Project management in Ghana: expectations, realities and barriers to use

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Abstract. This article reports the findings of an empirical study of the problems of developing Project Management (PM) practice in Ghanaian organisations. Based on previous research and survey data, the characteristics of the project life cycle (PLC) are used as a basis to examine the nature, type and severity of the problems encountered by organisations implementing projects. It is also used to determine the extent and relevance of PM usage: concepts, methods and application. It is concluded that although PM is important, legitimate and relevant, its practice in Ghana has been fraught with problems. Some recommendations for overcoming these problems are also made, and it is recommended that further research is required in order to ascertain the nature of PM practice and to gauge the attitudes and opinions of people involved in projects in Ghana.

Keywords. project management; project life cycle; Ghana

Introduction

Project Management as a distinct management concept has been used as a management tool by organisations across industries to achieve a broad spectrum of objectives. In the field of development economics, project management has been used as a vehicle to drive the economic development aspirations of developing countries like Ghana. Project management is useful for both private sector and public sector development. Hinson (2004) has, for instance, noted that there has been an 'expansion and intensification of competition' in Ghana's banking sector. With an increase in competition in Ghana's business sector, astute project management practices could easily become a source of differential business advantage. Projects are themselves comprised of many inter-related elements including the tasks to be performed, methods to be employed, resources to be committed, and the environ-

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ment in which the project is being implemented.

These elements are also integrated within the successive phases of a project life cycle (PLC). To ensure their proper functioning, the pieces have to be brought together to form workable systems which will promote and enhance the attainment of a project's objectives. However, several problems, resulting from the meshing of the different parts of these systems, sometimes hinder the effective and efficient functioning of projects. The causes of project failures span the whole spectrum of the project life cycle; from concept, formation, planning and control, to implementation factors.

Project management (PM) research to date has focused on private sector project management issues, public sector project management issues, firm-specific PM issues, and general macro-level PM issues. Private sector PM issues have been expanded upon by researchers like Kotnour (2000); Bryde (2003); Dey & Ogunlana, (2004); Sense (2004); Dey (2002); Smith (1997); Othman, Hassan & Pasquire (2005); Metcalf (1991); Khamooshi (1996); Ellis, Wood & Thorpe (2004); and Baccarani, Salm & Love (2004). Researchers who focused on public sector PM issues have included Dey (2000); Cervone (2004); Khan (1995); London (1994); Gent, Walker, Hampton & Peters (2002); Nagelsmeier – Linke (1995). Finally, researchers who have investigated firm-level and general macro-level PM issues have included Lee – Kelley (2002); Cicmil (2000); Leseure & Brookes (2004); Palmer (2002); Longman & Mullins (2004); Chan & Tam (2000); Gale and Cartwright (1995); and Duhlsten (2004).

Benko & McFarlan (2004) also concluded in a PM study that 'today, all companies are more dependent than ever on projects for growth'. Zwikael & Bar-Joseph (2004) also concluded in a study that there are a 'large number of projects that fail to achieve their objectives'. Finally Akgun, Lynn & Byrne (2004) also reported on their findings from an ongoing seven – year research project that 'successful project teams perform certain practices better than unsuccessful ones'.

All the PM studies discussed earlier have focused largely on PM research concentrated on Europe, North America and Asia. Very few of the studies have focused on PM issues in Africa, and none of the articles reviewed contained PM research conducted on Ghana. To date, no specific studies have been done to ascertain the performance of projects in Ghana, nor indeed, to track the types of problems that have plagued PM in Ghana. Some development and donor agencies track the performance of their project interventions but often, these are internal exercises whose results are rarely published and at best become 'internal documents.'

The current theme explored in this article therefore attempts to discuss some key issues that characterise project management activity from a developing country context, particularly Ghana. The author believes that the peculiarity of developing country project management nuances might

contribute some interesting dimensions to the global debate on PM.

