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UK Department for International Development

THE IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE MILLENNIUM VILLAGES PROJECT:

## Annex D: Institutional Assessment

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Results in development



# External Impact Evaluation of the Millennium Villages Project, Northern Ghana

## Preliminary Report of the Endline Institutional Study

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## Acronyms

AEA	Agricultural Extension Agent
CBRDP	Community Based Rural Development Programme
CEW	Community Education Worker
CHMC	Community Health Management Committee
CHPS	Community Health Planning System
CHV	Community Health Volunteer
CHW	Community Health Worker
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
DA	District Assembly
DACF	District Assembly Common Fund
DCD	District Coordinating Director
DFID	(UK) Department for International Development
DHD	District Health Directorate
DPO	District Planning Officer
DWD	District Works Department
DWST	District Water and Sanitation Team
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GES	Ghana Education Service
GH¢	Ghanaian Cedi
GHS	Ghana Health Service
GSOP	Ghana Social Opportunity Project
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTDP	Medium-Term Development Plan
MV	Millennium Village
MVP	Millennium Villages Project
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
NORPREP	Northern Regional Poverty Reduction Programme
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
SADA	Savannah Accelerated Development Authority
SMC	School Management Committee
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US\$	United States Dollar
VSLA	Village Saving and Loan Association
YEA	Youth Employment Authority

## Executive summary

### INTRODUCTION

The independent evaluation of the Millennium Village Project (MVP) in northern Ghana is based on quantitative and qualitative data that was collected in three stages of the project: baseline, midline and endline. For the institutional study, the baseline aimed to understand the institutional and governance arrangements in place for the management and implementation of the MVP. The midline institutional study sought to understand how the relationships between institutions and organisations at various levels had evolved as a result of the project, and why. The endline evaluation aims to assess the impact of the project on the district and community institutions and their capacity to sustain the achievement of the MDGs.

The institutional study has tended to focus on the experiences and perspectives of the MVP by district institutional actors. However, for this endline report, which is based on the institutional causal chain, the views of community members from the MVP cluster communities have also been incorporated.

### MAIN FINDINGS

The findings focus on the following four interrelated outcome and output areas identified in the local institutions causal chain. These are:

- 1. Increased capacity of local stakeholders to sustain the MVP model** as evidenced by: i) Increased participation in MVP activities and decision-making and ii) Individuals trained in MVP approaches.
- 2. People empowered to advance the MDGs:** i) Contribution of districts and communities to MVP projects or initiatives and ii) Impact of MVP on district and community institutions and actors (institutional impact).
- 3. MVP approach streamlined into local government processes.**
- 4. Sustained achievement of the MDGs** i) Exit strategy and ii) Sustainability.

#### **1. Increased capacity of local stakeholders to sustain the MVP model**

Viewed in terms of their participation in MVP activities and decision-making, the district actors, both the district administration and technical staff, reported that their participation in decision making and implementation was low at the inception phase of the MVP, when the project was implementing some 'quick win' interventions. Their participation however improved once the substantive components of MVP got underway, but their participation declined towards the last year of implementation, when the project was winding down.

There was mixed experience of their participation in MVP activities and decision-making. The type and level of participation varied from one district, department or activity to another. Some district institutions like the Department of Community Development and Social Welfare felt disregarded or bypassed, while others like the departments of agriculture, health, education and co-operatives worked more closely with MVP. This was due to a number of factors, the key ones being:

- The existence of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to set out what was expected of both sides;
- The status and existing relationship of a technical department within the decentralised local government system;
- Some technical departments were especially key to MVP activities and it therefore tended to work with them directly;
- The capacity or interest of individual district leaders to manage in a way that facilitates participation.

The overall assessment is that the majority of the district actors were of the view that the MVP did not involve them in decision-making. Most of the time, it was felt that the MVP came to consult them on decisions that had already been made and they did not feel they had the power to disagree with these decisions.

The reason why some district officials were of the view that their participation in decision-making was only consultative was that the MVP used stand-alone or parallel structures to manage its projects. The funds did not pass through the district assemblies thus bypassing the financial, management and procurement systems and procedures of the local government (district assembly).

At community level, there was an increase in the number of meetings involving stakeholders, especially of marginalised groups like poor women. This was attributed to the sensitisation that MVP gave to community leaders and also because of the many groups that MVP had facilitated. Some of the poor community members were of the view that despite their involvement in meetings, it was still the voice of the 'well-to-do' members of the community, men and the community leaders – chiefs, sub-chiefs and assemblyperson – that are heard. They found participation in meetings beneficial as it resulted in development projects and kept them abreast with what was going on in their communities.

One of the MVP objectives was that the capacity of individuals in districts and communities would be built to sustain the MVP model. The MVP provided training to the various district officials they worked with, although in the view of district actors, this would have been better achieved had MVP integrated its financial, management and procurement process into that of the district assemblies and the technical departments. This way, it would have provided hands-on training for the individuals as well as strengthening the institutional processes.

At the community level, there was no formal institutional agreement between MVP and the individual communities through their representatives like the chief, assemblyperson, sub-chief or the unit committee. According to community members, MVP did build the capacity of the various community-level institutions they worked with to carry out or supervise activities within their domain. For example, the project provided training to Parent-Teacher Associations/School Management Committees (PTAs/SMCs) in how to manage their finances, record keeping, management of conflicts in the school setting, guidance and counselling and resource management.

## **2. People empowered to advance the MVP model**

Cost-sharing by government, donors and the local community was an MVP principle designed to boost the sense of ownership by government and citizens, and thus the chances of sustaining the gains when MVP came to an end. The overall impression at endline, however, was that the level of government contributions (both central and local government) and those of local communities did not lead to that sense of ownership.

District actors felt that government (both central and local) made significant in-kind contributions to the MVP – including the salaries of the staff who implemented the projects as well as the use of district resources. The district assemblies were not in a position to make financial contributions beyond what they had given in-kind, even if they had wanted. Instead, they relied on MVP for logistics and monthly fuel allowances so that district level staff could undertake monitoring and support visits.

The MVP staff cited instances of agreement with some communities like Kinkadina and Jadema where MVP agreed to provide them with roofing sheets and bags of cement if they erected the structure of the additional staff building they wanted. By sharing the costs, the building of the additional teachers' accommodation in Kinkadina cost only 20% of what it would have cost if MVP had constructed it for them. At endline, the MVP team reflected that this should have been their approach to engaging the communities on the building of educational, health and agricultural infrastructural facilities from the outset.

*On the issue of the impact of SADA MVP on district and community institutions, MVP did not have any influence on the district level institutions because, although it worked closely with them, it did not*

embed itself in their operations, systems or procedures. It, however, affected the staff and volunteers of these district institutions rendering services at the community level. Apart from modifying the community health volunteer concept to community health workers, it also introduced the community education workers (CEW) concept in education in the MVP cluster. These community health workers (CHWs) and CEWs were paid monthly allowances. A concern raised by the district officials, especially those in the Ghana Health Service (GHS), was that by choosing to pay monthly allowances to the community health workers or teachers, the MVP had weakened the existing sense of community responsibility. Moreover, it was unlikely that these would be sustained post-MVP. MVP supported the formation of co-operative unions. At the endline, reports from the interviews with community members showed that some of these co-operatives had become strong and active while in some communities, they were not functioning. In addition to farmer co-operatives, the MVP introduced the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) concept, which is reported to have been of immense benefit to women as they are predominantly the members of these associations. The accumulated contributions of the VSLA members, which are shared at the beginning of the farming season, have made the women economically active as they now have access to capital.

The institutions of governance in the MVP communities appear to have remained largely the same. Due to MVP capacity building interventions, however, some community level governance institutions were said to have become stronger, more active, more influential or more consultative. In almost all the communities, the assembly person was mentioned as one institution that fits all these descriptions because of the roles s/he played in the interventions of MVP. On the other hand, some institutions were said to have become weaker over the project period. These were the traditional birth attendant (TBA), the herbalist and the 'Tindana' (traditionally regarded as the custodian of the land and the link with the ancestors). The TBA was weakened because of government policy that births should be at a health facility like a community health planning system (CHPS) compound; a policy then enforced by MVP.

### **3. MVP approach streamlined into local government processes**

One of the expected outcomes of the project was that its approaches and lessons would be mainstreamed into existing local government processes. As noted earlier, at district level, the MVP used a parallel structure to manage its projects and for this reason the achievement of mainstreaming MVP approaches has been limited.

Overall, the MVP's approach of using district field staff to implement activities, and district level staff to monitor, seemed generally appreciated – although some argued it did not go far enough as much more responsibility could have been given to the district staff in terms of the hands-on management of the project. If they had done so, they would not have initiated the community livestock volunteer concept and they would have avoided the challenges they had in Kinkandina Valley.

### **4. Sustained achievement of the MDGs**

A key objective of the MVP was that with increased capacity of local institutions, they would be empowered to manage their own development more efficiently and to sustain the achievements of the MDGs. The achievement of this objective was assessed looking at what plans the MVP team had put in place for its exit and how sustainability was factored into its interventions during the entire period of implementation. According to the district officials interviewed, the MVP did not have an exit strategy<sup>1</sup> that they were aware of. They deduced that if they had one, then it would not have been at the point of exit that they began to meet with them to discuss how some of the interventions, like the ambulance service, could be sustained.

Most of the concerns raised by district officials, especially those in the technical departments, at midterm about the unsustainability of some of the MVP initiatives were brought to the fore at endline.

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<sup>1</sup> That is a planned approach to ending the project or interventions in a way that the gains it made can be sustained and any possible damage minimised.

At the time of the institutional study in April 2017, which was four months after MVP's exit, the districts were struggling to sustain some of the initiatives like free ambulance services or emergency referrals, drug supplies to the health facilities, monthly top-up fuel allowances to district officials for monitoring, allowances to the CHWs and the CEWs, etc. The 10 tractors used in providing subsidised tractor services had been sold to individuals, and only one was sold to a co-operative.

The inability of the district assemblies to sustain these services is already being felt in communities. In Nabari, the community members said while they previously had 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access to free ambulance services from the period 2013 to 2016, with the exit of the MVP this ambulance service was no longer available. The shortage of drugs is being felt in the communities. For instance, in Zamsa, apart from the decline of drugs for CHWs to administer, they also reported that although their health facility is NHIS accredited, and hence community members with active NHIS membership cards are entitled to access free healthcare, the supply of drugs to the CHPS compound had declined, particularly after the end of MVP. The communities also reported a decline in the services provided by the CHWs at endline. In Kasiesa, the community leaders said that the mobile phones that the volunteers used in tracking the gestation period of pregnant women and in reminding them when they were due for antenatal services were taken away from them at the end of the MVP. As a result, the volunteers were not able to monitor the pregnant women and remind of them of the due dates for antenatal and delivery.

## **CONCLUSION**

The fifth output of the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) aimed to achieve "*strengthened local institutions and community capacity to secure sustainability of MV gains.*" This objective was largely not achieved, and the findings from the midterm and endline institutional assessment are broadly consistent in raising these issues.

The MVP undertook many interventions and initiatives in the 33 communities in the Builsa South, West Mampruli and Mamprugu-Moadori Districts. Some of these have shown some successes within the project period. This study found considerable evidence of community members' expectations being raised, only to be dashed as the considerable project resources were no longer available. MVP was a short-/ medium-term integrated rural development project that only temporarily expanded resources. In the rush to accomplish the numerous interventions in agriculture, health, education, infrastructure, water and sanitation, insufficient attention was paid to the institutional strengthening needed to sustain them in a manner that would promote a sense of ownership and enable them to be continued by local institutions and actors.

