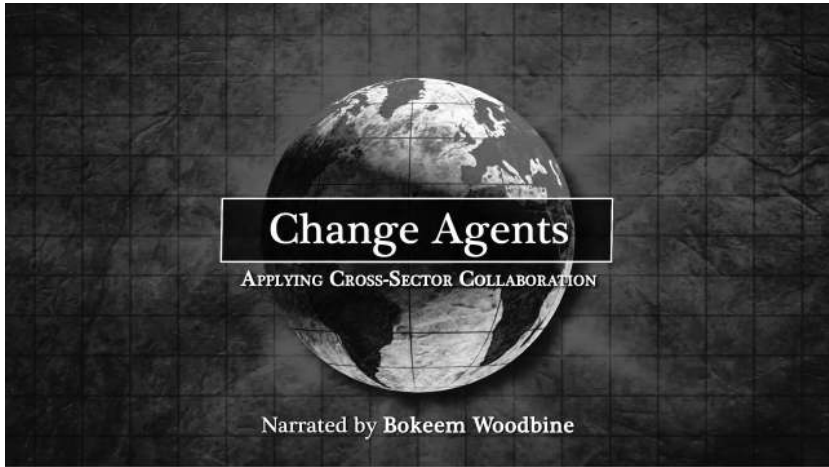


1 Introduction



Video 1 Change agents: Applying cross-sector collaboration. Video available at www.cambridge.org/Kritz_2nd_edition

Every urban slum creates challenges too complex for governments to resolve when working alone. Old Fadama, an informal settlement in Accra, Ghana, was established in the 1980s by migrants fleeing tribal violence in the north. It has grown steadily with spikes for a variety of reasons, including a period of intense domestic conflict in 1994 and drought conditions in 2015. Home to 79,684 residents when last enumerated in 2009 (Farouk & Owusu, 2012), in 2015 the Accra municipal government estimated that the number of residents expanded to 150,000. These included long-term settlers and multigenerational families as well as seasonal migrants coming from throughout the country. These short-term residents were motivated by regular crop cycles to sell produce at the nearby Agbogbloshie green market. Others sought access to health care, education, or work. Many Old Fadama residents did not speak English or the local languages in Accra.

Old Fadama had virtually no water or sanitation infrastructure (see Figure 1), so excreta were collected in plastic bags and disposed of in the river that bordered the slum, creating heavy silting in the nearby Korle Lagoon. Residents infilled the lagoon – packing the banks with car chassis, refuse, and sawdust – to create space for additional housing, which in turn led to flooding that spread fecal matter to the nearby Agbogbloshie market, the largest green market in the city. This cycle led to frequent outbreaks of cholera that spread throughout the country, resulting in hundreds of deaths. By 2015, when the research director for this project identified stakeholders who selected Old Fadama as a complex challenge they would like to



Figure 1 Old Fadama informal settlement, May 2017

address, the slum – which was locally known as “Sodom and Gomorrah” – was a government “no-go zone” due to the generally lawless environment.

In the words of the director of public health (2007–2016) of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA, the mayor’s office), Simpson A. Boateng, MD:

Sodom and Gomorrah was not meant for human habitation, and all attempts to remove the people failed. It was an unorganized community; for example, there were no sanitation facilities, and there were illegal electrical connections that were fire hazards. I wanted to enter the cross-sector collaboration to help improve the conditions and standard of living. And there was a need to collaborate effectively with the community in order to achieve something. The project provided an environment for the Ghana Health Service, judiciary, police, and other stakeholders to meet so that we could discuss the problems that were confronted.

My main priorities were to make sure every individual felt safe, physically and mentally. The public health department was set up to support public health in Accra by protecting the environment, food safety, making sure the food vendors were clean and making safe food for people, and ensuring sanitation policies by making sure everyone had a toilet in their home. Lack of toilets is a major problem and results in people defecating into plastic bags and throwing them into the streets and nearby river. (Gold, Audra. Q&A with Dr. Simpson A. Boateng, the former Director of Public Health, Accra Metropolitan Assembly (posted June 4, 2018), available at <https://jphmpdirect.com/2018/06/04/qa-simpson-boateng/>)

In February 2015, Boateng was frustrated by the repeated cholera crises that began in Old Fadama and swept throughout the city and the country. When approached by the research director for this project, he leaped at the opportunity to create a cross-sector collaboration with the community.

