

# **EVALUATION REPORT**

**of the**

**District Gender Strategy  
of the**

**The District Capacity Building Project (DISCAP)**

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## ACRONYMS

<b>CHRAJ</b>	-	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
<b>DA</b>	-	District Assembly
<b>DBO</b>	-	District Budget Officer
<b>DCD</b>	-	District Co-ordinating Director
<b>DCE</b>	-	District Chief Executive
<b>DFO</b>	-	District Finance Officer
<b>DISCAP</b>	-	District Capacity Building Project
<b>DPCU</b>	-	District Planning and Co-ordinating Unit
<b>DPO</b>	-	District Planning Officer
<b>GDO</b>	-	Gender Desk Officer
<b>GES</b>	-	Ghana Education Service
<b>GHS</b>	-	Ghana Health Service
<b>GPRS</b>	-	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
<b>GIMPA</b>	-	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
<b>ILGS</b>	-	Internally Generated Fund
<b>MDA</b>	-	Ministries, Department and Agencies
<b>MLGRDE</b>	-	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment
<b>MOFA</b>	-	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
<b>MOWAC</b>	-	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
<b>MTDP</b>	-	Medium Term Development Plan
<b>NALAG</b>	-	National Associate of Local Authorities of Ghana
<b>NCCE</b>	-	National Commission of Civic Education
<b>NCWD</b>	-	National Council for Women and Development
<b>NGO</b>	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NR</b>	-	Northern Region
<b>PGN</b>	-	Practical Gender Needs
<b>RCC</b>	-	Regional Co-ordinating Councils
<b>RPCU</b>	-	Regional Planning and Co-ordinating Unit
<b>RPO</b>	-	Regional Planning Officer

## **Chapter 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO DISCAP**

One of the major priorities of the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) strategic plan (2005-2008) is to establish a decentralized women's machinery at metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies as a mechanism to give presence to gender mainstreaming at the local level of the governance system. This priority is anchored in the governance component of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy II (GPRS) which seeks to use the decentralized women's machinery both as a catalyst for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 and as a vehicle for the delivery of services to vulnerable women.

To implement this priority, the former National Council for Women and Development (NCWD) has been incorporated into MOWAC as the Department of Women, giving the Ministry a strong presence at the regional level. However the women's machinery is not extended to the district level. MOWAC's collaboration with DISCAP was one of the Ministry's attempt at improve gender mainstreaming at the district level in the three northern regions.

### **1.2 THE DISTRICT CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT (DISCAP)**

The District Capacity Building Project (DISCAP) is a seven year governance and poverty reduction project with the objective to strengthen the capacities of government bodies in collaboration with Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and private sector stakeholders, in the areas of potable water and sanitation resources. From DISCAP's perspective capacity building necessarily requires gender mainstreaming because without a solid understanding and analysis of the role and participation of men and women, capacity building itself cannot succeed. To accomplish this, DISCAP designed and implemented a pilot decentralized gender strategy at the district level.

DISCAP's experience regarding the "piloting" of a decentralized women's machinery is particularly important because it is the only comprehensive effort in Ghana. For this reason, MOWAC looks to the DISCAP strategy, including the institutional experience of gender desk officers, as a mechanism for the implementation of a decentralized national women's machinery.

DISCAP is coming to an end and the Women Departments in the three northern regions will assume responsibility for district gender mainstreaming oversight.

### **1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE EVALUATION**

The purpose of the evaluation is therefore to provide a comprehensive and accurate picture of the impact and status of DISCAP's district strategy on mainstreaming gender and to identify best practices and lessons learnt. The evaluation also seeks answers to issues raised with regard to the temporary nature of the current arrangement of the position of the gender desk

officers in the district assemblies and how best DISCAP's "pilot" can be turned into a permanent district women's machinery which can be duplicated in other districts.

Another reason for the evaluation is to generate information that can be used to inform MOWAC's policy on district gender work as it relates to the ongoing integration of the seventeen departments of the MDAs into the local government service.

Specific questions that the evaluation seeks to address include the following:

- What is the impact of DISCAP's gender work in the three northern regions?
- What are the lessons learnt and the best practices acquired through DISCAP's experience?
- Regarding the processes used and structures established, what was most and least helpful?
- To what extent is DISCAP's work in the three northern regions replicable and adaptable to other districts in the country?
- What opportunities and challenges does the upcoming integration of the decentralized departments pose for the gender mainstreaming structures established in the three northern regions?

#### **1.4 ACHIEVEMENTS OF DISCAP**

In spite of a few problems, the Project has made significant impact in creating awareness for gender mainstreaming. In all the eleven districts visited DISCAP's achievement in the creation of awareness in gender mainstreaming as a strategy for institutionalizing gender concerns into local government was impressive. In addition to the awareness, the Project has also increased the responsiveness of the District Assemblies visited to gender mainstreaming.

About 90% of those interviewed and those who responded to the questionnaires alluded to the fact that people were gradually accepting the view that gender is about men as well as women and the relationship between them. As a result both men and women are accepting the position of the Gender Desk Officer (GDO).

There is also increased knowledge and expertise of key decision makers in gender mainstreaming. Decisions at the assemblies are not taken without the question of its effect on men and women, girls and boys. Public toilets, urinals and other social infrastructure are sited with gender considerations. Furthermore, to demonstrate their commitment, some district assemblies have made GDOs members of their tender boards and management teams. In general the evaluation found the lack of gender disaggregated data, and although this situation limit's the capacity of the assemblies to plan, implement and monitor gender sensitive plans and programs, gender concerns have been expressed in the medium term development plan of a number of the assemblies. Each district has a gender strategy which the evaluation found helpful. These strategies were developed from analysis of district's gender gaps, gender needs and priorities. It, however, lacks any performance indicators which could have enhanced effective monitoring and evaluation of gender work in the districts. Particularly important is the occasional grants from DISCAP to support activities from these strategies.

