



INTERNATIONAL  
FOOD POLICY  
RESEARCH  
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**IFPRI Discussion Paper 01401**

**December 2014**

## **Improving the Food Policy Process**

**Lessons from Capacity Strengthening of Parliamentarians in Ghana**

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## INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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## **ABSTRACT**

Evidence-based policymaking has been a critical aspect of development strategy for more than 20 years in developing countries. Yet the assumption that policymakers will automatically adopt and use evidence made available to them in the process of policymaking may not be valid in all contexts. Strengthening the key actors and players of the policy process is one way to improve evidence-informed policymaking. In this paper, we document an approach to capacity strengthening of parliamentarians in Ghana and attempt to gauge to what extent and under what conditions such investments could lead to better debates and informed policymaking to promote growth and poverty reduction. We traced a group of Ghanaian parliamentarians to draw lessons after their study and exposure visit to India. Exposure visits changed participants' knowledge, outlook, and thinking toward agricultural policies. While knowledge gained was useful, participants, on their return, faced significant inertia of the policy system to move their ideas forward. Understanding the mechanics of the policy process, involving participants early on to decide on their capacity needs, and continued follow-up in the policy process can contribute to successful strengthening of the policy process.

**Keywords:** food policy process, capacity strengthening, parliamentarians, Ghana

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The authors would like to thank the participants in the capacity-strengthening program for taking time for the interviews conducted that enabled identification of lessons documented in this paper. The authors are also thankful to the leaders of the institutions and organizations in India that hosted the participants in the program studied in this paper.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CSO	civil society organization
DCE	district chief executive
DDA	district director of agriculture
FASDEP II	Food and Agriculture Sector Development Strategy
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IT	information technology
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
MP	member of Parliament
NCAP	National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research
PPMED	Policy, Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Division



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Adopting policies that are growth oriented and poverty reducing requires evidence based on research and analysis. Yet the assumption that policymakers will automatically adopt appropriate policies if presented with research-based evidence on policy alternatives no longer seems valid. Recently, the importance of developing leadership and capacity of parliamentarians and other stakeholders to strengthen the policymaking and evaluation processes has been emphasized. Strengthening actors and players in the policy processes can help in improving the quality of policy debates and dialogues and help in building consensus through informed consultations.

Several countries in Africa south of the Sahara have seen dramatic change in their political system—moving from authoritarian or military rule toward democracy. Parliamentarians from both the ruling party and the opposition parties now have the opportunity to debate the issues that are relevant for their constituencies. However, parliamentarians in presidential systems have not managed to play as strong a role in influencing effective policy as they could. This is partly due to information and capacity constraints they face in terms of full understanding of the issues and the lessons from other countries that have addressed policy changes in the past.

The development community has recognized the need for strengthening the role of parliamentarians for some time (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2008; Babu and Ergeneman 2005). For example, the African Capacity Building Foundation has been conducting capacity development programs for parliamentarians for more than a decade (African Capacity Building Foundation 2004). The World Bank Institute has been implementing its Parliamentary Strengthening Program to enhance the capacity and role of parliamentary committees in the planning of, budgeting for, and engagement with civil societies (Stapenhurst 2004). As part of its Tunis declaration, the African Development Bank offered a capacity development program for West African parliamentarians in improving sustainability and accountability in the program in the health sector (African Development Bank 2014).

This paper attempts to gauge to what extent and under what conditions investing in strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians can lead to better debates and the formulation of policies that promote growth and poverty reduction, using a capacity development program for Ghanaian parliamentary stakeholders in agriculture that centered on a study tour of India. We trace the parliamentarians who participated in the capacity development program for their insights and gains and to understand how such capacity enables them to perform their functions better. We also attempt to develop an understanding of the current policy process in Ghana as well as its structure and level of functioning and to determine whether the study tour was impactful on the Ghanaian policy process and, if so, through which channels (individual, organizational, systemwide). It is also useful to identify obstructions within the policy process that prevent acquired knowledge and skills from being effectively used. Knowledge about such issues can be helpful in designing future capacity development programs.

1. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to understand the benefits of strengthening the agriculture policy-planning process of Ghana, undertaken through exposure visits of Ghanaian parliamentarians to India and a five-day training program. In trying to achieve that broad objective, the study addresses six five specific questions:
2. Did the visits to India make any impact on the capacity of the parliamentarians to understand and analyze policy issues?
3. After returning from India, to what extent were participants able to use their experiences to contribute to the policy process?
4. How can similar capacity development programs be made more effective in the future?

5. How are parliamentarians involved in the policy process for agriculture in Ghana, and is the process functioning well?
6. What changes in the policy process are necessary to enable parliamentarians to effectively contribute to influencing appropriate policies?
7. What lessons can be drawn from the structure of the Indian Parliament and the role of the Standing Committee on Agriculture to improve the policy process in Ghana?

The paper is organized as follows: A conceptual framework showing the relationships of various actors and players in the policy process to policy outcomes as well as an analysis of this system is presented in Section 2. This section also includes an examination of the structure and function of India's Standing Committee on Agriculture and lessons learned that are applicable to improving the policy process in Ghana. Section 3 describes the study program that took the Ghanaian parliamentarians and officials to India. Using the conceptual framework as a basis, Section 4 discusses the impacts of the study tour on the participants and their roles in the policy process while evaluating the program. Section 5 presents a summary and conclusion.