Grand challenges require grand strategies. In cases such as Old Fadama, no one sector – including government – can address the complex development challenges. Complex challenges are largely social, affecting many people, systems, and sectors (Rittel & Webber, 1973). They can seem difficult or impossible to resolve, and typical top-down intervention strategies are not sufficient. Cross-sector collaboration, incorporating multiple stakeholders and viewpoints, is necessary to create effective solutions.

Cross-sector collaboration occurs when governments, nongovernmental organizations, communities, and citizens come together to achieve more than they could if they worked alone (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006). These diverse entities must collaborate effectively to impact complex challenges. In the United States and Europe, collaboration research has expanded dramatically over the past fifteen years, improving the practice and the way Western governments function (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015). There are many well-developed examples of how the evidence base has been woven into the fabric of developed-country governance.

In low- and middle-income countries, many international development projects involve complex challenges, with multiple stakeholders representing various, sometimes competing, interests (Kritz, 2018). However, collaboration research is not widely conducted, and in practice, governments and international development programs have not effectively adopted collaboration tools. Consequently, complex challenges in developing countries are being addressed without the advances of this new, yet robust, field. Development researchers agree that rigorous approaches to development are badly needed (e.g., Ostrom, 2014). This Element reports such a rigorous project – an exploratory project, created in 2015 to respond to the critical evidence gap around cross-sector collaboration. The research director’s goal was to develop an evidence-based, stakeholder-driven participatory action research (PAR) intervention that resolved complex challenges in Old Fadama, could be evaluated at the process level, and had the potential to be scaled up sustainably. The intervention was subsequently piloted in 2018–2019 and replicated in 2020–2022.

In PAR, researchers and participants work together to define problems and formulate research questions and solutions (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). This research method couples knowledge generation – such as would occur in traditional research – with an additional component: a process to create or support organizational action and change (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Counter to the typical international development approach, in the concept phase this PAR project required the stakeholders to resource their own participation and make

all the strategy decisions by consensus, including where to work and what projects to undertake: to create their own solutions for the problems they wanted to resolve. For this project, the term “stakeholders” is used to mean the local group of research participants and others (who were not research participants, usually because the research team believed saturation was reached) who saw themselves as people who had a “stake” in resolving the challenge Old Fadama was facing. With this novel approach, the initial research questions included the following:

1. Would stakeholders around a complex challenge in Ghana build a cross-sector collaboration, if invited to do so (but not provided the resources to do so, other than a facilitator and a research director to help them)?
 - a. What would the stakeholders need from a facilitator?
 - b. What was the role of the research director (who was not providing resources or making decisions about the direction of the project)?
2. How would the stakeholders identify a challenge?
 - a. Which stakeholders would be involved in that decision making? Why?
 - b. What kind of challenge would they choose (e.g., would they choose “low-hanging fruit” or would they choose to work on something more difficult)?
3. Would the stakeholders expand the collaboration? And if so, how?
 - a. Would the stakeholders contribute resources to the collaboration? And if so, what?
 - b. Would the stakeholders take actions to resolve the challenge they identified? And if so, who would take them? What actions would they take?

When the research director for this project approached Boateng, he immediately saw the potential that this kind of research might improve his office’s results in Old Fadama. The Old Fadama collaboration began with three research participants: Boateng; his officer-in-charge for Old Fadama, Imoro Toyibu; and Sr. Matilda Sorkpor, HDR, a Ghanaian Catholic sister who worked to build a bridge between the government and the community. Peter Batsa, a researcher and project manager for the National Catholic Health Service, was engaged as a facilitator and to collect data on the project. Boateng described the beginning as follows:

We were able to start approaching the community by involving a community health officer, Imoro Toyibu. He was from the Sodom and Gomorrah community and trained in environmental health in northern Ghana. I had just hired him ... and I was excited to have a link into the community. He led us into the community and convinced the people (because he was one of them) to enter into conversations with the government [and this project’s research director].

