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## **Voices from below and from within: Institutions and resource management in coastal Ghana**

by

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## Abstract

With reference to resource management, the two interrelated issues of tenurial arrangements and the social organization of production are of overriding importance. It is crucial to understand these issues in detail in connection with implementing work along the lines of both poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

The call for sustainability is useful specifically in that it emphasizes close scrutiny of the factors that make development and poverty alleviation interventions more likely to succeed. An “enabling environment” refers, in part, to a situation where people are motivated to participate because they identify individually and collectively with an enterprise, whether it be part of traditional culture or planned development activities. Therefore, creating an enabling environment requires increased emphasis on “localizing” development to the extent that it makes possible meaningful local participation and communal development.

The impact of national policies and politics at the local level depends largely on the effectiveness, efficiency and outreach of the national government. Given the variability of governments’ presence at the local level, centrally initiated government interventions on CPR management institutions are likely to have different effects and interact differently with institutions, NGOs and community groups.

Based upon field work in Ghana, the paper examines the interaction between government and local-level planning on the one hand, and the modern and traditional spheres on the other hand, in the context of coastal resources management. The emphasis will be on constraints and incentives operating on the macro and micro levels, as well as the interaction between them, resulting in the mode in which local systems adapt to various macro-level interventions. Topics discussed include: NGOs, traditional knowledge, local institutions, conflict resolution and design of property rights systems.

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# Voices from below and from within: Institutions and resource management in coastal Ghana

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## 1 Introduction

This paper aims at providing a glimpse into the actual process of how the Bank operates through recounting the process, time table and history of some work on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in Ghana that I am currently involved in.

An important rationale for the focus of this work, is that there in Ghana today is an increasing tension between the traditional system or order, largely understood to be synonymous with the so-called chieftaincy system; and the modern order, that is the modernizing and devolving nation-state based upon democratic ideals and some sense of the pan-African foundation and ideals of Kwame Nkrumah.<sup>1/</sup> While relationships in traditional society are based on family membership, inherited status and traditional beliefs, in modern society they are a consequence of emphasis on achieved status, formalized interaction and bureaucratic organization.

The focus of my work is on chieftaincy, understood as an institution in the sense in which this term is used in institutional economics. For the purpose of this exploratory analysis, institutions will be understood as “. . . the rules of the game in a society or, more formally . . . the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. In consequence they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic” (North 1990:3). Furthermore, according to North, institutions “. . . are composed of formal rules (statute law, common law, regulations), informal constraints (conventions, norms of behavior, and self-imposed codes of conduct), and the enforcement characteristics of both” (1995:29).

From the point of view of the institution, people are simply following the rules and values that are constituting and defining the institution, and applying them to their life. If they have a choice at all, it is very limited. In other words, institutions determine, channel and/or limit individual freedom of action and choice.

The relations between the institution and the individual are more complex, however. It is not simply a question of a one-way track and causality. Institutions are created by people, and they are the outcome of individual choices. Furthermore, even given the prior existence of an institution, and the ongoing socialization of people into it, people will always experience a certain degree of freedom. An institution is never set or fixed, and it is always being recreated through the behavior of its constituent members. More than that, an institution is always changing and developing. Individuals operating within the framework of any institution, making

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<sup>1/</sup> The terms ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ are here used in order to simplify the characterization of the overriding forces at play in the modernization of the country. Clearly, Ghanaian society and culture today cannot be characterized by this simple dichotomy. The situation is much more complex. In particular, most Ghanaians, including those live in urban settings, will admit to a strong relation with traditional values. Modern Ghana is very much an integrated product of these forces – albeit an increasingly uneasy and labile one.

choices as constrained or limited by its “operating rules,” are in reality, on a macro level, contributing to the ongoing change of that institution. Douglass C. North has pointed out that institutional change influences the way societies evolve, and accordingly is the key to understanding historical change (1990).

This sets the overall framework for this paper: namely the relationship between individual choice and social structure.<sup>2/</sup> As already implied, there are two sides to this reciprocal causality. On the one hand there is the issue of how institutions evolve in response to individual incentives, strategies and choices. On the other hand there is the issue of how institutions affect the performance of economic and political systems.<sup>3/</sup>

As a first step, I will take the fact of my institution of choice – chieftaincy in Ghana – for given, and analyze how it affects the performance of other aspects of the culture or the structure. In this step, I will analyze the “performance” traditionally, but more importantly today. This will provide insights into why and how the chieftaincy institution today is not well suited to solve the tasks ascribed to it, including those traditionally accorded it nor those given to it, directly or indirectly, in modern times. Put differently, the modern system does not grant the chieftaincy system (enough) independence to choose its own course, freedom of movement and responsibility to do so. Chieftaincy today is an institution in strain, filled with internal conflict and inconsistencies.

The second step will focus on the fact that individuals create or cause institutions, or cause changes in institutions. In other words, instead of seeing the decline of chieftaincy as a consequence of impersonal macro-level agents and forces (e.g. as in the “modern system,” the “evolving nation-state” and “decentralization”) it can alternatively be seen as a consequence of the actions and behavior of individuals.<sup>4/</sup> The important point here is to understand that: (i) individual behavior and actions are inevitable, they take place in any case; and, (ii) that they should be understood as positive (as least as seen from an ethic perspective). As for the Ghanaians, they are in a fix, and many will acknowledge this freely. They are “trapped” in a system consisting of an unwieldy and confusing mix (or, as the case may be, no mix at all) of a modernizing system superimposed on the traditional order, and through their actions and choices they try to make sense of it. Many actions will of necessity be uninformed because the situation is so unclear, and they will, in turn, contribute to a reinforcement of the somewhat chaotic nature of the present situation. In an applied and positive vein, this step will primarily focus on a discussion of how to create and design CPR regimes.

Based on the present situation, as spelt out above, one possible reaction is to simply observe in which direction this will go - what kind of overall balance

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<sup>2/</sup> Equating the institution of chieftaincy with social structure may indeed be understood to be a bold move. The traditional development of chieftaincy peaked among the *Akan*, including in particular the *Ashante*, that live in the southern, and partly in the coastal, areas; while many other ethnic groups have less developed forms of chieftaincy. The colonial period – as well as the decolonizing period and the present nation-building period – in several crucial ways contributed to cementing and solidifying, on a national level, the position of chieftaincy as a vertically integrated social order of sorts. At least on a formal level (e.g. as specified in the 1992 Constitution), chieftaincy today is attributed, on a macro-level, tasks, roles and functions that it never had before. Chieftaincy is thus part and parcel of the nation-building process in the country. In this sense it makes sense to identify it with the social structure. By the same token, this points towards some of the problems that chieftaincy today is facing.

<sup>3/</sup> The complementarity of these two approaches appears as a fundamental dichotomy in much of the writing on institutional economics, cf. Acheson (1994), North (1990) and Ostrom (1990).

<sup>4/</sup> This statement probably places me fairly squarely in the camp of theoreticians like Fredrik Barth, Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, which is quite okay with me.

eventually will develop between the modern and the traditional system. Another possibility is, in cooperation with Ghanaians, to engage in creative efforts at helping the development take directions that may seem useful, based upon available data, specifically including Ghanaians' own views – what could possibly be labeled as social engineering. This is the approach chosen in the work to be reported upon here. As an example, one concrete outcome of such constructive and applied work could be in the area of creating new forms of, or models for, CPR-regimes. The guiding principle throughout is that of an ongoing, deliberate and conscious evolution of chieftaincy as a consequence of individual actions.

