

**DOES TRAINING STRENGTHEN CAPACITY?
LESSONS FROM CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN
GHANA, MINISTRY OF FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE**

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THE GHANA STRATEGY SUPPORT PROGRAM (GSSP) BACKGROUND PAPERS

ABOUT GSSP

GSSP is a research, communication, and capacity-strengthening program to build the capabilities of researchers, administrators, policymakers, and members of civil society in Ghana to develop and implement agricultural and rural development strategies. With core funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)/Ghana and a mandate to develop a multi-donor-funded Program, IFPRI launched GSSP as a partnership between Ghana and its development partners. IFPRI is working with these stakeholders to generate information, improve dialogue, and sharpen decisionmaking processes essential for effective formulation and implementation of development strategies. GSSP informs stakeholders on the role of agriculture and rural development in the broader economic and policy context in line with the emphasis placed on agriculture in Ghana's Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy. GSSP supports the development and implementation of a system to monitor and evaluate progress toward achieving Ghana's growth and poverty reduction targets and the Millennium Development Goals.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, continue to face insurmountable challenges in building and sustaining capacity for development. Although donor assistance for capacity development has been estimated to be about 25 percent of total overseas development assistance (Overseas Development Administration 1995), much of the capacity development investment in the last 30 years has primarily focused on technical assistance programs in which international experts hired to implement and manage donor funded projects substitute for local capacity (Fukuda-Parr, Lopes, and Malik 2002). While this gap filling approach to capacity development has been effective in “getting the job done,” it is of little help in strengthening local capacity to carry out activities after the completion of projects (Kanbur, Sandler, and Morrison 1999). In some cases the technical assistance approach to capacity strengthening even undermines local capacity development (Ebrahim 2007).

Although technical assistance has used up the bulk of the capacity development funds, developing country governments and development partners have spent a significant share of capacity development resources on building local capacity through short- and long-term training programs (World Bank 2005a). But the past capacity strengthening approaches have not been successful in building capacity sustainably. Because of the challenges in effectively strengthening, maintaining, and using the trained capacity, developing country governments and development partners alike are beginning to question whether investments in training really strengthen local capacity.

The challenge is to strengthen capacity in a cost-effective manner while functioning through a strategic framework that harmonizes investment in human resources. Training has high direct and indirect costs. Directly, upgrading staff skills can be costly, particularly if it involves overseas training. Indirectly, the opportunity cost of staff time during their absence can be high. Yet, training continues to be an integral part of donor-funded projects with a myriad of approaches.

Challenges in strengthening staff and institutional capacity differ depending on the political, economic, and cultural context. Institutional and policy frameworks under which public organizations function are important. Developing effective strategies to strengthen and effectively use local capacity will require, as a first step, addressing several fundamental but related questions. What prevents the effective use of capacity in places where some capacity already exists? Who benefits from different types of training activities? How are new knowledge and skills gained from training activities used in public organizations? Does the trained staff use the knowledge and skills acquired to seek employment elsewhere? What

incentives are in place to help trained professionals stay on the job? Do strategies to effectively develop capacity at national, regional and district levels differ? In this paper we take a closer look at training and its outcomes in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in Ghana to answer to some of these questions.

This note reports on a preliminary exercise to examine training and its contribution to developing capacity in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, as an input to developing a larger research and development agenda to strengthen the capacity of the ministry to effectively implement its strategies. The paper is structured as follows. A brief review of relevant issues is presented next. In the following section, we describe how the study was done and offer the findings, followed by some implications for developing a strategic framework for capacity development in the last section.

2. THE CAPACITY CHALLENGE IN AFRICA

Some principles on how to build sustainable capacity for African development are well established in the literature (Fukuda-Parr, Lopes, and Malik 2002). The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness places considerable emphasis on developing local capacity for effective use of donor resources and for achieving development goals (OECD 2006). It also recognizes capacity development as a key intervention that forms the basis for several other development interventions and as a development indicator in its own right. The challenge for development partners, however, is to come up with rational mechanisms to allocate aid assistance for capacity development. Doing this requires both government and development partners to develop harmonized approaches to organize capacity development processes, while making effective use of existing capacity.

Sustainable capacity development depends on, among other things, stability of the state, effective functioning of public and private sector organizations, and a civil society that is able to participate in the decision making processes of the government (UNDP 1994). It is not enough to develop capacity through training and skill building. Equally important are the policies and programs and the enabling environment that can nurture and retain such capacity. Furthermore, capacity development needs to be recognized as a long term effort which requires adequate resources and strengthening of local institutions. It is increasingly recognized that provision of capacity through skill-building activities alone cannot solve problems of capacity at a country level. Creating enabling environments, through major reforms of organizations, if necessary, are needed to effectively use the existing capacity.

Many capacity-building strategies consider country leadership to be central to developing local capacity (OECD 2006) (World Bank 2005b). However, defining the role of leadership and identifying various stages where such leadership is needed in the process of capacity development remains a challenge. Recent evaluations of capacity development programs call for developing countries to take ownership of the process of capacity development (World Bank 2005c). But ownership depends greatly on control over resources for capacity development; unless developing countries themselves are able to make greater investments in capacity development, instead of depending on donor resources, they may not be able to take full ownership for capacity development.

