Effectiveness of Ghana's Decentralized Administration in Matters of Physical Development: The Case of the Wa District Assembly

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EFFECTIVENESS OF GHANA’S DECENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATION IN MATTERS OF PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT:
THE CASE OF THE WA DISTRICT ASSEMBLY

KEON KNUTSON
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ABSTRACT

The topic concerns evaluating the effectiveness of a decentralized administration in matters of physical development, using the Wa District Assembly in the Upper West Region, Ghana, as its case study. The paper attempts to do this by examining 5 sets of District implemented projects, and determine their overall level of success, which is defined in terms of both the project’s efficiency and the degree to which it responds to the real needs of its benefactors. The paper then isolates three District activities whose functions directly contribute to the success of development projects, and uses the data drawn from the project histories to evaluate the District’s level of effectiveness in performing these activities. From the analysis, the write attempts to illustrate the effectiveness of the District in matters of development, so long as the actual activity of the District is decentralized to a large enough degree, and this is reflected in his recommendations for further decentralization.
1.0 INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

1.1 DIRECTION OF STUDY

Ever since Ghana’s new system of decentralized administration was implemented in 1988, debate has circled concerning its value in terms of efficient implementation of development projects, and subsequent improvements that such projects have had on the overall living conditions of the administrations’ constituents. Whereas many people from within the country have applauded the decentralization system as model of which subsequent efforts at decentralization should be based, others have complained about the level of corruption, poor management and miscommunication inherent in the system’s actual day to day activity. The purpose of this paper then, is to evaluate the effectiveness of Ghana’s current system of decentralized administration in matters of physical development. As not all of Ghana’s 110 local government units can be covered in such limited space, the paper will choose one district, that being the Wa District in the country’s Upper West Region, as its focus.

The paper will beginning by introducing background information and a methodology of the research process. It will then move to a design of the projects themselves, with an eye towards examining the successes and failures evident units implementation. Finally, we will attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of Wa’s District Assembly based on the success of these projects, before concluding with possible recommendations aimed at improving this effectiveness.

The point that will be argued is that, as long as the total activity in the District Assembly is decentralized to the proper degree, and in forms initially intended, the Assembly will be effective during all stages of the projects implementation. It is only when a particular activity of the District becomes overly-centralized, that the project’s level of success might be diminished, and usually in that area that is influenced most greatly by the particular District activity.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.2.1 CURRENT STRUCTURE OF DECENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATION

Before delving into the topic itself, some background information should be provided as concerns the current decentralized government system, and consequential interest in its study. In 1988, the current PNDC administration initiated a series of local government forms, outlining a
three-tiered (Ministry of Local Government, 1994, p.7). As endorsed by officials of the PNDC at the time, this new decentralized government was aimed at increasing the decision-making responsibilities of the general populous, bringing qualitative changes to the efficiency of Ghana’s administrative and ensure the potential for development changes at the grassroots level (Ayee, 1993, p.120). As pertains to be topic of development in particular, the new local government system was based on the assumptions that “development is a shared responsibility between central government, local government… and the people… all of whom must be closed linked.” As a result, “virile local government institutions are necessary to provide local points or nuclei of local energies, enthusiasm, initiative and organization to demonstrate new skills and leadership” (Ministry of Local Government, 1994 p.13).

In fulfilling this aim, the Central government made the District Assembly the basic political unit at the local level, and the consequent increasing of District from 65 to 110 units “was said to have underscored the government’s determination to ensure grassroots participation in the decision-making process” (Ayee, 1993, p.121). Upon their establishment, the new District Assemblies were assigned to 87 specific functions, making the assembly “not only the basic political authority, but also the statutory, deliberative, legislative and consultative body” (Ayee, 1993, p.122) of the local government system.

The District Assembly, then, has become a genuine government authority, “established as a monolithic structure to which is assigned the responsibility of the totality of government to bring about integration of political, administrative and development support” (Ministry of Local Government, 1994, p.8). Directly underneath the assembly are even more decentralized Sub-District political structures such as the Area Councils, and, at the bottom of the ladder, the Unit Committees. However, these bodies are currently in clear subordination to the Assemblies, as their functions are “assigned to them by the Instruments setting up the Assemblies or delegated to them by the Assemblies” ((Ministry of Local Government, 1994, p.8). It is for this reason then, that the paper will focus on the District Assembly in its evaluation of decentralized administration, as it is this body that implements the majority of the development planning process.

As concerning the departments in Ghana’s advisory board, its Civil Service, the new policies of decentralization aimed to build greater cooperation between the District Assembly and the District level departments, who previously had always looked to their parents Ministries
on the Regional and Central Government level. As a result, these “government departments/organizations [have] been converted into departments of the District Assemblies” (Ministry of Local Government, 1994, p.14), thus abolishing their status as “regional and district departments of ministries” and making them answerable to the political heads at both the Regional and District levels (Ministry of Local Government, 1994, p.38).

In implementing all these changes, the government’s goal was to cause a break in authority between the Regional level political and civil organizations and its partners on the District level, thus erasing the presence of a hierarchical vertical line of power. In its place, the government sought greater communication between these various organizations at the horizontal level, thus allowing for a greater level of communication so as to ensure a more effective, and much more decentralized development planning decisions.

Yet, as is the case with any new government system, the theoretical framework of the plan has not always been matched by equal success in practice, and many problems and conflicts have consequently arouse. Most harmful of these problems, has been the inability of the government to break the tie between the district department and their Central Ministries. This is because, in addition to the political re-arrangement of these departments there was suppose to have been a corresponding transfer of funds from the budgets of those departments to that of the District Assembly’s own composite Common Fund. (Ayee, 1993, p.126).

But as of now, the budgets of these suppos ed “decentralized” departments are still controlled by the Ministries. This has consequently hurt the District Assembly’s own Common Fund Budget, as it has not been able to access all the budgets in the District as was promised. In addition, the actual staffing of the heads of these decentralized departments are done by the Ministries, and not by the District Assembly. Most important however, is a reluctance among both the Ministries and their departments to become subordinate to the District Assembly’s as this would mean the relocation of their status from their parent ministries to that of the Ministry of Local Government, thus forcing to share the wealth with 13 other departments (Tampuri, 5/1/01). As can be seen then, despite the efforts of the local government itself in breaking free from their centralized parents, the departments which are suppose to cooperate with the government on a given political level, have not tried so hard with such attempts, and this has consequently inhibited the overall decentralization potential of Ghana’s administration.
1.2.2 PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE UPPER WEST REGION

The next question to address, why the study focused in the Upper West Region in general, and Wa District in particular. The District itself was picked for issues of practicality. These include familiarity with the town of Wa itself, and its position as the Region’s Capital and biggest city, consequently providing greater accessibility to government institutions and modern day conveniences (with transportation being foremost amongst these). The Upper West Region, however, was chosen for its status as one of the poorest regions in the country, which added a degree of urgency to the study. The reasons that led to these conditions of comparatively less of development and greater poverty should be discussed briefly.

Due to its proximity to routes of cross-continental trade, the town of Wa in the Upper West region soon emerged as a vital trade center for long distance routes of North-South trade. As Gold Coast region, became ever-increasingly under European domination, the trading of goods soon led to the trading of slaves, and the presence of major slave raiders in the area “ensured the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade of a constant stream of captured men and women for sale into slavery in the Americas” (Songsore, 1995, p.9). The consequences of resulting population drain on the area, among other things, led to a “slow down of growth on the productive base” (Songsore, 1995, p.9), especially seen in a decrease of agriculture production.

Such out-migration did not slow, however, with the abolishment of slaver, and the subsequent takeover of the area as a British Protectorate. This was due to the colonial government’s misinformed view of the lack of exploitable resources in Northern Ghana, and subsequent lack of economic potential. As a result, the Colonial State saw the North “from the point of view of the needs and interests of capital already well located in mining and cocoa production, in Southern Ghana” (Songsore, 1995, p.10). Since the only resource that could be compatible with these industries was one of a work Northern Ghana was therefore looked at as one cheap “labor reserve,” to be tapped for Southern industry and obtained through initiatives to promote migration. In addition, further policies were implemented to block educational, industrial, agricultural, and infrastructure advancement in the Northern Region, thus making the relocation to the south more appealing to the North’s opportunity starved workforce. All these condition helped to further widen the disparities in living standards, economic production and
industrial advancements between the South and the North of the Colony, that were originally a result of the slave trade (Songsore, pp.10-11).

Not much has improved following independence, especially in relation to Ghana’s other ten regions. The Nkrumah administration spent a great deal of effort with increasing welfare projects and improving social infrastructure, yet most of the social sector investments in the North went to those areas which had political support for the CPP, of which the Upper West Region was not one. The region fared even worse during the Post-Nkrumah period, as the government aimed their policies at cutting funding of social welfare programs and favoring privatization of State Enterprises. This resulted in an emphasis of free-market forces and a cut-back of government spending, both of which intensified poverty in the already lagging Upper West Region. Furthermore, economic crisis in the country during the mid-1970s led to the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs, which, while helping the growth rate at the macro-economic level, failed to provide any relief to the more disadvantaged social groups. As a result, Northern Ghana, and Upper West in particular, has consistently ranked near the bottom of Ghana’s region with all factors related to quality of life, economic advancements, and development. (Songsore, 1995, pp.17-19).

Having now addressed both the current system of Local Government in Ghana, and the particular conditions of the Upper West, we can now move to addressing the particular research in question.
2.0 METHODOLOGY
2.1 SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION

The data on which the research is based came primarily from visits to villages which have had or are in the process of being beneficiaries of a District Assembly Development Project. Not having any knowledge about the precise whereabouts of the sites of many of these projects, I initially sought the aid of the District Office.

The help they provided in contacting me with the project sites came in two forms. First, from lists of currently implemented projects (See appendix A), as well as interviews/observations with officers in the District Office, I was able to create a list of project sites to visit, which was later followed up by independent visits to the more conveniently located of these sites. Second, due to these initial inquiries of project location directed at the District Office, I was put in touch with the Senior Work Superintendent and a supervising contractor of some of the projects in the District. It was this contact which allowed me to visit still more sites, with the two men volunteering much of their time to show me their work on the District’s projects.

These village visits generally consisted of two parts. First, upon arrival to the village, a community meeting would be held for the purpose of getting as large a spectrum of opinion as possible as regarded the project. The participants of such a meeting would generally include the chief of the village, the village elders, the area council men, and any community member who may have had a large role in the initiation of the project. An interpreter who was also required to be present at these meeting, and this task was filled either by an Area Council Man, a local teacher or the Work Superintendent of the District. Though individual interviews were occasionally held with the Area Council men within the village, the all-community relevance of many of the projects brought people out in numbers to give their input. The questions were evenly balanced between the role of the community itself in the construction of the facility, and their cooperation efforts with the District Assembly in implementing the project.

The visits to the sites were further supplemented by the interviews with District officials who had a direct role in the implementation of these projects. These included two interviews with officials form the department of agriculture, one short interview with the District assembly
representative of the villages receiving a school project, and several conversations with both the Work Superintendent and supervising contractor.

In addition, I witnessed two District Assembly activities that will be discussed in the analysis of the paper. The first was a District Implementation Planning Meeting for Wa District, which gave me the opportunity to observe the decision making process of the District when it came to prioritizing projects, as well as providing more data as to the total scope of projects being implemented in the area. The second District Assembly activity was the resource delivery of the material goods to the work site, which constitutes the last role of direct involvement that the District has in a project’s implementation.

Finally, print-outs given to me by the planning officer in the District Department presented me with a rundown of all the projects that had been initiated in the last few year, accompanied by information as to whether or not these projects met their expected completion date and Budget goals.

