

DFID/FAO/ODI Strategic Programme for Information on Sustainable Livelihoods – Ghana Country Component

Background

Economic and Agricultural Development Policies

Ghana is a low-income country and a third of the population of 17 million people are living below the poverty line. The rural poor perceive lack of services and resources as the main constraint to improving their livelihoods. Agriculture makes up over 40% of GDP and 70% of rural employment, and has untapped potential. The incidence of poverty is highest amongst food crop and export crop farmers, and amongst self-employed rural people working in off-farm activities such as trade. The Ghanaian Government's development agenda as set out in the planning document 'Ghana: Vision 2020' which is to be implemented by accelerating broad-based economic growth and by direct poverty-reducing measures for those not participating in growth. Structural reforms have begun on the boundaries of the state, privatisation, financial sector reform and civil service development under a national institutional renewal programme. Privatisation of the power, telecommunications and urban water sectors is underway and is hoped to encourage further foreign investment. The economy generally is expected to improve with GDP growth forecast at 3.9% in 2001 and 4.3% next year (EIU, 2001). The government has initiated participatory poverty assessments and has developed an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP).

The I-PRSP provides the Strategic Policy Framework for the reduction of poverty and sets out the context and identifies growth strategies. The Accelerated Agriculture Growth And Development Strategy The Medium Term Agricultural Development Programme (MTADP), which was initiated in 1988, guided and informed government policies and programmes for agricultural development during the 1990s. In addition, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) has formulated an Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Development Strategy designed to increase the sector's annual growth rate from 2-3 per cent (1990-96) to 5-6 per cent as programmed for in Ghana – Vision 2020. The policies and programmes designed to achieve the objective of the Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Development Strategy are based on five major elements:

- Promotion of selected products through improved access to markets
- Development and improved access to technology for sustainable natural resource management
- Improved access to agricultural financial services
- Improved rural infrastructure
- Enhanced human resource and institutional capacity

The Agriculture Services Sector Investment Programme (AgSSIP) is intended to assist the implementation of this strategy through, amongst other things, empowering grassroots organisations to negotiate better with actors responsible for the delivery of services and regulate access to services, markets and production. Strengthened producer organizations, such as cooperatives and farmer groups will be able to provide better services to their members to facilitate technology adoption, by improving access to input and facilitating marketing. As most of the rural population earns their livelihood from farming, AgSSIP will contribute to broad-based poverty reduction in the country. Other principal elements of the PRSP such as 'reducing the isolation of poor communities through strengthening economic infrastructure such as roads and communications networks' address the following principal objectives:

- A reduction in the incidence of poverty in both rural and urban areas;
- Strengthened capabilities of the poor and vulnerable to earn income;

- Reduced gender and geographical and socio-economic disparities; and
- A healthier, better-educated and more productive population.

The Ghana Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) includes Agriculture and Decentralisation elements and helps to define the context of the I-PRSP. Under the UN umbrella, a Common Country Assessment of the human development situation in Ghana was prepared as a complement to the CDF, with the participation from a broad cross-section of development partners, under the leadership of the Government. The CCA also provides an important input to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which is the common development strategy of the UN agencies in Ghana.

DFID and FAO in Ghana

DFID has a significant bilateral aid programme with the Ghanaian Government with an estimated annual expenditure of £44m with significant investments in the country's agriculture and rural infrastructure (DFID, 1998). Assistance in the agricultural and natural resources sectors is currently focussing on the development of the AgSSIP as part of the overall support to the PRSP process. The FAO Regional Office is based in Accra and there is a considerable number of FAO activities in the country. The Farmer Field Schools, Participatory Community Forestry and Sustainable Livelihoods Fisheries Programme are some examples of FAO's ongoing programmes that will be coordinated with the information programme activities.

