



Report on the **Regional Development Forum** in the **Northern Part of Ghana**



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ABBREVIATION

CBRDP	Community-Based Rural Development Project
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAs	District Assemblies
DCE	District Chief Executives
DCD	District Coordination Directors
DPs	Development Partners
FCV	Fragilities, Conflict, and Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCD	Municipal Coordinating Director
MCE	Municipal Chief Executives
MLGDRD	Minister for Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies
MP	Member of Parliament
NDA	Northern Development Authority
NDF	National Development Forums
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NG-HDR	Northern Ghana Human Development Report
NGOs	Nongovernmental Organisations
NRCC	Northern Regional Coordinating Council
NRGP	Northern Rural Growth Programme
OHLGS	Office of the Head of Local Government Service
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RCCs	Regional Coordinating Councils
SADA	Savannah Accelerated Development Authority
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSNIT	Social Security and National Insurance Trust
SoCo	Social Cohesion
UDS	University for Development Studies
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The "Northern Ghana Development Forum Report" encapsulates the insights, discussions, and recommendations generated during a comprehensive forum to address the challenges of equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana. This report culminates key discussions, insights, and proposed strategies for fostering inclusive growth, social cohesion, and sustainable progress in the region.

The forum featured distinguished speakers, including experts in agriculture, economics, governance, and development, who collectively shed light on the multifaceted issues hindering progress in Northern Ghana. A recurring theme was the importance of resilience and social cohesion as foundational pillars for development. Resilience, in its absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities, was identified as crucial for effectively navigating challenges such as climate change and resource scarcity.

The region's challenges were dissected, including climate variability, water scarcity, health and education disparities, financial exclusion, and youth migration. The discussion emphasised the need for targeted interventions in climate adaptation, health services, education access, financial inclusion, and youth empowerment. The unique challenges faced by different sectors, such as agriculture and entrepreneurship, were also acknowledged.

A series of panel discussions provided platforms for experts and stakeholders to share their perspectives. Dr. Michael Ayamga challenged the "northern development" concept and emphasised the need for clear indicators and definitions. Prof. David Millar highlighted the importance of local ownership, effective coordination, and administrative decentralisation. Mr. Hardi Tijani stressed the significance of reframing the northern development narrative as a national imperative. Ms. Janet Adama Mohammed underscored the importance of sustainable funding mechanisms and alignment with national frameworks.

These discussions culminated in key outcomes that lay the foundation for future action. The outcomes encompassed a holistic understanding of challenges, equitable resource allocation, collaboration, climate resilience, youth empowerment, effective data utilisation, accountability, unity amid diversity, and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These outcomes underscore the significance of community-driven development, resilience-building, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders.

The forum also highlighted the need for a paradigm shift emphasising community involvement, long-term planning, and the alignment of development efforts with SDGs. The importance of comprehensive data, regional identity, and effective oversight mechanisms were also discussed. The forum's open discussions further elucidated the challenges and opportunities, emphasising the role of shared responsibility among citizens and leaders.

In conclusion, the "Northern Ghana Development Forum Report" provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and potential solutions for achieving equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana. The shared perspectives, expert insights, and proposed recommendations offer a roadmap for policymakers, development practitioners, community leaders, and stakeholders to collaboratively navigate the complex journey of the region's development. By embracing resilience, social cohesion, and inclusive strategies, Northern Ghana has the potential to emerge as a resilient, prosperous, and united region, setting a course for sustainable growth and positive transformation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The regions of Northern Ghana have long been characterised by a unique blend of challenges and opportunities that have shaped their developmental trajectory. These regions, including the Northern, North-East, Savannah, Upper East, and Upper West, occupy a significant portion of Ghana's landmass and are home to a diverse array of cultures, traditions, and livelihoods. However, beneath this rich cultural tapestry lies a complex web of developmental disparities, economic vulnerabilities, and environmental risks that have posed persistent challenges to achieving equitable and balanced progress.

Historically, the northern regions have faced systemic inequalities in resource allocation, infrastructure development, and access to social services. This imbalance has contributed to a developmental lag compared to their southern counterparts. Moreover, the effects of climate change, erratic rainfall patterns, and environmental degradation have further compounded the challenges communities face in these regions. These factors collectively call for a nuanced understanding of the region's development landscape and the formulation of targeted strategies to address its unique needs. Recognising the significance of addressing these issues comprehensively and collaboratively, a forum was organised to serve as a platform for constructive dialogue and engagement. This forum aimed to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders, each offering their perspectives, experiences, and expertise to contribute to fostering equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana.

1.2. Objectives

The forum's objectives were multifold, seeking to address the complexities of development in Northern Ghana and lay the foundation for collaborative efforts towards positive transformation. The key objectives included:

1.2.1. Facilitating Informed Discussions

The forum provided a platform for informed discussions on the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for achieving equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana. Experts and stakeholders from various fields were invited to share their insights, experiences, and recommendations.

1.2.2. Exploring Key Themes

The forum sought to delve into key themes relevant to development in Northern Ghana. These themes included resilience building, social cohesion, climate adaptation, adaptation and agricultural productivity, youth empowerment, gender inclusion, infrastructure development, and effective project delivery.

1.2.3. Sharing Best Practises

By bringing together diverse voices and experiences, the forum aimed to facilitate the sharing of best practises, successful case studies, and lessons learned from both within and outside the region. This sharing of knowledge aimed to inspire innovative approaches to development.

1.2.4. Formulating Recommendations

Through panel discussions, open forums, and interactions, the forum aimed to generate concrete recommendations that could guide policymakers, development practitioners, traditional leaders, and other stakeholders in promoting equitable and balanced development.

1.2.5. Fostering Collaboration

Collaboration was a central objective of the forum. It aimed to foster partnerships and collaborations between government agencies, Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs), academic institutions, traditional leaders, and other stakeholders. Such collaborations were essential for pooling resources, expertise, coordination, and efforts towards sustainable development.

1.2.6. Empowering Local Communities

The forum sought to empower local communities by giving them a platform to voice their concerns, aspirations, and ideas. By including community members in the discussions, the forum aimed to ensure that development efforts aligned with the actual needs and priorities of the people.

1.2.7. Building Momentum for Action

Ultimately, the forum aimed to create momentum for action. It aimed to inspire participants to take the insights gained from the discussions and turn them into tangible initiatives, projects, and policies that contribute to the holistic development of Northern Ghana.

1.3. Participant Analysis

The Northern Ghana Development Forum brought together a diverse and dynamic group of individuals, collectively numbering 346 participants. This contingent encompassed a broad spectrum of backgrounds, expertise, and roles, contributing to the richness of discussions and the forum's overall effectiveness in addressing the region's development challenges.

Demographic Breakdown:

The forum attracted a total of 346 participants, comprising 269 males and 77 females. This gender distribution underscores the ongoing need for gender-inclusive strategies and policies within the realm of development.

Participant Profiles:

The participants were drawn from a range of sectors and roles, reflecting the holistic and collaborative approach of the forum:

Persons with Disability (PWDs): The forum demonstrated inclusivity by involving individuals with disabilities, recognizing their unique perspectives and challenges in the context of development.

Government Officials and Administrators:

- Commissioners
- District Coordination Directors (DCD)
- Chief Executives
- Municipal Chief Executives (MCE)
- District Chief Executives (DCE)
- District Assemblies (DA)
- Managers
- Acting Directors

The involvement of government representatives, administrators, and decision-makers underscores the significance of policy and governance in shaping the region's developmental trajectory.

Farmers and Processors: The participation of individuals from the agricultural and processing sectors underscores the pivotal role of agriculture in the region's economy. Their insights are

essential for formulating strategies that promote sustainable agricultural practices and enhance livelihoods.

Officers and National Security: The participation of officers and representatives from the national security sector highlights the forum's recognition of security's interplay with development. Their perspectives contribute to comprehensive and secure developmental strategies.

Imams and Missionaries: The presence of religious leaders reflects the forum's acknowledgment of the role of faith-based communities in shaping social values, cohesion, and development initiatives.

Academic Community:

- Dean
- Senior Lecturers
- Lecturers
- Students

The academic community's participation demonstrates the integration of research, education, and innovation in the process of fostering development solutions.

Media: The media's involvement underscores the forum's commitment to dissemination and public awareness. Their role in informing and shaping public discourse about development issues is crucial.