In the last few years, increasing emphasis is being placed on organizational capacity to effectively manage individual capacity and on creating an environment that enables more effective use of existing capacity (Sorgenfrei and Wrigley 2005). The capacity of government organizations to create an enabling environment itself, however, depends on the nature of development process, the stage of development the country is in, the system of government,

and resources available to the country. Organizational capacity of a country also depends on the balance of private and public organizations and the policy and institutional environment framework they operate under.

As development outcomes, individual capacity, organization capacity, and enabling environment need to be monitored, appropriate indicators for this broad set of capacity need to be identified. It is important to recognize that capacity occurs at various levels (such as individual, organizational, and system levels), and developing appropriate interventions at each level would require both individual and synergistic strategies to achieve better development outcomes.

Capacity strengthening needs must be assessed in consultation with the professionals in government organizations, development partners, and the leadership that will be accountable for capacity development. Local institutions that may participate in developing and monitoring capacity also need to be brought in. Such wide consultations would be very necessary to identify context specific measures to improve the enabling environment and organizational capacity, in addition to strengthening individual capacity. Frequent dialogue with stakeholders and identification of issues that need to be addressed for effective management of the capacity in organizations call for a strategy that can bring together professionals, leadership, and development partners involved in the capacity development process.

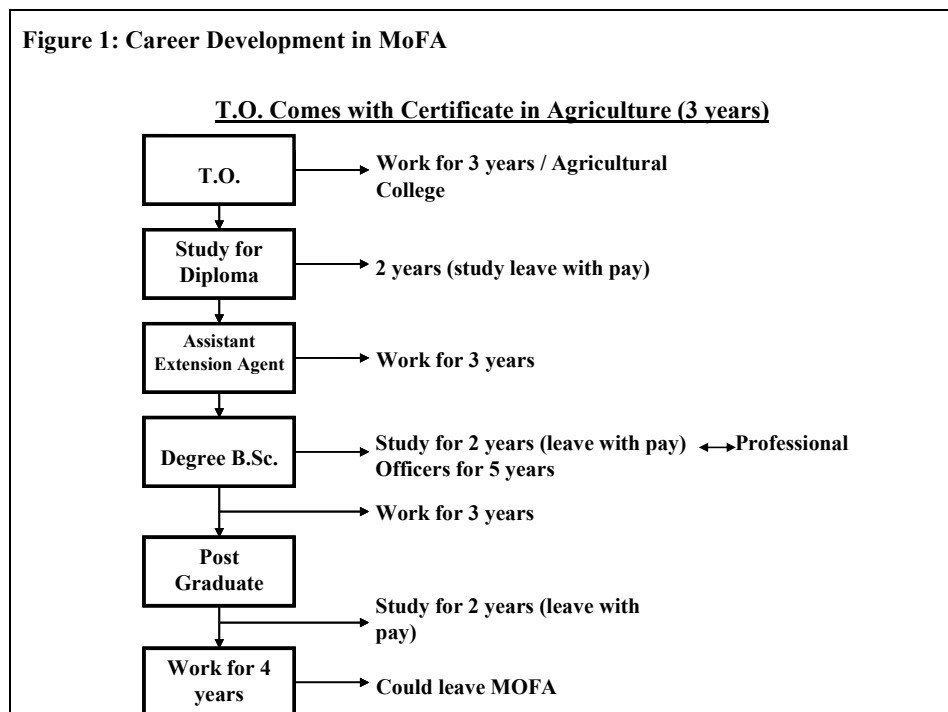
Much of the current capacity development efforts in Africa remain externally driven. Observers of capacity development programs in developing countries, particularly in Africa, have repeatedly called for evaluating capacity development process and outcomes (World Bank 2005d). The importance of development aid for capacity development and its effectiveness in building local capacity has been emphasized for quite some time (Kanbur, Sandler, and Morrison 1999; Klein and Harford 2005). The current approaches to donor-assisted capacity development in the public sector need rethinking. Without fundamental changes in how capacity is developed cost-effectively and how it is effectively used in public service, the capacity strengthening process will not be owned by the national government.

It is well recognized by development partners and developing countries in Africa that without adequate local capacity addressing the broader goals of economic development and poverty reduction will remain a major task. Effective development of capacity and sustaining such capacity for implementing programs and policies require good governance related to capacity management at all levels (Levy and Kpundeh, 2004).

3. THE SITUATION IN MOFA

First we review the policies of the government with regard to capacity development. The Ghanaian Civil Service Training Policy (GCSTP) permits training for all staff after three years of service. Entry level staff can go on to get diploma, first degree, masters, or even PhD level training based on their years of experience in the government and opportunities for higher education. The policy also states that the field of study that the professionals study must be relevant to the needs and goals of the ministries. The policy provides for study with pay for those gaining admissions locally. It also allows for post-graduate training outside the country when the participants obtain scholarships on leave of absence. The GCSTP remains a comprehensive approach to staff development in the government, yet the turn over of staff remains very high in several ministries including MoFA.

MoFA offers opportunities for developing one's career through mid-career training throughout the professional life. Figure 1 shows the opportunities for improving skills through diploma and higher education. For example, a training officer, who joins MoFA with a certificate in agriculture, which is gained after three years of study, would be eligible to study for a diploma on leave without pay after three years of service. With a diploma, the person can rejoin the ministry as assistant extension agent. After working for three years in that position, they become eligible to apply for further studies of two more years to earn a bachelors degree that takes into account the three spent for obtaining the diploma. They come back to the ministry and serve for five years as professional officers. They come back to the ministry and serve for five years as professional officers.



