

REPORT ON CONSULTATION WITH JOURNALISTS FOR BUSINESS ADVOCACY

**CONSULTATIVE FORA ON ASSESSING TWO DECADES
OF DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN
GHANA**

**ORGANISED BY: INSTITUTE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDIES &
MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT & RURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

**SPONSORED BY: KAB CONSULT & GHANA JOURNALIST
ASSOCIATION**

DATE: 19TH NOVEMBER, 2009

TABLE OF CONTENT	PAGE
1.0 Introduction.....	2
2.0 Rationale for Consultation.....	4
2.1 Methodology.....	4
3.0 Presentations and Discussions.....	6
3.1 Reviewing Twenty Years of Decentralization and Local Level Development.....	
3.2 Plenary Discussions.....	7
3.3 Recommendations and Proposals for Improving Decentralization.....	8
4.0 Closing Session.....	13
 LIST OF ANNEXES	
Annex 1: Decentralization Review Progress.....	14
Annex 2: List of Participants.....	15

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Assembly system of local governance was introduced in 1988 in Ghana. Over the years, various issues have arisen in the course of implementation. The present government has indicated its intention to review twenty years of decentralization to identify how best to accelerate the pace and facilitate effective and efficient local governance. To this end, a project for a stakeholder consultation process to review twenty years of decentralization and the assembly system was formulated.

The objective of the Consultative Process on Decentralization Project is to engage identifiable stakeholder groups in a review twenty years of decentralization and the assembly system, with a view to assessing the conceptual issues, distilling lessons and generating recommendations for the way forward.

It is intended that the project should:

- provide a wide range of opportunities for all sections of the population to participate, contribute to and feel that their issues have been taken into account;
- enhance a sense of ownership and recognition of the direction that is being taken in relation to decentralization; and
- acknowledge any peculiar experiences, good practices and priorities that different sections of the population may have with a view to making decentralization more effective.

The intended outcome of the Project is that the achievements, good practices and lessons from the twenty year experience of the assembly system would have been generated and recommendations for making decentralization and local governance more effective, provided.

To achieve its set objectives, the project has undertaken the following main activities:

- i. Ongoing identification, collation, analysis and documentation of expert review papers, results of consultations, reports, meetings and recommendations for reviewing the decentralization process;
- ii. Ten (10) regional consultations with an open forum format;
- iii. Consultations with Special interest groups including:
 - a) Regional Ministers

- b) Traditional Authorities Report
- c) Parliamentarians
- d) Women's Coalitions
- e) Community Women and Market Women
- f) General Agricultural Workers Union
- g) Presiding Members
- h) Political Parties
- i) Persons with Disability
- j) Journalists for Business Advocacy

iv. Position papers have also been received from various parties outside the interest group consultations and regional fora.

The regional consultations have yielded considerable fruit, validated concerns with the local government system, provided practical illustrations and generated suggestions about how to address issues such as the appointment of chief executives, citizens-government engagement.

A main national stakeholder conference is scheduled for the 14th and 15th January, 2010. It is important that all of the information that has been generated is made available to the Ghanaian public to:

- Keep citizens informed as to what transpired;
- Add to the store of knowledge and documentation on decentralization and local governance in Ghana;
- Communicate events, thinking and trends to an international audience interested in decentralization and local governance in Ghana; and
- Generally make the information available for reference and research purposes.

This report is on the consultation with the Network of Journalists for Business Advocacy (JBA).

2.0 RATIONALE FOR THE CONSULTATION

The Network of Journalists for Business Advocacy (JBA) has worked in the area of advocacy for small businesses which has involved engaging with assemblies in their role in providing an enabling local economic environment. Their advocacy has involved issues around fee-fixing, infrastructural development, revenue collection, services, markets and security. It is in this regard, that a consultation with JBA as an input into the national stakeholder review process was conducted on the 19th of November, 2009 at the International Press Centre.

The programme was facilitated by Dr. Esther Ofei-Aboagye and coordinated by KAB Governance Consult and the Ghana Journalists Association. The programme consisted of (a) a presentation of the issues (b) a plenary discussion and (c) formulation of recommendations for presentation to the National Stakeholder Conference.