Collectively, this diverse range of participants from various sectors and roles contributed to a multifaceted dialogue that embraced a wide array of perspectives, experiences, and expertise. The inclusivity of participants with disabilities and the active involvement of representatives from government, agriculture, security, religious institutions, academia, and the media further enriched the forum's deliberations.

The participant analysis highlights the broad spectrum of voices that converged to address the complex challenges of equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana. It underscores the commitment to inclusivity, collaboration, and cross-sectoral dialogue as fundamental principles driving the forum's objectives

CHAPTER TWO

PROCEEDINGS

2.1. Introduction

This chapter opens with a detailed account of the proceedings of a significant forum focused on achieving equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana. The event brought together key stakeholders, government officials, development partners, and experts to deliberate on critical issues affecting the region's growth. The chapter provides insights into the welcome address by Hon. Shani Alhassan Shaibu, the Northern Regional Minister, where he underscored the importance of the forum and its theme, "Achieving Equitable Balanced Development Planning through Effective Project Delivery in Northern Ghana." The collaborative nature of the forum and its significance in exchanging information and establishing priorities for Northern Ghana's development are highlighted. The chapter also features remarks by Hon. David Annang, Vice Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), who emphasised the need for holistic and inclusive development, considering the challenges imposed by ecological zones and regional disparities. Ing. Nana Ato Arthur, Head of the Office of the Head of Local Government Service (OHLGS), further discussed the development challenges faced by Northern Ghana and the importance of coordinated efforts to address them. Hon. Daniel Botwe (MP), Minister for Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development (MLGDRD), delved into the role of the MLGDRD in promoting balanced development and emphasised the need for coordinated systems and policies to bridge development gaps.

The chapter also includes the keynote address by Prof. Ramatu Mahama Al-Hassan, a distinguished Professor of Agricultural Economics. Prof. Al-Hassan provided insightful perspectives on resilience and social cohesion as key drivers of development in Northern Ghana. She discussed challenges related to climate variability, health, education, financial inclusion, migration, and youth empowerment, offering comprehensive recommendations. Furthermore, Planner Samuel Passah, Director of Local Governance and Decentralisation at the MLGDRD, presented an overview of the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion (SoCo) Project, highlighting its objectives, components, and expected outcomes.

2.2. Summary of Addresses and Statements

2.2.1. Welcome Address by Hon. Shani Alhassan Shaibu, Northern Regional Minister



The forum commenced with a welcoming address delivered by Hon. Shani Alhassan Shaibu, the Northern Regional Minister. He expressed great pleasure as he stood before the audience, representing the Chiefs and People of the region.

Hon. Shaibu warmly welcomed all attendees, emphasising the significance of stakeholder engagement. He offered a special acknowledgement to Hon. Dan Kwaku Botwe, the Minister of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development (MLGDRD), as well as Ing. and Dr. Nana

Ato Arthur, the Head of the Local Government Service, for their presence and involvement.

The Northern Regional Minister articulated the purpose of the engagement, which was to foster discussions on critical development issues affecting the communities and regions. He highlighted the aim of generating ideas and reliable policy initiatives, with the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project (SoCo) serving as a case study for these deliberations.

He expressed his hope that the engagement would provide valuable guidance for the effective implementation of projects, particularly the (SoCo) project. The engagement theme, "Achieving Equitable Balanced Development Planning through Effective Project Delivery in Northern Ghana," was underscored as paramount for the region's development aspirations.

Hon. Shaibu shared his enthusiasm for hosting the first-ever Regional Stakeholder Engagement, a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development, and the National Development Planning Commission. This event was viewed as an opportunity to exchange information on regional development concerns and establish consensus on Northern Ghana's priorities.

Acknowledging the challenges faced by the region, including historical factors, infrastructure deficits, poverty, and limited resources, Hon. Shaibu acknowledged the past efforts of Governments, Development Partners (DPs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and Government Agencies in addressing these issues. He admitted that while progress had been made, challenges persisted, necessitating the need for this significant development forum.

The Minister looked forward to increased collaboration between relevant authorities and entities, including the MLGDRD, the NDPC, and the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) and Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs). This collaborative approach was seen as critical in ensuring that projects aligned with the region's expectations and positively impacted the lives of the residents.

The SoCo project was highlighted as a promising initiative, with potential investments in various areas such as infrastructure, social amenities, and conflict management. The capacity-building efforts under the SoCo project were acknowledged, and the importance of extending this training to all relevant staff was emphasised.

The Northern Regional Minister concluded his address by stressing the significance of collaboration, cooperation, and collective action in achieving effective and transparent project delivery. He thanked all attendees for their presence and thanked the organisers for facilitating this essential stakeholder engagement. His closing remarks resonated with hope, envisioning the forum's deliberations as a catalyst for transformative change, fostering equitable and balanced development through effective project delivery in Northern Ghana.

2.2.2. Chairman's Opening Remarks, Hon. David Annang, Vice Chairman, NDPC

The session commenced with Hon. David Annang, Vice Chairman of the NDPC, delivering his opening remarks. Hon. Annang expressed his privilege in addressing the gathering, particularly in light of the forum's focus on bridging development disparities. He conveyed the satisfaction of the NDPC in collaborating with various entities, including the MLGDRD and the Northern Development Authority (NDA).

The Vice Chairman underscored the importance of holistic and inclusive development in shaping the region's future. He highlighted the event's significance as a platform to foster collaboration, particularly concerning the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project (SoCo). He mentioned that the NDPC had previously organised National Development Forums (NDFs) and

expressed the Commission's commitment to instigating transformative change through this new platform.

Hon. Annang addressed the persistent imbalances between the northern and southern parts of Ghana and between rural and urban areas. He acknowledged that these challenges were compounded by the ecological zones, which had varying impacts on different communities.

The Vice Chairman mentioned an African initiative that offered expertise and financial support, specifically through programmes amounting to around 18 million dollars. He emphasised that these partnerships presented development opportunities, particularly through the SoCo project.

The SoCo project's objectives were highlighted, aiming to enhance understanding of the socioeconomic development landscape in northern Ghana. Hon. Annang expressed pleasure in convening this engagement with key stakeholders to deliberate on integrated and inclusive development. He conveyed greetings from the Chairman and the entire NDPC membership.

He shared that in 2020, the NDPC initiated the National Development Forums as a public education programme to engage the public on critical national issues. The Commission's decision to move the engagement into the regions marked a shift towards discussing local development concerns. The current forum, held in the Northern Region, was the inaugural event in this series and provided an opportunity to address the developmental challenges of the north.

Today's joint forum organised by the Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development and the NDPC aimed to highlight pressing development issues affecting the local economy. The Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project was a focal point for discussions and policy recommendations.

Hon. Annang acknowledged the longstanding concern about development disparities between the northern and southern regions. Despite efforts and allocated resources, economic activities and high-value production remained concentrated in the south. The north continued to lag in development across various sectors, reflecting rural-urban, subnational, and regional disparities and the associated multidimensional poverty. He emphasised the need for policy interventions to move the region from stagnation to resilience.

The Vice Chairman highlighted the challenges posed by the natural environment of Guinea Savannah, characterised by harsh climatic conditions and limited rainfall. These conditions led to migration from the north to the south for better opportunities. He mentioned that despite previous interventions by governments, development partners, and non-government organisations, a lack of coordination and fragmented implementation hindered their impact.

Hon. Annang detailed several recent initiatives in the Northern Regions, including the Northern Rural Growth Programme (NRGP), the Ghana Community-Based Rural Development Project (CBRDP), and Shea Nut Processing and Marketing Partnerships. These efforts aimed to enhance agricultural productivity, rural infrastructure, and economic empowerment.

He noted the African Development Bank's grant of \$80 million to support agricultural development in the north, aiming to improve productivity, increase farmer incomes, and enhance nutrition.

The Vice Chairman elucidated the primary objectives of the forum: initiating conversations on development challenges, offering policy recommendations, and leveraging the SoCo project to address climate change challenges. He stressed the importance of considering multiple dimensions

of sustainable development to measure progress. He underscored the NDPC's role in identifying key actions for development achievement.

Concluding his remarks, Hon. Annang expressed his confidence that the forum would foster strong connections between ecological governance, ecosystem resilience, and community resilience, ultimately contributing to comprehensive community investments for local development. He expressed his pride in being part of this dialogue and assumed the role of presiding over the proceedings.

