

G-RAP in its early days

Transcript of an Interview

with

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Interview and transcript by Ms. Janet Dabire

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Transcripts of views and opinions on the beginnings of G-RAP, expressed by key members of the research and advocacy community in Ghana and the leader of the Project Management Team.

Interviewees

- ◆ Mrs. Bernice Sam - Women in Law and Development in Africa, WiLDAF
- ◆ Dr. Emmanuel Akwetey – Institute of Democratic Governance, IDEG
- ◆ Mr. Hans Determeyer - Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme, G-RAP

Interview and transcript

- ◆ Ms. Janet Dabire

Question: How would you describe the conception of the Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme (G-RAP)?

Emmanuel: Back in 2003, RAOs were not that visible and they all seemed to be so heavily involved in their own worlds and projects. Such that you couldn't even get them to take a position on critical policy issues. The absence of the RAOs was conspicuous in the development dialogue. When development partners met with government they were not there. So, it appeared as if the whole development process in Ghana was being driven by research from abroad. You could not get Ghanaian researchers putting products on the table. The donors sought to find out why RAOs were missing in the development dialogue. I remember an early discussion on the subject with the Dutch First Secretary in Ghana, David Kuijper, the Dutch Development Minister who was then visiting Ghana, Yaw Asamoah who was then the Executive Director of the Ghana Integrity Initiative and me. Part of the reasons we attributed for the situation were the donors' own limited or lack of interest in the work of research and advocacy organisations in Ghana. They only engaged us as consultants when it suited them. We were struggling for them to also take interest in our own long term programmes. We wanted to gain recognition as key actors in the development process of Ghana.

When we applied for support, donors appeared to be more interested in tangible products on the ground or more grassroots oriented projects such as building KVIPs or schools in rural communities with photographs and so on. While research and advocacy organisations and think tanks were more research oriented. So, we squarely said to the donors to look at their own policy in supporting civil society which is too skewed towards development NGOs and Community Based Organisations.

We also pointed out that Ghana had no tradition of government working with indigenous research and advocacy organisations. The universities were for the most of the time perceived by military governments as hot seat of opposition. So policy dialogue had not become a strong culture between government and universities.

Also, the gap between policy and advocacy was so wide that they suspected local researchers and trusted foreign researchers more. The whole notion of protecting the autonomy of the RAOs meant that one could not go to government for funding.

When the conversation started in 2003, it was important to change the status quo because we felt the democratic setting was exciting, a lot of opportunities were emerging which required we placed research at the centre, there was the need for more empirical work to influence policy and for RAOs to begin to own the products and policies. That was a gap that needed to be addressed.

For us it was just a conversation, but David Kuijper had taken the issue seriously. He therefore continued the conversation with Karijn de Jong who was a senior governance adviser with DFID at the time. Karijn had also had an interesting experience in Kenya which was her last posting before arriving in Ghana. She had initiated work with pro-democracy civil society groups which played a key role in Kenya's transition from a one party state to multi-democracy and the subsequent general elections in 2002. That election brought the rainbow coalition into office.

They had several conversations and came out with a draft paper (the so-called White Paper; see www.g-rap.org) in which they had put their ideas and information together. That paper became a working document to engage a wider community including donors and RAOs. At the time, the donors had a short-list of RAOs of mostly those the various embassies and donor agencies had already worked with.

Four people led the process, David Kuijper, Karijn de Jong from DFID, Elsabet Tham at the Danish Ambassador's Office and the head of development at CIDA. David was the only male, the rest were all ladies. They pushed this agenda because they believed it was time civil society in Ghana were assisted to play a more effective and critical role in the policy development process.

Question: Was this conversation at a point where the MDDBS mechanism was already operational?

Emmanuel: The document they prepared appeared to be heavily influenced by MDDBS and the coordination mechanisms that were emerging. They were however still struggling to operationalize it. There were references to the MDDBS and the GPRS in the working paper they presented. In working with government, the donors felt there was a gap in monitoring government. The question was who was to hold government accountable? The donors felt Ghanaian institutions needed to play that role.

