

# Ghana and Sustainable Development: The 40-Year National Development Plan in Retrospective

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## Abstract

All countries strive for sustainable growth and development. However, for countries to achieve the desired growth and development, efforts are needed to plan, regulate, control and guide the development process in the right direction. This makes the need for development plans imperative in spearheading sustained growth and development. Ghana, a developing country, has adopted a 40-year development plan, with the vision of achieving “a just, free and prosperous society” by 2057. This paper uses a descriptive approach based on data from secondary sources including public documents, official statistics, national diaries and published papers. It synergizes the country’s mechanism for the implementation of its long term development plan. The findings of the paper present to concerned actors, insight into how Ghana intends to implement its long term development plan. It offers the platform to critically assess, disparage and/or recommend the plan for other developing countries around the globe.

## Keywords

Development Plan, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainable Development, Ghana

## 1. Introduction

Sustainable development has become an issue on the global desk for quite a long period of time [1] [2] [3] [4]. Though the true origin of sustainable development can be traced as far back as more than four decades, global enthusiasm for sus-

sustainability re-ignited in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission. Sustainable development has since that period been widely defined as “*development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (Brundtland Commission, 1987 as in [5]). Despite this aforementioned definition which happens to feature prominently in every sustainability discussions, [6] and [7] are of the view that there is still lack of comprehensive understanding about the meaning of sustainable development. This position has earlier been avowed by [8] who contended that the definition of sustainable development is still vague. [9] has however, made deliberate attempt to unravel the complexities of sustainable development by developing a framework, of which “*ethical paradox*” remains as the heartbeat of the model to enhance comprehensive understanding of sustainable development (see [9] for more insight). Amidst the academic deliberations on sustainability, development partners and countries around the globe have developed a series of global goals dubbed “*Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*”, which tend to act as the reference point for global development actions till 2030 [10]. The SDGs succeeded the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which lasted till 2015. Sustainable development efforts have been premised on three main interdependent dimensions, namely environmental, social and economic efforts of development [5]. It is thus expected that individual countries should make considerable efforts to ensure environmental sustainability and management, economic growth and development as well as social advancement of citizens.

In Ghana, Government has revealed its commitment to contribute to global efforts towards sustainability through several development attempts. In line with ensuring coherent and unified development efforts, the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) of Ghana was mandated by government to prepare a 40-year development plan to guide governmental efforts in a sustainable manner, for growth and development. [11] is of the stance that sustainable development rests heavily on the implementation of viable national development plans either short, medium or long terms. There is also evidence to suggest that the implementation of development plan within the right context can lead to sustainable growth and tremendous development. Many countries especially the Asian countries popularly known as the “*Asian Tigers*”<sup>1</sup> provide a confirmation to the positive outcomes of the rightful implementation of development plans [12]. The adoption of a 40-year national development plan by Ghana seems to be right for the country, as it tries to follow the path of the successful Asian countries. The plan is expected to be issued in 2018; the year in which implementation will commence. Whilst the move for long term plan is somewhat right, concerned individuals have raised attention on the need for the country to get the basics right for the implementation of this development framework. This

<sup>1</sup>The four Asian Tigers are the high-growth economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. The four Asian Tigers have consistently maintained high levels of economic growth since the 1960s, fueled by exports and rapid industrialization, which enabled these economies to join the ranks of the world's richest nations.

paper has been structured by first, looking into literature to review what various actors have found in relation to long term development plan, the link between long term plan and sustainable development through conceptual framework, the mechanisms for the implementation of Ghana's long term development plan and the conclusion which tends to suggest appropriate lessons for successful plan implementation.

The paper is purely a desk study, and all findings are descriptively presented based on extracts from published materials, national diaries, public documents and other secondary information.

## **2. Long Term Development Plan and Sustainable Development: A Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1. Meaning of Development Plan**

Development plan has gained prominent attention in the development discourse. In view of that several definitions have been offered by individuals and organizations. In this paper, the definition offered by [13] has been adopted since it is comprehensive and covers key aspects of development. [13] sees development plan as the main public statement of planning policies for a particular geographical area. It brings on board the land use pattern, the infrastructural base for the locality, the development aims, objectives and strategies as well as policy options set up by the planning authority to steer the overall growth and development of an area. Thus, development plans are made of a clearly written statement of development objectives and a map or series of map to guide government's development effort.