There is a need to study the problems of PM in Ghana because projects are important in Ghana. The NDC government, which ruled Ghana from 1992-2000, published a development policy white paper, 'Vision 2020,' (NDPC 1998). The paper advocates the use of projects as a development tool to optimise the rate of economic and social development. This was to be achieved through the efficient and effective management of the country's projects, programmes and enterprises with the support of both the private and public sectors.

The NPP government, on its assumption of power in 2001, reiterated its commitment to the use of projects as a development tool to accelerate the country's economic development. Indeed, many projects have since been launched, established, and begun implementation under the ambit of the Presidential Special Initiatives (PSI). The government's economic development policy framework paper, couched within the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (GPRS, NDPC 2003) also lays a heavy emphasis on the use of projects. It is clear therefore that projects have come to stay and will increasingly be employed as a vehicle of choice to drive Ghana's economic development goals.

This article consequently aims to outline the problems associated with project management in Ghana, and to subsequently examine the nature, type and severity of these problems. Finally, recommendations for overcoming the problems are proposed.

A brief industrial history of Ghana

Successive Ghanaian governments pursued various models of economic development throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s. In the immediate post-independent era of the early 1960s, Ghana's economic development objectives were geared towards the 'Big Push' primary economic policies. These revolved around: a major investment effort; an industrialisation drive; increased import substitution; processing of commodities and minerals previously exported in their raw form; and direct state participation in leading areas of the economy.
The 1970s ushered in a policy of increased 'Ghanaianisation' or indigenisation with specified industrial activities reserved for state participation, Ghana-foreign ownership, and exclusive Ghana ownership, among others. The early 1980s saw the liberalisation of the Ghanaian economy and the encouragement of foreign investments.

All these approaches, however, fell far short of expectations and the failures were exacerbated by adverse terms of trade, falling commodity prices, and crippling debt by the mid 1980s. The failure of the various economic models and the severe strains exerted by external forces, in tandem, had contributed in no small measure to Ghana's dire socio-economic condi-

tion: a depressed economy; massive unemployment; high levels of inflation; capacity under-utilisation; dependence on primary commodity exports; and low productivity.

The challenge for development therefore has not merely been a matter of finding technically optimal solutions. Over the long-term, the challenge for Ghana has been to use its limited resources more efficiently and effectively through the management of enterprises, programmes and projects in both the public and private sectors. The need for manageability of the development process led Ghana, from the late 1980s, to adopt various programmes and projects as the vehicles by which to deliver social and economic initiatives.

Evolution and use of project management

The difference between traditional management and project management

Project management as a distinct organisational concept has its roots in World War II when complex war-related operational problems needed to be solved. It arose as a response to particular perceived needs. Traditional organisational structures and management techniques were insufficient to handle project-type work effectively. The traditional functional organisation tended to be mechanistic, product directed and functionally oriented, whereas in project organisations, intense focus is on objectives. The physical and human resources are co-ordinated so that ideally functional affiliations are subordinated to project objectives. The emphasis shifts to team activity and the integration of skills.

In organisational situations involving many firms with long time spans, large uncertainties and very large sums of money, the problems of manmanagement, financial management, planning and control can lead to serious inefficiencies, delays in production and delivery schedules and waste of resources unless project management is used. Therefore, the principal reason for the development of project management was the failure of the traditional forms of organisation structure and management techniques to handle project-type work effectively.

What is project management?

Young (1996) defines a project as

> a collection of linked activities, carried out in an organised manner with a clearly defined start point and finish point, to achieve some specific results that satisfy the needs of an organisation as derived from the current business plans.

Kerzner (2003) defines projects as any series of activities and tasks that

have a specific objective to be completed within specifications; have defined start and end dates; have funding limits; consume human and non-human resources and are multi-functional.

A project has also been defined as,

> an endeavour in which human, material and financial resources are organised in a novel way, to undertake a unique scope of work of given specification, within constraints of cost and time, so as to achieve unitary, beneficial change, through delivery of quantified and qualitative objectives.

