Paradox of Empowerment: Reflections on a Case Study from Northern Ghana

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Summary. — In recent years the “development” industry has began to incorporate into its vocabulary notions about the “empowerment of the poor,” “participatory democracy,” “gender in development” etc. as part of a strategy for poverty alleviation in the developing world. This paper critically examines the notion of participation as the basis of empowerment in the context of a joint Canadian–Ghanaian financed rural development project in the Northern Region of Ghana. The paper argues that because of the inherent goodness of the notion of participation, it has become a substitute for the structural reforms needed for social change. The paper raises questions not just about the terms and mode of participation but further points out that reference to the term “village” or “community” as the basis of participation is simplistic and problematic. The paper also questions the feasibility of the institutional and administrative structures within which such concepts may be realized. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years the “development” industry globally has began to incorporate into its vocabulary notions about “empowerment of the poor,” “participatory development,” “gender in development” etc. as part of a strategy for poverty alleviation in the developing world. The use of these terms at least suggests a certain degree of dissatisfaction with earlier models of development. Furthermore, this demonstrates a recognition on the part of the development industry that the process of social development is facilitated if the intended beneficiaries participate fully in the making and implementation of decisions that affect their lives or what they perceive as development. In the foreword to a World Bank publication, Listen to the People, the Vice President, Operations Policy states:

The World Bank is interested in incorporating the people’s perspective into project work so as to narrow the gap between professionals and the intended beneficiaries. Methods of attending to cultural and behavioural factors—listening to the people—... are as important to effective development work as are the more widely tools of financial or economic analysis. 1

In effect, the discussions centers around a theme of initiating development through the action of local people by means of development projects which enhance the “claim-making” capacities of local people. Undoubtedly, the emergence of a participatory element in development discourse is not a bad thing, since it offers the possibility of opening up spaces in which the citizenry could be part and parcel of the cultural and socioeconomic structures of society. The belief seems to be that once people are “empowered,” development becomes both attainable and sustainable. Some of the ideas for empowerment focus on initiating development from below and increasing people’s participation in the development process. As Cohen and Uphoff indicate, concern with participation has become so popular that one can hardly be against the concept and promoting participation becomes good by definition. 2

In this paper, I reflect critically on participation, as the basis for empowerment in the context of a joint Canadian–Ghanaian financed rural development project in the Northern Region of Ghana, referred to as the Northern

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Region Rural Integrated Program (NORRIP). The paper argues that because of the inherent goodness of the notion of participation, it has become a substitute for the structural reforms needed for social change. Thus the focus on participation is narrow and ignores many of the contextual issues, which remain out of the control or influence of the beneficiaries of the development project. The paper raises questions not just about the terms and mode of participation but further points out that reference to the term village or community as the basis of participation is simplistic, problematic and gives the impression of homogeneity. Furthermore, the paper questions the feasibility of the institutional and administrative structures within which such concepts may be realized and makes the case that a focus on local participation and empowerment can provide the state with a legitimate opportunity for shirking its responsibilities by dumping them on local areas even though those areas lack the resources needed.

Historically, the terms participation and participatory development as Majid Rahnema reminds us, appeared in development discourse around the 1950s, and were used by social workers and field activist who were frustrated by the failure of earlier models of development which advocated a “top-down” strategy for development. The mainstream development establishment some years later started to acknowledge the failures of the top-down strategy and thus agreed with the then marginalized knowledge that the failure of most development projects to achieve their goals and targets was in part due to the fact that the main beneficiaries of such projects had often been left out of the whole developmental process. Thus the consensus now among various categories of development field workers is that whenever the beneficiaries are locally involved and actively participate in their own development endeavors, much more will be accomplished. Perhaps the writings of the Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator provides one of the strongest affirmations of the value of participation, particularly among hitherto poor and dominated social classes. As Freire points out, whenever any social class becomes oppressed and is reduced to a culture of silence, that group is denied participation in the creation of its own humanity and as such, becomes only an object of knowledge. When this group is mobilized to participate in decision making for social development, the group begins to create its own history and engages in its own process of development. This is not to suggest, however, there is unanimity about what participation should entail. As a review of the literature elsewhere suggests, participation means different things to different people.

Gow and Vansant’s four affirmations below summarize the importance of participation in development:

—People organize best around problems they consider most important.
—Local people tend to make better economic decisions and judgments in the context of their own environment and circumstances.
—Voluntary provision of labor, time, money and materials to a project is a necessary condition for breaking patterns of dependency and passivity.
—The local control over the amount, quality and benefits of development activities helps make the process self-sustaining.

What these four affirmations suggest is that participation means more than just an occasional meeting in which local people are briefed about plans by project implementers. Rather, any meaningful participation implies at a minimum the process in which local communities discover the possibilities of exercising choice and becoming capable of managing what they understand as development. It is important that theoretically I locate myself as to how I use the term development. I do not use the term development as that which is self-evident and needed by all poor societies no matter their peculiar needs, circumstances and history. On the contrary, I problematize the notion of development and propose to understand development as a practice. That is to say, development should be understood as an arena of negotiations and struggle, which is historically constructed and may take unpredictable turns but usually involves interaction between different social actors. Such an approach, for instance, enables me to examine the role of the intended targets of developmental intervention and to find out whether they were capable of exerting any influence of their own.

In what follows, I provide an overview of the goals and objectives of NORRIP and also discuss the salient aspects of the Integrated Village Water Project (IVWP). I examine the conditions under which the villages were organized for participation in the NORRIP water project paying particular attention to the socioeconomic environment of the villages and the institutional and administrative structures
under which participation was institutionalized. I then conclude by indicating how participation has become a substitute for structural reforms.

2. THE NORTHERN REGION RURAL INTEGRATED PROJECT (NORRIP)—OVERVIEW

One of the most ambitious efforts to promote development in Ghana is the Northern Region Rural Integrated Project (NORRIP). The Canadian Government through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Ghanaian Government financed this project. The long-term goal of NORRIP was to increase the capacity for self-initiated and sustainable economic and social improvement in Northern Ghana. The following principles informed NORRIP’s program design and implementation: long-term sustainability, target-group involvement and commitment, Government of Ghana’s ownership of the program, economic viability of the program, flexibility, involvement of women, and environmental considerations. The program organizers in particular emphasized the involvement and commitment by local participants, the intended beneficiaries of the project.

