

## THE ROLE OF DECENTRALIZATION AND INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA'S DEVELOPMENT

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Ghana was the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to attain independence and her pre-80s economic boom raised development hopes for the continent. After fifty years, its actual development is below its potential and various propositions have been offered as to the way forward. While much has been written in the development literature on the individual potential of decentralization to bridge the gap between central government and the grassroots, and of a strategy to promote the development of the rural sector, there have been no deliberate attempts to combine the two strategies in promoting overall development.

My research makes a case for decentralization as a vehicle for Integrated Rural Development<sup>1</sup> (IRD), which in my view, is a cornerstone for Ghana's overall development. This project is a result of my longstanding interest in and observation of rural areas in Ghana and their contribution to national development. An internship with Ghana's ministry of Rural Government and Local Development also exposed me to the realities of decentralization and its connection to the development of the rural sector. Ghana's rural population constitutes about 52%<sup>2</sup> (World Bank Development Indicators) of total population, and characterized by agriculture, which accounts for sixty percent of the labor force<sup>3</sup>. This basic background of the country lends itself to a development approach that makes rural development an integral part of the development agenda.

In spite of implementation challenges, evidence from decentralization efforts in Ghana thus far, as well as the impact of the policy on development in countries such as Mexico and India<sup>4</sup>, strongly supports a development strategy that combines decentralization and IRD. My research provides evidence in support of and makes a policy recommendation in this direction.

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<sup>1</sup> Kostov, Philip and Lingard, John. "Integrated Rural Development – Do we need a new Approach?" September 2004. <<http://ideas.repec.org/p/wpa/wuwpot/0409006.html>>

<sup>2</sup> Increasing Rural-Urban migration is a major factor accounting for the fall in rural population from 71% of overall population in 1970. The resulting pressure in urban areas has caused other development problems.

<sup>3</sup> The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of Ghana, 2006 Fiscal Year. <[http://www.ghana.gov.gh/dexadd/budget\\_2006.pdf](http://www.ghana.gov.gh/dexadd/budget_2006.pdf)>

<sup>4</sup> Fox, Jonathan and Aranda, Josefina. "Decentralization & Rural Development in Mexico." Center for US-Mexican Studies at UC, San Diego. 1996  
Crook, Richard and Manor, James. "Cambridge University Press. 1998