2.2.3. Statement by Ing. Nana Ato Arthur, Head of Service, OHLGS



Ing. Nana Ato Arthur, the Head of the Office of the Head of Local Government Service (OHLGS), delivered a statement during the session. He began by extending compliments on behalf of the OHLGS management and staff. As the Head of Service, he expressed his pleasure in participating in the

forum and addressing pertinent issues related to the development of the five northern regions. He acknowledged the presence of dignitaries, including the Regional Minister and the UN Resident Coordinator.

Ing. Arthur conveyed his condolences to the Northern Regional Coordinating Council (NRCC) for losing the Municipal Coordinating Director (MCD) and Internal Auditor from the Saboba Municipal Assembly. He expressed his satisfaction in discussing critical topics that contribute to the development of the northern regions. He stated that the gathering demonstrated a collective commitment to enhance service delivery and improve lives in the sector.

Highlighting the aspiration for a better and more equitable society, Ing. Arthur discussed the forum's theme, "A Policy Thrust: Achieving Equitable and Balanced Development through Project Delivery in Northern Ghana." Referring to the Northern Ghana Human Development Report (NG-HDR) published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Ghana in 2021, he highlighted socioeconomic issues encompassing health, education, poverty, infrastructure gaps, governance, and environmental concerns.

Ing. Arthur noted that although there has been progress in the northern zone's development, additional efforts are required to achieve the SDGs, particularly SDG 1, which targets poverty eradication. He emphasised that the theme holds immense significance as it addresses the unique challenges and opportunities in northern Ghana, known for its rich cultural heritage and vast potential. He urged adopting a policy thrust to ensure equitable and balanced development, transforming lives in the region.

The Head of Service highlighted the growing concern for equity in socioeconomic development due to increasing disparities and their impacts on individuals. He acknowledged patterns of social exclusion, deep-seated poverty, and limited access to social services, emphasising the need for reflection to address these issues.

Ing. Arthur presented his thoughts on bridging development gaps to enhance project delivery. He stressed the importance of addressing diverse needs through participatory policymaking and local community involvement. He emphasised that projects should encompass social and economic

dimensions beyond mere infrastructure. He highlighted the necessity for robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure sustainable development. Collaboration and partnership among stakeholders, including government agencies, development organisations, the private sector, and local communities, were also pivotal for successful project implementation.

Capacity building was emphasised as an essential aspect to empower local communities for active participation in project delivery. Ing. Arthur stated that equipping communities with new skills and knowledge fosters ownership and sustainability of development initiatives.

Ing. Arthur affirmed the power of strategically planned and implemented projects to drive positive change and bridge development gaps. He pledged the support of OHLGS, RCCs, MMDAs, and the NDF towards implementing a developmental agenda that improves the socioeconomic lives of constituents in the region.

He emphasised that achieving equitable and balanced development in northern Ghana is attainable and called for collective efforts to achieve prosperity. He expressed his unwavering commitment to realising equitable and balanced development through effective, efficient, and sustainable project delivery.

2.2.4. Statement by Hon. Daniel Botwe (MP), Minister for Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development (MLGDRD)

Hon. Daniel Botwe, the Minister for the MLGDRD, delivered a statement during the session. He appreciated collaborating with the NDPC on this programme. He recounted an experience during the launch of the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion (SoCo) project in Bolgatanga, where he questioned why the situation remained unchanged despite numerous projects in northern Ghana. He highlighted his extensive tours across the region and the multitude of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) present.



He noted the significant number of NGOs in various districts: 18 in the Savannah Zone, 16 in the North East Zone, and 7 in the Northern Zone. He emphasised the importance of coordination and monitoring for the effective execution of plans, as organisations have Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mechanisms. Despite past efforts, he focused on the need to improve the quality of life for people. He underscored the significance of coordination in tracking projects' impact and identifying areas needing improvement.

The Minister highlighted the role of District Assemblies in exercising political and administrative authority, coordinating and harmonising development initiatives, and aligning NGOs' activities with assembly plans. He emphasised the necessity of coordinated efforts among NGOs, governments, and universities for effective tracking and improvement.

He expressed his excitement about being part of the Regional Development Forum and the importance of the collaboration between NDPC and MLGDRD. He noted the substantial attendance, demonstrating the collective desire for more development in the northern region. He

highlighted the forum's objective to engage stakeholders on key issues impacting development and resilience in northern Ghana, aiming to bridge the gap between the north and south.

The Minister pointed out the alignment between the forum's theme, "A Policy Thrust: Achieving Equitable and Balanced Development through Effective Project Delivery in Northern Ghana," and the mandate of MLGDRD. He emphasised the importance of equitable and balanced development and explained how the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) supports this goal.

He stressed the need to harmonise, integrate, and balance development through proper planning and programme design. He mentioned the importance of assessing progress and adopting an impact-oriented approach to development. He referred to an engagement with Development Partners that identified collaboration areas using the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion (SoCo) Project as a catalyst.

The Minister acknowledged the challenges posed by climatic conditions in the northern region, affecting livelihoods in agriculture and contributing to extreme weather events. He discussed the various development programmes and projects funded by the government and partners, including NGOs and CSOs. Despite these efforts, he observed that the impact on the citizenry remained unsatisfactory due to fragmentation and lack of coordination.

Hon. Botwe emphasised the need for integrated and coordinated systems to improve development interventions. He praised the SOCO Project for its emphasis on strengthening local institutions and involving vulnerable groups. He detailed the Project's approach and its impact on community-driven development.

He urged stakeholders to adopt an integrated and coordinated approach to development, harmonising efforts to ensure more effective outcomes. He highlighted the importance of mapping all interventions in the MMDAs and implementing a coordinated system. He underscored the need for regional cooperation and accountability among Chiefs, RCCs, and MMDAs for successful decentralisation and development.

The Minister expressed his hope for collaborative efforts to achieve equitable, balanced, and sustainable development, aligning with the SDGs and local governance principles.

2.2.5. Keynote Address by Prof. Ramatu Mahama Al-Hassan, Professor of Agricultural Economics



Prof. Ramatu Mahama Al-Hassan, a distinguished Professor of Agricultural Economics and a leading authority in development studies, delivered a comprehensive and insightful keynote address that shed light on the intricate web of challenges and opportunities surrounding equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana. Her extensive research and expertise in agricultural economics provided a robust foundation for addressing the complexities of the region's development landscape.

Resilience and Social Cohesion

Prof. Al-Hassan underscored the importance of resilience and social cohesion in steering Northern Ghana towards balanced and equitable development. She explained that resilience signifies the

capacity to endure and swiftly recover from adversities, which is a fundamental attribute for effectively navigating the region's developmental hurdles. The keynote address delved into the three crucial capacities of resilience—absorptive, adaptive, and transformative—as the essential building blocks for holistic resilience development.

Moreover, Prof. Al-Hassan provided an insightful exploration of social cohesion, emphasising its significance in fostering unity, trust, belonging, and upward mobility within societies. She highlighted that social cohesion represents an aspirational goal and is a pivotal means to achieve inclusive, equitable development by promoting active participation and harmonious coexistence among community members.

Exploring Regional Development Challenges

Prof. Al-Hassan's keynote address offered a comprehensive analysis of the formidable challenges undermining the progress of the local economy in Northern Ghana:

Climate Variability and Water Scarcity: Prof. Al-Hassan illuminated the region's uneven distribution of climatic hazards compared to its southern counterpart. The impacts of climate change were manifested in dwindling precipitation, escalating temperatures, and increased evaporation rates within the Volta Basin. These trends led to heightened risks to water availability, with recurring droughts, floods, rising temperatures, diminished rainfall, and unpredictable rainy seasons affecting the region's livelihoods.

Irrigation and Climate Adaptation: Prof. Al-Hassa emphasised the pivotal role of robust irrigation systems and climate adaptation strategies in bolstering the region's resilience. She acknowledged the prevalence of informal irrigation practises and the engagement of numerous smallholder farm households in irrigation practises. However, effective groundwater utilisation challenges hindered extraction and water quality improvements. Prof. Al-Hassan stressed the need for balanced water usage between agricultural and domestic needs to alleviate competition.

Health and Education Deprivations: Prof. Al-Hassan shed light on the pressing need to address health and education challenges impeding progress in the Northern Region. She highlighted the region's concerning health indicators, including high stunting prevalence among children under five, low childhood vaccination coverage, and elevated anaemia prevalence among tested children. Furthermore, she underscored the importance of improving primary healthcare services to strengthen the region's overall health infrastructure.