The most significant and popular aspect of DISCAP's work is the "creation" of the position of the GDO. All districts visited and all those who responded to the questionnaires have GDOs. Some of the offices of the GDOs are located within the District Planning and Coordinating

Units (DPCU) of the various assemblies. Training and capacity building by DISCAP has been comprehensive. All the GDOs interacted with and all the key management staff (except the DFOs) have benefited from training programs with course content designed to reflect specific skills. Training manuals have also been developed to suit the training requirement of each stakeholder group in the DA.

## 1.5 CHALLENGES

Whilst the evaluation found generally good results and good progress, the same cannot be said concerning mainstreaming gender into the districts' rules, procedures, regulations and policies. Other challenges impacting negatively on the project include:

- Legal status of the GDOs,
- Unresolved secondment issues of the officers,
- Perception that the GDOs and the gender work is an imposition,
- Limited knowledge of the GDOs relating to the district assembly system, and
- Outstanding issues on salaries.

In addition to the above, the difficulties in accessing funds from the district assemblies for gender work and the question of who monitors gender work are all challenges facing the District Assemblies as the Project comes to an end.

## 1.6 LESSONS LEARNT

- The Project places emphasis on women and men, girls and boys and how they relate to development. This emphasis has reduced negative feelings and resistance from men to gender issues.
- Commitment of political heads and the key management staff of the assembly may be enhanced through training and orientation.
- For gender sensitive plans to be effective, they should be backed by budgetary allocations and the release of funds.
- Seeking expanded funding sources for implementing gender strategies helps achieve more successes.
- Successful implementation of gender strategies may be enhanced by policies applied unequally in favor of women by the district assemblies.
- Gender mainstreaming may be enhanced when located within the central decision making point like the DPCU.
- Skills, knowledge and attitudes of the GDOs and the way these qualities are translated into district specific procedures are key to gender mainstreaming.
- The temporary nature of the position of the GDO due to the absence of a formal, legal and structured relationship with the DA has negative influence on the performance of the GDOs.
- Absence of gender disaggregated data makes advocacy with actual figures difficult.
- Sharing of best practices and success stories at all levels of government, among GDOs and policy makers enhances the gender mainstreaming process.

## 1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Institutionalize gender mainstreaming :** DISCAP has traveled far and there is the need to continue what has been started through the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming.
- **Sustain gains made through capacity building:** One way of sustaining gender mainstreaming at the local level is through training and capacity building. DISCAP in conjunction with the Institute of Local Government Studies has developed training manuals but there is the need for continued support for training of the GDOs and the key management staff.
- **Monitoring and supervision of GDOs:** In addition to the district assemblies, the Directors of the Women's Department of the three northern regions, may monitor, coordinate, harmonize and support the activities of the GDOs.
- **Prepare performance management plans:** An effective monitoring and evaluation system that clearly emphasizes performance management system for gender work should be established.
- **Lobby for Partnership:** The women's machinery at all levels of government should lobby for partnership between them, Non Governmental Organizations and other donors since gender work is the collective effort of all
- **Place GDOs on salaries and allowances:** Motivate the GDOs by giving those on secondment allowances for performing extra duties and salaries for those working full time.
- **DISCAP's gender work is replicable:** With some modifications, DISCAP's gender work may be adaptable in all districts assemblies in Ghana.

## Chapter 2: INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 THE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT AND DISCAP

According to the 2000 population census, women form about 51% of Ghana's population. In 2003, Ghana had a Gender-related Development Index (GDI) ranking of 104 out of 146 countries, down from a rank of 91 out of 130 in 1995. The GDI, a composite measure used in the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index, measures inequalities between women and men in basic dimensions of Human Development. Women in Ghana are under-represented in government, have lower literacy rates, lower enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. They also have lower estimated earned incomes.

Equality between women and men is a concept that is enshrined in the constitution and the Government of Ghana has made explicit commitment to gender equality by signing numerous international conventions. Despite these efforts, the translation of policies, laws and formal rights into substantive equality has not happened. Ghanaian women continue to persistently face inequalities in all spheres of national life and have difficulty in claiming a few gendered rights for which they have struggled.

Issues of women's subordination in private spheres impact on the public space where plans, budgets and strategies are drafted. They continue to impact on women's participation and

involvement in electoral processes. Insidious obstacles such as lack of education and illiteracy severely impact on women's rights to make informed and responsible choices. They serve to inform us that inequality is a multi-faceted problem that limits the full participation of women in national and local efforts.

In the three Northern Regions, the patriarchal ideology which positions women in low socio-economic and political status has been instrumental in the institutionalization of discriminatory practices in the economy and in politics. Inequality between men and women is also perpetuated through socio-cultural norms, values, customary practices and traditions which legitimizes the position of women in low social status. To address the existing structural gender inequalities in the Northern Regions, gender work was promoted and supported through a wide range of sector actions, particularly in education, health and economic sectors. Numerous organizations and NGOs had provided gender training and have advocated for change.

A directive from the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and the Environment (MLGRDE) in 1999 requested district assemblies to appoint District Gender Desk Officers (DGDOs) in their respective assembly.