After working for three years they become eligible for post-graduate study. They can study for two years on leave with pay. After finishing post-graduate they can work for four years before they can leave MoFA. Although the system is organized on paper, not all the procedures are fully followed in implementing the career development path in MoFA.

MoFA offer short term training courses, ranging from 1 week to 3 months, through local institutions for professionals and sub-professionals. In-country long-term training for a diploma, BSc, BAg, and MPhil is available to technical officers, professionals, and sub-professionals. The overseas short-term training is more limited, available mostly for the professionals, and in some cases, sub-professionals. Overseas long term training is also mostly for professionals with very limited opportunities for sub-professionals. Technical officers rarely get in-service training opportunities, either overseas or locally.

Staff departures are a widespread concern, but there is little information to accurately assess the extent to which the staff are leaving the ministry to work in other organizations in and outside the sector and whether these departures are associated with training. That is, whether training makes their current positions less appealing and gives them the ability to obtain a job else where. Table 1 shows the total number of staff at post in the Cape Coast municipal directorate of agriculture between 2001 and 2004. In all categories, there has been a decline. The numbers have to be read with caution. Some of them may be genuine retirements. Turnover could also be a lot higher in urban areas. But they generally reflect the inability to maintain staff which could be due to voluntary departures, retirements and inability to replace staff and limits on new recruitment.

Table 1: Total Number of Staff at Post 2001-2004

(in Cape Coast Municipal Directorate of Agriculture)

	2001	2002	2003	2004
Professionals (Asst. Directors to Directors)	19	15	13	10
Sub-Professionals (Production Officers to Chief Production Officers)	15	13	9	6
Technical Class (Technical Officers to Chief Technical Officers)	26	21	15	11
Supporting Staff	35	31	26	23
Total	95	80	63	50

Source: Assan, John Kwesi. 2005. Project Report.

4. DATA SOURCES

This preliminary examination is based on information obtained through three exercises.

First, we were able to observe and participate in a November 2006 national level consultation, which was organized by GTZ/MoFA, to discuss key issues, challenges, and constraints facing senior professionals in the ministry working at headquarters and regions. The objective of the consultation was to discuss the current status of MoFA, its capacity to deliver on its mission, and the conditions that would enable the ministry to achieve its mission. The consultation, which involved the Deputy Minister, provided an opportunity to document staff perceptions of major problems and potential solutions to address capacity limitations in the ministry.

Next, to understand how perceptions might differ at regional and local levels, three focus group discussions were held with district (KEAA and AAK districts) and regional level employees in November 2006. The regional level discussions involved about 15 subject matter specialists. At the district levels, about 25 staff in KEAA district and 8 staff in AAK district, mostly field extension personnel, participated in the discussion groups. These discussions also revolved around issues raised by the national consultation meeting and went into details about how such issues can be resolved at the regional and district levels. In addition, issues related to the training and capacity building at the regional and district levels were discussed.

Finally, we followed up staff that attended the national consultative meeting and participated in regional/district group discussions, with a formal questionnaire on the challenges they face in contributing effectively to the mission of the ministry. The questionnaire solicited information on their background and experience, their formal and informal training received in the last five years, their use of skills developed through training, their salary and other incentives that help them to contribute to their job, and other issues related to organizational capacity development of the ministry. Of the 60 officers at all levels — national, regional, and district levels — that received the questionnaire, forty-five, nearly 75 percent, returned them completed. The sample selection however, is not fully randomized for this exercise. The questionnaires were sent to the email addresses for the participants of the national workshop and distributed to the regional and district staff during the group discussions.

5. RESULTS FROM CONSULTATIONS, GROUP DISCUSSIONS, AND FEEDBACK ANALYSIS

In Ghana, the mission of MoFA, to achieve sustained agriculture growth and development to contribute to national economic growth, is well aligned with the national goal of economic growth, poverty reduction, and increased employment and incomes (MoFA 2002). MoFA's objectives include attaining food security for all Ghanaians through agriculture production, producing raw materials needed for the agro-based industries, contributing to foreign exchange through commodities for export, developing efficient input supply and distribution systems, and organizing effective output processing and marketing systems, and the effective implementation of food, agriculture and natural resource policies and programs (MoFA 2002). To achieve these objectives well trained human and institutional capacity are needed at all levels.

In addition to these specific objectives, MoFA has five strategic thrusts. Enhanced human resource development and institutional capacity for achieving the goals and objectives of MoFA is the first. The other four strategic thrusts are: increasing farmers' access to financial services through policies and programs that enable growth of the public and private financial institutions, developing appropriate technology for small holder and commercial agriculture sectors, improving infrastructure such as roads, telecommunications, and irrigation and improving access to Ghana's agriculture products to regional and external markets.

5.1 The National Consultation

The national consultation, under the broad framework of national goals, mission, objectives, and strategic thrusts of MoFA, initiated a dialogue on the current status and the ideal situation to achieve these goals and objectives. In Ghana, the process of decentralization that started a decade ago in 1997, which has resulted in structural reorganization of the government functionaries, provides an opportunity to critically evaluate how redefining functions at regional and district levels to reorient the mindsets of professionals has worked. In the recent years, the change management process that went along with the decentralization process also provided opportunities for such self-examination. Thus, the national consultation was organized in the spirit of an exercise that looked back at what has been achieved and what challenges they continue to face in achieving the organizational objectives.