## 1. Introduction

### The Millennium Villages Project (MVP)

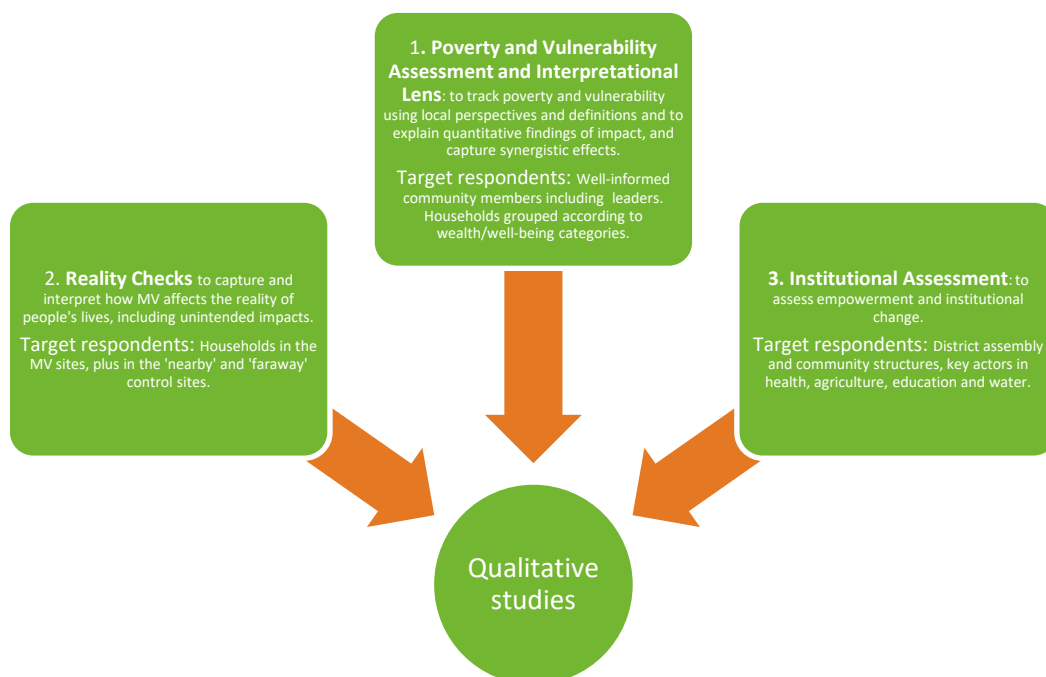
The Millennium Villages Project (MVP) was designed to show how an integrated approach to community-led development could translate the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into results in Sub-Saharan Africa. The MVP model provides an integrated package of interventions aiming to lift rural communities out of poverty. The central hypothesis was that addressing immediate capital deficiencies in communities and households through a “big push” would provide the necessary conditions to move towards local resilience and self-sustaining economic growth. The MVP was piloted in Kenya (Sauri) and Ethiopia (Koraro) in 2005 and then launched at scale across 10 countries in 2006.

The Millennium Promise approached the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to finance Millennium Villages (MVs) in northern Ghana in a cluster of communities in three districts<sup>2</sup> of up to 30,000 people. DFID agreed to support the MVs alongside an independent impact evaluation. DFID aims to provide evidence to guide further development interventions in northern Ghana, influence development policy in Ghana and inform the international debate on the effectiveness of the MV model (Masset *et al.* 2013).

### The independent impact evaluation

The independent evaluation of the MVP is based on quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative component is made up of three separate but interconnected studies, of which this district institutional study is one (Figure 1). The Institutional Assessment focuses on the experiences and perspectives of the MVP by district institutional actors. For this endline report however, it is based on the institutional causal chain, and the views of community members from the MVP cluster have been incorporated.

**Figure 1. Millennium Villages Evaluation: Qualitative Components**



This report is based on focus group discussions (FGDs) with district stakeholders, complemented by the views of community members on the institutional impact of MVP taken from the participatory rural assessment (see Annex B of the main report for details). The Institutional Assessment should be considered alongside the two other qualitative studies (the Reality Check Approach and the Participatory Rural Assessment), where the real value lies in triangulating findings from all studies, and synthesising these alongside the statistical analysis.

<sup>2</sup> West Mamprusi, Mamprugu-Moaduri and Builsa South districts.



### Purpose of the institutional study

The endline evaluation seeks to assess the impact of MVP on the district and community institutions and whether they are able to sustain the project interventions and gains. Guided by the institutional causal chain (Section 2, and detailed in Annex G of the main report), this report has incorporated community members' perspectives on the MVP's impact on their institutions.<sup>3</sup> Community and district actors' perspectives are important because the project acknowledged that the sustainability of the impacts is premised on *"local institutions and community capacity (being) strengthened and increased involvement and commitment by the local community and officials."*<sup>4</sup> Previously, there was a baseline district institutional study conducted in 2012–13.<sup>5</sup> This was followed by a midterm institutional study which was carried out in 2015 to understand how the relationships between institutions and organisations at various levels had evolved as a result of the project, and why.

### Critical contextual changes

Since the start of the MVP, there have been changes to district demarcation, which took place across Ghana in 2012–13 where new districts began from scratch with few pre-existing facilities or resources. Builsa District was divided into two, Builsa North and Builsa South; and West Mampruli District was also divided into West Mamprusi and Mamprugu-Moadori. In both cases a new district capital was created and the old one retained, though with fewer resources and a smaller area of jurisdiction. In Builsa, all the MVPs ended up in Builsa South. Builsa North was included in the initial baseline assessment because some staff members were in the original Builsa District and responsible for the preliminary partnership agreements with the MVP. Since no MVP interventions took place in Builsa North District, the MVP only dealt with the new Builsa South; Builsa North staff members did not see the need to be included in the midterm study (and consequently in the endline Institutional Assessment).

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<sup>3</sup> In the baseline and midterm reports the community perspectives were captured in the Poverty and Vulnerability Assessment and Interpretational Lens.

<sup>4</sup> DFID, Business Case: Millennium Village in Northern Ghana, 2011, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> While the reports for the institutional study were produced in 2013, the data gathering in the two Builsa Districts took place in 2012. The study could not be undertaken in the other two districts at this time however due to a strike by local government personnel. The study in the remaining districts therefore took place in early 2013.

## 2. Institutional causal chain

This endline Institutional Study report was guided by a causal chain<sup>6</sup> focusing on local institutions developed by the evaluation team (Annex G of the main report). This was based on the fifth output of the MVP which seeks to achieve “strengthened local institutions and community capacity to secure sustainability of MV gains.” By strengthening local institutions across the Millennium Villages (MVs), the project hoped to “empower people to advance the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) within their own communities, increase the participation of vulnerable and minority groups in decision-making and governance, and build the capacity of local government to sustain project gains in the long term.”

The MVP aimed to achieve these goals by investing in the development of local institutions in two key areas: (1) Building community capacity and institutions and (2) Improving community and government capacity to sustain project gains. The achievement of these outputs is measured through two indicators in the Ghana MVP logframe:

- Number of Local Government and Traditional Institutions' staff who receive training in leadership, planning and advocacy in the MV site (Output 5.1);
- Number of community-based organisations developed and actively advocating on behalf of communities (cumulative) in the MV site (Output 5.2).

### **The northern Ghana Millennium Villages Project local institutions causal chain narrative**

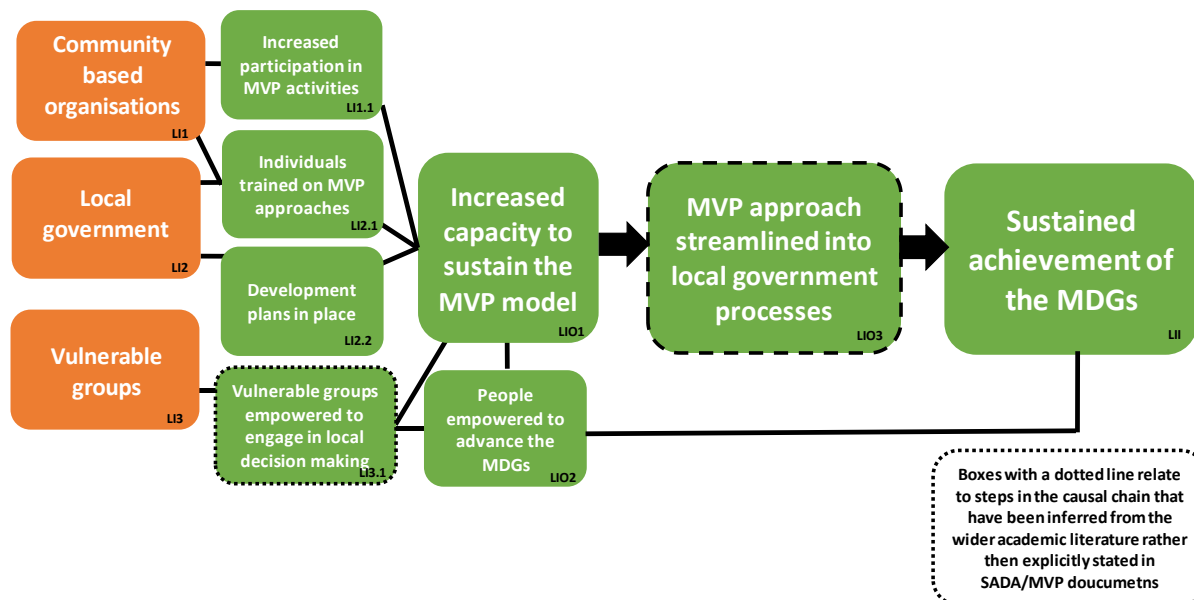
The MVP anticipated that several changes would result from the activities to strengthen local institutions in the MVs. By implementing multiple interventions generating impacts at various levels, it is expected that there will be a range of outputs, such as: increased involvement and commitment by the local community and officials, and help to secure sustainability of the impacts; building capacity of local government through technical assistance to regional and district officials, by including them within implementation teams, and by involving them in assessments including the initial needs assessment exercise; and expanded links with government and other development partners, including steering groups that coordinate local and district-level activities, planning, and cost-sharing. As a result of these outputs, several results were anticipated in terms of the increased participation in project activities. These outcomes are expected to have a positive impact on institution building and community empowerment. This is summarised in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2. Causal chain for the MVP's anticipated local institutions impacts<sup>7</sup>**

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<sup>6</sup> Barnett, C. *et al.*, Millennium Villages Evaluation: Sectoral Causal Chains, 2017, Itad.

<sup>7</sup> The evaluation team's interpretation of the MVP interventions on local institutions is about sustaining the achievement of the MDGs beyond the project.



The MVP employed a generic set of activities aimed at achieving ‘quick wins’ through community capacity-building processes to empower villagers to manage their own development more effectively and to enhance the sustainability of interventions. These include:

- Community-based organisations:** The MVP team attends community meetings (*durbars*) whenever possible to discuss the project objectives, progress, and challenges, and better define the roles of all stakeholders. The Community Development team at MVP has mapped and profiled existing community institutions and governance structures and set strategies for how to engage them in project activities. Community meetings were also organised to review and take stock of the project implementation in each community to date, so that the community may collectively agree on how to improve upon its role in the project implementation and engagement. The MVP placed a high priority on equipping community-based organisations with the skills and resources to help devise and execute advocacy strategy plans targeted at service providers and policy makers, in order to help them overcome community challenges. Initiatives that enhance community engagement and participation were undertaken such as constructing and furnishing a Community Centre in Kunkua;
- Vulnerable groups:** The MVP identified vulnerable groups in the cluster and worked with each sector coordinator to ensure that interventions reached these groups. The MVP made a concerted effort to recruit and train female interns with an aim to provide support to technical leads and coordinators, acting as a backup for staff, and create a pool of advocates for the MVP concept and its integrated approach to achieving the MDGs;
- Local government:** To develop a clear framework for partnership and sustainability, the MVP Community and Governance team secured the signing of MOUs with the three district assemblies where the project was implemented. These MOUs clearly state the roles and responsibilities of the assemblies and MVP in terms of project implementation and outline how MVP will contribute to the assemblies’ Medium-Term Development Plans. The MVP published and shared lessons learned via annual reports and articles. The project held training on leadership, planning and advocacy for local government staff including district chief executives, coordinating directors, planning and budget officers drawn from the project implementing districts.

