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# Strategically Sustaining People's Well-being: The Case of Ghanaian Women and Children

## **Cover Page Footnote**

My deep appreciation goes to the management and staff of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), Indiana University, as well as all those entities that willingly provided both the much-needed data and resources that facilitated this scholarly endeavor.

## Strategically Sustaining People's Well-being: The Case of Ghanaian Women and Children

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**Abstract:** *A government's commitment to an adopted policy may be the first step that symbolizes its genuine intent to ameliorate the living conditions of its people, particularly the relevant and/or beneficial populations for which the policy was formulated. Ghana's President J. A. Kufuor's New Patriotic Party government ended decades of debate about improving the conditions of the vulnerable group of women and children by establishing the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs. This article argues that, in order for the Ghanaian government to sustain efforts to effectively improve the plight of this group, there should be systematic mechanisms that include effective collaboration via sustainable-development, learning-organization, and knowledge-management philosophies. The study provides lessons that have implications for developing economies.*

**Keywords:** Women and children, vulnerable population, sustainable development, learning organization, knowledge management

### Introduction

Women and children constitute the most vulnerable demographic group in any part of the world. The literature on their well-being tends to lack effective institutionalized public efforts to continually promote and improve their lives and sustain their socio-economic condition. In developed countries, efforts to promote and improve their life conditions seem to be addressed primarily through social-service programs. For instance, in the United States, with all its wealth, even though public assistance provides amenities to this demographic group, it generally tends to fend for itself, particularly in terms of healthcare and the like.

Governmental assistance to women and children still falls short of the complete set of resources they actually need as a group to sustain their lives and promote their human rights and dignity. Ironically, after decades of serious debate on and discussion about the continued deplorable conditions of this vulnerable group, the government of Ghana, a developing economy, has established a major decision-making body, namely, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), to ameliorate the living conditions of the nation's women and children. In this analysis, the relevant population is Ghana's women and children.

This purpose of this article is to examine MOWAC's achievements and challenges, and propose measures to systematically assist it in reaching its potential for improving the lives of the Ghanaian women and children, its most vulnerable group of citizens. The analysis begins with a discussion of the sustainable-development, learning-organization, and knowledge-management (KM)

philosophies. This is followed by a brief discussion of Ghana, the situation of its women, and the extent to which the global economy and similar phenomena impacted MOWAC's establishment. The Ministry's achievements and challenges are addressed next, after which recommendations are proposed for enhancing its success. The article ends with lessons to be learned by other countries determined to systematically improve their women and children populations. A major assumption of the analysis is that public programs can best be achieved through the collaboration of the three sectors of a nation's economy (public, private, and nonprofit), as organizations adopt sustainable-development, learning-organization, and knowledge-management attitudes.

The author believes that the eventual success of the Ministry's work includes the application of sustainable-development, learning-organization, and knowledge-management ideas. Therefore, the next segment discusses those frameworks to the extent they facilitate one's understanding of how the ministry under review can realize its major goals or mission.

### **Conceptualizing Sustainable Development**

Sustainability is a more general concept than is implied in its adjectival use in sustainable development in the extant literature. It refers to the possibility that a system now producing (or that will soon produce) desirable emergent properties will continually produce them indefinitely. In essence, it means the possibility that human and other life will flourish on Earth forever (Ehrenfeld 2008).

Sustainable development is the most fundamental challenge confronting humanity. It refers to the extent to which resources are used to meet human needs as well as preserve the environment to facilitate the attainment of those needs. Applicable to all organizational endeavors, it refers to the extent to which all sectors of the economy should collaborate in finding best practices that would systematically utilize society's limited resources, conserving those resources prudently for future generational uses. Although it should be practiced via nationally-adopted policies, with the collaboration of all sectors of the economy (including the involvement of culture), (Hill, Terry, and Woodland 2006) claim that it's effective execution lies in local, grassroots implementation. A multidisciplinary practice and idea impacting all countries of the world, sustainable development examines what it means to collaboratively create, utilize, and conserve resources (e.g., human talent/skills, water, energy, technology, and others), especially to the degree that they directly impact globalization.

