Implementation of a Community-Based Poverty Monitoring System in Ghana

(January 2004—December 2005)

A Project Proposal
I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Since 1983, Ghana has implemented a number of economic recovery programmes to stabilize the economy, promote growth, and subsequently reduce poverty. Evaluation of these national poverty reduction programs has been conducted through national surveys—Ghana Living Standard Surveys (4 rounds). These surveys are however fraught with some problems such as glossing over some core poverty indicators for communities and individuals, design of questionnaires makes comparison between surveys impossible, and also irregular timing for data collection due to high costs of implementation. To overcome some of these difficulties, a Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaire (CWIQ) was developed. Compared to the GLSS, the CWIQ was easy to administer and included core poverty indicators that were previously overlooked in the former. However, irregular data collection, which plagued the GLSS, also affected the CWIQ. In addition, the CWIQ also showed that very little data on community poverty exists at the district levels. The data shortfall on communities creates problems in designing and prioritising programs and policies that will alleviate the plight of the rural poor. In this light, MIMAP-Ghana proposes to implement a Community-Based Monitoring System. One basic characteristic of a successful community data collection is the existence of a decentralised governance structure. Ghana has successfully institutionalised the local government concept since 1988 with the objective to ensure that people are directly involved in the decision-making process and responsible for their own development. The proposed system will use very simple and easy to administer questionnaires on core poverty indicators. Members of the community will conduct the survey in the chosen community in order to create a sense of ownership. Validation and processing of the results will also be done at the community level with all stakeholders. The results will finally be disseminated to development planners and community leaders through workshops and seminars to help policymaking and prioritisation of policy programs targeted at the communities.

II. Administrative Information

Project Leader: Dr. Nii Kwaku Sowa
Center for Policy Analysis (CEPA)
P. O. Box AN19010
Accra-North-Ghana
Ghana

E-Mail: niisowa@cepa.org.gh ; nii_sowa@hotmail.com
Telephone: (23321) 779365 or 778035
Fax: (23321) 773670
III. Background

Since 1983, Ghana has implemented a number of economic recovery programmes to stabilize the macro economy, promote growth, and subsequently reduce poverty. The latest programme to be implemented by Ghana in her poverty reduction efforts is the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). Ghana opted for the enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative of the Breton Woods Institutions (BWIs) in February 2001. Consequently, a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was prepared and is currently being implemented. The PRSP was prepared in consultation with people at the community level.

The consultation process brought to the fore specific problems based on perceptions and demands of the poor especially at the community level, which hitherto was not considered in developmental programs. One of the criteria that will be used to judge the successful implementation of the PRSP by the donors is monitoring and evaluation of programs and policies geared towards poverty alleviation. Though Ghana has benefited from a number of monitoring programs, all adopted a top-down approach to monitoring and not the bottom-up approach, i.e. from the community to the national level. This is in spite of the existence of a decentralized local government system in the country.

A. Local Government and Decentralization System

The local government system in Ghana began in 1988. It is a three-tier local structure, in line with the decentralization policy. The first level constitutes 10 administrative regions, which is coordinated by the Regional Council. The regions are subdivided into local government assemblies—District, Municipal and Metropolitan. Classification is done according to the size of the population in the area, demographic and ethnic characteristics. The geographical areas of a municipality for instance consist of a single compact settlement. The geographical area, population and the ability of the area to provide the basic infrastructure and other development needs from internally generated monetary resources qualify the area as a metropolis. A minimum of 75,000 persons is needed for a district. There are one hundred and ten (110) districts, made up of metropolitans, municipalities and districts (see figure 1).
The local government assemblies have sub-units such as Zonal, Area, Town and Urban Councils. At the lowest level of the tier are 16,000 unit committees. The unit committees are at the base structure of the local government system and represent the basic unit of planning and political administration. A unit is normally a settlement or a group of settlements, with a population of between 500 to 1,000 in rural areas and 1,500 for the urban areas.

The objective of the local government system in Ghana is to ensure that people are directly involved in the decision-making process and responsible for their own development. The District assemblies are therefore to identify community problems and development issues within their communities and to develop mechanisms solving them.

