

Ghana's Experience with Developing National Sustainable Development Strategies: A Brief Note

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1. Brief history of NSDS (s) in Ghana

Ghana's development framework today is hinged on the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) which was preceded by a series of plans, which placed emphasis on poverty reduction and human development. Earlier plans which preceded the GPRS include;

- Making People Matter: A Human Development Strategy for Ghana (1991),
- The National Development Policy Framework (1994): a 25 year development perspective,
- Vision 2020: the First Step (1995), a five year policy statement - later developed into the First Medium Term Development Plan, 1996-2000, (MTDP),
- In 2000, an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) was produced (limited in scope).

Vision 2020: the First Step and the MTDP were also not costed and therefore offered insufficient detail to provide effective guidance by which MDA could prepare appropriate programmes and projects. In the event, annual budgets failed to reflect the policies incorporated in the plan, and it therefore not fully implemented.

2. Characteristics of development plans:

These plans have tended to:

- be national in character,
- adopt an undesired top-down approach,
- require massive capital investment in infrastructural development.

They did not take into account the cost of:

- natural resource exploitation,
- mineral exploitation and environmental degradation,
- capacity development needs of that time or the future,
- the situation and welfare of portions of Ghana without these endowments.

Since 1998, there has been considerable improvement in the management approach to both natural and human capital especially with the introduction of the following policies and programmes:

- Decentralisation Programme (1988)
- Poverty Reduction Programme (1996)
- Natural Resource Conservation and Management Programmes (various)
- Gender Equity and mainstreaming programmes (1995/6)
- Governance Programme

3. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS)

The GPRS focuses mainly on poverty reduction in several key areas:

- Strategies for poverty reduction,
- Strategies for increasing production and employment,
- Strategies for human development and provision of basic services in health, education, water and sanitation,
- Strategies for good governance

These were expected to be achieved through:

1. Prudent fiscal and monetary policies;
2. Private sector-led industrial production through the application of science and technology;
3. Sound and sustainable management of the environment;
4. Promotion of commercial agriculture using environmentally friendly technologies;
5. Agro-based industrial expansion;
6. Export promotion based on diversification and competitive advantages;
7. Increased investments in social services;
8. And, accelerated decentralisation as the key mechanism for policy implementation.

4. Status of implementation of NSDS(s)

a) Leading up to the WSSD:

i) - Very little achievement as the policy makers were not committed to their own policies and programmes. This was worsened by the numerous military take-overs of government,

ii) - There has been some change of heart from the mid 1990s with a conscious effort in strategic planning after a decade of experimenting with a decentralized form of government,

iii) - The Rio Conference was also a reawakening call for the need to create synergies and also address issues of environmental management,

iv) - A Ministry of Environment was subsequently created and sustainable development issues came under its ambit.

b) Post WSSD Initiatives:

i) Profiles based a Agenda 21 themes are reviewed annually,

ii) Selection and development of indicators for sustainable development,

iii) A National Capacity Self Assessment Programme is being carried out to match human resource capacity with ability to implement three conventions – CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD

iv) Strategic Environmental Assessment of the GPRS is being undertaken,

v) Review of the NSDS(s) is underway.

5. Key features of the NSDS

The NSDS is:

i) Government led or driven,

ii) Participatory,

iii) Bottom up planning process,

iv) Cooperative with development partners,

v) The National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSDD) functions as a national forum or dialogue for sustainable development issues.

6. *Success stories*

Macro-economic stability: Fiscal policies are working somehow;

- There has been appreciable reduction in poverty levels by region, gender, trades, etc.
- Ghana has seen a shift towards private sector led growth;
- Governance issues have become a primary national issue, including
 - accountability projects,
 - the rule of law,
 - gender mainstreaming,
 - democracy and popular decision-making, etc.
- There is an effective and workable decentralized form of government. Sectors are able to monitor and evaluate development trends within their areas of concern and to appreciate the inter-relationships between sectors and the cross cutting nature of development issues and poverty as an overarching national concern.

Every sector strives to attain global targets set out in MDG(s) and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and thereby assists to establish generally acceptable national aggregations of these issues for planning purposes.

7. *Main challenges*

3. a) Low perception and understanding of sustainable development phenomenon,
b) Little commitment of policy-makers (inconsistencies) to strategic planning
c) Marginalization of a critical mass of the population in a globalising world.

8. *How can Ghana make these strategies work?*

Recommendations

- a) Commitment to strategic plans must be assured,
- b) Implementation of sector plans must revolve on agreed issues and address cross-cutting concerns as a matter of priority,
- c) A functional and hierarchical reporting system for plans and a communication method need to be put in place with the relevant authority and command structures working
- d) Sustainable development must be made to work at the community level with the attendant challenges originating from that level but not merely perceived to be happening from a national perspective.