The NORRIP Plan of Operation categorically stated that:

The most important principle is that the program must provide for the involvement of all persons in the target areas in the development process from planning through implementation in order to elicit personal commitment. For people to be committed they must be involved in (a) the process of planning their own future through identifying their needs and priorities and (b) the implementation of those plans and priorities, both physically and financially, in order that the results are seen as their own.¹⁰

On the basis of these principles Northern Ghana was divided into ten Integrated Development Areas with potential for socioeconomic development and the delivery of basic needs. When the agreements and the memorandum of understanding were completed for the implementation phase of the project it was agreed by the principal organizers to limit the entire project to seven projects—the Integrated Village Water Project (IVWP), health, Village Agricultural Initiatives Project (VAIP), roads, and two institutional strengthening projects for selected government agencies and an educational support project for regional technical institute. The Integrated Village Water Project (IVWP) was selected as the lead project to be accompanied by the health project, the village agricultural initiatives project and then the roads project.

I now focus on the lead project of NORRIP—i.e. provision of potable water—to understand how the apparatus of development becomes operationalized to realize some of the basic and fundamental principles underlying NORRIP both from the perspective of the intended beneficiaries and the sponsors of the program. In the context of the NORRIP water project, this idea of participation is clearly spelled out:

The IVWP is... a revolutionary approach to water supply, one that fits in with the Government of Ghana’s encouragement of self-reliance. It demands that villagers not be passive receivers of the hand pumps. Instead they must develop and use organizational, technical and financial skills. It is based on a special partnership between villagers and Government, with the Government helping communities to help themselves. In the end, it is the communities themselves, which will determine the success of their project.¹¹

NORRIP thus argues that social development is facilitated if people participate fully in making and implementing decisions that affect their welfare. What exactly does this idea of people’s participation, mean in practice within the context of Northern Ghana’s developmental efforts? For instance, does the constitution of the object of development in Northern Ghana limit or facilitate the idea of people’s participation in development? How do the beneficiaries of the villages of Northern Ghana understand their own roles as participants in the NORRIP water projects? Does the provision and organization of potable water by NORRIP also result in the autonomy and development of the villagers’ capacity to maintain and sustain the boreholes? These are some of the questions I reflect upon by using the organization and provision of water as the arena for examining these issues.

3. INTEGRATED VILLAGE WATER PROJECT (IVWP)

The IVWP was intended to provide at least one water supply unit in the form of a hand-pump fitted borehole for communities with 200 and 400 people and at least one borehole for every 400 people in larger communities with a
population of 2,000. In communities with fewer than 200 persons, it was expected that NORRIP would be able to respond to their requests by encouraging the construction of hand-dug wells, or through an extension of the borehole program. The program was to be managed by an Integrated Village Water Project Management Team drawn from the relevant sectors of NORRIP and other line agencies such as the Department of Community Development (DCD), Ministry of Health (MOH), and Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation (GWSC), all involved in the project. This team would report to the NORRIP Senior Management. At the district level, there would also be a District Management Team comprising of the district officers for GWSC, DCD, and MOH. The district team was to be headed by a NORRIP District Coordinator as the team leader. In each district there would be a Village Extension Team comprising the two Community Development and Ministry of Health extensionists. This team would carry out the program at the village level. The field manual for the potable water project stressed that, “at the village level, the village, NORRIP management teams are partners, with NORRIP assisting the village to implement its projects.” The village was to own, operate and maintain the water supply units. Village ownership of the water supply units was seen as a very important aspect of the whole operational setup of the IVWP. This structure was created to avoid a situation of what NORRIP officials described as “building up a dependency psychology such as usually exits if government retains responsibility.”

Creating a potable water supply under the NORRIP project was not seen only as a “technical” challenge to meet basic human needs. What does this say about NORRIP? According to NORRIP’s organizers, development projects organized as “technical” challenges were in most cases implemented in isolation by “technical” groups or departments. Such projects they argued, often ran into problems with their operation and maintenance and might not be sustainable in the long run. In very simple terms, such projects do not increase the capacity of the recipients to sustain and maintain them over time.

NORRIP thus saw rural water supply as also embracing: hygiene, sanitation and water use education activities … as integral elements; community involvement in decision-making, management and ownership of the water supply system to ensure its long-term sustainability and the proper use of the facility; and women’s involvement in all aspects of the projects (including planning, operation and maintenance) in view of their role as the primary providers and users of water.

In this regard, NORRIP saw community involvement as a critical component of the overall program and in particular as a critical element for ensuring the sustainability of the IVWP. In the NORRIP sector paper for the water project, it was clearly stated that:

No longer will it be necessary to have GWSC come to the village with tools and equipment to make routine repairs. Villagers will carry out the maintenance themselves and will be able to purchase the few spare parts required from commercial sources. (This is the long-term goal. In the meantime spares will be available through the project). It is intended that the whole programme be presented to communities and implemented on the basis of full ownership and … responsibility by the community. It will be their programme and their pump.

Community involvement according to NORRIP meant that the “communities will be involved in planning the programme activities such as timing and scheduling of meetings, training courses location and number of wells and other activities.” The ultimate intention was to involve all members of the community, especially women, at all levels including user-fee collection and financial management, pump maintenance and care. In a nutshell, sustainability of the water project was equated with the transfer of managerial and technical skills to a rural population that is predominantly illiterate. NORRIP recognized that women and children had greater responsibility as the primary providers and managers of water at the household level. As such, the project called for women and children to be the recipients of specialized training in water utilization, sanitation, and personal hygiene. The project also recommended that women should constitute at least, 50% of the membership of the village water and health committees. This would involve them in planning, implementation and on-going operation and maintenance. At the line agency level, women were to be selected to become members of the project management team both at the regional as well as the district level.

The project recognized that for a rural water management program to be successful, among other issues, it must have a technology that met
certain criteria such as availability of local inputs, replicability, reliability, sustainability and ease of use. Thus, for instance, NORRIP felt that the villagers did not need to become involved in the borehole drilling activity beyond being consulted about the selection of the well’s site. Rather, the project looked for hand pumps which, when fitted to the wells, would provide ease of maintenance. In theory, the water project conceived by NORRIP, and as stated in the Inception Report and Sector Paper on the IVWP would serve the function of introducing villages to other NORRIP projects. Considerable village organization and enthusiasm for development is expected to result from the implementation of the water project. Having successfully done the water project, villages will be in a good position . . . in developing their own projects. 18

4. WATER, PARTICIPATION, EMPOWERMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

The provision of potable water as the lead sector for the NORRIP project should not be seen as merely the fulfillment of a basic need in making available water. Rather, we must take a step back from the moral discourse about water saving lives to an evaluation of the actual social, economic and institutional means through which these techniques of providing water are made visible. In other words, I now investigate what Gow and Vansant describe as “the messy . . . unpredictable world of project implementation.” 19 In this regard, one key question to address is under what conditions does a community’s participation in social development ensure sustainability and empowerment?