The first meeting at Novotel brought together all shades of opinions including that of members of the RAO community. The universities were actively involved - I remember Professor Takyiwaa Manu of the Institute of African Studies, Professor Ernest Aryeetey of ISSER and others were all present. Then you had the think tanks like Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), Third World Network (TWN), and Institute of Democratic Governance (IDEG).

The working paper was critiqued seriously by this gathering for the original focus on poverty reduction issues in the country and support for the implementation of the GPRS. The RAOs kicked against the suggestion since they had varied interests and could therefore not limit their focus on poverty reduction. The document was skewed in favour of government policy and its relationship with development partners. This discussion took place in 2003. The promoters took the critique in good stride and challenged the RAOs to shape up the document.

Question: Were other development partners such as the World Bank, EU engaged at this point?

Emmanuel: No, the European Union and World Bank were not engaged at this point but they got involved later. The leadership of this discussion I will attribute to four organisations, the Netherlands Embassy, DFID, DANIDA and CIDA. DFID and the Netherlands Embassy played the crucial role of bringing consultants to design the entire project document.

Question: Were the RAOs involved in the development of the project document?

Emmanuel: The RAOs were not involved in drafting the initial working paper that was handled by the donors. After the Novotel meeting, however, the RAOs participated fully in fine-tuning the document.

Question: What happened after the completion of the project document?

Emmanuel: The project document was designed with the RAOs involvement. Several meetings were held to review and agree on the objectives of the programme. At the same time, the consultants were assessing the challenges and capacity of the RAOs to see how the programme can address the gaps identified. Once this was completed and the structure of the programme accepted, it was agreed there will be a project management team (PMT). A transitional advisory board was formed, the fund aspect of G-RAP and timelines for the start-up of the programme were all agreed. The whole issue about whether G-RAP should concentrate on research and advocacy groups based in Accra or capture similar groups outside Accra was all discussed. Now the consultants had finished their work and it was expected the implementation will start at the time. I think there were some hitches, so the implementation was delayed for several months. The interim body was set up. The RAOs decided to select Mrs. Bernice Sam of AWLA, Dr. Emmanuel Akwetey of IDEG and Dr. Joe Abbey of CEPA in February 2004 to represent them on the advisory committee.

Bernice: I got to know about G-RAP from the British Council. The then director had mentioned it to me and asked if my organisation would be interested. So I attended the next meeting at Miklin Hotel. What was interesting about that meeting was the fact there were only a few women's rights organisations present. Other women like Professor Takyiwaa Manu had previously been part of the discussions but she was absent from this meeting. At this meeting, three RAOs representatives were selected to join the interim advisory board made up of David Kuijper and Karijn de Jong. We therefore scheduled a post meeting the same day to discuss the terms of reference and how to bring two Members of Parliament to join the interim board. We left that meeting knowing there was a task ahead of us. Meanwhile, the consultants had drawn a programme for interim advisory board to follow. Actually, there were no criteria for eligibility. What we had was the amendments that had been done by the consultants following the Novotel meeting. So when we met we had to think of how to bring on board state agencies such as the National Development Planning Commission and the National Governance Programme. The objective of those meetings was to sell the G-RAP concept to those organisations since it was innovative and fairly new programme. We didn't also want it to seem as if it was competing with governments own work. The interim advisory board members were therefore assigned different roles to talk to different heads of institutions. All the agencies we met bought into the G-RAP concept. Aside meeting heads of institutions, the interim advisory board had to meet some donors to get them to join the G-RAP funding body. We held several meetings to talk about the virtues of G-RAP. Alban Bagbin and Kennedy Adjapong were nominated respectively by the minority and majority in parliament to join the interim advisory board

of G-RAP. It was always a challenge working with the members of parliament as they were not present at many meetings due to their busy schedules. But they liked the idea of G-RAP and the fact that there was an opportunity for civil society to engage the government in policy dialogue as well hold it accountable.

I would say the beginnings of G-RAP was challenging as well as exciting because we had to sell the concept to more people. Even though, we had discussed the selection process for the PMT, we were only observers to the selection process so we saw the bids submitted by LTS and others. This single action of openly selecting the consortium to manage G-RAP speaks volumes of transparent nature of the programme.