## 2 Chieftaincy - Past and present <sup>5/</sup>

### 2.1 Ethnography of Ghana's coastal zone

**Ethnic groups and location.** The total population of around 17 millions is divided among around 100 ethnic groups. On a macro level, three major categories of ethnic groups in the coastal zone can be singled out: (i) *Akan* (44 percent of total population); (ii) *Ewe* (13 percent of total population); and, (iii) *Ga-Adangbe*, or *Ga* (8 percent of total population).<sup>6/</sup>

Based upon the theoretical and operational definitions of the coastal zone spelled out below (see sections 4 and 5.1 below), for the purposes of the present ethnographic overview the coastal zone will be understood as the 30-50 kilometer wide corridor along the whole 600 kilometer long coastline. Going from west to east along the coast, the following major ethnic groups are found: *Nzema*, *Ahanta*, *Wasa*, *Fante*, *Dankyira*, *Asen*, *Agona*, *Awutu*, *Ga*, *Akuapem*, *Adangbe* and *Ewe* (see Table 1).

**Demographics and culture.** In most cases, groups within the same linguistically defined category or sub-category may be distinguished from each other even though they are characterized by essentially the same culture and social organization. At the very minimum, each has an historic tradition of group identity and, often, of political autonomy.

Lacking detailed information on the demography of ethnic groups in the coastal zone, two sets of data on the total number of persons for the ethnic groups that live in the coastal zone are provided (see Table 2). In conjunction with the above estimate on relative proportions of ethnic groups that live in the coastal zone, as well as the total number of *Akan* people, these data points toward a clear trend in the ethnic demography of the coastal zone. The data are, in addition, useful in that they point to the relative sizes of the ethnic groups in question.

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<sup>5/</sup> Most of this section is adapted from a study on chieftaincy and environmental management in the coastal zone of Ghana, currently under preparation (Soeftestad 1996b).

<sup>6/</sup> A general characteristic in dealing with the phenomenon of ethnic groups is that there is a certain degree of uncertainty or fluidity to it. In the present report, an effort has been made to follow current practices in Ghana, in some cases informed by Gonen (1993).

Table 1 – Ethnic groups in the coastal zone and regional localization

Ethnic group	Alt. name	Region
1. <i>Agona</i>		Central Region
2. <i>Ahanta</i>		Western Region
3. <i>Akuapem</i>	<i>Akuapim</i>	Greater Accra Region
4. <i>Asen</i>	<i>Assin</i>	Central Region
5. <i>Denkyira</i>	<i>Dankyra</i>	Central Region
6. <i>Fante</i>	<i>Fanti, Fantyn</i>	Central Region
7. <i>Nzema</i>		Western Region
8. <i>Wasa</i>	<i>Warshas</i>	Western Region
9. <i>Ewe</i>		Volta Region
10. <i>Adangbe</i>	<i>Adangme, Adampa, Dangme</i>	Greater Accra Region, Eastern Region
11. <i>Ga</i>		Greater Accra Region
12. <i>Awutu</i>	<i>Efutu</i>	Central Region

Source: Field notes, October - November 1995.

## 2.2 What is chieftaincy? Describing the indescribable

The term chieftaincy is clearly in need of clarification. The term obviously has something to do with “chiefs,” but beyond that it becomes vague for most of us. The term is often used in connection with the term “institution,” as in “the chieftaincy institution,” and this in most cases seems to have wider implications in terms of both scale and personnel. The inclusion of the term “institution” would seem to hint at some form of organization, possibly a type of traditional, non-western organization. Thus the term clearly stands the risk of being reified. In fact, chieftaincy cannot be said to exist in the sense of something tangible, that is, as an organized activity in the sense the term “organization” is used in the West. The fact that we here deal with traditional knowledge and its uses is the key to understanding what chieftaincy is for Ghanaians, irrespective of how we as outsiders understand or conceptualize it.<sup>7/</sup> The term “chief” will be used as an all-inclusive term covering chiefs on all levels, including paramount chiefs.

<sup>7/</sup> This leaves aside the obvious fact that chieftaincy is not one thing but different things to different people, depending on, most importantly, ethnic affiliation and where they belong on the traditional-modern continuum. The present-day juxtaposition of chieftaincy in an uneasy and unclear alliance with the modernizing state, has given rise to new efforts at understanding and conceptualizing chieftaincy, to be dealt with briefly below.

Table 2 – Ethnic groups in the coastal zone and aspects of culture

Ethnic group	Population (linguistic)	Population (ethnic)	Position of chieftaincy	Aspects of culture and traditional subsistence practices
1. <i>Agona</i>	(see note i)	49,080 [0.5]	Strong	(see note iv)
2. <i>Ahanta</i>	97,200	65,230 [1.0]	Strong	(see note iv)
3. <i>Akuapem</i>	(see note i)	144,790 [2.1]	Strong	(see note iv)
4. <i>Asen</i>	(see note i)	43,590 [0.6]	Strong	(see note iv)
5. <i>Denkyira</i>	(see note i)	33,460 [0.5]	Strong	(see note iv)
6. <i>Fante</i>	(see note i)	708,470 [10.5]	Strong	Cash crops, work force in modern enterprises (see note iv)
7. <i>Nzema</i>	285,000	111,800 [1.7]	Strong	(see note iv)
8. <i>Wasa</i>	175,000	94,260 [1.4]	Strong	(see note iv)
9. <i>Ewe</i>	1,615,700	872,860 [13.0]	Not strong	Patrilineal. Segmentary society, never had centralized state structure. Subsistence base varied: mostly farming, some livestock, fisheries, trade
10. <i>Adangbe</i>	1,125,000	237,440 [3.5]	Moderately strong	Associated with <i>Ga</i> , closely related to <i>Ewe</i> (see note v)
11. <i>Ga</i>	1,125,000	236,210 [3.5]	Moderately strong	Associated with <i>Adangbe</i> (see note v)
12. <i>Awutu</i>	100,000	55,030 [0.8]	Not strong	Degree of centralization weak. Influenced by neighbors. <i>Fante</i> versions of some <i>Akan</i> institutions and cultural practices are adopted. Subsistence farmers & migrant workers

Sources: (i) *Ghana. A Country Study* (1980); (ii) Field notes, October - November 1995; (iii) Grimes (1992).

Notes: (i) The data in the column "Population (Linguistic)" are taken from Grimes (1992), and the figures refer to number of speakers of a particular language, that is, not just speakers who live in the coastal zone. In this context, language groups will be understood as largely overlapping with ethnic groups. Although the various *Akan* dialects are not considered as languages per se, speakers of these dialects still very much consider themselves to be bearers of distinct cultural traditions. There are approximately 7 million *Akan* speakers, figures for individual *Akan* dialects are, in most cases, not available; (ii) The data in the column "Population (Ethnic)" are taken from the 1960 census, as presented in *Ghana. A Country Study* (1980). These figures also pertain to the total population of each ethnic group, with figures in parentheses giving the population in percent of the total population in the country; (iii) Other data are from *Ghana. A Country Study* (1980) and own field notes; (iv) The *Akan* as a whole is characterized as being matrilineal with, in most cases, a well developed traditional authority structure based in a strong belief in traditional knowledge. *Akan* as a rule are farmers, with some reliance on cash crops; (v) *Adangbe* and *Ga* are coastal people, often fishermen. They are, to a substantial degree, urban (many live in Accra), and show a high degree of participation in government and commercial/industrial activity. Urban life is nonetheless customary in orientation, and traditional ways of life are in many cases retained in urban settings.

Traditional knowledge or culture will be used as a common denominator for the way in which many Ghanaian ethnic groups use traditional values and knowledge, structured within specific organizational frameworks, towards solving particular issues or tasks. The organizational framework of these societies is the kinship system, or more specifically families, kinship, lineages and clans. On the various levels of this framework, specific rights and obligations, dealing with issues like authority, control, adjudication of conflicts, inheritance, succession, and election

to political offices, are vested in the members. On each organizational level there will furthermore be a chief, usually hereditary in a lineage, who functions as a kind of caretaker or custodian. A chief remains an effective leader as long as he serves the best interests of the community as its members view them.<sup>8/</sup> The overall organizational model of these societies is accordingly fairly hierarchical.

