

Addressing Aid Externalities: A Study of the World Bank's Community-Based Projects in Ghana.

Kwadwo Adusei-Asante, PhD. & Peter Hancock, PhD.

School of Arts & Humanities, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia.

Email: K.adusei@ecu.edu.au

Abstract

Sub-Saharan African continues to be the target of significant international development aid. Although the region has received massive aid in the past sixty years, lives have not improved as expected, as seventy per cent of the one billion poorest people on earth live there. The prevalence of poverty in the region is considered so serious that, while some progress has been made, there are concerns that only two of the eight Millennium Development Goal (MDG) will be achieved by the target date of 2015. As a result, stakeholders are looking for ways to improve aid delivery in the region in the post-MDG era. This paper seeks to contribute to the discussion by drawing on one of the case studies of our ethnographic study of the World Bank's Community-Based Rural Development Projects implemented in Ghana between 2005-2011. In addition to other factors, we argue that development aid has been ineffective in Sub-Saharan Africa because aid externalities (concepts and terms that underpin aid programs designs, delivery and evaluation) are at variance with the beneficiary local socio-cultural contexts. To ensure that more effective aid is delivered in post-MDG Sub-Saharan Africa, the paper calls on development stakeholders to invest in understanding aid recipients' local contexts, culture, behaviour and beliefs, and to not ignore their lived experiences.

Key words: Ghana, community-driven development, empowerment, international development aid.

Introduction

The 2015 launch of the new Sustainable Development Goals has renewed discussions on the effectiveness of international development aid (aid), particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. The focus on Sub-Saharan Africa appear to stem from the fact that while the region alone has, over the last six decades, received aid in excess of \$1 trillion, there is little to show for it, in terms of poverty reduction, seventy per cent of the one billion poorest people on earth live in the region (Collier 2007; Moyo 2009). A 2015 United Nations Commission for Africa report indicates that while the region is on track to attaining three out of the eight MDGs¹, relative to Goal 1 (Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty), arguably the most important MDG, the report (p.1) states that:

¹ Goal 2 (Achieve universal primary education); Goal 3 (Promote gender equality and empower women); and Goal 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS and other diseases). (African Development Bank, p.1).

Africa's progress in reducing poverty has been slow compared to that of developing regions as a whole. Africa excluding North Africa only reduced poverty levels from 56.5 per cent in 1990 to 48.4 per cent in 2010 (a 8 per cent reduction), which is well below the MDG target of 28.25 per cent by 2015.

The argument that aid has made little progress in Sub-Saharan Africa has given rise to two broad schools of thoughts on aid as a concept. There are the "dead aid campaigners" who argue that given the quantum of aid the region has consumed and the results achieved so far, aid has failed in the region and must stop entirely. They argue further that aid creates dependency, stifles innovation and is used as an instrument to achieve strategic objectives of donors and not the interests of recipients (Easterly 2006; Moyo 2009; Lal 2011). Their opponents, the "aid works supporters", disagree and argue that aid is improving lives and will work overtime, if the conditions are right (Cassen 1994; Collier 2007, United Nations Commission for Africa 2015).

The arguments of some dead aid campaigners seem to suggest a subtle demonisation of "aid as a concept". However, it is our opinion that aid as a concept and aid dependency are not the same. Several scholars concede that, as a concept, aid can be a medium of investment and capital resources mobilisation, and can produce positive results if employed within in a short, finite and time-bound period (Cassen 1994; Reinert 2007; Collier 2007; Moyo 2009). The US Marshall Plan, which succeeded in reviving Western European Economies after World War II, is an example of aid that worked when applied over a short period (1948–1952). In addition, some countries, labelled as the "International Development Association Graduates", have lowered poverty, increased income levels and achieved, relative economic successes because of their short-term reliance on aid (Collier 2007; Riddell 2007; Moyo 2009). These include: Chile, Columbia, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Turkey. Within Sub-Saharan Africa, Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, and Swaziland are examples of the transformative power of aid (Cassen 1994; Collier 2007)2.