I attempt to answer this question by looking at how the villagers were organized for participation in the water project. While participation by the local villages in the project districts of NORRIP could become the basis of empowerment this “liberating” process of participation could also be a very limited objective, if development policies or strategies were seen as ends in themselves rather than as a means to an end. In trying to understand participation as the basis of empowerment and sustainability, it is important to point out that participation should not be seen narrowly or simply that by forming village water and health committees to manage or supervise the water supply units individuals perceive that they are taking control of their lives. On the contrary, participation should be seen as part of the process by which the dominated social groups seek their own freedom from exploitation by powerful classes. Empowerment in the context of this paper is thus more than opening up access to decision-making. As Rowlands points out: “Empowerment must involve undoing negative social constructions, so that the people affected come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and have influence.” 20 Therefore, an important question to explore is the extent to which the social organization of the rural communities engineered for development around the provision of potable water by NORRIP paid attention to challenging the structural inequalities that led to the absence of water and other social amenities in the first place.

5. INSTITUTIONALIZING PARTICIPATION

To institutionalize the concept of participation in Northern Ghana, NORRIP specified certain binding obligations between itself and the villages in the project districts. The communities were to form Village Water and Health Committees (VWHC) in the project districts. They were expected to build a Handpump Fund with adequate resources to cover costs of preventive maintenance, repair and replacement parts after a one-year guarantee period by NORRIP. NORRIP expected that after the one-year guarantee period, the villages would become solely responsible for repairing, maintaining and providing replacement parts from village community resources, specifically the handpump fund. NORRIP thus suggested that the communities should be saving about 50,000 cedis per year to be able to afford a replacement handpump within a 5–10-year period during which time the handpumps would no longer be serviceable. Monies collected for the Handpump Fund should be deposited in a bank account and stay under the control of the community through the VWHC. Approval would need to be obtained from the village before any money was spent on any item. The villages were also to be responsible for collecting user fees for water utilization at an established rate or to initiate another form
of fund raising as determined by the village community. The villages were also responsible for selecting two or more persons (including a woman) from within the community to be trained as handpump mechanics and also to help the handpump mechanics in preventive maintenance and other repairs. These villages, through regular meetings at least once a month, were to continue the supervision and management activities of the water and health committees.

Any village that qualified or was selected for the borehole was expected to make an initial contribution of 80,000 cedis. This comprised a contribution of 60,000 cedis toward the purchase of the handpump (this is estimated by NORRIP to be one-sixth of the total cost which is about US$1,000) and a further contribution of 20,000 cedis toward the cost of cement to build the well’s pad and trough. A village was deemed prepared to participate in the IVWP when it contributed the initial amount of 80,000 cedis, had a functioning village development committee which included a water user’s subcommittee, participated in a course of nonformal education by an extension agent from the department of community development and in a written agreement accepted responsibility for operating and maintaining the water system on a continuous basis.

The main participants besides NORRIP in organizing the villages for the provision of potable water were the Department of Community Development (DCD), the Ministry of Health (MOH), and the Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation (GWSC). These organizations were some of the line agencies to be strengthened by NORRIP through the provision of support in the form of equipment, transport, training and management coordination. The MOH was to provide a health inspection assistant as part of the village extension team to help explain the relationship between water, health and the environment with the aim of maximizing health benefits in the villages. The GWSC was hired by NORRIP to drill the boreholes. The DCD was to act as the main communications link between the target villages and NORRIP. Specifically, the field staff of DCD was to educate the communities on the need and importance of clean water to protect the villages against guinea worm and other water-related diseases and on the need for the formation of strong village development committees to mobilize funds and labor for the water project and overall development of the villages. According to its community awareness program, the DCD was to emphasize the involvement of women in both the village development committees as well as in a simple Village-Level Operation and Maintenance (VLOM) system of the water project. The VLOM team was to be responsible for the basic maintenance of the handpump after installation.

6. SOCIOECONOMIC SETTING

My purpose here is to bring into focus the peculiar nature of the socioeconomic characteristics of the two target districts so as to raise questions about the actual and potential capacity of these villages to be in a position to participate meaningfully in sustaining the NORRIP water project on a long-term basis. The two target districts for the commencement of the NORRIP potable water project in Northern Ghana were the Yendi and East Mamprusi Districts. The Yendi district has about 7.3% of the total population of the Northern Region, with approximately 62% of its population rural. It is estimated that 34% are engaged in agriculture. Of this number 87% are men. East Mamprusi is one of the 13 district assemblies and has about 12% of the total population of the region. Of its agriculture population, about 71% are men and 29% are women.

While the two districts experience two main seasons, the rainy and dry season, and both districts lie entirely within the savanna belt, there are noticeable differences. In the Yendi districts the soils, mostly laterite, are considered more fertile than those of East Mamprusi, where the mountain range has affected the soil structure and leads to rapid erosion. This condition certainly limits the agricultural potential of the East Mamprusi district. Yendi, on the other hand, is more conducive to agriculture, possessing a relatively higher average annual rainfall. Its soil also has a better water retention capacity. Nevertheless, during the dry season most of the communities in the two districts experience severe hunger because the available food stock does not last through the entire season. The major crops produced in the two districts are cereals—maize, sorghum, and millet—yams and groundnuts (peanuts). In all, rainfed agriculture, including livestock, is the primary source of employment and livelihood.
for the majority of the rural population of the two districts. Farm sizes are generally small, ranging between 0.5 to 4.0 hectares with most households having an average of 1.5 hectares.

Family cash incomes are generally low for the two districts because income-earning opportunities are limited to seasonal agriculture. A sample survey by the Bureau of Integrated Rural Development showed that out of 69 people interviewed in the East Mamprusi district, 52% earned less than 100,000 cedis per year. In the Yendi District, out of 63 respondents, 39 persons—62%—earned less than 100,000 cedis per year. In a field survey of some villages in the two districts, it was shown that incomes hardly meet expenditures. Expenditure on food, according to the survey, was especially high during the dry season when the majority of the people experience food shortages since their reserves do not last until the next harvest season. In 80% of the cases, food was mentioned as the major item of expenditure. The food situation is very critical during the months of April–June, when food reserves have almost been depleted. During this period of ‘hunger gap’ it is not uncommon for people to request food credit from relatives and friends.

Overall, poverty within the two districts is reflected in levels of ownership of purchased assets and farm tools used in production. In the survey, 90% of the farmers surveyed who depend on bullocks to plough had no bullocks. The main assets in which the two districts had a comparative advantage in were livestock acquisition. A compound survey for a baseline study of the target districts suggested that about 56% of the residents owned sheep and goats compared to a national average of only 25%. But, as the survey further pointed out, fewer livestock get transformed into liquid income for consumption purposes and they tend to be a form of perpetual savings and insurance for the owners. On the whole, it is suggested, “stated monetary expenditure for both males and females amounted to per capita incomes far below the poverty line in Ghana.”