2.1 Methodology

The method used included

- Discussion: participants' expectations and experiences of decentralization
- Presentation: Issues in decentralization and conduct of review and progress to date
- Plenary discussion: Issues arising from presentation
- Group discussions: Advocacy for Responsive Decentralization: Recommendations for the National Stakeholder Conference on Decentralization. Focus on :
 - ✓ Promoting local economic development
 - ✓ Managing information and working with the media for effective local governance
 - ✓ Accelerating responsive and accountable decentralization

3.0 PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Reviewing Twenty Years of Decentralization and Local level Development

The Director of the Institute of Local Government Studies, Dr. Esther Ofei-Aboagye shared with participants government's current effort toward reviewing the decentralization process. Dr Ofei-Aboagye's presentation examined the following issues:

i. ***General Overview of What Has Been Done***

- The assembly system of local governance established with the passage of PNDCL 207 has been in place since 1988. The assemblies have legislating, executing, budgeting, planning and rating authority.
- Resources have been made available to the assemblies for development through the establishment of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF).
- The Fourth Republican Constitution also identifies political, administrative and financial decentralization as a channel for fostering democracy and popular participation in decentralization. It provides broad guidelines on institutional arrangements, functions and responsibilities of actors and resources
- The passage of various Acts such as Act 462, Act 455, Act 480 and the establishment of instruments of the different districts have rolled out the framework within which the assemblies would work
- Implementation of other activities aimed at moving the process forward such as :
 - The development of an issues paper in 1999, after a decade of implementation
 - The formulation of a national decentralization action plan
 - The development of the functional organizational assessment tool (FOAT) and the provision of a district development facility (DDF) to coordinate development resources to district assemblies in a manner that rewards good performance
 - Development of a plan to de-couple local government dimensions from the central civil service.
- However, the need for a coherent policy framework, pulling all of the requirements for accelerating decentralization together to its logical end was still required.

ii. ***How Have We Fared For 20 Years Under Decentralization?***

- The assembly system has open up the country and instil in the populace the need to participate in governance and at the local level.
- Reconsideration of issues of accountability of chief executives, links and relationships between the various actors, the working of appointed membership system and the capacity of assembly members to perform their representation and feedback functions.
- Concerns about incomplete functioning of the local government sub-structures, inadequate capacity in terms of full complements of staff, weakness of district departments, the low levels of internally generated revenues, planning and budgeting challenges and unsatisfactory conduct of public hearings.

- The need to work out relationships between local authorities and MDAs; the scope of responsibilities; and reporting mechanisms.
- Emerging issues include reinforcing the checks and balances built into the system to ensure accountability to people, the powers of chief executives, ineffective functioning of the assembly committee systems, and adequate space and voice for popular participation.
- Considerable unfinished business - composite budgeting, the activation of the local government service, functioning works departments, satisfactory public relations and complaints committees and the demand for services such as processing pension benefits, business registration amongst others by Ghanaians at the local level.
- The formulation of laws that contradicted the spirit of decentralization as envisaged by the Constitution.
 - laws establishing services such as Education and Health;
 - laws that reinforced centralised control of such processes as public procurement and internal audit
- The need for clear articulation of the role of the region and the mode of consultation between assemblies and traditional authorities, economic and social groupings and interest groups.
- Impact of the national and international environments and socio-economic, political, technical and administrative dimensions on the work of assemblies. Key areas affected include environmental sanitation and waste management; fostering capacity for information and knowledge management; and the need for a social agenda including gender, disability, people living with HIV AIDs.
- The move to a rights-based orientation, prioritizing horizontal and downwards accountability and participation of all sections of the population and pro-poor development agenda.

iii. Why Are We Now Reviewing The System?

- To ensure wide ownership of the process and remain true to the constitutional reason for decentralizing public administration.
- The Manifesto pledge of the NDC government to organize a broad national Stakeholders Conference on Decentralization review the twenty (20) years of implementation and make proposals for the way forward and the need for wide national consensus on what needs to be prioritized for action.
- General consensus by other political parties on the need for some reform to improve the performance of decentralization and local governance. Attempts made by previous

government to formulate a decentralization policy framework, for which the Cabinet had recommended further consultation.

- Stakeholder consultation on the review presents a direct channel for their input. Thus the need to provide as widely as possible, opportunities for various sections of the population, irrespective of education, gender, geographical location, political affiliation, age or religion to contribute and have their issues taken into account.

iv. The Review Process

- The review process consists of a series of consultative and reflective activities intended to provide Ghanaians further opportunity to make inputs for the conference.
- The process consists of four main categories of activities, conducted concurrently.
 - ✓ Ten (10) regional level consultations organized under the auspices of the regional coordinating councils (RCCs) at which identifiable interest groups made submissions and the general public invited to make inputs.
 - ✓ Consultations with particular interest groups namely traditional authorities, women's groups and coalitions, the disabled, parliamentarians and political parties.
 - ✓ Invitation and receipt of written submissions and position papers from think-tanks, networks and coalitions and bodies that have the capacity and interest to do so.
 - ✓ An ongoing, expert review of relevant reports and documents generated over the two decades.
- A National stakeholder consultation in 2010 where all the issues distilled from the various consultative fora would be brought on board for discussions.
- A master report will be developed and sent to cabinet. Cabinet will then come up with a National Decentralization Policy Frame work based on which Decentralization Action Plan will be developed.