The first set of exercises involved the participants developing a picture of MoFA today and contrasting it with what they would consider to be an ideal environment in which they can function effectively. Several issues were raised as part of this discussion.

Decentralization: They recognize that decentralization is an effective method to transfer responsibilities and accountability to local levels. While recognizing that

decentralization of administration has been advanced to a far greater extent in agricultural ministry than other MDAs, the participants noted that the linkages, in terms of technical, financial, and logistical responsibilities, between national and the regional/district authorities were weak. They wondered why the district assemblies, and not the district officers, will be making decisions on allocations of funds to district level programs, while it is their ministry that funds regional and district operations; they didn't seem to have fully comprehended the implications of decentralization.

Funding: Funding is of significant concern to those that work at regional and districts levels. This becomes even more significant with fiscal decentralization. One group of participants used the analogy of a tree without bark to highlight the issue. They indicated that the roots were funding sources, the branches and leaves were regional and district offices, and the stem without the bark in which nutritional flow is hampered is the national office. Under full decentralization, about 40 percent of the resources are expected to be utilized at the national level, with 5 and 55 percents going to regional and district levels. The participants felt that this was lopsided and suggested to 10, 20, 70 percent going to national, regional and district operations.

Underutilized Human Capital: They felt that the ministry, as a whole, has strong human capital, but it is not fully utilized, attributing it to poor "enabling environment." They felt that the current impediments to making good use of trained professionals in the ministry could be overcome with better leadership and improved work environment. Again using an analogy, they said that the existing situation was like a local variety of maize, planted on poor soil, poorly managed, not yielding enough. They attributed poor motivation among staff in the ministry to "low" service conditions and poor management practices, including lack of vision among the leadership, resulting in lack of teamwork among various units in the ministry. Additionally, they felt that weak planning and resource allocation practices also lead to fights among units and that improved inter- and intra-departmental coordination among the leadership and staff would help in creating a better working environment. They urged that capacity development and human resource management need to become a core part of the ministry's agenda.

Low Organizational Capacity: They also indicated that effective decentralization seems to have suffered from low organizational capacity. They attributed low organizational capacity to absence of accountability at all levels, poor funding of districts, deteriorating staff conditions at the regional and district levels and poor infrastructure, all of which result in poor outcomes on the ground. They felt that because the agricultural ministry is poorly organized, several multidisciplinary projects, such as the rice project, are given to other ministries, but those ministries depend on the ministry staff to implement the projects.

Weak Ownership because of Inadequate Staff Consultation: They also complained of senior and mid-level professionals not being consulted enough in the development of policies and programs, such as FASDEP, sub-sector policies, livestock, extension, and ICT policies. The absence of consultation extended also to the development of staff rules, regulations, and responsibilities.

Weak Implementation: Referring to absence of emphasis on implementation in the ministry, they noted that while there is a budget committee that identifies priorities and allocates resources according to the development plans and policies, the ministry lacks a monitoring and evaluation committee that routinely look at the progress made and identifies weaknesses in implementing programs and policies.

The participants identified a number of solutions to make better use of existing capacity in the ministry:

- More frequent, preferably monthly, meetings of directors to share their experiences and also interact with donors. While such meetings now occur on a biannual basis, more frequent meetings would help in more effective translation of decisions into actions. Sharing of information emerging from these meetings in a transparent manner would also be a first step to identify follow-up action and make individuals accountable for follow-up. The establishment of a local area network and posting of the meeting minutes of national directors regularly for monitoring the progress would be helpful.
- Improved information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure to reduce time and effort that goes into these interactions. It would reduce the need for regional directors to spend several days traveling just to give a five minute briefing. Connecting regional and district offices with ICT and helping senior officials at all levels to use the ICT effectively would help in saving resources and travel time.
- Investments in ICT at all levels of MoFA to make information widely available. Communication of information on progress made in various districts would help improve staff morale and create a competitive environment among staff.
- Equitable and transparent distribution of resources among various departments, regions, and districts reduce conflicts and encourage team work.
- Holistic approach to assessing capacity for designing and implementing projects is needed.
- New approach to human resource management. Decentralized human resource training will improve coordination among the regional and national offices. Strengthening capacity through a decentralized process and improving the conditions

of service for the trained staff in MoFA will help in increasing the impact of training programs.

- Better documentation of training imparted and the benefits. The major challenge is offering training that is relevant for the positions that the trainees hold. Skills obtained should be better matched with job requirements so that trainees make use of what they learn and also to reduce the capacity gap.
- Improved opportunities for sharing knowledge obtained through training. Sharing knowledge through seminars at the national and regional levels could help facilitate the knowledge gained by training to be transferred to others.
- Increasing the interaction among staff in order to build teams in each directorate. Developing common goals and performance measures for individuals and teams would help in better monitoring and appraising the performance of teams in various directorates.
- Improved scheme of service is needed to motivate staff. This would require clarity in job description, enhanced opportunities for decentralized promotions and credit for recognizing the time spent in remote locations—this would encourage staff to spend part of their careers in remote areas enthusiastically.
- Improved logistical support, such as office equipment and vehicles, to make better use of capacity.
- Visionary leadership to develop a coordinated and integrated strategic plan for strengthening capacity. Creating opportunities for staff members to express their views openly would enable better participation of professionals in decision making.
- Monitoring and evaluation committees similar to the existing budget committee to hold professionals accountable at all levels.
- Policies that remain consistent, even through leadership changes, to better connect policies to action on the ground and provide continuity.
- A workplace committee or a mechanism for expressing work place frustrations to better understand and address the challenges faced by staff.