We do not subscribe to aid dependency because of its long-term negative effects on recipient countries. However, the negativity associated with aid dependency does not justify any attempt to demonise aid as a concept. We argue that aid is not a negative concept and that it produces results, or otherwise, depending on what we refer to as the externalities (programs, motives, theories and concepts) that drive it. In this paper we present a case study to illustrate some of the lessons learnt about aid externalities when we studied the World Bank's Community-Based Projects in Ghana (2005-2011). Through our evidence of how the local context of a Ghanaian town negatively impacted the outcomes of the aid-funded CBRDP in Ghana, we argue that current mechanisms for achieving aid effectiveness, particularly program-based approaches, need to pay attention to aid externalities. It is our objective that the evidence presented here will offer stakeholders of the recently launched SDG and the development fraternity insights for making aid effective in Sub Saharan Africa.

Methods

The findings presented in this paper draws on a PhD dissertation written by the first author, which focused on the manner in which complex concepts such as 'community' and 'empowerment' influenced the outcomes of the World Bank's Community-Based Rural Development Projects (CBRDP) implemented in Ghana 2005-2011 (Adusei-Asante 2013). The case study presented in this paper is part of the five case studies in the thesis. The data was collected from nine localities from three regions of Ghana: Eastern, Greater Accra and Volta. The data collection process lasted seven months fieldwork (2010/2011) and involved a review and analysis of relevant academic literature and qualitative data collected, mainly participant-observation, semi-structured focus group discussions and individual interviews with respondents who experienced the CBRDP in their respective localities. A total of fifty individual interviews and ten focus group discussions were conducted. In order to obtain a larger sample size, twenty-five open-ended questionnaires were distributed in each of the nine research localities. The questionnaires were administered

² See also <http://www.worldbank.org/ida/ida-graduates.html>, retrieved November 03, 2015.

randomly, but purposively to residents who had intimate knowledge of the work of CBRDP, but were not included in the individual interviews and focus group discussions.

Relative to the case study presented in this paper, the research instruments sought information on the: 1) Processes leading to the selection and implementation and the state of the Adekro CBRDP; 2) Participants' understanding of 'community', their sense of belonging and obligations to Adekro and what they considered as the most important needs of the locality vis-a-vis the project implemented; and 3) Issues affecting local tendencies in Adekro. The data was analysed manually and the themes that emerged are presented in this paper.

Community-Based Rural Development Projects

The Community-Based Rural Development Project (CBRDP) (2004–2011) was a joint pilot initiative of the Government of Ghana and the World Bank. Ghana's CBRDP was funded with loan facilities from the World Bank's International Development Association and the Agence Française de Développement. The Government of Ghana implemented the project under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) and the Regional Coordinating Units in conjunction with an independent CBRDP secretariat. The project was piloted in two phases, 2004–2008 and 2009–2011 in all ten regions, all hundred and thirty-eight Districts, and one hundred and forty five Area Councils at the time. The CBRDP sought to strengthen the capacity of rural communities to enhance their quality of life by improving their productive assets, rural infrastructure and access to key support services from private and public sources (World Bank 2004). The 82.00 million dollar project also served as one of the principal channels for the implementation of Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) and sought to bridge the gap of uneven distribution across socio-economic groups and geographical locations (World Bank 2004; CBRDP Implementation Manual 2006; Yaron 2008).

The CBRDP had five components. These included (a) Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building: strengthened governance and functional capacities of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Regional Planning Coordinating Units, and District Planning Coordinating Units to deliver cost effective services to rural communities; (b) Infrastructure for Agricultural Development supported the provision of water for agriculture, rural transport infrastructure and post-harvest facilities to enhance farm and non farm rural activities; (c) Rural enterprise development established community owned and managed businesses and micro-enterprises to create avenues for skills development and job creation; (d) Infrastructure for Social and Human Development rehabilitated existing schools, construction of community health compounds and nutrition centers and potable water for communities to enhance well-being and reduce water borne diseases; and (e) Community-based natural resource management built the capacity of communities and district assemblies to enhance environmental governance and integrated management of land and water resources (CBRDP Implementation Manual 2006; World Bank 2011).