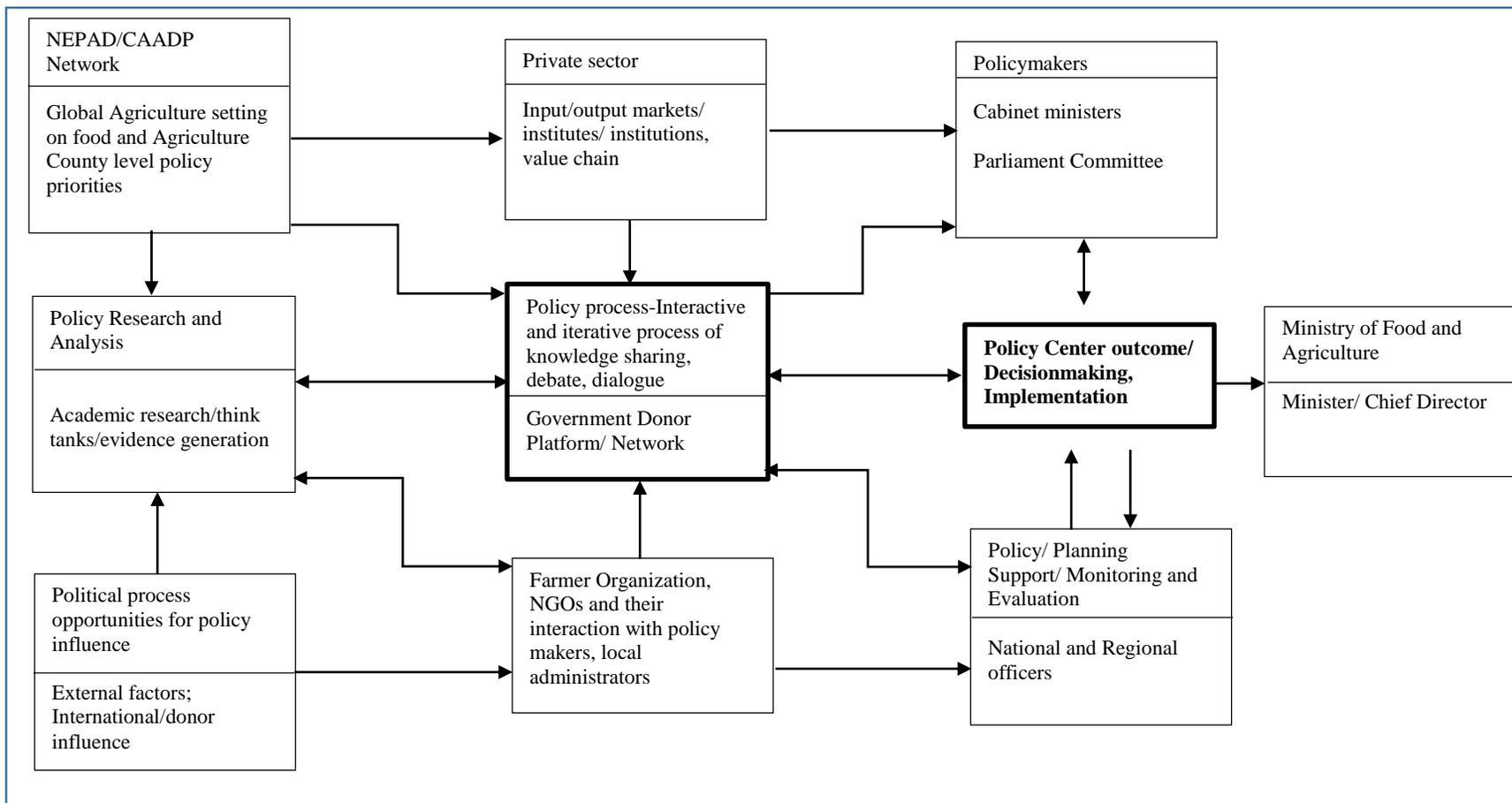
## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Enhancing the knowledge of various actors and players in the policy process is important for several reasons. First, enhancing the knowledge of various groups that interact in the policy process helps improve the quality of the debate. Although the sources of evidence may differ and have contradicting recommendations, enhanced capacity to understand the qualitative differences in evidence from various sources helps to develop common understanding. Second, the variations in capacity among the players could result in poor engagement of certain segments of actors, thereby resulting in lopsided policy conclusions.

There is a large body of literature that analyzes the political economy of the policymaking process (Watson 2013; Sabatier 2007; Meier 1991). The political economy of the policy process recognizes that agenda setting depends on the interaction of ideas and institutions. Such interaction further depends on the beliefs of the actors and players about the policy issues, their historical understanding of the issues, and the resources they have at their disposal to address such issues. Studies of the policy process often identify the actors and players and what role they play in a specific policy context (Birner, Gupta, and Sharma 2011). The role they play depends on the benefits and losses to various groups and the magnitude of such losses and gains from participating in the policy process. The gains could be political or financial, although they often reinforce each other. Other political economy studies address issues related to the role of political institutions such as parliamentary committees and political games of various players in the policy process (Rausser and Swinnen 2011; Bates and Block 2010).

In this paper we use a simple conceptual framework to identify how various actors and players interact in the policy process and how their capacities could be enhanced (Figure 2.1). This framework also highlights several key features that are often identified in aid effectiveness studies such as the role of strategic analysis, inclusive stakeholder participation, joint reviews of progress, and mutual accountability of the development partners. Various actors and players play their role in all these activities with varying degrees of intensity and knowledge levels. The extent to which each actor or organization contributes to the policy system depends on the actor's own capacity and the capacity of the system to facilitate the actor's involvement effectively. Capacity-strengthening programs designed and implemented by international agencies aim to improve the capacity of one or several sets of players in the policy process. To adapt to emerging issues and remain relevant to the policy system, all organizations must take on some degree of both organizational and institutional capacity-building activities. The framework also draws on broad capacity development approaches such as collaborative capacity development (UNDP 2007, organizational capacity (Baser and Morgan 2008), and aid effectiveness perspectives (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2009) to explore why under certain conditions capacity development investments have better payoffs than others. The key insight is that when capacity development is linked to the problems of the constituencies of the participants and the knowledge gained could be immediately applied for solving the challenges they are facing, then there is a high likelihood that the information gained will be acted on.

**Figure 2.1 A stylized framework of the food and agriculture policy process in Ghana**



Source: Authors.

Note: NEPAD/CAADP = New Partnership for African Development/Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program; NGO = Non-Governmental Organizations.

In the context of a developing African country such as Ghana, global development priorities such as achieving Millennium Development Goals and regional priorities such as the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) tend to influence the policy process and strategies. Country-specific priorities are currently guided by the Food and Agriculture Sector Development Strategy (FASDEP II), created and implemented by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA). This was designed to meet the targets established by CAADP as well as the Millennium Development Goals. FASDEP II is planned to be implemented through funding from the Medium Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan, which will be facilitated by MoFA. Such deliberate and coordinated internal and external policy and agenda setting helps local policy research and analysis to guide the process of evidence generation to address various policy options. However, they depend mostly on external sources of funds for their policy research and analysis. Policy research and analysis thus depend on donor funding and also could be to some extent influenced by the priorities of the external actors. These entities are described below and are depicted in the leftmost column in Figure 2.1.

Within MoFA there are several groups working to ensure the successful implementation of both federal and global policies and programs. The policy process is guided by the Policy, Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Division (PPMED), whose main function is to develop and analyze agricultural policies and programs as well as measure the impact of these strategies. PPMED contains five divisions, including a dedicated Policy Planning and Analysis Office as well as a Monitoring, Evaluation and Coordination office.