In sum, the participants are suggesting they are not performing as well as they can for a number of organizational reasons. The complaints are really about the way the organization is managed rather than limitations imposed by lack of capacity. Surprisingly, they are asking for stronger institutions—rules and practices—that hold them accountable so that overall performance can be better. In the next section, we offer summary of discussion with staff in a region.

5.2 The Regional Discussions

At the regional level, a group discussion was held with the subject matter specialists. The participants were briefed on the outcomes of the national consultations, highlighting the issues related to training and capacity, to elicit their views on how training worked in the ministry. Their observations were the following:

- There are no clear criteria for selecting beneficiaries for external training; also for some internal training programs. The chances of being selected for training, particularly those abroad, appear to be related to one's "proximity" to Accra.
- The result is that beneficiaries accept any training offered without any regard for its relevance to their work. The beneficiaries may choose training on the basis of benefit (e.g. per diem, warm clothing allowance, etc.).
- The organization does not recognize/acknowledge the knowledge that staff obtain through training. This perception is held because the beneficiaries of even long term training are left in their old positions without additional challenges.
- Inadequate staff and resources affect staff performance and therefore satisfaction. For example, AEAs who cover more than one operational area cannot accomplish what they are expected to (e.g. only about 20% of demonstrations are established, often on a smaller area than the ideal).
- Although the technical assistant class has been mostly phased out, the few remaining in the system need upgrading;
- Upgrading after graduation leads to reduction in salary. In some cases, the procedures for salary increase is such that after coming back from long-term training some categories of staff end up in slightly lower salary scale. This is partly because in their absence from service, the salary increases that happen during that period do not fully accrue to them.
- Good performers are not rewarded, rather mediocrity is encouraged. This is due to the absence of a performance based appraisal system;
- Technical staff of some directorates receives minimal training, (e.g. veterinary technical officers).

They had the following suggestions:

- An up-to-date database need to be maintained, which should become the basis for selecting staff for training. Rules and regulations for qualifying for training need to be rigorously followed.
- A comprehensive training needs assessment must be carried out at all levels and this must be informed by MOFA's training policy;

- Posting after training must be relevant to schedules (even if staff must be reposted after training, in case position is filled);
- A forum must be created at all levels for beneficiaries to share knowledge acquired with colleagues upon return from training;
- Beneficiaries must be made to present training reports to the appropriate authorities. Graduates must be made to submit copies of their thesis to HRDM Directorate and their respective RADU for the use and benefit of MOFA. Such a policy will need extra financial support from MOFA
- Need to re-establish the HRDM unit in the RADU for effective coordination of trainings, especially in the choice of nominees. In this case the National directorate only informs the regions about programs and the regions select nominees;
- The technical officer class can be exposed to, at least, inter – regional trips in addition to external trainings;
- Need to institutionalize payment of transfer grants to enhance staff postings;
- Need to introduce such programs as distance education; sandwich programs (ideally between October and December);
- Restructure the Sasakawa program to cater for other specializations apart from Agricultural Extension.

5.3 Survey Results

Following the national consultation meeting, a formal questionnaire was used to further elicit details of the background and characteristics of training activities and their current use in the jobs of the respondents. The survey enables us to quantitatively evaluate some of the assertions made during the discussions.

The respondents of the questionnaire ranged from senior professional officials (29) in the headquarters and the regions to technical field officers (16). They included agricultural professionals and administrators. The years of service of the respondents ranged from 2 to 40 years. Seven respondents had experience of five years or less and fifteen respondents had 15 or more years of experience working with MoFA. Educational attainment of the respondents also varied considerably. Sixteen respondents had a second degree, thirteen with only a first degree, seven did not have any degree and nine had certificates. Twenty six of the 28 respondents with certificates or first degrees specialized in agriculture or related subjects.

Who Received Training in the Last Five Years?

District and regional officials complained that training opportunities are biased towards degree holders and senior officials and that staff in headquarters or those stationed near Accra tend to get most of the training opportunities. On average, the respondents received more than one (1.73) short-term training in the last five years, ranging from 0-12. The thirty-two staff members that had first degrees or above received 88 percent of the training received by all participants in the last 5 years. On average, a staff member with a first degree attended more than two (2.16) short-term training courses, compared to less than one (0.69) courses among staff without first degrees (Table 2).

Does Senior Staff Receive More Training?

Although the nature of training needs for these groups differ, the frequency of training received by one group of staff could have some effect on the motivation of other groups. The mean number of training is greater for senior staff than that of junior/field staff (2.15 compared to 0.69) (Table 2).

Table 2: Training of Senior and Field Staff

Trainee Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Senior	32	2.1563	2.23043	0.39429
Junior	13	0.6923	0.85485	0.23709
t statistic for equality of means: 2.286; P = 0.027				

Does Headquarters Staff Receive More Training?