Chieftaincy in Ghana will be understood as a broadly defined, all-encompassing system of values and norms, underlying the total traditional social order, specifically among the *Akan*. Chieftaincy is itself linked to other traditional institutions, for example traditional religion including fetish priests. The main overt expression of chieftaincy is located in the political sphere, through which other aspects of society, including economic life, religion, social organization and kinship, are determined and come into play. The focus here will in particular be on the way in which chieftaincy influences or determines economic activities, in particular appropriation and utilization of natural resources.

### **2.3 Local people and traditional chieftaincy**

In the traditional system, chieftaincy serves several obvious functions, incorporating and catering to diverse groups of people, who all, at various points in time throughout their lives, play specific roles predetermined by the chieftaincy institution. On the local level, chieftaincy plays a major role in structuring and realigning relationships between people. On the macro level, it provides the means for ensuring the continuity of society over time, and that necessary adjustments are made to that effect. People have roles and functions to fulfill, there is a kind of contractual obligation between people and the chieftaincy institution. Chieftaincy thus clearly is a functional institution because it includes, or makes possible, basic functions necessary for the survival and maintenance of local socio-cultural systems.

Chieftaincy is originally an *Akan* institution. For the *Akan*, there was, and is, an especially strong connection between chieftaincy on the one hand, and cultural and ethnic identity on the other hand.

### **2.4 Chieftaincy, modernization and the nation-state**

As the *Akan*, and in particular *Ashante*, throughout pre-colonial history, and even after, expanded; their basic institutions – especially chieftaincy – were exported to neighboring ethnic groups. As a consequence, during pre-colonial conquest and due to cultural diffusion the chieftaincy institution, or parts of it, was spread widely among the peoples that lived in present-day Ghana. In spite of this, chieftaincy is most developed among the *Akan*.

Throughout the colonization period, and to a significant degree after independence, chieftaincy has been used as an instrument in empire and nation-state building, in effect as an extended arm into rural areas and rural life. The rationale for the important role chieftaincy played, and still plays, is that it at one and the same time provides a means for involving people in building the modern nation state, as well as for channeling and increasing the impact of central political decision making, bureaucratic influence and administrative control.

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<sup>8/</sup> Persons elected as chiefs will almost universally be males, but female chiefs – not to be confused with the office of ‘Queenmother’ – do occur.

The term “chieftaincy” as it is used today is even more difficult to understand. In addition to the various views on the meaning of chieftaincy referred to above, the following issues today impact the development of chieftaincy: (i) chieftaincy is to a large degree synonymous with recent regional and national level organizational efforts that have been defined in the interface of the traditional and the modern system, in order to solve perceived problems connected with the fit between the traditional system and the modernizing nation-state; and, (ii) partly as a consequence of the above, chieftaincy is under enormous pressure by the modern society in general due to ongoing social change. As a result, its position in the minds of people is unclear, vague and uncertain.

Chieftaincy is situated at the apex of the traditional system. The vast majority of the population lives primarily in the traditional system, including a surprisingly high percentage in urban areas along the coast, although traditional values and ways of living have changed more radically here than in the rest of the country. As a result of social change that began during the colonial period, traditional society is today found primarily in rural areas and in the northern part of the country, while modern society is found primarily in urban areas and the southern part of the country. Having said this, it is important to add that this is a generalization. Furthermore, most people will participate to some extent in both the traditional and the modern system. The difference is not one of geography as much as of value orientation and the emotional or qualitative overtones of relationships.

Until well after independence, that is, into the 1970s, the contrasts between the traditional system, which formed a basis for the new society, and the emerging modern society were not always distinct. Change often was incremental and fluid, rather than fast and absolute. Many people participated in elements associated with both systems. In many cases traditional institutions (and organizations) were fitted to new functions or given new outward or external/top structures.

**The national level.** These emerging and conflicting paradigms regarding the role of chieftaincy in modernization and nation-state building are largely premised upon the increasingly active role the state has taken in using, constraining, and redefining chieftaincy throughout the various republics that have followed each other since independence. This more or less planned change has taken place in the areas of reform of civil administration and the bureaucracy, as well as legal reform.<sup>9/</sup> A gradual recognition of the importance of the traditional system, and an increasing experience with how to work out the many details regarding the interaction between the two systems, thus marks the post-decolonization period.

The Chieftaincy Act called for the establishment of various new governing bodies, partly to deal with internal chieftaincy matters, and partly to liaison with the Government. These bodies include: (i) the National House of Chiefs, located in Kumasi and consisting of elected chiefs from each region; (ii) Regional Houses of Chiefs, consisting of elected chiefs from each respective region; (iii) Traditional Councils, to be established for each traditional area; and, (iv) Divisional Councils, to be established under each traditional area. In addition, there is the Chieftaincy

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<sup>9/</sup> Some of the more important of these reforms include: (i) The Government of Kwame Nkrumah did not attempt to abolish traditional offices, but sought to minimize their importance and fill them with persons acceptable to it; (ii) The National Liberation Council (1966-69) emphasized installation of chiefs according to more traditional criteria; (iii) The 1969 Constitution did not give chiefs greater power but their status was recognized; (iv) The 1971 Chieftaincy Act aimed at providing a final framework for the relation between the traditional and the modern system in Ghana (Republic of Ghana 1971); and, (v) the 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic took this one step further through, for example, increasing the powers of the National House of Chiefs (Republic of Ghana 1992).

Secretariat, located in Accra. Previously a separate Ministry, and today located directly under President Rawlings and headed by a Presidential Advisor, it functions as the Government's extended arm and cooperates closely with the National House of Chiefs. Many of the built-in conflicts between the traditional and the modern system is evident in the often competitive and sometimes strained relation between the National House of Chiefs and the Chieftaincy Secretariat, as symbolized in the two persons presently heading the two bodies; *Nana* Oduro Namapao II and *Nana* Akouko Sarpong, respectively, both *Ashante* paramount chiefs.<sup>10/</sup>

The Government administration is in the process of being decentralized, and in connection with environmental management the role of EPA is of special significance. EPA has regional offices in each region, and the EPA regional staff work closely with the Government administration on the regional and district levels. In addition, although more informally, in several cases the EPA regional officers have close connections with the Regional Houses of Chiefs and with chiefs on the local level, as well as with NGOs.

As stated earlier, chieftaincy must, in its traditional form, be understood as an institution. However, as a consequence of the increasing formalization of chieftaincy on the level of the state (e.g. as witnessed by the establishment of the National House of Chiefs and the Chieftaincy Secretariat), and based upon a nation-state type rationality; it in addition gradually takes on the appearance of a special type of organization with political goals and a westernized bureaucratic mode of operating. This form of organization is special because it is immature and still in search of a viable and final form. At present it exists mainly from the point of view of the Government and a smaller group of paramount chiefs in each region, while lower-level chiefs and especially rural people still think of chieftaincy largely in terms of an institution (however, in each community and locality it is clearly perceived as something tangible and concrete).

Chieftaincy is today woven into a multiplicity of sometimes conflicting discourses. This is stemming from chieftaincy being situated at the cross-section of the traditional and the modern system. From the point of view of the state there is a clear tendency to view chieftaincy with a double standard in the way it is approached: On the one hand chieftaincy is understood as a hindrance and an obstacle to modernization and to the effort at decentralizing government functions, and on the other hand it is, at the same time, seen as a more-than-potential vehicle for achieving more or less the same aims. Which position is taken depends on the context.

From the point of view of chiefs it is in many cases a question of trying to balance two competing roles: being a modern and a traditionally oriented chief. At the same time, chiefs today represent only one source of authority. In addition to the new and increasingly powerful, modern and devolving civil administration, other emerging sectors of the economy and polity are vying for positioning themselves as the avant-garde of the modern, or the traditional, or in many cases with a special syncretistic blend of the modern and the traditional system.