The survey report points out that:

On the average, each person in the survey area reported an average regular weekly expenditure of about 1,055 cedis, amounting to about 54,860 cedis per annum. In 1988, the Ghana Living Standard Survey estimated that the poorest quintile (20%) of the population earned 37,020 cedis per annum or below.

With the most conservative annual inflation rates of 30% in 1989, 25% in 1990, 25% in 1991, and 20% in 1992, the per capita income for the poorest quintile projected in 1992 cedis would be roughly 90,236 per annum. This puts the survey area significantly below the poverty line in terms of per capita income.

Access to social services in the two districts is very low. Services such as agricultural extension, research and marketing are sporadic and generally inadequate. Health service is significantly low for the two districts and access is projected by the baseline survey to be even lower as the system of user fees for social services intensifies and incomes get lower. Education is the least accessible for young girls, as villages do not have schools of their own. In cases where schools are available, boys are favored over girls. Churches and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) provide the few existing social services, and the extent of these externally supported activities is extremely low. Access to formal credit by any of the rural residences in the two survey districts is virtually absent. There is no bank in the whole of East Mamprusi district and in Yendi, the banks are too far away from the villages to serve as an effective medium of savings and credit. In the survey for the baseline study, most villagers were quite skeptical about the possibility that they could ever have access to a bank loan. This means that for the majority of the people in these communities, their low levels of saving and low access to any form of institutional credit severely limit their ability to finance any community income generation projects. In the East Mamprusi district area, it is common for villagers to pledge their harvest at predetermined prices to traders in food produce from the urban centers of the region before the harvest season, because they need money to subsist on during the difficult time before the first harvests. It is not surprising that there is a high incidence of migration from East Mamprusi to Southern Ghana among youths and men between the ages of 11 and 50 years for employment during the dry season.

The socioeconomic environment of communities in the project areas described above is one where the opportunities for income-generating activities are few, and social services are almost nonexistent for the majority of the villages, resulting in the limited ability of these societies to engage in investment to sustain development projects. It is important to emphasize that the
root causes of poverty in this region are to be sought in colonial and post-colonial socio-economic policies, which systematically denied the region the opportunity to develop its potential, hence denying the region a basis for creating more income-generating activities. 31

7. COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

The Department of Community Development (DCD) was assigned the critical role of “initiating village level participation and ... facilitat[ing] a definition of village needs and priorities” in the target communities.

In its Mobilization and Animation Report of June 1993 the DCD noted that:

The work of the department in the district is mainly a process of social action where the people in the rural communities are inspired to organise themselves, define their common needs and help to plan and take action for self-reliance. 32

To understand the extent to which the DCD could be an effective instrument of village mobilization, a few observations are in order. The DCD is responsible to the Ministry of local government and according to a Medium Term Report on NORRIP “has not been an attractive destination for high caliber personnel. As a result, the department is ... poorly staffed.” 33

It is also financially poorly resourced by the central government. Field staff of the department in the two target districts indicated to me during my field research in the summer of 1996 that the quarterly financial budget for the districts is usually exhausted within a week.

This observation was confirmed in interview with the regional director, when he said:

We are implementers of government policies and if government fails to finance us we cannot do anything. This accounts for the failures of certain projects in Ghana. Generally our budget is poor [and] in most cases we are being paid for doing nothing because the resources that will enable us to work are not there. We are at a big disadvantage if we use the budgetary allocation to do things outside our traditionally assigned schedule. Yet the government will not see the need for a supplementary budget allocation. In that case we cannot do much. 34

This position by the regional director was not an isolated view by a government bureaucrat crying for more funds. NORRIP itself held the view that most of the line agencies’ with which it was to collaborate in the implementation of its projects, were “under resourced in that they lacked staff, capital equipment and recurrent budgets required to assist effectively in project implementation. [It was] also concerned that, given the chance, line agencies will divert NORRIP resources to purposes other than those for which they were intended.” 35 Given the state of neglect of line agencies by the central government, and the fact that community mobilization was an essential component of the project, NORRIP included this department in its institutional strengthening program. Basically, institutional strengthening consisted of procurement assistance, formal and nonformal training. Procurement assistance was in the form of vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles to ensure greater mobility to the Village Extension Teams responsible for mobilization and education in the villages designated to receive the hand pumps. Formal training offered to the line agencies took the form of post-graduate university training in Ghana and abroad. The question, then, is whether this institutional strengthening was adequate.

NORRIP’s assistance was indeed welcomed by an organization that had been neglected by the central government for a long time. The assistance, however, was inadequate for the task envisaged for the DCD. Thus most of the earlier villages in the Yendi district earmarked for boreholes were not properly mobilized due to lack of time and personnel resources. 36 This perhaps indicates a problem with the whole concept of mobilization where it is stressed that “a key function of the community development workers will be to prepare villages or communities for initiatives in terms of social, cultural, financial and technological factors,” 37 without a consideration of the field worker who is expected to have multiple skills and the institutional mechanisms within which the field worker operates in order to achieve the objectives of the project at the village level. 38 In fact as Dudley points out, the successful field worker who is capable of stimulating and supporting well-rounded, community-based, integrated rural development has to be a kind of renaissance generalist. Over-stretched and under-resourced, the field worker must juggle the issues and strike compromises between policies, which tend to come to the field in the form of contradictory messages. 39

For the IVWP, community organization was a pre-requisite before drilling and pump installation could take place. Where commu-
nity development work lagged drilling was delayed and costs rose. This condition of villages not being properly mobilized was to re-surface several times even though the End of Contract Report reported that the situation had been brought under control. For instance, in March of 1992 the regional director of community development noted in a memorandum to the district community development officer that:

It has come to my notice through the Community Development Sector Office of NORRIP that the mobilisation and animation activities being undertaken … has slowed down considerably. According to the report this has come about as a result of the break down of the two motor cycles being used by your VETS (Village extension teams) … In view of our present financial constraints, representations have been made to Norrip to assist the Department to carry out the impending crash educational campaign … the programme manager of NORRIP has in his usual willingness and understanding given approval for the release of funds for the repairs of the two broken down motor cycles … It is my fervent hope that with this good will from the NORRIP Management, you … will live up to [the] expectation of all us. 40

This form of ad hoc appeal for assistance was not sufficient to solve the problems of mobilization in the field. In their field reports from the villages in the district, the community development officers raised the same issues again. For instance, in its report on the IVWP project dated November 4, 1992, the East Mamprusi District Community Development office reported the following problems:

Insufficient fuel for motorbikes and vehicles [was] released for the programme. Language problems: Most communities are not well informed about the project; Financial problems; Uneasy access of roads. 41

This prompted the district office to again appeal for assistance to the regional office and NORRIP.