2.2 DATA ANALYSIS

The Data was analyzed in terms of locating those pieces of evidence which could lead to a fair evaluation as to the effectiveness of the District Assemblies in the development process. In conjunction with this, the data was analyzed under the assumption that evaluations made as to the effectiveness of the District would be highly dependent on the success or failure of the actual projects that were implemented. As a result, the datum that was most highly valued were either in the form of direct witnessing of the activities of the District during the development process, or in the form of interviews and visits to sites of the projects with varying degrees of success, from which District effectiveness or ineffectiveness could be inferred.

As regards the activity of the District Assembly, the data was analyzed in terms of those mechanisms that either contributed to or impeded the progression of that particular activity. This meant tracing the actual process taken by the district in fulfilling the activity, starting from its initiation and ending with its completion, and determining which mechanisms at which point in this process contributed to the overall effectiveness.
As for the projects themselves, the actual visits to the site and the corresponding community interviews concerning the projects were analyzed in different ways. In concerning the site visits, the data, (much of it being photographs), was analyzed in terms of probable efficiency and rate of construction. As for the community interviews, much of the analysis of the data involved weighing the total amount of stories and antidotes received from all the sites visited, with an attempts to evaluate the District’s ability to first listen to the community, and then manage their projects.

More detailed descriptions of the various approached to analyzing the Data will be discussed in conjunction with the particular data to be presented in the main report.

2.3 LIMITATIONS TO STUDY

There were a couple of limitations which might impede a fair analysis of the topic. First, the time limit placed on the research corresponds to a limit placed on the number of projects visited. As a result, data involving the District’s quantity and quality of projects based off the visits are not comprehensive, as the percentage of projects usually visited is small in relation to the District’s output, even for just the current year alone (projects in 2001).

The time limit also put another constraint to the research, that being a failure to adequately get a wide range of opinions as regards the details of a project. This is important to note, as many times there is a large gap of miscommunication between the District Assembly Office and the community, so the impression of one party in evaluating the other may be based on information is not entirely correct. This assertion is made based upon the one village project in which both the District Office (the Department of Agriculture) and community were interviewed about; as was apparent here, there were discrepancies between their two stories, due to a miscommunication of information. These discrepancies were eventually worked out due to an adequate number of interviews, but failure to get multiple opinions with other projects leads me to wonder if there are similar instances of misinformation that could have been overlooked.

Secondly, there was also a limitation of accessibility to village projects, with many being remote enough away from the District Office in Wa to make travel to these sites impractical. This was compounded too by limited means of transportation and funds with which to obtain greater mobility. As a result, the majority of villages visited were ones within no more than a
short cab drive or long bike trip away, thus limiting the visitation capabilities of villages to those that were within a radius of about 10 km from Wa town.

Due to the efforts of the Work Superintendent and the supervising contractor to in aiding the research, a couple of the villages were in fact farther away from town than 10 km. This was due to the contractor’s accessibility to a private auto, which made such excursions feasible. However, though this added accessibility increased the number of villages that were visited, the actual quality and amount of time spent to do with the self-initiated interviews being arranged with the village usually a day in advance, thus adding a higher degree of formality to the actual meeting. The interviews from the aided village trips however, where organized spontaneously, and therefore seemed to lack the depth of the arranged meetings.

Now that we have accounted for both the vast range of sources which led to inputs in the collection of data as well as limitations involving the completeness of the data set, we can now move into examining the data itself. As our main mechanism for data collection was the actual visits to the projects sites, the data will be framed in terms of the actual stories of these sites.

3.0 STORIES OF THE PROJECTS

3.1 APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECTS: TWO CONDITIONS FOR PROJECT SUCCESS

In order to judge the effectiveness of the decentralized administration in the implementation of community development projects, we must examine the actual projects themselves. We can then determine the rate of success or failure in various aspects of the projects, which is a reflection of the District Assembly’s ability in carrying out these projects.

Two aspects will be looked at in determining a project’s level of success. First, the management of the project’s actual implementation must be considered. These include whether or not the project was completed within the scheduled time, and within the allocated budget. This also includes the ability of the management team to use efficiently all resources at its disposal, including not only the materials, supplies and tools allocated for the project, but also the use of existing resources, such as the mobilization of communal labor.
Secondly, we must consider the usefulness of the project to the community it is attempting to serve, in terms of making a difference in that community’s living standards. Determining such an aspect can be very subjective: a project may be useful to a community in bringing a degree of improvement to their lives, but this improvement may not have been one that was on the community’s list of priorities, and may not have been the project that was requested. In addition, even if the project is one that is desired by the community, the changes brought by the project’s completion do not always live up to the community’s expectations, (as in the case with a new school building that lacks a teaching staff).

The analysis will focus on 5 sets of projects. These are the European School Projects of Gadie, Dorimon and Zinya, the Common Fund school project of Mangu, the Busa Irrigation system, the Nembe Slaughterhouse and artisan relocation project, and the Jonga KVIP project. The European Union projects will be described first.

3.2 THE EUROPEAN UNION PRIMARY PROJECTS: GADIE, DORIMON, ZINYA

The first project to be discussed is the Gadie Primary School, one of the 12 European Union Sponsored projects for the year 2000, and the one cited as a model by the District Assembly due to its efficiency (Musaa, 14/11/01, Wa). The history of the project started 30 years ago, when the headmaster of the soon-to-be school, Sulemani Korderly, began teaching at the primary school level. Since there were no school grounds at that point, classes were held under a tree by his home (see Appendix A, Pictures #1-2), while the home itself served the dual function of school office and storage room (Korderly 14/11/01). As the enrollment started to grow, the community saw the need for a building to house the pupils, but the resources and funds for the materials of such a facility were lacking. Eventually, solely through the seal of communal labor, a rudimentary structure was put up. However, this was not enough to sustain the ever-increasing enrollment of the school, and when the structure finally collapsed in 1997, the community began to renew its efforts for government assistance (Balaworh, 21/11/01).

Finally, this past year, The European Union (EU) placed the Gadie Primary School on its list of District Assembly projects that it would sponsor. As with all European School Sponsored School projects, the school structure was to consist of three classrooms, a school Office/Storage Room, and a KVIP for toilet facilities. Though the delay was long until the project was
initialized, the village was of such a fundamental need to the people, that the community’s involvement was tremendous. In particular, Nuhu Bulawowrh, the opinion leader of the village, led the organization of the communal labor by mobilizing his peers in carting sand, stones and water necessary for the KVIP, as well as helping with the actual construction of the school buildings (Musaa, 14/11/01, Gadie).

Unfortunately, unavoidable consequences of the weather impeded the rate of the project’s construction. During the rainy season, much of the communal labor that could have gone towards the building’s construction went towards clearing out the rain water that had build up at the work site. Then, during harvest time, work on the construction slowed, as farmers had to diver their attention to their crops (Musaa, 14/11/01, Gadie). Despite these setbacks, the community participation is strong, and the project appears that it will be completed by the EU proposed deadline of December 15th, 2001 (See Appendix A, Pictures 3-5).

Most of the other Primary School District Assembly projects sponsored by the EU are also experiencing a similar level of success with punctuality, and much of this can be attributed to a similar spirit of communal level in the communities. The chief of Dorimon, for instance, told the contractor in charge of the school construction to write the names of all those members of the community who helped with the construction of the school, having them sign-in in each day they came to work. As a result of this monitoring, the participation was vast, with seventy men and thirty women regularly appearing on the contractor’s list (Yakuba, 14/11/01).

As with Gadie, the particularly heavy rains during this wet season dampened the ground and building materials, impeding the construction of the Dorimon School. As a result, the intended November completion date was not met and this led to an impression of inefficiency among observers. However, once the conditions were suitable for work, the chief once again ensured heavy turnout, this time by fining those individuals who did not show up for communal labor (Smache Yabuba, 14/11/01). As a result, the school was completed quickly once the dry season approached, (that being the end of the November, 2001).

The District Assembly fulfilled its end of the bargain for these schools by obtaining the materials, supplies and skilled labor necessary for the project, and by providing the means to get these resources to the work site. In addition, the Assembly paid for the labor cost of the drivers for the deliverance of the materials to the work site by the District’s own truck (Musaa, 14/11/01, Wa) (See Appendix A. Pictures 6-7). Community representatives from all three villages in the
school projects were implemented acknowledged this regular deliverance of materials by the District Assembly to their village work site (Abudali, Korderly, Yabubu, 14/11/01).

It appears then, that the EU school projects were entirely successful, garnering enthusiasm from the community for its construction, utilizing a high degree of communal labor once construction began, and being completed at or near the intended date of completion, even in the face of unavoidable set backs. The final aspect to be examined then, is to what extent the construction of the buildings will actually fulfill the expectations of the community, that of leading to a fully functional school.

Here too, the prospects look good. Korderly was not very concerned about the running of the new Primary School, as the resources of the village are adequate enough to provide and afford textbooks for the students. As for the teaching staff, he was confident that teachers would come to the new school following the Work Superintendent’s request to Ghana Educational Service (GES) (Korderly, 14/11/01). Upon seeing that the new school would be staffed with only one voluntary teacher (that being Koderly), the GES would be obligated to provide a paid faculty (Nuhu Balaworh, Balaworh, 21/11/01).

The Chief of Zinyen is a little more concerned about obtaining an adequate teaching staff for his village’s new school. However, he admits that the school’s very construction big step in the right direction. The GES is unwilling to send teachers into areas where there are no school facilities, and requests to the organizations in the past have consequently been ignored (Alhassan, 14/11/01). Following completion of the project, the Work Superintendent wrote a letter to the GES, notifying them about the opening of the school, and the subsequent need for the expanded teaching staff. This was followed later by consultation with the GES (on the 12th of October, 2001), and a subsequent progress report to the chief (Musaa, 14/11/01). Though no guarantees have yet been made then, the prospects look good that the Zinyen school too will soon become operational.

3.3 THE MANGU PRIMARY SCHOOL PROJECT

Unfortunately, some school projects fail to live up to the Community’s expectation upon completion, such as is the case with the Mangu Primary School. In this case, the problems of the project were not attributed to any failures of its actual implementation, but of conditions within the community which impeded the projects beneficial impact.
The area of Mangu is located directly next to Wa town, almost acting as a suburb to the town itself. As a result, the area is densely populated, with several schools already in existence to house the number of children present. Consequently, the center of the Mangu, had already benefited from a school, first established by missionaries (the exact date was never given), and later followed upon with an addition by Irish contributors (Tanaa, 22/11/01). Unfortunately, given that both structures were constructed with mud and cheap materials, compounded with its ever increasing wear due to old age, the buildings have slowly begun to deteriorate form wear and old age.

This deterioration can be seen in several ways. First, the walls of the buildings have begun to flake off the crack, potentially leading to the collapsing of the entire structure within a few years (see Appendix A, Picture #8). Secondly, much of the concrete that laid the foundation for the old building has crumbled away, so that many of the students’ desks and chairs are now placed on purely dirt floors (witnessed by author, 22/11/01) (Picture #9-10). And thirdly, holes and weak spots in the roofing of the building have led to constant leaking during the rainy season (Tanaa, 22/11/01). As the school itself is one of the bigger ones in the area, the District Assembly no doubt made addressing the Mangu’s schools problems a priority, and they responded with the construction of a new school, sponsored through their District Assembly Common Fund for 1999 (See Pictures #11-12 and Appendix B, sheet #1).