A project may therefore be viewed as,

> the entire process required to produce a new product, plant, system or other specified result at a particular point in time and within an established budget (Archibald, 1976).

The art of project management has been described by Young (1996) as,

> the dynamic process utilising the appropriate resources of the organisation in a controlled and structured manner, employed to achieve a change clearly defined with specific objectives identified as strategic needs.

For Kerzner (2003), project management involves project planning; definition or work requirements, quantity and quality of work and of resources needed; and project monitoring, including tracking progress, comparing actual outcome to predicted outcome, analysing impact and making adjustments.

Project management is the management of anything that has a beginning, a clear and final end and whose output is subject to time, budget and resource constraints. The end or result is as important as the start-up and comprises the first effective use of a road, factory, dam, power station, social system, technical system, business strategy, organisational design or other project result. The project management concept, in short, endeavours to provide at the minimum, the co-ordination of the work of the different groups involved and at the maximum, the integration of all groups involved into one effective organisation.

The elements of a project

Project managers, or the organisation, can divide the project into phases, stages or steps to provide better management control. Collectively, these phases are known as the project life cycle (PLC). The PLC defines the phases that connect the beginning of a project to its end. Although every project goes through a life cycle, there exist different views on what constitutes the project life cycle. Dinsmore (1990) characterises the activity distribution of a typical project life cycle as comprising a conceptual phase, a planning phase, an execution phase, and a termination phase. This characterisation mirrors that of Chapman and Ward (1997).

Archibald (1976) also classifies the project life cycle phases as progress-

ing from concept to definition to design to development to application and, finally to post-completion. Karger and Murdock (1963), in one of the earliest definitions of the concept, identify the four phases of the project life cycle as being: Conceptual or Idea phase involving activities like, market analysis, demand-pull/technology push, and technical feasibility; Formative, Planning or Structural phase involving analysis of forces of competition, opportunity costs, external factors (project environment like social, legal regulations, economics) resources and proposal preparation; Operational, Execution or Functional phase involving planning, detailed work breakdown, schedules/priorities and operations; and Termination or Conclusion phase addressing issues on project conclusion, termination for convenience termination for default and project evaluation.

The Project Management Forum (pmforum) captures the three foregoing elements in one of its definitions of a project,

> a systematic process for achieving a distinctive objective. The 'system' consists of a period of planning followed by a period of 'doing,' and this system is repeated at every level of detail. These two 'periods' are the genesis of the project life cycle. Project management is the process of managing the project process (Kerzner, 2003).

Dinsmore (1990) also categorises a project in terms of the expertise needed and lists the divisions as:

- Scope – the boundary definitions of given tasks, responsibilities and missions
- Time – the start to finish project characteristic
- Money – the costs of materials, labour and financing
- Quality – the standards of measuring project performance
- Communications – intra-organisational, interpersonal, and within the community
- Human Resources – administration and bureaucracy, manpower allocation and motivational management
- Contracts and Supply – involving third parties
- Risk – including technological, market fluctuation and managerial risks

Categorising and organising projects

Lock (1988) notes that projects can be conveniently classified into four different categories: civil engineering, construction, petro-chemical and mining.

These are the most usual kind of projects. A common theme running through them is that, the implementation stages of such projects are usu-

ally conducted on a site that is exposed to the elements. They also tend to be far removed from the contractor's head office, leading to special kinds of risks and problems of organisation and communication. Such projects often involve impressive capital investment and they require correspondingly intensive management of progress, finance and quality.

Manufacturing

These projects aim at the production of a piece of equipment or machinery, ship, aircraft, land vehicle or some other item of specially designed hardware. The finished product may be purpose-built for a single customer, or the project could be generated and funded from within a company for the development of a new product range. Manufacturing projects are usually conducted in a factory or home-based environment, where the company is able to exercise on-the-spot management and provide an optimum environment. These projects often involve some work away from the home base in installation, commissioning and training of the customer's staff.