Despite the increased attention to gender issues, serious gender gaps existed. The GDOs were either not appointed or existed nominally. Gender sensitive policies and programs were limited and not effectively implemented. District Assemblies did not have gender focal points for incorporating gender equality issues into institutional policies. Gender equality practices were therefore weak and limited. Framework or tools for gender mainstreaming did not exist and whatever mainstreaming was done was not planned for explicitly. The level of knowledge, skills and commitment of decision makers, senior management personnel of the DA and the decentralized departments were limited in gender analysis and gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, the capacity of DAs to plan implement and monitor gender sensitive programs to fulfill institutional mandate was low. Staff support mechanisms were weak and participation of men and women in political and institutional structures was not balanced

## **2.2 DISCAP'S DISTRICT GENDER STRATEGY**

The District Capacity Building Project (DISCAP) is a seven year local governance and poverty reduction project which began in 2000 and will close by the end of July 2007. The overall goal of the project is to strengthen local government capacities in the Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions of Ghana. The project's purpose is to strengthen the capacities of local government bodies to manage, in collaboration with Non Governmental Organization (NGOs) and private sector stakeholders, potable water and sanitation resources. From DISCAP's perspective, capacity building necessarily requires gender mainstreaming because without a sound gender analysis and strategy, capacity building itself cannot succeed. Based on this substantiated fact, DISCAP designed and implemented a comprehensive district gender strategy consisting of the following components;

- District Gender Strategies
- District Gender Networks
- Gender Specific Positions (gender desk officers)



- Capacity building for the gender specific positions
- Targeted gender training for the participating institutions
- Mainstreaming gender into all trainings.

DISCAP, therefore in consultation with the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), supported the creation of district level mainstreaming including the establishment (through local arrangements) of the departments of women in the district assemblies.

### **2.3 BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION**

MOWAC and others have expressed considerable interest in DISCAP's gender work. It has been proposed that DISCAP's experience may provide the basis for the development of guidelines on the process of establishing district women's department throughout the country. For this to happen, MOWAC and others need a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of DISCAP's gender mainstreaming efforts. Therefore, the Women's Departments in the three northern regions commissioned an evaluation of the impact of DISCAP's district gender work

Three main inter-connected reasons informed the three northern Regional Directors' decision to commission this evaluation:

1. DISCAP comes to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2007. As part of its sustainable exit strategy, DISCAP has been working with the three northern women's departments with the expectation that they will continue to coach and monitor the district level gender desk officers after DISCAP's support is withdrawn. DISCAP's gender officers have trained the Regional Directors in district gender mentoring and monitoring and have accompanied them on a number of field visits. For the northern Women's Departments to assume full responsibility for the oversight of gender mainstreaming at the district level, however, it is important that they have a comprehensive and accurate picture of the impact and status of DISCAP's work. Only a thorough evaluation can provide them with such information.
2. The second reason for the evaluation relates to the challenges in sustaining the district gender focused work in the three northern regions. This results from the informal nature of the current arrangements within the district assemblies. For one thing, the majority of the Gender Desk Officers (GDOs) are seconded from their parent ministries on local arrangements basis. Many GDOs receive their salaries and allowances from their parent organizations and in addition many continue to hold their regular positions apart from their new positions as GDOs. This raises the question of how can these positions be made permanent in future? In addition, DISCAP has provided transportation means (motorbikes), some furniture and more importantly small grants to support the implementation of the district gender strategies. What will happen once DISCAP's financial support comes to an end in July? Answers to these and similar questions must be found if DISCAP's "pilot" is to be turned into a permanent district women's machinery in the future. A thorough evaluation of DISCAP's work is the starting point for answering such questions.

3. The third consideration relates to the on-going implementation of government's decentralization policy; specifically, the commitment to integrate seventeen decentralized departments of Ministries Departments Agencies (MDAs) into the district assemblies system. Although MOWAC has been granted authorization for seventy-five gender positions and has signaled the intention to apportion at least sixty-five of these to the district level, financing for the positions is yet to be received. Furthermore, because MOWAC was created after the Local Government Services Act 656 was passed, it is not included in the seventeen MDAs to be decentralized. As the transfer of MDAs personnel to the districts takes place, it is important for MOWAC to have a clear picture of how it expects to fit into the process. The evaluation would provide MOWAC with valuable information as it decides its policy on decentralized district gender work.

## **2.4 MAJOR QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED**

DISCAP's experience in the North is the only comprehensive effort in Ghana to establish a decentralized women's machinery at the district level. This evaluation is set to help provide answers for key policy questions at the district, regional and national levels.

Among the major questions to be addressed in the evaluation are the following:

- What is the impact of DISCAP's district gender strategy on mainstreaming gender in the three Northern Regions?
- What are lessons learned and best practices acquired throughout DISCAP's experience?
- Regarding the processes used and structures established, what was the most helpful? Least helpful?
- To what extent is DISCAP's work in the North adaptable to other regions of Ghana?
- What opportunities and challenges does the upcoming integration of decentralized departments pose for the gender mainstreaming structures established in the Northern Regions?

## **2.5 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

This evaluation begins with an executive summary in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 provides background to DISCAP's gender work, sets forth the purpose of the evaluation and the overall context in which it takes place. Chapter 3 presents how the evaluation was designed and carried out. In Chapter 4 details a full analysis and discussion of the field work activities and data gathered. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

## **Chapter 3: EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 GENERAL APPROACH**

The design for the evaluation was derived from and linked to three sets of questionnaires outlined in the scope of work. The approach included literature review of various DISCAP and District Assembly documents as well as a series of interviews in eleven DAs.

### **3.2 METHODOLOGY**

The results of this evaluation were derived from the collection of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through extensive individual and group interviews with key stakeholders and district assemblies' staff members of the gender support networks, Gender Desk Officers, Regional Directors of the Department of Women in the three Northern Regions, Regional Planning officers, Regional Ministers, District planning Officers, District Co-coordinating Directors, Heads of Decentralized Departments and District Chief Executives.

In cooperation with the DISCAP team and the Regional Directors of the Women's Departments in the three northern regions, the consultant developed specific questions for District Co-coordinating Directors (DCDs), the GDOs and members of the gender support networks. All the 34 districts in the three northern regions participated in the evaluation process. However for in-depth data collection, field visits were made to eleven which are at different levels of performance. The districts were selected in consultation with the three Regional Directors and on information supplied by DISCAP. Criteria for selection include current performance ratings of high, medium and low. Three districts were selected from both the Upper East and Upper West Regions and five districts from the Northern Region based on the total number of districts in each of the three regions. The evaluation started from the Upper East Region where interviews were held at Bawku Municipal, Builsa and Talensi-Nabdam Assemblies. The evaluation study moved on to the Upper West Region: districts visited in the region included Jirapa-Lambusie, Lawra and Wa West District Assemblies. In the Northern Region, districts visited included Sawla-Tuna-Kalba, Savelugu-Nanton, Tolon-Kumbugu, East Gonja and Yendi.