Yet unlike most of the Common Fund projects for that year (with the Nakore and Naahe schools being especially successful (witnessed by author, November 20- 21, 2001), the new Mangu school building failed to solve the problems of the school, that being poor buildings and overcrowding. This is because the enrollment of the school is so high, that classes are still taught in the old deteriorating buildings in addition to the new District Assembly constructed one. An example of this over enrollment is seen in the Headmistress’s own office, which had to be converted into a classroom, while she consequently operates from what was the storeroom of the old school. Though there are other schools in the area that could feasibly help in dispersing the over-enrollment of the Mangu school, children are generally reluctantly to attend a school different from the one in which their siblings or parents went, and this leads to a constant increase in enrollment (Tanaa, 14/11/01).
3.4 THE BUSA IRRIGATION PROJECT

The physical development projects of Wa District can be said to fit under two broad categories. First, there are projects which are aimed at improving the overall living standards of a community, such is the case with a school, or sanitation facility. The second category are those projects which are geared towards increasing the production potential of a community, such is the case with the Busa Irrigation system.

Busa, a village about 7 kilometers from Wa town has had a history of water shortages, with the local women walking miles away in order to fetch water form the nearest well. The creation of a water sources therefore, has always been the primary concern of the community. Fortunately, by 1954, Busa had one of its own “sons” in Parliament, and he fought hard for the construction of a dam, to be paid for by the government (Bukari, 15/11/01). Initiation of the project came slow however, and it wasn’t until the Busia administration came to power in 1969 that Busa received funding for the dam, with the project being completed two years (See Appendix A, Picture #13). The desire for the project among the villagers was demonstrated by their entire farm lands in order to construct the dam in the village’s valley (Busa Elders, 15/11/01).

Busa’s irrigation project was for the purpose of building upon the success of the dam, utilizing the water supply for further agricultural production. Unlike the Dam, this new project was not a creation of the community itself, but of IFAD, (in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), who visited the village in 1997. Upon viewing the close proximity of cultivable lands around the dam, IFAD representatives saw that potential for year-round production, provided that there was an irrigation system to funnel water for the construction of such a system, and the community enthusiastically agreed with the project (Issa, 15/11/01).

Yet for all intensive purposes, it appears that the Busa irrigation project will not be completed in time for this year’s dry season, which was the project’s expected deadline. In fact, the project, now over four years old, is only forty percent completed, with the rate of progress becoming slower and slower with each passing month (Pictures #15-17). With such initial enthusiasm for the proposed project, we should examine why the project’s progress has currently halted to a slow grind.
The first reason for the four year delay of the project is explained by the need to construct two irrigation systems, with the first attempt being abandoned after faults were discovered in its planning (Picture #14). This decision to restart the project was made by the Agriculture Minister when the new Ghanaian government administration (the NPP) came to power on the 7th of January, 2000. On his visit to Busa, he condemned the existing half-completed irrigation system in Bolga (in the Upper East Region). Following his recommendation, the community began work on the new irrigation system, raised high enough so as not to overflow the canal, with the expectations that the project would be completed within two years (Busa Elders, 15/11/01).

Why then, is the new system not completed? According to the community, the failure to complete the project rests on the mismanagement of funds by IFAD officials, running out of money before scheduled. The particular money in question was supposed to go for the purpose of paying community members for work that they did through communal labor. Though such payments were handed out initially to the community, the halting of these subsidies has led the community to believe that the money was accidentally or fraudulently lost (Busa Elders, 15/11/01).

Now, with all work being non-subsidized, there is great reluctance among community members to continue their efforts at communal labor. The sand, stones and cement to complete the job have been promised and delivered by the District Assembly, but the actual work has come to a standstill. And though there has been some help form the community, getting an adequate labor force has been a problem, with the number of volunteers willing to work without subsidies not enough to complete the job in a timely manner (15/11/01, Busa Elders).

Such a decline in payments was a gradual one, and this has caused more difficulty within the community. During the first month, the District Assembly promised enough money to pay for 80 workers, and this was consequently the number that ended up working on the job. By the second month, the District Assembly’s funds could satisfy sixty workers, with only those 60 still on the payroll turning up for work. By the third month, that number was again reduced to 50, with a consequential reduction in the labor force. Finally, by the fourth month, the community was told that there was no money to pay for the laborers, and by that point, the work’s progress came to a practical standstill (Busa Elders, 15/11/01).
Petty squabbles soon developed among community members as a result of this pay distribution. The community claims that as many as 500 laborers were willing to work on the job at the project’s outset, but only 80 community members were picked to get paid. This not only made the rest of the voluntary 420 workers more reluctant to work on the project, but also put questions in their mind as to why those particular 80 were picked, and how much favoritism was involved in their selection process. Then, as time passed, and the amount of paid laborers decreased to 60, and then 50, there were more squabbles about why that number was reduced, and why were those particular workers either kept or cut from the payroll. No answers were ever given to any of these monetary queries (Busa Elders, 15/11/01).

3.5 Nemba Slaughterhouse and Artisan Relocation Project

The Nemba Project was another production-based project initiated by the District Assembly. Nemba is an open unpopulated area of land right on the outskirts of Wa town, which currently shows no sign of development other than the project in question. The idea was to construct a modern slaughterhouse facility for both the convenience of the butchers and for improved sanitation (See Appendix A, Pictures #19-20). As it now stands, the majority of Butchers use a slaughterhouse right off the main street of town, and in an area of high activity, (as an example, one of the most popular restaurant/bar in town, is located right next to this slaughterhouse). This has the unpleasant consequence of polluting and occasionally, smelling up the area, with the blood and carcass remnants of the slaughtered animals seeping on to the roads (Gambie, 21/11/01, Nemba).

The new slaughterhouse, in addition to being away from a dense population, is equipped with modern additions such as a connection to a sewerage system, thus routing the filth away from the facility. There is also the construction of a corral leading into the slaughterhouse, making for a more organized operation. However, the animal herders and the butchers are reluctant to take their cows so far from the center of Wa, and consequently away from customers. They fear a decrease of sales from being so isolated from the rest of the town activity, and subsequently have showed no signs of budging from their current location (Peter Gambie, Nemba 21/11/01).
In a related attempt to solve problems of crowding within Wa town’s urban center, The District Assembly has requested that a variety of artisans (bike workers, blacksmiths, craftsman, etc), also move their activity to Nemba. Once again, the workers are reluctant to move, citing the loss of business from moving to an area a few kilometers away from their customer base. In addition, the workers have complained about the lack of facilities and market stalls for their operation that would make such relocation practical (Peter Gambah, 21/11/01)

3.6 JONGA KVIP PROJECT

The Community of Jonga also benefited from a European Union sponsored District Assembly project, this being the construction of a KVIP (as set of 16 toilets) for improved sanitation. As with Busa, the Jonga project was not community initiated, but rather proposed to the community by the District Assembly. Upon viewing the lack of projects in the village, the District Assembly pledged to do its best to help the community. But before consideration could be given to the construction of any major project, they would need to start on a smaller scale (Jonga Elders, 19/11/01).

Though the District Assembly took on a similar active role in the introducing the project as with Busa, the response of the community to the project has been different. For starters, the Jonga KVIP appears to be right on schedule for it expected competition time, that being the European Union’s goal of December 15th, 2001. This outcome did not seem probable during the project’s beginning stages, which began in August. This is because the initial groundwork of the construction was spoiled due to the presence of an underground water source at an old site, which prevented the completion of the KVIP (the community maintains that the project would have been finished by now, if it wasn’t for the water log at this old site) (Jonga Elders, 15/11/01) (See Appendix A, Picture #21)

However, the community responded well, and quickly began construction on the new site, which is being completed efficiently. This is partly due to the Jonga’s own well organized efforts at communal labor, which involved dividing all eligible workers into six groups, and talking turns as to who did what work on which day (Jonga Elders, 15/11/01) (Picture #22). Yet it might also be due to the amount of community participation Jonga had in the actual planning of the project. This process involved the elders of the village and their Unit Committees coming together with the District Assembly in making decisions about the project, such as the location of
the new site. In this way, the details of the project, and any disagreement among community members were ironed out beforehand (Jonga Elders, 15/11/01).

One can say then, that the KVIP project of Jonga may be a success, as the facility was constructed efficiently and with adequate community involvement. It is less clear however, whether the village of Jonga itself to be a victor. While the town is happy with the construction and feels that it will be useful upon completion, the project itself was not on their current list of priority, which makes one wonder to what extent the KVIP will respond to the village’s real needs. Right now, the Jonga’s main problem is one of adequate drinking water, and the village says it is badly in need of a dam (like Busa’s they said). They also stated a much stronger preference for a health clinic than a KVIP project, with the nearest health facility being miles away. In addition, although there currently is a school construction project in the village, it is being sponsored by an Islamic Non-Government Organization, and this too is a need that community members wished the District Assembly would have them with (Jonga Elders, 15/11/01).

3.7 SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

What has now been described are 5 sets projects of which can be summed up in terms of their level of success.

First of all, European Union School projects of Gadie, Dorimon and Zinnya can be classified as successes. All three were completed on time or within a month of the intended goal, and all utilized efficiently the available resources at the community’s disposal, including communal labor. The projects were all desired by the community, with the Gaide school being community initiated. In addition, there is every reason to believe that the community’s expectation of its use will be fulfilled, providing compliance by the GES. Secondly, the District Assembly Mangu school project can be classified as a partial success. The project was completed smoothly (though interviews did not produce answers as to the process of the construction) and it was desired by the community. However, the project upon completion failed to live up the community’s expectations, in that the problems that existed prior to the construction’s initialization were still present, if not to the same degree as before.
Thirdly, the Busa Irrigation project is currently a failure. The project has not yet been completed, and resources, energy, time and labor have all been wasted in the process. Though the project was enthusiastically desired by the community, its current staleness has provided nothing but disappointment and frustration among the town’s members.

Fourthly, the Nembe Slaughterhouse and Artisan relocation project can also be currently classified as a failure, but for the exact opposite reasons as Busa’s irrigation system. The slaughterhouse is near completion, though there are discrepancies among those involved as to what “complete” means. However, the projects do seem to be fulfilled.

Fifthly, the KVIP can be classified as a partial success. The project is on schedule for its expected completion date, with materials, resources and communal labour all being utilized efficiently. However, though community members are happy with the project, it was not on the community’s list of most desired priorities. Consequently, though the KVIP project will live up to its intended function, it is questionable whether that function itself fulfills the community’s expectations vested in a District Assembly project.

Having evaluated the success and failures of the projects, we can now start our analysis on the actual work of the Wa District Assembly in implementing these projects.
4.0 Evaluating the effectiveness of decentralized administration

4.1 Approach to data analysis: the three activities in the district assembly’s work cycle

As has been laid out, a project can be defined as successful when two broad conditions are met. First, the project is completed efficiently. This means that not only is the project completed on time, but that money, energy and resources have all been mobilized and used properly. Secondly, the project is one that both addresses the needs of the community upon initiation, and lives up to the community’s expectations upon completion. In determining the effectiveness of Ghana’s decentralized government in matters of development projects, our approach must then be to analyze to what degree the activity of the District Assembly ensures that these measurements of success are met.

For our purposes, then, effectiveness will be defined as the ability of the assembly to perform those activities which influences the outcome of a project. If the activities of the District Assembly are performed in such a way as to make the project successful, their work can be considered effective.

With this as our approach, the next step is to isolate the specific activities of the District Assembly that would affect a project’s outcome, and then evaluate how well that activity is performed. In satisfying the first measurement of success, that of project efficiency, the data present seems to indicate that the level of effectiveness of the District Assembly rests on its ability to properly manage the resources and funds of the project. This means two things: First, the District Assembly must be able to successfully supervise those parts of the limits of that responsibility, and have the consequential ability to successfully delegate responsibilities outside its authority to institutions lower down in the local government hierarchy.