The project had the full political support of the former mayor and current mayor, as well as the new Minister of Sanitation. The Sodom and Gomorrah community was fierce and violent and did not trust the government at all; it was a no-go area. This is because the government made a lot of promises that were not

fulfilled. The people also felt insecure because they thought the government was bent on getting them out of the area they occupied. (Gold, Audra. Q&A with Dr. Simpson A. Boateng, the former Director of Public Health, Accra Metropolitan Assembly (posted June 4, 2018), available at <https://jphmpdirect.com/2018/06/04/qa-simpson-boateng/>)

In June 2015, heavy flooding that killed hundreds of people in Accra was attributed to Old Fadama, and the AMA bulldozed the portion of the settlement that was encroaching on the river. The media captured images of violence and signs such as “Before 2016 You’ll See ‘Buku Harm’ [Boko Haram] In Ghana.” Residents rioted in response to having their homes demolished. In July 2015, the AMA hosted the first meeting with community leaders, facilitated by Batsa. As Boateng described:

We had a meeting in my office with Imoro, the Catholic Sisters, and the community leaders. This first meeting was very tense, but, gradually, they have become our friends. Normally, the AMA would make a decision and impose it on the people. The cross-sector collaborations approach involved everybody and made them part of the decision-making process; therefore, they see it as their own. And the government showed good faith and inclusiveness by coming to the meetings and discussing the projects with the community. That is one reason why this project is working.

Also, including the Catholic Sisters helped because they are respected and are seen as leaders. As I’ve mentioned, the community had a high level of mistrust of the government, but including the Catholics and involving the community in the initiative allowed for an effective collaboration. And it is working very well. (Gold, Audra. Q&A with Dr. Simpson A. Boateng, the former Director of Public Health, Accra Metropolitan Assembly (posted June 4, 2018), available at <https://jphmpdirect.com/2018/06/04/qa-simpson-boateng/>)



Video 2 Partners in government agencies. Video available at www.cambridge.org/Kritz_2nd_edition

From the beginning, the stakeholders expressed their frustration with short-term international development interventions that took time and resources from the community, but “nothing changed.” They shared a different perspective that cut across technical sectors. They took a challenge-focused approach, and their goal was to address the root cause of the challenges facing the settlement. In this heavily conflicted environment, with the fear of AMA bulldozers, a government policy against slum upgrading, and ongoing resettlement efforts that led to violence, the early stakeholders exhibited significant courage in joining this research study.

The PAR proceeded as follows: the research director introduced the concept of cross-sector collaboration and trained Batsa on the evidence base and how to serve as facilitator. They were the research team and worked with the initial research participants in a purposive, consensus-based process to expand the collaboration. In an iterative process, the research team continued to introduce the concept of cross-sector collaboration and educate the stakeholders about the existing evidence. The stakeholders used the evidence to inform their decision making – either to validate their decisions or, when they departed from the evidence base, as a prompt to explain to the research team why they were doing so. This PAR process created a “stakeholder platform,” a forum for discussions between different stakeholders to identify and prioritize community issues and develop solutions (Figure 2). The PAR process taught participants to stand in the shoes of others, learn from one another, develop a shared understanding of the challenge, and work together.



Figure 2 Stakeholder meeting

As the collaboration took shape, the PAR process continuously expanded the number of participants. The process allowed government officials to interface with the chiefs – the tribal elders – of sixteen tribes of Old Fadama. Through a series of focus group discussions (FGDs), the research participants identified numerous priorities: sanitation, community violence, the need to support vulnerable populations of kayayei women who carry goods in the markets (typically balanced on their heads), solid waste management, and a clinic. Their first priority, sanitation, led to a sanitation strategy and latrine and bathhouse project.

A local Catholic sister, Sr. Rita Ann Kusi, HDR, joined the research team as community liaison, and she and Batsa worked with community leaders (chiefs and others) to conduct a community survey of fifty-nine research participants to expand the community stakeholders and design a public latrine and bathhouse project. The latrine and bathhouse installation created a local policy change, and this is where the results became surprising: local sanitation businesses learned of the project, saw it as workable, and wanted to participate in the policy change. On their own initiative and with their own resources, the businesses began to install latrines and bathhouses in Old Fadama, creating a path to local sustainability and freeing the stakeholders to address the next priorities, creating new strategies and projects.