Much of the secondary data used for the evaluation was as a result of the review of documents received from the DISCAP team and files of the GDOs.

### **3.3 STUDY LIMITATIONS**

Given the number of districts involved in the Project, the evaluation has had out of necessity, to draw conclusion on the basis of less than complete information. Only 50% of the questionnaires sent to 23 districts were received and analyzed.

## Chapter 4: FINDINGS

### 4.1 IMPACT OF DISCAP'S GENDER WORK

In all the eleven district assemblies and the two regional offices visited, DISCAP's achievement in creating awareness for gender mainstreaming as a strategy for institutionalizing gender concerns into local government has been impressive. Gender sensitization workshop has been held for key management staff of all district assemblies. The purpose of the workshops was to foster and sustain support for gender development programs. Perceptions about what gender means is changing positively. All districts visited have GDOs in place. All those interviewed could explain "gender mainstreaming." The following quote from one of the regional planning officers interviewed summarizes the views expressed by most people interviewed:

*"...awareness created for gender mainstreaming has been pushed by DISCAP beyond what it ever was..... everyone now knows gender is not a fight between men and women but about development"*.

#### 4.1.1 Understanding of Gender

Almost all the District Coordinating Directors interviewed (about 90%), indicated that DISCAP's gender work is gradually eroding the perception that gender deals with only women's issues. Slowly, both men and women are accepting that gender is about men and women and the relationship between them.

#### 4.1.2 Level of Knowledge and Expertise of Key Decision Markers

Considering the sheer volume of work and time required for mainstreaming gender into local government, especially in the three northern regions with entrenched traditions and beliefs about women and men, one can say that DISCAP has made great strides although with variations from district to district. Evidence from all 11 districts visited suggests that the DCDs, DPOs and others know what is meant by gender mainstreaming. A DCD said, *"...these days you cannot take any decision in the assembly without the question of its effect on women, men, boys and girls."*

*"...boreholes, public toilets and urinals for the district are sited with gender considerations..."* said a planning officer.

District assemblies like Savelungu-Nanton and Bawku municipal assemblies have given practical demonstration of their commitment, a key condition for gender mainstreaming, by making the GDO a member of the tender board. At Jirapa-Lambusie, the GDO attends management meetings which under normal circumstances would not have been the case. These moves are significant in that they introduce females into an otherwise male-dominated decision-making process. The challenge here is for the GDOs to show commitment and also make meaningful contribution at such meetings to serve as a basis for bringing in more women to restore gender equity into the district assemblies.

### **4.1.3 Capacities of District Assemblies**

Mainstreaming gender is a technical process which requires changes within an organization in agenda setting, policy making, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. A prerequisite for drawing up a gender sensitive plan is to have gender disaggregated data. None of the 11 district assemblies visited have been able to collect gender disaggregated data. However, gender concerns have been expressed in the medium term development plans (MTDP). Projects programs and activities that benefit women and men as well as girls and boys have been specifically outlined in the MTDPs.

An additional best practice to the above is that DISCAP in conjunction with regional and district stakeholders developed a generic gender strategy which is expected to guide the development of district specific strategies based on the district's priorities, gender needs and gender gaps identified. The strategy is validated and formally adopted at a meeting of senior officials and assembly members. For original and/or high performing districts like Lawra, Salaga, Savelugu, Talensi-Nabdam and Bawku Municipal Assemblies these plans have been incorporated into their MTDP and annual action plans. Despite the fact that budget lines have been created for gender specific plans, the release of funds for the implementation of these sensitive programs is not done. As a result, efforts at mainstreaming gender are limited. It is unfortunate that nobody monitors whether these funds are released or not. Also despite management's involvement in the validation process of the gender strategies, the general feeling that it was imposed from outside still exists. The GDOs for Bawku Municipal and Tolon-Kumbugu assemblies have been relatively successful at implementing some of their programs because they have taken the initiative to source funds from NGOs and other donors rather than the traditional DA source. GDO and Gender Networks could source funding for activities by submitting proposals to DISCAP' small grant fund.

#### ***Organizational Rules, Procedures and Policies and Gender Mainstreaming.***

Instruments for mainstreaming gender include the use of policies, procedures, guidelines, rules and regulations. These were however absent in all the districts visited. In an interview with the key management staff, especially the DCDs, each of them was of the view that gender issues are development issues which is part of the mandate of the district assemblies. Despite this admission the extent of mainstreaming gender into specific activities and policies and others is limited. About 80% of them admitted that they had not thought about mainstreaming gender into these areas. Gender auditing of policies, plans, program and activities is not yet a prerequisite for approval and release of funds in any of these districts. It is however worth noting that all the districts have loan schemes for women.

## **4.2 STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES**

### **4.2.1 The Gender Desk Office**

In consultation with the district assemblies, DISCAP supported the creation of gender desk or gender development offices which was to be the center of responsibility for incorporating gender equality concerns into district policies, practices and plans. It is headed by the GDO. Out of 11 districts visited, 9 had well established gender offices. In Tolon-Kumbugu the GDO shares office with the DPO and the DBO due to limited office space. On another level, the

GDO office in Builsa has been taken over by the National Youth Employment Co-coordinator temporarily.