Sustainable development received its first major international recognition in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden. Nonetheless, the most attention on global sustainability came after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Specifically, the Sweden meeting has raised deeper awareness of an issue that should first be resolved at the international level, spilling over to national and local grassroots levels for effectiveness. It was a clarion call alerting all nations of the world about the importance of placing sustainability, particularly in its general term as an environmental issue, at the forefront of all nations' policymaking, adoption, and execution with respect to the environment.

The establishment of the United Nations Environmental Program was a product of the conference. The conference and its aftermath have clearly institutionalized a global consciousness of what constitutes the international environment. In particular, it has introduced the idea of the symbiotic relationship between the environment and development. This relationship is applicable to the improvement of the lives of women and children in the world.

In essence, sustainable development is applicable to this paper, particularly to the extent that the government of Ghana has decided to assist women and children by providing sustaining efforts and practices that would gradually improve and solidify the legal and institutional basis for their groups' better lives tomorrow. Although sustaining the "environment" generally refers to resolving land-related and atmospheric issues and concerns, it also means gradually improving public policies on poverty reduction across the globe so as to ensure decent lives of people as impoverished as Ghana's women and children. Sustaining the positive gains of women and children through MOWAC, therefore, means having a powerful public apparatus promoting a woman's ability to compete equally with a man in school enrollment, establish and run a business, seek and assume a position in the public policy-making process, and, thus, be accepted and respected as a major contributor to national wealth.

### **Learning Organization**

The process involved in the creation of MOWAC as a key agency in improving women and children's lives clearly makes it a learning organization. A learning organization is symbolized by a group of people who continually enhance their capabilities with the view to creating the results they desire or want to establish (Senge 1990). The process also envisions an organization as performing successfully when it views itself as a system— a group of integral parts working interdependently and collaboratively to achieve common goals.

Furthermore, Senge claims that the learning-organization idea works in three dimensions, namely, structural, social, technological, all interacting to induce the best performance in a dynamic environment. This has been highlighted or reinforced by the work of (Brown and Brudney 2003). The major features of the social aspect include empowered employees, emergent strategies, and participative leadership. The structural component includes policies adopted and executed to encourage both horizontal integration and flat organizational structures, while the technological element supports the capacity to assimilate and transfer data to provide ongoing feedback about the organization's ability to adapt to environmental changes.

Indeed, the learning-organization paradigm presumes that information is signal, as organizations gather, retrieve, and learn from information to the extent of achieving ongoing successes in performance (Brown and Brudney 2003). Those advocating that ethos also maintain that an organization should utilize its culture to both train and develop its employees via rewards for learning, innovating, risk-taking, and experimentation (Gephart et al. 1996). The optimism associated with that philosophy has led many to predict that the learning organization will be the dominant perspective to effective organizational functioning (Choo 1998; Daft 1998; Drucker 1999).

In sum, the learning-organization idea clearly applies to the ministry, since its employment and maintenance by all its constituents/stakeholders—government, beneficiaries, donors,

management, staff, public supporters, and the like—would yield meaningful results for the target populations of women and children. Therefore, the ministry’s various units should agree to learn and share information and change together. It is a mechanism to be deployed by a new organization like MOWAC in ameliorating the living conditions of a vulnerable group of citizens, as well as future generations.

### **Knowledge Management**

The third collaborative philosophy that could effectively foster MOWAC’s successes is the adoption and pursuit of a knowledge-management or KM philosophy. Knowledge management, traced back to the early work on information economy from the 1950s to 1960s, continually promotes successful tapping, harnessing, and retention of the best organizational human capacity. Those trained in KM represent an organization’s memory bankers (Mayo 1998), as the contemporary brand of KM asserts inclusion of people, processes, and social initiatives in organizational efforts to solve problems (McElroy 2003).