Education presented its own challenges, with the Northern Region facing issues such as inadequate early childhood education, a lack of foundational skills in reading and numeracy for many children, and high rates of out-of-school children, particularly in primary and lower secondary levels. Prof. Al-Hassan stressed the need to allocate resources to improve access to quality basic education, which forms the foundation for subsequent educational attainment.

Financial Inclusion and Digitalization: Prof. Al-Hassan spotlighted financial inclusion and digitalization as pivotal development drivers. She lauded the progress in expanding access to financial services across Ghana, including the Northern Region. However, she underscored the importance of fostering collaborative partnerships with the private sector and targeted investments in ICT infrastructure to expedite digitalization and financial inclusion. Prof. Al-Hassan emphasised that ensuring equitable access to digital resources is essential for bridging the digital divide.

Migration and Youth Inclusion: Migration emerged as both a challenge and a resilience-building strategy for Northern Ghana. Prof. Al-Hassan highlighted the importance of enhancing

production environments, living conditions, economic prospects, and security to mitigate factors driving migration. Additionally, she stressed the significance of youth inclusion, particularly for girls, in development efforts. Providing education, knowledge, and skill development opportunities for potential migrants was highlighted as a strategy to enhance the benefits of migration.

Gender and Youth Empowerment: Gender and youth inclusion were identified as paramount components of inclusive development. Prof. Al-Hassan underscored the significance of tailoring activities to align with the livelihood strategies of women and youth, prioritising their needs. Building capacities in negotiation, networking, and prioritisation were deemed essential. Furthermore, Prof. Al-Hassan called for the establishment of achievable quotas to ensure the active participation of women and youth in development programmes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In concluding her keynote address, Prof. Ramatu Mahama Al-Hassan emphasised the multifaceted nature of equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana. She reiterated that building resilience and nurturing social cohesion were integral to achieving sustained progress. Addressing challenges related to climate variability, health, education, financial inclusion, migration, and youth empowerment were critical imperatives for the region's advancement.

The recommendations emanating from the forum discussions encompassed a spectrum of strategies, ranging from infrastructure development to promote resilient communities, to water resource management enhancement, strengthening climate adaptation through irrigation and water harvesting, fortifying primary healthcare, improving education access and quality, fostering financial inclusion and digitalization, guiding smart migration strategies, and ensuring the meaningful inclusion of women and youth in development endeavours.

Prof. Ramatu Mahama Al-Hassan's keynote address was a compelling call to action, resonating with the significance of unity, resilience, and strategic intervention as cornerstones for the region's transformation. Her insights provided a valuable roadmap for policymakers, development practitioners, and stakeholders to navigate the complex terrain of Northern Ghana's development journey collaboratively.

2.2.6. Overview of the SoCo Project by Pln. Samuel Seth Passah, Director, Local Governance and Decentralisation, MLGDRD



Planner Samuel Passah, the Director of Local Governance and Decentralisation at the MLGDRD, presented an overview of the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion (SoCo) Project. He provided insight into the background and context of the project.

He explained that the Gulf of Guinea region referred to Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo. These countries were increasingly facing spillover of security and climate risks from the Sahel region,

resulting in heightened Fragilities, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) in their northern regions. The shared challenges across these countries emphasised the need for a more proactive regional solution to collectively address security and climate risks.

Planner Passah highlighted that northern Ghana also faced significant challenges, including the highest youth unemployment rate and poverty. This setting laid the foundation for the project's development objective: to "improve regional collaboration as well as the socioeconomic and climate resilience of border communities in the target northern regions of the Gulf of Guinea countries exposed to conflict and climate risk."

The project comprised several components, each geared towards specific outcomes:

S/n	Components	Outcomes
1.	Component 1 (USD\$ 112.5 million) - Investing in Community Resiliency and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community resilience Investments Local Economic Territorial Development Youth Engagement and Innovation Funds
2.	Component 2 (USD\$ 15 million)	Building foundation and capacity for inclusive and resilient communities (Various capacity-building activities)
3.	Component 3 (USD\$ 7.5 million)	Regional Collaboration Platform and Dialogue
4.	Component 4 (USD\$ 15 million)	Project Management
5.	Component 5 (USD\$ 0)	Contingent Emergency Response

Planner Passah shared insights into the project's scope, which encompassed six regions, 48 beneficiary MMDAs, 217 clusters, over 1,500 communities, 434 community facilitators, and 582 sub-projects. Specific criteria, including climate vulnerability, security risk exposure, poverty incidence, unemployment rate, and proximity to border areas, guided the selection of beneficiary regions, districts, and communities.

Mr. Passah presented a summary of sub-projects categorised by type for the project area for year one.

Summary of sub-projects

Project	Sub-Projects Type	Number
Connectivity	Roads	42
	Footbridges	5
	Street Lighting	7
Educational Facilities	School Blocks/Accommodation/Offices	66
Health Facilities	CHPS/OPD/Ward/Health Centre	55
WASH Facilities	Boreholes with Hand Pumps	152
	Mechanised Boreholes	71
	Small Town Water Systems	5
	Toilet Systems	14
Agricultural Facilities	Dam/Pond/Irrigation	5
	Agro Processing	4
Market Infrastructure	Market Structures	74
Others	Community Centre/Library/Youth Centre	31
	Urban Park/Fence Wall	22
	Supply/Goods	29

Mr. Passah then outlined the expected outcomes of the SoCo Project:

- **Increased Productivity and Job Creation:** Contributing to government job creation efforts by constructing and rehabilitating community assets.
- **Socioeconomic Impact:** Improved access to basic services and economic opportunities, enhanced inclusion, improved relationships between citizens and local governments, and increased capacity for inclusive local development.
- **Youth-focused Impact:** Reducing youth exposure to extremist activities through involvement in community investment activities, capacity building, skills development, and employability opportunities.
- **Local Economic Development:** Boosting local economic development through market infrastructure rehabilitation, providing agricultural assets, and benefiting around 11,250 farmers.
- **Environmental Impact:** Contributing to climate resilience by investing in climate-resilient infrastructure.
- **Gender Impact:** Increasing female participation in agricultural activities and community decision-making.
- **Regional Impact:** Enhancing cross-border trade, information sharing, and coordination to prevent and minimise conflict spillovers and build resilience to climate change and risks.

CHAPTER THREE

PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND OPEN FORUM

3.1. Introduction

In pursuing equitable and balanced development, dialogue and exchange of perspectives are pivotal in shaping effective strategies. The heart of this chapter revolves around panel discussions and open forums that revolve around achieving equitable and balanced development through effective project delivery in Northern Ghana. These discussions are essential in fostering a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and collaborative efforts required to drive sustainable development in the region.

The conversations were led by experts, academics, practitioners, and community leaders who brought their diverse insights to the forefront. Guided by moderators who facilitated meaningful interactions, the discussions encompassed a wide range of topics crucial to the development landscape of Northern Ghana. This chapter provides a glimpse into these interactions' rich tapestry of perspectives, ideas, and recommendations.

Through these panel discussions and open forums, participants delved into critical aspects such as the definition and measurement of "northern development," the role of various stakeholders, including political leaders, NGOs, and traditional authorities, the importance of grassroots entrepreneurship and resource utilisation, the significance of regional identity, and the challenges and potential solutions related to climate change, governance, and agriculture.

As the discussions unfolded, it became evident that achieving equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana requires resource allocation, a paradigm shift in attitudes, collaborative frameworks, and the acknowledgement of the region's unique needs and strengths. The insights shared by panellists and participants shed light on the complexities of development, emphasising the need for concerted efforts, coordinated partnerships, and proactive interventions.

This chapter captures the essence of these dialogues, offering a mosaic of viewpoints that collectively contribute to the overarching goal of fostering sustainable and inclusive development in Northern Ghana. From historical perspectives to contemporary challenges, from individual experiences to collective aspirations, these discussions provide a comprehensive foundation for the journey towards equitable and balanced development.

The subsequent sections delved into the key themes explored during the panel discussions and open forums, offering a deeper understanding of the nuanced perspectives that emerged and the potential pathways to realising the development vision for Northern Ghana.

3.2. First Panel Discussions and Open Forum

The panel discussions during this event segment focused on achieving equitable and balanced development through effective project delivery in Northern Ghana. Moderated by Dr. Afisah Jaja, this session brought together esteemed individuals from various fields, each sharing their unique perspectives and experiences.