Since training activity is seen by some as an incentive to stay in MOFA, less training to regional staff compared to headquarter staff can result in greater attrition in the regions. While the mean number of training courses received by the headquarters staff is much higher than the regional staff, the standard deviations are also larger. An independent sample *t*-test on the assumption that the variances are not equal among the two groups (Levene's F test: F = 5.315, P value = 0.02) indicate that the actual value of the *t*-statistic is 2.283 (significant at 5% level), thus supporting the view that headquarters staff receive higher number of training compared to the regional staff (Table 3). It is necessary to note that location, seniority and whether one holds a degree may be related.

Table 3: Training of Headquarters and Regional Staff

Trainee Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Headquarter	21	2.476	2.657	0.579
Regional	24	1.083	0.928	0.189
t statistic for equality of means: 2.283; P = 0.03				

Does Training Contribute to Capacity?

Among the respondents who received short-term training (35), only four said they have not effectively used the skills they gained in the training courses in their current jobs (Table 4). Furthermore, 93 percent of the respondents said they would like to have additional training and 91 percent of them said their salary is not commensurate with their job responsibilities and the skills they have. About 40 percent of the respondents said that training they received helped to improve the organizational capacity of their institution.

Table 4: Contribution of Training to Capacity

Are the skills from training used in job (35 respondents answered)	Yes (31)	No (4)
How skills gained are used in current job (24 respondents answered)	89%	11%
a) skills directly related to job	(8) 28%	
b) improved administration skills	(6) 21%	
c) skills are useful to teach colleagues	(5) 17%	
d) skills are useful in better execution	(5) 17%	
e) strengthen client relations	(2) 7%	
f) improved personal development	(2) 7%	

In responding to how training helped them, about 28 percent said that skills received from training courses are directly related to their jobs. For 21 percent, training courses improved their administrative skills; seventeen percent reported that training helped them better execute their work; and an equal number said they were able to share their skills with colleagues. A few others reported gaining inter-personal skills useful to deal with clients. Absence of data, lack of resources for effective work, and poor management of human resources were listed as some of the reasons for not being able to make use of the skills obtained through training.

What are the Reasons for Leaving MoFA?

Group discussions also revealed that salary was the major reason for staff to leave MoFA. The motivational effect of pay incentives has been a critical determinant of public sector performance. Employees will respond to incentives (such as higher salary) if they believe that good performance will be instrumental in bringing greater rewards, and if they expect that their efforts would achieve greater performance for the organization.

We grouped responses to the questions as to why they think people leave MoFA into broad categories. Resource availability, job satisfaction (less frustration), work environment

(e.g. improved facilities) and logistics (including transportation) were grouped into one broad category called “Job Satisfaction”, while salary and allowances and perquisites into two other categories. Each respondent gave several reasons for this open ended question. Each of the distinct responses were counted resulting in a total of 162 responses which were grouped into the three categories; job satisfaction, salary, and allowances and perquisites.

Salary and allowances are key factors determining staff retention for junior staff, while job satisfaction and salary seem to be important for senior staff to stay in their jobs. The actual chi-square value (5.76) is greater than the critical value (4.60) for 2 degrees of freedom at the 0.10 level, indicating that overall junior staff differs from senior staff in their responses as grouped above (Table 5). For example, a larger share of responses from senior staff indicated that job satisfaction is a key reason for staff to leave MOFA while a larger share of responses from junior staff indicated allowances and perquisites are more important for them if they were to stay on their jobs.

Table 5: Cross-Tabulation Results for Salary as a Reason to Leave Public Service among Junior and Senior Staff

	Groups			
		Junior	Senior	Total
Reasons	Job Satisfaction	22 13.6%	24 14.8%	46
	Salary	48 29.6%	33 20.4%	81
	Allowance and Perquisites	26 16%	9 5.6%	35
	Total Responses	96	66	N = 162

Based on the interactions with staff on the reasons some of their former colleagues have left MoFA during their career, even after they are trained by MoFA, professional staff indicated that low job satisfaction is the main cause for attrition. In addition, a low salary in the government system compared to private sector, NGOs, and financial institutions was also cited as reason for staff mobility. The staff becomes highly skilled after training and if the skills are not effectively used by the ministry they are able to find better jobs using those skills outside the ministry. Delayed promotions after training tend to accentuate to this problem. Lack of appreciation from supervisors, lack of funds for program implementation, poor travel allowance and benefits, and not having clear tasks assigned with follow-up are some of the reasons given for high staff turn over in the ministry. These issues are common to all categories.

What are the Reasons for Staying at MoFA?

Public sector management and human resource policies differ from those of the private sector in a number of ways. Public sector employees are often less motivated by

material rewards than their counterparts in the private sector. While many persons in the public sector are highly qualified, their remuneration often does not reflect the value of their human capital. However, job security becomes an important factor for employees to continue to stay in public sector. During the group discussion, MoFA staff indicated “good management” of staff at the regional and district levels as a key factor for staff staying in their jobs.

In light of the above, we grouped the responses for reasons for staying on their current jobs into three categories: Job Security, Salary, and Management. Table 6 reports the cross-tabulation results between the various groups’ incentives to stay at MoFA and the junior and senior staff groups. From the table we find that the junior group has a greater proportion of responses that cite salary and management factors as the main incentives for staying in the public sector. However, from the chi-square test ($\chi^2_2 = 1.16$). We cannot reject the null hypothesis that the various incentives cited do not differ between the junior and senior staff groups.