I am also appealing to the Regional Director of Community Development to assist us with fuel since the quarter’s vote can hardly effectively operate the Department’s programmes for even a month …. NORRIP should try to pay our allowances in time to help reduce our financial problems. Besides, the 500 cedis and 650 cedis allowances per night for VETs and supervisors should be increased to 1500 cedis and 2000.00 respectively …. We hope to do much better on our next trip. However, I am still reminding NORRIP and the Regional Director of Community Development to help solve our problems. 42

Similarly, in another field report dated June 1993, the East Mamprusi office noted that:

Quite a number of problems saddled the progress of work during the month [of June 1993]. The lean staffing position is a major factor since there are only four field staff. Inadequate funds to repair and fuel motorbikes is also a stumbling block on work in progress. However, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the DDC (District Development Coordinator of NORRIP) for helping us with nine gallons of petrol. We are suggesting that more of the students from the Rural development College … be posted to the district for their practical work. This will be a short-term measure that would step up our activities in the next few months. 43

The DCD is responsible for the whole Northern Region and not just active in the two districts where NORRIP has projects. As a Report on the Program Review of NORRIP points out, while “a conscious effort has been made by the DCD to assign the maximum number of staff to the two project districts … it is still inadequate considering the large number of villages earmarked for the project and the need for follow-up contacts by the extension staff.” 44 The DCD in all, had a total of 23 staff positions for the two districts of NORRIP compared to a total staff of 22 for the remaining 11 districts in the region. 45

In addition, this same report questioned the effectiveness of the extension staff when a relatively high percentage of the them—60% in East Mamprusi and 70% in Yendi district—are not trained and in most cases receive on-the-job training. “Field supervision by the professional staff of 3 in Yendi and 4 in East Mamprusi is clearly inadequate for the task required,” 46 the report emphasized. The Program Review report estimated that East Mamprusi district would need at least five fully qualified professionals in order to function efficiently. This situation was so frustrating that at one point the NORRIP sector Water Engineer at an IVWP management meeting had to question the appropriateness of community farms at proposed borehole sites.

The management meeting could not help but “agree that this problem which was experienced last year, had come up again probably because of low mobilisation efforts” 47 by community development. In fact, there were concerns that some of village extension teams were not even visiting the communities as they reported since field reports by the extension teams were at variance with the monitoring.
The DCD’s inability to secure minimum operating expenses for the maintenance of vehicles, motor bicycles and bicycles provided by NORRIP, coupled with DCD’s inability to pay workers’ overnight allowance, greatly compromised its effectiveness as one of the premier front line agencies to mobilize communities for participation in their own development efforts. Compounding the situation was the perception among DCD staff that they were not employed by NORRIP, but rather doing extra work for NORRIP. This was detrimental to the work and showed a lack of commitment on the part of the extension agents. In fact, NORRIP’s intention was to provide them with resources to enable them to better execute their functions. The DCD was therefore to play both an integrative and a facilitative role. The importance of the relationship, then, between the DCD and NORRIP cannot be understated. As the Medium Term Program Review of NORRIP points out: “NORRIP’s relationship with the DCD has a very direct bearing on it’s success. Effective community work is central to NORRIP’s village focused approach and requires that DCD staff play an active role in all aspects of NORRIP work.” This narrative, however, is not to suggest that no educational and mobilization work was ever done by the DCD/VETs in preparing the villages for the IVWP concept. Rather, my aim is to raise questions as to how, institutionally, a concept of sustainable development in the form of the provision of year-round potable water is possible in such an operating environment, and also to highlight the complexities and “messy world” of development interventions.

This leads me now to point to some observations made by the village/district field officers and the monitors during a baseline survey of the project districts as it relates to the socioeconomic environment of the project districts. My intent is to explore the extent to which this environment either facilitated or impeded the operationalization of the IVWP concept and how the philosophy of the project was realized in practice. In its various field reports to mobilize and ascertain the preparedness of the various villages in adopting or accepting the IVWP philosophy, one factor seems to stand apart: the inability of most villages to raise immediately the required 80,000 cedis and to also maintain a handpump fund. This inability seems more pronounced in East Mamprusi than the Yendi District.

In the Yendi District’s IVWP Quarterly Report for the period October–December 1991, the District Development Coordinator noted the dissatisfaction of the Program Manager with the nonpayment of the villagers’ contribution for successful boreholes. He said in a courtesy call on the District Secretary during a field tour of the district recipients of the IVWP, “these communities were failing in their contractual agreement. He made it abundantly clear that, as a matter of principle, [those] communities with successful boreholes will not have them fitted with handpumps if they do not pay for them.” This concern may have prompted the Program Manager to stress the importance of the handpump fund on his visit to six other communities during his field tour of the Yendi district IVWP projects.

As the Yendi District Community Development officer later pointed out to me, eventually most of the communities paid their contributions. But he emphasized that contributions to the handpump fund could take many forms. “Some young men in the community mobilized to undertake weeding of people’s farms for a fee. Money realized from this activity was their contribution towards the maintenance of the hand pump. People who could not contribute cash gave out a number of bowls of cereal as their contribution for the upkeep of the handpump.” The village of Kpalsonando in the Yendi district, one of the communities I visited during my field research, the handpump had broken down. In a group discussion about the problems, the chairman of the village water and health committee responded to my question about how the village would organize to sustain the borehole:

The water is not sufficient for us. The people are so many and that accounts for the frequent breakdowns and funds are not always readily available for the repairs. By providing a borehole, NORRIP has done a lot for us but we will be very grateful if they could help us in maintaining it.

Let me also examine the case of the East Mamprusi District. A 1992 NORRIP Report: Programme review toward medium term plan notes the plight of East Mamprusi when it states that most communities “have had severe difficulties paying the initial contribution . . . required as deposit, pump installation fees as well as the 8 bags of cement for pad construction costs. This is partly attributed to the extreme poverty which characterizes the area
because of the depleted soil and low agricultural productivity.”