1. Dr. Michael Ayamga, Senior Lecturer, Department of Applied Economics, UDS

Dr. Michael Ayamga, a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Applied Economics, enthusiastically engaged with the topic, highlighting his experience as a longstanding development advocate. He questioned the concept of "northern development," shedding light on the lack of clear and

universally accepted indicators to define and measure such a complex endeavour. As an economist, he mentioned that traditional metrics like GDP have limitations in capturing the multifaceted nature of development. According to him, this lack of a precise definition makes it difficult to discern when a satisfactory level of development has been achieved in the northern regions.

Dr. Ayamga also raised concerns about the role of political manifestos and the NDPC in driving development efforts. He suggested that manifestos delve deeper into unpacking a comprehensive national development plan rather than being limited to a mere electoral tool. He advocated for concepts such as equity, inclusivity, social justice, and equal access to opportunities, suggesting that the involvement of NGOs could play a pivotal role in promoting these values.

One of his key arguments revolved around the issue of resource distribution. Dr. Ayamga argued that the north has historically been subjected to imbalanced resource allocation, impeding its growth and development. He provocatively proposed that the northern regions should receive more resources than the relatively advanced southern regions. He criticised favouring resource-rich areas, which he believed perpetuated colonial-era tendencies and might further perpetuate regional disparities.

As a historical example, Dr. Ayamga brought up the introduction of free education policies by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in the northern regions to bridge the developmental gap between the north and south, reinforcing his perspective on the necessity for proactive interventions to promote equitable development.

2. Prof. David Millar, Professor of Agriculture, Natural Resource Management and Indigenous Knowledge

Prof. David Millar, a distinguished expert in Agriculture, Natural Resource Management, and Indigenous Knowledge, expressed his genuine interest in the topic and his extensive involvement in various development planning initiatives in the northern regions. He underscored his commitment to the region's development by contributing to efforts such as Ghana @ 40, the NDPC's long-term plan, the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) plan, and Ghana Beyond Aid.

Prof. Millar shared his insights into the unique challenges facing northern Ghana's development trajectory. He acknowledged the existence of a typical development programme in the north, which he felt had been insufficiently supported. Reflecting on his past experiences, he mentioned an effort to develop the grass economy, which was met with limited responsiveness from local stakeholders and a lack of support from the region.

He emphasised the need for regional ownership and self-sufficiency in development endeavours. Prof. Millar proposed that the northern regions take the lead in their development before seeking external assistance. He believed regional leadership should drive development through specific and localised demands.

Prof. Millar's thoughts extended to the administrative structure of development coordination. He advocated for integrating unit committees and CSOs to enhance accountability and measurement of developmental outcomes. He recognised the significance of district assemblies as the foundation of development efforts, which should be further decentralised to bolster their effectiveness.

Addressing the critical issue of climate change, Prof. Millar stressed the importance of addressing bushfires to effectively tackle climate variability, reflecting the interconnectedness of environmental factors with broader development objectives.

3. Mr. Hardi Tijani, Executive Director, Regional Advisory Information and Network Systems (RAINS), Tamale

Mr. Hardi Tijani, the Executive Director of Regional Advisory Information and Network Systems (RAINS), a prominent development organisation, voiced his perspective on the forum's importance due to its gathering of crucial stakeholders. He acknowledged the presence of political leaders, indicating the significance of their engagement in the discourse.

Regarding equitable development, Mr. Tijani underscored that it should be framed not as a local issue limited to northern leaders and authorities but as a national imperative. He found it alarming to consider the extent of deprivation in the region. He believed that equitable access to social services was paramount. To achieve this, he proposed reframing and remodelling the narrative around development in the northern regions.

Mr. Tijani recognised NGOs' notable contributions to development while expecting state agencies to facilitate coordination among these organisations. He pointed out instances where district-level activities were coordinated, emphasising the need for collaborative approaches.

Climate change emerged as another significant aspect of his discussion. Mr. Tijani observed that existing attempts to distil climate change-related information into local languages were insufficient to meet the needs of farmers. He urged a deeper understanding of climate change-related matters at the community level while integrating indigenous knowledge and contextual differences into resilience-building efforts.

4. Ms. Janet Adama Mohammed, West Africa Programme Director, Conciliation Resources

Ms. Janet Adama Mohammed, the West Africa Programme Director at Conciliation Resources, shared her extensive experience supporting communities across Ghana. Her commitment to building resilience and fostering positive change in people's lives drove her engagement with the forum.

Ms. Mohammed drew attention to the financial discrepancies between NGOs in Ghana's northern and southern parts. She highlighted the need for national support to sustain development initiatives, underscoring the importance of human capacity for effective development delivery.

Delays in accessing resources and budgets emerged as a critical challenge affecting government agencies and NGOs. Ms. Mohammed emphasised that while NGOs often managed to secure resources, the government's presence and support were not always readily available. Technical assistance and conditionalities from donors and financiers were identified as additional hindrances to smooth development implementation.

The complexities of delivering development in the northern regions compared to other parts of Ghana were noted, and she called for establishing oversight structures to ensure effective NGO operations. Collaboration and alignment of NGO activities with local plans were key considerations.

3.2.1. Open Discussions, Led by the Main Moderator

During the open discussions led by the main moderator, a diverse range of perspectives and concerns were raised by participants, shedding light on various challenges and opportunities in achieving equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana.



- **Low-Hanging Developmental Activities by the State:** The conversation began by acknowledging the presence of "low-hanging fruit" in terms of developmental activities that the state could initiate. Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), for example, was highlighted as an avenue through which development could be facilitated. The sentiment was that these opportunities need to be explored and harnessed effectively.
- **Shared Responsibility of Citizens and Leaders:** A crucial point was raised about shared responsibility among citizens and leaders. It was recognised that, despite resource allocations to the north, the attitudes of both citizens and leaders needed improvement. Participants emphasised that the lack of impact wasn't solely due to resource constraints but also to attitudes hindering progress.
- **Entrepreneurship and Resource Utilisation:** Entrepreneurship emerged as a significant factor driving development. While academia and NGOs were acknowledged for their contributions, the importance of fostering entrepreneurship was stressed. The example of soybean export bans was cited as an illustration of untapped opportunities. It was noted that local processors could benefit from raw materials, but a lack of resources led to missed economic potential and a drain on foreign exchange for the government.
- **Regional Identity and Development Focus:** The discussion highlighted the need for a collective shift in focus towards the development of the northern region. The sentiment of regional pride was strong, with participants emphasising that, as northerners, developing

their region should be a priority. It was acknowledged that even as development challenges persist in the south, the northern region should take ownership of its growth trajectory.

- **Harnessing Research and Academic Output:** The academic community's role in development was addressed, particularly concerning research reports produced by institutions like the University for Development Studies (UDS). Participants questioned how research findings were practically utilised and whether they were effectively communicated to local assemblies and communities to drive actionable change.
- **Democratic Governance and Leadership:** The cyclical nature of democratic governance was discussed, particularly the practise of electing leaders every four years. Concerns were voiced about the efficacy of this system and the need for consistent, long-term planning that transcends electoral cycles. The role of the NDPC in shaping and guiding these plans was emphasised.
- **Inclusivity and Unity Amid Diversity:** The diversity of the northern region, with its multicultural tribes, was highlighted as a potential strength. Participants questioned how this diversity could be harnessed to collectively contribute to development, stressing the importance of unity and mutual understanding across communities.
- **Attitude Change and Resolving Differences:** The need for an attitudinal shift was emphasised, particularly in internal disputes and conflicts. It was noted that infighting and discrimination based on community origins were detrimental to development efforts. The importance of fostering an environment that values expertise and collaboration was underscored.
- **Prioritising Agricultural Sector:** The concerns of vegetable farmers regarding irrigation were brought to the forefront. It was noted that vegetable growers often felt left out of development planning discussions. Participants stressed the importance of prioritising the agricultural sector, especially vegetable cultivation, as it plays a significant role in local livelihoods and the overall economy.

The open discussions provided a platform for diverse voices to contribute their insights and ideas, highlighting the complexity of achieving equitable and balanced development and the multiplicity of factors that must be considered. It underscored the need for collective action, attitudinal shifts, and effective collaboration among all stakeholders for sustainable development in Northern Ghana.

3.3. Second Panel Discussions and Open Forum

The second-panel discussion in this segment focused on strengthening partnerships and building foundations for effective project delivery in Northern Ghana. Moderated by Ms. Martina Bugre, a respected Broadcast Journalist from the Multimedia Group in Tamale, this session brought together esteemed panellists representing various sectors who shared insights and experiences on how collaboration and coordination can enhance development effectiveness in the region.