This Element describes in detail how the PAR process expanded the number of stakeholders from three to three hundred research participants. The initial results are consolidated into a PAR intervention that incorporates results from the process as well as the stakeholders' first strategy, sanitation, and project, latrine and bathhouse installation. The Element then describes how the PAR process was replicated multiple times, creating novel results on a low budget and presenting new avenues for resolving complex challenges in Ghana. This Element is organized as follows.

Section 2 describes the robust field of cross-sector collaboration in developed countries, and the nascent evidence from developing countries. This section highlights and synthesizes the evidence to explain the interdisciplinary research approach to create a model for addressing complex challenges – the challenges of Old Fadama – at their root cause.

Section 3 contains the research context, including a brief historical, political, environmental, and social description of Old Fadama. The PAR methods and results of each PAR phase are described in detail.

Section 4 presents a flowchart of the PAR intervention and an evaluation of PAR as a tool for creating and supporting cross-sector collaboration. The section also explains how the latrine installation project shaped the collaboration process.

Section 5 discusses the continued work of the collaboration, 2018–2022. Stakeholder decision making about the additional priorities (community violence, solid waste management, and a clinic) was used to refine the PAR intervention and plan network analysis.

Section 6, the Conclusion, describes the theoretical and policy significance of this project, and how the process will be further scaled with government support.

2 Why Cross-sector Collaboration?

Cross-sector collaboration occurs when governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), communities, and citizens come together to achieve more than they could if they worked alone (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006). Challenging to research and practice, this sort of collaboration is recommended when there is a clear advantage to be gained, for example, when complex challenges have defeated sectoral efforts (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015). In 2015, the Old Fadama informal settlement of Accra presented just such an environment. Boateng had already identified many sectoral international development projects that had failed. Waste-picking machines installed by an international NGO at the nearby e-waste dump were unused (see Figure 3). Repeated cholera outbreaks were traced to the slum. Large infrastructure development projects in northern Ghana failed to attract Old Fadama residents back to their homes and communities of origin. Boateng attributed these failures to the fact that they were all sectoral approaches. The cholera epidemic was a driving force for the stakeholders to take a new approach: to create a process for addressing Old Fadama’s complex challenges at their root.

2.1 Complex Challenges

In the United States and Europe, the study of complex challenges began in the 1970s, when they were characterized as “wicked problems” (Rittel & Webber, 1973). These challenges are recognizable by their seemingly contradictory requirements, with complex interdependencies that take significant time and sustained effort even to define. Rittel and Webber (1973) transformed the thinking with the idea that a formulation of these kinds of problems was, necessarily, the solution to these problems, because the solution creation is what leads to definition. The leadership literature describes complex challenges as “adaptive” – because of their complexity, stakeholders may not only perceive the solutions differently but may even have difficulty agreeing on the problem (Heifetz, 1994).



Figure 3 View of Old Fadama and municipal and e-waste dump

By contrast, Rittel and Webber (1973) identified “tame” challenges as those that a manager, who had the right education and competencies, could understand and solve through a formulaic process. The leadership literature calls these “technical” challenges, those that groups or a technical community would perceive and tend to design a solution the same way (Heifetz, 1994).

According to Rittel and Webber and Heifetz, understanding complex challenges comes through a deep knowledge of context, and the context is used to give the problem scope and to understand what solutions are possible. Solutions are best identified according to individual and group interests, values, and ideologies through a process involving multiple parties who are equipped, interested, and able to create the solutions.

2.2 Cross-sector Collaboration

The study of complex challenges evolved into the study of cross-sector collaboration. This new field began to develop rapidly in 2006, aided by an important literature review by Bryson, Crosby, and Stone that coalesced the fragmentary evidence from many disciplines into a picture catapulting the research funding and interest at the municipal, state, and federal levels in the United States. They defined cross-sector collaboration as “the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one