As per CDD principles, Ghana's CBRDP beneficiary localities, through their Area Councils, were expected to choose, implement and maintain the projects (Mansuri & Rao 2004; Binswanger et al 2010). The selected Area Councils were trained in financial, project tendering and procurement management processes, after which they were required to prepare their respective Community Action Plans. The Action Plans were expected to be prepared in consultation with the local people and reflect their needs as well as their road maps to implementing the CBRDP. The Action Plan had to be submitted to the CBRDP Headquarters for approval, and if it met all the criteria, the Area Council received seed money in three equal instalments to implement the project. Beneficiary localities were required to contribute labour and/or render services at reduced rates to complete and maintain the project (CBRDP Implementation Manual 2006). The poor state of most of the CBRDPs studied, as illustrated in the case study below, suggests that the designers of the CBRDP seemed to have taken the local context of the beneficiary localities' and its potential impact on the projects for granted.

Program-Based Aid and Community–Driven Development

The Program-Based Approach (PBA) to delivering aid is regarded as one of the seven key principles for achieving aid effectiveness (World Bank 2010a). Since 2000, the belief that aid can and works has led the UN and the World Bank to launch several program-based aid initiatives. The PBA is premised on the notion that donors contribute to a coherent set of development activities at the national sectoral, sub–sectoral or thematic level³. The OECD (2008, p.148) defined it as sharing the following features:

Leadership by the host country or organisation; a single comprehensive programme and budget framework; a formalised process for donor co–ordination and harmonisation of donor procedures for reporting, budgeting, financial management and procurement; efforts to increase the use of local systems for programme design and implementation, financial management, monitoring and evaluation⁴.

At the Second High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (2005) in Paris, donors were enjoined to commit 66% of their aid in the form of PBAs. Listed as a way of achieving both harmonisation of aid and the MDGs, donors support and implement PBAs in different ways and across a range of aid modalities including: budget support, sector budget support, project support, pooled arrangements and trust funds. Although most donors have not achieved the 66% benchmark, there is evidence that many are investing in the approach (See CIDA 2010). The UN’s MDG and SDG and World Bank’s Community–Driven Development (CDD) are examples of program-based initiatives.

Embraced as an effective PBA to delivering aid, the World Bank defines CDD as ‘a development approach that gives control over planning decisions and investment resources to community groups and local governments’⁵. CDD is not considered a project, but rather the strengthening of political and administrative structures to empower communities and local governments with the resources and authority to control fully all project stages (Labonne & Chase 2008; Binswanger et al. 2010). While their operations vary by [country] context and objective, CDD is largely a joint–venture between ‘communities’, local governments and the central government, with support from the private sector and civil society (Mansuri & Rao 2004; Binswanger et al. 2010; Wong 2012). However, in some contexts, different localities or “communities” wishing to use CDD approaches write project proposals to compete for funds (Annist 2005; Conning & Kevane 2005).

According to Wong (2012), the World Bank currently supports approximately four hundred CDD projects in ninety-four countries valued at almost \$30 billion, with the largest number of projects in Africa, followed by South Asia and Latin America. The author argues further that since 2003, CDD investments have represented five to ten per cent of overall World Bank lending portfolio (Wong 2012). In 2008, the International Development Association’s (IDA) lending for CDD-related programs averaged 17% of its total lending (World Bank 2010). Since 2003 several African countries have implemented various CDD programs, namely: Senegal (National Rural Infrastructure Program), Tanzania (Social Action Fund II), Zambia (Social Recovery Project II) and Community-Based Rural Development Projects in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Ghana.

The terms ‘communities’ and ‘empowerment’ are key pivotal concepts in CDD operations. For example, because CDD provides ‘communities’ with a voice and control over all project stages, it is believed to; 1) Enhance sustainability; 2) Improve [aid] efficiency and effectiveness; 3) Allow poverty reduction efforts to be taken to scale; 4) Make development more inclusive; 5) Empower poor people, build social capital, and strengthen governance; and 6) Complement market and public sector activities (Dongier et al. 2003; Baird et al. 2009; van Domelen 2007; 2008; Binswanger et al. 2010; World Bank 2010b). Thus, the World Bank Group claims that CDD programs have empowered ‘communities’, delivered cost–effective infrastructure,

³ <http://www.aideffectiveness.org/Themes-Programme-based-Approaches.html>, retrieved May 18, 2015.

