest) SEASONAL CONDITIONS (group agreement)
Men: 1 group Group 1- 11	Understanding poverty, wealth and well-being, economic activities in the area, hardships encountered, problems of agriculture, poverty alleviation strategy, NGOs and poverty alleviation DA and development, projects, involvement of the people, poverty alleviation and performance	POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES (group identification)
Tangasie (4 groups)		
Women: Group 1 – 14 Group 2 - 10	Poverty, wealth and well-being, economic activities in the area, hardship within the year, poverty alleviation strategies, who are the poorest and what makes them peer? NGOs and poverty alleviation DA and development, projects participation, finances and performance	INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES WITH NGO SUPPORT (pebbles and voting as to which brought in more profit) EXPENDITURE PATTERN (as Daffiama)
Men: Group 1 – 9 Group 2: 14	Understanding poverty and poverty alleviation, economic activities in the area, problems encountered, coping strategies, poverty alleviation strategies. DA and poverty alleviation, projects, access to social services.	RANKING – SOCIAL SERVICES (pebbles)
Puleba (3 groups)		
Women : Group 1 – 14 Group 2 – 17	Economic activities in the area, hardships encountered within the year, poverty, wealth and well-being, what makes them poor, access to credit and social services. Poverty alleviation strategies, NGOs and poverty alleviation DA and involvement of the people in development, projects, poverty alleviation	PREFERENCE RANKING OF SOCIAL SERVICES (pebbles) RANKING FOR LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENT (pebbles)
Men: 11		

Wioso (2 groups) Women - 15	Poverty, wealth and well-being, economic activities, hardships and coping strategy, poverty alleviation strategy, NGOs and poverty alleviation. DA and development, access to social services, participation under the DA, DA and poverty alleviation, performance of the DA	Preference ranking - intervention for livelihood improvement (pebbles)
Men – 9	Economic activities in the area, problems encountered and assistance received, poverty, wealth, well-being, coping strategies in hard times of the year.	Preference ranking – intervention for livelihood improvement (pebbles)
	District Assemblies	
Nadowli District		
One mixed group : 6 men and 1 woman	The DA concept, finance, taxes, project distribution, Role of Assembly members, relationship between DA, DCE and presiding member DA and development participation under the DA, Perceptions of poverty, who are poor, poverty alleviation strategies, NGOs and poverty alleviation, District Assemblies Common Fund	
Adansi West district (2 groups)		
Men: 8	Understanding of the DA concept, relationship between DCE, DCD, Assembly members and Presiding member, sub-committees, unit committees, politics in the DA, finance , Participation of the people in development, planning under the DA Poverty in the rural areas, economic activities in the area, the DA and poverty alleviation, DA Common Fund and poverty alleviation.	
Mixed Group: Men 7 Women 3	DA and development, departments under the DA, finances, provision of social services, problems of the Assembly, participation of the people, Assembly members and their people, Poverty, women and poverty, DA and women in the district, poverty alleviation strategies of the DA, performance of the DA.	

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