According to (Brown and Duguid 2002), information is the starting point of knowledge creation. Zuboff (1988) also claims that information acquires meaning only via a social context when both it (i.e., information) and knowledge are shared. One important force for change in management is the growing need for new, good ideas. To that end, every organization in today’s turbulent economy is continually seeking efficient ways to be successful as work environments change. KM emphasizes the importance of continuous knowledge processing, creation, and sharing, as well as new approaches to or initiatives in public human-resources management. MOWAC’s employment of KM can clearly enhance its potential to realizing its goals and objectives.

Overall, MOWAC’s creation was facilitated by tremendous planning, and the social context for its establishment has been engendered by the commitment of many stakeholders with a desire to make it work. MOWAC, therefore, has the wherewithal to successfully employ KM to sustain its programs and activities as it continually strives to alleviate the plight of women and children.

### **A Brief Overview of Ghana**

Located on the West Coast of Africa, Ghana is one of the most thriving democracies on the continent. Often referred to as an “island of peace” in one of the most chaotic regions in the world, it shares boundaries with Burkina Faso to the north, Gulf of Guinea to the south, Togo to the east, and Cote d’Ivoire to the west. The discovery of oil in 2007 in the Gulf of Guinea could make the country an important oil producer and exporter in coming years.

With an economy dominated by agriculture, which employs about 40 percent of the working population, Ghana is one of the leading exporters of cocoa in the world. It is also a significant exporter of commodities such as gold and lumber. With an estimated population of 22 million people, it has 10 regions and more than 25 ethnic groups, each with its unique language, and English as its official language, a legacy of British colonial rule. Formerly known as the Gold Coast, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African nation to attain independence from a colonial power, Britain, on March 6, 1957, under the leadership of its first indigenous citizen, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.

After ruling Ghana with his Convention People's Party government for nine years, he was overthrown on February 24, 1966, by the country's military. Between 1966 and 1991, there was only one popularly-elected leader, Dr. Hilla Liman. The military, including Flight-Lieutenant John Rawlings, was in control most of the time until his National Democratic Congress (NDC) Party won the popular presidential elections in both 1992 and 1996. Rawlings served two terms from 1992 to 2000, and the major opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by John Kufuor, also continued governing the country for another two terms (2001-2008). That party's government ended in December of 2008 in a run-off election between the two most popular candidates, the NPP's Nana Akufo-Addo and the NDC's Dr. John A. Mills, in which the latter won by a very slight margin to continue his party's rule that ended in 2000.

A thorough discussion of Ghana's political and economic scene after independence falls outside the purview of this analysis. Therefore, only a brief discussion of the post-independence policies toward women and children will be undertaken with the view to familiarizing one with the extent to which this vulnerable group's seeming neglect is now a major concern that is being seriously addressed by the government.

### **Women Condition in Ghana**

Women in pre-modern Ghanaian society were perceived primarily as child-bearers, fish retailers, and farmers. Within the traditional sphere, their child-bearing ability was explained as the means by which lineage ancestors were permitted to be reborn. In pre-colonial times, polygamy was encouraged, particularly for wealthy men. Given the male dominance in Ghana's traditional society, some economic anthropologists have explained a female's capacity to reproduce as the most important means by which women ensured their socio-economic security for themselves, especially if they bore children (Owusu-Ansah 1994).

Oppong and Abu (1987, 31) have provided crucial data on Ghanaian mothers, confirming the traditional view of them on procreation. Specifically, the authors concluded that about 60 percent of women in the country preferred to have large families of five or more children. Uneducated urban women also had large families. In general, however, urbanized, educated, and employed women had fewer children (Oppong and Abu 1987, 9).

The alienation of women from the acquisition of wealth, even in conjugal relationships, was reinforced by traditional living arrangements. On one hand, among matrilineal groups such as the Akan, married women, considered outsiders in their husbands' family, continued to reside at their matrilineal homes, and their children would be expected to inherit from their mother's family. On the other hand, patrilineal groups such as the Ewe and Dagomba, considered the domestic group to include the man, his wife, and their children, and their children inheriting from fathers. The male children of a woman also assured her of more direct access to wealth accumulation in the marriage with their father (Oppong and Abu 1987, 53).