Management projects

These are the projects that arise when companies relocate their headquarters, develop and introduce a new computer system, or prepare for a major trade exhibition. These projects prove the point that companies may require project management expertise at least once in their lifetime. Management projects also arise when companies mount a stage show, or generally engage in any operation that involves the management and coordination of activities with an end result that is not measurable in terms of hardware or construction.

Research projects

Projects for pure research can consume vast sums of money, last for many years and end up with results that please, surprise or disappoint. These are projects which aim to extend the boundaries of current scientific knowledge and are capable of being managed by project management methods. An increasing number of organisations in all spheres of industry are now using project management as a distinct management concept in order to achieve a number of organisational objectives.

Development projects

In addition to the projects discussed above, another genre of projects – development projects – can also be identified. These are projects which

have been used by developing countries as a way of effecting structural change within their economies. Countries have used development projects as a tool to improve on their existing condition of under-development. The various categories that can be identified in this genre include institution building projects, policy advice projects, educational projects, health projects and infrastructural projects, among others. Developing countries such as Ghana have sought to use the resources available to them locally and from the international donor community more efficiently and equitably in order to improve their economic, political, social and environmental indicators through the management of their projects, programmes and enterprises.

Development projects emerged as a category of a well-tested genre in response to the need for a formal approach towards effecting structural change within the economies of developing countries. Its raison d'être was to be its use as a vehicle to drive the economic development aspirations of poor countries and to help improve on their existing conditions of under-development. Christensen (1995) notes that, well-designed development projects are essential for laying the foundation for long-term growth, through the development of human resources and various other economic infrastructures.

Objectives of projects

The objectives of any project can be grouped under the following factors:

Quality – the end result of the project must be fit for the purpose for which it was intended. The project's specifications must be satisfied.

Budget – the project must be completed without exceeding the authorised expenditure. This does not necessarily mean that the project must be profitable. Many projects are undertaken without any profit motive - for example those undertaken for and by local government authorities.

Time-scale – project progress must match planned progress so that final hand-over to the customer takes place no later than the specified date. This objective is particularly important - if a project runs late, it is almost certain that the cost will overrun the budget. Conversely, if the work is carefully progressed against a sensible plan much of the cost control battle will already have been won.

Perceived need – a project with a development agenda must meet the needs for which it was conceived. It must satisfy the aspirations of all stakeholders and must represent an improvement on the existing condition. It must aid the development effort on a sustainable basis.

Environment – increasingly it is being required of planners and implementers that the end product of projects, apart from meeting technical performance and design characteristics, must also meet environmental

parameters. Thus, the project must be environmentally sustainable and its presence in the locality must not be seen to have disturbed the ecological balance.

Nature of the problem

The track record of PM in developing countries, including Ghana, has been very poor – and projects have failed to deliver – hence the anticipated returns to various communities and beneficiaries have not materialised. Instead, these failures have exacerbated the very characteristics of under-development that projects were meant to ease. Indeed, Ellis (1985) comments that the track record of projects is fundamentally poor, particularly for the larger and more difficult ones. He notes that cost overruns are common and that many projects appear as failures, particularly in the public view. Baum & Tolbert (1985) also support this view, pointing out in their research that World Bank projects have consistently overrun their cost projections.

In addition, Christensen (1995) also identifies deficiencies associated with this approach to economic growth. He asserts that in several cases, governments have attempted to execute too many projects, which in the end, have not been completed because of factors such as inadequate financing, non-existent counterpart funds, and insufficient local implementation capacities. He maintains that this inadequacy is mirrored in the increasing frequency of failed projects prevalent in most developing countries, including Ghana.

Morris & Hough (1993) concur, stating that,

> projects are often completed late or over budget, do not perform in the way expected, involve severe strain on participating institutions or are cancelled prior to their completion after the expenditure of considerable sums of money.