Left to right: Mr. Ibrahim-Tanko Amidu, Executive Director, STAR-Ghana; Mr. Charles Abani, UN-Resident Coordinator, United Nations in Ghana; Ms. Wedad Sayibu, Development Practitioner and Director, School for Life; Sagnar Naa Ambassador Yakubu Abudulai, Paramount Chief, Sagnarigu Traditional Area, Northern Region; and Ms. Martina Bugre, Broadcast Journalist, Multimedia Group, Tamale.

1. Sagnar Naa Ambassador Yakubu Abudulai, Paramount Chief, Sagnarigu Traditional Area, Northern Region

Sagnar Naa Ambassador Yakubu Abudulai, a Paramount Chief of the Sagnarigu Traditional Area, brought a traditional leader's perspective to the panel. He highlighted the significance of win-win situations in partnerships, particularly with external partners bringing their resources. Drawing parallels with historical colonial authorities, he emphasised the potential for collaboration between partners who share resonating objectives and development needs.

Sagnar Naa Abudulai stressed the importance of recognising the complementary nature of NGOs and state agencies in addressing development challenges. He advocated for timely responsiveness from government agencies to the needs of NGOs, fostering collaboration that could yield impactful results. Central to his discussion was the notion of accountability, both on the part of NGOs and state agencies. He raised questions about benchmarks and aligning NGOs' efforts with broader developmental targets.

Traditional leaders' role in accountability emerged as another critical topic. Sagnar Naa Abudulai acknowledged challenges where traditional leaders were unaware of certain projects, creating obstacles to holding parties accountable. Effective communication emerged as a central theme, with the chief highlighting the need for improved information dissemination, especially regarding the involvement of CSOs.

He further discussed the pivotal contribution of traditional leaders to development through their role as custodians of the land, promoting mediation, peace, and cooperation between police and communities.

2. Mr. Charles Abani, UN-Resident Coordinator, United Nations in Ghana

Mr. Charles Abani, the UN Resident Coordinator representing the United Nations in Ghana, brought a global perspective to the conversation. He emphasised the importance of multiple partnerships for success, particularly in light of limited government resources. He acknowledged the potential for duplication and resource waste when actors operate independently.

Mr. Abani advocated for coordinated efforts to ensure the effective flow of resources and accountability in development initiatives. He highlighted the need for collaboration between government institutions, NGOs, and CSOs, stressing the importance of partnerships that enhance ground-level implementation and monitoring.

Mr. Abani discussed the significance of aligning external support with national frameworks to address sustainability challenges. He emphasised the role of community ownership in project execution, citing the pivotal role of beneficiaries in ensuring sustained implementation and long-term impact.

The need for comprehensive data emerged as a key point for effective coordination among NGOs, CSOs, and relevant government bodies.

3. Mr. Ibrahim-Tanko Amidu, Executive Director, STAR-Ghana

Mr. Ibrahim-Tanko Amidu, the Executive Director of STAR-Ghana, a renowned development organisation, focused on the framework and dynamics of partnerships. He highlighted the importance of understanding the nature of relationships between communities, district assemblies, and DPs. He emphasised the need to consider various forms of partnerships to drive development effectively.

Mr. Amidu critiqued the "start-and-go" approach to development, advocating for long-term vision and planning, as exemplified by successful countries like Japan and Europe. He discussed the challenges of situational coordination (SoCo), suggesting the need for partnerships that align with existing programmes and foster learning and integration into planning and policies.

He emphasised the crucial role of information dissemination for accountability, underscoring the importance of mutual accountability that extends from the national level to communities. Mr. Amidu stressed the need for accountability mechanisms that enable feedback from the community to the district and national levels.

4. Ms. Wedad Sayibu, Development Practitioner and Director, School for Life

Ms. Wedad Sayibu, a respected Development Practitioner and Director of School for Life provided insights into partnership coordination and community engagement. She discussed the responsibilities of various actors in coordination and the importance of assigning clear roles. Ms. Sayibu emphasised that government agencies should lead coordination through district assemblies.

At the same time, sector ministers should oversee and empower partnerships at the zonal and national levels.

She stressed the importance of community consultation in identifying needs and engaging beneficiaries. Ms. Sayibu discussed the significance of community ownership, where the attitude and involvement of beneficiaries play a vital role in sustained implementation and success. She underscored the need for a mutual accountability basis to ensure effective collaboration.

Ms. Sayibu concluded by advocating for frameworks that facilitate community participation and contributions to projects, ensuring a sense of responsibility and involvement.

CHAPTER FOUR

CLOSING SESSION

4.1. Introduction

The forum's closing session provided an opportunity to reflect on the discussions held during the event and draw conclusions that could guide future actions and collaborations for effective development in Northern Ghana.

4.2. Summary of Proceedings by Dr. Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa, Director-General, NDPC



Dr. Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa, the Director-General of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), delivered a comprehensive summary of the discussions and insights gained throughout the forum. His summary touched upon key themes and recommendations that emerged during the various panel discussions:

- 1. Planning and prioritisation:** Dr. Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa emphasised the importance of effective planning to navigate the challenges of limited resources. A well-defined plan aligned with a long-term vision ensures responsive decision-making and resource allocation.
- 2. Policy and Focus:** Dr. Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa stressed that policy and planning must guide the focus of development efforts. Districts have made notable improvements, aligning their initiatives with larger developmental policies and plans.
- 3. Institutional Partnerships:** The Director-General highlighted the significance of building partnerships and relations among key actors. Well-defined roles for stakeholders, including NGOs, district assemblies, and Development Partners, contribute to streamlined collaboration and synergy.
- 4. Articulation and Information Sharing:** Effective communication and information sharing among various actors, including NGOs and district assemblies, are crucial for successful partnerships and collaboration.
- 5. Capacity Building:** The Director-General illuminated the significance of enhancing the capacities of NGOs and the private sector. A well-informed private sector is empowered to make strategic investments, thus fuelling sustainable development. Concurrently, NGOs need the capacity to actively engage with district assemblies to ensure that their interventions resonate and contribute positively.

6. **Resource Mobilisation:** Dr. Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa highlighted the imperative of diversifying resource mobilisation efforts. Drawing from local sources and the private sector can offer a stable foundation for funding developmental initiatives.
7. **Harmonised Implementation:** The timing and harmonisation of activities by NGOs, district assemblies, and DPs are vital for successful implementation. Missing timing can disrupt the overall process.
8. **Sequencing:** Dr. Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa noted the significance of proper sequencing, where activities are interconnected and build upon each other, contributing to a holistic approach to development.
9. **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning:** A cornerstone of accountable development, robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning mechanisms were spotlighted. These mechanisms enable stakeholders to assess progress, derive valuable insights, and fine-tune strategies for optimal impact.
10. **Legitimacy and Inclusion:** The Director-General concluded by underlining the logic of development, which relies on legitimacy and inclusion. Ensuring all stakeholders are brought on board fosters ownership and commitment to development goals.

The closing session marked a thoughtful conclusion to the forum, capturing the core themes and recommendations from the insightful discussions. The summary by Dr. Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa provided a roadmap for future collaborative efforts emphasising the importance of partnership, planning, accountability, and inclusive development strategies for Northern Ghana's progress.

4.3. Chairman's Concluding Remarks, Hon. David Annang, Vice Chairman, NDPC

In his closing remarks, Hon. David Annang, Vice Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), encapsulated the essence of the forum's discussions and emphasised the collective responsibility that underpins the path towards effective development in Northern Ghana. His remarks resonated with the sentiments shared by panellists and participants alike, highlighting the following key points:

Collective Responsibility and Ownership: Hon. David Annang reflected on a poignant statement made by one of the panel discussants—that the challenges faced by the Northern region are not isolated to its people alone but concern everyone. He underscored the need for beneficiaries to actively demonstrate ownership of the developmental processes. The Vice Chairman eloquently conveyed that the Northern Ghana region's destinies are intertwined with its people's actions, underscoring the importance of embracing a sense of shared responsibility.

Breaking Free from Historical Shackles: Acknowledging the historical legacy that has often shaped the region's development trajectory, Hon. David Annang echoed the sentiment that Northern Ghana must emancipate itself from the shadows of its colonial past. He advocated for a transformative shift and a collective determination to move beyond historical constraints and chart a course towards a brighter future. This sentiment encapsulates the theme of agency and forward-looking determination.

