

DEVELOPMENT FROM THE INSIDE OUT – THE CASE OF THE TANCHARA PROJECT IN NORTHERN GHANA

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Description of the project: In the northern part of Ghana, not far from the Black Volta River a village called Tanchara is found. The name Tanchara means “in between mountains” in Dagaare, the local language spoken there. The village is made up of ten small communities scattered around in the dry savannah landscape. Possibilities of employment are limited, illiteracy is widespread and as the weather is hot and dry and the rainfall unreliable, farming, which is the common income-generating activity, can at times be a complicated affair. The traditional system of governance in Tanchara is centred around the chief, the Tanchara Naa, who is supported by 10 sub-chiefs.

Purpose of the project: In 2003 the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organisational Development (CIKOD), a Ghanaian non-governmental organisation started working in Tanchara in collaboration with the Tanchara Youth and Development Association (TYDA). The purpose was to support the village to revitalise and use their indigenous institutions and knowledge base to better manage their natural resources and use them for their livelihood development.

Project Strategy and Activities: To achieve the purpose, CIKOD developed and used an innovative process called the Community Institutional and Resources Mapping (CIRM) Process that enables communities to marshal both indigenous and external resources using their traditional leadership and organizational systems for their own development initiatives. CIRM is a process that was developed from the principles of **endogenous development** – ie, promoting development that involves creatively using all the indigenous potentials of a community (including their spirituality) for their development but not excluding appropriate external resources. The following is a narration by a field facilitator of cikod on how he facilitated the CIRM in Tanchara.

Preparation of the self

This started with a retreat for me and all the field staff in the CIKOD office. It was the most important step in the CIRM as it enabled me to adopt the right attitude necessary for promoting ED. I and my colleagues reflected on the CIRM guide with particular emphasis on the "preparation of the self" for working with the community. Each of us reflected on the steps and what will be required to ensure that we are able to work within the worldviews of the community. Each of us identified possible challenges we could face and through discussions, we prepared ourselves to be able to address those challenges. We identified our knowledge gaps through peer reviewing each other and filled the gaps through open discussions.

Preparation of the community

I made an initial reconnaissance visit to Tanchara to meet the chief to inform him about the programme. I first made a telephone call to the Chairman of the Tanchara-Youth and Development Association who made the appointment and led me to meet the Chief. After introducing me to the chief and his elders, the chief asked for my mission. I presented CIKOD and its work explaining the concept of endogenous development as a new approach that centers around respecting and including the cultural values and assets of the community as the starting point for their development initiatives. Discussions floated around previous development interventions which apparently only led to disunity in the village. The Chief agreed that it will be a good idea to work with CIKOD to experiment on the ED approach to development. They agreed on a day to meet with the rest of the community to discuss the issue further.

Community Orientation

On the agreed date, I returned to the community, first reporting to the contact person who took me to the Chief to announce my presence in the village. The Chief had already sent a message around to all his ten sub chiefs to inform their people to gather at his Palace for this meeting. At the meeting, I presented the ED concept and the interest of CIKOD to pilot it in Tanchara. This generated a discussion around the institutions present in the community and their continued relevance for development.

Some people lamented on previous attempts by some NGOs in the village which left the village worse off. I time to present the CIRM approach and my role as a facilitator and those expected of community members. When everybody was clear on this, they invited me to come again on another day to set up a team to carry out the CIRM in the community. A date was fixed for another community meeting and commitments made by all to be at the meeting on time.

Formation and Preparation of the CIRM Team (How long?)

On the agreed date, I returned to Tanchara to meet an already organized community forum at the chiefs palace. I did a recap with the community on what was discussed at the last meeting. I further explained the CIRM process and what it will take to carry out a CIRM in Tanchara. Through a consensus process, the community selected a team of five persons – two women and three men as the Tanchara CIRM team. These were selected because of commitments they have demonstrated in community activities. One of them was a teacher who was given the responsibility to record the work of the team. I then facilitated a discussion around the institutions, resources and the kind of information they would want to collect about these institutions. I facilitated a discussion around the following issues:

- a. The existing Indigenous Institutions (IIs), Traditional Authorities (TAs), as well as the formal institutions including non-governmental organizations that provide services for or facilitate the development of livelihood activities.
- b. All assets in the community:
 - Biological assets (threatened tree species, crop and animal species, medicinal herbs),
 - Natural assets (clay deposits, natural water sources, raw materials for local crafts, natural sites for water collection, etc),

- Cultural assets (traditional architecture, local crafts, traditional artifacts, indigenous technologies, traditional medicine in the community (bio-cultural resource map)
 - Social assets (festivals, health centers, educational facilities, social centers, markets,
 - Spiritual assets (shrines, sacred groves, forests, tree, water points)
- c. The livelihood activities being undertaken by the youth and women that depends on community assets and has relevance for preserving these assets. Prioritize them.

Based on the discussions, they came up with a list of questions (checklist) that would guide the team to collect the information. The list was prepared in the vernacular language to be sure all understood the issues and process. The team through different ways (PRA tools like FGDs, individual interviews, field observations, transect walks, resource mapping, etc)) to enable the team collect the information in the community. The team was made to present the way they would carry out their assignment using the PRA tools through a role play. This was a very lively session with lots of discussions and suggestions on what the team should be doing in the field. At the end of this, the CIRM team led the discussion to agree on a time table for visits to various sections of the community to collect the information. They also agreed on when the team would report back their findings to the community.