In satisfying the second measure of success, that of usefulness of the project, the District Assembly must be competent in two separate activities. First, the Assembly must be able to determine what the needs of the community are, preferably through direct or indirect communication with community representatives. And secondly, the Assembly must have the resources, funds and connections to secure the desired project required to meet those needs.

The total output of three separate activities can be looked at as constituting one single cycle, of whose path the Assembly must follow in order to ensure a project’s success. First, a village’s information as to what their grievances are must be brought up to the District Assembly
via the community’s District Assembly representative, and this is converted to knowledge by the Assembly’s own decision making process about what projects should be prioritized and who could help fund them, thus converting the knowledge into potential plans for a project’s implementation. And thirdly, those project plans, upon approval by the sponsoring organization, are converted into the physical resources necessary for the project’s construction, with these resources being directed to the community itself.

The resources that arrive at the community should, therefore, be a reflection of the initial information received by the Assembly at the first stage of the cycle. After the resources for the project are brought to the community, the Assembly’s responsibility in the process comes to an end, and the process starts all over again in the form of new information passed up through the District Assembly representatives. Of course, this last stage, that of delivering the resources, consists of multiple trips to the work site, and in this way the District maintains some degree of contact with the progress of the project.

The following section will examine the steps taken by the Assembly in fulfilling these activities. The evaluation begins with what the intended work of the Assembly should be in regard to the particular activity in question. It will then be turn to examining how effective the Assembly was in to fulfilling the work of this ideal model, using the success and failures of the projects in determining this level of effectiveness. Lastly, the analysis will try to narrow in on breakdowns and bottlenecks in the activity that might have impeded this effectiveness. In addition to evaluating how well the Assembly performed its activities, the analysis will also show to what extend this performance contributed to the actual outcome of the projects. The secondary aim is an attempt to demonstrate how the fulfillment of the three activities in the District Assembly’s work cycle directly influences the success or failure of the projects.

4.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF DISTRICT IN GAUGING COMMUNITY NEEDS

4.3 DISTRICT'S ACTIVITY IN GAUGING COMMUNITY NEEDS

The first activity to be examined is the role of the District in determining the needs of the community. Ideally, this process begins at the community level, with the Unit Committee for a given village organizing the chief, elders and general villagers for a meeting aimed at reporting their concerns. Next, the District Assembly representatives of the community will visit the village, (often in conjunction with an engineer), and receive input as to what project they might
want initiated by the District Assembly, or what existing community initiation project they might want assistance with. After making decisions about the actual project, the participants at the meeting will then reach decisions as how to best go about implementation and construction of the facility (Musaa, 14/11/01, Wa).

In the cases where a department from the District is trying to evaluate the community’s needs, the process is the same. Representatives from a given department, such as from the Ministry of Agriculture, will go to the farmers of a community, often along with District Assembly representatives, and get input as to the community’s needs. They will then organize and prioritize the needs and suggestions of the farmers, and formulate a plan based on those suggestions. The plan will then be implemented in conjunction with the District Assembly (Dy-Yakah, 13/11/01)

4.2.2 **LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS IN DETERMINING COMMUNITY NEEDS**

Out of the projects examined, two for certain, the Dorimon and Zinnya school construction projects, were initiated through this process (Musaa, 14/11/01, Wa). The sponsors of the project, the European Union have also in the past collaborated with the community in the initiation of these projects. In either case, the success of these two projects can be partly attributed to the District’s fulfillment of its intended activity, and its consequential effectiveness in determining the community’s needs.

The other projects examined however, where brought about by other means. The Gadie School project for instance was created through the community’s own initiative, making requests to the District directly, without the help of an Assembly representative. This was accomplished by the chief’s son and “opinion leader” of the village. Nuhu Balaworh, who initiated the application process for the school through a barrage of letters to the District Assembly Office (Nuhu Balaworh, 21/11/01). However, this seems to be an exception to the rule, with most villages tending to play a more passive role in the initiation process. The success of the Gadie project then, can be attributed to the persistence of the community in getting its needs addressed, and not the ability of the District itself in evaluating those needs.
In the majority of the projects examined though, the Assembly itself takes on a larger role in the initiation process, attempting to reach its own conclusions as to the most beneficial project for a given community. Sometimes, these decisions are good ones, receiving much support from the community, as is the case with the Busa Irrigation System. Their enthusiasm of the community surrounding the project can best be illustrated by the amount of cultivation that has sprung up around the dam this past year in anticipation of the completion of the irrigation system (See Appendix A, Picture 18). Many of these areas had never been used for farming before as the beginning of the dry season (November) would have killed off the crops (much of it being rice). The implication of the project however, motivated many farmers to try their luck at the planting (Busa Area Councilmen, 15/11/01).

However, sometimes the Assembly is not so accurate with their assumptions of community’s needs, with consequences of such poor judgement being severe, leading to a waste of resources, and tensions among the District Assembly and the communities. Such is the case with the Nembe slaughterhouse and the artisan relocation project, in which confusions resulted between the implementers (The District Assembly) and the supposed benefactors (Butchers and Artisans) of the project.

First, there was a miscalculation by the District Assembly over what were the actual needs of the targeted participants. As concerning the slaughterhouse, the Assembly’s mistake came in thinking that the butchers were in need of, or at least wanted, a more modern, cleaner and ideally more efficient facility. A desire among the butcher’s to keep their work and animals away from the congestion of the city could have also been in the District Assembly’s thinking. And as concerning the artisans, the District Assembly might have thought they would have benefited having their own open area, away from town congestion, from which to more freely operate their craft. Unfortunately, they appear to have been incorrect with both assumptions, of whose cause could have been a lack of community input on their real needs.

Secondly, there appears to have been confusion between the Assembly and the artisans over details regarding the project’s implementation, providing that the artisan’s even agreed with the project’s conception. As there are minimal facilities currently in the Nembe Area, the District Assembly has asked the artisans of the relocation to set up their own market stalls. The artisans, reluctant to move in the first place, are even more reluctant to spend the time and money involved in recreating a shop. They say, that if the District Assembly is making them move, then
the District Assembly themselves should be the ones providing the stalls and other facilities (Gamba, 21/11/01).

Some compromise has appeared to have been made in this dispute, as the District Assembly has just recently begun work on a Borehole in the Nembe area, thus making some attempts at developing the area for the artisans (witnessed by author, 21/11/01). However, this is only a small step in light of the artisan’s demands of the creation of entire market stalls, and it is unlikely that they will make a move to the Nembe region anytime soon.

From the evidence presented, it appears, then, that as long as the District performs in adequate amount of communication with its communities, it is effective in determining their needs. It is only those instances where the District tries to guess that priorities of its constituents without adequate consultation, that it often fails in its task, resulting in effectiveness. Though occasionally, the District may guess correctly, the consequences that result from improper assumptions are severe enough has to make such assumptions ill-advisable.

4.2.3 THE BREAKDOWN: INACCESSIBILITY OF COMMUNITIES WITHIN DISTRICT

The breakdown in this process of District-Community communication is a result of the District Assembly Representatives’ inaccessibility to the villages that they represent. Ideally, District Assembly representatives are suppose to meet to meet with their community every two weeks, either before or after a District Assembly representative does not even live in the village that he is suppose to represent. And in other instances, the representatives may be responsible for multiple villages, therefore running into difficulty with addressing all the communities under his authority (Dansah, 1911/01).

These conditions may not have been problems, if it wasn’t for impediments of both transportation and time placed on the Assembly representatives. Distances between villages in the Upper West region can be great, and many are isolated from regular transportation services, or even roads. As a result, some Assembly representatives experience great difficulty in making regular visits to their village, as they many lack sufficient means of mobility. The second impediment, that of time constraints placed on their office, also may prevent Assemblymen from frequenting villages to the proper extent (Dansah, 19/11/01). As a result of both conditions, many District Assembly men are far removed form the happening of their community, with this leading to possibly hasty planning decisions during District Assembly meetings.
4.3 Effectiveness of district administration in securing the desired project

4.4 District’s activity in planning development projects

The second activity to address is the Assembly’s ability in securing the right project to address those community needs. A project is secured, when it is first decided by the Assembly as a suitable project to be put on the year’s agenda, and subsequently funded appropriately by a willing sponsor. This process will be briefly described.

In order to get input from the District Departments, the Assembly will periodically invite representatives from all the relevant departments to its planning meetings, and ask what should be done in all the sectors at that particular time. The Department will then propose their recommendations for District Assembly plans. For example, if the Assembly feels that “Feeder Roads” are important, but does not know exactly where they should be placed, they might ask the representative from the Department of Agriculture, who will then give the Department’s recommendations about what roads should be placed where, and which projects should be considered priorities. The District will then take the plans from the various departments, cost them, and determine how such projects fit in with the total plans of the year (Dy-Yakah, 13/11/01).

If the projects that are looked at are in the form of requests of the community from the District Assembly man, the process varies slightly. Upon receiving the application, the District Assembly will examine all the various governmental and non-governmental organizations that might lend their support to the funding of the project ((Musaa, 14/11/01,). As we have seen, the European Union has lent its support to many of these projects, in particular lending aid to the construction of schools. Therefore, if Assembly members and Department advisors feel that a given project might have potential under the European Union plan, that project then become a viable candidate, to be approved at the District Implementation Planning meeting.

It is at this meeting where all the potential candidates that would fit under a given sponsor (in this case being EU), are looked at in terms of which ones should be included on the list, and which of those should be given priority, with the eventual number resting at twenty. Some of these decisions are based off of which types and how many projects were approved from last year’s list, (this being the 6th year of the program). Others are made depending on what other development programs may have come to the District’s aid in the past year, thus leading to a greater number of potential sponsors. For example, four of the water oriented projects that were
candidates for this year, and those that were not approved from last year, were shifted out of the EU list and onto the list for the "Water and Irrigation Program," thus opening up room for other non-water projects to potentially be approved District Implementation Planning Meeting, (16/11/01 Breakdown). After the 20 are picked and prioritized, the list of 20 are sent to the Official from the European Union, and the District’s role in choosing projects comes to an end.

4.3.2 District’s Level Of Effectiveness In Securing A Project That Responds To Needs

With this as the model upon which projects are to be planned, we must now gauge how effective the Assembly is in securing a project that sufficiently responds to real needs of the community. With this activity, the Assembly has been adequately effective. All European Union school projects, and the Busa Irrigation project, resumed well with the community, and were actually implemented. The Mangu School project too, would have responded to the community’s needs, if it wasn’t for conditions within the actual village that prevented the building from fulfilling community expectations. Only the Jonja and Nembe projects then, could be considered as facilities that did not meet the priority needs of the community. (As the failure of the Nembe project appears to be one of miscommunication and not one of the District’s ability to obtain the desired project, it will not be discussed here).

Given that Jonga’s main priorities are access to water and health services, why the, did the community volunteer to put in their time and effort to a KVIP project that responded to neither need? The Community’s explanation rested in their inability to adequately get their real priorities responded to by the District Assembly (Jonga Elders, 19/11/01). However, this failure was not one of lack of contact with the District, as the community acknowledged that their District Assembly representative does visit the village. Instead, the problem has lied with the Assembly’s in ability to deliver a desired project based on the needs reported via Jonga’s representative.

Some of these requests have in fact been answered: the community’s request for an accessible road to keep them in better contact with modern facilities has recently been provided by the District Assembly (Jonga Elders, 19/11/01). However, the District has yet to promise a dam, despite repeated requests by the community. And as for a Health facility, the community
has not put in a formal request to the Assembly, though this too would have been preferable to the current KVIP project (Jonga Elders, 19/11/01).