**The local level.** Changes on the macro-level are reflected on the local level. Thus, the dramatic changes connected with the large-scale decentralization of most Government functions are easily observed on, for example, the district level. These changes include, foremost: (i) the establishment and extension of a district

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<sup>10/</sup> 'Nana' (pl. 'Nananom') is the official title for a chief according to the *Akan* tradition, today understood and used universally in Ghana.

administration headed by a District Chief Executive: (ii) increased presence of Government agencies and ministries; and, (iii) a District Assembly consisting of both elected and appointed members. This means a dramatic increase in the level and type of interaction between the traditional and the modern system throughout the rural areas.

One important aspect of the Government's interest in creating direct and positive links between the two systems is that local chiefs can be appointed as members of the District Assembly.<sup>11/</sup> However, given that chiefs, according to traditional values, are pronouncing final decisions or verdicts when they speak, it becomes very difficult for them to take active part in deliberations in the Assemblies. For this reason they are mostly quiet, and largely exercise their influence outside of the Assembly meetings. This partly accounts for the fact that chiefs only rarely seek to be appointed members of the Assemblies.

Chiefs in several cases clearly become apathetic in the face of the onslaught by the modern system. This is most clearly the case along the coast where chiefs in many cases have lost all, or most of, the "stool land" – a traditional wooden stool being the *Akan* symbol of a chief's role and status – and are left with only lineage land. In spite of this tendency, however, there is also a tendency whereby many chiefs appear to be very interested in discussing the need for changes and transition. These chiefs more often than not see themselves as partners in the devolution of the Government administration and in the inevitable search for a *modus operandi* for integrating the traditional and the modern system. The rationality for involvement will, however, today invariably more and more tend toward protecting or pursuing personal and vested interests. Those inside the system (i.e. high-ranking chiefs involved in national politics) want to retain and if possible increase their control through bridging the traditional and the modern sphere, while those outside (i.e. mostly traditional and rural chiefs) want to exert due control and influence, as traditionally belonging to the position they have.

On the level of the chief, both chiefs and people around him understand that times are changing and that chiefs are losing power. As of yet, hardly anybody manage to draw any conclusions from this as to what should be done. This is closely connected with the fact that very few are able to make the necessary generalization to a higher abstract level, namely that of the chieftaincy institution. The few that have been able to do it, through western education and jobs, have, in the nature of this, over time tended to become outsiders, and have thus largely been defeating the purpose of attaining the outside view.

Having said this, it should also be mentioned that rural people are, in many cases, critical of chiefs. Many chiefs are less than able in handling themselves and protecting the interests of their communities. The fact that times are changing and chiefs are not well equipped to deal with this, is certainly an important explanation but hardly an excuse. According to some, chiefs are removing themselves from people, think too highly about themselves, do not see themselves as representatives or servants of the people, and charge exorbitant prices for the services they offer. Add to this the number of conflicts over ascendancy to stools in the southern part of the country, many of them working their way through the court system, and with

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<sup>11/</sup> According to the 1992 Constitution, chiefs cannot seek or have political office, based on the idea that chiefs should not be partisan. Up to one-third of the members in a District Assembly are however appointed, formally by President Rawlings, and chiefs can in this way become members of the Assemblies.

enormous negative implications for chieftaincy in terms of functionality and credibility.

## **2.5 Local people and modern chieftaincy**

The devolving state bureaucracy, especially on the level of the districts, seems to have contributed to the increasing alienation of rural based and traditionally oriented local people from any sense of identification with modern Ghana, and for belonging within it. Decentralization and modernization have, indirectly – that is, more unintentionally than intentionally – contributed importantly to discrediting traditional values and culture, largely without substituting them with an acceptable alternative.

There is, among rural people, a strong feeling of drastic social change sweeping them along. Many people, including chiefs, are alienated. Uncertainty, not knowing where they are going, is the order of the day. A major supporting pillar of the traditional culture, the gradual withering away of chieftaincy, affects laymen and chiefs alike. Only the urban, modern and increasing breed of enterprising young professionals and politicians seem to rejoice and applaud the situation.

## **3 Ghana's coastal resources and their management**

The coastal zone of Ghana exhibits a wide variety of macro and micro ecosystems, and an equally varied list of natural resources traditionally utilized by people. The most important of these resources include: agricultural land, forests, sand, fish and other sea animals, salt and mangroves (Soefstestad 1996b).

Given the complexity of the natural system as well as the social system, a wide range of traditional management practices exist that define the exploitation of these resources. An important part of my work is to document these practices, either through own fieldwork or through locating secondary material (Soefstestad 1996b). What is common for all these practices is that almost all of them are firmly entrenched in the chieftaincy institution. These resources are said to “belong to the stool.” The chief is referred to as the “custodian” of the environment and natural resources that belong to his stool. Exceptions to this are: (i) coastal waters, excluding coastal lagoons, and their resources, that for all practical purposes are treated as open access; and, (ii) possibly the lower reaches of the Volta.

In many cases traditional fetish priests are also involved in sanctioning and authorizing the utilization of natural resources, for example through offerings to gods at the beginning of a harvesting season, be it land-based or sea/lagoon based resources.

The situation today is that the role and authority of chiefs, and chieftaincy, in traditional management of coastal natural resources is fast eroding. This is due to a variety of factors, some of the most important and fundamental of which are touched upon in this paper. This development is especially evident in the coastal zone with its massive and increasing population.

## **4 Integrated coastal zone management**

The ongoing work in Ghana is an application of a somewhat loosely connected set of various ideas and analytical approaches that has come to be known as Integrated

Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). The intellectual roots of ICZM work within the Bank in general, and in Sub-Saharan Africa more specifically, can partly be traced to the Rio Summit (cf. Cicin-Sain 1996). In order to provide guidance for the many Africa-related initiatives that came out of the Rio Summit, the Technical Department in The Bank's Africa Region initiated an exercise called "Post UNCED Strategy for Environmentally Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa." The exercise involves creating a strategic vision for the future (year 2025) through scenario building based on analyses of current and future trends in a variety of sectors. A transition course toward an ideal scenario that seeks to minimize environmental costs while maximizing the net benefits of development in each sector is elaborated. A series of building blocks were commissioned for key resources and sectors, including one on ICZM (World Bank 1994, 1995a).<sup>12/</sup>

The coastal zone is a dynamic area surrounding the interface between land and sea. It encompasses shoreline environments as well as adjacent coastal and marine waters. Loosely defined as the corridor where terrestrial and marine factors interact in their influence on natural and human-altered systems, the coastal zone typically includes coastal plains, river deltas, wetlands, lagoons, beaches and dunes, mangroves, reefs and other coastal features (World Bank 1994).

The Noordwijk Guidelines on Integrated Coastal Zone Management, prepared in connection with the 1993 World Coast Conference, characterizes the coastal zone in the following way: (i) it is a dynamic area with frequently changing biological, chemical and geological attributes; (ii) it includes highly productive and biologically diverse ecosystems that offer crucial nursery habitats for many marine species; (iii) coastal zone features such as coral reefs, mangrove forests, and beach and dune systems serve as critical natural defenses against storms, flooding and erosion; (iv) coastal ecosystems may act to moderate the impacts of pollution originating from land; (v) the coast attracts vast human settlements due to its proximity for the ocean's living and non-living resources, marine transportation and recreation; and, (vi) the seaward limit of the coastal zone can be the edge of the continental shelf but is for practical reasons defined as the 200 miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (World Bank 1995a).

Coastal zones offer a range of benefits and opportunities for human use. At the same time, coastal resource systems are valuable natural endowments that must be managed for present and future generations. ICZM seeks the optimum balance between these uses and their effects based on a given set of objectives.

The increasing emphasis given to ICZM is itself an instructive example of the increasing tendency to throw the net wider, to devise and utilize more and more wide-ranging ideas and conceptual models, first, to understand issues and their interrelations and synergies, and, second, to devise plans or mitigation measures that are social as well as environmentally sustainable in the long term (see Annex 1).

## **5 Ghana – Integrated Coastal Zone Management Initiative**<sup>13/</sup>

The Integrated Coastal Zone Management Initiative in Ghana is a sector work, that is, it is not a development project with accompanying investments. Concrete investment operations often, and more and more, tend to follow from sector work.<sup>14/</sup>

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<sup>12/</sup> World Bank (1995a) is an abridged version of World Bank (1994).

