



Centre of African Studies, Edinburgh  
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# **Participatory History Writing / Participatory Assessment of Development**

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# Main questions

- How do Africans themselves look at their recent history and how do they assess development and change?
- How do Africans assess the impact of development initiatives on their capabilities, on poverty alleviation and on social justice?



# Research



- University of Amsterdam, with Tamale University for Development Studies Ghana and Expertise pour le Développement du Sahel Ouagadougou + African Studies Centre + Royal Tropical Institute Amsterdam
- Funded by ICCO, Woord en Daad and Prisma, 2008-2012
- Eleven workshops in North Ghana (7) and South Burkina Faso (4)



# Approach

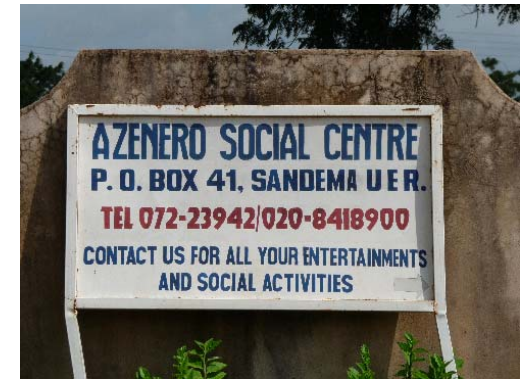


- People's Perceptions of
  - Development and Change,
  - Valuation of Development Initiatives/ interventions/ projects and
  - Assessment of Impact on Capabilities and on Poverty and Inequality
- Long-term = 20-30 years; the 'big picture of development and change' (holistic)
- Bottom-up: local level assessment by a workshop of 60 opinion leaders, with a variety of local backgrounds