These offices, with support from DISCAP have been supplied with a set of furniture, filing cabinets and for other district assemblies like Yendi and Salaga a bookshelf in addition. A set of computer and accessories have been given to the DPCUs for use (some GDOs are members of DPCUs and it was intended that GDOs would have access to computers supplied to DAs) but 10 out of 11 GDO interviewed requested for computers of their own. One major reason was that they do not feel part of the planning unit as expected by DISCAP. The gender office is expected to be located within the central decision- making unit, that is, the DPCU but this is usually not the case due to the fact that there is no formal directives from the MLGRDE and MOWAC making them part of the DPCU. The GDOs attend meetings of the expanded DPCU but not the core. The core DPCU is the secretariat and is made up of the DPO, DBO and DCD whilst the expanded DPCU is made up of the core plus the decentralized departments.

#### **4.2.2 The Gender Desk Officers (GDOs)**

The most significant and popular aspect of DISCAP's work is the position of the gender desk officer. In some district assemblies, they are referred to as 'DISCAP babies'. All the district assemblies in the three northern regions have GDOs but with varying backgrounds, skills, experience and influence. The position is not institutionalized in the structure of the local government system and as a result the influence resides in the individual and the political will of the DCE and the key staff of the district but not in the position itself. In the district assemblies where the DCE and the management staff support the GDOs, they tend to have influence and work better. Even though gender mainstreaming is the collective effort of all in the district assemblies the GDO is expected to lead the process.

##### ***Recruitment Process of GDOs***

A major challenge impacting on the project is the recruitment process of GDOs. Criteria for selection of GDOs depend on commitment, preparedness for voluntarism and approval from top management of the district assembly and little on qualification and experience. This mode of selection lends itself to the politicization of the position. Even though some of the GDOs have experience and can mobilize women on the ground, most of them lack managerial and technical abilities and have found it extremely difficult to plan and strategize gender activities and mainstream these within the local government system effectively. Other GDOs who are seconded from other departments of the assembly share their time between their main job functions and the work of a GDO. Apart from Tamale Metropolitan Assembly where the GDO is on a full time job, all the others visited share the GDO function with their full time traditional jobs. Most of the GDOs are from Ghana Education Service (GES) Ghana Health Service (GHS) Departments of Environmental Health, Community Development and Social Welfare. In most cases, there is no formal secondment. They start working as GDOs after consultation by management of the district assemblies and verbal agreement. This process of recruitment is worsened by the fact that the GDOs are not placed on any formal salary or compensation and allowance for performing such function. Out of the 11 district assemblies visited, a 50% change in GDO has occurred since the original appointment. A stunning case, in point, happened at Jirapa-Lambusie where a GDO had her name struck off the GES payroll for nine months. She finally had to return full time to GES to have her name restored on the



pay roll. Some DCDs raised the ban on employment into the civil service as a barrier in formalizing the employment of the GDOs. However, if the assemblies were committed to gender mainstreaming they could have paid the GDO from their internally generated funds (IGF). A good example of this is Tamale Metropolitan Assembly where the GDO's allowance has been formalized (even though meager) with payment from the Assembly's IGF.

The result of such an informal recruitment process is that these GDOs consider their positions as temporary and vacate the positions at the least chance to do so. The catalytic presence of the GDO in mainstreaming gender into district assemblies system is very necessary and needs a lot of time which cannot be shared with other departmental work. In the process, most of them devote more time to their original departments and little time to gender work leading to the perception that GDOs are ineffective. Experience from other countries has also demonstrated that attempts to create gender focal persons have failed because of lack of time and incentives

### ***Sex of the GDOs***

Only one out of the twelve GDOs interviewed was a male, that is, Tolon-Kumbugu district assembly. This was a concern to many of the stakeholders interviewed in most of the districts. The Project could have been more instrumental in carry out education on this issue. That is, that appointing females is an affirmative action which begins the introduction of gender equality into an all-male management staff of the assembly. None of the district assemblies visited have females in the management teams made up of the DCEs, DCDs, DPOs, DBOs and the DFOs.

### ***Skills and Knowledge of GDOs***

If GDOs should become real agents of change at the local government level, there is the need to continue to improve upon their level of knowledge about local government system relating to policies, rules, regulations, procedures and other activities of the assemblies addition to gender mainstreaming. Through intensive training provided by DISCAP, GDOs have significantly improved their gender mainstreaming knowledge and skills. In addition to the above, the turnover of GDOs makes it imperative for gender training to be done regularly. For example only three out of the 11 GDOs recruited in 2002/3 were still at post and received the gender training program to this point. GDOs from the new districts requested more training.

Despite such challenges the presence of the GDO is a constant reminder of the need for gender mainstreaming. According to one of the DCDs, "...before the GDOs were appointed, plans were made for 'human beings' - referring to the fact that the plans were then gender blind. As established by research, any plan or activity that is gender blind favors the dominant group, in this case the males. According to this DCD "the gender desk has brought some consciousness which has made the females more confident and we can now use them more than before".

### ***Roles and Responsibilities of GDOs***

Even though DISCAP has developed and provided all GDOs with job descriptions and gender desk operating manuals which clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the GDOs, only

three districts visited, Bawku Municipal, Lawra and Salaga, had any knowledge of the existence of such manuals. The others seem to depend on their individual knowledge, interest and the space for them to operate.

Some of the DCDs did not know the existence of such documents to help in supervision. As a result, all the GDOs continued to depend on their intuition to work in the field; forming and identifying women's groups, looking for funds for the groups and operating micro credit schemes. It is good to empower the women on the ground but the job description clearly states that the role of the GDO is that of coordinating not implementing and "they do not carry out activities such as income generating for women". They were to concentrate more on the practical gender needs than the strategic gender needs. Sometimes, because of their multiple roles it is difficult to tell whether they are working as GDOs or for their original departments. GDOs need to strike a balance between the practical and strategic gender needs. Experience from other countries has demonstrated that if such "field" activities are not controlled in order for GDOs to concentrate on their primary duties at the institutional levels, their activities degenerate into women's organizers for political parties.