In addition to groups within MoFA, other federal organizations play major roles in the food policy process. The Agriculture Sector Working Group is a coordinating body established to bring together local and regional development partners such as civil society organizations (CSOs). To coordinate efforts between federal ministries, the National Development Planning Commission was established and was also involved in the creation of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategies, which are government wide initiatives. In addition, the Ministry of Environment, Science, and Technology is a key player in the policy process. Research conducted by the Ministry of Environment, Science, and Technology provides the scientific evidence base for policymaking, especially surrounding issues of soil, water, crop science, and production technology. Another source of evidence needed for informed policymaking is the Ghana Statistical Service, which collects and organizes census and survey data, a valid resource when evidence is needed for policies and programs related to poverty reduction. Within the Parliament, the Parliamentary Committee on Food, Agriculture, and Cocoa Affairs provides leadership and advocacy for agricultural issues.

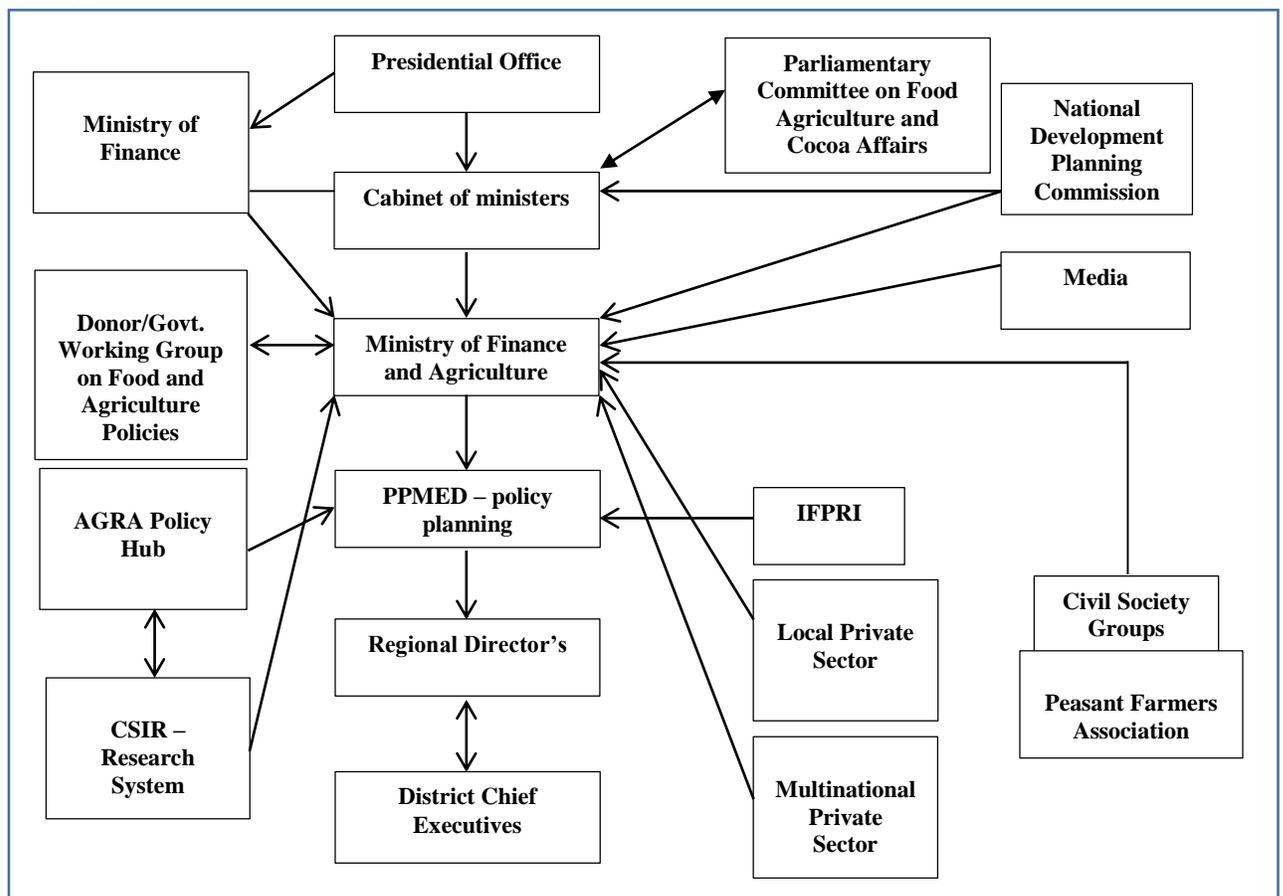
The policy process in Ghana is established not only at the federal level but at the regional and district levels. Regional directorates are gaining influence in the policy process as the federal government shifts to a more decentralized structure. At the local level, district assemblies are the most directly linked to farmers and can provide the most insight into local issues and challenges farmers are facing.

The policy process described above also involves stakeholder consultation, and the interactive process of sharing knowledge, debate, and design through various platforms and networks is given at the center of Figure 2.1. Increasingly, the private sector and CSOs play an important role in the development of policies as these have profound influence on their business and clients. Salifu et al. (2010) estimates that there are more than 10,000 farmer-based organizations and cooperatives to support farmers as well as many more broadly focused nongovernmental organizations and CSOs. Educational institutions and universities are increasingly contributing to the policy conversation in Ghana. The Institute of Statistical, Social, and Economic Research of the University of Ghana undertakes policy-relevant socioeconomic research and participates in monitoring and evaluation programs and policies. The Center for Policy Analysis is a nongovernmental think tank that generates analyses of Ghanaian policy issues, especially those related to macroeconomic issues and fiscal policy, but its research also covers the agricultural sector and marginalized groups as its vision focuses on affecting poverty-reduction policy.

Although the effectiveness of their participation differs depending on their position in the policy landscape and political and socioeconomic settings, they could be effective forces in the implementation of policies and programs working with the public sector. Elected officials and cabinet ministers are ultimately responsible for approving policies and modifying them when they do not yield the desired results. They, however, work through the sectoral ministries, which are responsible for implementation of the policies. The supporting entities for the decision making process within the sectoral and related ministries and other statistical agencies also need to be recognized for their roles in the policy process. The collective efforts of these entities result in policy outcomes. However, it should be noted that the policy processes are not always such simple interactions among these players. The nature and intensity of their roles and their influence depending on the political economy context, type of policy under consideration, and level of capacity of these entities to function as credible actors in the policy processes all vary.