The transition into the modern world has been very slow for women. On one hand, the high rate of female fertility in Ghana in the 1980s showed that women's primary role continued to be that of child-bearing. On the other, current research supported the view that, despite the Education Act of 1961, which expanded and required elementary education, some parents were unwilling to send their

daughters to school, simply because their labor was required either in the home and/or on the farm (Oppong and Abu 1987, 20). Resistance to female education also stemmed from the conviction that women would be supported by their husbands. In some areas, there was even the fear or perception that a girl's marriage prospects dim when she becomes educated.

It has been observed in Ghana, as in many African countries, that, even if girls go to school, most did not continue after receiving the basic education certification: elementary school. Others do not even complete the elementary school. A study conducted by the National Council on Women and Development with respect to women's role in political decision-making indicated that only 6 percent of senior civil-service posts were held by women, and these were mainly in administrative and more junior positions (Campbell-Platt 1978). As a result, the Council called on the government to explore meaningful ways to remedy the serious situation.

Overall, for many years, the environment of Ghana's women had been that of neglect and abandonment, as both women and children had been marginalized to the lowest class of citizens. The formulation of ideas that could promote their well-being seemingly came from pulpits, foreign missionaries, and international nonprofit organizations working in the country. Aspects of their family and economic roles have been documented by few anthropological studies (see Allah-Mensah 2004). That is why the National Council on Women and Development in Ghana should be commended for continually sponsoring workshops and studies on women's work, education, training, and family issues. It should also be stated that stereotypes based on biological reasons are often cited for their neglect. They include their physical inability to work long hours and their supposition to work at home, especially in providing food for the family (Oppong and Abu 1987, 5).

It is in light of the foregoing analysis that (Assibey-Mensah 1998) in his work on Ghana's Women-In-Development program seems relevant. Specifically, he emphasized the efforts being made by Ghanaian women to enter various sectors of the Ghanaian economy through small-business ownership, despite considerable constraints that hamper them from taking full advantage of opportunities available to them. For instance, they generally experience problems such as the brunt of poverty; continued limited access to and control over land; inadequate funding for production and expansion of businesses; inadequate skill-training to enhance their employability; less formal education; and fewer numbers in decision-making structures at both community and national levels (see Ghana's Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs 2005).

Ghana's latest and most enduring democratic experiments began in 1992, earning worldwide recognition as a leading democracy in Africa. Since 2001, it has been able to establish democracy by instituting popular presidential elections, among other devices. The government had also created the National Women's Machinery as a structure to spearhead efforts to address women and children's issues. Recognizing the urgent need to seriously address both the current and future concerns of Ghanaian women and children by promoting and maintaining their social, economic, and environmental (e.g., home, school, among others) needs, the presidential candidate of the New Patriotic Party, John A. Kufuor, promised to take action if elected. Such action, he believed, should be orchestrated through a high-level public-sector entity to be specifically responsible for coordinating national efforts to facilitate the achievement of gender equality.



Immediately after taking the presidential oath of office in January 2001, by Executive Instrument, he established the cabinet-level Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) to spearhead a vigorous drive to overcome the challenges of gender inequality in the country; and promote the execution of meaningful activities addressing the rights of women and children. The goal of that executive action is to advance the growth and development of the two vulnerable groups of citizens. Its thrust consists of formulating, coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of policies by two departments: the Department of Women and the Department of Children. Those two departments respectively replaced the National Council on Women and Development and the Ghana National Commission on Children, which had hitherto functioned as the respective national bodies on women and children's issues and concerns.

MOWAC has now been elevated to a cabinet status and has a comparative advantage with the role and responsibility of carefully and effectively monitoring policy implementation of programs envisioned in its thrust. In view of this, it provides the coordination linkage for all cross-sector issues related to women and children. To the extent that its charge is very difficult to execute, especially because it has to spearhead efforts to break stereotypes, it requires systematic collaboration with all its stakeholders (domestic and international) to facilitate such a difficult task.

In essence, a major blueprint creating an effective apparatus for promoting and sustaining women and children's well-being has been institutionalized in Ghana. The global economy, with all its advantages and disadvantages, has been instrumental in MOWAC's establishment. The discussion below chronicles global motivation factors for the creation of MOWAC.