## 3. Methodology

### Study process

The Institutional Assessment endline was undertaken by a team of four researchers from Participatory Development Associates Ltd from 25–27 April 2017 using a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix E2). The team met the district administrative team as one focus group, and the heads or representatives of the district technical departments and agencies as another. It also held a meeting with MVP staff. It met two at Walewale in West Mamprusi District, two at Fumbisi in Builsa South District and one at Yagaba in Mamprugu-Moaduri District. There should have been six district focus groups but the study team met with five, as only one member of the district administration from Mamprugu-Moaduri District, the sixth focus group, could attend.

The participants varied slightly in each district. In Builsa South District the administration focus group had five participants and 11 heads of technical departments. In West Mamprusi District there were five administration staff and 10 technical staff. In Mamprugu-Moaduri District there was only one administration staff member<sup>8</sup> and five technical staff. To protect the identity of those who participated in the discussions, only the number of district administration officials has been stated. For the technical focus groups, the departments have been stated as representatives and not by their titles. See Appendix E1 for details.

Using the institutional causal chain as the framework for this report, it became necessary to incorporate the findings from the participatory rural assessment that related to community empowerment and institutional impact. This was not the case for the baseline and midterm reports.

### Limitations

At the start of the MVP, there were two intervention districts (Builsa and West Mamprusi), but a few months into the project each was split into two districts in line with a wider government decentralisation policy. This increase in the number of districts influenced the structure of the institutional study from the baseline to the endline in terms of deciding to conduct the interviews in focus groups rather than individually. Also, at baseline, it was helpful to allow the personnel from both the old and the new districts to share their experiences and knowledge of the institutional arrangements with new ones through focus group discussions.

Though the midterm and endline studies were conducted separately in the three partner districts, it was still done in focus groups because many of the district staff members who had participated in the previous study stages were no longer working in the district, having been transferred to other posts. Out of the 10 technical staff in the West Mamprusi District who took part in the endline FGD, none were involved in the baseline and only one was part of the midterm. A similar pattern was observed in the two other districts. In addition, several new personnel had not followed the project activities since the baseline and thus could only share their sense of what had changed since the time they joined the district. Another limitation to the endline study was that because the project had ended, there was little interest in talking about it, unlike the midterm when participants were hoping there would be an extension beyond the project end date. Moreover, at endline the participants, who had been anticipating that the project assets would be given to them had been recently disappointed, and thus did not see the value of discussing the project further. The evaluation team had to put in extra effort to get the focus group discussions to take place. A brief questionnaire designed to obtain information for the cost-effectiveness analysis of this endline study had to be abandoned because despite several follow-ups, they had not been filled because those responsible did not feel they had adequate information to do so.

Despite these limitations, it was evident that because both the administrative and technical staff of the three district assemblies had worked closely with the MVP staff, if only for a short time, they were able to provide sufficiently detailed information about the institutional and governance arrangements and relationships in the project. Since the institutional arrangements for the management of MVP, and between the MVP and the partner districts had not changed between the midterm and the endline studies, the endline institutional report has in some cases simply served to further corroborate the findings from the midterm study.

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<sup>8</sup> For various reasons, only one administrative staff member could be interviewed as the other staff were unavailable at the times arranged.

## 4. Key findings

As discussed in Section 2 above, the MVP aimed to increase the capacity of local institutions to sustain the achievements of the MDGs beyond the project and empower vulnerable groups in communities to engage in local decision-making. The findings thus focus on the following four interrelated outcome and output areas identified in the local institutions causal chain:

- (1) Increased capacity of local stakeholders to sustain MVP model
  - Increased participation in MVP activities and decision-making
  - Individuals trained in MVP approaches
- (2) People empowered to advance the MDGs
  - Contribution of districts and communities to MVP projects or initiatives
  - Impact of MVP on district and community institutions and actors (institutional impact)
- (3) MVP approach streamlined into local government processes
- (4) Sustained achievement of the MDGs
  - Exit strategy
  - Sustainability

### 4.1 Increased capacity of local institutions to sustain the MVP Model

To understand the changes in the institutional capacity to sustain the MVP model, this report focuses on: (1) the increased participation of district institutions in MVP activities and decision-making, (2) the increased participation of community institutions in MVP activities and decision-making and (3) the individuals trained in MVP approaches.

#### 4.1.1 Participation of district institutions in MVP activities and decision-making

The district actors, both the district administration and technical staff, reported that **their participation in decision-making and implementation was low at the inception phase of the MVP**, when the project was implementing some 'quick win' interventions. **Their participation, however, improved once the substantive projects got underway. Their participation declined towards the last year of implementation**, when the project was winding down.

The district administrative staff said their participation in MVP activities was mainly in: a) stakeholder meetings, b) quarterly and annual review meetings and c) trainings and workshops meant for them or project beneficiaries. It was at the meetings that they made contributions to the MVP implementation plans or activities.

The district administrative staff were of the view that, comparing MVP to other donor funded projects, **the MVP used a stand-alone or parallel structure to manage its projects**. This is because it did not use its financial and procurement systems and procedures compared to other external actors like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Community Based Rural Development Programme (CBRDP) and Northern Regional Poverty Reduction Programme (NORPREP). This is especially so when they compared them in terms of the involvement of the district administration or technical departments in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects. In West Mamprusi, they used UNICEF projects, NORPREP introduced by Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and CBRDP as comparators. They mentioned that UNICEF, CBRDP and NORPREP work directly with the assembly and funds for projects pass through the assembly. They added that project accounts were opened by the district assembly for these projects and that UNICEF, for instance, has a co-ordinator (a desk officer) at the assembly with whom they work directly. Builsa South district administrative staff also mentioned UNICEF as one of their comparators and added Ghana Social Opportunity Project (GSOP). UNICEF and GSOP work directly with the district assembly and have co-ordinators at the assembly. They, however, were of the view that, though MVP had

its own structures, it still worked closely with the district assembly in terms of its involvement in the MV activities and in monitoring and support visits to community level staff.

At the district level, the type and level of participation in MVP activities and decision-making varied from one district institution (i.e. district administration or technical departments) to the other. This was due to a number of factors, the key ones being:

1. The presence of an MOU to set out what was expected by both sides. When these were agreed, the relationship and responsibilities became clearer and enabled the participation of the district institutions in the MVP interventions.
2. The status and existing relationship of the department within the decentralised local government system. The district administration has varying levels of authority over different departments, depending on the way each department has been decentralised historically and currently. Some departments like health, education and agriculture, command bigger operations and budgets than others, which resulted in these departments having closer working relationship and more influence in the MVP.
3. Some departments were especially key to MVP activities and they therefore tended to work with them directly – notably the Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service and the Department of Agriculture.
4. The capacity or interest of individual district leaders to manage in a way that facilitates participation. There were varying expectations among district personnel about the level and type of participation desired. Some, such as personnel in Builsa South, were content with being kept informed by the MVP team about what their activities were, while others like those in West Mamprusi and Mamprugu-Moaduri, expected and were ready to be fully consulted and involved in the design and decision-making at all stages. This affected the way in which district actors at all levels engaged with MVP and their sense of ownership of both what happened during and after the project. The level of commitment and participation of district actors was dependent on the individual. Some heads of departments were proactive and took the initiative to pay monitoring visits to schools, health facilities and communities to see what was going on and to carry out activities agreed upon. For instance, at endline, in Builsa South District and Mamprugu-Moadori, two nurses for each district had completed their training as midwives and replaced the retired midwives brought in as an interim measure at the beginning of MVP. In West Mamprusi District the two nurses were still in training because the health directorate at the time had been slow in implementing what had been agreed on. Thus, the attitude, interest and commitment of the department leadership or district assemblies also affected the attainment of the MVP outcomes.

Though **the participation of the district technical departments and agencies in MVP activities and decision-making varied from district to district, and from one local government institution (department or agency) to another, the overall picture is that the majority of the district actors were of the view that the MVP did not involve them in decision-making.** Most of the time, the MVP came to consult them on decisions that had already been made and they did not feel they had the power to disagree with their decisions. While the district technical staff in Builsa South District seemed satisfied with the level of their participation in decision-making, those in the other two districts, Mamprugu-Moaduri and West Mamprusi expected more, as explained below.

### **Department of Agriculture**

At the endline study the representatives of the Department of Agriculture in Builsa South and Mamprugu-Moaduri seemed content with the level of participation of the department in the MVP's decision-making process (what seemed limited to consultation); this was not the case with the West Mamprusi representative. The representative in Builsa South was of the view that there was adequate involvement of the department in decision-making. For instance, when it came to staff training, a joint needs assessment was usually done during review meetings, with the MVP and appropriate topics selected before staff of the department were taken to Bolgatanga to be trained. His counterpart in Mamprugu-Moaduri had similar views. According to him, the department was usually invited for meetings and impending activities for the MVP were usually submitted to the department for their suggestions and inputs. The changes were usually accepted. He gave the example of the distribution of the 10 tractors among the three districts. The MVP implemented what they collectively agreed on

by giving three to Builsa South, three to Mamprugu-Moaduri and four to West Mamprusi. The representative in West Mamprusi held a counterview. He thought that generally speaking, decisions were made by the MVP and so the participation of the department had been minimal. Usually they sought their views and inputs during workshops, stakeholder meetings and the quarterly review meetings, but they usually did not know what the MVP would be doing in the next season, as the department did not take part in the planning. The MVP sometimes had not even developed their work plan for the next season as the season could begin without their plan being available. He said the planning for the demonstration farms was carried out solely by MVP. They only came to inform the department of their intent to use a particular technology in the implementation. It was thus only at farm level that the agricultural extension officers offered technical support for the achievement of results.

He also gave another example related to the development of the valley at Kinkandina. The MVP decided to develop the valley through the creation of stone bunds around it. The first year when the valley was developed, it could not retain water as the bunding was done without the involvement of the department. The agricultural officer in charge of the area gave them reasons why the valley did not retain water. The reasons were accepted, and a different contractor/engineer was brought to re-develop the area. However, during a monitoring visit by the district staff of the department they met another contractor who had been sent to the site by MVP without the prior knowledge of the department. In the case of the Kinkandina Valley, the Department of Agriculture leadership expected to have participated right from the beginning, so they could offer their technical expertise and support. One of the times they did feel involved in decision-making however was when the Regional Department of Agriculture participated in the interviews conducted to select the extra agricultural extension staff employed by the MVP.