The specific policy process mapping for the Ghanaian food and agricultural sector is given in Figure 2.2. Mapping of the various players and actors in the policy process and understanding the level of their influence can help in studying their capacity needs and how enhancing their capacities could help in improving the effectiveness of the policy process and can result in improved action by them. For the capacity-strengthening efforts analyzed in this paper, individuals from the parliamentary committee along with others were targeted. The rest of this section deals with the methodology used in this study.

**Figure 2.2 Actors and players in the policy process in Ghanaian agriculture and their linkages**



Source: Authors.

Note: AGRA = Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa; PPMED = Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division; IFPRI = International Food Policy Research institute; CSIR = Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

## Methodology

The evaluation of the benefits of strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians was conducted ex post, through face-to-face interviews. Because of the small sample size it was feasible to conduct extensive interviewing to identify benefits from the International Food Policy Research Institute's (IFPRI's) Capacity Strengthening program. Given that the main objective of the capacity-strengthening effort was to help improve the policy process to result in improved policy outcomes, a relatively small number of participants were involved, and the assessment was more in the nature of an exploration, we decided to use qualitative methodology (Hajer 2006).

In-depth, ethnographic, or semistructured interviews were conducted with the participants who had undergone the capacity-building effort as well as stakeholders, those who had worked with the participants as colleagues (peers), superiors, or subordinates and were believed to have influence and a stake in the policymaking and implementation processes. The participants were interviewed in an environment outside their offices (IFPRI offices in Accra) to keep the discussions confidential and not influenced by their peers.

A key set of prompts and leads used for the participants' interviews is given in Box 2.1. The interviews were free flowing, allowing the interviewees to express themselves freely on broad themes. Very few questions were asked, and only a few prompts or leads were used to smoothly focus the responses on the desired themes. Each interview lasted between one and about one and a half hours. Interviewees were asked for permission to record their interviews on tape. All the interviewees agreed to this without hesitation. In exploring the three broad questions mentioned in the "Objectives of the Study," some prompts or leads were used to focus the interviewees' responses on the issues of interest. They are given in Box 2.1.

### Box 2.1 Key prompts and leads used for participants' interviews

- *The Study Tour itself*
  - What is your recollection of the study tour to India?
  - What are some of the things that come to your mind when you think of that tour?
  - Was there anything specific that turned out to be of use to you in your work here after your return, till now?
  - Is there anything that you think might be of use in future?
- *Improving the Study Tour*
  - What could be done differently for the Study Tour for it to be more useful for your work or professional development?
  - Are there any things, that you can recollect, that needed to be done, in addition to what was done, to make the Tour more useful for you?
- *The Policy Process*
  - Please describe your understanding of how the policy process in Ghana works.
  - Is there any group, level, function, or department that exercises strong control or influence on the policymaking, and on policy implementation?
  - Who or what are the other groups, levels, functions, or departments that have the potential to influence the policymaking, and policy implementation processes?
  - Given your current position and situation, what sort of opportunities do you have for influencing the policymaking, and policy implementation processes?
  - Given your assessment of your future position and situation, what sort of opportunities might you have for influencing the policymaking, and policy implementation processes?

Source: Authors

Three researchers, two of whom were also the interviewers, made notes. The interviewers reviewed the notes after the interview. The recorded interviews were transcribed. The transcripts were content analyzed to determine the common themes or threads that emerged and to draw out other findings (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1998). In analyzing the transcripts of the interviews, efforts were made to identify the patterns of expression that relate to a common set of lessons the participants shared. Further, the interview transcripts were analyzed to identify key policy issues and how the capacity-strengthening program helped them to perform their functions and what conditions were helpful in doing so. Similar approaches to analysis of qualitative data have been recommended for studies with similar objectives (Blee and Taylor 2002).

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAM

To build the capacity of parliamentarians, ministry officials, and other stakeholders to contribute to the agricultural policymaking process in Ghana, IFPRI's Ghana Strategy Support Program facilitated a study tour to India. While the study tour initially planned to visit Burkina Faso and Kenya as well, only India was feasible. The trip brought a total of 18 officials to India: 8 members of Parliament (MPs) and 2 clerks from the Parliamentary Select Committee on Food, Agriculture and Cocoa affairs, including the committee chairman and vice chairman; 5 officials from MoFA; an agricultural researcher; the managing director of processing company; and a leading farmer. The program leader of the Ghana Strategy Support Program accompanied participants on the trip to help guide discussions toward applying the lessons from India's policies and programs to Ghanaian agriculture.

Lessons for Ghana can be drawn from the organization of India's government to facilitate agricultural policies and programs, including within its own Parliament. Within the Parliament of India's Lok Sabha, or House of the People, there is a Standing Committee on Agriculture that aims to advocate for the funding of food policies and programs within the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, and the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying, and Fisheries. This committee reviews the annual reports and budgets of the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, ensuring oversight of these programs.

The objective of the study was to expose participants to policies and programs in India on aspects of agriculture that were relevant to agriculture in Ghana. In New Delhi, participants interacted with policymakers in the Ministry of Agriculture and scientists in the Indian Council of Agricultural Research to understand the policies and strategies that India is employing to develop its agriculture. In Bangalore, they visited a seed producer and fresh vegetable exporter, an organic fertilizer manufacturer, and a watershed development program and discussed policy processes in India at the Indian Institute of Management–Bangalore.

Following the field study, the parliamentarians requested that a training on governance and agribusiness be organized for them. At their request, they were accompanied to this training by five district chief executives (DCEs) and five district directors of agriculture (DDAs). The program consisted of five days of presentations and discussion followed by a two-day visit to Mysore, another site visit within Bangalore, and a final day of discussion. The program focused on two themes: governance and agribusiness development. Governance topics included the domestic and international challenges to governance, maintaining the right balance between government and markets, orienting policies to focus on citizens, public-private partnerships, and policy evaluation. Agribusiness topics focused on international and Indian agricultural policy; creating a supportive environment including finance, infrastructure, and capacity; and including biotechnology, competition, and trade in government policy. Site visits included seed companies, an organic cotton contract farming scheme, a research institution, cocoon (silk) markets, and a dairy-processing center.

## 4. RESULTS FROM THE GHANA CASE STUDY

The results are described in three sections: The Individual, The Program, and The Process. The first section presents the responses pertaining to how the capacity enhancement program affected the participants as individuals and their contributions to the policy-making process. The bulk of this information came from responses to questions 1 and 2, respectively, listed in the objective of the study. The second section, The Program, refers to the participants' perceptions of ways to enhance planning process capacity besides exposure visits and classroom sessions. The participants' suggestions for improvement to the program are also included in this section. These are responses to question 3 listed in the objective of the study. The third section contains the participants' perceptions about how the agricultural policy-planning process currently is in Ghana and how it could be made more effective and relevant to development objectives. Question 4 pertains to the policy-planning process as it currently is, and question 5 pertains to what it should be.