There is currently no consistent and timely data on poverty at the district and unit committee levels. Lack of data makes it difficult for the district assemblies to identify the needs of the local people and address them sufficiently. A community based monitoring
system could offer the district assemblies opportunities to assess policies they have implemented at the local levels, identify problems and basic needs at the village/community levels and how best they can be addressed.

B. Evaluation of Existing Poverty Monitoring Systems

Ghana has conducted four rounds of Living Standard Surveys, which have been relied on to assess the poverty situation in Ghana over the years. These surveys provide information on poverty trends in the country. They also provide opportunities for policy makers to trace trends in households’ well being over a period of time.

Even though the Living Standard Surveys serve a purpose of providing poverty indicators, they are fraught with problems some of which are listed below.

- The GLSS misses out on some important poverty indicators.
- Poor design of the questions makes them incomparable over time.
- Due to the high costs of implementing these Surveys, their timing has been irregular and lastly;
- The global nature of the Living Standard Surveys makes it gloss over poverty at the community and individual levels making it difficult for the average Ghanaian to identify him or herself with some of the results.

There have been attempts to remedy some of the inadequacies of the Living Standard Surveys. For example, the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaires (CWIQ)—which is designed to furnish policy makers with a set of simple indicators for monitoring poverty and its impact on living standards in the country—help to fill in the gaps as far as some social indicators of poverty are concerned. Nevertheless, these do not still cover analysis of poverty at the community levels and at the same time the problem of regularity of data collection is still persisting.

In addition, there have been participatory surveys, which have involved collection of data at the community level. But these have been very isolated and not on a consistent level.
IV. Objectives

Ghana has had about 14 years of decentralisation and the local government system is currently entrenched in the governance of the country. One of the main objectives of the local government system is ensure that people are directly involved in the decision-making process and responsible for their own development. The District assemblies have been charged to identify problems and development issues within their communities and to develop mechanisms solving them.

As is evidenced from the living standard surveys currently available in the country, very little data on community poverty exists at the district levels. The only available data on the districts are those collected by the sectoral departments for their central offices and not to the district planning offices. This major constraint in the development process makes it difficult for targeted interventions at alleviating poverty in the communities. In addition, such policy interventions use a ‘top-down approach’ since it often involves very little analysis of the priorities and perceptions of the people in the communities.

Against this background, we propose that a Community Based Poverty Monitoring System will inform policy makers, on a timely basis, of the effects of policies on the standard of living of people at the community level. This hopefully will complement the efforts of the decentralised system and achieve the main objective of local people becoming directly involved in what policies best address their needs.

*The proposed objectives of the CBMS-Ghana are as follows:*

- To offer communities with simple and easy to collect poverty indicators to determine the prevailing standards of living;
- To offer district planning offices with up to date core set of welfare indicators for assessment of poverty status at the communities;
- To provide policy makers with data to be used for prioritisation of projects, effective planning and monitoring of developmental programmes in the various communities;
• Improve capacity of data collection at the district and unit committee levels in collection, processing and analysis of data collected at the local levels; and finally
• To strengthen flow of information and dissemination of poverty data from the national to the committee level.
• To test a locally feasible data processing system, without necessarily relying on central government resources.

V. Research Activities

A. Welfare Indicators

Poverty in Ghana is multi-dimensional and characterized by low income, malnutrition, ill health, illiteracy, insecurity and isolation. Most of these indicators tie in with the Minimum Basic Needs Approach identified in the literature as capturing the multi-dimensional characteristics of poverty. The main areas of concern will be health, Nutrition, Water and Sanitation, Income & Livelihood, Basic Education and Literacy, Shelter, Peace and Order and finally Political Participation.

Poverty indicators currently available in Ghana (see Appendix 1) do not include indicators such as political participation, peace and order. The inclusion of these in Ghana’s CBMS is likely to provide additional information for poverty monitoring purposes. See Appendix 2 for the details of variables and indicators.