### ***Monitoring and Supervision of GDOs***

The current management and operational structure of DISCAP limits effective monitoring of activities of the GDOs. Under the current structure formal monitoring seems to be effectively exercised by the DISCAP field office in Bolgatanga. District level supervision of GDOs seems limited. Once in a while a GDO may be called by the DCE or DCD to find out how they are faring. Most of the GDOs from GES and other decentralized departments outside the main district administration sit in their various departmental offices and are called upon when the need arises. Unfortunately being a "pilot" project, the Regional Women's Departments were not fully involved in their "establishment" and therefore do not seem to have monitoring relationship with them. Apart from a letter from the Upper West Regional Director on the file of the Lawra GDO requesting for quarterly report, none of the other district could show enough evidence of such a relationship.

### **4.2.3 Gender Support Network**

Another important structure set up by DISCAP is the gender support network. Networking is important because it can lead to greater knowledge about gender mainstreaming and provide inspiration for undertaking new ideas and sharing experiences among GDOs and the decentralized departments. Members of the various networks serve as a pool of resource persons for training in gender work. The advocacy role of the gender support network may help influence decisions and policies with regard to gender activities at the district level. Basically members include representatives from the following departments; GES, GHS, Community Development, Social Welfare, environmental health, MOFA, CHRAJ, NCCE, a representative each from water and Sanitation Teams, traditional council and an NGO working closely with the assembly. The DPO and the DBO are also members of this network. In spite of the importance of the gender support network, it is operational in only two of the district assemblies visited (Tolon-Kumbugu and Bawku Municipal Assemblies). A major challenge cited as facing the operation of these networks is financial. The two district assemblies with successful operational gender support network depend on other NGOs for support and funding.



#### 4.2.4 Training and Capacity Building

One of DISCAP's greatest achievements is the development and implementation of a comprehensive training and support programs for key stakeholders at the district assemblies. The content of these courses have been designed to reflect the broad and specific skills required for gender mainstreaming in the district assemblies. Topics mentioned included gender analysis, gender planning and budgeting, gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation, reporting and proposal writing. In addition to the above some of the GDOs have been sponsored to attend courses at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and the University of Development Studies (UDS). Out of the 11 district assemblies visited, only the GDO for Wa West had not benefited from any additional training beyond the basic four-day course. The DPOs and DBOs who are the key allies of the GDOs in the gender work have also benefited. In addition to the above, some DCEs, DCDs, District Engineers and some women in the water sector have taken part in the capacity building programs at different times. The only group of people who are conspicuously left out in the training is the District Finance Officers. In order to institutionalize the training courses, DISCAP worked closely with the Institute of Local Government Studies to develop training courses to suit capacity needs of different stakeholder group including core members of the DPCUs and thus by extension the District Finance Officers.

#### 4.3 LESSONS LEARNT

Some major lessons learnt in the light of DISCAP's gender work in the three northern regions include the following:

- i. Helped to reduce drastically the perception that gender issues relate to women only and the negative feelings it brings out of men. The program places emphasis on issues of concern to men and women as well as boys and girls as they relate to development.
- ii. Commitment of political heads and the bureaucracy of the district assemblies are key to success of DISCAP gender work at the district level. The program suffers where local authorities are less committed and vice versa. Practical demonstration of commitment is seen at Jirapa-Lambusie District Assembly where the GDO has been made part of the management team. Another example may be seen at Bawku Municipal and Savelugu-Nantom assemblies where the GDOs have been made members of the district tender boards.
- iii. For gender issues mainstreamed into development plans to have a significant effect, it should be backed by budgetary allocation, release of funds and monitoring procedures.
- iv. Seeking expanded funding sources for implementing gender strategies helps in achieving more successes as seen at Bawku Municipal and Tolon -Kumbungu District Assemblies. Gender mainstreaming requires resources which may come from international agencies, various levels of government and NGOs.
- v. Successful implementation of gender strategies may be enhanced by policies applied unequally in favor of women by the district assemblies. The various loan schemes for women, appointment of women on water boards, management teams and tender boards are good examples of gender enhanced strategies.
- vi. Gender mainstreaming may be enhanced when located within central decision sections

- such as the District Planning and Coordinating Unit (DPCU).
- vii. Skills, knowledge and attitudes of the gender desk officers and the way they translate these qualities into district specific procedures and policies are key to successful gender mainstreaming. The use of mixed interpersonal advocacy and lobbying skills and demonstrated action oriented initiatives may lead to recognition of GDOs at the district assemblies.
  - viii. Gender support networks provide members, especially those from the decentralized departments, space to meet, discuss programs, share experiences strategize and advocate for changes. Members of such networks also become key allies in gender mainstreaming efforts of the GDO. However lack of funding and support for strengthening institutional linkages limits frequent interactions and consultations by the gender support network and consequently impinges on the gender mainstreaming process.
  - ix. Lack of integration into the district assemblies resulting from absence of formal, legal and structured relationship with the district assemblies has had negative influence on the effective performance of the GDOs.
  - x. Commitment to gender equality activities may be enhanced through staff training and coaching programs. Training should be regular and gender focused and should be implemented to suit the needs of each stakeholder group, in order to be effective.
  - xi. Sharing of best practices and success stories at the various levels of government (regional, district), among the GDOs and with policy makers has helped push the gender mainstreaming process forward.

## **4.4 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

### **4.4.1 Challenges**

#### *Location of the Gender Desk Office*

Among the various challenges posed by the upcoming integration of the decentralized departments is the issue of the location of the gender desk office. The issue of the best location of this office has been a long standing concern since its establishment. For effective functioning of the gender desk office, DISCAP has proposed that the office operates within the DPCU. Being in that unit will facilitate gender sensitive planning implementation and monitoring. The challenge here is that the DPCU is not responsible to MOWAC but to the MLGRDE. MOWAC has no control over the DPCU. The other point with regard to this is the suggestion to have a separate women's department at the local level. This suggestion also raises the question of how MOWAC fits into the integration process especially when it was established after Act 462 was passed and therefore not among the 17 departments to be integrated.