v. Harvesting the Gains of Consultation

Clearly identifiable outputs and outcomes from the stakeholder review exercises include

- An issues/paper/master document collating all the key issues as is currently known to be used as a starting point for the regional consultation process
- A consolidated stakeholder review process report with proposals for the acceleration of decentralization
- A revised decentralization policy framework

- A 2nd National Decentralization Action Plan and
- Inputs on priorities for the envisaged legislative and constitutional review processes.

3.2 Plenary Discussions

The key issues arising out of the presentation included:

- The centralization of internal audit: how do we build capacity for assemblies to gain and use that information? The competency levels of presiding members must be ensured to let internal audit fulfill the managerial control role.
- Ordinary people have not participated fully in the process due to the non-functioning of the unit committees; participation has been frustrating and people have withdrawn
- Political interference in the decentralization process and the challenge of partisanship. The nation has to undertake in-depth search to see how to de-link political parties from the local government system.
- Fiscal decentralization, District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) and the systematic and strategic development of capacities of assemblies for mobilizing internally generated revenue. There appears to be inordinate emphasis on external inflows. The level of resources generated from public toilets demonstrates the potential for mobilizing good levels of revenue.
- To what extent has the review process engaged assembly members?
- The capacity for innovative thinking must be encouraged. The people are not thinking on their feet or being responsive and resourceful. There also appears artisans experience differential rates whether paid at the assembly or when the collector comes to you.
- Non-payment of assembly members renders the activity unattractive and de-motivates those who would want to work.
- The centralized deductions from the Common Fund do not fundamental facilitate development
- Political will must be ensured to implement any policy reforms that evolve from this process. The review process and resulting reports must be supported by cabinet. How do we assure this feasibly? Civil society ownership, adoption by the president and inter-ministerial coordinating mechanisms.

- The election or appointment of DCEs: can election be possible in this current political arrangement? Given our unitary system, this presents a challenge. Elections are easier in federal system.
- The competence of structures at local government level. More often than not, DCDs as heads of administration are often younger and less experienced than the professionals at the local level. This presents conflicts and kills the spirit
- Our assembly system has been politicised. Political parties are sponsoring people and local government has served as a training ground. This should be acknowledged and taken advantage of.
- Party polling executives should be encouraged to stand for unit committee elections.
- If DCEs are going to be elected, a lot of issues have to be resolved. What register is going to be used for the elections? Are we doing these elections alongside that of the members of parliament (MPs)? Are they going to be sworn in on 7th January? Are the electorate going to be drawn from the ruling party or universal adult suffrage? Who are the people going to contest? Who will endorse them? Where are their salaries going to be drawn from?
- How is this review going to be ensured or insulated against recentralization? There are institutional contradictions in the public services. If you look at services that could be decentralized have not been, how can they be carried along?
- The rhetoric of power to the people has not materialised. MPs and DCEs who would have been custodians of power are in a tug of war over resources. Resources and development projects are being used to settle political scores. How do we achieve equitable distribution of the national cake since some areas are still deprived?
- The government appointee mechanism should be used to facilitate technical capacity in the assembly.

3.3 Recommendations and Proposals for Improving Decentralization

Participants through a group work session made the following recommendations:

- i. *Promoting Local Economic Development*

- The assemblies should involve SMEs and rate payers in the decision-making process. There is the need for more forceful engagement. So that SMEs will feel part of the process and will not default
- There should be structured medium for dialoguing. It is only when there is mutual understanding of the perspectives of the other party that successful consensus can be build
- There should be a transparent and accountable mode of expenditure of the proceeds. More accountability and transparency.
- Public private partnerships: resources available to local authorities are insufficient to carry out their remit. Effective engagement with private sector. The bead industry in the Eastern Region – perceived as itinerant traders with no permanent structures are being exhibited in the United States. Assemblies should focus on their comparative advantage.
- Development should be promoted with attainable targets. The assemblies should be able to share their visions and the role of small enterprises in these clear achievable, development targets.
- Better identification and marketing of unique opportunities in their localities
- Privatisation of revenue collection with clear targets; in the KVIP crises, it was clear that this could work. However, assemblies must be able to have the data and capacity to establish realistic targets. While some aspects of revenue generation should be privatized, a revenue-generation strategy should be developed to identify which aspects should be privatised, building the capacity of revenue collectors' capacities, appropriate motivation and target-setting.
- Some assemblies need to be innovative and creative in getting resources. The non-development of falls (e.g. Boti Falls). If the good will is there, assemblies should not be afraid of public-private partnerships for this purpose.
- The need to identify KVIPs as an economic activity that assemblies should promote? Now in the system, there is the encouragement of household toilets. Public places of convenience would be used for travellers.
- Ghana Tourist Board's initiative to engage the traditional authorities and district assemblies in tourist initiatives.

