

## Theories in Community–Driven Development Operations: A Case Study of Ghana Local Government System

**Kwadwo Adusei–Asante.  
Peter Hancock.**

*School of Psychology and Social Science, Edith Cowan University  
270 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup, Western Australia*

*j.adusei-asante@ecu.edu.au  
p.hancock@ecu.edu.au*

---

### **ABSTRACT:**

**T**his paper critiques one of the notions that underpins Community–Driven Development (CDD) operations: which is that developing nations with high functioning inter-government and public service sectors (decentralisation) are better placed to implement CDD programs. We draw on secondary data to explore the World Bank's indicators for measuring a country's decentralisation within the framework of our experience of Ghana's local government system. We argue that the indicators are imprecise and have the potential of impacting negatively on implementation and outcomes of CDD programs. It is recommended that we look beyond constitutional provisions and one–dimensional indicators in the future to be able to make the surety claims that have been refuted in this paper. Finally, future researchers need to include a specific focus on issues affecting the functioning of the sub–structures of a country's inter–government system. From this focus more realistic analysis of political systems can be drawn.

**Keywords:** *Community–Driven Development, Ghana, Local Government, Decentralisation, Development Theory.*

## Introduction

In the last decade Community–Driven Development (CDD) programs have been embraced as an effective Programme–Based Approach (PBA) to delivering International Development Aid. The World Bank defines CDD as ‘a development approach that gives control over planning decisions and investment resources to community groups and local governments’ (Dongier et al 2003). Because CDD provides communities with a voice and control over all project stages, it is believed to 1) Enhance sustainability; 2) Improve efficiency and effectiveness; 3) Allow poverty reduction efforts to be taken to scale; 4) Make development more inclusive; 5) Empower poor people, build social capital, and strengthen governance; and 6) Complement market and public sector activities (Dongier et al. 2003; van Domelen 2007, 2008; Baird et al. 2009; Binswanger et al. 2010).

Owing to its many advantages, the World Bank’s investment in CDD 2000-2010 has been enormous, averaging almost USD 2 billion a year. For example, an Independent Evaluation Group review of sixty–two country assistance strategies found that CDD operations are an important part of the World Bank’s strategy in more than 74% of relevant countries (Binswanger et al. 2010). In 2008, the International Development Association’s (IDA) lending for CDD related programs averaged 17% of its total lending; while the number of CDD programs active at the IDA for the 2007–2009 period averaged over seventy–two (World Bank 2010). Although there are no recent published data on the regional distribution of the World Bank’s CDD lending, there is evidence that between 2000 and 2005, 25% went to Africa (Asian Development Bank 2006). Relative to Ghana, between 2005 and 2011, the country benefited from an USD 82 million loan facility from the World Bank’s International Development Association and the Agence Francaise Development to implement a Community-Based Project Development Project (CBRDP) (World Bank 2008).

However, CDD programs do not work in a vacuum; they are consistently underpinned by theories and concepts, although their operations may vary by country, context and objective (Mansuri & Rao 2004; Binswanger et al. 2010). Despite this, the literature appears to have paid little attention to such theories and concepts. This paper focuses on one of the theories that underpin CDD operation. We argue that the indicators are vague, imprecise and have the potential of impacting negatively on implementation and outcomes of CDD programs.

The paper is based on Ghana’s decentralisation system and is an extract from a PhD dissertation. It draws mainly on the review and analysis of relevant academic literature and secondary data from Ghana’s Electoral Commission. It also draws on a seven months fieldwork designed to unearth the manner in which Ghana’s CBRDP was impacted by the project’s application of contested theories and concepts. Three sections are presented. The first section discusses CDD conceptual framework for engaging local institutions. To contextualise the argument presented in the paper, the second section presents a brief overview of Ghana’s local government system. The last part of the paper examines each of the four indicators of highly functional decentralisation system. Argued within the context of Ghana’s local government system, the section argues that the country’s system is definitely not high functioning.

### CDD Framework for Engaging Local Institutions

The World Bank and other proponents of CDD programs argue that better outcomes are guaranteed, if the implementing country’s existing inter–government institutions are effective; and/or have

genuine commitment to decentralisation (Crook & Manor 1998; World Bank 2002; 2006; Whitford & Kavita 2006; Binswanger et al. 2010). In the words of Dongier et al. (2003, p. 23):

Local governments can be critical to the success and sustainability of [CDD]. When local government interacts with communities and informal groups in a participatory way, it is possible to achieve economies of scale in producing and providing goods and services... Local governments are needed to support operation and maintenance of services, and for continuing funding of community groups.

As the figure below illustrates, Dongier et al. (2003) identified three institutional alternatives for CDD programs. While each varies operationally, their contextual (in)appropriateness depends on the state of the country's decentralisation. While the World Bank's scholars provide guidelines for each option, they seem to favour the first: partnership between Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and local governments. They argue that because it engages existing (elected and functioning) local government structures, it has better prospects for galvanising local support for CDD programs. By so doing, they further argue that it strengthens the national system of inter-governmental transfer of resources and allows resource allocation decisions to be accountable to local priorities (see World Bank 2006; Binswanger et al. 2010).