### **2.2. The Essence of Long Term Development Plans**

Long term [national] development plans have substantial influence on the growth of nations. Dismayingly, many developing countries do not give long term development plan an attention [11]. It is therefore not surprising to realize that many development plans of developing countries fail to achieve their intended results. The lack of massive attention for long term development plans could be attributed to lack of better understanding-that is; such plans are implemented either to please foreign development partners or just a copy-and-paste from developed nations without finding out how best to streamline long term plans to meet the needs and aspirations of developing nations [11]. Adding their inputs to the discussions on long term plans, [14] unveiled that in Brazil (developing nation) for instance; government was criticized by neo-classical Economists in the 1950s and 60s that it lacks the capacity to implement its development plan; hence, the government desisted from implementing such comprehensive plan for the betterment of people in the country. In Africa, [15] has affirmed that the end results from many development plans have been disappointing for the lack of better understanding in terms of the essence of long term development plans. It is worthy to ascertain that the planners have

in-depth knowledge and can accurately make predictions for the future; it is thus, very important, for developing nations to realize the beneficial outcomes associated with long term development frameworks [11] [16] and as well make effective use of their skillful human resource base to implement such plans without fear.

The main issue on board is; if developing countries have fears for implementing long term plans due to the lack of adequate knowledge on the essence of long term development plans; then, **what is the essence of implementing long term national development plans?**

1) *Long term plan helps developing countries to climb higher on the ladder of development [11].*

2) *Long term development plan serves a country to its future [16]. That is, successful long term development plans assimilate various governmental priorities and actions for the present to the future. Hence, with the absence of long term plan, governments are likely to become disoriented or blinded with short terms issues.*

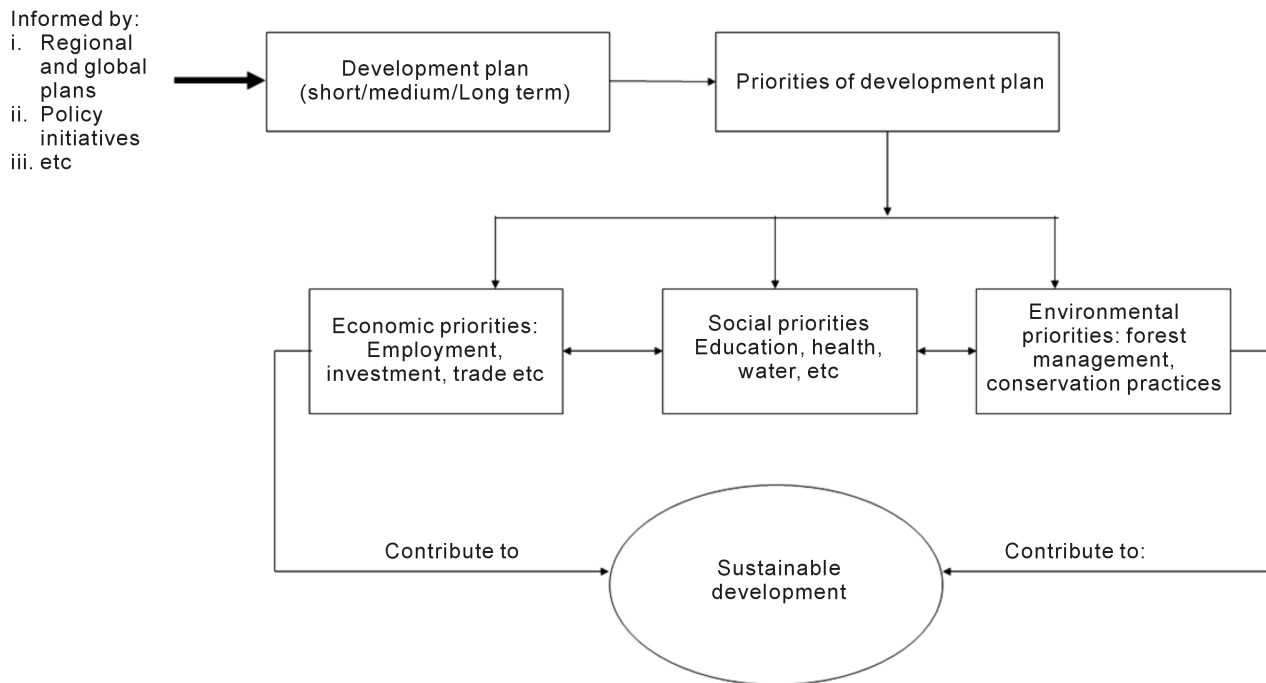
3) *Long term development plan can also become a country's official ideology; thus, making it necessary for nations to welcome such development plans [17].*