### **District Directorate of Ghana Health Service**

At the endline, it appeared that the participation of the District Health Directorate in MVP decision-making had declined from the level described at midterm. At midterm, it was reported that there had been improvement since the baseline in their level of participation in the design and implementation of the MVP projects. In the view of the Ghana Health Service (GHS) representative in Builsa South District, most decisions in the department as far as the MVP was concerned were taken at the regional level. He gave two instances to illustrate his point. One was the decision to bring in retired midwives as a temporary measure while steps were taken to train, re-engage and bond new midwives, in consultation with the regional health directorate. The second was that the current district office of the district health directorate was constructed by the MVP in agreement with the regional directorate. The representatives in Mamprugu-Moaduri and West Mamprusi Districts regarded the participation of the district health directorates in decision-making differently. The representative at Mamprugu-Moaduri explained that the MVP had a co-ordinator in charge of all their health activities and he consulted the district health directorate about projects and they always accepted what they suggested. When it came to capacity building workshops, the MVP co-ordinator was the one in charge. The West Mamprusi District representative observed that the district health directorate (DHD) were not involved in the decision-making, as the MVP only came to the DHD when they had already made the decision or implemented the activity, or, in the case of a capacity building activity, they had already engaged the resource people, who may not necessarily be experts. The DHD felt like spectators because the MVP usually only came with instructions on what they wanted done. Also, the department felt that they had only participated in the activities, as opposed to the planning stages when they could have contributed to the programme or plan content and style.

### **District directorate of the Ghana Education Service (GES)**

The GES perspective mirrored that of the preceding two district institutions. At the endline, the GES representative in Builsa South seemed content with the informational meetings that MVP held with the staff of the various departments, collectively or individually, but this was not the view of colleagues in the two other districts. According to the representative at Mamprugu-Moaduri, the initial design of programme activities was normally done by the MVP team and only brought to the district department of GES for them to make their inputs. For instance, during training for kindergarten (KG) teachers the department was invited to merely attend the training session. They reflected that sometimes they were only informed of an event taking place, rather than being invited to participate, and even at times that the MVP asked them for their ideas or suggestions they were not taken on board. One such instance was when the MVP decided to implement the right age placement by

moving primary school pupils to the classrooms appropriate to their age group. It was discussed with the district GES staff, teachers and at the community level. The MVP was advised to carry it out in phases since some of the pupils may not be able to cope and this could lead to other problems, but the MVP went ahead to fully roll out the programme and it indeed brought a lot of problems. Some of the pupils refused to sit in their new classes and so went back to their previous classes, while others dropped out of school because they had not been prepared adequately to cope with the demands of their new classes. For those who were moved one year forward, such as from Primary 4 to Primary 5, or Primary 5 to Primary 6, it did not cause a major problem because the age gap and the academic difference was not too wide, so these children were able to cope. However, extra classes had to be swiftly organised for those who could not cope so as to bring them to their respective level and reduce the number of dropouts.

Similar sentiments were expressed at West Mamprusi where the GES representative said they were often not involved in decision-making, especially in relation to in-service training and the training of SMC and PTA members. The GES staff, including the circuit supervisor, were only invited to participate in or observe these training sessions so that they would know what to do or say when they were monitoring teachers and SMC/PTAs. They said that they had brought their concerns to the attention of the MVP on several occasions and, yet nothing changed.

### Other Departments

At endline the representatives of the **Department of Community Development and Social Welfare**<sup>9</sup> said they had been marginalised and had played no role in MVP activities. The same view was expressed at both baseline and endline. The department was only involved in frequent stakeholders' consultative meetings and workshops organised by MVP which, in the view of one representative, were just to showcase the progress in their work. These meetings were more a progress report to the stakeholders in terms of what the project had done in the areas of mobilisation, agriculture, education, health, infrastructure, etc. and did not make space for amendments or changes to be made. According to the representative, the department felt undermined when during one of the meetings they raised their lack of participation and an MVP staff member said that, *"If we see you (i.e. the department) on the ground doing what you are supposed to do, whatever assistance you need, we will support you."* In the view of this representative, it was as if the department was complaining because they wanted support from the MVP.

At the endline study, the representative of the **District Works Department (DWD)**<sup>10</sup> at Builsa South said the MVP always consulted the department and district assembly before carrying out any physical project. However, this did not include procurement processes, even though the district has a tender committee which could have easily handled procurement. This was similar to what was said at midterm, when the DWD representative said that, since the baseline study the Works Department's role had increased. They were involved in the design of infrastructure projects, often undertaken by external contractors. They were also involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the projects. The representative of the DWD at West Mamprusi complained that new boreholes had been constructed and that they and the district assembly were not informed about them until they were completed. He, therefore, wondered how the Works Department was expected to maintain them when they break down without any details on the dimensions of the boreholes in terms of depth, yield, etc. In the view of the representative, it was going to be difficult to sustain these boreholes without this information. This confirmed what the representative of District Water and Sanitation Team (DWST) of the West Mamprusi District said at midterm; that they were given the specific task of identifying and rehabilitating non-functioning boreholes, which they had completed, but they were not given any further role to play.

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<sup>9</sup> At the national level, the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, which used to be two separate departments but merged into one, is known as Department of Social Development and at the regional level it is the Department of Social Protection. However, at the metropolitan and district levels it is called the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development while at the municipal level it is also called the Department of Social Protection. This difference in the naming of the same department according to focus group participants at West Mamprusi is a result of errors in the gazetting of the Act that instituted the merged entity.

<sup>10</sup> The District Works Department (DWD) provides all the basic design, surveys working and structural drawings as might be needed for the initiation process, sourcing and procurement of works and their implementation. Works after they are procured are thus either executed by a contractor under the supervision of staff of the works department, otherwise in case of direct labour works they are handled directly under the supervision of staff of the works department. Source: <http://aeda.gov.gh/departments/works-department/>



At endline, the Builsa South representative of the Environmental Health Department affirmed what was said at midterm, that the department was responsible for monitoring the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) programme and had been provided with the resources to do so by the MVP through their respective district assemblies. He said most decisions were jointly taken by the department and the MVP. For instance, the selection of the 23 communities for CLTS was done with the MVP. The decision for MVP to channel the project funds directly to the Environmental Health Department (rather than through the district assembly) to avoid delays in the release of funds was taken jointly with MVP. However, the department was not involved with the purchase of the motorbikes for monitoring. This experience was affirmed by the representatives at Mamprugu-Moaduri.

The representative of the Department of Co-operatives in West Mamprusi at the endline study said that because they were the only department which technically and legally have responsibility for the registration and development of co-operatives, the MVP could not work with co-operatives in the districts without their participation. For this reason, almost all activities related co-operatives were handled by their department. They attended several meetings to take decisions, as well as capacity-building workshops for the farmers' co-operatives, which were facilitated by the staff of the department. One thing the department was not happy with, however, was that MVP sometimes met the co-operatives without the involvement of the staff from the department. Also, the department was not involved in the Lead Farmer concept<sup>11</sup> or in the selection of the lead farmers. Sometimes the department was accused of being biased in the selection of the lead farmers, even though it was done by MVP on the blind side of the department. When the department reported the issue to MVP they saw no change.

#### 4.1.2 Participation of community institutions in MVP activities and decision-making

**In the project communities studied as part of the PRA, all the four well-being focus groups reported an increase in the number community-wide meetings as well as group meetings at which community members participated in decision-making.** The number of meetings over a 12-month period varied from two meetings in Zuasa to 20 meetings in Kasiesa. The communities that reported large numbers also acknowledged that some of the meetings were political because 2016 was an election year. The increase in meetings and participation in decision-making was seen as a change from baseline (2012) when decisions were mostly made by the community or group leaders alone. In some communities, this change was attributed to community sensitisation by SADA MVP and training it provided for community and group leaders, and the increased number of MVP initiated community-based groups like farmers co-operatives, the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA), women's groups and youth groups which the project had facilitated. The formation of youth, women's groups and farmers' co-operatives meant that these stakeholder groups had new spaces for their voices to be heard. In some communities, in addition to SADA MVP, they also attributed the changes to increased engagement from assembly members and staff of government departments like GES, GHS and agriculture but did not attribute it necessarily to MVP, but which could have been the case. In Naadema, the women also attributed the change to sensitisation programmes they heard on Radio Builsa. In many communities, an increase in the participation of women and the poor and vulnerable persons in decision-making was reported. In one community, women reported that because of this improvement in their participation, when they are called to the chief's palace, it is no longer because they have been accused of doing something wrong. The increased participation in community meetings could have been sustained if it had been anchored on community members coming together with their leadership to assess and deliberate on their needs and aspirations. These then could have translated into a community level development plan (one of the expected project outputs in the institutional causal chain, Figure 2) around which they could have mobilised resources internally and then contacted the district assembly (local government) and the MVP for financial, material and/or technical support to execute their own plans and activities. Such an approach could have created greater ownership of the projects the MVP funded.

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<sup>11</sup> The 'lead farmer' concept was launched in 2013 to provide a better alternative of how farmers acquire new techniques for farming. The lead farmers were trained in technical, communication and leadership skills and are expected to share with others in order to create some change within the community. Source: 2014 Millennium Promise Annual Report on the Millennium Villages Project, pages 7-8.

**According to the women in Gbedembilisi, and despite the increase in their participation in decision-making, it is still the voices of the men that are heard, though the men disagreed.** Many communities reported that the traditional hierarchical structure whereby community members have to channel their views through their family heads, the '*magazia*' (women leader), or assembly member to their sub-chiefs for onward transmission to their chiefs was still in place. For this reason, in Nabari, the rich and averagely rich women, and the poor and very poor women reported that it is the chiefs', sub-chiefs', *magazias*' and mens' voices that are still prominent. The least heard voices were thought to be those of persons with a disability (PWDs), although according to the poor and very poor men, they are also allowed to participate in meetings. In Zamsa, the rich/averagely rich women attributed the improved participation of the poor and vulnerable (PWDs) in meetings to improvement in their well-being, which they said was because of stipends they receive from the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty.

**Both the poor and rich, men and women said that the benefits of the community and group meetings reflected in the increased number of development projects like school buildings and health centres in their communities. The meetings also help them to keep abreast with other developments within the community.** In Nabari, the poor and very poor women said the meetings foster good relationships among the community members, which also helps to resolve differences or conflicts. Similar sentiments were expressed in Kunkua. The rich in Nabari said it built their confidence for when they have to speak in public, especially when they are outside their community. In Naadema, they said they learn from each other during meetings. Their participation in meetings shows agencies, like NGOs, who come to work with them, that they are committed. It is also through participation that beneficiaries of an intervention get selected. They indicated that the selection of beneficiaries for the SADA MVP interventions in agriculture was based on their participation in meetings. This was the same view expressed in Gbedembilisi.

#### 4.1.3 Individuals trained in MVP approaches

One of the outputs in the institutional causal chain outlined in Section 2 above related to individuals in the district and communities to have been trained in MVP approaches, towards increasing the capacity of the districts and communities to sustain the MVP model. **In the view of district actors, this was not achieved to any depth at district level because the MVP used a stand-alone or parallel structure to manage its projects.** The separate institutional arrangements described below were corroborated by MVP staff.

The MVP was headed by a team leader with coordinators for each component of the project: education, health, agriculture, community participation, monitoring and evaluation. The MVP team operated from Bolgatanga, the regional capital of the Upper East Region. According to the district staff, this was different from the practice of other agencies and projects like UNICEF, the FAO-funded NORPREP, the CBRDP and the GSOP, which have coordinators based in the districts who work directly with the district assemblies. Funds for project activities are channelled through bank accounts opened by the district assemblies for that purpose. This was not the case with MVP and so its project team controlled between 80–90% of the project funds. This was because much of the project funding went into infrastructure projects which were handled directly by the project. Although the district assemblies do have tender committees, MVP did not use them for procurement of goods and services of contractors who worked on the infrastructure projects, or suppliers of stationery or furniture. The remaining 10–20% of the project funds were related to capacity-building activities of the district staff, monitoring and review activities, top-up or fuel allowances for GHS and GES district staff or field workers, fuel for ambulances and motorbikes, etc. While some of these funds were paid directly to the district institutions to carry out project activities, top-up or fuel allowances were paid directly to the individual staff/workers, bypassing the district institutions they worked for.