As concerning the Mangu project, the community has requested the Assembly’s aid in remodeling the old building, in the form of reinforcing the near collapsing structures. They have also requested a Borehole, or at least a reservoir tank, to provide adequate drinking water for their vast student body. Just as much of a priority, is the need to a Junior Secondary School, as the old facility collapsed years ago (remains of school witnessed by author, 22/11/01). As it currently stands, the students at the Junior Secondary school level are using the Primary School facilities, rotating with Primary level students at mid-day. Failing to receive any further aid from the District Assembly however, the Mangu community has become actively involved in creating these structures themselves. The PTA of the school in particular, has garnered funds for supplies, as well as mobilized communal labor for the construction of a new Junior Secondary School. Further contributions have been made for cement and other materials to repair some of the damage done to the old school (the materials for this maintenance work is kept in the Headmaster’s store room) (Tanaa, 22/11/01).

When then, were failures made during the District’s planning process that could have impeded the initiation of a new school building for Mangu, or a dam for Jonga? From the evidence offered, it appears that the inability to acquire these projects may not have been through any fault of the Assembly, but through unavoidable limitation that are placed on its decision making capabilities.

4.3.3. Breakdown #1: budget restraints on district assembly

The first limitation placed on the Assembly’s ability to acquire projects, is one of funding considerations. This is evident not only for those projects that are not initiated, but the ones that are, albeit after a long wait. With the construction of the Gadie School, for example, the District promised that qualified contractors and funds would be sent to help with the project, but they delay with any direct support (Balaworh, 21/11/01). It wasn’t until the European Union stepped in, offering to help the District Assembly sponsor rural projects in the region, that action was taken for the implementation of the Gadie School (Korderly, 14/11/01). This has to do with the limited budget in the Wa District Assembly’s Common Fund, which is typically not large enough to care for and provide project support for all communities in the District. As a result,
the assembly generally directs its purely Common Fund projects to areas where a greater majority of the District’s population is (Musaa, 14/11/01, Gadie).

Yet even in those areas of higher population, budgetary restrictions again limited the Assembly’s effectiveness with creating development projects. This can be seen with the Mangu School, in which, despite the District Assembly’s successful efforts in solving part of the community’s problems, a desire to adequately distribute their limited wealth to as many communities as possible prevented them from providing further assistance. Possibly due to its close proximity to the Mangu site, the District Assembly is well aware of Mangu’s problems of over-enrollment and their need for even further assistance (Tanaa, 22/11/01). But given the fact that the District Assembly implemented a project for Mangu just this last year, there is no doubt a degree of hesitancy to initiate anything else anytime soon.

The uneven population distributions of the districts seem then, to pose an interesting dilemma. On the one hand, it makes sense to focus development efforts in rural areas of low population, as these areas generally lag behind more populated places in terms of facilities. Yet this is assuming that the amount of facilities in areas with dense populations are adequate to fulfill the basic needs of the high number of people there, which, as Mangu illustrates, may not be the case. On the other hand, if the District focused its efforts on these denser populated areas, they run the risk of having construction efforts consistently be one step behind the ever increasing population, when a similar project in a rural community might adequately fulfill the needs of the population.

Just as many budgetary restrictions are placed on those District Assembly projects that are sponsored outside organizations. The European Union, for example, in order to meet their own budgetary constraints, must put a yearly cap that they are willing to give for projects under Wa’s District Assembly, offering to spend “y” amount of money for “y” amount of approved projects. However, the money offered by these organizations usually is dependent on the number of projects approved, so that the amount initially promised to the Assembly may not always be the money actually given (Dansah, 19/11/01). For example, the European Union might offer one billion cedis for the construction of twenty District assembly projects. But the EU might approve only ten of those projects, and the money subsequently awarded would be decreased to 500 million cedis.
The District Assembly then, when deciding on its projects, must take a look both at the feasibility of a particular project to get approved by the sponsor, as well as how many of what type of projects should be made. Seeing how schools and health facilities cost more than toilets, the Assembly is forced to strike a balance in-between the various projects to stay within the budget (Dansah, 19/11/01). Upon finding that balance, they then must prioritize the projects based on the practicality of approval, and importance to the community, (District Implementation Planning Meeting, 16/11/01).

For instance, this past year, The European Union approved 15 of Wa District’s proposed projects, with 12 of those being initialized. (Gadie, Zinya, and Dorimon Schools and Jonga KVIP were on the list). While some of the remaining 8 that are not approved were cycled back onto the list for this coming year, not all of them made the District Assembly’s or will make the EU’s cut (District Implement Planning Meeting, 16/11/01). It are for these reasons then, that certain communities may get their requested projects, while others may not. Interestingly, Jonga’s KVIP was the least prioritized project to be initiated, being number twelve on the District’s list of European Union projects this past year; if circumstances were slightly different, they might not have had a project at all (Appendix B, Sheet 1).

4.3.3 Breakdown #2: Centralized Criterion Restraints On District Assembly

A second impediment in responding to communities’ requests is that of criteria limitations, made in order to maximize the potential practically and utilization of a project. In this way, a district may be forced to prioritize its projects, attempting to determine how beneficial the project might be in light be in light of the District as a whole. However these decisions are not made by the District themselves, but by consultants from the National Ministries in Accra, who are responsible for laying out the criteria that determines suitability of a project’s location for all Districts (19/11/01, Dansah).

The Ministry of Health, for example, might set national guidelines as to the minimum distance that health facilities might have to be apart form each other. As a result, a village’s desiring for a health facility may be forever denied, simply because the village itself does not meet the criteria to qualify for the facility. In Jonga’s case, however much the village would like a health facility, the population of the village may not be large enough to make the construction of the facility practical, given the amount of potential people that it would serve (Dansah,
This may have been partly why the District Assembly constructed a road for the torn, to at least make access to a health facility more feasible.

In a similar way, Ghana’s Educational Service may require a certain minimum enrollment to justify the construction of a school. It was for this reason then, that Sulemani Korderly, the headmaster of the Gadie School, intensified his efforts of encouraging enrollment during the application process, thus make investment in the school more appealing to the District Assembly and to potential teachers. (Balaworh, 21/11/01). In addition, the Ministry also has certain policies set at the Regional level as to where a school should be placed, (such as no school should be no less than three participants in a completion, (or lottery), over who gets which project (Dansah, 1911/01).

4.4 Effectiveness Of District In Managing Projects

Having now addressed the effectiveness of the District in both conceiving and securing development projects for its communities, the analysis will now turn to the District’s ability as concerns management and construction for the actual project after its being approved for implementation.

As has been previously mentioned, the role of the District in the management process is primarily one of providing materials, supplies, skilled laborers, and a well trained contractor, and ensuring that these resources are transported to the work site and communal labor force efficiently. As Gadie was cited as the model EU project, it is this project that we will use as an example to describe the intended activity of the District during the construction process. As will be seen, mechanisms to ensure that materials for the school project are delivered timely and in proper proportion have been put in place, thus holding all individuals involved with the process accountable for the projects success.

4.4.1 Assembly’s Activity In Managing Project Resources

After the initial laying out the construction plan by a skilled contractor chosen by the District Assembly themselves, the contractor makes his request to the assembly for the exact quality and quantity of materials needed to ensure the efficiency of the project. The District Assembly will then order these needed materials form a supplier located in Accra, who will
construct a check list of the requested materials, gather them up, and send it back to Wa for approval at the District Assembly Office in Wa (Gambah, 21/11/01).

Once these materials arrive, the Contractor of the project, the Work Superintendent and a hired driver will cart the materials off to the village, (in this case being Gadie). Upon arrival at the school work site, truck is greeted by the communal labor force at that time, who will assist the contractor in unloading all materials out of the truck (See Appendix A, Pictures 6-7). The Contractor then shows the community the approved list of the materials requested, and together they make sure that the quantity of projects recorded on the list match the number actually delivered. Finally, the Superintendent signs the list, acknowledging the full deliverance of the materials to the project and his own witnessing of this transfer of goods (witnessing of material delivery to Gadie work site, 21/11/01).

The reason for such deliberate accountability at each step of the deliverance process seems to be in response to suspicions of the potential for corruption within the decentralization process. For example, the supplier for the materials, could upon receiving payment for a certain quantity of goods, check that requested amount off the material list, while simultaneously providing less than that given amount. Just as easily, a contractor could deliver less material in the District truck than what was allocated, keeping the remainder of the materials for his own use to sell later. In both instances, the community ends up with less material than promised, and accusations are subsequently made at the assembly for mismanaged funds and lost supplies (Gambah, 21/11/01). It is the quantity on paper matches the actual amount, with the Work Superintendent finalizing the proper delivery with his signature.

The careful attention to detail that is evident in the District’s work during the construction process was illustrated by a discussion at the District Implementation Planning Meeting. The discussion was in regards to the ambiguity of references to “a truckload of sand”. Unlike measurements involving area (cubic meters), or weight (kilograms), there is no set definition as to what constitutes a “truckload”, as both the size of the actual truck, and the shape of the load (flat or raised), could effect the amount of sand. District officials were worried about the consequences that might have resulted over this confusion of definition: suppliers could fill a truck with what they consider is a full load, but what the District might feel is a half of load, while the supplier himself collects the full amount of money. Or, contractors could use the District’s funds to buy what they know is half a load of sand, and keep the extra money; without
an adequate definition of what is one sand load, the District would be unable to accuse them of stealing. The recommendation was therefore made to standardize what constituted a “sand trip” in actual concrete measurements, to as to prevent unnecessary waste of funds or possible corruption. (District Implementation Planning Meeting, 16/11/01).

It is important to note that after the arrival of the materials and the contractor to the construction site, the District’s job in terms of project construction is finished. From here on out, the contractor assigned to the project will then work on the project’s construction with the communal laborers in the village currently at the site, instructing them what to do (Jonga Communal Laborers, 19/11/01), and often spending days at a time on the project site (Gamba, 21/11/01, Gadie). The communal labor itself is organized and mobilized by the chief, or other leaders of the community. In other words, once the materials arrive, the community, with the help of the contractor, is left on its own to complete the project efficiently.

4.4.2 Effectiveness Of District In Managing Project Resources

How well does such meticulous supervision pay off? It appears that the District is extremely effective when it comes to managing its own projects. Out of the projects analyzed in the research, only one of them, the Busa Irrigation Project is incomplete. In addition, the evidence seems to show that all the other projects were or on in the process of being completed efficiently, that being on time and with proper utilization of resources. In particular, the EU schools were all completed on time (or within one month of the aim) and on budget, despite running into and unavoidable delay due to the rainy season (Musaa, 19/11/01, Gadie). The Jonga KVIP too, is on pace to be completed by the December 15th EU deadline (One could argue that the relocation of the KVIP project to a new site after faults were found with the old location demonstrates a degree of poor management, but the writer refuses to make this conclusion due to lack of conversation with the supervising staff of the project). In fact, the Work Superintendent has stated that all 12 European Union implemented projects for the 2000 have been similarly successful (See Appendix B, sheet 1).

Broadening the scope to all the project done by the District (not just those that were studied), we find again that the success rate of project completion seems to be consistently high form year to year. For Common Fund projects in 1996, for example eleven of the seventeen projects were done within a year of the project initiation, with all eleven being completed either
at or below the allotted contract sum of the project (sheet #2). The 1999 Common Fund Projects (which included the Mangu) were that much more efficient. Out of the twenty-seven projects, all of them were completed within a year of implementation (sheet #3). The success rate of these projects might be attributable to the fact that they were all the same type of projects, that being the cladding of schools pavilions. In addition, many of these projects took on the same design (witnessed of Mangu, Nakore, Naahe Schools by author, November 21-22, 2001), with all but four fallings under the same contract amount of 13,500,000.00 cedis. Irregardless of the uniformity of the Common Fund projects that year, however, the District’s success rate at completion is very impressive.