### 2.3. Development Plan and Sustainable Development: A Conceptual Framework

Development plans are expected to guide efforts of state and non-state bodies in a codified manner, leading to overall growth and development. [16] attested that development plans make governments to be more focused on targeted actions, which are implemented to spearhead sustainable growth and development. As indicated in the conceptual framework of the study (**Figure 1**), sustainable development is made up of three main dimensions of development: Economic Development, Social Development and Environmental Development [10]. The extent of contributions of government to each specific dimension of sustainable development depends on the priorities of the development plan in question. Development plans can be very successful when it reflects and aligns to international development plans which seek to address regional and/or global development challenges. This gives direct insight into a country's development plan, indicating that implementation is consensus with global efforts for sustainable development. See **Figure 1** for the study's conceptual framework.

### 2.4. Essential Keystones for Successful and Sustainable Long Term National Development Plans

Long term development plans will be successful only when nations are able to get the fundamentals right for the implementation of such plans. There is the need for urgency, strong political will and drive which are essential cornerstones in ensuring successful implementation of long term plans [11] [18]. This implies that there should be the motivation and enthusiasm to develop as a nation. With this implicit desire and interest, all and sundry regardless of political taste will



**Figure 1.** The relationship between development plan and sustainable development Source: Authors' construct, 2017.

bring out their inputs needed to ensure successful implementation of such development plans.

Moreover, long term plans should be made up of good intentions and policies. The intentions and policies should be integrated across various governments, and their implementation should be characterized by constant and routine monitoring exercises [19]. This will help to bring deviations on board so that appropriate measures are put in place to correct them. Such plans should be flexible and legitimate [19] in order for it to be successful and sustainable. Flexibility allows for political parties' manifestoes to be tilted along with national aspirations for development [16]. In South Korea for instance, [19] revealed that its national development plan was uncharacterized by "*straitjacket of economic ideologies and dogmas*" but was made flexible; thus, has played massive role in making the country a successful nation today.

A dedicated planning bodies and other concerned stakeholders are also needed for a successful long term plan. Committed stakeholders provide important inputs, especially, with key attention to growth-potential sectors where they identify "*constraints and success factors*" which will help to speed-up growth and development [20]. There should therefore be a central planning body which will be committed and dedicated and have the required caliber of personnel needed for successful preparation and implementation of long term development plan. The central planning unit and its related bodies should have a simple structure and a clearly defined mandates [11]. [11] further indicated that the head of the central planning unit should also be confident, has the required technical ability and the zeal to push for a successful preparation and imple-

mentation of long term plans. The head should therefore ensure effective and valid researches to find out the various issues that need to be inculcated in order to reap the full benefits of such plans. Not only does successful long term plan depend on the government, rather an integrated efforts between the state, the private bodies and civil society groups [15]. The clarion call for every individual to provide inputs to shape the development direction of a country through the framework of long term plan is thus, a vital one. Hence, broad participatory mechanisms covering the grass root individuals through to the top officials is important keystone in ensuring successful preparation, implementation and results-oriented long term development plan [11] [15] [17].