### **Exploring the Global Impetus**

Globalization, the catch-all concept or phenomenon currently steering all countries' economic activities, forces countries to systematically integrate such activities to continually promote the connectivity and interdependence of the world's markets businesses, and the like. With respect to the plight of Ghana's women and children, the connectivity notion became relevant when the United Nations declared 1975 as an international year of women and children, calling on all state parties (or country organizations) to establish appropriate national mechanisms to ensure the integration of women's concerns in all spheres of development. This declaration came as a result of the worldwide recognition that women lag behind in the development processes at all levels. This serious concern resulted in major world conferences on women, starting from Copenhagen, Mexico, Nairobi, Beijing, and New York I and II. All these meetings proposed strategies and action plans to accelerate the development and enhancement of the status of women (Auth 1998).

To the degree that the benefits of global economy had not trickled down to the well-being of millions of women and children worldwide, a historic meeting was held for over 100 heads of state and governments at the World Summit for Children in 1990 (UNICEF 2007). It culminated in the Declaration and Plan of Action for child survival, development, and protection. This signaled a new era for children, as well as the institutionalization of a commitment on the part of governments, to place the well-being of children at the top of their political agenda. The prime objective was to address the urgent needs of children. (It is to that end that MOWAC has the responsibility of

coordinating children's issues and report Ghana's progress on implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Additionally, the new millennium has obligated the Ghanaian government to develop certain goals and objectives to reinforce its commitment and consequent ability to achieve:

1. The Eradication of Extreme Poverty among Women and Children;
2. Universal Primary Education for Children;
3. The Promotion of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women;
4. A Reduction in Child Mortality;
5. An Improvement in Maternal Health;
6. The effective Combat of HIV/AIDs, Malaria, and other Diseases;
7. Environmental Sustainability; and
8. The formation of Global Partnerships for Development (Ghana's Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs 2005).

Besides globalization and the challenges posed by the new millennium, another impetus triggering and/or reinforcing the Ministry's establishment was the July 2001 Organization of African Unity adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). A strategic device, NEPAD addresses the challenges facing the African continent on issues such as continually-escalating poverty, underdevelopment, and the continued marginalization of the continent. One of its primary objectives is the acceleration of the empowerment of women and gender equality. The section that follows provides a discussion on MOWAC's thrust in terms of its mission.

### **Operational Context of MOWAC**

Its clear vision is to ensure a harmonious functioning society, in which equity and equality between the sexes are guaranteed and where survival, protection, development of the child are guaranteed within the National Policy Framework. Its mission encompasses promoting gender equity and equality: to facilitate enforcement of the rights of women and children; promote the survival, development, and protection of children; and increase participation of both women and children in the development process through skilled and committed staff (Ghana's Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs 2005).

Its objectives, premised on national laws and the national-development policy framework, as well as international conventions, treatises, and agreements to which the Government of Ghana is committed, include:

1. Formulation of a gender and child-specific development policy framework, guidelines, and advocacy strategies for use by all cabinet-level Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and for collaboration with Ghana's Development Partners;
2. The planning and facilitation of the integration of women and children's policy issues into the National Development Agenda;

3. Effective monitoring and evaluation of both the processes and impact of implemented programs on women and children;
4. Provision of guidelines and advocacy strategies for all MDAs, as well as other partners for effective gender mainstreaming;
5. Provision of the crucial platform and mechanism to implement government's commitments expressed at international meetings for improving the status of women and children; and
6. Coordination of all gender-related programs and activities at all levels of the economy (Ghana's Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs 2005).

If the Ministry has been institutionalized and has been functioning to promote the well-being of Ghanaian women and children, what does it claim as its accomplishments? The next section addresses this question.