<sup>13/</sup> Parts of this section are adapted from a comprehensive study on chieftaincy and environmental management in the coastal zone of Ghana, currently under preparation (Soeftestad 1996b).

## 5.1 The sector work

This section will present the various steps and phases in this sector work as a process. Various relevant project documents pertaining to the sector work, in particular my own involvement in it, will be utilized in order to throw light on the sector work. The documents will partly be quoted in the text, and partly be included as Annexes (see Annexes 2-8).<sup>15/</sup> The sector work can briefly be presented in terms of: (i) Geographic coverage; (ii) Objectives; (iii) Approach; (iv) Issues; and, (v) Output.

**Geographic coverage.** The geographic coverage of the sector work is the coastal zone, inherently difficult to define, but in general terms understood as the area within the 30 meter contour. This area is referred to as the “impact zone,” with an additional hinterland area, even harder to define, referred to as the “management zone.”

The impact zone covers parts or all of the four regions that border on the sea, namely, from west, Western Region, Central Region, Greater Accra Region and Volta Region. In practical, operational terms, the “impact zone” – in effect the coastal zone – has been operationalized to mean, roughly, the 20-odd districts that border on the coast, while the “management zone,” in a much more vague way, refer to selected inland districts, or parts of these districts.

Identifying the coastal zone with the coastal districts, the lowest tier in the administrative set-up, is useful since responsibilities for environmental issues have been delegated to the districts. As a consequence, the sector work focuses largely on the district level, including District Assemblies as well as other administrative and organizational units.

**Objectives.** The objectives of the sector work are the following: (i) identify priority environmental problems in Ghana’s coastal zone that directly affect human health, economic productivity, social well-being and environmental quality; (ii) identify potential interventions, particularly targeted at the district level, in order to redress priority problems, including policy and institutional reforms, education initiatives, and specific investment initiatives; (iii) evaluate the economic impact of implementing these interventions, with a view to ranking the interventions identified on a cost-effective basis; and, (iv) identify project opportunities for the public and private sectors, NGOs and communities (World Bank 1995b).

**Approach.** A number of different approaches are available for conducting an analysis of coastal zone management options. In the present exercise, the following set of approaches have been selected: (i) based on an assessment of existing reports and studies in the different sectors, identify priority environmental problems in the coastal zone; (ii) adopt a highly participatory process of extensive consultation with stakeholders including NGOs, close collaboration with the Ghana Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other relevant government agencies, and the use of local consultants; (iii) a forecast of the potential extent of these problems by 2025 under selected macro-economic development and demographic scenarios; (iv) identification of the most cost-effective interventions for mitigating the critical problems, based on appropriate environmental economic analyses of these interventions; and, (iv) identification of complementary education, policy, and

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<sup>14/</sup> For more on the relation between sector work and projects, see Annex 1.

<sup>15/</sup> Annexes nos. 6-8 are adapted from Soeftestad (1996a).

institutional programs, particularly targeted at the district and community level (World Bank 1995b).

Based on the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), the EPA has initiated two types of environmental planning tools important for the present sector work. These planning tools follow the recent emphasis in decentralization of government administration and the political decision-making process. The planning tools are: District Environmental Profiles and so-called Local Environmental Action Plans (LEAPs). The LEAPs are also prepared on the district level.

The members of the study team, and me in particular, traveled extensively along the almost 600 kilometer long coastline during several visits to the country, and we met with literally hundreds of people.

**Issues.** The main issues to be addressed during the sector work are the following: (i) given the proposed emphasis on small-scale initiatives, the study will need to define targeted programs for meeting the challenge of weak institutional capacity for planning and implementing programs and projects, as well as develop methods to improve cross-sectoral and vertical institutional coordination; and, (ii) to explore innovative delivery mechanisms in order to reach the community level, and in this build on mechanisms being used in Bank programs, as well as work being done by other donors and NGOs (World Bank 1995b).

**Output.** The study will lead to the identification of potential interventions and investments for the Bank or other institutions. These may consist of the following: (i) integrated resource management projects aimed at strengthening institutional capacity at the district level for improved coordination for proactive planning, impact assessment, monitoring and enforcement of current and future regulations; (ii) needed reforms in the policy, institutional and regulatory framework for easing conflicts in resource management at the local level; (iii) community oriented projects focusing on improved natural resource management and environmental health; (iv) projects and programs to address biodiversity concerns and land based sources of marine pollution (possibly to be funded by GEF); (v) specific infrastructure interventions; and, (vi) education and community awareness programs (World Bank 1995b).

It is expected that the sector work would provide important opportunities for the Bank to design innovative, community driven programs in partnerships with local NGOs.

## **5.2 Social issues in integrated coastal zone management**

There are a number of potentially relevant social issues that merit closer attention in the context of a sector work on coastal zone management. They include chieftaincy, culture, ethnic groups, ethnicity, religion and traditional knowledge. On one level or another, they are all related and relevant to focus on. Given the primary concern with environmental issues in the present context, as a first approximation it would seem correct to focus on culture and traditional knowledge.

From the earliest planning of the sector work, there was a realization of the need for an extensive participatory approach, and to devise a consultative process that included all identifiable stakeholder groups. There was, however, not a clear emphasis on culture, traditional values and knowledge as such, in particular as embodied in the chieftaincy institution.

A realization of the need for such a complementary emphasis led to my participation in the team responsible for the sector work. The rest of the team is comprised of three staff members from the West Central Africa Department and two outside consultants. From the earliest discussions with the Task Manager responsible for the sector work, my participation became focused around three issues: (i) assessing the socio-economic problems arising out of high population growth leading to, among other things, intensified pressure on the limited coastal resources; (ii) assessing user conflicts between fishing communities, tourism, commerce and other industries located in the coastal zone in the absence of institutional and regulatory mechanisms to ensure coordinated development; and, (iii) defining programs and direct interventions to alleviate major problems identified.

Based on these discussions, reviewing the results of a first mission in July 1995, reading available project documents, as well as familiarizing myself with the Ghana project portfolio in general, I prepared TORs for my participation in this sector work (see Annex 2). Within an overall framework of social assessment (SA) (see Annex 1), applied in order to establish a framework for participation as well as identification of priority areas for social analysis, the TORs emphasize the following areas: (i) stakeholder analysis, (ii) traditional knowledge; and, (iii) property rights and tenure.

For the purpose of my participation in the October - November 1995 mission, and based upon the overall TORs, I prepared a Statement of Mission Objectives, dated October 16, 1995, that spells out my concrete tasks in connection with this mission in some details (see Annex 3). As will be seen, the task now had become more focused, centering on the interrelated issues of chieftaincy, traditional knowledge, coastal tenurial arrangements and common property resources.<sup>16/</sup> The rationale for the primary focus on the chieftaincy system is that it is a key social issue in its own right, and, partly because of this, because it provides an entry point into several of the other key social issues.

For the second major mission, in May 1996, I prepared a Statement of Mission Objectives, dated May 8, 1996, that details my expected tasks and foci during this mission (see Annex 4). Taken together, this set of three TORs in themselves reflect the scope of my tasks and responsibilities as an anthropologist within the study team, and they should furthermore give some idea of the progression and increasingly pointed focus that my work took (see Annexes 3-4).