The interesting bit about the beginnings of G-RAP was the effort to get more gender groups interested in the concept. Infact, when you look at the initial list of the think tanks that was attached to the programme document, itself were the usual suspects. There were very few, if any of the women's rights groups represented. So, my being on the interim board was to get other women rights groups to know more about G-RAP and to express an interest in it. Now we are seeing a lot more gender groups represented on G-RAP not only as beneficiaries but also as people engaged in the policy engagement process itself.

Question: For how long did the interim board work before handing over to a substantive advisory board?

Bernice: We worked till the first RAO convention in 2005 when new RAO representatives were elected to the board. The interim board discussed the election process as well as meet with the PMT to plan the RAO convention. The first RAO convention was a good start for us as well for G-RAP. We had a very diverse representation of RAOs, state agencies and partners present.

Question: At the time that the PMT took over, what were your expectations of the RAOs in Ghana?

Hans: Considering the outcome and what they will deliver, I think the picture was relatively clear for the think tanks and research institutions. They had an established relationship with the key donors behind G-RAP and the larger donors like the multilateral institutions. Obviously, you would expect G-RAP to finance further work and allow RAOs with core support to establish longer term

programming as well as to attract and retain long-term staff in order to get away from projectised existence.

That was all fairly clear, but when we hit the ground in September 2004, within two weeks, we realized that the advocacy component of the programme and the ambitions of the programme were conflicting with certain criteria for core funding. There was a threshold of \$400,000 annual turn-over for any organisation applying to be eligible. This showed that G-RAP was typically designed as a programme to finance larger established organisations that had a track record of influencing policy. But, there was a whole group of organisations that actually influence policy, for example there was the water privatization, the women's manifesto and domestic violence bill lobby groups all were busily at work. Many of the typical advocacy organisations have a much lower turn-over per annum than a research institution. That immediately made it clear to us that there was an aspect in the design that had been overlooked. Advocacy often happens in networks; those networks have major players, who may be larger organisations, and a lot of typical advocates that may have a turn over of maybe one to two hundred thousand dollars. We didn't immediately see how to solve that. At that moment, we felt it wasn't right as a team hitting the ground to say that there was a fundamental fault in the design.

We had three types of funding: Core Support which has a limit on access to the four hundred thousand dollars; the Institutional Capacity Building Grant and the Technical Assistance Grant. What we did is, we brought in smaller organisations by use of these other grant types, hoping that we would gain some ground in time. With those smaller organisations on board, we might have sufficient weight to discuss the design of the programme. And indeed we managed to tackle the criterion of the four hundred thousand dollars threshold with more organisations behind the G-RAP. We felt that by improvising access for a different category of organisations which had been overlooked previously and by focusing more on networks it would enable us to broaden the scope of G-RAP. Three years later, we now understand that to provide core support, you need organisations that have strong systems; otherwise it is difficult to cover fiduciary risks and smaller organisations often have challenges to report on the total turn-over of the organisation. We learned that there is a certain level of organisational capacity needed to absorb core support.

In the meantime, it has been decided G-RAP focuses entirely on core support and on funding activities by networks. This is like going with big strides through a three and half year period: from a

concept of core support predominantly to well established think tanks to the financing of a broader scope of organisations, but still focusing on an organisation's track record of national impact.

What we now see is a larger landscape of organisations that have influence in pro-poor policy processes in Ghana. We managed to open the systems in various steps over the years. We try to leave organisations all freedom to programme according to what their niche of activity demands from them or what their scope is in the pro-poor policy environment. We will only make sure it is well reported and that the data are generated of those activities, which are as a matter of fact often only partly financed by G-RAP.

Question: To Bernice and Emmanuel, It's been over three years since G-RAP took roots in Ghana, is it anything like you envisaged?