Table 6: Cross-Tabulation Results between Job Security as the Incentive to Stay in Public Sector between Junior and Senior Staff

	Groups			
		Junior	Senior	Total
Reasons	Job Security	7 12.1%	7 12.1%	14
	Salary	11 19%	6 10.3%	17
	Management	18 31%	9 15.5%	27
	Total Responses	36	22	N = 58

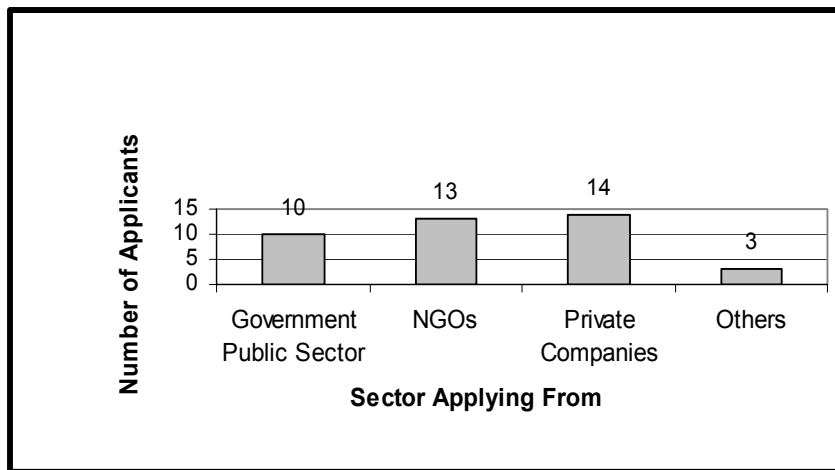
While staff mobility continues to be high, there is enough motivation and opportunities in the government systems to encourage staff to stay in their jobs. Staff members who stay on in their jobs at MoFA indicate that training and career building opportunities are the key reasons for the staff to stay in their job. Job satisfaction and love of their work was also mentioned. Staff members openly expressed appreciation with regards to the flexibility of their job which allowed them to undertake additional jobs with NGOs and also conduct side businesses. Job security seems to be a reason for many to stick with their jobs. Several staff mentioned benefits such as housing and transportation for senior staff as a reason for staying on their job. Other reasons included an inability to find a job outside the ministry, reaching too old an age to move from MoFA, and some wanted to give back to the government for the training they received during their career.

Where do MoFA Staff Go?

Brain drain remains a pervasive problem for many developing countries. A recent World Bank report estimate suggests that on an average about 23,000 qualified professionals are emigrating from Africa each year (Chacha 2007). Brain drain is caused by low wages paid in the public sector, political instability and poor leadership within countries. Brain drain can be defined as a process where qualified professionals leave a country for better opportunities, mainly in the area of employment but also in academia (Wadda 2000). Brain drain has significant negative implications for capacity retention as qualified individuals leave the public sector to join the private and other foreign non-government entities. This is mainly due to better remuneration and service packages elsewhere. During the past decade, this problem has become more acute as mid- and senior-level professionals are moving to western countries in search of better opportunities, and thus the level of human capital in the originating country strictly declines in the next period.

Figure 2 shows who applies to NGO jobs based on the analysis of the applications for the post-doctorate market-oriented program officer offered by GTZ in 2005 among 40 applications reviewed 10 of them came from current staff members employed by the government. About an equal number of applicants came from NGOs and private companies. At least for this particular job not all applications came from government employees.

Figure 2: Analysis of Applications for GTZ Post for Market-Oriented Agriculture Program Officer (40 Applications)



Does Individual Training Improve Organizational Capacity?

Peter Morgan (1997) has identified several distinct phases of concern with building government capacity. During the 1950s and the early 1960s, when many countries became independent from colonial rule, efforts were concentrated on institution building to manage public investments effectively. During the early 1970s, however, attention was focused on

institutional strengthening to improve the operation of existing organizations and the training and performance of public sector personnel. During the early 1980s, the attention shifted to *development management*, which concentrated on managing development programs; this often required considerable organizational initiative and inter-institutional coordination. *Institutional development*, a concept that was broadened to include private sector and NGO activities, and which focused more on developing institutions with effective processes for managing change, was on the agenda during the 1980s and the 1990s.

An important element of individual capacity building relates to the ability of individuals to improve organizational capacity. Training refers to higher and specialized professional education required for filling certain roles in organizations, whereas recruitment refers to the process of attracting skilled individuals to fill up certain positions within the organization. The above dimension of capacity emphasizes how talents are used within organizations so that both professional development and organizational development takes place. While better training can often lead to improved organizational capacity, it is important to bear in mind that often management skills, in-house training within organizations and partnerships within and between organizations are important factors in improving organizational performance.

In light of the above, we asked the respondents if their past training helped to improve the organizational capacity of the department. Most of junior staff responded that they were not sure if their training helped in improving the organizational capacity of their units, while the senior staff thought their training did (Table 7).

Table 7: Cross-Tabulation Results between Training Cited and Management Groups

	Groups			Total
	Junior	Senior		
Cannot Say	16 35.6%	4 8.9%		20
Yes	11 24.4%	8 17.8%		19
No	1 2.2%	5 11.1%		6
Total Responses	28	17		45

What Factors Contribute to Improved Organizational Capacity?