B. Data Collection

The CBMS will be pilot-tested in three (3) communities in the Damgbe West district; namely Prampram, Ningo and Dodowa. To create a sense of ownership and final take over of the system by the local authorities, enumerators to be used for the data collection will be selected from the communities. The District Planning Office and the District Statistical Office will supervise the collection of data at the local level and the MIMAP team will provide training and overall supervision of the system for the pilot-testing phase.
The basic sampling unit for the pilot test will be households. The collection of data will be undertaken through a survey covering all households (that is, a census covering about 7,100 households) in the 3 selected communities in the Damgbe West district.

**The Pilot Area – Damgbe West District**

Prampram, Ningo and Dodowa are communities within the Damgbe West district of the Greater Accra Region. It has a total population of about 30,000 with an average household size of 5.2. The 3 communities have about 2850 houses with 7,100 households (2000 Population and Housing Census).

Each community has a Town Council (sub-district structure) with about 3 electoral areas. An electoral area is made up of about 10 unit committees.

**Supervisors and Enumerators**

The data collection will involve 10 supervisors. The activities of the supervisors will be co-ordinated by 3 people nominated by the Town Councils (one from each town council). In each community, the members will recommend 10 people to be used as enumerators. Thus, about 30 enumerators will be employed for the survey. The 10 people nominated by each community will also be vetted by the CBMS Team before the training starts.

**C. Training**

The first phase of the pilot of the CBMS-Ghana will involve training of potential enumerators and supervisors on data collection techniques. Two separate training modules will be designed for the implementation of the questionnaires. The first module will involve procedures for the conduct of the survey and data processing.

The capacity to process and analyze data either manually or computerized at the community level is very low. Therefore, a detailed training programme will be developed to build capacity for processing of the poverty monitoring data. Prospective
community information recorders and data processors will be identified by the District Planning Officer and trained for future poverty surveys.

Figure 2  Schematic Diagram of Training and Data Collection

CBMS-Ghana Team

District Planning Officer
District Statistical Officer

- Overall supervision of the data collection

Selected Supervisors from Communities

- Supervise enumerators
- Summarize key poverty indicators

Enumerators from the Communities

- Data collection

D. Data Processing and Validation Techniques

The data processing and analysis will be conducted at the community by the supervisors, that is, District Planning Officer, District Statistical Officer and Selected supervisors within the communities. There will be a manual data processing system (tally sheet) insuring that the key indicators given in appendix 1 is extracted by local level resources, that is the supervisors.

Validation of the data will be conducted at a joint meeting between the Regional Minister, the District Chief Executive, representatives from the Area councils, Assembly members, District Planning Officers, supervisors, opinion leaders in the community and finally the enumerators. At the meeting, the results of the survey will be discussed and explanations sought for particular trends in the data. If the data is questionable, enumerators may be required to revisit the community surveyed.
E. Data Dissemination

The main method to be adopted from dissemination of the data will be meeting with stakeholders and policy-makers at the districts and the national levels. The meeting will seek to promote the use of poverty data in decision-making, resource allocation and subsequently prioritization of projects at the district level. A proposed flow of information chart is presented in Figure 3.

After validation, the results will be published on posters to be displayed at the district offices or any public place for announcements in the communities (in English and the local language). Community Poverty Monitoring Reports will also be published for dissemination to the District Chief Executives, Regional Ministers, the National Development Planning Commission and any other interested parties.

Data users:

National Level: Both government and non-governmental agencies will be sensitized to use the CBMS data for diagnostic study of the poverty situation in districts at the community level. The information will help design policy interventions and target the vulnerable groups including the poorest of the poor in the districts.

Local Level: It is envisaged that with the collaborative efforts of the district planners, CBMS data will improve and enrich the preparation of the district development plans that in turn feeds into the national development agenda. The Community Poverty Monitoring Reports will be disseminated through workshops to inform district assemblies/district planning officers to help monitor the impact of development policies and programmes undertaken at the national level and/or local government in the surveyed communities.
VI. Institutions and Personnel

The following Personnel working in the institutions listed below their names will be working on the CBMS project in Ghana.