Emmanuel: Yes to a large extent, I think the vision behind G-RAP is something that is owned by the RAOs and driven collectively by them and the PMT. I think we've lived through that. At every stage we have been involved, whether it was to decide on the eligibility criteria for beneficiary RAOs, fund monitoring and procedures was openly discussed and agreements reached. Before G-RAP, project funding was a straight forward thing, you signed on to a facility with an embassy and they have their rules and you go under it. But with G-RAP, a body of rules evolved and a certain culture of how you make decisions has emerged. G-RAP felt it needed to engage collectively and it was well received. I think it's a different model.

Before G-RAP, the level of collaboration between RAOs - outside times of crisis - was non existent. We felt that through G-RAP we could promote networking among ourselves; just sharing information and getting to fraternize with one another has crystallized into the annual convention. It was not just the funding that G-RAP has provided but the evolution of a community of researchers and advocacy organisations. Reflecting the situation in Ghana where advocacy organisations are usually not researchers, I believe through G-RAP, we now have a certain culture of research and advocacy going together.

Bernice: Initially, the perception among women's rights groups was that G-RAP was limited to a certain kind of think tanks, who had an annual income above the threshold required. I recollect when we were discussing the eligibility criteria, the threshold was a big issue for advocacy groups because most of us, particularly those doing women's rights work, do very good advocacy work but receive very little money, and mainly projectised funds for our work. So, to see G-RAP as focusing on research was a bit of a problem. There was a bit of discussions on the threshold, eventually it was

dropped. Many of us were therefore able to qualify to put in our applications. There was also the missing focus of gender in the initial G-RAP document. Gender was mainstreamed and it was expected that every activity will have a gender dimension to it. However, the women's rights groups were concerned the scheme was gender insensitive. I remember attending a meeting organised by the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) at TWN and had to defend G-RAP extensively. What evolved thereafter was the engendering process that the PMT with the advisory board put in place. Some consultants were brought in to look at engendering G-RAP and the analysis has been spectacular and we are now experiencing that shift. I can say that G-RAP has listened to the voice of RAOs in Ghana. It has been able to take on board the demands of RAOs to shape G-RAP to what it is now.

There was also the discussion among RAOs that G-RAP was too focused on research more than advocacy. As Hans noted earlier, there are a lot of groups that do advocacy and do it very well but do not need to be research institutions. Eventually, research institutions as well as advocacy groups or both qualified for funding. I must say that with the new aid effectiveness going on in Ghana, pooling of funds for the MDDBS and a number of donors pooling funds for G-RAP also means that a number of small RAOs fall through the holes in the basket. This is the down side of G-RAP, in as much as it had helped the well established RAOs as well as others who have been able to improve upon their systems through the ICB support that we received.

A number of NGOs have fallen through the cracks because they are too small and so don't qualify for such interventions. As we look at how G-RAP evolves into the future, we must look how we can support these other smaller groups.

G-RAP has indeed helped to move a lot of organisations from one point to where they are now. I'll like to use WILDAF as an example, as a result of the support of G-RAP; we have moved our work from where we were prior to receiving grants from G-RAP. If we say we are broadening the scope of G-RAP to allow RAOs to do their programmes in line with pro-poor policies engagement and reform, are we just looking at a specific category of RAOs or looking to robe in more organisations nationwide? These are some of the issues we need to consider if we are looking at the future of G-RAP.

Emmanuel: From the perspective of an emerging RAO community working together, I think what G-RAP has done is to strengthen the involvement of gender groups in projects of this nature. Someone reading this text will ask why was it that the original document did not factor in the issue

of gender. I tried to get the gender groups involved but it was very difficult. They had the tendency of working on their own in isolation rather than in wider processes. Some of them were at the initial meeting at Novotel but subsequently stayed out. They could best articulate their issues and were more into advocacy. They were not strongly into research but were drawing on research conducted by other agencies. When they conducted research, it was to strengthen advocacy. So if you want a certain analysis and publication independently undertaken by the women's rights groups, it was not available. They were interested in instrumental action oriented research. After seeing the first document, they started engaging in a way that was very difficult to handle (very confrontational and unfriendly). Their grievances were never channelled through us, their representatives. It looked more like the women's rights groups suspected us and mistrusted us so they dealt directly with the PMT. We got to know about gender meetings through the PMT. They ignored us completely, letters were sent straight to the PMT and to donors.