### *The Individual*

To recap, the questions being explored were, "Did the visits to India make any impact on, or difference to, you?" and "Have you been able to contribute to policymaking differently as a result of your visits to India?" Given the unstructured format of the interviews, the responses of the participants were mixed, often overlapping, so it was not always possible to distinctly separate the responses to the two questions. But an attempt is made to present them here as distinctly as possible.

All participants, without exception, said that they had "benefited" from the program. The participants were asked to give specific examples of what was the benefit and how they benefited from it. While some of the participants mentioned general outcomes such as, "My belief that it can be done has been strengthened," and "I developed a belief that it *is* possible and it *can* be done," others gave specific instances. Many participants mentioned tomato growing as an example where takeaways from India could be applied to local practices. Most said they were impressed by what they saw, and some even adopted the new practices they were exposed to. One brought seeds from India and is now growing them, another has changed his practice by not allowing the fruit to touch the ground while on the plant, and yet another said he got so "inspired" that he started tomato cultivation on his farm.

Some of the other benefits mentioned were seeing the use of information technology (IT) in getting information to farmers who are remotely located, availability of agricultural finance and credit, use of hybrid seeds and irrigation systems, government support to agriculture, value addition, and looking at agribusiness rather than only agriculture. Some general comments appreciating the program are the following: "The visit has changed my entire attitude to my work in the ministry. The exposure to how things work in India has energized me." "The trip was an eye opener." "The exposure and trip had a lot of influence on me." "I wouldn't have come but I am here because it has really helped me." "The trip was very useful." "It changed my view on irrigation."

Only a few responses specifically addressed how participants contributed to policymaking differently as a result of their visits to India.

Participants expressed different ways the program influenced their actions based on where they were located in the policy process. One of the two DDAs, who function in the field, stated he initiated many activities<sup>1</sup> in his district as a result of his visits to India, including radio

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<sup>1</sup> He listed as some of the activities radio broadcasts, circulation of mobile phone numbers of all technical and extension staff to farmers and communities, the "Night with Farmers" concept, including weekly weather forecasts in the radio broadcasts, and setting up demonstration plots.

broadcasts, holding a “Night with Farmers,” and establishing demonstration plots. The parliamentarians mentioned participating in parliamentary debates in a better-informed way, more forcefully, and more effectively. One politician was responsible for drafting the agriculture section of his party’s manifesto and stated that he included lessons from India in the manifesto.<sup>2</sup>

The farmers in the group also were influenced to adopt new practices and organize demonstration activities. One farmer made significant changes in his practices for growing tomatoes and even started growing sorghum seeds. Setting up demonstration plots (also called learning plots) appeared to be popular.

Responses also varied depending on the participant’s level in the hierarchy in the political system. Quite a few lower-level participants said clearly that their opportunities to contribute to policymaking were extremely restricted and that all they could do is to make suggestions to their superiors when the opportunity arose.

### ***The Program***

While there was universal appreciation for the classroom sessions and their contents, there seemed to be a general preference for field visits. Although few alternatives to exposure visits and trainings came up, there were many suggestions about what else could be included in the duration of the visits.

Some of the suggestions were obviously prompted by personal interest. A politician whose constituency has a lot of fishing communities suggested that (1) some people from the fishing industry be included for such visits and (2) some fisheries-related projects in India be included in the schedule of the visit. Similarly, a farmer who wanted the visit to be about one month long “for more exploration” said, “The trip should have allowed us to see what farmers are doing starting from land preparation to harvesting, so that we can learn all aspects of the farming process.”

Having the DCE and DDA of the same district go on the visit was widely approved. One DDA whose DCE was on the trip reported exemplary success in the activities that he initiated after the trip and attributed the success to the support of his DCE, whereas another DDA whose DCE was not on the trip lamented, “I gave him my report, but I am not sure if he actually read it.”

Given that policymaking is heavily influenced by politics, whether politicians should be given preference for such exposure visits was explored. Although benefits from such visits by politicians were universally acknowledged, there were different views about the relative importance of different groups. Some illustrative observations follow:

- If the capacity of the members of Parliament are enhanced it will help to formulate policies better especially those from technical departments of MoFA, like extension directorate.
- Not all committee members have enough experience and knowledge in agriculture, so the travel exposure gave them some level of understanding and enriched them even more than those with agricultural background.
- Civil servants implement policies, but political parties initiate the policies; therefore both need to be trained. ... Both sides are very important.
- Will advocate training for civil servants but it will be theoretical considering the governance system in Ghana, because it is the politician who holds onto money.
- Exposure trips and training should be given to both types of people, politicians and nonpoliticians.

The consensus was that exposure is useful for all actors in the supply chain, but it is helpful to “put parliamentarians in the frontline.”

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<sup>2</sup> A perusal of the manifesto showed that this was indeed true although this party lost the election.

Another issue explored was whether the program should focus on individuals or on the system or process of planning. One view was that “institutions should be strengthened because institutions, if strong, can compensate for the people.” Some of the other suggestions included visits to other countries such as Burkina Faso, intermingling field trips and lectures to prevent monotony and boredom, and devoting three days to study how ministries function in India.

### ***The Process***

The process, as mentioned above, was explored in two ways: as is and as it should be, the former focusing on how the planning process for agriculture policy is currently being done and the latter based on how participants would like to see it being done so that it can become more effective and more useful to the country.

### ***How the Process Works***

According to respondents, the policy process in Ghana is characterized by political influence in both budgeting and implementation, lack of funds, inefficient research, and centralized decision making. In broad terms, the policy-planning and budgeting process begins in August–September each year when the Finance Ministry releases the Budget Procedure for the following year and calls for budgets for the following year from all ministries, including agriculture, asking the ministries to submit their budgets by November. MoFA then initiates its own planning process, which is coordinated by its PPMED. PPMED then holds consultations and meetings with a variety of individuals and groups and comes up with the strategic plan, with targets and budgets, for the entire agriculture sector, not only for MoFA. Once the PPMED prepares the strategic plan, it is submitted to the chief director of MoFA, who, with his or her inputs, if any, forwards it to the minister for agriculture.

The minister for agriculture, after his or her approval with whatever changes he or she wants, sends it to the Ministry of Finance (MoF). The MoF compiles such budgets from all ministries and submits a national budget to Parliament. Once Parliament approves it, it then goes to the president for his or her approval. With the president’s approval, the budget becomes law. It comes back to MoF, which is then supposed to release funds. The entire process is supposed to be completed by the end of the year, and the MoF is supposed to start releasing funds from January onward.