### **5.3 Stakeholder identification and involvement**

Identifying and involving various categories of Ghanaians from the very beginning was seen as a major goal with, and driving force of, our work. Our basic approach was that anybody who came forward and identified her/himself as a stakeholder, by self-identification, was accepted as such. We did not, and could not; establish any criteria for selecting them. On the Ghanaian side, our counterpart, EPA, shared our

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<sup>16/</sup> In terms of potentially relevant traditional and modern institutions and organizations, and given the overall focus of the sector work, the emphasis in my work is on chiefs and chieftaincy. This is to a large extent due to a need for limiting the focus, given the time and resources at hand. There is a varied list of other traditional institutions and organizations, both rural and urban based, to some extent lying at the junction of the traditional and the modern system, as well as more recently established organizations, that also deserves to be studied, in particular regarding the synergies between them (Soefstestad 1995b).

basic views on this, which does not go to say that there always was agreement on whether a certain person, group or category was eligible as a stakeholder.<sup>17/</sup>

Identifying stakeholders is thus an ongoing process, and the number of stakeholders identified during the first mission in July 1995 was small compared with the much wider and more varied group of stakeholders that were invited to the series of stakeholder workshops organized in May 1996.

I gave some emphasis to identifying and involving national and local NGOs and organizations that represent fishermen. The extensive traveling along the whole coastline was useful in that it exposed me to several such NGOs and organizations, who in turn could inform me about other NGOs and organizations. A major problem with gathering this kind of information is that very little of it is collected and put together. To a large extent this exercise therefore has had the character of collecting primary data. The situation in Ghana may in this respect be slightly better than in other countries, at least in Africa. In the case of NGOs, there is, since some years, the Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organizations in Development (GAPVOD) that understands itself to be an umbrella NGO organization. A major obstacle is however that NGOs are not compelled to register with GAPVOD, and there is very little incentive to do so. Another factor is that NGOs that work on environmental issues recently formed their own interest group, the National Union of Environmental NGOs (NUENGO), whose membership only partly overlaps with that of GAPVOD.

#### **5.4 Overall work program and processes**

The sector work began in early spring 1995, and it will continue into fall 1996. The process can most easily be structured around a logical sequencing of a series of missions and key documents.

**Preparation and planning phase (spring - early summer 1995).** The work began with the constitution of a small planning group in the relevant part of the Africa Region in the Bank. Through a number of meetings, various drafts of the Initiating Memorandum (IM) as well as other communication between team members; the plans for the first exploratory mission in July 1996 were defined. I was approached in June 1996 and asked whether I would be interested in joining the team.

**First mission (July 1995).** This was a fairly brief mission. It aimed primarily at discussing the details of the proposed sector work with EPA and other relevant government Ministries and bodies. An initiating workshop with participation mostly from these limited categories of stakeholders was held in Accra. I did not participate in this mission.

**Initiating memorandum (summer - early fall 1995).** Based upon the results of the July 1995 mission, the Initiating Memorandum (IM) was revised over the summer. Partly due to other commitments, in particular a long vacation, I

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<sup>17/</sup> An interesting case in point came up in connection with the final stakeholder workshop in Accra during our May 1996 mission (see below). We had earlier agreed that Members of Parliament (MPs) for all the involved coastal Districts should be invited to this meeting. Prior to the workshop I had a meeting with a prominent member of one of the opposition parties, and I realized that the "parliamentarians" we had invited were not simply individuals occupying a seat in the Parliament, but members of President Rawlins' party (the major opposition parties boycotted the last elections with the result that almost all MPs were elected among members of Mr. Rawlins' party). When this was broached with EPA, the idea of identifying opposition parties as relevant stakeholders was seen as a non-issue.

formally joined the team sometime in late August 1995. I was not involved in preparing the final version of the IM.<sup>18/</sup> Key paragraphs in the IM state that:

6. The Study was initiated with a stakeholder workshop which was organized by the EPA. About 35 individuals from national and regional government, academia, and the NGO community attended the workshop and provided inputs on the scope, process and outputs expected from the initiative. Main inputs include:

- (a) the geographic focus should be on the entire coastal zone of Ghana. It was recognized however, that the analytical basis will likely focus on approximately 12 coastal districts (there are 110 districts in Ghana in total).<sup>19/</sup> The [Government of Ghana] defined the boundary of the coastal zone as the edge of the continental shelf on the marine side and as the 30 meter contour on the landward side. Within this area beneficiaries requested that the initiative examine both rural and urban issues in the coastal zone.
- (b) the initiative should recognize the nexus of interactions among sectors and then set priorities based on a review of existing studies and analytical work.
- (c) potential interventions for a project should focus on: (i) institutional interventions, including capacity building for policy enforcement; (ii) education and public awareness; (iii) community resource management and development programs; and, (iv) specific structural investments for mitigating or preventing coastal zone degradation;
- (d) no specific delivery channels were highlighted, although it was recognized that the initiative identify opportunities targeted at the district and community level. However, depending on the nature of the problem, other groups would be involved, (e.g. at the national level, where policy or regulatory reform is required); and,
- (e) the EPA would be the focal point for the study. The EPA may, however, identify specific institutions to handle selected problem areas. The active participation of organizations at the district level would be ensured throughout the consultative process at the district level.

7. The consultative process initiated in this sector work will be continued through the use of local experts to analyze key issues and a series of regional workshops to increase the opportunity for a wide range of stakeholders from along the coast to provide inputs for the study. Participatory community appraisals will be conducted in selected districts with the assistance of local experts and NGOs. After formal review in the Bank, the report will be widely disseminated in user-friendly formats to reach community level beneficiaries, as well as decision-makers.

**Second mission (October - November 1995).** Prior to this mission I prepared the overall TORs to guide and focus my input and responsibilities as member of the team (see Annex 2). I also prepared specific TORs for the purpose of this mission (see Annex 3).

The team traveled along the whole coastline for a couple of weeks, and held meetings in several locations. The EPA regional Programme Coordinators were responsible for the logistics. We collected information partly through open-ended discussions with people, and partly through a more structured exercise using a set of specific questions. The goal with this mission was fact-finding, that is, to collect as

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<sup>18/</sup> Parts of the IM dealing with the objectives, approach, issues and output of the sector work are presented in section 5.1 above.

<sup>19/</sup> The number of districts that the sector work covers was later increased to almost 20 districts.

much information as possible about the range and extent of environmental problems experienced by people along the coast.

I focused specifically on chieftaincy and chiefs, and also on traditional fetish priests. I also worked with a local consultant that I commissioned to prepare an analytical report on chieftaincy and traditional environmental management in the coastal zone.

I stayed on after the other team members left, and traveled alone along the coast for almost three weeks. I spent a total of 5 weeks in Ghana during this mission, most of it traveling.

**Third mission (March 1996).** During the winter of 1996, as the data collected during the October - November 1995 mission slowly were being analyzed, and ideas for the structure and content of the report were being discussed, we also began planning the next mission, scheduled for May 1996. This promised to be an especially important mission, to some extent because of the emphasis given to social, cultural and institutional issues, and the concomitant need for maintaining a high profile regarding stakeholder identification and involvement.

According to an early idea for the focus of the upcoming mission, entertained by the Task Manager and the Director of EPA, one large stakeholder workshop would be organized in Accra over 2-3 days, with the participants representing all stakeholders, whether directly or indirectly. I argued that this would not be a good idea, and that it would in fact not be in the spirit of the approach this work had followed so far. I proposed an alternative strategy for reaching the intended aims with this mission, suggesting a three-phased approach, with an initial opening meeting in Accra, followed by parallel workshops in each of the coastal regions, and ending with a national workshop in Accra where the results of the regional workshops would be presented and discussed. This proposal was accepted in principle by the Task Manager and the EPA. As I was going to participate in a sub-regional workshop on ICZM in Accra during the last week of March, we agreed that this would be a good time to discuss this proposal in detail with EPA.

Staff in the EPA regional offices was called to Accra for these meetings. The result was that we agreed that my proposed model should be followed. The details of the proposed model were prepared in a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the EPA and the World Bank (see Annex 4). A host of detailed issues relating to organizing this fairly complex 1 1/2 week long stakeholder workshop process were discussed and agreed upon. In particular, we discussed who should be invited to all the workshops. I had several suggestions, all of which were accepted. EPA agreed that it would be useful to send out invitations to the workshops immediately.