They, however, suggest that, in development terms, the emphasis should not be on project management per se, but on the management of projects. The focus being not on the tools and techniques of bringing the project in on schedule, in budget, and to technical performance, but rather, the phenomenon of projects and how they can be managed successfully.

Boorman & Kuroda (1995) also state that developing countries need to put in place, sound macroeconomic and structural policies in order to maximise the benefits from foreign assistance and from their own local resources. They emphasise that at the individual project level, projects need to be well designed so that they help lay the foundation for long-term growth. Hence, previous research and survey data establish a clear trend of the problems of PM in developing countries. This article seeks to present a picture of what is relevant to Ghana.

Data and research method

The sample population of the study was based on 53 project funding, sponsoring and implementing organisations in Ghana. The sample size cut across the entire spectrum of development projects and encompassed over 100 case studies. An eight-section questionnaire was designed and sent to each respondent organisation. The projects examined in the study were promoted, funded, sponsored and managed in Ghana by local and international agencies operating within both the public and private sectors in the Ghanaian economy.

The survey used a cross-sectional design approach in which data was collected from a research questionnaire conceived on the basis of a typical project life cycle (PLC). This approach allowed the use of the PLC as the logical framework for the examination of PM in Ghana – and for the project itself to be the unit of analysis.

Findings and summary

The results of the study were drawn from a thematic analysis and clustering of findings from the eight sections of the questionnaire. A combination of descriptive accounts as well as summary statistics in terms of frequencies and percentages was used to examine the findings. The comparative approach adopted allowed a comparison between the planned and actual performance targets of the respondent organisation's projects, using five measures of project success as a benchmark. These measures included:

Project functionality – where the project is measured financially, technically or in the ways expected by project stakeholders.

Project management – the project is assessed in terms of its three basic principles – budget, schedule, specification.

Incremental change **–** this measure ascertains whether the project represents a process of structural or incremental change which engendered an improvement on existing conditions.

Reason for termination **–** in the event that a project had to be cancelled, was the cancellation made on a reasonable basis and was the project terminated efficiently?

Were expectations of key project participants' satisfied? **–** in other words, were customers' expectations met? (Nicolas, 1989; Larson & Gobelli, 1989; Deutsch, 1991; Nemann, Glockner, Hite & Taylor, 1993; Maylor, 1999; Tukel and Rom, 2001).

Not only did the study establish that PM in Ghana is also fraught with problems, but the thematic analyses and clustering approach adopted in the study also uncovered several different classifications of the problems

associated with PM in Ghana. One approach classified the problems of PM in Ghana according to seven different headings based on the elements existing within a typical project life cycle. This is presented in Figures 1-6. In Figure 1, lack of a clearly stated project policy and protracted negotiations over selection issues and project objectives are some of the problems associated with project conceptualisation, definition and selection. Figure 2 shows that ineffective use of project management tools, as well as inadequate and ineffective methods of control, are some of the causes of problems in project planning, scheduling and control.

Figure 3 presents the problems engendered by wrong project organisation while Figure 4 shows that unavailability of trained personnel and the ambiguous division of authority and responsibility do cause problems in the project environment. The problems of project monitoring, termination and evaluation are presented in Figure 5. It shows some of the problems existing in this area include lack of an appropriate risk management function and an inadequate maintenance system. Figure 6 shows that the problems of project management related to political, social and community factors include frequent policy changes by officials and their frequent attempts to appoint favourites and cronies to projects.

Figure 1: Problems of Project Management in Ghana
Project Conceptualisation, Definition and Selection
Lack of a clearly stated project policy
Frequent design and modification changes
Insufficient consultation among players
Incomplete/inaccurate project description
Protracted negotiations over project selection, objectives, etc.