As one of the field officers of the Department of Community Development pointed out to me in an interview: “most of the people here [in East Mamprusi] live below the poverty line. Some or most of the villages don’t have any viable economic venture apart from farming. So in the dry season the only job is pito (local beer) brewing and that is done by the women.” The Regional Director of Community Development also reiterated this point when he noted that:

It has not been easy for us to get the communities to make their part of the contributions and deposits. It has taken a lot of time especially in East Mamprusi. The place has [...] been designated a hunger stricken area. If they are finding it difficult to eat, how can they contribute towards sustaining water projects? Even though it is in their interest but they cannot afford it. It would therefore take the collaboration of the District Development Coordinator to the East Mamprusi District Development Coordinator management noted that:

The management of NORRIP remained insistent on getting the communities to pay their contributions irrespective of their socioeconomic situation and took measures to enforce this policy. In a directive to the East Mamprusi District Development Coordinator management noted that:

It has been reported that some hand pumps have recently been installed and made operational in a number of villages that have not completed payment of their communities contribution of sixty thousand cedis per hand pump. This is a violation of both IVWP Philosophy and recorded decisions of IVWP-MT. Please, take every precaution that hand pumps installed in violation of IVWP-MT decisions as cited, are “disabled” (i.e. remove handle and pump rods) and re-connected only after full payment is done. For the avoidance of doubts, hand pumps shall be installed and made operational in only communities that have paid up fully (i.e. 60,000 cedis/Hand pump). Installation in other communities would be partial (i.e. without fitting handles and connecting rods). [Emphasis original].

Despite this directive, at the end of the fourth quarter the Department of Community Development report on the IVWP for East Mamprusi indicated that about 40 communities still owed the project various sums of money totaling 1,591,500 cedis. The situation was not any better even in the case of the handpump fund. In the Department of Community Development field report of seven communities in the East Mamprusi District with potable water supply from the project, the field officer noted that with the exception of only one community which had 40,000 cedis on reserve, the other six had not been able to raise contributions for their handpump funds in case of handpump breakdowns.

Thus a monitoring team in its preliminary report, cautioned that one should not lose sight of the need for sustainability so far as the villages’ ability to maintain the water and health schemes is concerned. Economic projects have been on the minds of the women in all the communities we visited. NAP 92 (NORRIP Annual Plan, 1992) should include some [economic] projects or creditability will be lost.

In fact the concern was such that by June 1994, NORRIP had to organize a workshop on community management and sustenance of its IVWP project in the East Mamprusi District. Some of the participants suggested that: NORRIP should consider coming into the agriculture field like aiding farmers to get fertilizers, tractor services [and] should extend the VAIP [Village Agricultural Initiative Project] to many more villages to address the poverty syndrome in hunger-gap East Mamprusi. During my field survey of the target districts in the summer of 1996, I found that one of the main concerns across all communities was the need for assistance to engage in more income-generating activities, particularly during the dry season when farming is virtually impossible and hunger threatens the livelihood of the villages. A contributor to a focus group discussion I held in Nakpanduri, East Mamprusi District, indicated: “Even though there are committees to take care of the boreholes, at certain periods it becomes very difficult for us to generate funds to repair the handpumps in cases of breakdown. Could there be a way of attracting funds from elsewhere?”

Clean water may be a vital issue for the health concerns of these communities and NORRIP to all intents and purposes may wish for a healthy community. But are the villages within the target districts participating in the IVWP on the basis of their own priorities? The senior management of NORRIP, as some of them indicated to me, were not blind to these socioeconomic problems. In fact, they suggested that one of the underlying program principles was that the “long-term focus should be
economic such that surpluses generated by a strong economic base could be used to support social investments.” As justification, they pointed to the fact that in the original list of the 15 projects arising out of the first planning phase of NORRIP, seven were agricultural projects, which together had the potential to produce the desired economic support base for the districts. 64

Instead, another project, the Village Agricultural Initiatives Project (VAIP) was substituted and even then it was only allowed to start on a pilot basis in August 1993 after several requests had been made to CIDA for funding. The VAIP was designed to enable community women’s groups to establish small income-generating businesses primarily using agricultural products and create a sounder economic base for the whole community. The VAIP identified women’s groups in each district for assistance in income-generating projects. The activities targeted included sheabutter extraction—two such projects were supported in Yendi and one in East Mamprusi—and grain storage and marketing—four projects were supported in Yendi, and five in East Mamprusi. The VAIP projects were, however, extremely limited and did not address the structural causes of poverty in the region. They looked more like an after-thought addition to the project. As the former Program Manager indicated:

Agriculture has been the economic base of the region … yet it was reduced in scale and was not pursued with any enthusiasm by the sponsors even though the numerous problems of that sector could have contributed to the high incidence of poverty among the food crop farmers in the region. Besides the coverage of the substituted VAIP [was] very small [and], its implementation … started only in the last 20 months of the programme. It is therefore doubtful if it will have any meaning economic impact that should sustain the provision of the social facilities. 65

The late payment by most communities within Yendi District and the difficulties of some communities in raising money for the handpump fund leads me to question the socioeconomic base of the project and in particular, the villages’ ability to generate income to sustain themselves and the borehole projects. Do the villages have autonomy to decide what they see as developmentally relevant? A former Program Manager of NORRIP addressed this question when he indicated in a paper that: “Like most integrated rural development projects NORRIP had its conceptual origin from the donor agency … the communities in the region were not the decision-makers. Therefore the projects that were selected may not have met their needs or were perhaps not their priorities.” 66

One key informant, the former NORRIP sector head responsible for community development, during my field survey saw it as follows. “At the local level NORRIP was not accountable to a constituency because issues of planning were pseudo participation in that [NORRIP] went and asked people questions and even then their views did not matter.” 67 For instance, even though the provision of hand-dug wells was to be encouraged as part of the IVWP, as the monitors report points out “there appears to be an over emphasis on boreholes as the most efficient and reliable means of supplying water to villages.” 68 Thus, it seems that in cases where additional dredging of existing hand-dug wells could have simply improved the water situation instead, boreholes were provided. The project seems never to have explored other technological options for producing a steady source of potable water such as lining hand-dug wells and creating water reservoirs. 69 These would not have required the same initial investment, nor the costly maintenance of handpumps for producing a steady source of potable water.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS: PARTICIPATION, EMPOWERMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

The inability of most villages within Yendi and East Mamprusi Districts to fulfill the essential conditions to become beneficiaries of the potable water project by NORRIP raises essential questions for the study of development in current times. In particular, as the development industry globally incorporates into its vocabulary notions about participation, empowerment and sustainability, feasibility of the approach comes into question. In the context of this study, one of such questions NORRIP raises is how institutions create the parameters of what constitutes development in such a way that participation becomes a critical component. I argue that this constitution of development with its emphasis on participation, empowerment and sustainability in development projects reflects a blindness to the
The sector paper of the IVWP stresses that:

- discussing just who participates in the IVWP.