### **MOWAC and its Achievements**

Resource allocation is crucial to any undertaking. The success story of the Ministry includes its ability to emphasize gender-sensitive budgeting in all its programs in 2009 and 2010. Additionally, it facilitated the establishment of the Gender Statistical Management Unit to support the provision of sex-disaggregated data, currently used in addressing gender-based inequality issues in the country. Resulting from the unit's establishment is a major byproduct, a Gender-Budget Monitoring Unit, ensuring the effectiveness of gender policies and programs in Ghana, which include spearheading the protocol to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons, particularly women and children. It has also organized sensitization programs on government programs in all the 10 regions. Its capacity to evaluate and present the gender impact of public-sector policies and programs' work outcomes to government is also commendable.

MOWAC has been able to effectively advocate a stronger financial commitment for women's programs, being able to facilitate the preparation of reports on women-empowerment goals and outcomes. In doing so, it has developed indicators and targets for measuring gender priorities in medium-term development framework at sectoral and district levels. Moreover, it has been able to collaborate with stakeholders to provide financial assistance and skills training in business and financial management for women groups. Further, it has initiated the execution of a 10-year National Policy and Implementation Plan on Domestic Violence Act (2007). Besides, the Ministry has done well in its advocacy work to create public awareness of the undeniable rights of women and children. This accomplishment was a result of its successful collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service in reinforcing the need for the government to continually create avenues to increase the awareness of maternal and child-health issues plaguing society, as well as the need to sensitize women on life-threatening diseases of women (e.g., breast and cervical cancer).

Additionally, through collaboration with stakeholders (e.g., parents, religious leaders, among others), the Ministry has been able to strengthen the early Childhood and Child Protection Committees in all 170 districts and 10 regions through the implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Development policy. It is also highly commendable that it is gradually providing skills training to women groups in the non-traditional income-generating enterprises; and collaborating with the Ghana Education Service in its drive to promote parity in boys' and girls' enrolment in schools.

Generally, the Ministry is systematically advocating and promoting the increased acceptance of women and children's human rights and their protection, as well as women's representation and participation in family, public service, and community development. Despite these achievements, MOWAC's statutory charge faces challenges, which, nonetheless, could be transformed into numerous opportunities for women and children, its primary beneficiaries. Indeed, its ability to change those opportunities into actual improvement in the lives of women and children may not be far-fetched.

### **MOWAC and its Challenges**

The Ministry encounters major restraints. It still lacks institutionalized capacities (e.g., human, technical, and financial) to effectively implement its well-established programs. This human-resources bottleneck is basically symbolized by the lack of effective training for its staff in the 10 regions. Additionally, it cannot prevent the increasing incidence of women and children's HIV infections, despite having intensified its public-campaign efforts to prevent that from occurring. It runs short of funding to meet its training needs for personnel, also having inadequate offices or workplace environment for its key staff.

A closer look at these constraints shows that MOWAC is seriously confronted with three roadblocks, such as finding viable financial resources to enable it to effectively translate the government's commitment and policy into practice for the benefit of women and children, recruiting the best personnel to help carry out its meaningful thrust, and establishing effective mechanisms to systematically support and coordinate the planning of integrated programs at the national, regional, district, and community levels for promoting the well-being of both women and children.

In sum, the Ministry's campaign to educate the public on the need to perceive women and children as human beings performing vital roles in society has met resistance. However, sustaining the developmental activities underpinned in its meaningful programs and goals clearly calls for measures that could seriously and systematically ameliorate the vulnerable conditions of women and children. To that end, the next section addresses those measures.

### **Recommendations**

With the establishment of MOWAC, it is now clear to the general Ghanaian population, advocates, and interested stakeholders that, finally, there is in place a cabinet-level Ministry to promote the well-being and constitutional/human rights of women and children. However, the organization's ultimate success would depend on institutionalized devices delineated below:

1. *A commitment of collaboration and coordination with the partnerships it has established*

The government should systematically encourage stakeholders to use their individual and group skills and talents to carefully and consciously promote the implementation and management of the strategic plan used in creating the Ministry. It should continually use its efforts in intersectoral data coordination, linking core staff to public-sector ministries, nonprofits, and development partners with hopes of enhancing information sharing and joint programming and implementation (Zuboff 1988). In addition, the government's acceptance of the Ministry's staff, especially in policy revision and re-development would be a laudable action, because Nakamura and Smallwood (1980) claim that involving policy implementers in policymaking can lead to effective policy execution.