Figure 2: Problems of Project Management in Ghana **Planning, Scheduling and Control**
Ineffective use of project management tools
Lack of an appropriate risk management function
Lack of adequate and effective methods of control
Untimely communication of pertinent information

Figure 3: Problems of Project Management in Ghana Organisation
Poor/wrong project organisation
Inaccurate/incomplete definition of positions
Undue reliance on procedural matters
Ad-hoc project organisation

Figure 4: Problems of Project Management in Ghana Human Factors
Non existence of a project team
Unavailability of trained personnel
Poor managerial expertise in technical environment
Ambiguous division of authority and responsibilities

Figure 5: Problems of Project Management in Ghana Monitoring, Termination and Evaluation
Lack of an inspection and quality assurance function
Lack of an appropriate risk management function
Lack of an adequate maintenance system
Contradictions and inappropriate applications of codes and regulations

Figure 6: Problems of Project Management in Ghana Political, Social and Community Factors
Frequent policy changes by politicians
Frequent attempts by officials to appoint various officers, suppliers, etc to projects
Corrupt practices that lead to theft, wastage, etc
Interference by officials and interested parties at various stages of projects

- Another schema grouped the problems of project management in Ghana according to the nature of the problem. Under this classification, three main groups are identified:
- General problems of project management in Ghana; non-specific problems that are related to the projectisation of activities – simply put, they come with the territory

- Specific problems; these are problems of a more pernicious nature, more project- specific and being manifested in function of the particular project type and/or environment
- Unique problems of project management in Ghana; project management practitioners in Ghana also seem to be faced with a distinct class of problems spawned by a combination of local cultural, social, human and environmental conditions including both tangible and intangible variables.

A discussion of some of these problems follows.

Timing of Contract Awards

This mostly occurs when project implementation is contracted out to an external organisation. Sometimes the length of time it takes to get higher level approval of a budget (for example) and the procedures for the award of contracts may result in wrong timing for the commencement of the project. For instance, when contract awards coincide with heavy rains, the commencement of road projects may be held up, resulting in extensions in project duration and increased project costs.

Variations in Original Scope of Projects

The scope of projects sometimes changes in the process of implementation. In such cases, additional activities, or projects which should normally be treated as stand-alone contracts, are then tagged onto the original project as a contract variation. Sometimes, a particular aspect of an approved project may change, leading to a delay or even suspension of the whole project.

Delayed Payments

This is a finance function, which encompasses several problem areas. Delayed payments can result from a lack of co-ordination of project implementation with the approved budget. It may also result from a lack of matching funds from government of Ghana sources in cases where project implementation hinges on a release of funds from a particular government agency. It could also be due to inadequate portfolio management where the implementing agency is responsible for multiple projects.

Currency Fluctuations

This is another finance function, which has serious implications for several of the previously explored problem areas. In view of the large propor-

tion of projects and programmes which originate from external donors, any changes in exchange rates and prices of goods and services in the course of project implementation may necessitate an upward revision of some project cost elements. This is especially significant in view of the percentage of project finance that originates from external funding sources. For instance, in the decade of the 1990s, Ghana received close to US$ 5bn in loans and grant aid from overseas donors (Ofori, 1999). These funds were consequently applied to over 350 projects and programmes.

Poor Inter-Agency Co-ordination

This happens especially where project implementation cuts across sectors and is common in infrastructure planning, for example, in road expansion and improvements. Typically, the major implementing sector would be primed to go but because other sectors involved in the project may have different priorities, project execution may lag behind due to inadequate synchronisation of activities. For instance, the budgeted cost of a road project could be exceeded because the relocation or replacement of water, electricity and telephone lines lag behind due to the non-existence or non-availability of maps of utility lines required from other agencies.

Legal Issues

This is an area that is increasingly gaining prominence within the project milieu in Ghana. Problems occur when legal battles are fought between the contract-awarding agency and the project-implementing agency. Differences arise out of a mis-interpretation of guidelines surrounding project design, management, maintenance, etc. For example, in 2004, the government of Ghana was sued over contract provisions by a Malaysian company which had been brought in as a strategic partner and minority shareholder in Ghana Telecom. This court case, which was only resolved in late 2004, held up several projects that made up a $180m Ghana Telecom restructuring programme.