Information Systems and ICT policies

Other multi-sectoral plans include the Framework for the Design of a National Information Technology Policy for Ghana, which is broad in focus ranging from content development to infrastructure and e-governance to education. The UNDP has helped to facilitate the formulation of the policy together with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and is continuing to support the process. The Draft Communication Policy Working Document is the result of the National Communications Conference in Accra in 1998. The National Communications Policy will be developed through an integrative process that involves a wide range of stakeholders. The policy aims to be comprehensive including issues such as

- Building an appropriate institutional framework including where necessary liberalisation of state owned industries. Review of state owned news agencies and greater inclusion of rural population and other groups in communication.
- Technical, operational and maintenance human capacity building based on better assessment of needs.
- Improved technology and research capacity to focus on indigenous capacity building and local appropriation of technologies to reduce import dependency and help to 'internalise and domesticate' the technology.
- Training and development through the educational system and the development of specialised training institutes.
- Inter- Agency and multi-sectoral standard setting to reduce incompatibilities between new systems and make infrastructure investments more efficient.
- Improve access through the mass media, education system, development of Ghanaian languages, and laws to protect indigenous knowledge.
- Broader legal framework needs to reinforce democratic communication policy.

A number of e-working groups have been established to develop programmes and project activities under the authority of different ministries within a comprehensive framework. Groups such as e-sovereignty, e-learning and e-economy involve the formulation of programmes to be managed by Ministries such as Defence, Foreign Affairs and Media

Relations. The Ministry of Agriculture is also involved in the e-community working group to promote community based IT infrastructure, access and use through a combination of investment strategies and tax incentives. The Ministry of Agriculture together with the Ministries of Local Government and Communication are also expected to carry out further analysis of the grassroots level impact and uses of ICTs.

Policy processes have already made some progress in Ghana towards improving rural community access through the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector. Ghana Telecom was converted from government department to corporation in 1974. Separation from postal services and privatisation took place in the mid 90s. In 1997 a 30%-share of Ghana telecom was sold to a consortium led by Telekom Malaysia (BMI-T 1998). Through an agreement with the Ghanaian government, the company is required to provide app. 225,000 main telephone lines between 1998 and 2002, investing more than US\$80 Mill. Capital Telecom has been operating since 1997 to promote rural access. The company provides rural communications using a multi-access Wireless Local Loop (WLL) radio system with a potential capacity of 1,000 subscribers per hub. By the end of 1999 the completely liberalised mobile services market covered the major cities of the southern part of the country and served approximately 40,000 subscribers. Internet services are also planned through the fully liberalised ISP services that are currently focussed on the urban subscriber markets. At present the mobile networks are most likely to address the current rural –urban disparities. There is approximately 1 main line per 100 urban inhabitants compared to 0.12 main lines per 100 rural inhabitants (Bertolini, 1999).

The Country Visit

As part of the preparatory phase of the Strategic Programme for Information in Support of Sustainable Livelihoods, a team from FAO, DFID and ODI visited Ghana as one of three country case studies. The team met with a wide range of institutional and individual stakeholders that use and require information for their livelihoods in order to identify the gaps and constraints that they face in using information relating to food and agriculture, and rural development in Ghana. The Ghana Country Component will form part of the overall Strategic Programme and as such this visit has helped to identify specific opportunities for FAO interventions in Ghana and has also served to draw lessons that relate to the key themes of the desk study, which will assist in the design of the Strategic Programme.

Information needs and existing systems

The visit began the process of providing a differentiated needs assessment on which to base the programme's activities. The meetings with stakeholders included a wide range of organisations and individuals from many different levels and enabled the team to identify the broad range of information needs amongst the various groups in Ghana. This process will need to be continued especially during the first six months of the programme when specific activities, partnerships and intermediaries will be defined. It is important, however, that a differentiated approach has been taken at an early stage in the overall programme design because it has facilitated a deeper understanding by the design team of the information needs in Ghana of the multiple-levels. These are discussed further in the summary of organisations visited and at each level a more detailed assessment of information needs will assist in the design of complementary interventions within the country programme.

Key Themes

The SPISSL Desk Study identified a number of themes for improving information for sustainable livelihoods based on a review of the literature and worldwide experience. Discussions with stakeholders in Ghana confirmed their relevance, and helped to prioritise the key themes in Ghana:

1. Information costs, income generation and financial sustainability

Cost is a central issue to the use of information in Ghana, especially regarding sources of information that are outside the country (eg foreign printed or digital journals, most of digital resources, Internet). These are often not seen as cost-effective because i) the benefit from that information is not always clear (relevance to the Ghanaian context) ; ii) associated costs are too high (IT equipment, subscription to Internet, subscription to foreign journals/CDROMs etc). Charging for information services remains a challenging exercise given the very limited resources of individuals / organisations. INSTI QAS experience suggests that a charging scheme can be introduced if the benefit of the information can be clearly demonstrated and if prices are kept very low through heavy subsidisation.