I think it's important for the history to capture this as well. It was the culture of relating to other organisations, networking and so on that created problems and made it look as if we were just interested in pursuing our individual interests. At the second RAO Convention, research was conducted on how to make G-RAP more gender sensitive. However, it was still overlooking the fact that there was a certain barrier that needed to be crossed. The gender groups are now very well engaged. They serve on the board and are now actively involved and we see some qualitative change.

Question: How would you describe the kind of benefits you have derived from the G-RAP programme. Has that improved your participation in policy dialogue in anyway?

Emmanuel: I think that for RAOs it has improved the individual capacity to organise themselves, plan their work and focus on research. It will take time to see the products coming out. But certainly if you saw the situation as it existed before G-RAP, institutionally, peoples capacities have been enhanced, institutions have been able to recruit and retain more people. They've had through G-RAP funding a certain scope to use resources to drive their agenda. In that way its changing the character and capacity of the organisations engaged. Whether that has translated to RAOs acting collectively as strong partners in policy dialogue is yet to be seen. It's a process, we are not there yet. Individual RAOs are engaging in policy dialogue from the perspective of what they are interested in. For instance, if you take trade and the EPAs, you'd find TWN and the Economic Justice Network strongly involved. But whether that got all RAOs to come together and take a common course is an open question yet to be answered. Similarly, IDEG convenes the Growth and Poverty Forum (GPF) and had other organisations such as the TUC involved. It's the GPF that lobbied strongly for the

Consultative Group meetings [MDBS] to be opened to civil society participation. Attempts to get as many RAOs signing on has not worked out but you find many RAOs participating in the forums as and when they find it convenient.

The recent RAO convention is an evidence of how we find common policy issues that we can work on, like the Trust Bill [officially know draft Trusts and Non-Profit Making Civil Society Organizations Bill, introduced by the Government of Ghana to regulate activities of civil society]. The RAOs are a niche group and it is necessary for them to stay like that to provide a certain depth to analysis and intellectual issues, and to broaden the knowledge network. In so doing they are able to articulate the issues and interest of grassroots organisations. The Trust Bill for example has elements that will affect more grassroots organisations than that it could affect the RAOs. They provide leadership and you find all the members acting together in responding to crisis.

Question: To Bernice, evidence from reports submitted to G-RAP indicates the gender groups collaborate and network better; how do the women's rights groups go about collaboration?

Bernice: From 2000 to date, there have been a number of major happenings in Ghana that has brought women rights groups together. One issue is the killing of women in late 1999 and early 2000 that got many of us working together. Then the Domestic Violence Bill and the Women's Manifesto got women's rights groups working together. Currently, there is the Property Rights Bill which is also a rallying point. The benefit to the women's rights groups in joining G-RAP aside the way we approach things is that we've come to appreciate the need for networking among ourselves. We have experiences to draw upon from the past and so we are seeing more people eager to join coalitions depending on the issues on the table.

I think on the big macro issues, you do not find many of us showing clear interest. An example is the MDBS process and this whole discussion on aid effectiveness. A few of us understand the MDBS process but very few of us attend the Growth and Poverty Forum. I know that the PMT has organised a number of meetings to get us to understand the whole MDBS but very few of us have attended. We are seeing a replay of that with the aid effectiveness, every few gender groups are involved in the process. That for me is a concern that G-RAP can help us address.

G-RAP has best practices by various RAOs on how policy engagement is happening. We need to use that as a basis to get gender groups to rally around various policy issues that affect the work that we do. We may be doing very good service delivery work or advocacy work but we need to tie these

into the bigger policy issues. At the end of the day, what we want to change are the policies that affect the lives of grassroots people that we work with.