### 3. Findings and Discussions

#### 3.1. Current Issue on Ghana's Development Desk: Adoption of 40-Year National Development Plan

The long term development plan for Ghana has received massive attention in the country. It is well known that the country's first attempt to develop long term development plan as a framework for spearheading development started in 1995 dubbed as "Ghana Vision 2020". Ghana has also early on made considerable efforts to implement short to medium term development plans such as the 7-Year Development Plan for National Reconstruction and Development (1963/64-1969/70), the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (2001-2003), the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (2004-2007) and the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (2015-2020) but their outcomes were somewhat unsuccessful as these plans failed to achieve their intended objectives. In line with the failure of previous development plans, a lot has been said about the yet-to-be implemented 40-Year National Development Plan as to whether it can really achieve its intended objectives. Perhaps, the NDPC taking the leading role instead of central government ministry might change the case. As earlier plans which failed to achieve their intended objectives were implemented by government ministries, with very limited involvement of the NDPC which serves as the technical eye for planning in Ghana. The NDPC has indicated that the long term plan (from 2018-2057) will embrace a broad participatory framework and ensure political legitimacy as studies by [11] and [15] have revealed the beneficial outcomes of participation and political legitimacy in ensuring successful long term development plans. Issues the plan intends to tackle in its implementation are; Spatial Planning, Petroleum revenue, population growth of the country, monitoring, and a national infrastructure plan. The long term plan will be composed of a four medium term development plans (MTDPs) with a time span of 10 years. The MTDPs will be broken down into Annual Plans (APs) which will be tied to yearly national budget of the country. This long term development plan (LTDP) is strategic since its implementation will be tied to the Africa Union's (AU) 50-Year Agenda 2063 and the 15-year Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

The long term plan is very necessary as even; the father of Development Plan-

ning in Ghana J. H. Mensah in 1963 revealed: “... *the real value of a plan is to give to the nation a sense of direction and to institute a system of purposive discipline*” [21]. The long term development plan is required for growth and development of the country since the 1992 Constitution of the country deems it as necessary. Article 87 (2) of the constitution calls for the need to develop plans characterized by monitoring, evaluation and coordination of development policies, programs and projects whilst Act 479 (1994) has also mandated the need for the formulation of comprehensive national development planning strategies and to ensure that strategies including consequential policies and programs are effectively carried out. From [22], the long term plan for Ghana can promote sustained growth when it is national in character, mandatory on all successive governments and made to be region-and district-specific inculcating the needs and aspirations of all Metropolitans, Municipalities and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in the country. The long term plan should also inculcate both the needs of the present and future population. The NDPC also affirmed that the plan will receive inputs from political parties in the country to ensure political legitimacy. This will prevent failure of the plan due to the lack of support from some political parties as earlier showed by [20] in their studies. Although, it is highly recommended that the plan is made binding on all governments, nevertheless, it should be flexible to allow ruling governments to prepare their own operational plans based on their manifestoes for the attainment of the vision, goals and objectives of the long term plan (supports [16] and [19] on the need for flexibility of long term plans). In line with making the plan flexible, [21] has called for political parties to align their manifestoes with this national development plan. In ensuring that this happens, the NDPC held a meeting with political parties before the plan preparation. This was made to ensure that there is a link and some sort of synergy and synchronization between the manifestoes that political parties will eventually prepare and the national development plan [12].

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) of Ghana considers the long term plan as very vital in promoting general economic growth and development. In fact, the IEA has even submitted a 29-page report titled “*The Winner-Takes-All Practice of Governance in Ghana-Proposals for Reform*” to the president’s Advisor of Governance indicating the need for a long term national development plan, formulated through a broad consensus with inputs from across all political parties which reflect the views of identifiable groups of people at all levels of government in the country [12]. The Institute divulged that the country has failed to successfully reach its targets in previous development plans; hence, the NDPC should be made an independent and autonomous body charged with the overall responsibility for ensuring successful implementation of this long term plan. Even though, the plan is to be made flexible, the country should not permit ruling governments to implement their manifestoes rather the National Development Plan. Ghana Institute of Planners (GIP) concurred that important issues concerning the current poor spatial planning in the country and the poor state of



the Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD) which operates less than 20% capacity need to be addressed in order to ensure successful outcomes of the plan [12]. In ensuring successful long term National Development Plan, Ghana must take second look at its poor spatial planning and ensure a successful implementation of its National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF) in order to address current land matters and haphazard developments. The land market, management and planning serve as a “*sine qua non*” for sustainable and successful long term development plan for the country. Indiscipline in implementation of district’s development plans and over-reliance on external funds are key factors which can halt the success of the long term plan; hence a need to put in place measures to address them [12].