Unity and Collaborative Efforts: Highlighting the active participation of various NGOs, development partners, and the government in supporting the development initiatives of the Northern region, the Vice Chair emphasised the importance of collaborative unity. The call to

"hold the fort together" resonated as a clarion call for a united front. Hon. David Annan recognised the amalgamation of efforts as pivotal in surmounting challenges and realising developmental goals.

Community Engagement and Ownership: Reinforcing the theme of ownership, Hon. David Annang echoed the notion that engagement with communities is crucial to nurturing a sense of ownership. He urged NGOs to secure the buy-in of the local populace, ensuring that the people become active stakeholders in the developmental processes. This community engagement and participation concept emerges as a linchpin to sustainable and effective development.

The Chairman's concluding remarks encapsulated the overarching narrative of the forum and an unequivocal call for shared ownership, collaborative unity, and an empowered outlook that transcends historical boundaries. As the Vice Chairman of NDPC, Hon. David Annang's words echoed as a rallying cry to embrace the future with collective determination, solidarity, and an unwavering commitment to realising the developmental aspirations of Northern Ghana.

4.4. Vote of Thanks/Closing, Mr. Alhassan Issahaku, Chief Director, Northern Regional Coordinating Council

Mr. Alhassan Issahaku, Chief Director of the Northern Regional Coordinating Council, concluded the event with a heartfelt expression of gratitude, extending his appreciation to all participants who had dedicated their time and energy to the forum. He offered a special acknowledgement to PWDs for their invaluable presence and contributions throughout the proceedings. Mr. Issahaku's closing remarks resonated with a spirit of gratitude, commitment, and hope, encapsulating the following key points:

Acknowledgement of Participants: Mr. Issahaku expressed sincere gratitude to all those who participated in the forum, recognising attendees' dedication and active engagement. He acknowledged that the event's success was attributed to the collective efforts of diverse individuals who shared their insights, experiences, and perspectives.

Inclusivity and Special Recognition: The Chief Director offered a special commendation to PWDs who actively participated in the forum. This gesture highlighted the importance of inclusivity and the value of diverse voices in shaping development discussions. By recognising PWDs' contributions, Mr. Issahaku underscored the principle of leaving no one behind in the developmental journey.

A Call to Action: As he concluded, Mr. Alhassan Issahaku hoped that the forum's deliberations would not be confined to mere discussions. He voiced a collective desire for the outcomes to transcend the boundaries of a talk show and manifest as tangible actions and implementations on the ground. This sentiment underscored the practical nature of the forum's objectives—to catalyse real change and progress in the development landscape of Northern Ghana.

Gratitude and Commitment: The closing remarks encapsulated a deep gratitude for the contributions of all participants, organisers, and collaborators. Moreover, Mr. Issahaku's words echoed a shared commitment to turning the discussions into transformative actions. The sense of collective responsibility and shared vision for Northern Ghana's development journey was palpable.

Mr. Alhassan Issahaku's closing address expressed gratitude for the efforts invested. It radiated a sense of determination to move forward with purpose. As Chief Director of the Northern Regional Coordinating Council, his words embodied the desire for the forum's impact to extend beyond its physical bounds and instigate meaningful change in the region.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINAL SESSION

5.1. Introduction

As we conclude the Northern Ghana Development Forum's enlightening journey, this chapter unveils the invaluable outcomes distilled from the profound dialogues and exchanges that reverberated throughout the event. The forum, a platform that united stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, catalysed enlightening conversations, shared insights, and collective endeavours to sculpt a narrative of equitable and harmonious development in Northern Ghana. Within the embrace of these outcomes lies the quintessence of the forum's mission, illuminating the intricacies of challenges unveiled, prospects discerned, and actionable recommendations that surfaced to navigate a sustainable developmental trajectory. In unity, these outcomes project the symphony of collaboration and the potential for transformative progress, resonating across the tapestry of Northern Ghana's journey towards a brighter future.

5.2. Key Outcomes Regional Development Forum

This final chapter presents the key outcomes from the deliberations and discussions that transpired during the Northern Ghana Development Forum. The forum served as a platform for stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to engage in thoughtful conversations, share valuable insights, and collectively shape the discourse surrounding equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana. These outcomes capture the essence of the forum's objectives, shedding light on the challenges, opportunities, and actionable recommendations for charting a sustainable development path for the region.

- 1. Shared Understanding of Development Challenges:** The forum facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by Northern Ghana, ranging from climate variability and water scarcity to health and education disparities and from financial inclusion gaps to youth migration and gender inequality.
- 2. Resilience and Social Cohesion as Foundations:** Resilience and social cohesion emerged as fundamental pillars for steering Northern Ghana's development trajectory. The importance of building absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities for resilience was underscored, along with fostering unity, trust, belonging, and upward mobility through social cohesion.
- 3. Importance of Equitable Resource Distribution:** The discussions highlighted historical imbalances in resource allocation, with a call for equitable distribution to overcome developmental disparities. The need to prioritise resource allocation based on the region's developmental needs rather than resource-rich areas was emphasised.
- 4. Collaboration and Partnership:** The forum stressed the significance of collaboration and partnership among diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, traditional leaders, academia, and communities. These partnerships were essential for pooling resources, expertise, and efforts to achieve effective and sustainable development outcomes.
- 5. Community-Centric Approach:** The forum advocated for a community-driven approach to development, recognising the pivotal role of local communities in identifying needs, incorporating local knowledge, driving initiatives, and ensuring sustained impact. This shift

empowers communities as active contributors to their development rather than passive beneficiaries.

6. **Climate Resilience and Adaptation:** Climate change and its impacts were considered crucial challenges. The discussions underscored the importance of climate resilience strategies, including effective irrigation systems, to enhance the region's capacity to withstand climate-related adversities.
7. **Youth Empowerment and Inclusion:** Youth empowerment emerged as a critical focus area, emphasising providing education, skill development, and economic opportunities to mitigate youth migration and promote active involvement in development initiatives.
8. **Enhanced Data Utilisation:** The forum recognised the need for comprehensive data and evidence-based decision-making. It highlighted the importance of effectively utilising research outputs, academic expertise, and local knowledge to drive informed policy actions.
9. **Accountability and Oversight Mechanisms:** A recurring theme was the necessity for accountability across all levels, from government agencies and NGOs to traditional leaders and community members. Establishing oversight structures and mechanisms to track progress and ensure transparency was emphasised.
10. **Unity and Regional Identity:** The discussion emphasised the importance of unity and a shared sense of regional identity to drive development efforts. Overcoming internal disputes and promoting collaboration between different tribes and communities emerged as vital for cohesive progress.
11. **Long-Term Vision and Planning:** The need for long-term development planning that transcends electoral cycles was highlighted. The role of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) in shaping comprehensive plans and policies was emphasised.
12. **Resource Mobilisation and Management:** Efficient resource mobilisation, allocation, and management were essential for translating policy actions into tangible outcomes. The discussion recognised the importance of financial prudence and strategic resource utilisation.
13. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Alignment:** The forum underscored the importance of aligning development efforts with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure a holistic and globally resonant approach to development.

These key outcomes collectively present a roadmap for Northern Ghana's journey towards equitable and balanced development. They encapsulate the forum's shared insights, collective vision, and actionable recommendations, highlighting the transformative potential of collaborative efforts and strategic interventions.

5.3. Policy Actions and Recommendations

The final session of the forum culminated in a comprehensive compilation of policy actions and recommendations drawn from the discussions, insights, and experiences shared throughout the event. These policy actions and recommendations were meticulously crafted to serve as a guiding

framework for stakeholders, policymakers, development practitioners, and traditional leaders working towards equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana.

5.3.1. Climate Resilience and Adaptation

Recognising the pressing challenges posed by climate variability and environmental risks, the forum underscored the need for proactive climate resilience and adaptation strategies. It recommended the integration of climate-sensitive agricultural practises, the establishment of comprehensive early warning systems, and the promotion of sustainable land management techniques. Stakeholders were called upon to collaborate on developing and implementing localised climate adaptation plans that account for each community's vulnerabilities and strengths.

5.3.2. Social Cohesion and Inclusivity

Social cohesion emerged as pivotal in fostering unity, trust, and inclusivity within communities. The forum recommended implementing programmes that promote intercultural dialogue, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Traditional leaders were encouraged to play a central role in building bridges across diverse communities. Moreover, the participants emphasised the importance of mainstreaming gender equality and youth inclusion across all developmental initiatives to ensure equitable opportunities for all members of society.