A second example is the landmark case involving the Ghana government and Construction Pioneers (CP), a large German construction firm with extensive infrastructure project interests in Ghana. The dispute revolved around contract payments. CP contended that the government deliberately and maliciously withheld contract payments involving work already executed. They further held that any additional requirements had to be written into a revised project document. The government of Ghana, for its part, claimed that the work it is insisting on existed in the contract all along. Consequently, the project was stalled while the impasse dragged on and on.

Conclusions and recommendations

Project management has evolved into an accepted scientific way of managing programmes, projects and entities in a way that is different from traditional management but which meets the objectives of its practitioners. It has become an important and relevant tool for driving Ghana's economic development aspirations. However, the attempt to use projects as a tool for realising development objectives has not been as successful as anticipated. The management of projects in Ghana has been plagued by a myriad of problems, some of which have been discussed in the preceding sections.

This section now proposes a set of project improvement factors identified by officials of non-governmental organisations, project beneficiaries, government ministries, donors and other support institutions within the public and private sectors as being crucial to the successful implementation of projects in Ghana. Some of the strategies for improving project performance suggested include:

The preparation of meaningful implementation plans for all projects. This would allow for adequate budgetary allocations to permit the completion of projects within their estimated completion dates.

For specific loan-tied programmes, there is the need to project and forecast an annual matching fund element per project per sector in order to facilitate loan disbursements. Subsequent loan financing should also include the matching fund element.

Comprehensive project plans and designs must be prepared in order to cater for variations in the project during implementation. In order to avoid disputes and ensure the efficient handling of variations, all variations must be agreed upon and signed off by all project stakeholders.

Project implementation plans must always be adhered to. Officials should avoid the importation and introduction of new and unplanned projects that unhinge the implementation schedule of the original project; a charge levelled against the government by the construction firm, CP during its legal tussle with the former.

Project implementation contracts must be based on the project life cycle. This will enable projects to be scheduled and implemented in natural phases, the start of which must not be affected by the weather. As an adjunct to this point, the project contracts themselves must be awarded through the 'open tender' system in order to encourage the participation of qualified agencies.

The government must establish an overall project 'guru' at the office of the presidency – along the lines of the recently established (2004) Office of Accountability. This official would have overall responsibility for coordinating projects throughout the country. S/he would be tasked with

establishing and running inter-agency co-ordination units within government ministries and departments which have oversight responsibility for project implementation.

Civic authorities, like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), must be empowered to prosecute individuals and institutions whose activities hinder project implementation – especially with regard to infrastructural projects.

Project monitoring units within ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) should be strengthened through training and the provision of equipment. They should also be empowered to enforce corrective actions on implementation issues arising out of their monitoring activities.

A system of interim reports using a prescribed format should be introduced as a pre-requisite for the payment of funds. This will aid the tracking of funds released to project implementing agencies. The only operational system currently in place relates to the road construction sector.

Concrete and definite evaluation procedures should be prepared for all projects to measure the attainment of all project objectives.

Donor governments and agencies should include good governance and project measurement as requirements in their project application procedures and, finally,

Projects and programmes selected and presented for funding should dovetail into the country's development policy framework as set out within the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy and the 'Vision 2020' paper.

This article contends that the science and art of managing projects in Ghana can be improved with the adoption, by project practitioners, of a two-pronged approach to project management: firstly, by engaging in the deliberate and practised avoidance of the problems of project management identified by the study; and secondly, by adopting a concentrated and formal training programme to prepare and equip stakeholders and project principals with the requisite skills to plan and manage projects more efficiently and effectively. The successful implementation of these two actions, in tandem, will enable the use of projects, as an essential tool for laying the foundation for sustainable long-term economic development in Ghana.

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