The MVP provided training to the various district officials they worked with. When the District Water and Sanitation Team in West Mamprusi was tasked to identify and rehabilitate 33 boreholes, MVP also trained them in how to maintain and repair boreholes so that they could provide back-up support to the trained water and sanitation committees when needed. MVP trained 35 officials of District Assemblies in project management and environmental impact assessments. Apart from providing health staff with motorbikes and fuel for health awareness promotion activities, MVP also organised training sessions to build their capacities to better serve the

people in the beneficiary communities in all three districts. Some of the district officials complained that the MVP did not utilise their technical expertise fully, especially when it came to training community level operatives like CHWs, PTAs/SMTs, CEWs, etc. They believed that this is how their capacity could have been built, instead of SADA MVP relying on outside expertise for planning and training.

The Builsa South health representative said one strategy they adopted to ensure diffusion of good practices taught at capacity-building workshops organised by MVP for their staff was to include those from non-MVP communities. In this way they were able to spread good practices across the district. With the exit of SADA MVP, the GHS staff that underwent the training in this district are still at post and implementing what they were taught.

**At the community level, there was no formal institutional agreement between MVP and the individual communities through their representatives like the chief, assemblyperson, sub-chief or the unit committee. However, according to community members, MVP built the capacity of the various community-level institutions they worked with in order to strengthen them to carry out activities or to supervise activities within their domain.** It provided training to the emerging farmer co-operatives in new improved farming methods and in how to keep records. They also selected community members as livestock volunteers and trained them in basic animal care using some drugs. They trained PTAs/SMCs in how to manage their finances, record keeping, management of conflicts in the school setting, guidance and counselling and resource management. The members of the VSLA reported that the MVP gave them training on group dynamics, management and investment to become economically independent and sustain the group. The MVP also recruited and trained community education workers who went around the community to urge parents to send children to school as well as do some teaching.

Similarly, in the health sector, community health volunteers in the MVP cluster communities benefited from a skill upgrading package and became known as CHWs. CHWs, who numbered 53, performed a wider and more intensive range of diagnostic and curative tasks at community level, guided by a mobile phone-based application (Commcare) and were supervised by GHS's community health nurses. In acknowledgement of the considerably higher demands on their time, MVP paid each CHW a monthly allowance. Regarding water and sanitation the community water and sanitation committees were revitalised and strengthened to take responsibility for the management of the boreholes and local artisans trained to build household latrines instead of contracting them to outsiders. Overall, the impression given by district and community actors was that most of the MVP's training at community level had focused largely on the CHWs, the CEWs and the livestock volunteers, and was aimed at extending the work and services of the district departments. Arguably however, this increased individual capacity is more likely to remain, and thus be sustained and shared, at the community level than at district level, where officers are frequently transferred elsewhere.

The MVP output relating to development plans being in place is discussed in Section 4.4, which examines exit strategy and sustainability.

## 4.2 People empowered to advance the MDGs

The institutional causal chain, Figure 2, shows that the increased capacity of local institutions was expected to go together with empowering people to advance the MVP model. One way to look at this is in terms of the contribution of districts and communities to MVP projects or initiatives. This section examines two issues in relation to this: (1) The contribution of districts and communities to MVP projects or initiatives and (2) The impact of the MVP on both district and community institutions.

### 4.2.1 The contribution of districts and communities to MVP projects or initiatives

One of the core principles of the SADA-MVP was cost sharing with government, donors and the local community.<sup>12</sup> For government and local communities, this was to boost their stake in the project or their sense of ownership of

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<sup>12</sup> Shira Mitchell, *et al.*, The Millennium Villages Project: A protocol for the final evaluation, p. 3.

it, and thus the chances of sustaining the gains when MVP came to an end. **The overall impression at endline, however, was that the level of government contributions (both central and local government) and that of local communities did not lead to that sense of ownership.**

In the view of the district officials interviewed as part of this institutional assessment, government's contribution to the implementation of the MVP interventions was principally through the payment of the salaries of the community level staff (community health nurses, teachers, agricultural extension agents, etc.) who were either already working in the MVP cluster communities or posted there at the request of MVP. They also mentioned the time they spent accompanying the MVP staff on monitoring visits to project communities, at review and planning meetings, and at capacity-building events, and the MVP's use of the district assembly's facilities such as the halls or meeting rooms. One could argue that these were not new contributions by government, since it would have incurred these costs irrespective of the MVP, and that the contributions of the district assemblies (local government) were non-financial and could be said to be token. However, they understandably concluded that, as the MVP provided monthly allowances for these district officials to purchase fuel for their vehicles so that they could undertake monitoring visits in their districts; and provided motorbikes for the field staff of co-operative, health and agriculture departments to enable them to do their work, the MVP had the means to fully fund the projects it initiated without needing any form of financial contribution from the assemblies. Moreover, the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) allocation from central government was always in arrears for two or three quarters, and the districts' own internally generated funds were also not substantial. These factors meant that the district assemblies were not in a position to make financial contributions, in addition to those they made in-kind, even if they wanted to.

At the community level, the MVP did not make it mandatory for communities to contribute, in cash or in kind, towards the construction of schools, CHPS compounds and other infrastructure projects such as roads, culverts and boreholes. These projects were awarded to contractors. However, the accounts from communities on their contribution to MVP projects are mixed. This is because some communities, like Zamsa and Kinkadina, there were two types of projects: those given out to contractors, and those with some material support from SADA MVP, but which the community undertook themselves. In the latter, they typically said that they mobilised the community members, with the youth providing labour for the construction of the facilities by moulding blocks, women fetching water or cooking and providing general assistance to those working on the project. Some reported that they provided food for the labourers and sometimes helped to pay for some of the building materials like stones. It is customary practice for a chief of a community to provide food for strangers and visitors that come into the community, and this was reported to have been done by the chief of Kunkua, who provided five bags of rice, maize and a bull to contractors to feed their workers during the construction of projects in the community. When the small town water supply system broke down shortly after it was handed over to them, it was the chief who provided the funds to repair it. Likewise, in some communities, it is the practice that the chief and the community annually support teachers by giving them food stuffs. This was said to be the case in Kunkua, but they were yet to extend this to health workers. They also said that when school resumes, community members all contribute Gh¢ 2.00 (50 US cents) per child to pay the security man who takes care of the school. This also seems to be a customary way of showing appreciation that had nothing to do with the MVP. In Kunkua, they also see it as their contribution when they pay for the use of the chairs and the space at the community centre (for private events), which SADA MVP provided them. They paid Gh¢ 50 (about US\$ 10.50) a day when they hired the space only. All communities regarded their giving of land to the MVP for the construction of infrastructure projects as a major contribution on their part.

Community members interviewed affirmed what district staff said, that some community members were selected and gave their time to be trained under the CLTS project as artisans to help build toilet facilities so as to help eradicate the practice of open defecation. In addition, community members contributed about 40% of the cost of constructing the household toilet facilities. Another important contribution mentioned by the district FGD participants as a contribution by communities was the monitoring and scrutiny by communities of the physical projects when they were being constructed. They checked to ensure that the right thing was being done and brought any shortfalls they saw to the notice of the MVP so that remedial action could be taken. The MVP staff said that increasingly communities began taking their own initiative. Thus, when additional accommodation was needed to house teachers and nurses in Kinkadina and Jadema communities, and the MVP said it did not have

the funds to extend what it had provided but could support these two communities with materials if they took the initiative to do so, the two communities did so using local materials. The MVP then only provided cement for plastering the walls and roofing sheets for the roof. Zamza community also took the initiative to construct a co-operative office and a warehouse. The MVP staff estimated that if the MVP had put up the accommodation for teachers it would have cost around GH¢ 100,000, while the cost of supporting the Kinkadina community to do it themselves was approximately GH¢ 20,000, or 20% of this. At endline, the MVP team reflected<sup>13</sup> that this should have been their approach to engaging the communities on the building of educational, health and agricultural infrastructural facilities.

#### 4.2.2 Impact of MVP on district and community institutions

This section looks at the impact of MVP on both district and community institutions. **MVP did not have any influence on the district level institutions because, though it worked closely with them, it did not embed itself in their operations, systems or procedures. It did, however, introduce or affect the staff and volunteers of these district institutions rendering services at the community level.** A concern raised by some district officials, especially those in the GHS, was that by choosing to pay monthly allowances to the community health workers or teachers, the MVP had weakened the existing sense of community responsibility. The concept of unpaid Community Health Volunteers (CHVs)<sup>14</sup> had existed as part of the health service delivery at the community level over the previous 15 years. The MVP modified their roles and task, paid them monthly allowances and designating them as CHWs. In the view of the district health officials in the three districts, it was unlikely to be sustained post-MVP. In the interview with the MVP team, the staff affirmed that prior to the MVP, GHS collaborated with unpaid CHVs, whose main functions included birth and death registration and mobilising communities for health interventions such as immunisations. Within the MVP cluster some CHVs benefited from a skill upgrading package under the MVP and were renamed as CHWs. The MVP recruited and paid 53 CHWs. They performed a wider and more intensive range of diagnostic and curative tasks at community level, guided by a mobile phone-based application (Commcare) and supervised by GHS's community health nurses. According to MVP staff, it was in acknowledgement of the considerably higher demands on their time that MVP paid each CHW the monthly allowance of Gh¢ 150. The MVP staff did say that the monthly payment to CHW was a contentious issue between the project and the GHS. However, they still went ahead because the CHW was the pivot around which their health programme evolved. In its 2013 annual report, the Millennium Promise, which is a founding member of the Millennium Villages, stated, *"The MVP Health team has, from the onset, pioneered the concept of a professionalised cadre of Community Health Workers (CHWs) as being a crucial pillar of a comprehensive community health care delivery."*<sup>15</sup>

**Also, in the health sector, new community health committees were formed where they did not previously exist, and existing ones strengthened.** Although CHWs were in every community in the MV cluster, there were only 10 community health committees because, according to MVP staff, they did not want to introduce new community institutions that would stop functioning when the project came to an end. For this reason, the community health committees were formed around the 10 health facilities within the cluster and their role was to plan how they could support a facility, for instance, how to provide water to the facility if the borehole broke down.

**Similarly, in education, the Community Education Worker concept was introduced by MVP within the cluster.** The CEWs played the role of sensitising parents to send their children to school, and stepped in when teachers were absent. Like CHWs they were paid a monthly allowance.

**The MVP also introduced the concept of Community-based Veterinary Extension Volunteers (also referred to as community livestock volunteers) to address the shortage of veterinary officers in the districts.** These were selected community members who were trained in basic animal care using some drugs. After the training, they were linked to better trained and accessible veterinary and extension officers. It was meant to improve access to animal health services. At endline, according to the representatives of the district agriculture directorate, this

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<sup>13</sup> Meeting between the PRA Study Team and the MVP Transitional Team on 5 June 2017.

<sup>14</sup> These are community members who are given basic training by the GHS and who help periodically with such things as community mobilisation for immunisation programmes and generally monitoring health and sharing health information in the community.

<sup>15</sup> 2013 Millennium Promise Annual Report on the Millennium Villages Project, p. 17.

intervention was not successful because, like previous attempts by the Ministry of Agriculture to do this, the volunteers could not ask their relations (which is virtually the whole community in the case of a small village) for money for vaccinating their animals. If they did, the relatives failed to pay for their services as had been agreed with the community. Another reason why it failed was that only literates were trained as volunteers and most of them had ambitions to continue their education so many of them went back to school following the training, thus leaving the community once again without ready veterinary support.