2. *Human-capital formation, development, and retention*

This is crucial to the success of the Ministry's activities. Therefore, it has to find effective means of formulating strategic human-resources management and development techniques (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall 2003). It has to link human-resources planning to strategic planning (Walker 1978) in order to sustain those activities via efficient techniques of training that would continually assist personnel to effectively apply acquired skills to ensure the appropriate impact on society. To that end, the government should continually explore effective ways to utilize its intellectual talent for competitive advantage (Drucker 1993; Ulrich 1991). Additionally, it should adopt and systematically execute a vigorous capacity-building and human-resources development strategy that targets the vital needs of the staff of the Ministry, as well as build the required human capacity among women and children to take up professional positions in all sectors of the nation's economy.

3. *Effective monitoring and evaluation of the overall management of the implementation process*

The Ministry's own Policy Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation unit is charged with monitoring and evaluating its activities. To ensure effective monitoring and review of its work, there should be an external group of personnel from various segments, including the private and nonprofit sectors. This would promote the credibility of the evaluation reports, thus ensuring interdependence among the network of organizations involved with the Ministry's activities. Moreover, this would continually ensure that all aspects of the programs in place are effectively and efficiently executed and coordinated. Quarterly and activity reports, as envisioned in its objectives, should be prepared and presented to the appropriate stakeholders to enhance their satisfaction with ongoing collaboration and, more importantly, lead to successful outcomes.

4. *Adequate funding.*

The Ministry's enabling act obligates mandatory partial funding from the central government's budgetary allocations, as well as funds from a vigorous resource-mobilization program developed by MOWAC. The author believes that partial funding is not enough, especially considering the magnitude of the Ministry's activities throughout the country. The government should, therefore, ensure and maintain a steady flow of programmed funds to sustain MOWAC's activities, gradually

empowering the Ministry's relevant target populations to play major roles envisaged in its enabling act (see Assibey-Mensah 1997, for an extensive discussion of Ghana's budgeting).

### *5. Accountability*

MOWAC is headed by a political and administrative figure with the ultimate responsibility of ensuring that the office functions to provide continued benefits to women and children. (Assibey-Mensah 2000) asserts that Ghana's grassroots bodies, the 170 district assemblies, follow a devolutionary model of decentralization in Ghana's current public administration. Those involved in operating those subsystems should be financially energized to play major roles in the Ministry's operations, since their leaders are held answerable to the ongoing needs of women and children in their respective areas. Ultimately, however, MOWAC's minister should be the political leader who should be held accountable by the public for the eventual success of its overall activities. In view of this, the minister's appointment should be continually reviewed by the president of the country.

### *6. Developing a learning-organization and knowledge-management culture toward the Ministry and its operations*

Human-capital formation, development, and retention are crucial to the success of a learning organization, an entity with people who continually hone their human capital to establish what they desire to create. Since adapting to rapid change is a basic tenet of the concept, MOWAC must formulate more effective strategic human-resources management and development techniques (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall 2003) linking human-resources planning to strategic planning (Walker 1978). This will enable it to sustain its activities via flexible but efficient ways of training and assisting personnel to effectively apply acquired skills to ensure the appropriate impact on society.

Consequently, the government should continually explore effective ways to utilize the Ministry's personnel for competitive advantage (Ulrich 1991), since its trained staff will continually represent the organization's memory bankers (Mayo 1998; Choo 1998; Drucker 1999). MOWAC's ability to systematically utilize the two paradigms (learning organization and knowledge management or KM) will enable it to effectively involve researchers, concerned citizens, and practitioners in developing and retaining strategies that will also assist it in delivering services that have never been provided to Ghanaian women and children. Indeed, by effectively utilizing KM, MOWAC can systematically strive to recruit, develop, select, and retain the best intellectual talent to symbolize an important source of its competitive advantage (Drucker 1993).