2. Access, empowerment and democratisation

The historic lack of information has meant that users at all levels rely on their own informal information sources. Therefore demand for published and broadcast information is high but difficult to determine. In many cases users are not accustomed to having any choice of information made available to them. Farmers in particular have very limited access to information and extension tend to provide information when it is made available to them (eg as part of a specific programme) and not on demand. Only a relatively small percentage of farmers receive any information from extension officers services. Improving access to information resources is likely to be an essential precursor for the programme to developing a more demand driven and responsive information system because it will help to inform users of the choices that become available to them. Access to information is so limited in Ghana at every level that SPISL should prioritise improving access early on in order to generate the demand for more information and more responsive mechanisms that will also be developed during the programme.

3. Appropriate content and context

There is a predominance of informal sources of information through personal networking in Ghana. Direct human interaction is preferred (face-to-face meeting, telephone). Constraints to access information are often expressed in terms of lack of funding for arranging meetings/transport/telephone access. It is evident that that information and knowledge relevant for Ghanaian farmers is already present in Ghana or can be generated in Ghana. The main constraint is that this information is not mobilised. Knowledge and experience might have been already documented but materials are uncoordinated among organisations and difficult to access physically. Knowledge that has not yet been captured in an appropriate format that can be shared widely can only be transferred through face-to-face meetings. There are numerous organisations producing agricultural information from research institutes to private sector input suppliers but there appears to be very few consistent information sources providing regularly updated, high quality information. The extension service and MOFA policy-makers rely on the research institutes which *can* provide high quality information but are limited by sporadic and uncertain funding. There is a need for greater coordination of information between the macro and micro-levels in order to ensure more appropriate content for users at every level.

4. Building on existing systems

A weak telecommunication infrastructure, high costs of IT equipment / telecommunication usage and lack of IT skilled persons prevent penetration of IT and access to digital information through electronic medium (Internet, CDROM). Despite improvements in telecommunications infrastructure and strategic planning for improved decentralised government the district assemblies remain relatively isolated. About 50% of the 110 DAs are connected to the telephone and virtually none have access to e-mail and the Internet. There

are plans¹ to connect most government ministries and 20-30 DA s over the next 5 years with a co-ordinated government software programme that will improve budgetary planning and monitoring. None of this is likely to have a significant impact on the government information network in time for SPISL to contribute in any way. The context in which SPISL will operate is one where outside Accra the information infrastructure is minimal and networking is largely informal and personal. The CSIR centres and University faculties of agriculture are marginally better equipped but network failures and prohibitive pricing persist and are unlikely to be solved in the short term.

5. Building capacity

The context in Ghana of limited information use at every level means that there are a very broad range of possible interventions that could usefully be undertaken by the Strategic Programme. In Ghana, the initial assessment of needs and existing systems suggests that a focus on capacity building would be a very effective starting point for the strategic programme activities. There are a number of possible entry levels in Ghana and capacity building activities will need to reflect the needs of the different user groups. An initial assessment has led to the identification of four levels of stakeholders, policy level, district level, research and community levels; that should be supported by the strategic programme either directly or through partners and intermediaries. Capacity needs to be built in terms of the technical skills for the collection, preparation, storage and dissemination of information as well as the social skills to use information for improving livelihoods.

6. Realistic approaches to technologies

Crop and product specific information from the private sector is also dependent on the supply company's marketing campaigns and needs to be translated into a format suitable for Ghana. Where this occurs (eg Weinco) there is no mechanism for checking the quality of the information supply. The most regular supply of agricultural information is the weekly radio and television programmes (GBC) although these are not demand driven. There are currently no facilities for copying and rebroadcasting or showing these programmes in a more localised context. A few rural radio stations provide more localised agricultural information programmes such as Simli radio and they also suffer from a paucity of available information sources for the content of their programmes. TV and radios are widespread and are the best ways to reach the population directly including in rural areas. Constraints in TV such as the cost of production of videos (old technologies) and lack of funding; video programmes in English for national audience (not adaptation for local context) need to be addressed. Local public/private FM stations are very competitive. At District level lack of Public Information Officers qualified and experienced to collaborate with local FM stations for programmes preparation and for lobbying to defend the presence of Agriculture.