The reality, of course, is different. In the year of the study, 2013, the first quarter funds were released only between May and July, according to different dates provided by different respondents.

Based on the responses, making the strategic plan used to be a “desktop” activity until about a year or two ago. The head of the Policy, Planning, and Analysis wing of PPMED used to sit at his or her desk; consult some previous years’ plans, a few books, and so forth; and write up the strategic plan. It seems there used to be consultations with some stakeholders in “the early 1990s,” but all that stopped over the years. The consultation process with stakeholders was revived after the visits to India.<sup>3</sup> Once the consultation process was restarted, it was actively supported by several groups including the Canadian International Development Agency, which also provided financial support; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); and IFPRI.

The current planning process is heavily influenced by politics. All participants, civil servants, farmers, researchers, and politicians themselves unhesitatingly stated that politics plays the major role in the policy-planning process for agriculture. Politics intervenes, according to the participants, at multiple levels. At the top end, it seems that the president calls the finance

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<sup>3</sup> This was said by a young planning assistant from the Policy Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Division of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. The causality implied is possibly a result of his overestimation of the visits.

minister and tells him his priorities, and the MoF then influences the budgetary and disbursement processes accordingly. At another level, when the draft plan goes to the chief director and the minister for agriculture, their inputs are supposed to be based on political considerations.

- Technical people only make proposals from the field, but in the long run it is the politicians who decide on the policies.
- Leading policymakers are making policies for the personal and political interest.
- Minister's opinion is the final word in policymaking process.
- At the end of the day it is the politician who decides the fate of policies and their implementation process.
- Agriculture minister can push some of these things through if he wants to depending on his stature in his political party. Political stature matters.

Respondents had the same concerns with regard to the implementation of policies. Many broadly characterized implementation as inefficient and unreliable and often cited politics as a reason. They suggest that disbursement of funds is largely controlled by a few politicians and budgetary allocations are altered to serve political interests. Many described a culture of power politics where politicians were dependent on their superiors and their parties and therefore were reluctant to suggest alternatives to the party line.

*"I am talking like this because I am in a room; if it were to be a public forum my voice would have changed. But now that I am out of Parliament and do not want to return, I can say anything to some extent."*

*"Once you are in Parliament, you cannot speak your mind. If you do that, you step on big toes and they start keeping you out."*

Parties also felt compelled to advocate different policies in their manifestos because they prioritized differentiating themselves from competing parties' policies rather than including the ones they thought would be most beneficial.

*"Every political party has its own manifesto instead of having in plan a long-term national development plan accepted by all parties."*

*"There should be laid down policy framework, which all political parties in government will follow, but every party comes out with manifesto, each government wants to its own things and does [not] want to continue programs of their predecessors."*

*"Political parties in power do not use them [policy plan documents] as their work plan because each has its own plan, which is different from the national policy."*

Lack of funds in general was also voiced as a constraint, with claims that by July only 37–40 percent of the funds MoFA had requested had been released, which creates a situation where ministries are paying their staff without any activities to conduct. District officials complained of understaffed offices and lack of general resources.

*"MoFA got 37–40 percent of what it had asked for. The first quarter disbursement came only in July. This leads to people working with the ministry of agriculture, sitting in their offices and not working because they probably only have their salaries and no money to work with."*

*"At the end of the day it is the politician who decides the fate of policies and their implementation process."*

Many respondents cited bureaucracy as delaying implementation of policies as well as lack of initiative by civil servants. Others also mentioned that despite decentralization efforts, activities needed to be approved in Accra before taking place, which often complicated and delayed implementation. There also were accusations of the government's paying lip service to agriculture while having little desire to enact any change within the sector.

*"[There is] a lot of bureaucracy in the policy implementation process, and so our policies do not bear results."*

*"The challenge is the ability of the public servants to take the bull by the horn."*

*"The problem with the system of governance. The system decentralization is being proposed, but everything is still controlled by Accra, resulting in process delays, which affects implementation of activities."*

*Agriculture is suffering because people are paying lip services to the sector and nothing substantial is going on.*

*"Agriculture in Ghana is just about workshops and drawing plans, which eventually end up the on shelf and never make headway to help farmers."*

In addition to the above, there were also some general, broad-based observations on the process of policy planning and its implementation. Some of these are mentioned below as examples:

*"Agriculture in Ghana is just about workshops and drawing plans, which eventually end up the on shelf and never make headway to help farmers."*

*"Our policies in Ghana are not straightforward, and there are problems with them."*

*"Policymakers and implementers do not involve farmers before making decisions."*

*"Policies in Ghana are not favoring farmers."*

*"In Ghana there [is] no one available to give agricultural advice, apart from technical officers of MoFA on the field who are also few; meanwhile two-thirds of Ghana's population is in agriculture."*

*"ADB—Agricultural Development Bank—in Ghana has now become a commercial bank."*

*"There is indiscipline in the system, and our institutions are not working."*

*"We have the Third World's mindset: welfare state, indiscipline, poorly functioning institutions."*

*"The country is moving to a lower equilibrium."*

*"Planners do not know the field conditions properly."*

*"Specific planning for different species and geographies is not done."*

*"Development partners not interested in Ghana because we have graded ourselves as lower-middle-income country, and donor support will be to low income countries."*

*"Cost of doing business in agriculture is high—risks, access to the farm—that is why investors are not putting their money in there."*

### ***How the Process Should Work***

Despite the interviewers' requesting that respondents focus on the process, most of the responses to question 5 seemed to refer to the "content" of policy planning for agriculture. These included citing the need for better infrastructure, especially roads and water; crop insurance and farm subsidies; value addition; and establishing demonstration plots. One of the main process issues mentioned was how policy research could be made more effective and accessible by giving the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) a policy research mandate, similar to what was seen at the National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research (NCAP) in India on the study visit. This suggests that such visits can be effective not only for exposing participants to specific policies but toward the policy process as a whole. Others suggested more coordination to make research better available to policymakers and choosing to undertake research that meets the priorities of farmers.