⁴ http://www.oecd.org/document/19/0,3343,en_21571361_39494699_39503763_1_1_1_1_00.html. Retrieved May 18, 2015.

⁵ <http://go.worldbank.org/24K8IHVVS0>, accessed August 04, 2015.

enhanced livelihoods, and improved ‘community’ dynamics in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia regions, while solving critical problems in Haiti and Somalia (World Bank 2010b; Wong 2012)⁶.

The above notwithstanding, some scholars have criticised CDD programs. First, Tesoriero (2010) and Warwick and Overton (2011) argue that the World Bank’s promotion of the concept cannot be trusted, as they have a hidden agenda. In their view, like Structural Adjustments of the 1990s, the World Bank is now using CDD to promote neo-liberal and neo-structural ideals, which shielded governments’ commitment to welfarism, while encouraging privatisation and reliance on families and women (see also Amin 2005; Defillippis et al. 2010; Pandey 2010).

Second, some scholars contend that because, in some contexts, different localities have to compete for funding, CDD inadvertently promotes ‘survival of the fittest’, the rich, the educated and the politically-connected (Platteau 2004; 2009; Labonne & Chase 2007). Because the approach usually funds those with the best project proposal, it has been argued that the approach posits ‘style’ over ‘real needs’, and that the ‘genuinely needy’ (the poor, illiterate or marginalised), may not always be those who obtain ‘the help’, due to the possibilities of corruption and conflict of interests (Annist 2005; Conning & Kevane 2005; Araujo et al. 2008; Baird et al. 2009).

Furthermore, there are concerns that CDD programs lack generalisable and uniform indicators for assessing aid effectiveness, as its successes are context-specific (Mansuri & Rao 2004; Chase & Woolcock 2005; Labonne & Chase 2008). Some scholars have argue that CDD programs tend to create new allocation rules, while altering existing structures of engagement and neglecting traditional institutions (Mansuri & Rao 2004; Miguel & Gugert 2005; Habyarimana et al. 2007). In other words, while CDD attempts to empower marginalised people, it is criticised for failing to appease the ‘traditionally powerful’. Because ‘power’ is not neutral, and ‘empowering’ one group may mean ‘disempowering’ the other; CDD programs can potentially threaten ‘community’ cohesion (Chase & Woolcock 2005; Mansuri & Rao 2004; Vail 2004).

A recent World Bank report titled “What Have Been the Impacts of World Bank Community-Driven Development Programs? CDD Impact Evaluation Review and Operational and Research Implication, has also outlined the need to 1) Establish a more participatory and inclusive model of service delivery despite a low starting point of financial and economic crisis and conflict in many of the countries; 2) Provide high-quality and adequate facilitation and technical assistance; 3) Build capacity for communities to obtaining positive results; 4) Utilize poverty maps to target resources to poor areas; 5) Use block grant funds for economically productive purposes; and 6) Ensure adequate level of resources for investment (Wong 2012). The World Bank’s report is crucial for this paper in two respects. First, Ghana’s CBRDP was not included in the study, making our study relevant. Second, although inherently appealing, yet complex concepts such as ‘community’ and ‘empowerment’ are pivotal in CDD’s operations; the report did not discuss the manner in which such concepts impact on CDD program outcomes in multi-cultural and ethnic settings, a gap this and our other papers seek to fill (see Adusei-Asante & Hancock 2012; 2013; 2015a, 2015b; Adusei-Asante 2015).