In the agriculture sector, **the MVP supported the formation of co-operative unions. At endline, reports from the interviews with community members showed that some of these co-operatives had become strong and active while in some communities, they had collapsed.** For instance, in Kasiesa, the co-operative was said to have been formed by the MVP at the beginning of the project from four existing farmer groups. The co-operative had been active and assists members to get access to improved farming inputs, train members on best farming practices and also secure credit facilities for the members. They were given land by the community to erect a co-operative office. The co-operatives in Kinkandina, a rice valley community, were reported to be very strong. They invited Avnash, a multi-national agri-business company, to come and partner with them to develop the valley. The new government's 'Planting for Food and Jobs' Programme, which was launched at the beginning of 2017, registered farmers in the valley and the co-operatives as beneficiaries. The co-operative, on its own, was engaged in talks with TECHNOSERVE to assist farmers with cultivation. The farmers' co-operatives are similarly reported to be active in Nabari, Zamsa and Zuasa. However, in Kunkua, it was reported that the two farmers co-operatives in the community had collapsed. These co-operatives do not meet, members do not have shares and they did not keep records (financial and administrative).

**In addition to farmers' co-operatives, the MVP introduced the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) concept, which is reported to have been of immense benefit to women as they are predominantly the members of these associations.** A district official said that he was surprised to learn that Gh¢ 500,000 was raised in the MVP cluster through the VSLAs. The members of the VSLA reported that the MVP gave them training on group dynamics, management and investment to become economically independent and sustain the group. In Kasiesa for instance, it was reported that there are four VSLA groups, with each section of the community having a group. Each group is made up of 30 women and a few men. The group meets every week and each member contributes between GH¢ 2.00 to GH¢ 10.00. The accumulated contributions, which are shared at the beginning of the farming season, have made the women economically active as they now have access to capital. As a result, most women in the community have become more economically active than they were at baseline. Their increased access to funds had greatly improved, hence at endline, more women had their own farms and are able to contribute to the upkeep of their households. In Nabari, it was reported that apart from savings and loans activities, the VSLA had helped to create spaces for women to discuss issues pertaining to their welfare. It was also a platform that MVP used to sensitise the women. In some communities, the VSLA concept was said to be catching on. For example, in Zamsa, apart from the two VSLAs that were facilitated by the MVP, namely, *Vaansa dem Chugsum* and *Ayiakjangsa*, a third group emerged. This group is called *Kananwasa* and is moulded after the MVP's VSLA concept. According to a leader of the new group, they were motivated to form the group because of the financial capacity and freedom that they had observed in the members of the other two VSLAs, who had been enabled to engage in economic activities to support their families.

**The institutions of governance in the MVP communities appear to have remained largely the same, namely: chief, sub-chief, 'Tindana' (landlord/land overseer), 'Magazia' (women leader), assemblyperson, unit committee (though this was hardly mentioned).** However, in Kasiesa, FGD participants mentioned that a new institution, the 'queenmother', had been introduced.<sup>16</sup> Due to MVP capacity-building interventions, some of these community level governance institutions were said to have become stronger, more active, more influential or more consultative. In almost all the communities, the assemblyperson was mentioned as one institution that fits all these descriptions because of the roles they played in the interventions of MVP. For instance, in Zamsa, before the start of the MVP in 2012, even the rich and averagely rich men and women said the assemblyperson used not to consult them, but had now become the "go-to-person" for decisions related to development of the community, as he is now seen as the person who convenes meetings. Decisions taken at such meetings are then forwarded to

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<sup>16</sup> This is part of a nationwide initiative by the National Council of Women Traditional Leaders to increase women's representation in traditional leadership structures.

the sub-chief for collective consideration with other leaders in the community. While in Zamsa, the sub-chief was ranked second to the assemblyperson in terms of influence. In Kasiesa, Nabari and Kunkua, the chief or sub-chief was ranked first, either because he was perceived to have the power to summon all the other institutions, is active in mobilising the community for development or is educated and progressive. In some communities like Zamsa and Kasiesa, the *magazia's* influence was said to be weak because she deals with only issues concerning women. However, in Gbedembilisi, where she also doubles up as the traditional birth attendant, she has more influence. The same was said in Nabari, where their *magazia* is said to bring the women together.

**The institutions that were said, in most communities, to have become weaker over the project period, were the traditional birth attendant, the herbalist and the 'Tindana' (traditionally regarded as the custodian of the land and the link with the ancestors).** The TBA had become weakened because of the government's policy that births should be at a health facility like a CHPS compound. This policy was then enforced by MVP. TBAs were threatened with sanctions if they assisted a woman to deliver at home. On the other hand, in the initial stages of the project, they were given some token money if they accompanied a pregnant woman to the health facility to deliver. Also, it appeared that the increasing number of women attending antenatal clinics had led to their ties with TBAs being weakened. One exception was in Nabari, where the TBA had undergone training at the health facility and is still active in delivering babies because the midwife is not resident in the community and therefore not reliable. The case of Nabari raises the issue that if the TBAs are side-stepped by the GHS, and communities are facing circumstances where there is no midwife and TBAs no longer exist, then they will have no fall back option.

### 4.3 MVP approach streamlined into local government processes

One of the expected outcomes of the MVP as a project was that its approaches, lessons or gains derived from it would be mainstreamed into existing local government processes. The extent to which the MVP achieved this is assessed here in terms of: (1) The financial arrangements between the MVP and the participating districts and (2) The cost effectiveness of the MVP operations, from the perspective of its district partners.

#### 4.3.1 The financial arrangement and cost effectiveness

As noted earlier, at district level, the MVP used a parallel structure to manage its projects and for this reason the achievement of this outcome of mainstreaming the MVP approaches into local government processes had been limited. Some of the district actors interviewed felt that it is only by using, not bypassing, the local government management and financial processes, that a project like the MVP would be able to improve them.

Between 80–90% of the project funds were disbursed directly for infrastructure projects which were handled directly by the MVP and not by the partner districts. The remaining 10–20% of project funding for non-infrastructure activities was also almost entirely controlled by the MVP team. From the accounts of district officials, there were only two or three instances where monies were given directly to a district assembly or a department to execute an activity. One instance was during the inception phase of the MVP when the DWST in West Mamprusi was tasked to identify and rehabilitate 33 boreholes and also train community members in the communities to take responsibility for borehole management. However, the new boreholes that were later constructed in the MVP cluster to supplement the repaired ones were all handled directly by the MVP. The reason given by the MVP team for not giving the construction of the new boreholes to the DWST was that they had to go through procurement processes to acquire the services of a hydrologist and a contractor (two separate contracts). The construction was supervised by the District Works Departments. According to the representative of the Works Department, the procurement could have been done by them, or together with the MVP, because the department has a tender board with significant experience in procurement. He said that under the Northern Region Small Towns Water and Sanitation project alone the district was able to construct two small town water systems worth Gh¢ 1.4 million using their own tender board. Also, projects funded from the DACF<sup>17</sup> are all handled by the District Works Department and so it could easily have handled the MVP's as well. The second instance where the money was channelled through the district assemblies was when the Environmental Health Departments were made

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<sup>17</sup> Annually, the Parliament of Ghana makes provision for the allocation of not less than five per cent (5%) of the total revenues of Ghana to the District Assemblies for development and the amount is paid in quarterly instalments. Source: The 1992 Constitution of Ghana, Section 252.

responsible for overseeing the CLTS programme. This involved them training and supervising community level artisans in the construction of household latrines.

According to the GES representatives in all three districts, finances relating to education were also handled directly by the MVP. Activities such as building classrooms, procuring books, outdoor games, trainings for SMC/PTA, etc. were all handled by the MVP. Community teachers were also recruited by the MVP and their monthly allowances paid directly to them, although the teachers were accountable to both GES and MVP and they monitored them independently. Girl-child education coordinators, Circuit Supervisors in the MVP cluster, District Directors of Education and assistant directors were all paid monthly allowances by the MVP directly into their bank accounts in return for undertaking supervision and monitoring activities. According to the representative at West Mamprusi, even the best teacher awards were organised by the MVP – from the selection of the awardee pupils and teachers to the award ceremony and the present for the awardees. The staff of the department observed the ceremony but were not involved in the planning. According to this representative, it was during the ceremony that the GES district directorate got to know the awardees and the presents they were getting. This was affirmed by the GES representative at Builsa South, except that in their case the department drew a budget and was given money to provide refreshments for participants.

This was generally not different in the other technical departments – health, agriculture, co-operatives, works, etc. They all spoke of the MVP making payments directly into community level workers' accounts and other staff employed in the communities (e.g. agriculture extension officers, midwives, community nurses, district directors and supervisors) without these funds coming through their departments' accounts. The Environmental Health Department in Builsa South explained that the cement, roofing sheets, nails, etc. that the MVP provided as a subsidy for the household latrines were bought by the MVP and stored in the communities for distribution to households. The field workers implementing CLTS were also paid a monthly allowance of Gh¢ 100 into their accounts, directly by MVP.

#### 4.3.2 The perceived cost effectiveness of MVP operations<sup>18</sup>

The topic of cost effectiveness was discussed in the FGDs with district actors. In Builsa South, administrators understood it as measuring funds used for a particular project against the project's impact. Those in West Mamprusi saw cost effectiveness in terms of access, quality and efficiency of staff management. The MVP's cost effectiveness was thus viewed from a number of angles. **Overall, it was considered to be relatively cost-effective in comparison with other external interventions they knew – remembering that district staff did not have sight of the expenditure, and this is a perception.** The MVP approach of using district field staff to implement activities, and district level staff to monitor, seemed generally appreciated, though some argued it did not go far enough. Some felt that much more responsibility could have been given to the district staff in terms of the hands-on management of the project. District officials said that not having to recruit their own field and district operational staff saved the MVP a considerable amount in terms of personnel and logistical costs.

Positive examples of the 'cost effectiveness' of the MVP were mostly related to infrastructure projects. A district administration staff member in the West Mamprusi District said that the MVP compared favourably in terms of programme quality and infrastructure interventions compared to similar projects in other districts he had worked in. At midline, a Mamprugu-Moaduri District administration staff member said that when comparing the contract sums of MVP interventions with government projects (e.g. constructing one-unit-three classroom blocks) the MVP generally provided better results at a lower cost. This was contradicted, at endline however by a staff member from the Works Department in Builsa South, who said that the contract sums of MVP interventions and those of the district assembly fell within the same cost range (they did not say if this led to better, the same, or lower quality interventions however). Some of the district officials thought the MVP could have been more cost-effective if department staff were used in the entire process, including procurement and the awards of contracts. The selection and training of community members as artisans for the CLTS project was said to be more cost-effective than if people outside the communities were contracted.

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<sup>18</sup> This section is a summary of perceptions of cost-effectiveness in the view of district officials. A full assessment of cost-effectiveness is presented in Annexes E and F of the main report.



At the endline, the representative of works department and the department of agriculture, health and education were of the view that the MVP had not fully utilised their technical expertise in the training of community level operatives like CHWs, PTA/SMC, community education workers, etc. Instead the MVP relied on outside expertise for planning and training. Below are some examples:

- According Department of Agriculture representatives in West Mamprusi, work in Kinkandina valley had to be done twice because their expertise was not sought during planning and implementation;
- The failure with the implementation of the community livestock volunteers outlined above. If the MVP had sought their views at the design stage they would have shared this insight with them. Instead the MVP informed them at a meeting that they wanted to implement the scheme and they (the agricultural staff) assumed they had a tested approach which was going to succeed;
- Delivering a training programme on nutrition where a resource person from Senegal was brought over with an insufficient level of English and one of the district health staff who was there as a participant, had to frequently step in to explain aspects of the course to his fellow participants.