We do have certain key coalitions that bring us together, we need to get those coalitions to understand the G-RAP process every well. One of the coalition's reactions to the not too well articulated gender concerns in the G-RAP document was very bad. Eventually it has come round and its members are involved. I think we also need to use G-RAP as an opportunity to discuss how our interventions as women's groups are made towards certain policy issues or programmes that are being introduced into the country. The way we go about it is very important. To move beyond our national issues to issues like Nepad, the AU meeting in Ghana in 2007 and other international issues that Ghana has signed on to, which also influence our national work. Again, we are not seeing many of us taking issues on board. Let me give an example, Ghana reports to the UN Human Rights Council in May. An email is circulated in November asking for papers to be submitted. Not many of us submitted papers and there was no rallying point for us to say this is what is going on and what papers we should submit. The deadline is over and I think few people submitted papers. I think what happens internationally impacts on us nationally. So, we should be able to draw linkages with whatever happens internationally.

Hans: We saw the RAOs collaborating to respond to G-RAP right from its inception when they declined to sign any contractual agreements with us.

Emmanuel: RAOs refused to sign any contract with G-RAP initially because the terms were not favourable. We wanted to be involved in the terms of engagement because we wanted to strengthen our autonomy. One novelty of G-RAP is to set out as a funding mechanism to say I am giving you money in order to make you more independent.

Question: *Hans, from a Project Management Perspective, do you have some frustrations?*

Hans: Managing a programme like this is quite a challenge. You deal with four captains and nobody at the steering wheel, because the governing structure of G-RAP needed to be reviewed. For a long-time the board had not really a voice in how things were run.

Part of the issue was that, at the administrative level, the pooling of donor funds had not been sorted out at the time the project started. It was quite a challenge to have all donors agree in detail how to run the programme. Sometimes, we had to negotiate with their respective headquarters. G-RAP is an innovative programme that has an immediate bearing on the process of harmonization of donor

systems, but mind you, we only have a turn-over of eight million dollars in three years. With that kind of money, you don't easily have leverage at the donor headquarters. It was quite complicated to get all donor noses pointing the same direction. That process of tackling successive administrative hitches pulled programme governance down to the administrative level.

As a consequence, at the strategic level there was not sufficient energy for steering; besides, the donor group had all the power. The advisory board may have had on paper an advisory role to influence and steer the programme, but it was different in practice. Just to give you some examples of the administrative challenges: in spite of the pooling of donor funds, we deal with six currencies to date and work within four different financial years. We have also seen continuous changes in staff on the donor side. At the moment almost all donor staff in office from the beginning has changed. So these challenges pulled us constantly away from the strategy level which should actually be the level at which you steer a programme like this.

To fill that gap, the advisory board was not sufficiently positioned to act. It could give advice but it didn't have the power to enforce it. At some stage, the PMT stepped into that void where there was nobody at the steering wheel, for instance when ensuring we were getting the smaller advocacy organisations on board. It shouldn't have been the PMT doing that; it should have been the advisory board.

At the Mid-Term Review in late 2006, this issue came up prominently. The PMT was over stepping its mandate in taking certain decisions. At the same time, the advisory board didn't have the power of a body designed to steer the programme. The donors had a lot of influence and – because of the pooling challenges - focused their attention at the administrative level. This was recognised and one of the consultants at the mid-term review was invited back for an additional consultation on the governance structure of G-RAP. The outcome is that roles were changed completely, the advisory board will become the governing/programme board. From now on, it will actually steer and as such there will be a captain. PMT will go back to its operational task e.g. providing the funds, preparing the selection and contracting. The donor group will become the advisory body to ensure that fiduciary risk as well as funding flow is ensured and that there is sufficient level of compliance with donor systems of the funding countries. Looking back, G-RAP has written history, it is now seen as an innovative model to be replicated elsewhere with the funding of civic engagement in pro-poor policy and governance processes.

Struggling as we did at times, we have actually accomplished something; it was a multi stakeholder effort. Both the beneficiaries of the programme and the funders have collaborated in getting this far.

In designing the programme there has been a lot of networking. It was necessary for the RAO community to convene to discuss contract templates, reporting issues, the governing of the programme. That necessarily by itself has brought organisations together that usually do not meet often because they are so different in their focus.