*"Agricultural economic policies research has informed India's policy decisionmaking process. In Ghana agricultural policy research system is lacking, Will be laudable NCAP of India can be replicated in Ghana to provide support for policy. Maybe CSIR can replicate the NCAP of India, but CSIR is not effective."*

*"[There is a] disconnect between researchers and farmers and between agriculture research institutions and MoFA. Researchers are doing research for their own benefits but this is not really linked to what farmers."*

*"Access to whatever policy research exists is totally missing—even annual reports of the MoFA are not available."*

*"Knowledge management needs to be organized in MoFA."*

A few suggestions were also made about shifting responsibilities to different ministries, such as placing CSIR and the Cocoa Board under MoFA. However, respondents also claimed that the agricultural policy decisionmaking needed to be more decentralized, implying that MoFA should continue devolving responsibilities to the regional and district levels. One respondent claimed that he had spoken out in support of realigning ministries but was met with opposition from other politicians.

*"[I] wanted to move all the research institutes under the ministry, but at cabinet, it was refused. Cabinet ministers refused to vote for it. The Ministry of Science and Environment also opposed it as the Council for Scientific and Industrial research, which has most of the agriculture research institutions, is under that ministry. That meant the Ministry of Environment would have virtually collapsed. Other people who were in education also did not want that to be done."*

*"Cocoa sector is an island in Ghana; should be integrated with other crops and should be in the MoFA instead of being under the Ministry of Finance."*

Many respondents suggested that strengthening the advocacy voices of farmer organizations, civil society, and the media would improve the policymaking process. They cited the Indian government's attempts to consult with commercial farmers and farmer organizations as an example.

*“Farmers should be the key in policy planning and decisionmaking.”*

*“There is a need to call on farmers and seek their views and see how compatible the policies are with what the farmers really want.”*

It was suggested that farmer associations come together to form an umbrella organization to exert greater influence since the current organizations do not seem to be making the desired impact individually.

*“Government should be listening to farmer groups and provides them with the needed support policywise because policies like fertilizer subsidies do not favor them.”*

*“Empowering farmers by organizing them is the way to go.”*

*There are four or five farm-related associations. ... Need to form an Apex Body to have a greater voice.*

*“In India the government calls the commercial farmers and other farmer organizations to a discussion table to agree on policy issues before implementing them.”*

*“In addition to increasing the input of civil society, it was also suggested that the government should reduce influence from donors and multinational corporations by setting its own priorities in terms of agricultural policies.”*

*“In negotiation for donor funding it is the donor partners who decide what the money is used for based on their interest. In Ghana we do not have the capacity to decide what we want for the donors to support us. Donors put their own interest first as conditions to the loans they give. We should be more assertive in negotiations with donors. Political will, needed for being assertive with donors, is missing in Ghana.”*

*“Ghana needs to separate the multinational from local industries and limit their operation because some of the foreign companies may be too big for the economy.”*

On a similar note, respondents also suggested legislative reform to involve more parliamentarians in the budgeting and policy process. One indicated that a “budget act” had already been proposed to ensure that the budgeting process was not dominated by the executive branch. Another suggested that MPs no longer be allowed to be appointed ministers to ensure that they focus on representing their constituents rather than on their ambition for a ministerial post.

*“A budget act is under process whereby MPs will have inputs into the national budget formulation process. The executive arms of government alone will not determine the content of the budget before it is debated and approved by the Parliament.”*

*“The only way is to amend the constitution such that by law MPs should not be appointed as ministers so that then MPs are just in Parliament to fight for their constituents. A lot of people have a number of things to offer, but because of their positions in partisan politics they cannot make drastic changes.”*

Finally, participants proposed setting up an Indo-Ghanaian Business Council that could be operated by the government, the private sector, or a partnership, which would promote investment partnerships and continue exposing Ghanaians to Indian agriculture through programs such as internships.

### ***Policy Suggestions***

Although participants were asked to comment on potential improvements to the policy process, most of the responses given presented specific policy areas where Ghana can learn from India. Infrastructure appeared to be the most significant of these areas, specifically in terms of roads, power, irrigation and water, and IT. Comments about roads suggested focusing on farm tracks, leading from farms to villages, in addition to feeder roads, which connect villages to towns.

*“There is no institution [department or ministry] responsible for laying and maintaining farm tracks.”*

*“Farmers carry produce over long distances on their heads and [the younger generation] gets discouraged [from entering] farming.”*

Expanding rural electrification beyond the village level was mentioned as necessary to power on-farm operations such as irrigation.

*“Rural electrification project ends only at the village level. [There is] no power for doing irrigation half a kilometer from the village where the farmer may have access to a river and want to irrigate his farm.”*

Other comments about irrigation suggested making it more accessible to commercial farmers, proper water table management, and expanding research on irrigation and water management.

*“Large-scale farmers are going down in number in Ghana. The reason is because rainfed agriculture has a high risk of crop failure, so need for small-scale irrigation, in which government should help.”*

*“Recharging the water table should be done.”*

*“There aren’t a lot of water resources in Ghana, like India, and we are not making the best of what we have. With the recent climatic changes there is the need to research and find out how we can pay attention to irrigation and even irrigation that conserves water such as drip irrigation that gives just enough water required for the crop. Without irrigation, we subject ourselves to a lot of uncertainties”.*

For IT, one Ghanaian suggested replicating remote agricultural information centers, which India has begun to implement.

*“India has remote agricultural information centers. Ghana should also have them.”<sup>4</sup>*

*“Use of IT in India was very impressive: doctor in Bangalore treating patient in a faraway village. Also used for agriculture extension.”*

Another important area brought up was agricultural finance, focusing on insurance and subsidies. The Ghanaian delegation was impressed by crop insurance in India and suggested government collaboration with financial institutions to make it available to farmers in Ghana. Others also suggested increasing direct subsidies to agriculture as a potential lesson from India, specifically in terms of fertilizer (which is already subsidized in Ghana) and irrigation.

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<sup>4</sup> This observation was by a scientist in the Savannah Agriculture Research Institute. India is also experimenting with such stations, and there are not too many of them at present.

*“Interest rates for agricultural credit in India are very low. [It] could be feasible in Ghana but can happen [only] if aligned with public insurance system; thus agricultural credit/finance must go along with insurance for it to be feasible.”*

*“Block Farm Program, where inputs are given to farmers and requiring them to back in kind, does not seem to be working because farmers are not paying back, as result of crop failure, and in some cases they get lower yields. So the recovery rates were very low, and this is creating social tensions between MoFA and some farmers. Agricultural insurance is the answer to this. This was a very fruitful discovery.”*

*“The sort of support by Indian government to its farmers is what Ghana is lacking, like guarantee price supports.”*

*“Government support is very critical to ensure all these programs to succeed as [he] also learnt from Chinese system. [India gives] high level of subsidies to agricultural entrepreneurs including fertilizer subsidies, and subsidies on irrigation equipment.”*

Demonstration plots were also commonly suggested by participants in the study visit. One person suggested that each MP establish a demonstration plot in his or her constituency to introduce new crops and practices to local farmers.