Furthermore research has shown that women's machinery when they stand alone at the local level tend to be weak, under resourced and vulnerable to changing political fortunes.

#### *Qualification, Skills and Experience of the GDOs*

Whilst some GDOs have the required knowledge, skills and experience for gender work, many also lack the basic qualification to enable them to be placed within an integrated District Assembly structure.

The issue of secondment is also an added issue. Most GDOs seconded to the DISCAP's gender desk are still holding on to their job functions at their original departments. Most of the GDOs interviewed said they would opt for their original departments if they had to choose between the two jobs especially those who are in fairly senior positions or have only a few years to go to retirement. The challenge here is how to handle such people during the integration of the staff of decentralized departments.

### *Creating More Awareness*

Many people in strategic institutions like the Local Government Services Secretariat, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and those in influential positions remain ignorant about issues relating to gender. Gender mainstreaming cannot however be effective and/or successful without the support of such local government structures and the staff therein. This means that, a lot of time and programmed resources need to be spent on orientations of such people to support the established structures.

#### **4.4.2 Opportunities**

DISCAP's gender work has helped in improving gender mainstreaming at the local level in all of the 34 districts in the three northern regions through the appointment of GDOs, recognition of the GDOs as part of the DPCUs, establishment of the gender support network and training programs. These structures create the opportunity for MOWAC to push for the integration of a women's machinery at the local level.

It is important that MOWAC recognizes the nature of the integration and identifies ways in which gains can be maximized and damages to these structures minimized. In addition to the above it is an opportunity for MOWAC to identify the direction of the integration, the power brokers and their orientation and its implication for gender work.

Integration also brings with it an opportunity to demand more accountability from government to gender work.

It also creates the opportunity to train those involved in the integration of gender mainstreaming and to lobby for national budget allocations for gender work. MOWAC can also use the integration process to establish gender sensitive indicators in planning, budgeting, and monitoring and also lobby for the inclusion of gender issues in some aspects of the integration process.

## **Chapter 5: RECOMMENDATIONS**

*'Human development if not engendered is endangered', UN Human Report, 1999*

To ensure that human development is gender responsive, gender should be integrated in all policies, programs and projects of the district assemblies. It is in this context that the following recommendations are made.

### ***Institutionalize Gender Mainstreaming.***

DISCAP has traveled far and there is the need to continue what has been started through the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming at the local level. Absence of formal legal and defined relationship between the gender desk officer and the district assembly is also a constraint that limits the progress of mainstreaming gender. This is an area which needs effort from MOWAC.

Additionally, it is recommended that the gender desk or development office be made a formal, regular part of the core DPCU; that the MLGRDE send this directive to all district assemblies. Locating the office in the DPCU may help engender the budgeting and planning process so as to create the capacity to respond to gender needs in resource mobilization and distribution.

Further it is recommended that the district assemblies draw up policies making gender mainstreaming one of their top priorities. That is, DAs need to take up gender mainstreaming as a requisite for progressive development in their districts.

### ***Capacity Building***

One way of sustaining gender mainstreaming at the local level is through training and capacity building. There is the need for continued support for training of the GDO and the key staff of the district assemblies. Training for the GDO is critical, especially when qualifications were not considered a priority during recruitment. Constant orientation and reminding them of their roles and responsibilities through training and mentoring by the Regional Directors should enhance their performance.

Training manuals that DISCAP in conjunction with the Institute of Local Government Studies has developed may be adopted and mainstreamed into all training programs. In addition to the above, a certificate and diploma studies in gender may be instituted by ILGS. Sponsorship for such programs may be gained through lobbying NGOs, NALAG, MLGRDE, the district assemblies common fund administrator and other donors.

### ***Monitoring and Supervision***

In addition to the district assemblies and the RPCUs, the Regional Directors of the Women's Departments in the three northern regions may monitor, coordinate, harmonize and support the activities of the GDOs. The relationship will involve sharing of annual or quarterly action plans and reports. Given the experience and expertise of the regional officers, they should be encouraged to take up some aspect of the training, orientation, mentoring and coaching of the

GDOs. There may be the need for the regional directors to lobby MOWAC, donors and NGOs for some logistics and funding for the GDOs.

### ***Performance Management Plan***

There seems to be the absence of a performance management plan as a monitoring tool. An effective monitoring and evaluation system that clearly emphasizes a performance management system on gender work should be established. A good performance management plan would help establish the performance indicators, data collection methods, data analysis and reporting formats which can always bring out gender disaggregated data to help establish the level of gender work in the north. Important uses of this plan include making it an assessment tool in the selection and awarding the best gender sensitive district assembly. It can also serve as a supplement to the functional organizational assessment tool being developed to assess the performance of District Assemblies in Ghana.

### ***Partnerships***

Research and experience from other countries and findings from Bawku Municipal and Tolon-Kumbugu have demonstrated that gender work cannot be done by one organization alone. Gender work should be the collective effort of governments at all levels, Non Governmental Organizations and other donors. The women's machinery at all levels of government will have to lead the way and provide direction in addition to lobbying for this partnership.

### ***Replication of DISCAP's Work***

DISCAP's work is replicable in all district assemblies of the country. Further studies to help strategize and inform policy will be necessary for modification. Selection of gender focal persons should be based on qualifications and experience. Also a well defined salary scale and allowances need to be developed.

### ***Salary and Allowances***

Those GDOs currently in position should be given allowances and salaries by the District Assemblies.

