



Gyasi, Kadir Osman

**Determinants of Success of Collective Action on Local Commons**

An Empirical Analysis of Community–Based Irrigation Management in Northern Ghana

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The growing recognition of the potential of local institutions to assure the sustainability of natural resources has motivated the devolution of the management and responsibility over local commons from the state to local user groups. In Ghana, farmer management of irrigation systems has become an important component of policies for irrigation development and reform. While numerous examples of successful local irrigation management exist in different parts of the world, there are several cases of failure that sometimes lead to a complete system breakdown. Using a dataset from community managed irrigation schemes in northern Ghana, this study examines the reasons why communities differ in terms of economic, distributional and environmental outcomes of the devolution program. Among others, the study finds the resistance of landlords to a land redistribution policy to have a detrimental effect on the success of collective action for local management of the irrigation schemes. The ability of the user groups to tackle local asymmetries for promoting equity and forming appropriate institutions to motivate cooperative behavior is essential for achieving sustainable local management of the irrigation schemes.

*Contents:* Devolution – Collective Action – Participation – Community Irrigation Management – Northern Ghana.

The Author: Kadir Osman Gyasi received his MPhil degree in Agricultural Economics from the University of Ghana, Legon in 1998. He carried out his research at the Center for Development Research at the University of Bonn. Before joining the Department of Economic and Technological Change at the University of Bonn, the author worked as an economist at the Savanna Agricultural Research Institute of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in Ghana. He successfully completed his PhD in 2005. His research interests include household economics, resource economics, institutional economics and rural development.