ii. *Managing Information and Working With the Media for Effective Local Governance*

Key challenges identified include:

- Assemblies do not know how to use the media, explain issues to journalists or even offer information;
- The Smaller assemblies do not have public relations; the mass recruitment of journalists by the Ministry of Information did not resolve the issue because of low conditions of service.
- Most assemblies do not know the functions of PR, do not consult the PROs in programme formulation, the PRO is not getting the information from the right source and the PRO function is not adequately resourced
- Most assemblies do not update their websites or maintain it so it is not a good source of information about the district. ICT capacity is constrained in rural communities

Recommendations made include:

- Assemblies should establish publicity sub-committee to facilitate information dissemination to plan and implement an effective communication programme
- All policy interventions of the assembly should be communicated to the people on a regular basis
- Establishment or strengthening of Public Relations and publicity offices of assemblies with ICT facilities as a main tool for effective local governance.
- For effective dissemination of information district assemblies should not discriminate against particular media houses (this often comes with changes in government)
- Assemblies should regularly involve media in the business of assemblies so as to ensure that they are properly
- Assemblies should institute channels of getting regular feedback from the public
- Communication of policy to the people is critical especially in relation to opportunities for local business. PR units of assemblies should formulate regular engagement with small business owners.
- Organograms of assemblies should be finalised with a clear indication of the place and reporting relations of the PRO and PR Units. PROs should not be glorified messengers.

PROs as professionals should also not succumb to a reduction in their standards but should insist on the right thing and establish the standards.

iii. *Accelerating Responsive and Accountable Decentralization*

- The need to strength bottom-up approach to responsive and accountable decentralization
- There are insufficient linkages between institutions especially departments and agencies; therefore these must be built
- The lack of monitoring and supervision
- Strengthening unit committees
- Human resource capacity building
- Improving consultations with the people through public for a
- Contact interaction between the unit committees and assemblies
- Infrastructure improvement must be prioritised
- Equitable distribution of development
- Committee meetings must improve
- Constant interaction with the media; a programme initiated by GTZ in radio central was solely on decentralization which provided information on new policies and local governance in practice
- Elimination of bureaucratic tendencies which appears to be a major challenge
- Government appointees must prioritize competence and expertise to ensure expert knowledge to work with. This should be taken into account with the HR capacity building.
- Who should the DCE be accountable to? The bottom-up approach must seek to involve the local people as extensively as possible.

4.0 CLOSING SESSION

DECENTRALIZATION REVIEW PROCESS

Generating Inputs



Envisaged Outputs



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

NO	NAME	CONTACT	EMAIL
1	Caesar Abagali	0244860196	eabbagali@yahoo.com
2	Albert Oppong Ansah	0242586646	ansahalbert@gmail.com
3	Edmund Quaynor	0243878839	Akwetteeyeg2009@yahoo.com
4	Saaka Mohammed	0242103700	mohammedsaaka@yahoo.com
5	George Wilson Kingson	0244822034	jokingsghana@yahoo.com
6	Kofi Ahovi	0243663650	kofiahovi@yahoo.com
7	Emmanuel Halm	0242210989	payassroch@hotmail.com
8	Annoh-Dompreh Francis	0244702572	Dompreh2001@yahoo.com
9	Phillip Forson	0244477576	unkjoe@yahoo.com
10	Agnes Mungulitum	0243635201	Blemayo22@yahoo.com
11	DorothyWard	0242753361	dothyward@yahoo.com
12	E. Kwamina Onumah	0243513720	ebenoma@yahoo.com
13	George A. Naykene	0204256726	gnaykene@yahoo.com
14	Wisdom Peter Awuku	0244366910	kofiageshe@yahoo.com
15	Zambaga Rufai Saminu	0242377558	cococedis@yahoo.com
16	Suleiman Mustapha	0241497712	suleidauda@yahoo.com
17	Georgina Ama Ankumah	0244616993/0209283541	Ginacom46@yahoo.com
18	Seth Krampah	0244725688	krampahseth@yahoo.com
19	Hannah Asomaning	0244547980	Hans57ty@yahoo.com
20	Nathaniel Glover-Meni	0208253886	glovermeni@yahoo.com