5.3.3. Infrastructure Development and Access to Services

Access to basic infrastructure and services was identified as a fundamental prerequisite for balanced development. The forum recommended strategic investments in road networks, water supply systems, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and market infrastructure. It called for prioritising rural and underserved areas to bridge the developmental gap between urban and rural regions. Stakeholders were urged to explore innovative financing mechanisms to expedite infrastructure development.

5.3.4. Collaborative Partnerships and Coordination

Collaboration emerged as a recurring theme, and the forum highlighted the significance of effective partnerships among government agencies, NGOs, traditional leaders, and local communities. It recommended the establishment of clear coordination mechanisms, data-sharing platforms, and joint planning processes. Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of involving all relevant stakeholders in decision-making processes to ensure holistic and integrated development interventions.

5.3.5. Youth Empowerment and Skill Development

Youth engagement was identified as pivotal for both economic growth and social stability. The forum recommended the creation of youth-focused initiatives that prioritise skill development, vocational training, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Stakeholders were encouraged to support innovative projects that harness the energy and potential of young people, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the region at large.

5.3.6. Strengthening Local Governance and Traditional Leadership

The forum recognised the crucial role of local governance structures and traditional leadership in driving development. It recommended strengthening district assemblies, enhancing their capacity for resource allocation and implementation oversight. Additionally, the forum emphasised the need for traditional leaders to actively shape developmental priorities, resolve conflict, and preserve cultural heritage.

5.3.7. Data-Driven Decision-Making and Monitoring

Informed decision-making relies on accurate and up-to-date data. The forum emphasised the importance of data collection, analysis, and utilisation in driving evidence-based policies. It recommended establishing data collection systems encompassing socioeconomic indicators, climate-related data, and community feedback. These data-driven mechanisms would enable stakeholders to monitor progress, identify gaps, and make informed adjustments to development strategies.

5.4. Conclusion

The forum's conclusion marked a significant moment of reflection and consolidation, where the amalgamation of diverse perspectives, knowledge, and experiences converged into a unified vision for equitable and balanced development in Northern Ghana. Throughout the event, stakeholders, experts, practitioners, traditional leaders, and community members came together to dissect the complex challenges and opportunities that shape the region's developmental landscape.

The resonance of the forum's discussions lay in the realisation that the path to meaningful progress in Northern Ghana is not a solitary journey but a collaborative endeavour that requires the concerted efforts of a myriad of actors. As the discussions unfolded, the forum uncovered the intricate webs of hindrances that obstruct development and the seeds of transformation that can sprout from collaborative action.

The recommendations and policy actions formulated during the final session encapsulated the distilled wisdom of the forum's discourse. They provided a blueprint to navigate Northern Ghana's multifaceted challenges, drawing from the insights shared by panellists, participants, and thought leaders. The call to enhance climate resilience, cultivate social cohesion, empower youth, invest in infrastructure, fortify partnerships, and utilise data for informed decision-making reverberated as the cornerstones of this transformative roadmap.

Amid this collective wisdom, a clear theme emerged: the importance of placing the community at the centre of development. The forum underlined that the aspirations and needs of the people are the true foundation upon which sustainable development can be recognised in local communities' potential to be beneficiaries and active drivers of change. This shift towards community-driven initiatives acknowledges these communities' inherent expertise and knowledge, ensuring that solutions are rooted in the local context and resonate with the lives they seek to improve.

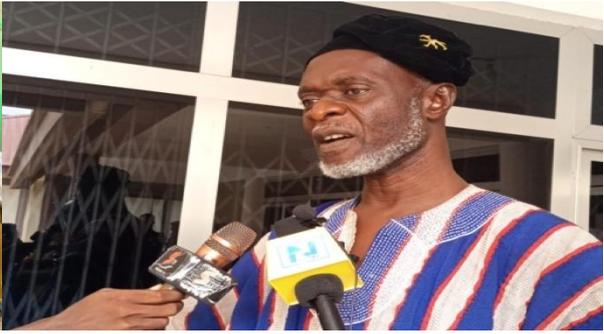
Equally vital to this equation is the fostering of partnerships that transcend boundaries and sectors. The forum illuminated the power of collaboration among governments, NGOs, traditional leaders, academia, and various stakeholders. These partnerships amplify resources, insights, and capacities, creating a multiplier effect that propels development efforts forward. By embracing a holistic approach that integrates different perspectives, strengths, and expertise, the forum emphasised the potential to magnify impact and achieve sustained change.

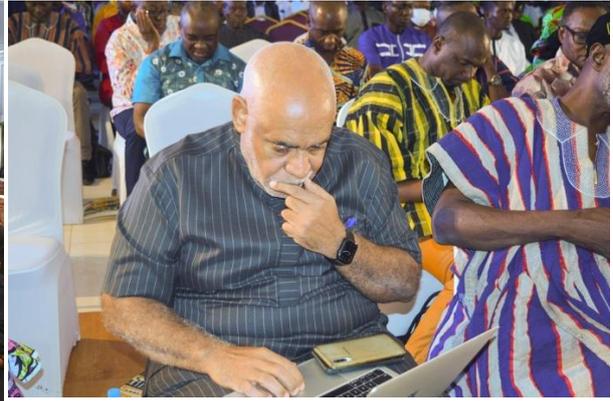
As the forum drew close, participants departed, armed with a shared commitment and a renewed sense of purpose. The insights shared, connections forged, and commitments made during the event set the stage for the next phase of action. The forum's legacy lies in the documented policy actions and recommendations and the collective determination to translate these words into tangible outcomes.

The forum's conclusion was not an endpoint but a catalyst for a new beginning. In this era, the lessons learned, the challenges acknowledged, and the aspirations kindled propelled Northern Ghana towards an equitable, balanced, and sustainable development trajectory. As stakeholders

continue to collaborate, innovate, and champion the cause of the region's advancement, the forum's legacy will endure as a beacon guiding the way towards a brighter future for Northern Ghana and its resilient, vibrant communities.

Annex 1: Pictures & Inserts from the Conference





Annex 2: Links to Media Coverage

Facebook Live Coverage	NDPC Official Facebook Page	https://web.facebook.com/100009391450956/videos/318857444139963/	Streamed on NDPC official Facebook Page, August 15, 2023
Excerpts of Statement by Vice Chairperson of NDPC, Hon. David Quaye Annang	NDPC Website	https://ndpc.gov.gh/media_center/blog_details/ndpc-play-lead-role-achieving-equitable-and-balanced-development-northern-ghana?fbclid=IwAR1PS5TmbaSPb4Ud3VCGfjh-MCvMjMZ5vOx8d5kacCKvpIYr_BgGaOLOqYs	Published on NDPC's official website on August 22, 2023
Media Reportage	Modern Ghana	https://www.modernghana.com/news/1253119/govt-secures-80-million-grant-to-support-agricult.html	Published on August 21, 2023, by Joyce Adwoa Aimia Ocran
Excerpts of Statement by Minister for LGDRD, Hon. Daniel Botwe	The Ghanaian Standard	https://ghstandard.com/2023/08/16/minister-for-local-government-daniel-botwe-calls-for-equitable-development-across-regions/101759/	Published on August 16, 2023, by Mariam Aminu
Development Economist Michael Ayamga calls for affirmative action to accelerate northern Ghana's progress	The Ghanaian Standard	https://ghstandard.com/2023/08/17/development-economist-michael-ayamga-calls-for-affirmative-action-to-accelerate-northern-ghanas-progress/102111/	Published on August 17, 2023, by Mariam Aminu
Northern Ghana Development Forum aims to foster collaborative development efforts	Northern Regional Coordinating Council – NRCC Official Facebook Page	https://web.facebook.com/NRCCGH?_cft__[0]=AZXpVuCtvQYE01UekfvXYQT9fO2VPp4SZN8sjzc3pAumHhn7kjujjKbzjpr1iQdxN-xApJehYFSP64S3tDqsLHceF3HbxFHHCYDVS0Z61lb1swGXagFi16K89EZOPIn4fxxJsKKIXUNok_IXax3hdGqlr-cXIV2gXd7UgaXPVSH-oAKSWKkP2ZFHId13RFw5_BE&_tn=-UC%2CP-R	Published on August 22, 2023, by NRCC RCC