7. Strengthening partnerships

The opportunities for strengthening partnerships in Ghana exist at the different levels outlined in the section below. There is limited NGO and CBO institutional capacity in Ghana and therefore strengthening partnerships *between* the different levels would assist in providing support for these institutions. National and local government institutions will also benefit from improved partnerships with community organisations through improved dialogue and two-way flow of information for more effective policy-making. Partnerships with the private sector and between line ministries could also assist in developing improved resource allocation and cost sharing and more coherent strategy formulation. Partnerships across traditional government sectors such as with education, IT and finance will also greatly assist

¹ Oracle has been contracted by the government with World Bank funding to develop a financial management system for the Ministry of Finance Public Financial Management Reform Programme (PUFMARP) with a wide area network (WAN). Siemens has been contracted to implement phase 1 of the IT infrastructure to 42 government sites.

the PRSP process in Ghana. Education resources such as schools, teachers and training institutes could represent innovative partners in improving information flows in Ghana.

Opportunities for FAO interventions.

FAO information systems

FAO has considerable information resources that could be made more available to many different users in Ghana. The background report identifies the wide range of information resources and programmes that are relevant to a programme supporting sustainable livelihoods. In Ghana it was evident that FAOs resources are vastly under utilised and this needs to be addressed by the programme as a matter of priority. There is very limited awareness of the information resources that FAO has available. A range of activities need to be developed that raise awareness, improve access and define information needs. Some of these might include:

- Survey of existing users to determine priorities and preferences.
- Survey of relevant policy-makers to determine information use patterns.
- Training courses in accessing and searching for relevant information from FAO's resources.
- Bulletins and newsletters to inform a wider public of new information materials.
- Improved access to the FAO library and extended borrowing and copying facilities.

FAO's information systems are sustainable and by making them more available to information systems in Ghana the programme will also make those systems more sustainable. Many of FAOs information resources are available free of charge and these should be used to greater effect. The programme should aim to investigate the role of information as a public good in the context of agricultural and rural development. An example of an intervention-to-output process to address these issues is provided below:

Intervention: Baseline survey conducted in MoFa HQ, a Research Institute, A Faculty of Agric, a Farmer producer/processor Association and a District Directorate of Agriculture. Follow-up survey conducted in the last year of the project for impact assessment
Timeframe : baseline survey preparation / conduct / results compilation : 3 to 6 months, y1 ? Follow-up survey : y5.

Outputs:

- profile of FAO's information use, to be used to model other SPISSL interventions.
- baseline survey + final survey : impact assessed.
- lessons for FAO info dissemination derived.

Policy level

The PRSP is the major government planning process at the moment (Trevallion) in Ghana under which sectoral plans are being designed with the intention that they form a coordinated and cross-sectoral poverty alleviation strategy for the whole country. The Strategic Programme can assist in the coherence and coordination of the policy planning processes by providing support to policy-makers. The rural sector has been identified as an essential component of the underlying rapid economic growth strategy and the Agricultural Services Subsector Investment Project (AgSSIP) outlines the strategy for rural poverty alleviation and agricultural development. The AgSSIP follows on from the National Agricultural Research Strategic Plan (NARP) that was prepared in 1994 and has helped to identify the priorities for the development of the agricultural sector. The AgSSIP will be

implemented in three 3-year phases and the Strategic Programme will be well placed to support phase 1 (2001- 2003). The inter-related thematic sub-programs are as follows:

- Strengthening the agricultural technology generation and diffusion systems
- Reform and strengthening of MOFA and District Assemblies
- Development of Farmer-based Organisations
- Strengthening Agricultural Education and Training