*“In addition to exposure trips and training programs, demonstration projects by politicians in their constituencies can be a good way to push people to adopt the idea. Can be done by done by involving youth, by using their common fund, and thus becoming an agent of development.”*

*“Another suggestion was to increase agricultural processing and value addition in Ghana, especially in the cocoa sector, to keep Ghana competitive with other nations such as Brazil.”*

*“Must think of agribusiness rather than only agriculture; value addition and finished product for the final consumer are a must.”*

*“Brazil may overtake Ghana in cocoa production. The only solution is for Ghana to adopt the agribusiness aspect of adding value to the cocoa as a finished product.”*

In summary, the existing process of policy planning for agriculture is highly influenced by politics. Policies are often not implemented as planned or cannot be implemented for a variety of reasons. Political power structures, lack of funds or availability of funds at the appropriate time, dissonance between manifestos of different political parties, and bureaucratic delays are some of the factors impeding effective policy planning and implementation. Agricultural research institutions are not conducting research relevant to the needs of farmers and policymakers and failing to make the research that is carried out accessible. A lack of awareness by politicians, paying only lip service to agriculture, and overly centralized governance are other factors that adversely affect policy planning for agriculture and its implementation.

Respondents suggested a few ways of improving the policy process in Ghana, including strengthening the research system, increasing farmer advocacy while building independence from corporate and donor influence, giving CSIR a policy research mandate, reassigning research and the cocoa sector to MoFA, and legislative reform giving MPs a greater role in the budgeting process. There were also many policy areas that the study tour motivated participants to consider, most significantly infrastructure. Respondents were impressed by India’s rural roads, on-farm power, irrigation, and rural IT services. Other policies mentioned were crop insurance and increasing subsidies for fertilizer and irrigation, promoting processing and value addition, and establishing more demonstration plots.

## **Policy System/Process Analysis**

The greatest weakness in the food policy process in Ghana is currently the linkages between the different types of players. Weak linkages between the government and institutions such as think tanks or universities are partially caused by the lack of incentive for local capacity. Due to a lack of communication or influence at the federal level, Ghanaian researchers and technical professionals have little to no incentive to increase the relevance of their research to current policy issues or to improve communication of the results of this research to policymakers. Increasing the cooperation between the federal government and research and education institutions could also serve to build the capacity of government and parliamentary officials, as universities are typically the best source for trainers. Another potential solution to this problem would be to strengthen the capacity of the Agriculture Sector Working Group to report on and advocate for specific issues based on the evidence generated by local researchers. To use this data to support broader policies such as FASDEP II, there is the need for high-quality research and analysis within MoFA. This could be achieved by strengthening the capacity of PPMED to use research to monitor and evaluate the performance of its programs.

Improving the policy process involves not only building individual capacity but also improving the organizational structure of the government itself. As it stands now, the poor organization of the central government facilitates a culture of underperformance. This is caused by the many regulations around public-sector employment as well as low salaries, which illustrates the need for incentives to motivate a stronger work ethic and encourage coordination between offices. Annual reviews and sectorwide assessments can improve mutual accountability across the sector while simultaneously generating the information required for measuring the progress of programs and policies. This approach also aims to increase the quality of data, which in turn would increase the ability to conduct policy analysis.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS FOR CAPACITY STRENGTHENING IN GHANA

The following conclusions for strengthening the policy process for Ghana emerge from the study:

1. Exposure visits seem to have changed participants' knowledge, outlook, and thinking toward agricultural policies. Participants returned with many suggestions on a wide range of general and specific policy areas. In general, participants expressed that agriculture needs to be given more priority in Ghana and that Ghana should increase its focus on agribusiness and pay better attention to the needs of farmers. Specifically, they expressed that their visit to India had made them interested in investment in agricultural infrastructure, agricultural finance and subsidies, crop insurance, and value addition.
2. Some participants translated their takeaways into action, which included the adoption of new crops and practices by some of the farmers who went on the visits, an official's implementing new projects in his district, and an MP's including recommendations from the visit in his party's manifesto. However, many others faced significant inertia toward moving their new ideas forward on return.
3. All participants expressed satisfaction with the visit to India, with some stating that the trip was inspirational. Many suggested placing a greater emphasis on field visits rather than classroom learning, and there were also many suggestions about which officials should be taken on exposure visits. There was a general consensus that MPs lacked specific knowledge about agriculture and would benefit greatly from going, although civil servants should not be excluded. Responses also suggested including a technical agricultural person and his or her direct superior to influence the superior to greater appreciate the recommendations of the technical person.

It would be useful to involve intended beneficiaries in the early stages of planning the capacity enhancement effort, such as deciding which activities to include. Continued follow-up activities after the visit are also needed to link the knowledge gained to the actual policy development process. A before-and-after assessment of policy planning capacity would also be useful in judging the efficacy of the effort if there were reliable assessment methodologies and data collected to achieve such an objective.

1. The process of policy planning for agriculture is a complex, multilayered process with multiple stakeholders that does not always go as planned and is a heavily political process. Understanding the actual mechanics of the process is essential before an appropriately focused effort to strengthen the process is attempted. Many practical, evidence-based suggestions are either ignored or never proposed in the first place due to political considerations. Respondents described a system in which higher-ranking officials set the tone for the policy discourse and MPs often lack the political stature to propose an alternative to what comes down from above. Political parties also compete with one another through their manifestos, which influences them to include different policy proposals for the sake of differentiating themselves rather than basing proposals on evidence or expected impact. Policies often suffer from poor implementation due to lack of or delays in funds in addition to accusations of lip service from respondents.
2. In general, there seemed to be more suggestions about specific policy steps to take rather than proposed changes to the actual process. However, a number of significant suggestions were proposed. One was reorganizing the organizational arrangement of agriculture within government, including integrating the Cocoa

Board and research institutions into MoFA, while also giving more influence to MPs in the budgeting process. There was also a call for the government to make agriculture a serious priority and to focus on empowering farmers to participate in the policy discourse while establishing independence from donor and corporate influence. However, it remains to be seen how strongly these steps will be advocated and whether they will be appreciated and implemented.

3. Enhancing policy planning capacity and strengthening the policy-planning process are long-term endeavors. Relatively short-term visible effects can be expected if at least some of the participants remain in positions of real influence. However, nearly half of the MPs who went on the visits lost in the 2013 elections. Therefore, it would be useful to conduct visits earlier in the term to both orient newly elected MPs and ensure that participants in these visits have time to influence policy action.

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