It is worth recounting here the issues raised by the district actors at midline, some of which were reiterated at endline. They noted three ways in which existing cost-effective practices were undermined by the MVP:

- As has been referred to earlier in this report, the MVP's monthly payments to the various 'community volunteers/workers' to fill personnel gaps are unlikely to be maintained post-project. The district actors feared that when the MVP came to an end and the community volunteers/workers were not paid the allowances they have become used to, they may stop working, which could ruin the activities, which relied on these volunteers;
- The MVP's practice of paying community members to work on infrastructure projects rather than using communal labour (a traditional practice whereby community members agree to voluntarily come together to undertake a community project or task). There were concerns that it could undermine the traditional spirit and practice of communal labour on which communities have relied for so long;
- Organising training events, where participants were taken from their communities and lodged in hotels (mostly in Bolgatanga), thereby incurring and introducing unnecessary feeding and lodging costs. It set a precedent and created expectations among community members which the district assemblies and departments could not possibly meet in the future. At endline, the district officials reported that the training for the artisans who constructed the household latrines in Builsa South District was held at the Fumbisi Senior High School, which they thought was more cost effective and more likely to be sustainable.

## 4.4 Sustained achievement of the MDGs

A key objective of the MVP, as portrayed in the institutional causal chain diagram (Figure 2), was that with increased capacity of local institutions, they will be empowered to manage their own development more efficiently and to sustain the achievements of the MDGs. As this was an objective, this section looks at what plans the MVP team put in place for its exit. Secondly, it also looks at the extent to which sustainability was factored into its interventions during the entire period of implementation.

### 4.4.1. Exit strategy

According to the district officials interviewed, **the MVP did not have an exit strategy<sup>19</sup> that they were aware of. They deduced that if they had one, then it would not have been at the point of exit that they began to meet with them to discuss how some of the interventions, like the ambulance service, could be sustained.** At the midline evaluation, neither the MVP nor the partner districts had an exit strategy in place, although the district officials said there had been talks about developing one together. However, at the time, the district partners were

<sup>19</sup> That is a planned approach to ending the project or interventions in a way that the gains it had made can be sustained and any possible damage minimised.

expecting the MVP to produce one, because for the districts it was their technical staff that were implementing and monitoring the MVP interventions, and all they had to do was to mainstream them into their MTDPs. Community structures like the PTAs had been trained and told to take responsibility for sustaining the interventions themselves.

In 2016, before the project ended in December, the MVP held three meetings with the District Chief Executive (the political head), District Coordinating Director (administrative head) and heads of technical departments of the three partner districts to discuss their exit. The district administrations assured the MVP that the projects will be integrated into the district MTDPs as far as possible, and their district monitoring teams will include MVP interventions as part of their regular monitoring. Although an expected outcome from the institutional causal chain was that development plans would be in place, there was nothing written up to provide guidance on how this task could be approached when the MTDP was being drawn up in 2017/18. Also, it was difficult to see how the district monitoring teams would continue to visit the communities when it was the MVP that was providing them with funds for fuel for their monitoring visits.

It was also in the year of exit, 2016, that the MVP started to engage the district partners and communities on how they could manage the day-to-day operation and maintenance of the ambulance vehicles (both cars and tricycles) as well as the remuneration of the drivers. The MVP had provided the funds for these costs during the project so that the service could be provided free of charge to users. It was decided that post-MVP users should be charged some fees which would go towards the cost of running the service. Committees were then set up to consult communities on what the user fees should be. The amount to be paid by a user depended on the distance from the departure to destination points. According to the district officials, communities were not happy with the introduction of a user fee for the ambulance at the exit of the MVP and wished that this had been discussed at the beginning of the provision of the service. According to some district officials, it also risked creating a credibility gap between the district assemblies and the communities, because communities were likely to wonder if the districts were keeping the funds meant for the service for their own use rather than providing the service free of charge, as MVP had done over the years. The same issue applied to the use of the tractor for ploughing services. As at April 2017, four months after the end of MVP and the beginning of farm preparations, district officials and communities said they had not been told what was going to happen to the tractors. A month or so later, nine out of the ten were sold to individuals and only one was sold to a farmers' co-operative. According to a representative of the District Agriculture Department at Mamprugu-Moadori, the co-operatives were made to believe that the tractors would be sold to the strong and viable ones. The MVP transition team confirmed that they had originally planned to sell the tractors to the co-operatives. However, they later realised the tractors were assets of SADA and not MVP, as such they had a limited say in their disposal. They, however, managed to persuade SADA to agree to sell five tractors to individuals and one to a co-operative within the partner districts (i.e. two per district).

#### 4.4.2. Sustainability

**Most of the concerns raised by district officials, especially those in the technical departments, at midterm about the unsustainability of some of the MVP initiatives were brought to the fore once again.** At endline, the district administration staff at Builsa South and West Mamprusi were still optimistic, as they were at midterm, that the MVP initiatives were going to be sustained. All that was required was to integrate the MVP projects into the district MTDPs. They planned that the district monitoring teams would include MVP interventions in their regular monitoring. However, judging from what the GES representative in Mamprugu-Moaduri said, monitoring of the projects was already a challenge. According to him, from January to April 2017 (when the endline study was being undertaken) only two gallons of petrol had been provided by the local government to circuit supervisors for monitoring. Staff sometimes used their own money to conduct monitoring. The West Mamprusi district administration also raised doubts about how the payments to various community level workers/volunteers were going to be sustained as there were challenges absorbing them into the technical departments.

For the district health directorates, a major concern regarding sustainability was with the free ambulance service at some health facilities, which had already been discussed in the section above on exit strategy. According to the representative of the health directorate in Builsa South, despite the assurances given to the MVP team by the district administration of providing some funds towards the running of the ambulance services, as at the time of

the endline study in April 2017, the health directorate had not received any support. However, the ambulance had been serviced four times since January 2017 using fees charged to clients. Similarly, the community health management committees (CHMCs) in charge of the CHPS compounds were tasked by the MVP and the district health directorates to mobilise funds to manage the tricycles provided by the MVP for emergency referrals. They had also not succeeded in raising any funds. Clearly, if this trend continues, it is only a matter of time before the ambulance service will ground to a halt. Already in Nabari, the community members said while they previously had 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access to free ambulance services from the period 2013 to 2016, with the exit of the MVP this ambulance service was no longer available.

The CHMCs also agreed to mobilise funds to replace drugs dispensed by the CHWs, service and fuel motorbikes used by the health workers at the CHPS, and buy reagents for the laboratory, etc. The CHMCs had not been able to do any of these. Four months after the exit of MVP, the shortage of drugs is being felt in the communities. In Zamsa, apart from the decline of drugs for CHWs to administer, they also reported that though their health facility is NHIS accredited, and hence community members with active NHIS membership cards are entitled to access free healthcare, the supply of drugs to the CHPS compound had declined, particularly after the end of MVP. They indicated that they are mostly asked to buy drugs from pharmacy shops whenever they visit the facility for healthcare. The same complaint of decline in the supply of drugs to the health facility was also raised in Nabari. Another longstanding concern of the district health directorates was the sustainability of the monthly allowance paid to the CHWs. Before exiting, MVP sought to get the CHWs absorbed into the Youth Employment Authority (YEA) programme. Some of the criteria for qualifying to be part of the YEA programme (minimum education and age of not more than 35 years), however, had become problematic. Unfortunately, at the time of recruiting the CHWs, these had not been taken into account so most of them did not qualify to be taken onto the YEA programme. As a result, some reverted to their status before MVP, as unpaid volunteers, while those absorbed into the YEA programme continued to be paid. This was said to have created some resentment, with those not being paid becoming reluctant to work for GHS. At midline, it had emerged that there were plans, at a meeting between Jeffrey Sachs and the Minister for Employment and Labour Relations, to recruit 3,000 CHWs as part of Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Agency programme. Of this number, 800 were to be posted to the savannah zone. The district representatives for health directorates in West Mamprusi said they were not aware of this national programme and none of their CHWs had benefitted from it.

The communities also reported a decline in the services provided by the CHWs at endline. In Kunkua, all the four well-being focus groups reported that since the exit of MVP the CHWs had stopped working. In Kasiesa, the community leaders said that the mobile phones that the volunteers used in tracking the gestation period of pregnant women and in reminding them when they were due for antenatal services were taken away from them at the end of the MVP. As a result, the volunteers were not able to monitor the pregnant women and remind of them of the due dates for antenatal and delivery. In Naadema, they said that after the MVP folded up, some of the other activities of the CHWs such as the number of visits per household had reduced and malaria testing and treatment had stopped. In Zamsa, they put the reduction in the household visits by CHWs to a decline in supply of drugs which they administered at the household level.

In Builsa South, the eight midwives (five were from senior high school and three were community health nurses) sponsored by the MVP to replace the retired midwives had completed their midwifery training. However, the five from senior high school were yet to be granted financial clearance by the Ministry of Finance to be employed and deployed. The midwife trainees in West Mamprusi had not completed their training because they started late due to what the MVP staff interviewed at midterm described as lack of commitment on the part of the leadership of the health directorate at the time. In Mamprugu-Moaduri, according to the health directorate representative, the retired midwives who were engaged by the MVP were still at their post and working at the time of the endline study. Catholic Relief Services' Mentoring and Coaching program had engaged these midwives to mentor and coach those who had just completed the midwifery training to conduct skilled and safe deliveries.

From the accounts of the representatives of the education directorate, the fortune of the CEWs differed in the three partner districts. In West Mamprusi, of the 12 trained, only one was absorbed into the YEA programme. In Mamprugu-Moaduri, of 12 trained, six left the job and two were recruited onto the YEA programme. In Builsa South, 15 of the 17 CEWs were enrolled onto the YEA and were still at post. Although there was only one CEW

remaining in West Mamprusi, the education directorate did not consider it a setback because from the inception of MVP, more trained teachers were sent to the MVP cluster annually to fill the teacher vacancies. At the endline, according to the representative, all schools in the cluster had at least five teachers and so in terms of staff they had improved. The Builsa South education directorate said what they would not be able to sustain were items such as sanitary pads, books and uniforms that the MVP distributed to pupils for free. However, in West Mamprusi, sustaining the supply of teaching and learning materials was not seen as a problem because every year the government provides items like text books, registers, lesson notebooks and syllabi, and the communities in the MVP cluster will not be left out.

With regard to agriculture, the West Mamprusi representative felt that most of the MVP interventions were routine department activities, and thus they would be sustained. There were, however, a few areas that could not be sustained such as the number of agricultural extension agents (AEAs). The district was planning to revert to one AEA per cluster of communities. In Builsa South, the three AEAs employed and paid for by the MVP had left because they could not be absorbed into the government system. Another intervention they would not be able to sustain was the lead farmer programme. Although the concept was a rehash of an old one (i.e. the contact farmer concept), the department could not continue with how the MVP had implemented it. This is because the MVP provided lead farmers with inputs to carry out demonstrations to facilitate learning amongst other farmers. The department predicted that it may not have the resources to provide those inputs, unless another development partner funds it. This seemed to be the case in Builsa South and Mamprugu-Moaduri where the Sustainable Land and Water Management was taking over the field demonstrations but in only four communities in Builsa South. As noted earlier in this report, the community livestock volunteers concept had failed even before the MVP's exit.

Building warehouses where farmers could treat and store their harvest was helpful. The perceived challenge was how the co-operatives would maintain the warehouses. The alternatives discussed before the MVP closed was either to charge farmers to store produce in the warehouses or for the district assembly to take that burden off the farmers by subsidising the cost for farmers. At the time of the study, a final decision had not been made by the district assemblies.