The SPISSL Ghana Country Component can assist in the implementation of these sub-programs by enhancing the information capacity and information management of the policy-level decision-makers that are responsible within the central ministries. This will help to build on the existing policy processes and develop the democratic processes through improved information sharing. This will involve the provision of FAOs information resources, training in accessing and using information sources, facilitation of training for improved information management processes and the development of demand driven information and resource packages. These activities will need to be coordinated from a specialised information centre in Accra that could be based within one of the implementing agencies for the AgSSIP sub-programs, FAO or another independent institution. The focus of the activities at this level should be on the policy processes and providing policy-makers with access to FAO information resources and the skills to manage and demand information from a wide-range of sources, not least internal cross-sectoral and line Ministry sources, that are relevant to the actual needs of the policy process as they arise. Activities at this level could include:

- Support to a dedicated information centre for policy level information.
- Support to a dedicated intermediary responsible for repackaging information for the Ghana national context and in response to domestic policy processes.
- Provide training for policy makers in information management and integrating information components into policy planning.

An example of an intervention-to-output process to address these issues is provided below:

Intervention : Assist the MOFA to formulate a clear IM/IT strategy. Many different and complex Information systems/services planned in the context of AgSSIP. Importance of an articulated IM/IT strategy to support the MOFA in fulfilling its mandate. SPISSL team support the process. Key principles : user-driven, local ownership, synergy with AgSSIP. Timeframe : 6 to 12 months, y1/y2 ?

Output : A MOFA IM/IT strategy, owned by MOFA and reflecting its views/needs.

- IM/IT strategy formulation case study.
- In-depth understanding of IM constraints and information needs .
- Personnel sensitised to the role of information.
- Could be used for modelling other SPISSL interventions.

District level

The decentralisation process is based on the District Assemblies (DAs) which are required to co-ordinate and manage government programs at the local district and area level. There are 110 DAs that house representative from the various sector ministries. The extension service is located at the DAs and is structured as follows:

- District Director of Agriculture (DDA)
- District Development Officer (DDO)
- Agricultural Extension Agent (AEA)

There is also a designated information officer for the whole DA under the Information Services Department and an agricultural information officer working within the extension service. The SPISSL Ghana Country Component can provide assistance both to the decentralisation process as mentioned above and through direct interventions at the DAs targeting the extension service staff in particular. Training in information management and accessing resources will need to be integrated into a specialised training programme that should correspond with the existing resources, infrastructure and capacity at the district level. The development of responsive information networks both within the extension service at the district level, and between the extension service and farmers is essential to achieve all of the sub-programs of the AgSSIP. There is insufficient capacity to develop training materials and repackage information at the DAs and therefore this should be carried out separately at a third level of intervention that links research and extension through subject matter specialists, research centres, agricultural colleges and faculties of agriculture. At the district level activities should focus on the extension officers to:

- Provide training in information management.
- Improve access to information resources.
- Use participatory approaches to assess community and farmer information needs.

An example of an intervention-to-output process to address these issues is provided below:

Intervention : Identification of the existing extension materials through selected partners such as INSTI, UDS and UCC. Use of ICT to store the full range of existing materials at the District Level in a cost-effective way. Contract digitisation of printed materials and production of the CD-ROM. For video : contract out porting of videos to DVD and production of versions in predominant local languages. Provision of a PC with multimedia features to District Agricultural Directorates and partners. Existence of the facility publicised, dissemination methods developed with partners + guidelines for recording logs of consultation (quantitative + qualitative). Follow-up survey / workshop for assessing impact. Scope : 5 to 10 districts ? Timeframe : 12 to 18 months , y1/y2 ?

Output : Models of information management, collection and dissemination tested and evaluated.

Research level

The Research and Extension Linkage Committees (RELC) were established under the NARP and are regarded as a successful part of that programme that will be continued under the AgSSIP. This forum provides support to extension services by providing specific training programmes to extension officers and investigating problems identified by farmers through participatory research. There are limitations to the RELC that are largely due to funding but the potential for partnerships between research and extension to be strengthened in Ghana is clearly demonstrated by these committees. The programme should not only aim to build on the existing RELC system but to develop new partnerships between agricultural research centres, faculties of agriculture and the extension service. The capacity of the research community in Ghana is variable but evidence of innovative approaches to the development of more participatory extension techniques and training resources suggests that intermediaries for the programme could be located at this level. The SPISSL Ghana Country Component could help to build these linkages by improving information flows between farmers, extension and research. FAO has experience of tackling this interface and supporting the information resources that are used to achieve the RELC's objectives and would be building on FAOs comparative advantage. The research institutes and existing stakeholders such as UDS, Cape Coast University, Sasakawa (mid-career extension school) INSTI/CSIR (CRI/FORIG), GAINS could be supported directly through improved access to FAO information resources for the creation of locally relevant training and extension