Various concerned bodies declared their enormous support for the long term plan and also called for every Ghanaian to support this yet-to-be-implemented development plan of the country. Notable amongst these bodies are; Trades Union Congress (TUC), Ghana Employers Association, Private Enterprise Foundation, Federation of Association of Ghanaian Exporters, the National Union of Ghana Students, Religious Organizations, the National House of Chiefs, Ghana Culture Forum, Ghana Journalists’ Association, Ghana Union of Traders’ Association and the Council of Indigenous Business Association [12]. The support of these concerned groups is a step in the right direction for the success of this 40-Year National Development Plan. Inputs from the chairman of the NDPC tend to give assurance that the plan will definitely promote sustainability once implemented in terms of growth and development of Ghana. The chairman revealed that many countries, including the ‘so-called’ Asian Tigers, have been able to accelerate their growth and development through long term plans they embraced; hence Ghana, the star of Africa and a nation with enormous natural and human resources can achieve accelerated growth and development through the implementation of the long term plan.

The various political parties have accepted the need for the implementation of a long term plan to guide the development efforts of Ghana. Inputs from the Progressive People’s Party (PPP) suggest a change in attitudes of Ghanaians in terms of national commitment and patriotism are needed to ensure successful outcomes. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) called for effective decentralization which allows the locals to get involved in development initiatives is needed. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) called for a fiscal discipline (with sanctions for violation) for the implementation of the development plan whilst the Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party (CPP) mandated the NDPC not to sideline the country’s ideology and history in the preparation and implementation of the development plan. The immediate former president of the country upon his approval for the long term plan, called for every Ghanaian to devoid their partisanship and differences and rally support for this long term plan. That is, the pull-him down syndrome and cynicism should be kept far away and a sense of a common identity and nation must be embraced so that the 40-year long