Ghana

Ghana is a multi-ethnic country defined by linguistic and cultural characteristics⁷. There are over two hundred and fifty languages and dialects, but English is the country’s official language, although most Ghanaians also speak at least one local language. The 2010 Government Census broke down religious divisions in the country as follows: Christian 71.2%, Muslim 17.6%, and African Traditional Religion 5.2%; some 5.3% Ghanaians are not affiliated to any religion (Ghana Statistical Service 2012). These diversities notwithstanding, no part of Ghana is ethnically, linguistically and religiously homogeneous, although a certain group may dominate.

⁶ <http://www.worldbank.org/ida>, retrieved in January 2015; see also van Domelen (2008).

⁷ Although the Akan make up 50% of the population.

Ghana is a politically-sensitive country; virtually every national event or program is politicised. Two political parties are dominant in Ghana: the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). Both political parties have activist groups they call 'foot-soldiers'; these are supposedly the men and women who work hard for their respective political parties at the grassroots level to win elections. 'Foot-soldiers' have become so influential that they are able to boycott and sabotage national programs, seize state properties or even demand the dismissal of Ministers of state and government officials⁸. As the case study will show, the CBRDP was politicised, and negatively impacted the Adekro CBRDP.

Ghana has depended on aid for most of its history. Until its recent categorization as a lower middle income, Ghana was one of the top ten recipients of development assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the IDA of the World Bank Group, the US, the UK and the EU Institutions as its the largest donors⁹. Since 1980, Ghana has experienced several aid initiatives at varying success rates, namely the Structural Adjustment Program; Multi-Donor Budgetary Support; the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative; and The Millennium Development Goals (Osei & Quartey 2001; Tetteh 2003; Aryeetey & Fosu 2003; Bawumia 2010). The country has also benefitted from sector-specific and program-type initiatives that served as vehicles for the implementation of the national-level development assistance programs, examples being the Village Infrastructure Project and the CBRDP.

Case Study: The Adekro Presby School Renovation CBRDP¹⁰

Adekro, a semi-urban locality in the Matse Municipality of the Eastern Region, benefitted from the CBRDP. Their project was the renovation of the Adekro Presby Basic School, whose roof was ripped off by a storm. According to the Head Teacher of the school, while the renovation was in the offing, it was not planned to happen under the CBRDP. However, the CBRDP coincided with the disaster, which disrupted their academic activities for several weeks, compelling their relocation to church buildings.

Although important, the renovation of the school was not the topmost priority of the residents and the Area Council (Adekro Action Plan 2010). Many residents explained in interviews that their topmost priority was a public toilet facility. Owing to the urgency of the school's renovation however, the Municipal Assembly impressed upon the Area Council to use the CBRDP funds to renovate the school. As explained below, while the project solved a major problem, the residents did not support it during and after the renovation. As of June 2012, fifteen months after the fieldwork, the school was still in crises, which in principle, the CBRDP intended that the local 'community' would maintain.

Before examining the reasons for the residents' neglect of the school, the circumstances leading to the renovation of the school require more explanation. The Adekro Presby Basic School, the only school in the town, housed the Pre-primary, Primary and Junior High Schools (JHS) pupils. The school children were largely from the surrounding villages. The introduction of the government School Feeding Program in 2009 had school led to increased enrolments, exacerbating the already overcrowded classrooms. The Head Teacher recounted that his staff were always stressed, as they could not keep up with the influx. Thus, after consulting with the Parents and Teachers' Association of the school, he decided to divide the Upper Primary (Classes Four, Five & Six) and JHS (One, Two & Three) to be run on a shift basis, 7:30am-12:30pm and 12:30pm-5:00pm respectively. The shift system, the teachers explained, helped to some extent. Yet, because of the ever-growing population of Adekro it did not solve the overcrowding problem and also exerted pressure on the limited resources of the school.

⁸ <http://elections.peacefmonline.com/politics/201108/64201.php>; <http://www.modernghana.com/news>, all retrieved September 25, 2015.

⁹ See <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/21/40/1881076.gif>, retrieved March 25, 2015.

¹⁰ The names of the town and respondents have been deidentified.