Emmanuel: One of the concerns Hans raised that I think we should look at carefully is sustainability of the programme. In three years we didn't succeed in getting all the donors on board to increase their contributions to G-RAP. Traditionally, the government of Ghana has no funding of this nature to support RAOs and other organisations. You could talk of GETFUND but its more for public institutions. Given the interest created and the fact that it as been accepted that G-RAP should not strategically focus on only the elite research institutions, it is important to now increase funding in order for us to continue to support more organisations. The think tanks are a unique group and they must always be supported. The kind of work they do cannot be done by mass civil society groups. We've gone through the pilot phase, having now laid the foundation and designed a model of a multi stakeholder kind of intervention, you can expect that the funding arrangement will be streamlined to march the expectations of beneficiaries. We have no assurance that we are going to see a lot more money on the table and the general commitment to a programme like G-RAP is something that worries. Would we see changes as personnel of the various donor agencies change? In any case, the amount of money on the table and the expectations - and given what needs to be done by the organisations whose capacity has been enhanced - do not tally. G-RAP is a long term programme and we need to look at funding arrangements that will sustain the programme to a point where it will attract sufficient interest and command confidence of the state; they might want to put in money as well because its mechanisms of raising funds will not be subject to donor control. In first instance, we would like the donors to scale up their contributions, harmonize the procedures and currencies in which they contribute.

Question: *What do you think is a major achievement of the G-RAP process so far?*

Bernice: I think the PMT has done very well to give public access to reports by RAOs . When visiting the website (www.g-rap.org), there is so much information on research and advocacy work in Ghana. It also has links to websites of the RAOs thereby further giving access to more information on pro-poor interventions in Ghana. The level of documentation carried out by G-RAP is unprecedented in Ghana. Knowledge management and documentation are two major achievements of the G-RAP Programme.

Emmanuel: I think the most significant achievement is the emergence of a RAO community. We had existed in a much atomised way but now it is becoming clear that a very strong community is emerging. RAO conventions take place annually and we go there to share our common interests and challenges. I believe the ability to undertake collective action is extremely important and would lead to a lot more influence by think tanks over policy dialogue and agenda. The idea of linking the research and advocacy community to parliament is important. The question now is how do we analyze and input information to the work of parliament and keep them updated on happenings in the research work? Over time, I think the relationship between the two institutions should be strengthened and RAOs should make input into the work of parliament. Parliament is so dependent on information from government sources, but if we are able to engage them well, RAOs could offer counter information to give them alternative sources of information.

Hans: I think we've come a long way in developing a model. You mentioned the website and the positioning of the RAO community as a body of knowledge and experience in the national policy arena. At the same time we see through the website and through updating the anthology of RAO research titles, that now also international research institutions and universities get access to research and advocacy work done in Ghana. What we now see is that international research institutions have started recognising a mechanism that facilitates a sort of fabric of civic engagement to emerge. The network of connections establishes itself in all its fluidity; it is not institutionalised and should not be institutionalised e.g. in the form of an umbrella organisation. It is a loosely knit network of a number of organisations, with their activities, interacting so intensely that one notices an institution emerging. It is now made accessible for international research to see what is happening in this context and to see what is being produced.

In practice, it means that parliamentarians will have access to counter information. Prior to this, parliamentarians had to rely on existing personal contacts, but now they no longer have to. All they need to do is to browse the websites of RAOs, or to execute a search on the contents of the G-RAP website for a specific topic. It is an achievement that through the establishment of a unit for the actual financing of advocacy and research organisations, whether at the national or sub-regional level, you also get a central point of access to a lot of knowledge and expertise which was previously not publicly available in Ghana.

Question: *What is the future expectation(s) of Research and Advocacy Organisations in Ghana?*

Emmanuel: I think we've gone through the pilot phase and a RAO community has emerged and is still evolving. It will develop a momentum of its own and we cannot say we will always need a steering hand. But the culture of RAOs and G-RAP management has evolved and it's going to continue. What we expect to see is that, after three years of spending a lot of time in institutional positioning and developing capacity, we will move a lot more into areas where our research material will be published. The quality will improve considerably up to global standards and increase not only access for parliamentarians, but also the government machinery itself will begin drawing vital information from RAOs. In the past, if you wanted documented analysis of any issue, you were more likely to find it in international sources and universities that took an interest to work on such an issue than from any Ghanaian sources.