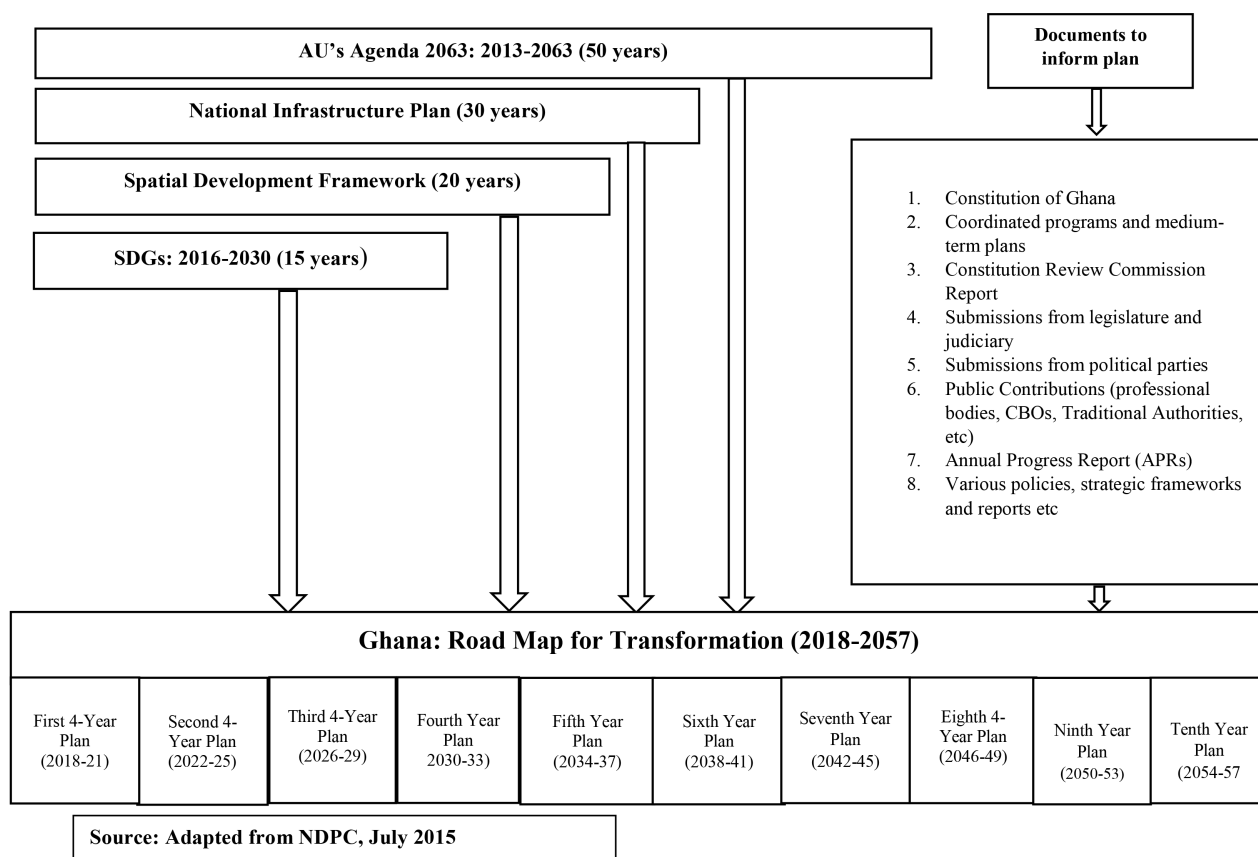
term plan of the country can successfully be implemented, monitored and evaluated to promote Ghana's development [12].

### 3.2. Mechanisms for the Preparation and Implementation of the 40-Year Long Term Development Plan

The implementation of the long term national development plan (LTNDP) certainly rests on the shoulders of the NDPC. The roles of the NDPC in ensuring the formulation and implementation of this plan are enormous. In line with the enormous roles, the NDPC has set up a technical advisory team to replace the earlier National Reference Group (NRG). The team helped the commission in the preparation of the long term plan. The specific roles played by the team are: 1) provision of professional and technical advisory services on the draft outline and the contents of the development plan; 2) review and provision of advisory services on draft reports prepared by the Plan Preparation Team (PPT) and other relevant professional advice regarding the long term plan; and 3) analysis of the large volume of recommendations received from various stakeholders in plan preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation [12]. The membership of the team is shown in the Appendix. During the preparation of the plan, the NDPC established a cross-sectoral planning groups which coordinated the planning and development activities of the various sectors of the economy. The cross-sectoral planning groups consisted of: representatives from the NDPC, relevant sector ministries, appropriate sector institutions and private sector organisations, and individuals selected by NDPC based on their extensive knowledge and experiences.

The long term plan was aligned to high-levels plans around the globe; notably amongst these plans were: the United Nations' 15-Year Sustainable Development Goals, and the African Union's 50-year Agenda 2063. Ghana has the vision of achieving a just, free and prosperous society, hence the long term plan has been aligned with the vision of the country. The specific goals of the plan are: inclusive and resilient economy; equitable and tolerant society; safe and sustainable communities; effective and efficient institutions; and creating an economy that contributes to world peace and justice.

**Figure 2** shows the 40-year development plan of Ghana which is yet to be implemented in the country. As shown in **Figure 2**, the development plan of Ghana tends to gain insight from regional and global development plans, which are the Africa Union's (AU) Agenda 2063: 2013-2063 (50 years) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2016-2030 (15 years). Within Ghana, the plan aligns to the 30-year National Infrastructure Plan and the 20-year Spatial Development Framework to ensure harmony in development efforts. The plan also aligns with sustainability dimensions as economic (infrastructure such as energy; science, technology and innovation), social (human capital, public sector reform/modernization; attitudinal change in work ethics, pursuit of excellence, respect for time, attention to details, respect for land and a sense of urgency) and environment (land reforms for spatial planning). In order to make the plan comprehensive and