Determining the cusses of overall District development projects for the year 2000 is a little harder, due to the newness of these projects, which result in a lack of recorded information as to their status. However, the one piece of material obtained, a progress report form the year 2000 also appears to shine favorably on the effectiveness of the District (Sheet #4). Two of the projects, #9 and #11 had almost been completed as of the printing of the report, with the work now being handed over entirely to the community. Two more of the projects, #8 and #10 had the groundwork already laid out, though there was a fair amount of carpentry and roofing work that needed to be done. But what is more impressive about these projects, is the fact that the estimated cost to complete the project all fell at or below or the intended contract sum, thus all falling within the expected budget (lack of information with projects 1-7 deter analysis).

Finally, we can take a look at the community initiated projects for the year 2000 (Sheet #5). “Community Initiated” projects refer to those whose actual construction was begun by the community itself. However, due to lack of resources and money, the community is pressured to ask for assistance, and the assembly responds by providing the same services that it does to all its other projects, that being so supply the materials for the projects, as well as supervising its completion. As the construction is already under way once the Assembly becomes involved, there is less work that they need to do. As can be shown, these projects too, have all been 100% completed.

4.4.3 Busa Irrigation Project: A Dent In The District’s Near-Perfect Record

What then, went wrong at Busa? With such a high level of success in implementation and management of their projects, it is necessary to take a look at the Assembly’s one failure, in order to determine what conditions could have led to such inefficiency in the construction
process. According to the community itself, the problem was one of mismanagement of funds on the part of IFAD and the Assembly itself, resulting in the lack of subsidiaries for communal laborers.

Yet in actuality, the problem appears to be one of the misunderstandings by the community more than one loss of funds by the District Assembly. According to Wa’s Agriculture department, who developed the planning of the project in conjunction with the District Assembly, it was never the intention to continuously pay Busa members for their communal labor. Instead, the idea was to select 80 laborers at the beginning to pay, thus insuring that at least that many people would consistently turn up for work (Atakro, 22/11/01). After the construction process began to move at a steady pace, the intention was then to gradually phase out the amount of payments distributed. Community members however, who from interviews appear to have been unaware of this plan, were extremely concerned with the sudden lack of allowances, apparently failing to realize that this gradual decrease of subsidies for communal labor was not a mistake, but intentional (Elders of Busa, 15/15/01).

4.4.4 BREAKDOWN#1: DISTRICT ASSEMBLY FAILING TO STICK TO ITS

The first mistake by the assembly was in failing to stick to its own strategy as concerns implementing projects. As has been shown with all the successful projects described above, the Assembly’s management responsibilities are solely to provide the actual resources, (building materials, supplies, tools and skilled labor) for the facility to be constructed. This should have been no different with the Busa irrigation project. Many of the projects run through the departments of Agriculture have recently fallen under a comprehensive UWADEP program, which is funded by IFAD, mostly with help from the World Bank. However, UWADEP only has authority to cover certain types of Agricultural projects, with those projects consisting of Feeder Roads, Animal Health, Animal Production and Credit Unions.

Since the Busa irrigation project could not be placed under the authority of UWADEP, it was therefore covered by the District Assembly’s own comprehensive plan, the Village Infrastructure Project. In addition to directly providing “private goods” such as carts, machinery and vehicle for farmers, the VIP also takes responsibility to cover “public goods,” such as the Busa Irrigation Project. And, like with all District Assembly plans, the financial backing for
such project under VIP is theoretically offered only “in kind”, as opposed to direct cash (Dy-Yakah, 13/11/01). In the case of Busa then, the Assembly should have only provided the cement, mortar, tools and skilled labor for the irrigation’s construction.

Why then, did the Assembly reach out of bounds and decide to offer direct cash for communal laborers that in all the other projects discussed have worked for free? The logic among the District was that the payments were to initially act as an enticement to increase the amount of community labor involved in the project, which up to that time was below the expected turnout (Atakro, 22/11/01). So as not to give the impression of community apathy with the project site may have been equal to all the other projects we have analyzed,. However, given that the scope of the project was so much more bigger (a vast irrigation system as opposed to a 3 classroom school building), the communal labor numbers had to have been higher to complete the project in a timely manner.

However, as the story has told, the effect that such subsidies has had on the Busa communal labor force numbers has led to the exact opposite results of the District’s, and community’s wishes. One year after the initiation of the new project, and several months after the District stopped offering its subsidies, there are less than 20 regular workers on the project, a small percentage out of the registered 375 farmers of the village, and not nearly enough to complete the job efficiently (Atakro, 22/11/01).
BREAKDOWN #2: DISTRICT’S FAILURE TO DECENTRALIZE RESOURCES, RESPONSIBILITY

The delegation of funds in cash as opposed to “in kind” however, would itself not have been a big enough error to have led to the current failure of the Busa project. The real problem occurred when the actual selection process of who was to get the subsidies was made directly by the Assembly themselves, with no input from Busa community leaders. And has been demonstrated by the high success rate of most of the other projects, the Assembly is at its most effective, when it realizes the limitation of its own responsibility, and delegates accordingly the remainder of the responsibility to non-District officials.

Not knowing who was on the communal labor force at the time of their decision, and not conferring with village leaders about who should receive payment, there were absolutely no mechanisms in place to ensure that the 80 paid members selected by the Assembly were among the 200 volunteers working the project at the time (Atakro, 22/11/01). This led to confusion and disgruntlement among 200 unpaid laborers, as they could not understand why just 80, and those particular 80, deserved subsidies for their work. Not surprisingly, all those volunteers who were unpaid were no longer willing to work aside their paid peers, reducing what could have been a potential force of 280 workers to just 80. In addition, after the allowances ran out, the department of Agriculture and Assembly had a still harder time convincing the total 280 aggrieved that they were never paid once while the allowances existed (Atakro, 22/11/01).

The district then, in paying community members directly, went over the heads of government institutions that should have been given responsibility of this task, those being the area councils, unit committees and community leaders themselves. In addition, this lack of input from the area-councils and community seems to fit in with a pattern of grievances from Busa related to their own lack of responsibility in the project.

Given that the Busa Project was under the authority of VIP, it is curious to note how little input the Busa Community members and the Area council men in particular, had while the project was being implemented. Also interesting, is the high degree of power that IFAD had in the project. According to the Area Council men, the IFAD representatives never once involved the area council during the planning process, instead choosing to do all its business indirectly from the District Assembly office in Wa. This may be understandable, as it is not IFAD’s job to
ensure a smooth path of communication for every project that it implements. That job lies with the District Assembly which in keeping with principles of decentralization, should ensure that there is at least some degree of responsibility accorded to the Area Councils and Community from the IFAD organizers (Ibrahim Issah, 15/11/01).

Just as interesting, is the amount of power that was supposedly accorded to the District Assembly. According to the Busa community, their District Assembly representative rarely mentioned the details of the irrigation system during these community meetings, seeming to be unaware about any element of the project’s planning. This put serious doubt in the community’s minds as to whether or not their own Assembly man, or even the District Assembly as whole was involved in the implementation of their own project, or if they were all kept uninformed (Busa Elders, 15/11/01).

What type of responsibility could have been accorded to the Area Councils and Busa via the authority of the District Assembly? First of all, the Busa community felt that a greater amount of the actual groundwork for the project should have been done by skilled contractors within their won community, as opposed to giving the entire project for IFAD engineers. The town mason, (with the community in agreement), felt that he should have been allowed to supervise the project, as he is not only a skilled contractor, but an actual member of Busa, and therefore more knowledgeable about the potential labor force in the community (Busa Town Mason, 15/11/01). Further evidence of the town’s own potential contracting abilities was demonstrated during the actual visit of both the old and new sites of the irrigation system, with community members pointing out what they felt to the flaws in the construction work during the site visit (Busa Area Councilmen, 15/11/01). In fact, the community claimed that it had its suspicious about the inadequacy of the old system even before it was condemned by the Ministry of Agriculture (Busa Elders, 15/11/01).

Secondly, the village believed the funding form IFAD that went to the materials, tools, and communal labor, should have gone directly to the village itself through a bank account in the name of the town’s Water Use Association. This Water Use Association, which had been recently set up in Busa for co-ordination of these type of water initiatives, should have been left in charge of handling the budget and supervision of the project (Busa Elder, 15/11/01).
It is in regards to monetary management by this Water’s Use Association in which the District has voiced its strongest degree of support in Busa’s recommendations, thus acknowledging their own fault with the project. This Association, in conjunction with input from the Area Councils, should have been allocated the money that was to go to the communal laborers, as opposed to the district making payments directly to the laborers. In particular, the Association, due to its contact with the area councils and village, would have been able to judge more fairly which 80 should be picked for the payments, and which, should be kept on the payroll once the funding was gradually withdrawn (Dansah 19/11/01, Atakoro 22/11/01). In addition, the localized nature of the Association would have reduced the amount of tensions that went on among community members during the payments, as the community members themselves would have a say in the decision making process.
5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS OF DISTRICT IN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

We have now evaluated what activities of the process are most effective in implementing development projects, and what specific procedures of the Assembly have led to that effectiveness. In addition, we have also determined those activities in a project’s cycle which the Assembly is least effective, and have conjectured breakdowns in the process that might have led to this level of ineffectiveness. In this final section, the conclusions made as to both the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the District will be used to suggest recommendations for further improvement.

As has been shown, the Assembly’s highest level of effectiveness came during the actual construction of the project, with this being attributed to two reasons. The first reason for success was the Assembly’s own meticulous and careful work in carrying out its responsibilities, those being the management of the project’s resources and subsequent efficient delivery of those resources to the community. The second reason for success, can be attributed to the district’s restraint in not overstepping its own responsibilities, instead delegating that responsibility to the contractors, community leaders and laborers involved in the planning and construction of the project.

In both cases, the activity at question was the district’s willingness and ability to further decentralize, both with resources and the responsibility in handling those resources. In fact, the only project that was managed poorly, that of the Busa irrigation system, was attributed to the Assembly’s failure in decentralizing both its resources (that being funds), and responsibilities (that being control of those funds) to the community. In addition, many of the other reasons for ineffectiveness within the District’s activity can also be attributed to a lack of decentralization, especially in regards to the decision making process needed to secure the project. Therefore, in positing recommendations, the presumption being made is that proper decentralization is effective for development.

The recommendations are also made with an eye towards eliminating some of the breakdowns determined above. Five such breakdowns were discovered during the District
Assembly’s development process. These were 1) inaccessibility of the communities within the district by the community’s District Assembly representative, 2) budget constraints involved in the decision-making process, 3) criterion constraints involved in the decision-making process, 4) Assembly’s failure to stick to its own development mandate, and 5) Assembly’s failure to decentralize resources and responsibility.

Out of these five, two of the breakdowns will not be addressed. Budget constraints inhibit the decision-making capabilities of any government administration, as no organization has an unlimited budget. The breakdown then, is one of the unavoidable consequences that comes with attempting to run an efficient administrative operation, and therefore can not be examined with an eye towards improvement.

As regards to the District’s failure to stick to its own development mandate with the Busa project, this negligence appears to occur only in rare incidences, with the District quickly acknowledging the fault, and correcting it efficiently. This can be best illustrated by the by the case of the Tuma irrigation system. In conjunction with the Busa irrigation scheme, the department of agriculture implemented a similar project in Tuma. This time however, the Assembly did not over extend its responsibilities, providing only the resources necessary for the project, and not trying to interfere with the community’s own efforts at communal labor. As a result, the Tuma irrigation system is now complete, even though construction for the project began after Busa’s.

The other three breakdowns however, will be addressed with the recommendations.