Implementation of the CIRM (5 days)

Following the agreed plan, the team agreed to work as one team. The tanchara community was divided into ten sections and the group visited the ten communities as a group. In each community they visited households and discussed the questions in the checklist. They also met the tindana (the spiritual leader) of each section as well as the paramount tindana. The teacher in the team recorded the results of the meetings. In the process of collecting the information, the cikod facilitator visited the team two times – on the first day the team went out into the community and on the last day. In the first visit, the cikod facilitator assisted in clarifying the assignment and addressed organizational

problems they said they faced. On the fifth day when the data collection phase was done, the facilitator together with a consultant from the University for Development studies, supported the team to put together in the form of a coherent report, all the information they had collected. In writing up the report, the facilitator and consultant asked more questions to fill in gaps that they noticed in the data collected by the team. The facilitator who had come along with a video camera, took video clips of some of the resources they had identified.

Community Visioning and design of action plans

At a date agreed by the Chief and community leaders, a community meeting was organized where the CIRM team and the cikod facilitator presented the report of the CIRM exercise to the whole community. This took the form of listing the Social institutions, the natural resources and the spiritual resources that were found. The video clip was also played back to them. Community members commented on the reports, disagreed with some information, added new information and modified some information. At the end of the day, the report was accepted and adopted as a document for the community. The cikod facilitator drew an outline of the village on a flip sheet and people were challenged to locate the various resources on the map. After a lot of lively debates, a community map of their resources was agreed on. The facilitator led a discussion to come up with a community vision based on the resources identified. The cikod facilitator asked the following simple questions:

- where was our community 10 years ago?
- where is our community now?
- where do we want our community to be in 10 years?

The responses were captured and presented as a vision statement. The cikod facilitator again led a discussion to facilitate the development of programmes and action plans to be able to reach their vision. He asked the following simple questions:

- how do we use the resources we have identified to make this dream come true?
- What practical activities must we carry out to achieve this dream?
- When do we want to implement these activities?
- Who will do what and how do we ensure that we all carry out our responsibilities (community contract)?

The facilitator used the responses to formulate development issues the community would want to address. These were prioritized following discussions facilitated by the cikod facilitator and developed into clear development activities with with a time frame for implementation. A community contract was also agreed on with regard to rules that guide the implementation of the planned programmes.

Implementation of the Action plans

For implementing the development plans, the chief proposed that community members would provide all the labour requirements. They should also use the local resources they have identified where relevant. This was discussed and agreed on. The cikod facilitator informed the community that if they would organize themselves very well they would be able to demand resources from the District Assembly and other development agents for the implementation of those activities that needed external support. The chief decided that he would organize durbars during Easter and Christmas and would invite government officials and development organizations to present their demands and dialogue with them for support. This was accepted by all, adding that this would also be an opportunity for the sons and daughters working outside the village to come home and make contributions towards the development of the village. This has since been institutionalized and during easter and christmas, community forums are organized for a review of the village activities as well as presenting the projects to external agencies.

The Impact so far

The achievements so far are best described by oral testimonies given by different categories of persons in Tanchara as captured in an evaluation in 2008:

- “Before the intervention of CIKOD, my sub-chiefs used not to have that much regard for me as the village chief. But now they have developed some respect for me and now anytime I call them for any meeting or gathering they see that it’s very necessary to attend. The sub chiefs now realise that if there should be change in the village, it is not only me as the Tanchara Naa but they as the sub-chiefs also have a role to play.” **(Niber Yaayin, Tanchara Naa)**

- “Initially there used to be disputes over land boundaries in Tanchara. but with the intervention of CIKOD we now use trees to plant along our boundary to indicate that this is our portion to avoid misunderstandings. This is something CIKOD taught us and it is very significant to me.” **(Niber Yaayin, Tanchara Naa)**
- “The most significant change over the past years compared to today is that the disunity that used to prevail in the entire village has changed. Everybody is now focused on what he or she can do towards making Tanchara what it should be for the generation yet unborn.” **(George Pireh, retired educationist and chairman of the Tanchara Youth and Development Committee)**
- “Now there is some kind of unity among the men and women. Now we don’t have any general gatherings were we think that it should be for the men alone. If it is a general gathering concerning the whole of the community the women should be part of it and the men should also form part of it. For me this is something that deserves recommendation.” **(Mary Kunga, mother of 5, brews pito and trades in kerosene and petrol)**
- “When CIKOD came in, they didn’t come to give us money to build this or build that. But they assisted us to source development from outside by giving us small grants to organize meetings and invite certain personalities and stakeholders who would come and talk to the people. They’ll come and say “okay these are your needs, this is what I’m able to do for you.” Like the Junior Secondary School block. It was through the initiative of CIKOD that we brought in the District Chief Executive here and were able to put down our problems to him. And he saw the need to build the JSS block for us.” **(Gordon Zobazie, Assembly Man in the Lawra District Assembly elected in Tanchara electoral area)**
- “We had a mapping out programme where we looked at the strategic resources in the village. We had a forum where people brought all the types of hidden crops that were not known by the people in the village. We also decided to map out, where we have the traditional medicine, the sacred grooves and water points, clay deposits, as well as the traditional healers and all those things that were almost forgotten of. That was one of the most tremendous impacts CIKOD made and we decided to go further

- “I’m very happy that with CIKOD men have been sensitized. We know traditionally men have always been in a position to think that women are inferior but for now they know very well that what men do, women can also do the same thin. CIKOD has educated us this and I’m very happy for it.” (**Dibb Kundesea, woman leader and former pito-brewer. Now she sells salt.**)
- “ As a result of cikod, we have now realised the value of the twenty five sacred grooves and four water sources in the village has an opportunity to conserve indigenous fruits and plants that are no more seen outside these grooves as a result of bushfires. We have decided to plant fruit trees around them to ensure their protection and contribute to food security”. (**Daniel Banuoko, Co-ordinator of the Tanchara Project**)