

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS OF A

**ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON A PROGRAMME-BASED  
APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR GENDER IN GHANA**

**Organized by the District Capacity Building Project (DISCAP) for the  
Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs**

APRIL 20, 2005

## **Introduction**

The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) has engaged in a strategic planning process to develop an action plan for the Ministry for the next 3 years. This action plan is based on the 3 broad areas that are consistent with the President's priorities for national development. These areas are: human resources development, good governance and private sector development.

The District Capacity Building Project (DISCAP), a joint initiative between the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has been supporting the mainstreaming of gender into the District Assemblies (DAs) in the North as part of its mandate of improved government programming and maintaining and operating most water and sanitation systems using local and national resources. To this end, 24 DAs in the North have appointed Gender Desk Officers, provided office space to the GDOs and involved them in development programming to an extent. In addition, all 24 will have gender strategies by the end of May 2005. It is therefore, a natural partnership that brings MOWAC and DISCAP together to discuss the planning process.

One of the issues that had arisen in preliminary discussions is the potential of MOWAC to use a sector wide approach in guiding the strategic planning process which will produce programme-based plans, rather than project specific activities. To this end a roundtable was designed by DISCAP to assist key staff of MOWAC in understanding the sector wide approach and programme based strategies for planning. Two eminent professors from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada who were here acting as policy advisors for DISCAP, Katherine Graham and Allan Maslove, provided perspectives and guided discussions during the roundtable.

## **Roundtable Deliberations**

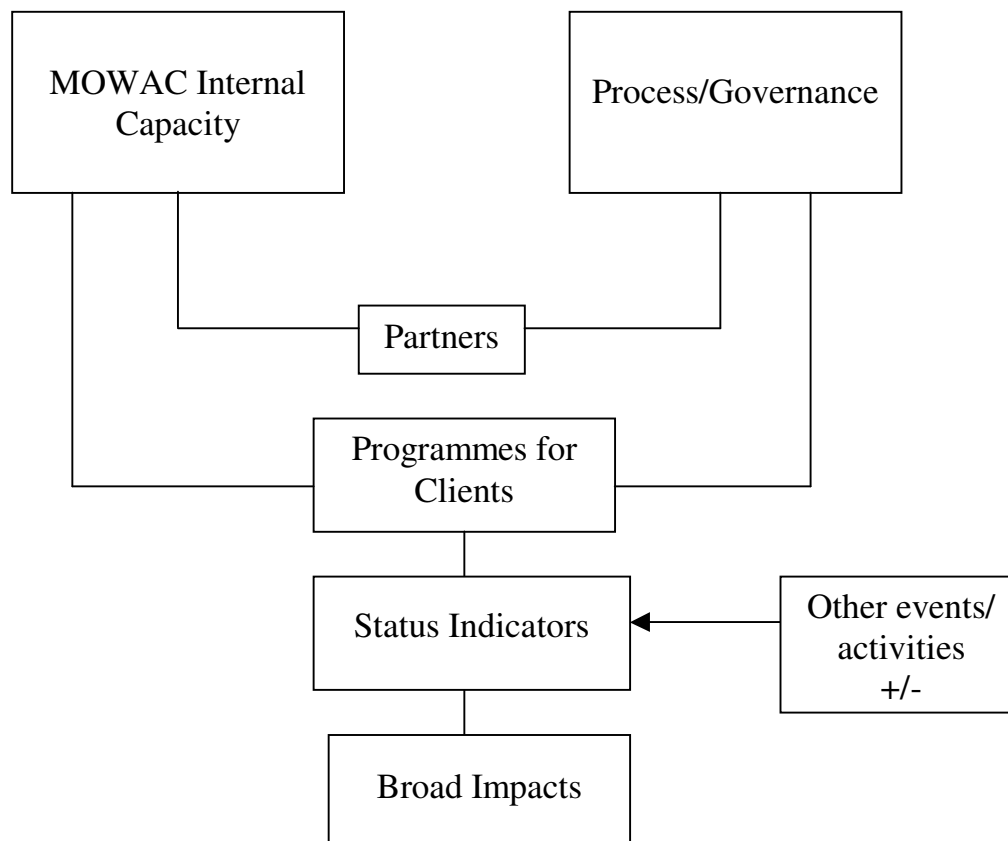
As indicated above, MOWAC has been working on the development of a 3 year action plan for the Ministry. The Roundtable began with an update from MOWAC on their planning process and a summary of their action plans in the 3 areas of: human resources development, governance, and private sector development.

Activities in the 3 areas complement each other with activities focusing on internal capacity building, service delivery, and policy advocacy.

Prof. Graham opened the discussion period following MOWAC's presentation with a question as to whether or not it was possible for MOWAC to set priorities in one of the areas as opposed to all 3. A representative of the Ministry indicated that they would be prioritizing some of their activities, but that it was necessary to touch on all 3 areas. The representative indicated that there were 5 selection criteria that were developed and would be used to establish priorities. These criteria are: visibility, high impact, doable, wide applicability (relevance to sectors), and potential for wide departmental buy in.