## **ANNEX I: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED**

Ghana - The New Local Government System

Towards sustaining a Decentralized Women's Machinery in Ghana:  
Implication for DISCAP Gender Work, Exit Strategy  
Prepared by E. T. Jackson et al. December 2006

District gender Strategies/Action Plans

Gender Desk officers, Job Description

District Gender Desk Manual  
Prepared by ET Jackson et. al.  
August 2002

Report on District Gender Sensitization and Adoption Training  
Prepared by DISCAP, Gariba Development Associates 2003

Background Paper on Gender Issues in Ghana  
By Sally Barder & Co.  
January 1994

Gender Analysis of the District Wide Assistance Program  
By Kathy Cusack, July, 2003

## **ANNEX II: LIST OF DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES VISITED**

### **Upper East**

Talensi – Nabdam District Assembly

Bawku Municipal Assembly

Builsa District Assembly

### **Upper West**

Jirapa – Lambusie District Assembly

Lawra

Wa West

### **Northern Region**

Sawla – Tuna – Kalba District Assembly

Savelngu – Nanton DA

Tolon Kumbugu DA

East Gonja (Salaga) DA

Yendi DA

### ANNEX III: LIST OF INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

S/N	NAME	DISTRICT	ORIGINAL DEPARTMENT
1.	Elizabeth Ngabase	Bawku Municipal Assembly	Environment Health Officer
2.	Alhassan Iddrisu	Tolon – Kumbungua DA	Ghana Education Service
3.	Faustina Ayi Mahama	Savelugu – Nanton DA	Social Welfare
4.	Vida Diorotey	Wa West DA	Ghana Education Service
5.	Biliguo S. Enoch	Lawra DA	Social Welfare
6.	Esther Abuching	Jirapa – Lambusie DA	DPCU
7.	Alidu Zenabu Margaret	Gonja East DA	Community Development
8.	Osman Fusena	Yendi DA	Environmental Health
9.	Zoogah Mukasah (Ag.)	Talensi-Nabdam	DPCU
10.	Cecilia Afoblikame	Builsa	Ghana Health Service
11		Sawla – Tusia – Kalba	
12	Adeshetu Isahaku	Tamale Metropolitan Assembly	Full Time Assembly Employee



## ANNEX IV: QUESTIONNAIRES

### EVALUATION OF DISCAP'S DISTRICT GENDER WORK DISTRICT COORDINATING DIRECTOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Sex.....

1. What are some of the functions of the District Assembly that relates to women's development?
2. What do you know about DISCAP and its work in this District?
3. How do DISCAP supported activities relate to the achievement of the over all goal of the Assembly?
4. Does your District have a GDO?
5. How was she/he recruited?
6. Which Department does she/he originally belong to and how is her time is shared among these two (2) jobs?
7. What are her/his main functions?
8. What is gender mainstreaming?
9. Does the District have a policy on gender mainstreaming?
10. Do you think gender mainstreaming is important and why?
11. What are the challenges that impede the performance of the GDO in the District?
12. What are the gains made so far concerning men and women with the presence of the GDO in the District?
13. With the coming integration of decentralized department under the Local Government Service, where and how do you think the GDO will fit in the structure of the DA?
14. Is the system of having a GDO the best in achieving gender mainstreaming? (Please give reasons for your answer)
15. (a) Does your District have a District Action Plan or Strategy? If yes, how was it developed?  
(b) If yes, how is the plan financed?
16. In the absence of external funds how do you think the activities of the GDO could be financed?
17. What has been the impact of the collaboration between the DA and DISCAP on the over all development of the District?
18. What are the positive and less positive results of DISCAP's activities on gender that you may or may not recommend to other DAs?
19. (a) Will you continue to advocate for the practices and activities fostered by the DISCAP Project after it ends?

(b) Which activities are likely to continue to be used by your District after the end of the Project?

20. Do you have any suggestions regarding the operational approaches and activities of DISCAP to become more effective in the future?

### **EVALUATION OF DISCAP'S GENDER WORK GENDER DESK OFFICERS (GDOs)**

Sex.....

Educational level:.....

Length of time as a GDO.....

1. How did you become a gender desk officer?
2. What are your responsibilities as a GDO?
3. What guidance/training have you received so far and from whom?
4. Which District Unit do you work closely with or belong to?
5. How often do they invite you to their meetings?
6. How would you describe your level of communication with higher level management authorities?
7. How do you combine your normal job schedule (if on secondment) and that of Gender Desk Officer? What are the challenges?
8. If you are on secondment, what are the terms:
  - Period of secondment?
  - Allowances?
  - Others?
9. What impact has your involvement in gender mainstreaming as supported by DISCAP had on men and women in the District?
10. Do you have any action plan/strategy?
11. How was your plan/strategy established (from formulation to approval)?
12. How are these plans/strategy financed?
13. What are some of the positive and less positive results of DISCAP's activities on gender?
14. How would you describe your relationship with the following in connection with DISCAP supported activities:
  - District Assembly?
  - Gender Network?
  - Women's Department (Regional)?
  - Community?

15. What has been some of the challenges in relation to the stakeholders in question #14?
16. What has been your experience with the Regional Women's Department?
17. How do you see the relationship between the Regional Women's Department and yourself as a GDO?
18. Which activities (if you have your own way) will you continue after the Project ends?
19. What suggestions do you have with regards to improvements on operational approaches, strategies and activities that would make a district gender work like that supported by DISCAP to be more effective?

**EVALUATION OF DISCAPS  
DISTRICT GENDER WORK  
GENDER NETWORK**

1. What is the composition of your Network?
2. What are the objectives of the Network?
3. What are some of the topics/issues discussed?
4. How often do you meet?
5. How are the activities of the Network financed?
6. What are the positive and less positive lessons learnt?
7. What has been relationship between the Network and the following stakeholders:
  - Women's Department?
  - District Assembly?
  - DISCAP?
  - Communities?
  - Others (name them)?
8. What are the major challenges facing your Network and the GDO?
9. Will you continue to advocate for the practices and activities fostered by DISCAP after the project ends?
10. Which activities or approaches that were fostered by the Project should be maintained and why?
11. Would you recommend DISCAP's approach on gender mainstreaming to other Districts elsewhere? Why/why not?