Self-evident by the program sponsors when the term community involvement appears to be a core component of the IVWP project. The use of the term village or community in the Report—directs attention away from the internal politics in the village and from questions of the nature of actual social relations and the distribution of wealth. This fact raises the question of just who participates in the community. As Jackson cautions, the dynamics of participation are complex:

- even the smallest and poorest of communities have within them the relatively better off and the absolute poor.
- There are family divisions and often ethnic, racial or religious divisions within communities as well.

All of these factors influence the access individuals and households to money and power.

How then do all these factors influence the outcome of development?

The case of NORRIP is instructive. The project’s concept of participation, which is managerial and technocratic, is limiting and may contain the seeds of its failure. This stems from a constitution of development which sets limits on the villagers’ participation. The villagers’ participation in the NORRIP projects did not allow them to define for themselves their priority needs. The villagers’ participation was embedded in a program initiated from outside and to that extent they were only empowered by the terms of participation as set out in the development program.

For instance NORRIP’s IVWP was not linked to a serious systematic economic effort to enhance the socioeconomic capabilities of communities, which are significantly below the poverty line in terms of per capita income.

Attention was only given to the willingness of the local communities to raise their initial share of contributions for the borehole so that they could possess an indicator of “modernity”—a handpump fitted potable water system.

The project failed to allow villages in the target districts to define their priority needs, and thus the villages did not acquire a stronger position in which to generate revenue through a re-organization of their socioeconomic environment. Instead, the communities might have entered into a new form of dependency, one in which they had to depend on outside forces for assistance in maintaining hand pumps. This fact certainly threatens the notion of villagers’ ability to sustain the borehole in the longer term. The villagers of East Mamprusi and Yendi, in the context of NORRIP, should be seen as resources for development and not its progenitors.

Majid Rahnema’s comment,

Community involvement is critical to sustainability and will embrace all aspects of the programme. [...] The intention will be to involve members of the community at all levels (especially women) and not only at the formal hierarchy.

[...] It is intended that the whole programme be presented to communities and implemented on the basis of full ownership and responsibility by the community. It will be their programme and their pump. A handover and inauguration ceremony will formally accomplish the transfer of GOG’s interests to the community.

Even though the concept of village or “community involvement” is central to the IVWP, it is poorly defined and used loosely to refer only to a socio-spatial entity. The use of the term village or community involvement is silent about the fact that even poor rural communities are not homogenous and may be comprised of the poor, the very poor and the not so poor who have differential access to resources. As such, this use—of the term village or community in the Report—directs attention away from the internal politics in the village and from questions of the nature of actual social relations and the distribution of wealth. This fact raises the question of just who participates in the community. As Jackson cautions, the dynamics of participation are complex:

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which he borrowed from Karl Polyani’s description of the modern economy, is pertinent to the situation of NORRIP.

He points out that:

participation has come to be “disembedded” from the socio-cultural roots which has always kept it alive. It is now simply perceived as one of the many “resources” needed to keep the economy alive. To participate is thus reduced to the act of partaking in the objectives of the economy, and the societal arrangements related to it. ... For the modern construct of participation, a person should be part of a predefined project, more specifically, an economic project, in order to qualify a participant. 77

Sustainability of the IVWP is also threatened at another level if one realizes that community development is a continuous process and as such may require on-going support from both the regional and district levels of government. In a situation where the primary institutional vehicle for rural adult education and literacy is an inadequately-funded Department of Community Development, there is serious doubt as to whether on-going support will be available. 78 This is confirmed in the monitoring report for April 1993–October 1993. The monitors note that “the long-term sustainability of capabilities acquired at the district level will depend on continued financial and logistical support. This is especially crucial in the case of DCD which will have difficulties in maintaining and replacing facilities which have been provided by NORRIP II.” 79

Another important aspect of organizational sustainability is the establishment of a system of access to affordable inputs in the form of the spare parts that may be needed to maintain the boreholes. With the current macroeconomic climate of structural adjustment policies, emphasizing cost recovery and privatization, among other issues, it is doubtful whether most of the NORRIP communities will be able to afford the open market prices of basic replacement parts, as NORRIP allows private distributors to handle the procurement of these inputs. The failure to ensure that participation enlarges the socioeconomic choices of the villagers of East Mamprusi and Yendi, in the words of Jackson “amounts to promoting [participation] with poverty, which is utterly irresponsible, not to mention undeniably unsustainable.” 80

These concepts—“community participation,” “empowerment,” “governance” and “sustainability”—have gained unprecedented visibility and respectability among the large multilateral and bilateral aid agencies. Indeed, the World Bank, the United Nations and most bilateral programs have made participatory approaches as part of policy papers and project design criteria. Yet, there remains a need for researchers and policy makers to pay critical attention to what these concepts mean in practice. This calls into question the relationship between the state, community participation and development. The literature on community participation state and development in Africa has predominantly showed how the post-colonial state systematically co-opted and directed all efforts at community participation in development. 81 Hence most advocates of community participation understandably reject state involvement in the promotion of community participation. The argument is that state involvement perpetuates the old top-down approach to social development, thus stiflingly initiative and local self-reliance. Though these views may be popular and are currently reinforced by structural adjustment policies, which advocate a complete state withdrawal in social development. Such a position tends to ignore the fact: “the state is today a major provider of social development services and ... largely determines how social development programmes will evolve. The state also has the power to shape and determine the nature of community participation activities in many Third World societies.” 82 Thus it would be a mistake to ignore the role of the state. The important role of the Ghanaian state is reiterated in one of the program principles underlying the overall operations of NORRIP that this is the Government of Ghana’s development program for the Northern Region, not Canada’s Program.

The socioeconomic environment of the districts that I described is one that will need structural and institutional transformation to qualitatively address issues of poverty. The resources made available through NORRIP either in the form of institutional strengthening or subsidizing the purchase of handpumps are inadequate and it seems that in the process community participation became a substitute for the structural reforms needed for the region. Because it is difficult to challenge the inherent goodness of community participation the concept has become a double-edged sword sometimes used to justify the state’s evasion of its responsibilities. In the context of Northern Ghana, while community participation may
have been a necessary condition for the rural people of Northern Ghana to manage their affairs, this concept was presented as a kind of magical “missing ingredient” from the development package which once provided would guarantee success irrespective of other considerations such as the structural, administrative and political pre-conditions necessary for participation to function. To reiterate, while this concept of participation may try to promote the belief that the poor villages of Northern Ghana should be able to establish their own potable water systems from their own resources so as to become self-reliant and autonomous, this case study illustrates a form of participation that fails to recognize that local resources are insufficient to meet local needs and does not allow the people to define for themselves their priority needs. The villagers in this case no longer become the progenitors of development but simply a resource to be used for development. In sum, the discourse of participation and empowerment as used within the context of Northern Ghana becomes the new ideological terrain in which the villagers of the rural communities of Northern Ghana do not decide what is developmentally relevant and are only allowed to participate in a developmental project without questioning the conditions under which they are allowed to develop.