Organizational capacity refers to how the resources, knowledge, and processes employed by an organization are effectively utilized to achieve its goals and mission. The resources include the personnel, facilities, and funding at the organization’s disposal. Knowledge refers to the organization’s internal abilities to perform a given task better as well as its strategic leadership. The quality of an organization’s leadership has an important

influence on overall performance. Processes refer to the program and process management, motivating and supervising staff members, and maintaining relations with various stakeholders.

Organizational capacity development is an ongoing process and is carried out through the application of its internal resources and external support. Organizational capacity can lead to improved management by taking into account the organization's strengths, weaknesses, and its response to external opportunities and threats. An extension organization, for example, can take advantage of training areas from an international agency, and have its staff members trained in a variety of areas. This, in the long-run, can help the organization improve its performance in key areas, such as human resource management, budgetary skills, training, and networking activities, etc.

Group discussions revealed that two major sets of factors contribute to improved organizational capacity; salary and allowances and better management. Based on the responses received from staff, we group resources, promotion, and motivation into one category and call it "Management", while salary and other allowances are grouped into another category called "Salary". The junior staff group cites salary proportionately higher as a reason for lower organizational capacity compared to the senior staff group. While both factors equally contribute to organizational capacity of the units and departments, there seems to be no statistically significant difference between the two groups of staff in identifying these factors.

6. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING CAPACITY AT MOFA

It is clear from staff views sought through various instruments that a comprehensive strategy is required to strengthen capacity rather than ad hoc training through various projects and a loosely administered staff training policy. The primary issue that needs to be addressed is why the organization fails to effectively use the capacity that exists.

Regarding training itself, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed:

1. Selection for mid career training needs to be more transparent. There seems to be a high level of dissatisfaction among the candidates who have not been selected for local or overseas training.
2. Currently, there seems to be a poor linkage between the skills attained through training and opportunities for promotion in the ministry. This weak link results in several staff members leaving after receiving training at the expense of the ministry. Salary and compensation for improved skill development does not seem to match the skills obtained by the staff members. Some staff members reported that they get less salary after coming back from the training due to the organizational structure of the ministry. Human resource development strategies should include appropriate follow up with the trained personnel to place them where they are most needed and where they can contribute effectively to ministry.

As a start, a human resource mapping is needed to locate where the skills are in various departments of the ministry. Next, a database to track the trained personnel and their career progression needs to be developed. A human resource development program could also establish a forum for sharing information and knowledge from overseas training so that the trained professionals can further share knowledge and, in some cases, conduct local level training to multiply the impact of such training. Staff interviewed reported a high level of lobbying for overseas training among the staff members. Moreover, people with close proximity to the national offices seem to get frequent opportunities for overseas training. Transparent allocation for overseas training opportunities according the background of the professionals and the need within various departments would help in eliminating the lobbying practice. Enforcement of the rules and regulations in career development and training opportunities is important for effective implementation of training plans. The ministry as a whole would benefit by improving the working environment to keep the trained staff who come back with high skill set.

The ministry could further collaborate with local universities to identify opportunities for higher education and training opportunities. Currently, such collaboration seems to be weak. The ministry will benefit by improved dynamism of human resource development staff and their interaction with the regional and district offices. Regional exchanges of staff between neighboring countries for a period of three to six months will expose them to different approaches to problem solving. Improved management skills of professional officers can enhance their people and leadership skills so they can manage the trained staff in a professional manner. The allocation of training resources where new and emerging skills are needed would help to fill the capacity gap. Constant interaction of national offices with the regional and district counterparts will encourage better working relationships and will help in accomplishing their goals. Finally, better scheme of service, job description and roles and responsibilities of staff at all levels will help in better organizing the human resources within the ministry for effective implementation of plans and policies.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Training and updating the skills of staff of public sector organizations continues to be the major approach to building the capacity of the professionals to deliver on their mandates. Sectoral ministries in developing countries, such as MOFA in Ghana, have followed similar approaches for a long time with limited success. When organized well and followed up for effective use of the skills obtained by the staff, training activities can help in alleviating capacity constraints and could be an effective source of motivation for staff to remain on their jobs and contribute to the goals of the organizations. Given the limited resources for training and capacity strengthening, there is a constant need to identify opportunities to reduce the cost of training activities as well as to reduce the opportunity cost of staff staying away from their jobs during the training period. Development partners have followed a number of different approaches to effectively build national capacities, with little harmonization of such efforts among them.

As a first step to organize the efforts of development partners in building and effectively using the capacity of the staff in MOFA, this paper looked at various individual and institutional constraints and challenges to identify opportunities for effective use of existing capacity within MOFA at the national and at the regional levels. Based on national and regional consultations with the staff of MOFA and from their feedback to formal questions, this paper presents a set of implications for maximizing long term impact of staff capacity in MOFA.

Results of consultations and analysis of feedback from staff indicate that with improved organization and management the existing human resources could be effectively used for achieving the goals of MOFA. Although developing skills and building capacity in new areas should be seen as on-going efforts, such activities need to be highly connected to the functions staff performs in the various units of the ministry.

This study was intended to be an initial effort to identify a broad set of challenges and opportunities for improving the human resource management within MOFA. Exploring the issues identified here further and implementing innovative approaches to better management of organizational and individual capacities on a pilot basis will help in increasing the effectiveness of capacity building activities.

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