Ten modules

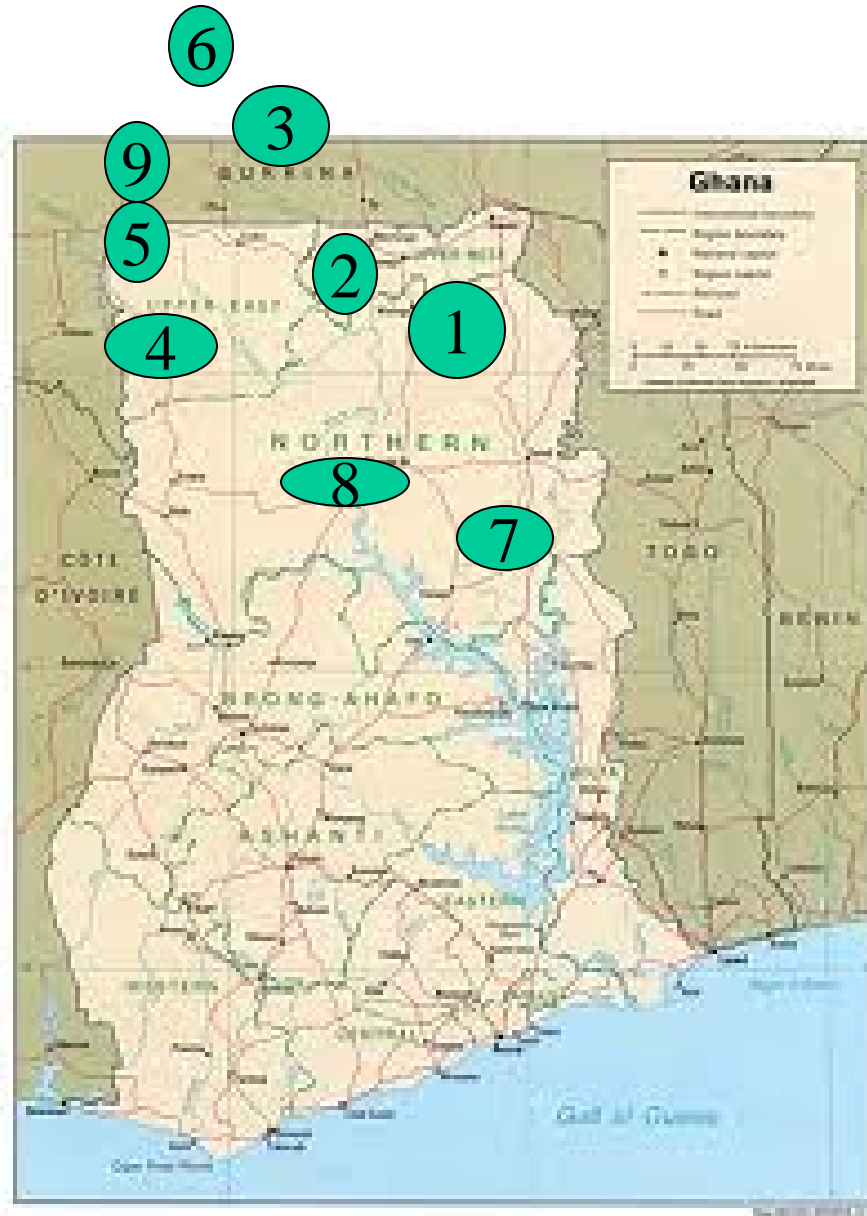


# Six Phases



- Preparation: Development agencies and their M&E systems (North Ghana and South BF)
- Workshop round 1: three cases of strong Dutch NGO presence now and in the past
- Workshop round 2: three cases of past Dutch NGO presence, but no longer
- Workshop round 3: three cases of no Dutch NGO presence
- Workshop round 4: back to To and Langbensi
- Follow up among the development agencies





- 1 Langbinsi
- 2 Sandema
- 3 Tô
- 4 Lasia Tuolo
- 5 Nandom
- 6 Silly
- 7 Wulensi
- 8 Daboya
- 9 Niabouri



# Preparation



- Local team leader
- finds trusted workshop organiser
- who invites sixty participants
  - 10-15 officials
  - Men/women from the central place and from villages around
  - Both young and old
  - Different cultural backgrounds

# Nine modules; three days

- Day 1: five subgroups
  - Officials
  - Older women
  - Older men
  - Younger women
  - Younger men
- Three exercises and an individual task
- Many facilitators needed







# Day 1 exercises



- 1: Time line (> 30 years)
- 2: Changes in capabilities/capitals (natural/physical/human/economic/social-political; cultural)
- 3: Wealth categorisation (very rich/ rich/ average/ poor/ very poor)

and

- 1a: Personal and family life history forms (individual survey)





## Day 2



- Different groups:
  - Officials
  - Four or five area groups, one for the central ‘town’ and three or four for the surrounding villages: Langbensi:  
Central+South+Northwest+Northeast
  - Partly: men separate from women
- Three exercises



# Day 2 exercises



- 4: List of ‘projects’; their valuation and their perceived benefits/impact on capabilities (and be clear about the agency and ‘sector’)
- 5: Selection of five best and five worst ‘projects’ + Historical assessment of these five best and five worst ‘projects’ ‘Then’ and ‘Now’
- 6 Relations between trends (per ‘capital’) and interventions/’projects’ (“attribution”)

# Valuation (“then” and “now”)

- Negative impact
- / No impact
- + Small positive impact
- ++ Big positive impact

# Day 3 exercises

- Same groups as Day 2
- Four additional exercises:
- 7: effects of best five ‘projects’ on wealth classes (‘wealth group benefits’)
- 8: Agency assessment (e.g.: long-term commitment, realistic expectations, honesty, relevance, participation, local presence, other)
- 9: Strength of impact per wealth group of best five
- 10: evaluation of the workshop and finalisation of personal surveys