5.1.1 RECOMMENDATION #1: MEASURES TO ENSURE GREATER ACCESSIBILITY BETWEEN DISTRICT ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVES AND THEIR CONSTITUENTS

As the Nembe project illustrated, a District Assembly can run into a lot problems with its constituents, as well as wasted resources, if it fails to adequately ensure that the project planned is one that is desired. Yet due to the deadlines of both District meetings and the submission of projects to be approved to various sponsors, the District Assembly is often forced into a position to try to guess the needs of the community. This can be partly attributed to a failure by the
District Assembly Representatives to adequately consult with their constituents beforehand. This condition in turn, usually has to do with the Representatives inaccessibility to those very communities that they are suppose to represent.

Therefore, the first proposed recommendation in improving effectiveness is to set measures in place to ensure that the District Representative has the means to adequately meet with his community on a regular basis (supposedly such meetings should take place every two weeks). This could be accomplished in a couple of ways. First, rules could be implemented in the decision making process that would require the District Assembly representative to live in the actual village that he represents, thus always coming into contact with his constituents. If the representative is in control of several villages, similar rules should be implemented to ensure that these villages are close enough to each other so as to make it easy for the representative to pass through all of them regularly.

Secondly, there may be certain instances in which the representative simply cannot live in the village that he represents, or the village themselves is unable to round up a viable candidate to serve as their representative in the Assembly. In addition, even if such rules were successfully maintained, a consequential problem would then have to be address: with District Assembly representatives each living in the village that they represent, some of them may be too far away form the District Office in Wa to get to the very District Assembly meetings that would allow them to voice their villages requests.

It is for this reason that means of mobilization for those representatives living in the more remote and distant villages be provided, thus making residence requirements on District Assembly representatives practical. Attempts at providing such resources have been initiated by the “Danish Support to the District Assemblies” organization, which paid for motorcycles and other means of transport for some of the Assembly men (Dansah, 19/11/01) (though research was not done as the extend or success of this plan). Such a plan should be continued however. Representatives living far from Wa town could be provided a bike as long as they have no other means of transportation to get from town to the village. Furthermore, an application process should be completed by those Representatives seeking the vehicle, thus seeding out those members who may not really need the added transport. In addition, the bike should be lent, not given, as this will decrease the possible corruption that might occur with obtaining the bike; the loaning of the bike will erase its potential as a commodity that could be sold.
If the Assembly is unable to provide motorbikes for all who require them, they should at least supply additional monetary aid for those Representatives living far away, to help them with transportation. However, such subsidies, whether monetary or transport, should be uniform throughout all District Assembly representatives that quality, so as to eliminate disputes among representatives as to who got what subsidy.

5.1.2 RECOMMENDATION #2: DOCUMENTATION IN THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION BETWEEN THE DISTRICT ASSEMBLY AND THE COMMUNITY

The second recommendation, like the first one is also to ensure greater communication between the district and community. As has been demonstrated, the District Assembly is at its most effective during the final leg of their activity, that being the actual management of and transfer of resources from the District office to the community. This effectiveness can in large part be due to the high level of meticulous documentation and careful note-taking that goes on during the transfer of goods, with each participant in this chain being held accountable for his role in the delivery process.

Therefore, in order to make the first activity of the Assembly equally as effective, that being the exchange of information form the community to the District, it is recommended that a similar level of documentation be implanted. This would mean that upon hearing the needs of his/her constituency, the District Assembly representative for a given community must bring up these grievances at the next District Assembly meeting. The District Assembly would then put in writing for the community whether or not they will implement a project addressing these needs. If the Assembly does decide to approve a project for the community, they would need to describe the exact nature of the project, and when the community could expect its implementation.

In either case of approval or denial, the Assembly would need to explain for the community what were the reasons for its decision. If the assembly refuses to give approval to a project of the community’s wishes, but does agree to implement a project of some kind, the project and reasons for its implementation would also need to be given. This would go a long way in pacifying the possible frustrations among villagers in towns like Jonga, who fail to
understand why their requests for a dam are responded to by the creation of a KVIP. The District Chief Executive would then sign on behalf of the District, and the letter would be presented to the village by their District Assembly representative at their next meeting.

At the meeting, the Chief and Area Council men of the village would need to acknowledge that they did in fact receive the letter, either by a signature or a seal of approval. If the letter contained the good news of a soon-to-be-implemented project, the Chief and Area Councilors would need to additionally give their approval for the implementation of the project. The District Assembly Representative will then take the signed letter back up to the District Office, as proof that contact was made with the community and whether or not the project should continue as planned. In this way, the Community is kept informed at each step of the way as to what the status of the project is, while the Assembly has the confidence of knowing that the project is one that is desired by the community.

Such mechanisms would go far in smoothing out the occasionally disjointed dialogue between the communities and the District. The current uselessness of the Nembe Slaughterhouse for example, has been attributed to a failure by the District to absorb an adequate amount of knowledge about what the real needs of the community were. If such a system of documentation like the one described was put in place, the District would be forced to receive both this knowledge, and approval from the butchers and artisans prior to its implementation. However, if the benefactors of the project disagreed with its aims, they would then acknowledge through their signatures that they were made aware of the plan by their District Assembly representative, but that they refuse to sign off on its construction. This would have cut back on a great deal of time and energy wasted by the District.

5.1.3 RECOMMENDATION #3: CRITERIA REGARDING PROJECT CREATION TO BE DECIDED BY THE DISTRICT ASSEMBLY

As has been mentioned, during the decision making process in the life of a project, The District Assembly must abide by certain guidelines and criteria in determining the type and location of projects to be implemented. Such criteria are useful so as to ensure that the projects, which are implemented, are true necessities, thus justifying the energy and costs that would have
to be expended on their construction. In addition, the abiding by these criterions also help the
district in attempting to stay within its other unavoidable constraint, that of a limited budget.

However, as it now stands, the particular criteria that are put in place may not be
beneficial, but actually harmful to the District itself. This is because of the centralized nature of
the criteria, with the decisions as to their guidelines being made at the national level (19/11/01),
Dansah). This has two implications. First, as these decision makers are based in Accra, they
may be unaware of the peculiar and ever-changing characteristics of all of Ghana’s 110 Districts.
Secondly, even if they tried their best to analyze every district before arriving at their criteria,
they are still pressured to form just one set of criteria to be applied, irregardless of the Districts
vast diversity.

The consequences of these conditions can be very harmful to communities with a
particular District. The Ministry of Health’s requirement of a minimum district between health
facilities for instance, may be illogical for Wa district, as poor roads, and the isolation of villages
from one another may necessitate facilities to be closer to each other. In a similar way, The
Ministry of Education’s requirements of a minimum amount of enrollment so as to justify a
school, may also be adequate criteria, failing to consider the lower population densities of the
Upper West Region.

In order for these criteria to truly be a beneficial tool for the District Assembly in its
decision making process, it is therefore necessary that the criteria be created by the District itself.
This means a decentralization of this particular responsibility form the Central and Regional
administration, to that of the District. As the government officials at the District level are no
doubt much more aware of the conditions within their own domain that their central Government
counterparts, they can make decisions that more adequately suit the characteristics of their own
District. In addition, these decisions at the would just effect one district, thus avoiding damage
that may have come with imposing one district’s criteria on another.

5.1.4 RECOMMENDATION #4: MORE RESPONSIBILITY, POWER ACCORDED TO
AREA COUNCILS

One of the primary aims in creating a system of decentralized government in the first
place was to bring the government physically closer to the communities they were trying to
serve, thus increasing the success rate of development projects. This seems logical; a
government institution that is within walking distance from a community be much more attune to the community’s needs than one which is a hundred miles away. It was this reasoning which led to the 3rd recommendation, that of placing criteria constraints to District projects in the hands of the District themselves.

In according the responsibility of development to the District Assemblies, the thinking was then that the decentralization of the country into 110 separate government entities was sufficient enough to bring about the amount of accessibility required to respond to community needs. However, this appears not to be the case, as many District Assembly representatives are still failing to regularly met with their constituents. Though the recommendations as to make the constituency more accessible to the representatives could be useful in addressing the problem, the implementation of the solutions depend on many factors, these being adequate funding, and the representatives willingness to live in the village of their constituency. It is, therefore, unwise to rely on this one solution at the District level to facilitate smoother communication between the government and the communities.

The last recommendation therefore, calls for further decentralization of Ghana’s government, placing more power on the Area Councils. If the 110 districts are currently not small enough in size to build a close relationship with the community, more responsibility should be laid on the over 1000 Area Councils, thus reducing the amount of land area that each localized administration would be held accountable for (the Upper West Region along, has 12 area Councils). After all, the evidence from the projects show that as long as the planning process is decentralized to the proper level, the project’s chance of being successful becomes very high.

The Area Councils then, should be accorded a comparative amount of responsibility, decision making, and finances as is given to the District Assembly. If this happens, the Area Councils, who appear from the research to have a good grasp as to the needs of its constituents, will then be able to implement the same type of development projects that the District Assembly would have ideally covered for. If the District Assembly does decide to approach a village for a suitable development project, the community would no doubt accept the offer. But by strengthening the Area Councils own ability to implement similar projects, a village will no longer have to rely totally on this more impersonal, centralized, district level administration to bring down a project that may or not respond to the communities real needs. If finances were placed in Jonga’s Area Councils for instance, the community might have constructed a more
useful facility, as opposed to simply relying on the financial table scrap left over from the 
District Assembly’s more ambitious projects.

As it stands now, the Area Councils have very little power, currently viewed as 
“essentially rallying points of local enthusiasm in support of the development objectives of the 
District Assembly” (Ministry of Local Government, 1994, p.10). The limited power of the 
Assembly in implementing its own projects stems primarily from a lack of funds with its own 
budget. This lack of funds impedes any potential projects, as the Area Councils must always 
look to the District Assembly for funding. The Assembly is subsequently forced to prioritize 
projects among the twelve area councils and hundreds of villages in the District, thus decreasing 
the chances of a particular community getting its desired project.

The current minute budget in Area Councils possession can be attributed to a couple of 
reasons. The initial intentions of the PNDC government were that the Area Councils would be 
paid by the Central Government in Accra. However, this was an aim that was never reached, and 
as it now stands, the Accra Councilmen receive their allowances directly from the District 
Assembly. Yet the Budget of the District assembly is in large part built upon taxes that are 
administered by the Area Councilmen. This is because one of the roles of the Area Council is to 
collect funds through community taxes for the District’s Common Fund. Half of this money will 
then be given back to the Area Councils for the purpose of paying the councilmen’s own salaries, 
with the remainder ostensibly going towards fulfilling the wishes of the community (Disueo, 
19/11/01).

Yet by the time the District distributes the allowances of the Area Councilmen, there is 
often times no money left over towards development (Disueo, 19/11/01). This might be because 
the taxes collected in many of these rural areas of low population are insufficient to constitute a 
workable yearly budget. In addition, many communities are reluctant to pay such taxes 
following the takeover of a new government administration, such as was the case with the NPP 
government at the start of the year 2000 (Disueo, 19/01/01). The Area Councilmen however, 
often unaware of the actual amount that was given to the District Assembly budget for their own 
allowance, become perplexed as to why they are not receiving the supposed 50% of the budget 
promised by the district (Busa Area Council Men, 15/11/01).
The recommendation that has been proposed is definitely not a novel one, however, as both the District Assembly and outside government organization have initiated steps for more powerful area councils. The efforts by the District Assembly and Department of Agriculture in trying to address the grievances among the Busa community is a good example. As of December 2001, officers from both the District and the Department are in the process of trying to arrange talks with the Area Council members of Busa as well as executives from the Water User’s Association. The purpose of these talks will be to try to work out plans to redistribute the project’s responsibility and finances towards the community, Area Councils and Water User’s Association in an effort to restart work on the project (Akakro, 22/11/01).