The shift system resulted in the loss of two hours of the teaching contact time. Moreover, the integrity of the school's examinations was also compromised as pupils sat close to each other. This was the state of the school until a storm blew the school's roof off. At the time of the fieldwork, although the government had abolished the shift system in all schools in the country, the Adekro Presby Basic School still operated the scheme for their Upper Primary. Only the JHS has been moved to an uncompleted structure, where pupils had to their own furniture to school everyday. Asked why he continued to admit more pupils, the Head Teacher said:

We cannot deny the kids their right to education. But we have had to repeat some of the class six pupils who were due to go to JHS one, not because they are not brilliant but because the numbers were just too much and there were not spaces for them.

As of the fieldwork, none of the overcrowded classrooms had electricity or fans, and as there were not enough textbooks, three or four pupils in some classes shared one. Because of the high temperatures, many of the students used the textbooks to fan themselves, resulting in many tattered books. There were also visible cracks on the floor and on some parts of the structure (see photos below).

The Area Council Chairman and the Assembly Member were concerned about the indifferent attitudes of the residents to the school and the general welfare of the locality. They expected the residents to rally behind the CBRDP and champion other initiatives to build more classrooms for the school. However, the residents appeared not to care much about the school. The local leaders had hoped that the successful implementation and maintenance of the CBRDP would attract more community-based initiatives from the Municipal Assembly. Despite this, The Area Council Chairman and the Assembly revealed, in separate interviews, that the residents of Adekro contributed neither labour nor monies to the project and were literally apathetic to it. Tellingly, as there existed no public toilet facility in Adekro some of its residents used the school's toilet facility and/or defecated on the compound. The challenged state of the Adekro CBRDP was attributable to the fact that the demographical dynamics of Adekro showed that it was 'community' enough to benefit and/or implement a community-based or driven project.



Photo 1: The state of the Adekro Presby School.

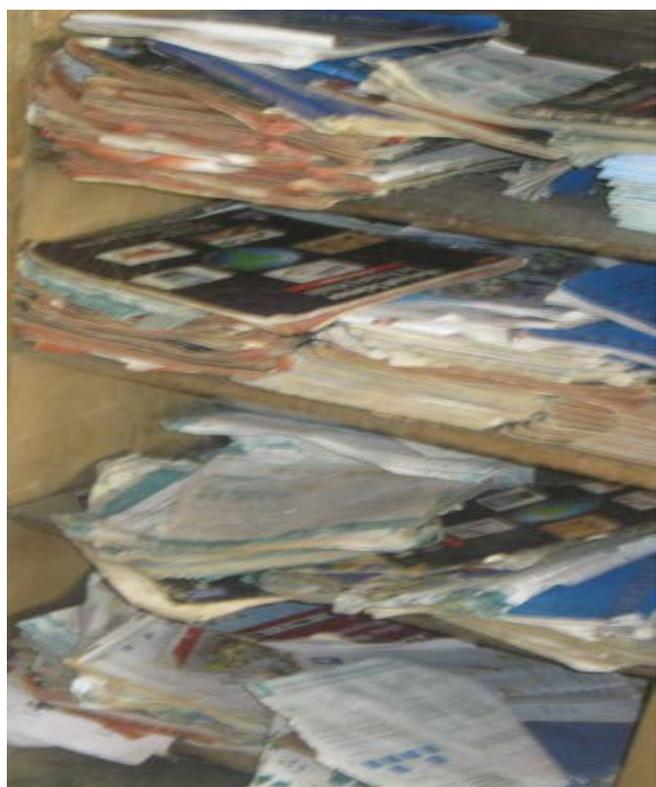
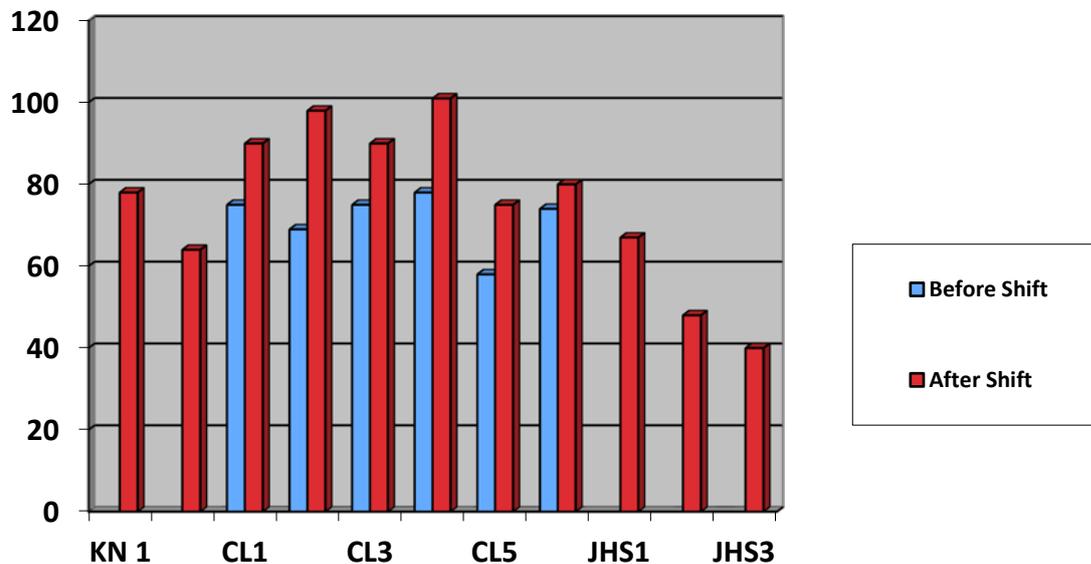