1. Dr. Nii Kwaku Sowa, Core Research Fellow, Center for Policy Analysis, Accra
2. Ivy K. Aryee, Research Officer, Center for Policy Analysis, Accra
3. Dr. Felix A. Asante, Research Fellow, Institute of Statistical and Social Research (ISSER), University of Ghana, Legon-Accra.
4. Prof. Clara Fayorsey, Associate Professor, Sociology Dept., University of Ghana, Legon-Accra.
5. 1 Research Assistant – To be identified

Adding to these, a network of personnel will be drawn from the

1. Ghana Statistical Service
2. National Development Planning Commission
3. District Chief Executives
4. District Planning Officers and
5. Unit Committee leaders of the chosen pilot testing area.
Steering Committee

A National Steering Committee that will advise the CBMS Research Team on what strategies would be useful in promoting the use of the CBMS in the decentralized system will be formed. This committee will also help in the institutionalization of the CBMS in Ghana. The members of the committee will be drawn from the following institutions:

(i) National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)
(ii) Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development
(iii) Ghana Statistical Service and
(iv) The CBMS Research Team
Appendix 1: Welfare Indicators in Ghana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA OF CONCERN</th>
<th>INDICATOR (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Composition and Characteristics</td>
<td>- Population: 18.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Av. Household Size: 4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Basic Education and Literacy</td>
<td><strong>Primary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Access to School: 81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Primary Enrollment: 67.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Secondary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Access to School: 19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Secondary Enrollment: 40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Adult Literacy: 48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Income and Livelihood</td>
<td>- Upper Poverty Level: $106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lower Poverty Level: $82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Upper Poverty Line: 39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lower Poverty Line: 26.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Nutrition</td>
<td>- Stunted: 29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Wasted: 6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Underweight: 26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Housing and Shelter</td>
<td>- Owns their Dwelling: 37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Living in Rented Houses: 18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Av. No. of Rooms/Household: 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Water and Sanitation</td>
<td>- Access to Water: 82.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Safe water Source: 65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improved toilet: 25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(flush and covered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Health</td>
<td>- Access to Health Services: 37.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2: Proposed CBMS Indicators and Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA OF CONCERN</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Composition and Characteristics</td>
<td>Demographic and Social Characteristics</td>
<td>Population, Area size, Size of available farmlands, Average household sizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Political Participation</td>
<td>Participation of household members in community organization and electoral processes</td>
<td>Number of households with members involved in at least one community organization; Number of members with eligible/registered/actual voters in household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Basic Education and Literacy</td>
<td>Educational facilities Educational attainment and literacy of household members</td>
<td>Existence of Schools/distance Educational materials, teachers Elementary enrolment (6-12yrs); Secondary enrolment (13-16yrs); Educational level of household head; Household Literacy (ability to read and write)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Income and Livelihood</td>
<td>Sources of Income -Wages or salaries from employed household members -Income from livelihood activities and other sources - Income from household members abroad</td>
<td>Average household income Income and Economic activities of household members; Number of household members with a job/business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Nutrition</td>
<td>Nutritional status of children 0-5 years old</td>
<td>Number of Children (0-5yrs) by height, weight, sex and age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Housing and Shelter</td>
<td>Characteristics of housing unit of the household Household amenities</td>
<td>Households living in own or rented houses; Number of people living in room. Number of household type of construction materials used for roofs and walls of dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Water and Sanitation</td>
<td>Households with sanitary toilet facilities Households with access to safe water</td>
<td>Type of toilet facilities used Source of water supply; Distance to one within the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Health</td>
<td>Health indicators and access to health facilities</td>
<td>Common diseases within community Child and maternal mortality Presence of health workers, hospitals, health posts etc. Distance to such facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Social and Community</td>
<td>Social and Community status as perceived by household members</td>
<td>Availability of Electricity; Telephone, Postal facilities; Banks or credit facilities Type of transportation facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Peace and Order</td>
<td>Crime Incidence Conflicts or armed encounters within community members</td>
<td>Presence of Police post Number of crime victims by type of crime (rape, murder, robbery, abuse, physical injury) Number of conflicts or armed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

Poverty Trends in Ghana in the 1990s, Ghana Statistical Service, October 2000