Non-Ghanaian government organizations are also establishing programs aimed at area council strengthening. Most prominently among these is the Economic Development Fund by the Danish Embassy, of which the Upper West Region (along with the Volta Region) have recently become beneficiaries. The program involves the direct transferring of funds to the Area Councils Budget, which re to be controlled and used solely by the Area Councils themselves. With such control over their own resources, the Area Councils can be assured of bypassing the confusion and mismanagement that led to the failure of the Busa irrigation system (Dansah, 19/11/01).

Unfortunately, out of the 12 area councils, only 2 and 3 of them have applied and gotten approved through the program. This low percentage might be due to the Embassy’s decision to leave the application with the District Office, in the hope that the District Representatives would consult with their area councilmen about applying to the fund. Yet this mobilization has not occurred to the expected degree, and as a result, many area councils are still left unaware of the opportunities that the program can offer (Dansah, 19/11/01). However, the program is still in its early stages, and adequate time must pass before we can truly determine the Economic Development’s Fund potential in addressing the recommendation of more powerful Area Councils.

5.2 OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK FOR DEVELOPMENT UNDER DECENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT

Despite breakdowns in the process in which with the recommendations attempted to address, the prognosis for further improvements to the District through a process of decentralized
administration looks very promising. Only 13 years after the establishment of the new system of decentralized government, the Wa District Assembly has been able to formulate a plan of attack for development that guarantees a high rate of project success. It is only when the assembly’s actual work fails to follow through on its ideal model of activity, that the projects themselves fall flat. As can be seen, this derailment of the ideal model of activity usually occurs when the District takes on a greater degree of responsibility than is called for under a process of decentralization.

In 1988, The Ghana Central government tested its government at the local level, granting them more power, and challenging them to use that power responsibly. It appears that, at least as far as Wa is concerned, the Assembly has currently responded with a great deal of maturity on its part in both fulfilling the functions that were required of it, and in formulating a plan that in the coming years. Wa, and all of Ghana’s other 109 District Assemblies will continue on a similar program of decentralization, increasing the degree at which it sticks to its ambitious and idealist model. The consistently high degree of project success that the Assembly experiences year in and year out as a result of these decentralization efforts should act as a good enough motivation to keep their fest from wandering too far off this course.
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Yukubu, Sumache, Wa District Assembly Man. Interview by author, 14 November 2001, Office of the Senior Works Superintendent, P. O. Box 16, Wa District, Upper West Region, Ghana. Notes in possession of author.
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APPENDIX B

5TH MICRO-PROJECTS PROGRAMME: PRIORITIZED PROJECTS

REGION: UPPER WEST
DISTRICT: WA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT CODE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT</th>
<th>SECTOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-01</td>
<td>Wa</td>
<td>Construction of 30 No. Market Stores</td>
<td>Revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-02</td>
<td>Torsa</td>
<td>Construction of 3 Classroom P/S Blk</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-03</td>
<td>Manso 17/1/2000</td>
<td>Construction completion of 3 Classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-04</td>
<td>Wa Industrial Site</td>
<td>Construction 3 No. Borehole</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-05</td>
<td>Dorimon</td>
<td>Construction of 3 Classroom P/S Blk</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-06</td>
<td>Funi</td>
<td>Construction of 16 No. Market Stalls</td>
<td>Revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-07</td>
<td>Gadi 16/1/2001</td>
<td>Construction of 3 Classroom P/S Blk</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-08</td>
<td>Manwe</td>
<td>Construction of 3 Classroom JSS Blk</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-09</td>
<td>Bulenga (Health Centre)</td>
<td>Construction of 4-Seater KVIP Toilet and fencing of health centre.</td>
<td>Sanitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-10</td>
<td>Gurungu (Health Centre)</td>
<td>Construction of 4-Seater KVIP Toilet and fencing of health centre.</td>
<td>Sanitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-11</td>
<td>Nyinbandu</td>
<td>Construction of borehole</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-12</td>
<td>Dopieni</td>
<td>Construction of borehole</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-13</td>
<td>Mimpea-Seme</td>
<td>Construction of borehole</td>
<td>Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-14</td>
<td>Kunyebing</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of 6 Classroom P/S Blk</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UW-WA-15</td>
<td>Jonga</td>
<td>Construction of 12-Seater KVIP Toilet</td>
<td>Sanitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT TITLE</td>
<td>CONTRACTOR</td>
<td>AWARD DATE</td>
<td>CONTRACT SUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cladding of 13 Sch. Pavillion</td>
<td>M/s Kubusco Ent.</td>
<td>24/6/96</td>
<td>11,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M/s Jamatutu Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>5/5/97</td>
<td>96,607,376.00</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>M/s Balorma Kpani Ent</td>
<td>19/12/97</td>
<td>23,671,700.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M/s Mahama Sidique Ent.</td>
<td></td>
<td>18,210,404.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of 12-Seater vault at</td>
<td>M/s ALHAJI Assibi Ent.</td>
<td>24/12/96</td>
<td>18,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of 12-Seater vault at</td>
<td>M/s Osumani Saani Ent.</td>
<td>24/12/96</td>
<td>18,000,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of 12-Seater Vault at</td>
<td>M/s Katabatai Ent</td>
<td>24/12/98</td>
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<td>Rehabilitation of JSQ Staff</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>21,841,552.00</td>
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<td>Rehabilitation of PWD Guest House</td>
<td>M/s Ramax Ent.</td>
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<td>11,958,412.00</td>
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<td>Gbajong Ent.</td>
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<td>18,573,200.00</td>
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<td>Assembly’s contribution to ASIP</td>
<td>M/s Mahama Bin Bukari</td>
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<td>41,250,000.00</td>
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<td>const. Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>NO.</td>
<td>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</td>
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<td>AREA COUNCIL</td>
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<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Cladding of 1 No. pavilion</td>
<td>Kpalworgu</td>
<td>Bulenga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Kpalworgu</td>
<td>Bulenga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Katua</td>
<td>Bulenga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Chaggu</td>
<td>Bulenga</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Yaala</td>
<td>Funi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>yaala</td>
<td>Funi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Buffiama</td>
<td>Funi</td>
</tr>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Boli</td>
<td>Boli</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Boli</td>
<td>Boli</td>
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<td>“</td>
<td>Bonaa</td>
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<td>“</td>
<td>Loggu</td>
<td>Boli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Loggu</td>
<td>Boli</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Goripie</td>
<td>Bulenga</td>
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<td>14.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>“</td>
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<td>Kperisi</td>
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<td>16.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>“</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Cladding of 1 No. Pavillion</td>
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<td>Dorimon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Eggu</td>
<td>Dorimon</td>
</tr>
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<td>“</td>
<td>Eggu</td>
<td>Dorimon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Kpongu</td>
<td>Kpongu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Kpongu</td>
<td>Kpongu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Manga Meth</td>
<td>Wa</td>
</tr>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Manga L/A</td>
<td>Wa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Manga L/A</td>
<td>Wa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>“</td>
<td>Nakore</td>
<td>Wa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>“</td>
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<td>“</td>
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</table>
## PROGRESS REPORT ON DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS 2000

**WA DISTRICT ASSEMBLY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>COST (£)</th>
<th>DATE OF AWARD</th>
<th>DATE OF COMPLETION</th>
<th>SOURCE OF FUNDING</th>
<th>NAME OF CONTRACTOR</th>
<th>SECTOR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>37,822,650.00</td>
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<td>21/8/2000</td>
<td>GES</td>
<td>M/S Khanurdeen Enterprise</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>13,134,115.00</td>
<td>April, 2000</td>
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<td>GES</td>
<td>M/S Kumula Enterprise</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of Yaala, Ha, Kayiahi and Fongo E/ A Primary Schools</td>
<td>19,394,826.00</td>
<td>April 2000</td>
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<td>GES</td>
<td>Sisssla Construction Works</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of Adabiyat and Boli JSS</td>
<td>17,263,144.00</td>
<td>April 2000</td>
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<td>GES</td>
<td>Bampuo Enterprise</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>18,608,750.00</td>
<td>May, 2000</td>
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<td>GES</td>
<td>JSD Enterprise</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6,742,500.00</td>
<td>May, 2000</td>
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<td>GES</td>
<td>Mumuni Hassan Contracts Works</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of JSQ</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT TITLE</td>
<td>LOCATION (DISTRICT)</td>
<td>CONTRACTOR</td>
<td>CONTRACT SUM (£)</td>
<td>CONTRACT PERIOD</td>
<td>PAYMENT TO DATE</td>
<td>WORK COMPLETED TO DATE STATUS</td>
<td>WORK LEFT TO COMPLETE PROJECT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Const. of 18 Unit seater septic tank toilet</td>
<td>Sumbawiera Ent.</td>
<td>36,000,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>19,241,500</td>
<td>Groundwork Concrete work, and block work and completed</td>
<td>Carpentry roofing furnishing painting &amp; decorating</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Const. of Market Sheds (phase)</td>
<td>P &amp; W Ghanem Ltd</td>
<td>221,397,320</td>
<td></td>
<td>210,327,454</td>
<td>Handed over (interim)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Const. of 18 unit seater septic tank toilet</td>
<td>Sit Mumeen Ent.</td>
<td>36,000,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>20,000,000</td>
<td>Groundwork complete</td>
<td>Concrete work, block work, carpentry roofing furnishing painting &amp; decorating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Rehabilitation of KSQ No. 15B</td>
<td>Mac Ismael Const. Ltd.</td>
<td>16,787,940</td>
<td></td>
<td>15,109,146</td>
<td>Handed over (interim)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

SHEET 4.2

APPENDIX B
### COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROJECTS FOR 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/NO.</th>
<th>PROJECT / LOCATION</th>
<th>LEVEL OF COMPLETION</th>
<th>MATERIALS SUPPLIED</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>100% completed</td>
<td>Cement – 100 bags&lt;br&gt;2” x 4” scantlings – 24 packets&lt;br&gt;1 x 12 Wawa Boards – 24 pacs</td>
<td>Completion of school block supervised by Wa District Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2” x 4” Scantlings – 25 pcs&lt;br&gt;2” x 3” Scantlings – 33 pcs&lt;br&gt;2” x 6” Scantlings – 5 pcs&lt;br&gt;2’ x 8’ Gal roofing sheet – 2½ pcs</td>
<td>Roofing of classroom supervised by Wa District Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2½” Cap Roofing sheets – 1 pkt&lt;br&gt;2” x 4” Scantlings – 6&lt;br&gt;4’ x 8’ all roofing sheets – 1 pkt</td>
<td>Maintenance works, supervised by Wa District Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2” x 4” Scantlings – 11&lt;br&gt;2” x 3” Scantlings – 8&lt;br&gt;2’ x 8” Gal roofing sheets - 1 pkt</td>
<td>Re-roofing of school block, supervised by Wa District Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4’ x 8” all roofing sheet - 1 pkt</td>
<td>Maintenance works, supervised by Wa District Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2’ x 6’ Hard wood, 12 pieces 4’ x 8’ all roofing sheet – 1 pkt, 10 bags of cement 2½ cap roofing nails – 2 pkts</td>
<td>Re-roofing of Headmaster’s bungalow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Remedial works on contract supervised by both PWD/WDA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>6 bags of cement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>For maintenance works technical assistance, supervision by WDA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4’ x8’ roofing sheets – 1 pkt 3 bags of cement 2½” cap roofing nails – 2 pkt 2’x4’ Scantling – 8 pcs 2 x 3’ Scantling – 15 pcs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maintenance works with technical assistance and supervision by WDA</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Technical supervision by WDA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Remedial works on contract, supervision by WDA</td>
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