**White cover report (May 1996).** The draft report "Towards an Integrated Coastal Zone Management Strategy for Ghana" was issued in early May 1996. This first draft version placed the emphasis on a visual and appealing presentation of the findings through an extensive series of maps. The main intention with this version was to provide the Ghanaians participating in the stakeholder consultation process during the May 1996 mission with a rough outline for what the final report could look like, and to initiate a discussion of our findings and draft conclusions and recommendations.

**Fourth mission (May 1996).** For the purposes of my responsibilities during this mission, I prepared a set of detailed TORs (see Annex 5).

It was in any case clear that this would be an especially important mission in terms of involving more people, place the various cultural and social issues on the

discussion table, get feedback on the draft report, and continue the important process of creating local ownership of the outcome of the work. Given the radical concept we had agreed on for holding these workshops, things were, literally, at stake also for ourselves.

Compared with what is stated in the draft, unofficial MoU (see Annex 4), the agreed upon dates for the workshop process for several reasons had to be postponed a couple of weeks (see Annex 6). It was also agreed that it was not necessary that we prepare a formal MoU for this occasion. For the rest, the draft MoU adequately reflects the background for and details of the workshop process, and it makes it clear how important and time consuming such a complex consultation exercise can be.<sup>20/</sup>

In order to be able to evaluate the overall workshop process properly, I gathered as much process information I could about each workshop, and after returning to the US I collected it in a fairly extensive document. Parts of this document, relating to the regional workshop in the Volta Region as well as the national workshop in Accra, are included as annexes (see Annexes 7-8). The annexes contain information on location, dates, program, objectives, process notes, participants, outcomes, selection of participants to attend the Accra workshop, and evaluation; and should give a fairly good idea of what went on.

**Draft yellow cover report (June 1996).** The Yellow Cover Report is scheduled to be ready by the end of June 1996. One of my contributions at this point will be to prepare an outline for a possible project to address the relation between the traditional and the modern system, with the aim of increasing the utilization of traditional culture in environmental management. This version of the report will be for internal review and commenting only.

**Fifth mission (July 1996).** Two team members will travel to Ghana in early July in order to have follow-up meetings with EPA. Important issues to be discussed will be how to keep up the momentum, within EPA as well as otherwise, and more generally prepare for the important workshop that will take place in fall 1996.

**Dissemination of report (summer - early fall 1996).** By late July 1996 a revised report will be ready and sent to EPA for comments. Comments from EPA are expected by September 1996. In September work will begin on planning a large workshop aimed at the high-level bureaucracy and political machinery in Accra. Work will furthermore proceed on making more detailing a number of concrete proposals for projects briefly specified in the sector report.

**Draft concept paper / Project proposal (September 1996).** This draft concept paper, emphasizing the critical importance of sustainable coastal development to Ghana's long-term economic growth, will be ready towards the end of September 1996.

**Sixth mission (November 1996).** This mission will consist of organizing a national coastal zone workshop in Accra in order to present the final sector report, and discuss specific interventions to be implemented by the government and donors. Efforts to realize the recommendations of the workshop will commence immediately.

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<sup>20/</sup> The complex and time consuming tasks of financing, budgeting and accounting in connection with the stakeholder workshop process in May 1996 have been left out of this discussion.

## **6 Elements of a framework for possible interventions in the social domain**

In terms of developing concrete proposals for interventions to follow from the sector work, there are, in particular, four different but overlapping issues that I will address: (i) The relation between the traditional and the modern order, and the future position of chiefs, (ii) Conflict resolution, (iii) Design of CPR regimes, and (iv) NGOs.

### **6.1 The relation between the traditional and the modern order**

The first issue concerns the gradual demise of the traditional order in the face of the evolving modern order, and how the disconnect between the two can be overcome (this is in a way an overriding issue that includes also the other three issues). How can the status and authority of chiefs, being at the center of the social order, be restored? How to establish and maintain a meaningful and satisfactory dialogue between local authorities (read: District Assemblies) and chiefs on utilization of stool land, and natural resources more generally? Electing chiefs as members of the District Assemblies does not seem to solve anything. Does it make sense to separate the political and the social and moral order the way the 1992 Constitution does it? What about contributing to the ongoing macro-level efforts at transforming chieftaincy from an institution to also being an organization? Maybe this will only contribute to eroding the status of chiefs and thereby the whole chieftaincy institution?

Whether traditional institutions exist that previously managed a specific resource (e.g. land and forests), or traditional institutions could be extended to cover a previously untouched resources (e.g. fisheries), a crucial consideration will have to be made regarding the usefulness of traditional institutions for management in the face of new and more complex situations. At issue is the presence or absence of a focus on social organization that are structurally suited to manage and control the environment (Cernea 1991, cf. also Ostrom 1990). In the case of Ghana we should not necessarily a priori assume that a simple “reinstatement” of chieftaincy will be sufficient (even if it were possible). Realizing that both macro-level and local-level parameters are significantly different today, it is realistic to assume that important aspects of the way in which chieftaincy would manage natural resources would be less successful today, and probably even dysfunctional.

### **6.2 Conflict mediation and resolution**

The second issue concerns the problem of conflicts over specific natural resources, and initiatives focusing on conflict mediation and resolution. This is already rampant as far as land is concerned, and something has to be done with this problem. More generally speaking, the increasing immigration to the coastal zone, with corresponding increasing competition for dwindling natural resources, is bound to lead to conflicts. These potential conflicts (to some extent already existing, as mentioned above) can conveniently be categorized in three types: (i) conflicts within an ethnic group; (ii) conflicts between ethnic groups; and, (iii) urban-rural conflicts (these conflicts take place at the point where urban sprawls are expanding, and often consist of a mixture of the two former types). Aside from conflicts over land, this is still mostly an unknown phenomenon. Specifically, I have no knowledge of inter-

ethnic conflicts over access to natural resources, and I furthermore did not encounter any conflicts over rights to fishery resources. The latter is however likely to appear in the future since fishery resources are declining.

### 6.3 Designing CPR regimes

The third issue is connected with the previous issue. An alternative or complimentary approach to mitigating, or avoiding, conflicts over natural resources, would be to look at the existing traditional and modern property rights' regimes themselves. A difference should be made between existing property rights' regimes that may or may not be functioning optimally anymore, and cases where there are no property rights' regimes and it may be argued that such regimes should be created or designed. To take an example of the former, I am wondering whether the conflict between traditional CPR regimes and individual property regimes can be solved, or at least addressed, by giving chiefs the option or right to lease land instead of selling it? In this way, the land would still be stool-land, and the stools would be guaranteed income throughout the lease period. Should other people in the locality, whether in the traditional or modern arena, in addition to chiefs, be responsible for assigning use rights to particular resources?

Regarding cases where no property rights' regimes exist, the best case would be marine coastal fisheries. Marine fishing is, comparatively speaking, not a very old subsistence practice, which to some extent may explain this lack of culturally clearly defined property rights. Also, most fishermen along the coast are *Ewe*, an ethnic group who traditionally worked as fishermen along the easternmost part of the coast, and only in this century began migrating westward along the coast, while the other ethnic groups traditionally did little fishing. And finally, up until very recently, and still today, maybe with the exception of the Volta region area, fishermen appeared not to experience any decrease in overall catches.

Fishermen would often have a sense that a line drawn perpendicular to the coast and located somewhere half-way in between two adjacent villages, constituted a fisheries border between the two villages. For the most part this is however still a theoretical construct and not something they are much concerned with in their daily lives. Along some parts of the coast some vague rules appear to be developing regarding sanctions connected with fishing "on the other side" (of the imaginary border), but fishermen within any village disagree as to the exact rules, and fishermen in different villages moreover had different ideas of what the correct rules were. Many of them found this to be a mildly interesting and joking matter.