Photo 2: The state of textbooks at the Adekro School.

Figure 1: Adekro Presby Basic School Population by Class 2010



Source: Adekro Presby School records.

KN: Kindergarten CL: Class, JHS: Junior High School

The implementers of the Adekro CBRDP seemed to have underestimated the demographic complexities of the town. With a population of almost 6,000, the Adekro Township was one of the fastest growing localities in the region because of its proximity to the nation’s capital, approximately thirty-five minute’s drive away. Thus while the Benkum, who are the traditional owners of the land, have some presence in the town, the majority of the residents are from other regions of the country, who either work in the capital or in local factories. Not only are many of these residents busy, they rarely have time for local meetings and activities. The Area Council Chairman explained the difficulty they had in organising the residents to provide labour during the implementation of the project. He said:

Participation in the communal was very poor. So we had to use the project funds to hire masons and other building professionals to finish the work. The project was supposed to be for the ‘community’ but they did not come. People gave excuses that they were going to find work and money.

Because the residents would not lend a hand to the project, the Head Teacher said:

During the renovation, sometimes the pupils had to spend time of school time to fetch water for the project. Although the ‘community’ was supposed to contribute labour, they did not. Thus a large percentage of the project sum went into hiring labour.

The Assembly Member condemned the apathetic attitude of the town residents when he said: “The disease in this town is that when you call for meeting they don’t come ... so I have formed an elders’ council who help me to plan for the community.”

Asked why they do not participate in local development activities, interviews with some residents revealed three issues. First, most of the Adekro residents interviewed perceived the local leaders (Assembly and Area Council officials) as corrupt. Apart from alleging that the leaders had failed to render proper accounts for monies collected for previous projects, the residents tended to label them as agents of the then ruling NPP government. Relative to the CBRDP, the Head Teacher corroborated the perceptions of corruption when he explained that the local officials awarded the purchasing contracts of the project to ‘themselves’ and inflated the figures for some of the project materials. Thus, the project suffered not only from labour cost but also over invoicing. These perceptions seemed to have affected local collective tendencies, as they generated mistrust in the local leaders and broke down the town’s social capital, an important ingredient for community-based initiative (Labonne & Chase 2008; Tesoriero 2010; Kenny 2010).

Second, there was also a strong sense of political factionalism in Adekro. The town seemed to have been divided along the lines of the two major political parties, the NDC and NPP. The division was so intense that certain areas of the town were noted as the strongholds of both parties. As a result, the Assembly Member, who was perceived to belong to the NPP, did not control the entire town. While he denied affinity with the NPP, he confirmed the factionalism in the town and indicated how the situation was frustrating his work, having been threatened several times by a youth group, who were members of the opposition party.