Another point of clarification made by MOWAC was that the action plan does not reflect the current budget, but the next budget. It is anticipated that development partners will be able to buy into the plan, and select areas they would like to support. In addition, staff capacity is a priority issue as it relates to other areas.

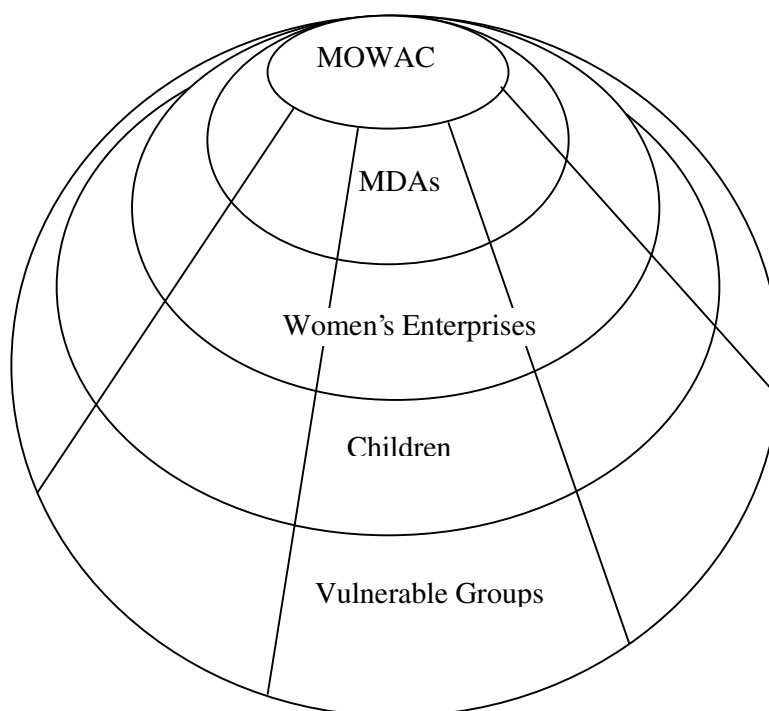
The question then arose regarding how do we relate this approach to a programme based approach. Prof. Maslove identified 3 perceived realities for the Ministry: its cross cutting nature; the tight budget; and staff capacity constraints. He went on to propose the following diagram to bring the separate pieces together.



Prof. Maslove indicated that he saw the action plan as focusing on the internal capacity, the process or governance, and programmes for clients. He added the 3 remaining boxes to indicate additional areas that could bring the 3 together into a programme based approach.

Prof. Graham contributed that she thought the emphasis in these early days of the Ministry should be on internal capacity. At the same time the Ministry could go for a few “quick wins”, highly visible activities that would allow them to gain profile and credibility. She saw a need to have a balance between the two.

Dr. Sulley Gariba (DISCAP Institutional Development Specialist) contributed another diagram for the group to deliberate upon.



This diagram depicts the cross cutting nature of MOWAC and its ability to affect change in MDAs. As potential stakeholders are pictured here it is clear that MOWAC is multi-sectoral, and there is a need to develop a niche. What should the role of MOWAC be vis-a-vis other stakeholders? This is one of the key questions to be addressed in a strategic plan. Key words that could be considered are: influence, facilitate, persuade.

As the Ministry distinguishes between itself as a Ministry and the two implementing departments, of Women and of Children, the roles and responsibilities of not only the Ministry but other stakeholders could be thought out.

To help the Ministry answer this question, and also to prioritize Prof. Graham proposed the following matrix:

	<b>MOWAC</b>	<b>Shared Responsibility</b>	<b>Decentralized to partners</b>
Policy			
Program Development			
Program Delivery			
Monitoring and Evaluation			

Prof. Graham used the matrix to define the potential roles of the Ministry down the side, and different actors across the top. For their proposed actions the Ministry would need to decide what area it falls in and who should be responsible for it. She indicated that there may be things in the plan that do not require MOWAC to implement. The Ministry could

use this matrix to determine what is driving the Ministry over the next 3 years and who they need to be involved to achieve it.

**The Way Forward**

In a discussion regarding the way forward it was decided the MOWAC would finalize their frameworks over the next couple of weeks. DISCAP would then support a Writers Workshop that would invite 3 representatives of MOWAC to work with the 2 DISCAP specialists to collate the different frameworks, and write a narrative document to accompany the plan. This writers workshop should be held in early May 2005. DISCAP will propose a date and liaise with MOWAC regarding logistics. The 3 proposed people from MOWAC are: Eva Asare-Bediako, Francisca Bobee-Hayford and Joanna Opaare.