My preliminary hypothesis is that such regulations and property regimes will evolve over time, and that we in fact already are seeing the beginning of this. Such rules will develop in direct response to individual incentives, strategies and choices, given a situation of increased emphasis on fisheries and dwindling resources. It may also be fueled by *Ewe* ethnic considerations, although all ethnic groups along the coast seem to have accepted *Ewe* superiority and primary position as fishermen par excellence. It would be useful to consider the present situation carefully and decide whether it would be a good idea to be proactive and contribute to setting some regulations in system while local relations still are good. Would it be possible to vest ownership of fishery resources (as well as other marine resources) in coastal fishing villages, somewhat parallel to the CAMPFIRE program? This would have to build

upon chieftaincy, as represented by the local chief; but it would have to go beyond him, and involve also the Chief Fisherman in the locality.

#### **6.4 Non-governmental organizations**

There are finally the NGOs. There is already a widely developed and responsible sense of public involvement in Ghana. This is, in particular, the case in connection with environmental issues, as witnessed by the work on preparing the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) as well as the recent district level exercises of formulating Local Environmental Action Plans (LEAPs). The NGOs played a role in this, and NGOs are quite visible overall in Ghana. One important issue to look at would be how the scope for direct contact and exchange between NGOs and relevant government offices can be structured, facilitated and increased. A problem that needs to be addressed in this connection is that the internal differences between NGOs, due to differences in underlying political, religious and/or cultural principles for operating, are so large as to effectively prevent development of a unified NGO-sector.

#### **6.5 Summary: Social funds as an overall framework for interventions**

Social funds (SF) are increasingly being used as a suitable vehicle for reaching the Bank's overriding goal of poverty alleviation. Often considered as a social safety net, they have in fact a broader mandate. While social safety nets address the need of vulnerable groups and prevent them from falling into absolute poverty, SFs aim to reduce poverty and reintegrate destitute groups into the economy. The rationale of a SF project is to fund local organizations, public or private, and often NGOs, in a more flexible and transparent manner than what regular government line ministries do. SFs respond to funding requests from local agencies and neither identify nor implement projects, that is, they are demand-driven.

An SF project in the context of coastal environmental management should focus primarily on the modern as well as the traditional arena, through an integrated emphasis on the relation between districts and Traditional Areas, the latter coinciding with traditional divisions between areas ruled by paramount chiefs. This will ensure substantive efforts at innovative thinking, on behalf of the personnel operating on these two parallel levels, regarding adapting the traditional and the modern in order to address today's problems and issues. The NGO-sector should play an important role in this. Chiefs, aided by their traditional councils, and in conjunction with among others local NGOs and the district administration, would prepare concrete project proposals to the SF administration for funding. Briefly, the rationale for such an SF project would be to continue to support the successful participatory process initiated during the sector work, and to further local initiatives in environmental management. A further important rationale would be to support local efforts at adapting formal institutions to local contexts in order to build the necessary legitimacy, while traditional institutions need to adapt to the changing outside world to ensure their relevance (Dia 1996).

The experiences with SFs so far in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as more conceptual work with the interplay between traditional and modern institutions, in particular the Africa's Management in the 1990s (AM90s), needs to be harnessed in order to prepare such a project (cf. e.g. Dia 1996, Marc et al. 1990).

## 7 Conclusions

This paper has emphasized the benefits and importance of employing a concerted holistic, macro-approach to understanding the issue of traditional institutions and resource management. The constraints that seemingly perpetuates and increase the disconnect between the traditional and the modern order, and the complexities in the relation between the two orders, are easier to identify and analyze by employing a sector approach. Moreover, it would seem to be the only way to answer the question of whether the traditional order – or traditional knowledge – has the ability to contribute to manage the perceived environmental problems in the coastal zone.

More than that, important long-term effects of investing in traditional knowledge would be much more widespread and generalized, in that the erosion of the traditional order hopefully would be stemmed. It is important to realize that for creative work on social engineering to succeed, it is seldom possible to pick out one aspect of traditional culture and work on it. In the case of coastal Ghana, likely candidates for such cultural traits could be local-level institutional arrangements whose very purpose it is to give rise to resource use patterns that are sustainable. Taken out of context, anything we would try to “do” with these cultural traits is not likely to succeed. In the case of Ghana, the whole chieftaincy institution, specifically including chiefs, would have to be addressed.

In this connection, the importance of stakeholder identification and involvement, of consultation, consciousness raising and awareness creation; aimed at increasing transparency and local ownership, cannot be overestimated. Once initiated, one would hope that this process will feed on itself and set in motion other local processes, for example contribute to increasing public involvement in decision-making processes concerned with development initiatives, be it on the national, regional or local level.

A caveat is in place here. For all the emphasis placed on communities, a local-level focus and local participation, this is clearly not enough. It is important to realize that, parallel to and in support of this approach, it is also important to focus on the legal and regulatory side. Traditional institutions that have proven to lead to sustainable resource patterns will today in most cases by themselves not survive. They need to be translated from the traditional area or domain into the modern domain, and be properly codified in this new domain. That is, even granted that the position and authority of chiefs would be restored, this would amount to nothing if it does not become sanctioned by the modern society. Likewise, in the case of the design of such institutions (as suggested above in the case of fisheries) such property rights institutions would have to be formulated as for examples bye-laws to be passed by District Assemblies, while in other cases it may be necessary to do this on the national level. In other words, we need to strike a balance between an emphasis on participation on the one hand, and on translating and codifying valuable traditional knowledge and institutions on the other hand.

The work and the approach reported upon here may be seen to be different compared with other approaches. It is a much longer process; it is open-ended and unplanned in the sense that it places a major emphasis on local inputs. It is important to realize that local participation is critical not just because local people have a right to know, but because they know best. If traditional, local knowledge is considered to be crucial, than those that have that knowledge should sit in the driving seat. The ideal, not necessarily totally realized – or realizable – in this sector work, is to involve local people, through identifying and consulting with as many stakeholder

groups as possible, and in a certain sense let the process run its own course, if necessary with some suggestions or hints from the sideline underway. While the sector work of necessity will end with a concrete output, after which it will close, the process it contributed to and hopefully influenced, began earlier and will continue beyond the life time of the sector work. I would suggest that this is a rather unique approach to stakeholder involvement, in the sense that it is so widespread and thorough in its application.<sup>21/</sup>

For all this, the paper is very much a report of work in progress. The study team is still in the middle of analyzing the data, and no clear conclusions and products (in the sense of suggestions for concrete interventions and investment operations) have yet been formulated. The intention with the paper accordingly has been to emphasize the process aspects of the work more than concrete outcomes. The emphasis on the process aspect is here given a fairly radical interpretation in the sense that the sector work is understood to engage an ongoing evolution of the modern and the traditional order in Ghana, including a gradual adaptation to each other; a process that began a long time ago and that will continue long after this sector work is over. In this perspective, an emphasis on concrete outcomes or final products to come out of the sector work would seem somewhat less important than simply contributing to the ongoing institutional evolution in Ghana. Put differently, the measure of the validity, usefulness and importance of these products should be less their size, novelty, mix of different approaches, or whatever; and more their emphasis on supporting already ongoing initiatives, the degree to which they are logical and natural extensions of basic social and cultural values and norms, the degree to which they reflect all stakeholders' priorities and abilities, the degree to which they contribute to build transparency, commitment and ownership of the proposed initiatives, and the degree to which they take current social capital capacities into consideration, while at the same time contribute to building such capacities as are needed.

My own involvement in the sector work is far from over. In a certain sense, it is just beginning. In preparing the final version of the report from the sector work I will now focus on actually putting together detailed proposals for concrete project interventions that can address the problems I have identified in a culturally and socially appropriate and acceptable way. This is truly a formidable challenge, and one in which the Ghanaians of course will be heavily involved. The challenge is above all to give voice to the hundreds of fishermen, farmers, chiefs, fetish priests, cattle owners, men, women and children that I have met with, not just because they represent the traditional knowledge and the voiceless, but because their views on the importance of traditional knowledge, in spite of the overt signs of a living culture, today are increasingly becoming hidden within and behind a veil of modernity and progress.

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<sup>21/</sup> For this reason it would be worthwhile to document the overall process that the sector work became grafted on to, became a part of, and eventually and contributed to.

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