# Follow up



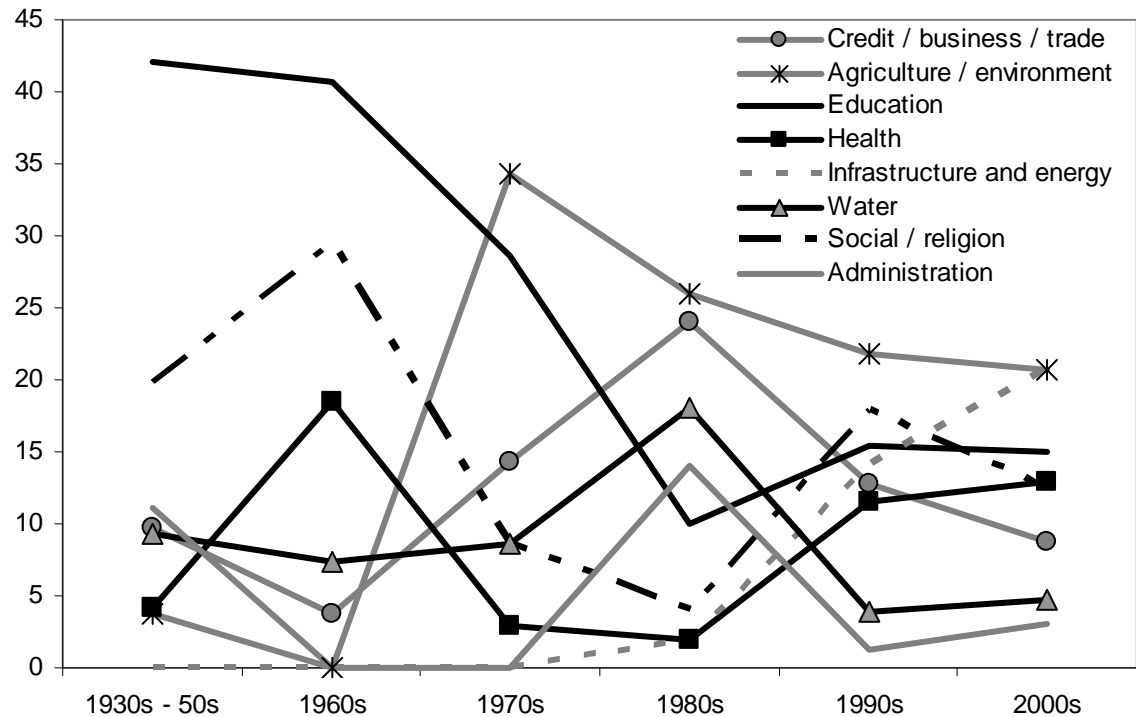
- Make a detailed report for each of the workshops and their findings
- Go back to the research area to check the main findings with some trusted spokespeople
- Develop a Guidebook
- Make an assessment profile for each agency and ask for
  - The agency leadership's opinion about the various judgements
  - The agency's own assessment procedures and findings (M&E; research)

# Example: Wealth categories and bottom-up criteria

	Very rich	Rich	Average	Poor	Very poor
Owens a car	Yes	Some	No	No	No
Owens a motorbike	Yes	Yes	Some	No	No
Owens a bicycle	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some	No
Owens cattle	Yes	Yes	Some	No	No
Owens small ruminants	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some	No
Owens poultry	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Does not need to work	Yes	Some	No	No	No
Has employees or helpers on the farm	Yes	Yes	Some	No	No
Owens several houses	Yes	No	No	No	No
House made with cement blocks	Yes	Yes	Some	No	No
House roofed with zinc	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Able to support others	Yes	Yes	Some	No	No
Children in SSS	Yes	Yes	Some	No	No
Children in basic education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some	No
Has access to good health care	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some	No
3 meals a day	Yes	Yes	Some	No	No
2 meals a day	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some	No
Has a family (wife/children)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some
Has a place to stay	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some
Goes well-dressed	Some	Yes	Yes	Some	No
Goes bare-footed	No	No	No	No	Some
Depends on help from others	No	No	No	Some	Yes
Has to beg in public	No	No	No	No	Some

# Example of Numbers of Projects

	Langbinsi		Sandema		Tô		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gov (G)	62	39	151	48	106	54	319	47
Christian/Faith-based NGO (C)	66	41	81	26	43	22	190	28
Other and Private (O/P)	20	13	52	16	35	18	107	16
Secular NGO (N)	12	8	33	10	13	7	58	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>100</b>