Members of the youth group interviewed alleged that the Assembly Member was only in power to execute the agenda of the NPP, and not the interests of the local people. They added that he did not consult with anyone in the town except his party members, and vowed to unseat the Assembly in the 2010 local government elections. However, they did not succeed, as the Assembly Member retained his job. Adekro’s political factionalism was complicated by the fact that the town had no Traditional Chief who could have been a neutral force to organise the local people for development activities.

Third, there was a strong concern by Adekro residents that the CBRDP did not solve the topmost problem in the town, which was the lack of a public toilet facility. While contemporary houses in Adekro had toilet facilities, many of the old houses (which were in the majority) did not. Adekro had only one public toilet facility, and apparently could not support the growing population. A new one was being built, but had been stalled for almost two years. When asked in the questionnaire to state the needs of the locality, 80% of the respondents mentioned a public toilet facility as the topmost need followed by other needs such as poor drainage system and the lack of pipe-borne water. These needs were also captured in the Area Council’s list of social services needs in Adekro (Adekro Action Plan 2010). The respondents also indicated that a willingness to wholly support any project that would meet their needs.

Owing to the absence of adequate public toilets facilities in Adekro some residents used the Adekro Presby Basic School’s toilet facility. One of the teachers of the school complained that on most mornings when they reported to school, the students had to use some of the class hours to clean up the toilets. Frustrated by the incidents, the Head Teacher started locking the toilet after school and reopened it when reporting each morning. This did not help that much, as the perpetrators resorted to defecating on the school’s compound and under verandas. During the fieldwork the researcher sighted some of the toilet residues on the school’s compound. While many residents would not openly admit using the schools’ toilet, they were aware of the practice and condemned it. However, they gave responses alluding to the fact that the perpetrators had no alternative. Many of these residents explained that, while they did not disregard the importance of education, the project officials should have implemented what the residents wanted: a public toilet, if they wanted their full cooperation.

Conclusion

The Adekro CBRDP has shown the importance of tailoring community-based projects to meet the local people’s needs if their participation is to be guaranteed. Clearly, the dynamics of Adekro did not make it ‘community enough’ to receive a community-based ‘rural’ project as the CDRBP was. In fact: 1) Adekro as

a town and not a rural locality; 2) Adekro residents were busy city or local factory workers and did not normally interact vis-a-vis local development issues; 3) Adekro was rife with political factionalism, complicated by the absence of a Traditional Chief, meaning that organising would always be difficult; and 4) Adekro's local people wanted a public toilet facility, the renovation of Adekro Presby Basic School was not a 'function' strong enough to rally them. In hindsight, if the implementers of the project had studied Adekro's demographics carefully, they might not have implemented it as a community-based initiative.

Two important policy implications can be learned from the Adekro CBRDP case study. First, achieving aid effectiveness is far more complicated than the way it has been presented in the literature. The CBRDP, despite being well intentioned, had many challenges, not because donors had ulterior motives or that they intended to make Ghana aid dependent. Rather, the program was confronted with externalities, in this case the local context of the beneficiaries were at odds with the key tenet of the project – the idea that communities would implement and maintain the project. Implementing community-based project would have first required a comprehensive impact assessment (ex-ante) of the level of communitiness in the beneficiary localities, and if found to be low or non-existent, the program should have been required to nurture or develop communities in those areas before implementation. Second, the case study has highlighted the importance of ethnography as an invaluable tool for not only assessing the impact of development programs, but also of understanding how aid can be more effective in the development stage. The ethnographic approach discussed in this case study unearthed complexities that often used evaluation methods would not, especially around externalities (see Wong 2010; World Bank 2011).

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ⁱ Area Councils form the lowest system on Ghana's local government structure

ⁱⁱ This was supposed to be participatory and consultative between the local people, the Assembly and Unit Committee Members, and Traditional Chiefs.

ⁱⁱⁱ GHC 15, 000 (Approximately USD 10, 000 in 2005).