The final issue in agriculture was the MVP tractor service. According to the representatives of departments of agriculture, the MVP controlled the operations of the tractors, including the recruitment and payment of tractor operators. In a meeting before the exit of MVP, various options were given as to how the tractors were going to be disposed of. The first option was to sell them to the co-operatives in the cluster; second was to sell them to individual farmers from the co-operatives and the third was to sell to any farmer in the community who could afford to buy one. This was what, as far as they were concerned, had been agreed on with MVP. As at the time of the endline institutional study in April 2017, the district officials had not heard from them and were worried that the farming season was about to begin, and farmers needed the tractor service to prepare their lands. All they knew was that the tractors were parked at their yard at Kpasenkpe. They were seen as described by the endline institutional study team. At a meeting, with the MVP transition team during the endline study, it was explained that the team were made to believe the tractors were the property of the project. It was for this reason that they wanted to sell them to either the co-operatives or individual farmers within the cluster so that they remain there. However, they later learnt they belonged to SADA and the officials there had started the process of auctioning them. Eventually, they were sold to five individuals within the cluster and one to one of the co-operatives. By the time the farmers became aware that the MVP tractor service which they had depended on over the past four years was not going to be available, the time for land preparation was almost over. At the start of the planting season, many were struggling to get hold of a tractor.

For the other departments whose resources were channelled through the district administration, like the Departments for Cooperatives, Works, Environmental Health, etc. the sustainability of the MVP initiatives they were involved in (such as boreholes, household latrines, monitoring support to the co-operatives) was to be dependent on the district assembly making the resources available for them to continue, or monitor and maintain them. They said that considering the current level of resources available to the district assemblies in the country from internally generated funds and the DACF this looks most unlikely.

## 5. Conclusions

The fifth output of the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) aimed to achieve “*strengthened local institutions and community capacity to secure sustainability of MV gains.*” By strengthening local institutions across the Millennium Villages (MVs), the project hoped to “*empower people to advance the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) within their own communities, increase the participation of vulnerable and minority groups in decision-making and governance, and build the capacity of local government to sustain project gains in the long term.*” **Based upon the findings of both the midline and endline studies for this evaluation, this objective was largely not achieved.**

Although the district officials interviewed reported improvements in their own participation in MVP activities when the project was in full swing, some said they did not feel that they could influence MVP decisions or plans, as often they were presented with what MVP wanted to do and were only consulted for their inputs at a late stage of plan development. Even in instances when the district institutions disagreed with MVP on its approach, it went ahead anyway, as in the often cited case of MVP’s insistence on changing the CHVs to community health workers (CHW) with monthly remuneration. This was something the Ghana Health Service thought was not sustainable and could negatively impact on the CHV concept they had practiced for years.

At the community level, community members reported that there was an increase in the number of meetings held by their leaders to consult them. This they attributed to the sensitisation given to them by the MVP. It was also an outcome of the formation of various groups in the community such as youth and women’s groups, the VSLAs, farmer co-operatives, facilitated by the MVP. In some of the communities, these community groups have provided spaces and served as vehicle for the voices of vulnerable groups such poor women, to be heard. These groups, especially the VSLAs, required some level of facilitation and support, but at endline it was not clear how this support was to continue without the resources that the MVP used to provide the staff of the departments of co-operatives and agriculture. Also, the increased participation in community meetings could have been sustained if it had been anchored on community members coming together with their leadership to assess and deliberate on their needs and aspirations. These then could have translated into a community level development plan around which they could have mobilised resources internally and then contacted the district assembly (local government) and the MVP for financial, material and or technical support to execute their own plans and activities. Such an approach could have created greater ownership of the projects the MVP had funded.

The MVP conducted a number of training events for district officials with the intention of building their capacities. But in the view of the district officials, the MVP was not embedded in the partner districts but had a parallel project management team for the various components. For this reason, it did not make use of the district’s processes and procedures. Though, if MVP had done so, it would have been frustrating for them, due to bureaucratic tendencies characteristic of government institutions and the limited resources at the district level, it would have provided it the opportunity to contribute to the strengthening and streamlining of the existing systems and processes. For example, if MVP had used the district tender boards in the selection and award of contracts to service providers and contractors, it could have stood a better chance of building the capacity of the board members and the staff hands-on. Instead, MVP controlled and disbursed 80% to 90% of the project funds using its own systems and procedures. It also transferred funds directly into the bank accounts of the district and community level service providers it worked with.

At the end of MVP, there was little evidence from this study that the partner districts and communities had been empowered to advance the MDGs in terms of their financial, material or human resources to do so. The government contributed in terms of increased infrastructure projects like roads, culverts, electricity, etc. in the MVP cluster, and paid the salaries of the district and community level staff involved in the project. This, however, is not different from what the government did in non-MVP areas. There was no clear-cut matching fund from government to MVP partner districts which could, for instance, cater for the purchase of motorbikes and fuel needed by district officials to undertake monitoring and support visits to field level staff. All these had to be provided by the project and now that it has ended the officials lack the means to get to the field in the way they used to during the MVP.

Ideally, an exit strategy and consideration of how the project outcomes would be sustained should have been thought through at the start of a project (which by definition has a life span) not at the point of exit. At midline, in 2015, district officials talked of discussions they had had that year with the MVP regarding their exit strategy and were waiting for them to come up with one. From the accounts given by district officials and community members, it was in the final year of project implementation that the MVP engaged the district administration and the heads of the technical departments to deliberate on how certain initiatives like the free ambulance service and the supply of drugs to the health facilities could be sustained. Barely four months after MVP's exit, some of these initiatives were showing signs that they may not be sustained. Neither the district administrations nor their technical departments were in a position to continue with the salary top-up or fuel allowances that MVP was providing to most of the district or community level service providers. Some of the CHWs had been absorbed into the Youth Employment Authority scheme, but others were compelled to revert to their former status as unpaid volunteers. The subsidised tractor service and the free ambulance or emergency referral service had ceased. The latter was continuing but was no longer free. As far back as the midline, there were issues raised regarding the deterioration of some of the infrastructure facilities that the MVP had provided and the challenges envisaged with their maintenance. At the endline, some of the district officials were still adamant that once they integrated these projects into the MTDPs of their districts, they could sustain these projects. However, this does not appear tenable because a study conducted by SEND Foundation of 11 MTDPs showed that only 7.3% of planned activities were implemented.<sup>20</sup>

In conclusion, the MVP undertook a number of interventions and initiatives in the 33 communities in the Builsa South, West Mampruli and Mamprugu-Moadori Districts. Some of these have shown success within the project period. This study, however, found considerable evidence of community members expectations being raised, only to be dashed as the considerable project resources were no longer available. MVP was a short-/medium-term integrated rural development project with only temporarily expanded resources. In the rush to accomplish the numerous interventions in agriculture, health, education, infrastructure, water and sanitation, insufficient attention was paid to the institutional strengthening needed to sustain them in a manner that would promote a sense of ownership, and enable them to be continued by the local institutions and actors.

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<sup>20</sup> SEND-GHANA, Making Decentralisation Work for the Poor, 2010, p. 15

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## Appendix E1: Number of District Assembly Staff Met

Districts	District Administration team	District Departments
West Mamprusi	5	10 Representatives made up of: Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service, Department of Community Development and Social Welfare, District Works Department, Department of Agriculture, Environmental Health Department, Gender Desk Officer, and Department of Co-operatives
Builsa South	5	11 Representatives made up of: Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service, Department of Community Development and Social Welfare, District Works Department, Department of Agriculture, Environmental Health Department, Gender Desk Officer, Department of Co-operatives
Mamprugu-Moaduri	1	5 Representatives made up of: Ghana Education Service, Department of Agriculture, Environmental Health, Ghana Health Service, Social Welfare and Community Development



## Appendix E2: Questions for District Level Actors

### MVP End-term Impact Evaluation

#### Institutional Assessment – Questions for focus group discussions

Objective of the End-term institutional assessment of MVP will be for the district actors to assess the impact of the project regarding the following:

- The effective participation of district institutions and actors in decision making in MVP and in project implementation and monitoring;
- The effect of MVP on district and community institutions and actors;
- The effect of MVP on poverty and standard of living of the people in the MV communities, neighbouring communities and the MV districts as a whole;
- The contribution of districts and community institutions to projects initiated under MVP;
- From the perspective of district and community actors, the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of projects initiated under MVP.

As much as possible, the team will request for evidence from the district administrations and the departments to back their claims.

Similar questions will be asked of communities during the Interpretational Lens Study and the Reality Check.

Objective/Issues	Questions	Who to ask
Institutional arrangements and effective participation	<p>What currently is the institutional, financial, and governance arrangements in place for the management and implementation of MVP? How has this changed since the baseline study?</p> <p>How have the institutional arrangements in place enabled effective participation of district and community institutions and actors in decision making and project implementation, monitoring and reviews compared to other past or existing projects?</p> <p>Compared to other donor funded projects mentioned at the baseline, how does the MVP compare in terms of the involvement of the district administration/departments in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects?</p> <p>With MVP ended, what structures, mechanisms are in place for sustaining the projects, services, facilities, etc. that have been implemented in the MVP communities?</p> <p>What is MVP's exit strategy? What plans have the districts in place to take over from MVP?</p>	<p>(i) MVP Bolga office (ii) Key district administration staff (DCE, DCD, DPO, DBO, etc.) (iii) Staff of key decentralised departments and agencies (education, agriculture, health, works, community development)</p>
Effect of MVP on district and community institutions and actors	<p>To what extent is the MVP working with existing district and community institutions? Which are these and what are their roles and responsibilities in MVP?</p> <p>Which new organisations or institutions have been: (i) created by MVP; (ii) emerged as a result of MVP at community and/or district level?</p>	

Objective/Issues	Questions	Who to ask
	<p>What has been the effect/impact of the MVP (positively or negatively) on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the functioning of district and community institutions;</li> <li>(ii) the confidence and trust of the people in these institutions;</li> <li>(iii) the allocation of district resources?</li> </ul> <p>Number of NGOs in each district from 2012–17.</p> <p>Which NGOs that have started, ceased or scaled-up operations in the area? And, why?</p>	
<p>The effect of MVP on poverty and standard of living of the people in the MV communities, neighbouring communities and the MV districts as a whole</p>	<p>On a scale of 1–10, to what extent has the MVP led to improvement in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) poverty,</li> <li>(ii) health,</li> <li>(iii) education,</li> <li>(iii) agriculture,</li> <li>(iv) infrastructure,</li> </ul> <p>in beneficiary communities and districts? What is your justification for the rating?</p> <p>On a scale of 1–10, what has been the effect on the above in neighbouring communities and districts?</p>	
<p>The contribution of districts and community institutions to projects initiated under MVP</p>	<p>At baseline, districts admin contribution was MVP's use of Assembly Hall, and Departments contributed personnel time and motorbike (fuel by MVP). What has changed over the past 5 years?</p> <p>On a scale of 1–10, what is the extent of the contribution of (i) the district administration, (ii) departments and (iii) communities to projects under MVP?</p> <p>How has the MVP affected Central Government's resource (human, financial, material, projects, services, etc.) to the district?</p>	
<p>The cost-effectiveness and sustainability of projects initiated under MVP</p>	<p>Against the factors that was identified during baseline study for sustainability of projects (e.g. community ownership, training of facility users, measures for maintenance, sensitisation of people, etc.), how would you rate the MVP on sustainability, and why?</p> <p>What is your understanding of cost effectiveness?</p> <p>Against the factors which were identified during the baseline study for cost effectiveness of projects (similar to the above), how will you rate the MVP on cost effectiveness, and why?</p>	