materials. The programme should focus at this level of research, farmer, extension linkages on the repackaging of information, using the skills and capacity of the research institutes to develop simple and locally relevant information materials that can be used by extension officers and the communities they serve. Many of these activities are already being carried out in Ghana and the programme will therefore need to identify those organisations that represent best practice in Ghana and work with them as intermediaries and strategic partners. The repackaging of information resources could be effectively carried out at this level for both the district and community level. Feedback from this element of the programme would form a key element of the lesson-learning process that will enable FAO to produce more demand-driven information resources. Activities at this level could include:

- Support research based intermediaries to repackage and generate extension materials through designated information centres.
- Support information centres in the co-ordination of research , extension and farmer information capacity building programmes.
- Facilitate micro macro-level information flow through dissemination of research and feedback from community level users.
- Facilitate training of extension staff including private sector and NGOs.
- Develop responsive information resources for extension and CBOs

An example of an intervention-to-output process to address these issues is provided below:

Intervention: Participatory assessment of AEAs and farmers' needs and preferences regarding the format and content of extension materials. Use research and extension subject matter specialists in partnership with journalists, graphic designers, educators and community organisations to prepare extension materials in a range of formats from print to radio and video, including photos, drawings, diagrams.

Output: Model for developing participatory extension materials developed and tested. Can be used for other activities of SPISSL including training extension officers, private sector and CBOs to produce more demand driven extension materials.

Community level

Farmers' groups, NGOs, Community radio, Fishermen, processing and marketing groups all need information for their livelihoods and currently have limited direct access to FAO resources or any other information sources from outside their immediate local environment. Local language is the key to communication at the local level but literacy levels also result in most information flowing by verbal and audio methods with visual demonstrations, images or diagrams rather than text based materials. There is no shortage of organisations able to translate materials into local languages either for formal text documents or for use as part of a demonstration or training programme. Art work can easily be produced that reflects local cultural practices and knowledge systems. The SPISSL Ghana Country Component can provide a range of information resources to CBOs to assist in the content and creation of locally relevant materials. This should be coordinated through the information centres identified within the research institutes either as part of the RELC or separately through new partnerships as mentioned above. However, materials will also need to be specially commissioned and feedback will be essential to provide lesson-learning not only for the FAO and the Strategic Programme but for the policy process in Ghana corresponding directly to the FAOs advocacy role. Activities at this level should be targeted at extending access to farmers as a means of empowerment by providing resources in a locally appropriate format. Community based radio programmes are one of the best methods currently being used in Ghana to provide technical information in local languages that respond directly to farmer needs and present the information in an entertaining and educational format. Intervention at

the community level can be managed by the research institutes and NGOs but can also support the ongoing work of the extension services and help to raise awareness amongst farmers of the programmes' work to strengthen the capacity of the extension officers to respond to their information needs. Activities at this level could include:

- Use research extension linkages and CBOs to develop information resources that respond to identified needs at the community level.
- Develop innovative mechanisms with CBOs such as market day 'information stalls' focusing on improving access and empowerment with targeted information packages for the most marginalised groups.

An example of an intervention-to-output process to address these issues is provided below:

Intervention : Mobilisation of knowledge and innovative practices. Collaboration with MOFA and partners to prioritise topics to be covered. Identification of innovative farmers (collaboration DA) and target audience. Conduct interviews, capture the context (contracts with local production unit + District Agricultural Directorate or Research Institute). Mix of text and photos driven by a voice telling the story. Medium CDROM with searchable facilities. CDROM would be played at the District Agricultural Directorate level + disseminated through a range of access points including the Web (Web MOFA/ FAO etc.) and CBOs. Production of the "story", production of the CDROM contracted out. Adaptation to the Web. Scope : 3 to 5 stories. Timeframe : 6 to 12 months, y2 or y3.

Output :

- Model of capturing and disseminating knowledge and innovative practices.
- Guidelines for developing "story-telling" format documents.
- Guidelines for improved access to information resources developed.