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**INTEGRATING DEMOCRACY INTO OTHER SECTORAL PROGRAMS: EXCERPTS FROM
A REPORT ON A VISIT TO WEST AFRICA
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FOR GHANA AND NIGER:

First, I would like to again thank the members of the Mission and Embassy for their willingness to take the time to enable me to understand their perspectives on Democratic Governance (D/G) issues and the earlier ARD Democracy Macro-Political Assessment. As the Mission requested, here are some observations, based on my review in Washington as well as my days in the field, concerning possible next steps for the Mission in D/G programming--- and ARD's potential contribution.

FOR GHANA:

Democracy and Sustainable Development

The Mission and Embassy clearly recognize that continued progress towards democracy is essential for sustainable development, including the liberation of private economic initiative. Nowhere else in Africa perhaps have the major donors made this connection such an important condition of their assistance. This does not mean that short-term conflicts between democracy and donor-driven economic reform will not occur, as evidenced by recent governmental backsliding on reforms in anticipation of elections. Still, as the Embassy's and Mission's substantial roles in the establishment of a fair election system for 1996 and beyond imply, Ghana's long-run prospects for broad-based economic advance are closely tied to the development of democratic governance.

To the surprise of many, the Rawlings Government has taken important steps towards the institutionalization of democracy, but authoritarian impulses also endure. The same Ghana that a major opposition leader described to me as the best hope in Africa for a functioning two-party democracy is capable, as we have just seen during the anti-tax demonstrations, of suddenly erupting into serious violence. And, given the predominance of military regimes since Independence, the danger of a coup will persist for some time---particularly should economic conditions worsen.

New Programming Opportunities :Decentralization in Mission-Assisted Sectors and the Growing Emergence of a National Civil Society

Fortunately, recent developments seem to offer two broad opportunities for the Mission to further develop its D/G programming and thereby increase the chances for sustainable development. The first is the trend towards political decentralization as manifested by democratic local elections, the provision of national resources (as well as taxing authority) to local governments, and the movement toward local government budgeting for locally-based national services. This trend presents a challenge to the Mission to enlist local, including non-governmental, constituencies in support of its sectoral aid programs (For example, the central government no longer guarantees to USAID that there will be a fixed level of budgetary effort for

family planning activities). It also provides the Mission with opportunities to draw upon growing local community participation to enhance program effectiveness (For instance, the Mission might work with developing local school management committees, including parent-teachers' associations, to increase community support for and contributions to schooling).

At present, Education seems to be the most fertile area for Mission work in decentralization. Not only are plans being formulated for community participation in school governance, but local district-level political processes largely determine school construction and maintenance decisions. The Mission has already given some support to the overall decentralization process from the Ministry of Education (i.e. "governance") side. The challenge now is to also contribute directly to the "democracy" dimension---perhaps through the prospective school management committees---while looking for ways to articulate this concern with support for good governance that avoids possible local tyranny. Similar opportunities may appear in the population planning sector, where the Mission is already strongly involved in informational efforts with NGOs and where the Health Ministry seems to be moving rapidly towards political decentralization.

Secondly, to the extent that Mission efforts in behalf of decentralization promote local democratic governance, they also further the ongoing development of a national civil society which, experience suggests, lies at the heart of sustainable democracy. But national civil society does not automatically emerge from the proliferation of local initiatives. Recognizing this reality, the Mission provided in its original proposal for its current election registration and education project for assistance to national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) conducting voter education activities. Unfortunately this plan was waylaid by Governmental suspicion of "partisan" NGOs and internal AID deadlines for making end-of-the fiscal year obligations. With the Government and the opposition now agreed on a specific registration scheme, it may be possible to revive part of this plan with anticipated left-over funds. Other means of assisting national NGOs to develop their organizational capacities to contribute to political participation, through an "umbrella project" to lessen Mission administrative burdens might also be considered. (Among the candidates for aid might be the national teachers' organization or a new national parents' group to reinforce Mission efforts in the local education sector) Obviously, this kind of work needs to be done carefully, given Government sensitivities. And it might be easier to start a new NGO-aid program in the aftermath of elections rather than amidst ongoing partisan passions. It is notable that the Mission has already begun to be somewhat active in this area through its support of the Private Enterprise Foundation's policy advocacy with the Government. Last but by no means least, a functioning modern democratic society requires effective political parties. A future project offering aid in party organization and fund-raising and tapping recent African as well as American experiences, could be a credibly non-partisan and significant means of aiding the

emergence of civil society.

Recommended Actions

My recommendation would be for the Mission to utilize, in tandem, two consultants. One would focus on how the Mission could assist the democratic decentralization process within the sectors it is already working in, especially education but also family planning. The focus would be on strengthening local NGO capacities and on articulating these with better functioning district assemblies and administrations for democratic good governance. An in depth knowledge of decentralization experiences in Africa and elsewhere would be required. The other consultant would explore possibilities for national-level NGO capacity-building (including political parties). Intersections with existing sector programs (e.g. education or decentralization generally) would be sought. A knowledge of African and other relevant experiences and of the mechanics of effective and manageable PVO umbrella projects would be essential. Both consultants would take into account existing and anticipated resource constraints.

