**Danida support to Decentralization and Democratization**

**Basic Information**

**Support at-a-glance**

***Duration of support:***

1993 – 2022

***Total disbursement:***

DKK 1 billion (approx.)

***Key national partners:***

Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Office of the Head of Local Government Service, Electoral Commission, National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana, Institute of Local Government Studies, Ghana Audit Service, and Institute of Democratic Governance (IDEG).

***Geographical coverage:***

Volta, Upper West, Eastern, Central, Greater Accra and Northern Region benefitted from the initial project-based and programme support. All regions have benefitted from the support to DDF and IDEG.

***Key Outcomes:***

* Strengthened capacity of the Local Government Service at national, regional and district level.
* Significant improvement of infrastructure at the local level through DDF. From 2009 to 2017, a total of 5,841 basic service infrastructural projects had been initiated at the local level in various sectors, incl. education, agriculture, water, roads, sanitation, energy and governance.
* DDF together with its performance-based features have been integration into the District Assemblies’ Common Fund.
* Foundation laid for future referendum about direct elections at decentralised level.
* Production of a documentation study of Danida’s 26 years of support to governance, incl. decentralization in Ghana (link below).

Danida support to decentralization and democratization in Ghana dates back to 1993. Main activities under this project-based support included provision of rural water and sanitation facilities; primary healthcare services; feeder roads rehabilitation; and extension of electricity supply. Assistance was also given to the Electoral Commission on voter registration to enhance the democratization process.

The next phases of the support was through the Danish Support to District Assemblies Phase I (DSDA I: 1998-1999) and Phase II (DSDA II: 1999-2003). Main activities included capacity building at the national level for the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (policy analysis, human resource development, planning and monitoring); the National Association of Local Authorities in Ghana (NALAG) (research and advocacy regarding the decentralisation process); and the Institute of Local Government Studies (monitoring). Other activities included strengthening the human resource capacity at the regional level and at the district level capacity in their roles and responsibilities including public financial management.

Danida continued support to decentralization under our Good Governance and Human Rights Programme Phase I (GGHRP I: 2004-2008), in which the main activities included institutional support to key institutions implementing the decentralization reforms; strengthening fiscal decentralization through establishing conditions for the rollout of the District Development Facility (DDF) – a performance-based grant mechanism, which seeks to address key problems of inadequate resources and low human capacity for sustained development at the district level. In addition, a Danida Adviser was positioned at the Decentralization Secretariat of the Ministry of Local Government to assist with the review and implementation of the national decentralization action plan (2003-2005).

A key feature of Danida’s next phase of support to decentralization under the Local Service Delivery and Governance Programme (LSDGP: 2009-2013) was the support to the newly established DDF. This was done together with support from the government of Ghana and development partners (i.e. Germany, France, Canada and later Switzerland). Other activities supported included decentralized service delivery in the areas of rural roads, rural water supply and sanitation and centralized and decentralized institutional support among others. Based upon request, a Danida adviser was provided to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and another provided to the Office of the Head of Local Government Service. Both advisers were contracted for fixed periods over the entire duration of the programme to help build capacity in both institutions. In addition, the Danida Fellowship Centre provided training for a substantial number of staff from the local government service (national, regional and local level) both in Denmark and in Ghana.

After more than 20 years in the decentralization sector, the Rights to Services and Good Governance Programme (2014-2018) was formulated as an exit programme to Danida’s support to decentralization. This programme continued with support to DDF and provision of Danida advisers to both the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the Office of the Head of Local Government Service for more than three years of the programme. Danida also provided core funding to the Institute of Democratic Governance (IDEG), a local NGO, mainly in its advocacy role towards campaigning for transformational local governance and inclusive democratic development at the local level. This was in line with Danida’s support to political decentralization and specifically that of electing local governments who will be held directly accountable by their constituencies for the services they deliver.

The support to IDEG’s effort to provide information on the prospects for direct election to District Councils in the future was continued as part of a new civil society programme (2019-22).

**Results and Key Achievements**

The Joint Evaluation of the Ghana-Denmark Development Cooperation (1996-2000) noted that Danida’s substantial work in decentralization prior to focusing on policy changes and changes in institutional frameworks was a comparative advantage. In addition, the Evaluation stated that, “Danida’s influence and impact on policy changes and changes in the institutional framework that help increase aid effectiveness have been commendable.” The Evaluation of the Ghana-Denmark Partnership (2007-2017) also noted that Danida’s consistent support to decentralisation over many years had produced some transformative changes. It further stated that although DDF had not systematically measured the impact of its projects, district spot checks have provided evidence that beneficiaries perceive the projects to have improved the community situation and quality of life. Danida’s support to decentralization, incl. support to DDF, has contributed to changes in policies/strategies/procedures and plans including the provision of discretionary funding to the districts to provide harmonised capacity building and to promote issues such as transparency and accountability among others. At the end of 2017, a total of 5,841 basic service infrastructural projects had been initiated at the local level nationwide since the inception of DDF in 2009 with a completion rate of 97%.Educational infrastructure (mainly primary level classroom blocks) had the highest share with 2,328 projects representing 39.9%. This was followed by sanitation facilities with 15.1% and the least being in the agricultural sector with 17 projects representing 0.3%. In addition, a documentation study of Danida’s 26 years of support to governance, incl. decentralization, in Ghana was produced in 2018.

**Lessons Learned**

Effective programme monitoring at both the national and regional level led by a level-headed and committed national programme steering committee chairman ensured judicious use of resources and prompt decision making to guide programme implementation. Integration of existing departments (feeder roads, water and sanitation, public works and rural housing) into the newly created District Works Department (DWD), which is the department responsible for infrastructure at the district level (in line with Ghana’s administrative decentralization agenda) brought to the fore the urgent need to recruit the requisite staff for DWDs to ensure effective decentralised service delivery. In addition, the good collaboration between Danida and the Auditor General in undertaking joint follow-up of the districts’ DDF audits helped to improve accountability at the district level.

**Links**

* Evaluation of the Ghana-Denmark Partnership 2007-2017 (2018): <http://danida-publikationer.dk/publikationer/publikationsdetaljer.aspx?PId=8c80db97-19aa-4f83-858a-ee1189f4033d>
* Joint Evaluation of the Ghana-Denmark Development Co-operation 1990-2006 (2017): <https://um.dk/en/danida-en/results/eval/Eval_reports/publicationdisplaypage/?publicationID=78EEFD4A-6547-4CB8-A628-C0C3981817E1>
* Documentation study ‘Pioneering Democracy’ (2018): <https://ghana.um.dk/en/News/newsdisplaypage/?newsID=24DECCDC-9A56-442B-B891-078D07EA63AD>