As already stated, the KM idea strives for the sharing of ideas among organizational members. As long as the Ministry's staff and management continually share information, MOWAC's ability to effectively provide efficient services to its target populations would also be enhanced.

### *7. Continually operationalizing sustainability*

This will enable all stakeholders (e.g., Ministry employees; nonprofit, private-sector, and other partners) to interact effectively in exploring the best ways to move forward and continually advance

MOWAC's cause, as it ensures the relevance of their collaborate actions. Additionally, this will ensure the relevance of their (stakeholders') collaborative development of measures that would be useful in sustaining the values or benefits gained by women and children, as cross-functional and cross-level interactions, and team efforts occur in tackling any complexities in the Ministry's multiple operations/tasks.

### **Conclusions, Lessons, and Policy Implications**

The article has attempted to present a phenomenal and unique governmental initiative in Ghana, namely, the establishment of a cabinet-level ministry (MOWAC), to systematically address the needs of women and children. Any successful implementation of the government's agenda will depend primarily on the effective governance of the ministry's operations in sustaining progress made by women and children. So far, the government has exhibited its commitment to improving women and children's conditions and rights by, among other means, striving to improve policy capacity within the public service to deliver its priorities within MOWAC. Therefore, it should continue its partnership efforts with other stakeholders by providing the crucial resources for the implementation of the Ministry's programmed activities. In essence, the government should show its commitment to the Ministry's success.

Using the learning-organization philosophy will help the Ministry to systematically tap the best people with the knowhow, competencies, and collaborative spirit that will enhance their effective sharing and mobilization of knowledge. This is symbolic of the knowledge-management technique, which, together with the learning-organization ethos, denotes change as a catalyst. It was a change in political will that provided the impetus for the creation of the Ministry. It was also a very strong commitment to eradicate the plight of women and children in the Ghanaian society that has seen the birth of a most important and significant public agency in Ghana's history.

The author views MOWAC as a learning organization, because its establishment included not only the processes of creation, acquisition, and transfer of knowledge but also a reflection of the new knowledge on organizational behavior, the essence of integration of the individual and the organization (Argyris 1964). Therefore, MOWAC should adopt expansive patterns of thinking, nurture them, and harness its human and financial resources more efficiently, economically, and effectively, as it continually provides an environment conducive to sustaining all efforts through the meaningful engagement of competent stakeholders. To be sure, the government's provision of programmed funds in its annual operational budget would tremendously assist the Ministry in all its operations, thus diminishing anxieties about how activities could be sustained for successful outcomes.

Ghana has now adopted a model for policy development and execution to promote women and children's well-being. Its experience with MOWAC offers insights into the factors that often engender the failure of public policies in some countries (Assibey-Mensah 1999). Additionally, as (Assibey-Mensah 1997) reminds us, contemporary development is shaped not only by the need for or availability of money, but also by adequate administrative capacity. The point here is that, in order to sustain MOWAC, the Ghanaian government must: (1) conduct careful analyses of MOWAC to counter evaluation anxieties, among other things, and design feasible execution of its robust goals;

(2) provide ongoing training and education for its Ministry's personnel; (3) explore effective ways to promote and publicize its training strategies (Daly 2002); and (4) continually provide an environment that promotes interdependence, not rivalry, among MOWAC's partners and other relevant stakeholders.

Finally, the article furnishes relevant lessons for other developing countries with the view to providing effective systematic mechanisms for both initiating and improving the socio-economic conditions of women and children as the most vulnerable and marginalized population. The Ghanaian government should continually promote public understanding of the significant role of women and children in the economy to systematically sustain the progress of this group via MOWAC. In doing so, it should seek partnerships with different segments of the society.

In light of this, the government should bear in mind that public policies are judged by consequences, not innate qualities (Hampshire 1978). In view of this, it should exercise a persistent political will and commitment, and seek a stronger platform for educating the people to support its Ministry's thrust. Failure to do these may lead to a serious opposition from and sabotage by those population segments that view the amelioration of women and children's human conditions as militating against both their own interest and certain traditionally-accepted beliefs about women and children.

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