FOR NIGER:

Democracy and Sustainable Development

The Mission and Embassy believe there is a mutually reinforcing dynamic of private economic initiative and political democracy in Niger. This conviction is expressed most notably in the Mission's adoption of a D/G cross-cutting objective in its strategy for sectoral assistance and its emphasis upon a broad diffusion of information about citizen legal rights and responsibilities in its various sector programs. Mission officials are particularly aware of the democratic themes embedded in the financial sector program of aid to cooperatives, credit unions and financial institutions serving microenterprises. Given endemic governance problems in Niger's fledgling democracy (particularly tax-avoidance, corruption, and fierce partisan obsessions), the Mission has chosen to increasingly work with local NGOs and the informal sector.

On the other hand, both the Mission and the Embassy are rightly concerned that state-centered nostalgia for past authoritarianism could impede individual and local initiative, and that a state besieged by economic crisis or new conflict with the Tourag minority could again become vulnerable to military intervention.

New Programming Opportunities: Decentralization in Mission-Assisted Sectors and the Growing Emergence of a National Civil Society

Recent developments seem to offer two broad opportunities for the Mission to further develop its D/G programming within anticipated resource constraints. The first is the trend towards

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decentralization including not merely administrative "deconcentration" but also devolution of power to local citizens. Although a formal, legal structure for decentralization is likely to follow rather than precede the 1996 local elections, a number of political initiatives are propelling decentralization forward as central state erodes. These include continuing Mission-supported legislation on the Rural Code that facilitates the organization of local natural resource management associations, and work on new enabling codes for cooperatives and credit unions. In addition, there are ambitious Administrative initiatives for decentralization, for example one being pursued by the Ministry of Health which includes support for locally-delivered services via new local tax sources and cost-recovery measures. In these circumstances, the Mission might seize the potential to further develop its cross-cutting themes of democratic governance within its key assistance sectors.

The most promising opportunity appears to be in the Family Planning/Maternal and Child Health area. Eighty percent of Mission funds will shortly be devoted to ten decentralized health districts. In these districts, the Mission expects to involve Ministry officials, nongovernmental service providers and "customers" from village or other NGOs in the planning and delivery of family planning/ health services. The challenge is to enlist citizen participation through NGOs ("democracy") and to articulate it with effective administration of services ("governance"). Some Mission and Embassy officials understand that in Family Planning/Health, meeting this challenge could require going beyond providing information to citizens toward NGO capacity-building and possibly technical assistance to the new decentralized administration. They also acknowledge this is "virgin land" where they could use some expert guidance. Similar potential D/G themes are also emerging in the Natural Resource Management program as the Mission moves to emphasize aid to local NGOs rather than to the central government. Currently, D/G processes in the NRM program are largely implicit or inferred; they are not, for example, specifically estimated or measured via D/G indicators. Like considerations apply to the local financial institutions program as well.

Secondly, to the extent that Mission efforts in behalf of decentralization promote local democratic governance, they also further the ongoing development of a national civil society which, experience suggests, lies at the heart of sustainable democracy. Yet national civil society does not automatically emerge from a proliferation of local initiatives. The Mission recognizes this reality in its diverse Section 116(e) program but understands that this relatively small resource does not represent a broad strategy for national civil society development. What appears necessary is a somewhat larger program, of the "umbrella" type (to avoid undue administrative burdens), to support national NGOs, especially intermediary organizations that interact with local rural associations. In this regard, there are some very promising potential linkages to Mission sector programs at the local level.

For example, U.S.-aided cooperatives and credit unions have become more active recently concerning national legislation affecting their status. We could help them develop their horizontal and vertical organizational relationships. Ridd-Fitila, a civic education-oriented NGO that has participated in the section 116 program, is now moving into the area of assisting community organizations in economic development (including natural resource management) and is also interested in promoting decentralization at the national level. Ridd-Fatila and women's groups like the Association of Women Jurists are interested in promoting local discussions of the rights to be embodied in a projected new Family Code which would indirectly support local population planning efforts.

Recommendations for Action

In sum, the Niger Mission appears to have exciting opportunities, largely within the contours of its existing sectoral efforts, to simultaneously further broad-based economic growth and democracy at the local and national level. My recommendation would be for the Mission to utilize, in tandem, two consultants. One would focus on how the Mission could assist a developing democratic decentralization process within the sectors it is already working in. The focus would be on strengthening local NGO capacities and articulating them with better functioning local administrations for democratic good governance. An in-depth knowledge of decentralization experiences in Africa and elsewhere would be required. The other consultant would explore possibilities for national-level NGO capacity-building. Intersections with existing sector programs influenced by decentralization would be especially sought. A knowledge of African and other relevant experiences and of the mechanics of effective and manageable PVO umbrella projects would be essential. This consultant could also examine the current National Democratic Institute proposal for a Democracy Program which would seem to need serious refinement in order to maximize sustained NGO capacity-building.