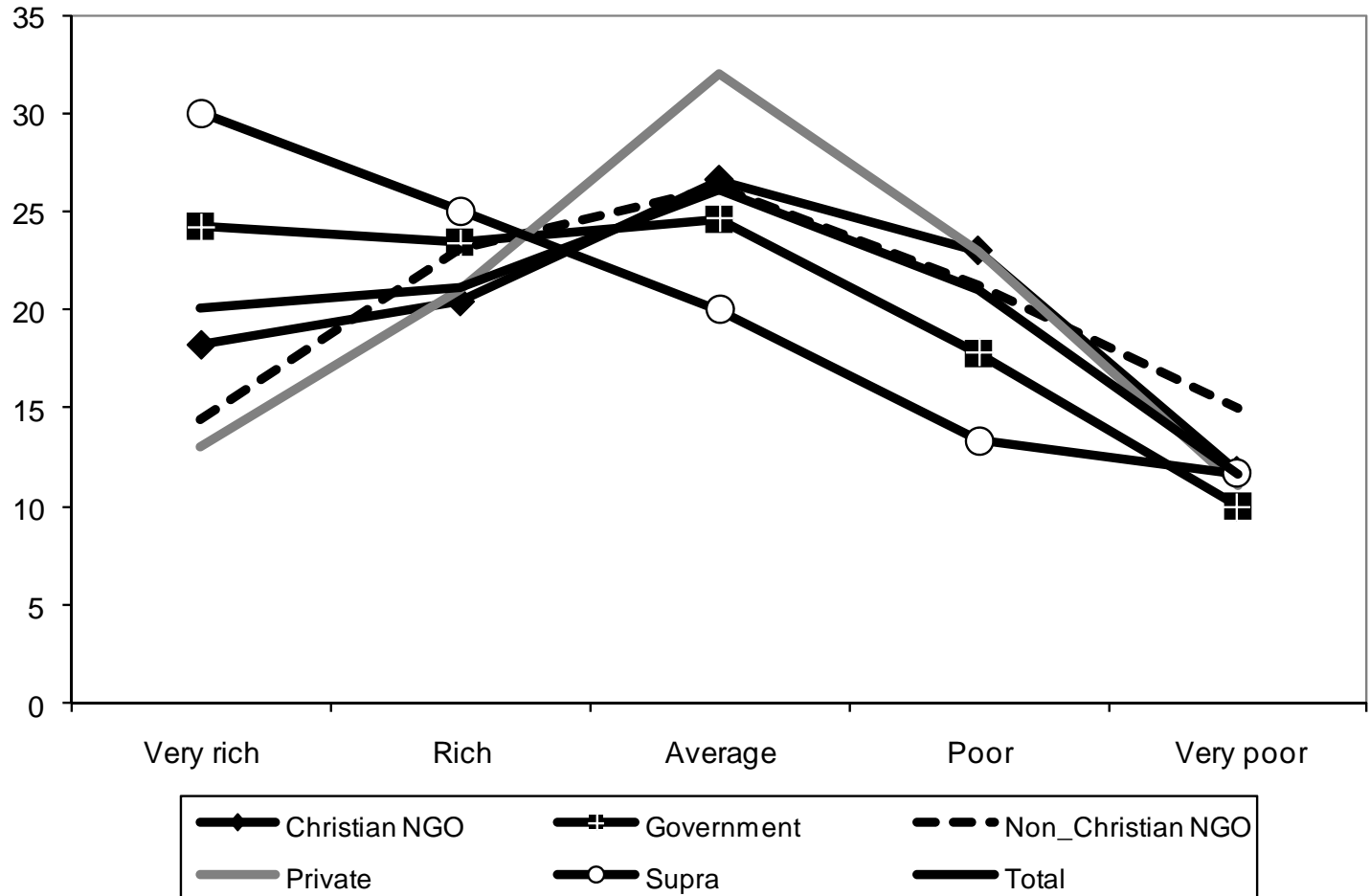




# Example of findings

Agency	best projects freq.	best projects score	worst projects freq.	worst projects score	best-worst freq.	best-worst score
Christian NGO (C)	15	47	8	18	7	29
Partnership C+G	8	28	1	2	7	26
Partnership G+P+S	2	5	0	0	2	5
Non-Church NGO (N)	2	5	0	0	2	5
Partnership C+G+N+P+S	1	5	0	0	1	5
Partnership G+N	2	3	1	2	1	1
Partnership C+G+N+P	1	5	1	3	0	2
Partnership G+S	1	1	1	2	0	-1
Partnership C+G+N	0	0	1	4	-1	-4
Partnership G+P	0	0	2	6	-2	-6
Private (P)	3	9	5	16	-2	-7
Government (G)	10	27	21	72	-11	-45
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>125</b>		
<b>Solo</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>106</b>		
<b>Partnerships</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>		