NOTES

3. I am indebted to the anonymous reader at World Development.
8. In recent times critics of developmentalism have begun to produce works showing how the implementation of development programs leads to the entrenchment of state bureaucratic power, the depolitization of problems and displacement of local systems of knowledge. For such group of critics they locate development as a discursive field and a system of power relations, which produces its own objects, and regimes of truth. The following are a representative sample: Sachs (1992), Fergusson (1994), Crush (1995), Escobar (1995).
10. See CIDA (1987, pp. 8–9).
11. See, CIDA (1990a, p. 4).
12. CIDA (1990a, p. 36).
15. GWSC refers to the Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation.
17. See CIDA (n.d., p. 22).
18. See CIDA (1990b, p. 31).
21. According to the Field Manual for the IVWP the true cost of the wells and pumps are approximately as follows: Well Drilling (2–3 million cedis); Pump Purchasing (350,000 cedis); Pump Installation (150,000 cedis); Total (2.5–3.5 million cedis). See CIDA (1990c, p. 11).
22. See Department of Community Development (1988).
23. The material for this section is taken from Gariba and Jackson (1994) and CIDA (1992b).


27. See Gariba and Jackson (1994, p. viii).


31. This is an issue which has been examined in depth elsewhere. See for example, Chapter two of Botchway (1998).

32. See Department of Community Development (1993, p. 1).

33. See CIDA (1992a, p. 40).

34. Tape recorded interview with Mr. E. A. Yentumy, Regional Director of Department of Community Development, Tamale, Ghana, September 18, 1996.

35. See CIDA (1992c, p. 63).


38. See Dudley (1993, pp. 9–12).


40. Department of Community Development (1992). In fact, as far back as September 1991 this has been a concern. At the IVWPMT management meeting concern was raised by the NORRIP management on the lack of community mobilization and the general poor response of the communities toward the drilling program in East Mamprusi. On this issue, see, Minutes of IVWPMT Meeting (1991).


42. Report on five weeks animation and mobilization programme (1992, pp. 2–3).

43. See Department of Community Development (1993).

44. See CIDA (1992a, pp. 40–41).


46. See E.T. Jackson, and Associates and G.A.S. Development Associates (1992, p. 41). The insufficient staff of the DCD for extension work prompted the NORRIP management to make a formal request to the Regional office of the Department of Community Development for more extension workers. Such request, the NORRIP management noted “should detail the problems being posed to the work in the field as a result of the absence of VETS in some zones.” On this issue, see, Minutes of IVWPT Meeting (1992).

47. See Minutes of IVWPT Meeting (1993, p. 1).

48. See Minutes of IVWPT Meeting (1992). During discussions on this issue at the meeting it was said that a probably cause for this problem was the nonpayment of allowances to VETs.

49. In an institutional baseline survey, it was observed ‘the total funds available for recurrent cost of the department was far below resource requirements to meet work programmes established by the district officers. For example, only ten to twelve thousand cedis were available on the average each month for meeting transportation, vehicle running cost and night allowance of field staff. In relation to programme costs, this could pay the equivalent of one day’s night allowance for each field staff a month and one gallon of petrol per week for each motor bike. This leaves nothing for the occasional repairs and maintenance of vehicles or the cost of reimbursing staff for the use of public transportation for official duties. See CIDA (1990d, p. 9).

50. See CIDA (1992a, p. 58).

51. The NORRIP II monitors and evaluators observed that the field officers of the DCD in the two districts stated that their involvement in the IVWP was currently their most effective activity. See CIDA (1990d, p. 12).

52. See Memorandum from DDC—Yendi to DPM (P) (1991, p. 3).

53. Tape-recorded Interview with Mr. Michael Agana, District Community Development Officer, Yendi, August 10, 1996. The observation that eventually most communities in Yendi district paid their contributions into the NORRIP water account is confirmed in the Yendi IVWP Quarterly Report: January–March, 1993. In this report the NORRIP District Development Coordinator noted that only one community had
defaulted in its payment and that efforts are being made to get the community to pay.

54. Tape recorded interview, Kpalsonando, Yendi, August 16, 1996. Translations by my research assistant Abudulai Yussif.

55. See CIDA (1992c, p. 52). Typical of most “development” reports the poverty of the area is explained as a result of “depleted soils and low agricultural productivity.” Such explanations invariably do not paying attention to the underlying structural and socio-political causes of poverty.

56. Tape-recorded interview with Swain Abakuri, Community Development Officer, Gambaga, September 1996.

57. Tape recorded interview with Mr. E. A. Yentumi, Northern Regional Director, Department of Community Development, Tamale, September 18, 1996.


59. See Department of Community Development (1994a).

60. See Department of Community Development (1994b). In reviewing various management minutes of the IVWP project during 1992–93, NORRIP’s senior management deliberated extensively on the issue of lack of contributions from the villages in sustaining the hand pumps particularly in the East Mamprusi District. At one of such meetings the District Development Coordinator suggested a survey to get a true picture of village incomes and how much they could afford to contribute. This idea was rejected. Subsequently, NORRIP had to contact the District Administration to supporting poorer communities in paying their contributions. The following IVWP meetings offer an insight into some of the problems. Minutes of IVWPMT Meeting (1992).


63. Tape-recorded interview, Nakpanduri, East Mamprusi District, September 13, 1996. I am indebted to Moses Parimar Ali for translation from Bimoba to English.

64. The economic support base was to comprise of the following: extension services, farm credit facilities, input supply, storage, livestock development, bullock supply, fisheries, forestry and small scale enterprises. See Hudu Siita (1995) for a discussion. Hudu Siita was the Program Manager for NORRIP—Phase II until his resignation in 1994.


67. Tape recorded interview, September 5, 1996.


70. Botchway (forthcoming).

71. CIDA (n.d., p. 22).


73. For an excellent way in which a homogenous representation of the village provides a comfortable framework within which development programs can be planned and the kinds of questions and problems this presents, see, Pigg (1992).

74. See Jackson (1995). I am indebted to E.T Jackson for making available a copy of this paper and other valuable publications on NORRIP to me.


76. See Gariba and Jackson (1994, p. 128).

77. See Rahnema, “Participation” in Sachs (1992, p. 120).

78. In a government directive during the 1993 fiscal year, the DCD as part of a retrenchment program was required to reduce staff levels by over 20%, although, the DCD staff levels in the two districts, given the priority needs of NORRIP, were protected. As the monitors pointed out it is unlikely that such protection will be available in the future.
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