Participation that Empowers for Ownership: A Case Study of the UN Millennium Villages Project, Ghana

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Overview of Presentation

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Introduction

- **Goal:** 1) Decipher what “ownership” looks like on the ground and 2) Understand the extent to which participatory mechanisms used lead to project ownership at community level.

- **Method:** Participant observation, questionnaire

- **Duration:** 3/6 months

- **Unit:** Community Development

- **Activities:** Daily interactions with communities, community sensitization of educational and health issues, wealth ranking exercises, review of CAP implementation process, etc
Background

• Participation: “... the involvement by a local population and, at times, additional stakeholders in the creation, content and conduct of a program or policy designed to change their lives... participatory development uses local decision making and capacities to steer and define the nature of an intervention” (Jennings 2000: 1).

• Despite focus on “people centered” practice, there is still a concern that intended beneficiaries of development strategies feel little influence over and benefit from these.
Cluster Manager and dignitaries admire MV agricultural produce during National Farmers Day Awards
The Case for Increased Local Ownership

- Local ownership does not signify full control or possession…but rather, “ownership” refers to the respective capacities of different stakeholders, their power or capacity to set and take responsibility for a development agenda and to muster and sustain support for it (Saxby 2003).

- Without it, high dependency, low commitment levels, lack desire to want to continue, lack ability to build upon and replicate grave implications for sustainability.
Ingredients of Ownership

- Involvement
- Commitment
- Control
- Influence
- Replication
- Engagement
The Oman hene greets sub chiefs at the commissioning of a school at Yawkasakrom
Observations

- The participatory mechanisms being used contribute significantly to communities’ sense of project ownership.

- However, communities’ definition of ownership is focused on the physical structures. This implies that more needs to be done to ensure that they assume ownership of the entire project.

- The composition of the 6 ingredients appears to be slightly top-heavy: the project has clearly made ample provisions for participation, community involvement and commitment. Control and influence are existent but could be strengthened further. There is insufficient capacity development at this stage of project implementation, as a result the communities’ perceived ability to replicate processes and engage partners to assist them in CAP implementation is poor.
I and two women pose for a photo after a community debriefing meeting.
Recommendations

• Organize more frequent CAP reviews with pictorials and annotated manuals to help communities remember steps taken

• Put greater focus on capacity development e.g. introduce Citizen Government Engagement classes to teach literacy and human rights classes, and impart basic accounting, management, lobbying, proposal writing and fundraising skills

• Promote more rigorous sharing of knowledge and experiences through inter and intra community exchanges across all sectors

• Involve community members in purchasing of items where possible, i.e. ingredients for SFP or agricultural inputs
A Buruli Ulcer Patient stands in front of the Tontokrom Health Center
Recommendations contd.

- Explain the TORs of local governing bodies e.g. assembly men, agricultural extension workers, unit committee workers etc to repair existing relational issues amongst them

- Explore possibility of introducing innovative incentive packages to keep communities engaged and committed

- UNDP/ MV staff should see how processes can be quickened as TIMING is negatively affecting communities’ ownership

- MV staff should be careful of language and maintain a sense of urgency when talking about the need for communities to assume responsibility of project so that they develop a shared sense of project ownership sooner rather than later