**Figure 2.** The 40-Year national development plan of Ghana.

participatory, national and party specific inputs were solicited from the 1992 constitution, the coordinated programs and medium terms plans of the state, the constitution review commission reports, submissions from legislature and judiciary, submissions from all political parties, public contributions, specifically from professional bodies, community based organizations, traditional authorities; annual progress reports of the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in the country, as well as various policies, strategies frameworks and reports of the country. The plan composed of medium term plans to allow for effective evaluation of the entire plan. Decennial evaluations (10 year interval) will be conducted during implementation periods (2027, 2047 and 2057) to inform plan's progress in achieving its objectives.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is adequately true that the long term plan of Ghana looks very beautiful as NDPC has taken thorough time to prepare the 40-year development plan. But the critical concern that seems very common to developing countries including Ghana is successful plan implementation [23] [24] [25]. Various actors have provided their inputs to ensure successful implementation proposed to start in 2018. However, current situations seem to suggest that the plan is likely to have implementation problems. The manifesto of the incumbent government who

assumed office in 2016 has provisions far apart from what the NDPC has indicated in the long term plan. Whilst the current government's own plan tends to place economic transformation through industrialization as the right mechanism to enhance Ghana's sustainable growth and development, the long term plan insists on spatial planning, improving petroleum revenue, population growth management, and infrastructural expansion as the overarching pillars in which government should prepare responsive plans to ensure development. This distinction is quite surprising as the NDPC made deliberate efforts to involve all political parties in the preparation of the plan. The NDPC as a technocrat body is less powerful, and cannot force sitting governments to oblige to the provisions in the long term plan. Clearly, a legal backing is needed to make the NDPC an autonomous and powerful body who can force incumbent political parties as well as centralized and decentralized public institutions to align their development efforts to the long term plan. Again, the implementation of the long term plan was proposed to be done by a team of experts, of which no provisions were made for political parties. The NDPC will have to refine the plan implementation committee to include stakeholders from ruling political parties, so as to earn their commitment to the implementation of the plan. The start date of 2018 is currently unfeasible due to failure of the government to align its plans to the proposed long term plan. The indications show Ghana is not prepared for the implementation of its long term plan. However, it is worthy to admit that Ghana's long term plan is very comprehensive, as it directs Ghana to its future. Until the aforementioned measures are put in place, the plan will forever remain on paper and the future of guided development for Ghana will be a mere mirage.

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## Appendix

### **Initial membership of the Technical Advisory Committee for the implementation of Ghana's 40-year development plan**

The Technical Advisory Committee is made up of 15 members. They are;

- 1) Professor Kwesi Botchwey; the Chairman of NDPC;
- 2) Dr. S.S Yirenkyi; the President of the Ghana Institute of Planners;
- 3) Professor Emmanuel K.A. Tamakloe; a former lecturer at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and a former advisor to the chairman of the NDPC;
- 4) Mr. Albert Osei; a former Chairman of the World Bank;
- 5) Mr. Alhassan Iddrisu; the Director of the Economic Research and Forecasting at the Ministry of Finance;
- 6) Dr. Isaac Mensah Bonsu; the Director of Plan Coordination, NDPC;
- 7) Mr. Kenneth Owusu; the Technical Advisor to the Director General of the NDPC;
- 8) Dr. Charles Amoateng; the Director of the Centre for Learning and Evaluation and Results, Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA);
- 9) Mr. Kwaben Essilfie-Adjaye; an Economic Consultant;
- 10) Dr. Nii-Moi Thompson; the Director General of NDPC;
- 11) Professor George Gyan-Baffour; a former Director of NDPC;
- 12) Professor Ernest Aryeetey; the Vice Chancellor of University of Ghana;
- 13) Dr. Franklin Obeng Oddom, University of Technology, Sydney-Australia;
- 14) Professor Seth Appiah-Opoku, United States of America; and
- 15) Dr. Callistus Mahama; the Head of the Local Government Secretariat.