I think the universities are going to find a lot of complementarity in the work of RAOs. Our universities are heavily burdened with the tasks of teaching; the number of students is just unmanageable. There are no clear indications that we are moving towards research institutions as against teaching institutions, so that we cordon off where research must be given its space. Those doing research are still involved in teaching and so forth but I understand the GETFUND is now funding more research work at the universities. In the past, there has been this view that think tanks were competing with universities, they were recruiting qualified people from the universities and the implicit impression created that universities could not benefit from the work of RAOs. I think with the publication of empirical researches being done in grassroots policy issues, universities and its students are both going to benefit from such material. RAOs are filling existing gaps. I think what the universities cannot do within their confines, can be effectively done by RAOs and a certain symbiotic relationship could be encouraged. RAOs must find a strategic approach to developing a relationship with universities.

Bernice: I think we've done the first gear and are moving into gear two. In gear two, we have to start consolidating the gains of G-RAP and improving upon the challenges that have arisen over the years. I think we should strengthen our engagement with institutions such as parliament as well as the monitoring of GPRS and MDDBS to produce solid reports. These reports not only go to help research institutions or universities but also get on the website in terms of the body of knowledge that we develop in Ghana. For the future of G-RAP and gender groups, we need to come together to decide on critical issues of policy that we must all work around. We also need to build a stronger relationship with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, parliament and get into the macro policy debate

as well. We cannot just hang on the fringes. We will also have to broaden the scope of working with district assemblies.

Question: *How would the new governance structure of G-RAP impact on its relationship with RAOs?*

Hans: It's very difficult to tell. It needs time and dedication, time investment and an active engagement by its membership. One of the disadvantages that we discussed earlier is the quality of people that you will want to serve on such a board, personalities that have the conceptual vision to steer a programme like this in its total environment. These are the kind of people that are usually in demand everywhere. The steering of G-RAP has gone from 90% donor influence to 90% Ghana influenced, it's a dramatic swap. The donors used to complain about the time they have to invest; we will have to see whether the Programme Board membership will manage to meet expectations.

I would expect in 2008 an important boost in funds from the current donor group. The amount of money is not so much the issue. For a long time it was rather the establishment of systems of governance and the harmonization challenge that halted an important boost of funds. Programme Management has been discussing a boost in the current funds as far back as in 2005. In 2004, the quality and the number of the response by applicants were already higher than expected. I think the donors are all willing to put in more money, in spite of the fact that it is a difficult type of intervention and a challenging domain to monitor and evaluate. Obviously, the headquarters want to have solid evidence of the effectiveness of their investment, which is not all that easy with programmes like G-RAP. These are long term programmes; you have to look at a period of say five years before you can actually identify important tendencies of change. After ten years you may be able to talk of results. Impact is probably more something to detect over a fifteen year period. G-RAP is operating in a multi-actor and multi-influence environment. There are so many factors influencing the pro-poor policy process and governance in Ghana. Therefore the impact of a programme like this is always hard to attribute.

The current donors are bilateral donors and they should be seen as the initiators, they are the most flexible funders at this level. G-RAP should now work towards attracting funding from private and powerful multi-lateral donors like the Ford Foundation, ACBF, EU and the World Bank, but maintaining the principle of the pooling of funds.

RAOs must now work towards getting parliament to commission research to be done either on government funding or G-RAP funds; how that will evolve needs time and a certain flexibility. A more active engagement with academic institutions is necessary especially with the applied research aspect; this could be promoted by having students do their masters or PHD in collaboration with non-state actors in the governance arena. I know the RAO community already is taking on a number students. I would also suggest that a lot of attention be paid to having the academic institutions get more involved with active research and other activities in the governance domain.

One other way is to further develop the knowledge base, to share it more broadly so that researchers are more aware of what has been done by civil society and RAOs are also aware of resources at the universities.

Furthermore, I expect the RAOs to be become more active in the sub-region of West Africa. There is a large demand of expertise in surrounding countries and we would expect now to have the West African sub-region to enter a more stable period. I think Ghana is one of the countries that could provide the expertise and experience necessary for the sub-region to further stabilize and prosper.