# Example of impact on wealth classes



# Overall conclusions-I

- Change agents are still mainly NGOs and government, NOT private sector (yet); growing Asian presence
- Aid has played an important role as driver of change, but only if embedded in local agencies; generally much appreciated
- People not only judge ‘initiatives’ by the outcome (practical success) but also by the process (respect, decent relationships, trust, dependability).
- ‘Good agencies’ have a long commitment, take their time, dare to experiment and dare to fail, and they are seen as honest and dependable; they play broker roles (networking, knowledge exchange) and commit themselves to solve conflicts and help when there are major problems.

# Overall conclusions II

- ‘Bad aid’ is aid that is disrespectful, top-down without consultation, and creates trouble without taking responsibility for solving conflicts
- ‘Bad aid’ is quick (‘hit and run’) and looking for fast and visible success . which is often not sustainable.
- In some areas Government Agencies are more often involved in ‘bad aid’ than NGOs or the private sector; in other areas it is the other way around.
- Development initiatives are mainly improving the lives of local rich and middle-income groups, not the lives of the (very) poor
- The current emphasis in donor aid agencies on ‘visible success’ (“effectiveness, impact”) increases the chance that development agencies focus on the locally rich and already successful, and fail to really commit themselves to the poor.

# Summarised findings

- **Natural environment:** improvements in agricultural productivity, but deteriorating environment (expansion of crops and livestock ‘eats’ forests, wildlife and biodiversity).
- Major role for Christian and Secular NGOs
- Different opinions about Government: in some areas: not very active and effective; and relatively many ‘bad projects’.

# Physical environment

- Expansion and improvement of road system, and of 'modern' buildings (mainly by government, assisted with aid)
- Major expansion of public water system (government and Christian NGOs); much better water quality and much lower burden for women
- Major expansion of telecom (private sector), and electricity (government)

# Human Capabilities

- Better health facilities, thanks to government with foreign aid (starting: health insurance) and also Christian NGOs
- Strong increase in education, mainly thanks to government with foreign aid (sector support), but still not 100% primary school coverage

# Economic Activities

- Growth of private sector; (female) traders, but NOT a major growth in industry, and slow growth of paid jobs
- Foreign agencies: more diverse (also India, Arab world, China, Brazil, South Africa)
- Little involvement of government in facilitating employment
- Many young people with good education NOT working in paid jobs
- Major outmigration; strong growth of remittances
- Growth of microcredit, but mainly thanks to secular NGOs



# Social-Political Capabilities

- Much wider social networks; orientation no longer local, but national or even global
- Much higher development expectations; growing anger among youth about slow change; in some places: anger mobilized by ethnic political entrepreneurs and by religious entrepreneurs
- Much stronger and more visible role for women (thanks to Christian and secular NGOs)
- Double feelings about more democracy: more local involvement, but also more instability and in-fighting/quarrels, also more visible local corruption, and potentially dangerous/violent exploitation of ethnic and religious differences. But: DA's ineffectiveness also a source of local initiative
- Local chiefs still very important
- Government leaders better educated, and some are now acting as officials of a 'developmental state', not only a 'rule and order state'

# Cultural change

- Fast growth of Christianity and Islam, and of Christian and Islamic organizations and NGOs
- Hybridization of religion: mixing with local elements; sometimes tensions; generally peaceful co-existence
- Growth of language abilities.
- Near centres: rapid change of dress styles; house styles; food habits; men-women relationships and old-young relationships.
- Many people regret that ‘the youth forget our age-old customs’; some resistance to globalization and to ‘western’ education , particularly in Islamic circles



There is reason for **‘silverlining Africa’**:  
Africa’s walk to prosperity may be dusty and the road bumpy  
But there is hope again...

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