The World Bank distinguishes between low and high-functioning inter-government systems (decentralisation) and categorizes some African countries by the approach. As Table 1.1 shows below, the World Bank's indicators of a high-functioning local or inter-government systems include contexts where there exist: 1) Decentralization laws create local government structures with autonomy in resource management; 2) Local elections; 3) Fiscal decentralization and; 4) Devolution of service delivery. Accordingly, the World Bank has put forward operational strategies appropriate for both the low and high-functioning contexts: the Leading, the Conservative or Lagging and the Matching Strategies (Dongier et al. 2003; Binswanger et al. 2010).

The 'Leading Strategy' is used in low-functioning inter-governmental system countries that have dysfunctional government structures. Under this strategy, a community-based or driven project becomes an initiative that pushes the boundaries of the institutional environment and accelerates change in the political, fiscal, administrative or social aspects of local governance (Binswanger et al. 2010). The 'Conservative or Lagging Strategy' is largely employed in a low-functioning inter-governmental system with a deconcentrated system. The strategy is cautious in allowing the country's local government institutions the full power to set priorities, manage resources and implement subprojects. It does not take full advantage of the opportunities to promote the role local of government in program implementation (Binswanger et al. 2010).

The 'Matching Strategy', is employed in a countries categorized as having high-functioning inter-governmental systems, with a consolidating decentralised system. The World Bank considers such countries as being better placed to successfully execute CDD programs (see Serrano-Berthet et al. 2010; Binswanger et al. 2010). By implication, Ghana's local government system, which is considered high functioning, would require no adjustment for the implementation of a CDD program. However, as argued in the next section, this 'surety claim and indicators' do not give a true picture of Ghana's stagnated local government system.

## Ghana's Local Government System: A Brief Overview

Local government in Ghana dates as far back to the pre-independence era through what was known as Indirect Rule, which centred on native authorities made up of Traditional Chiefs or local royalty (Ayee 1999; Institute of Local Government Studies & Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development and Environment, 2006). Although both the pre and post-independence (1957) periods have witnessed several local government legal and constitutional amendments, the most significant was the 1988 Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Local Government Law 207, Legislative Instrument 1589. This was the landmark legislation that provided the legal framework for the beginning of Ghana's decentralised local government system of today. In the current Constitution (1992), the PNDC Law 207 has been strengthened as an entrenched provision in Chapter Twenty, while Article 240 specifically provides the broad framework for the Ghana's decentralisation. In the last decade, the passages of other relevant laws have also augmented Article 240<sup>1</sup>.

Ghana's local government structure consists of Regional Coordinating Councils and a four-tier and three-tier Municipal/ District Assembly system (see Figure 1.2). Within the structure, District/Municipal Assemblies (DAs) appear to be the most 'influential' as they are entrusted with wide political and administrative authority at the local level (Gyimah-Boadi 2009). For example, Section 10 (5) of the Local Government Act 462 stipulates that all programs and projects, including those approved under the District Development Plan and other development programs by Government Ministries and Departments and non-governmental organisations, are supposed to be coordinated and executed by/or under the supervision of the DAs. They also have responsibility for eighty-six functions; sole control over certain public services; and the prerogative to make decisions regarding some executive and policy issues (Tettey 2006; Gyimah-Boadi 2009; Ofei-Aboagye 2009; Ahwoi 2010). Despite having these powers, in reality, as argued below, DAs seem to be controlled and used for various political manoeuvrings by the central government (Crawford 2004; Sumberg & Okali 2006; Antwi-Boasiako 2010).

While constitutionally mandated to be the hub of development at the local level, the operations of Ghana's DAs offer many loopholes for political machinations. Despite the fact that Article 248 (2) of the Constitution requires that DAs be non-partisan, the system is highly politicised (Tettey 2006; Gyimah-Boadi 2009). Ahwoi (2010, p. 62) argues that the politicisation of the system stems from the modelling of Ghana's local government structure on that of Canada: 'partisan central government superimposed on a non-partisan local government system'. Others blame the politicisation of the DAs on the constitutional provision in Article 243 (2) that allows the President to appoint District Chief Executives (DCEs) rather than being elected (Tettey 2006; Antwi-Boasiako 2010). DCEs are responsible for the day-to-day performance of the executive and administrative functions of the DAs and the chief representative of, and the principal executor of, the central government's programs in the district. Appointed for two terms of four years only, DCEs are nominated by the President, but require approval of two-thirds of the Assembly Members

---

<sup>1</sup> These include but are not limited to: the Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462); the Local Government Service Act 2003 (Act 656); the District Assemblies Common Fund Act 455, the National Development Planning Systems Act 480 and the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies Standing Orders (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1992; Kyei-Baffour 2009; Antwi-Boasiako 2010; Ahwoi 2010).

present and voting (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1992; ILGS & MLGDE 2006; Tettey 2006; Ahwoi 2010; Antwi–Boasiako 2010).

It has been suggested the constitutional provision that allows for the appointment of DCEs should be amended so that they get into office through popular votes. In the view of the pro–amendment scholars (see Tettey 2006; Gyimah–Boadi 2009; Antwi–Boasiako 2010), revising that constitutional provision will make DCEs accountable to the local people. They argue further that the status quo allows DCEs to be loyal only to the President rather than the local people they serve. However, Ahwoi (2010) disagrees and argues that if DCEs were elected, the entire local government structure would be politicised, as political party cronies with little or no administrative experience would be voted to manage the system. While successive governments and politicians have promised to amend the particular constitutional provision, they appear to lack the political will to carry it out (New Patriotic Party Manifesto, 2008; National Democratic Congress Manifesto, 2008; Ex-President J.E.A. Mills First Sessional Address, cited in Asante 2009). The main reason, some scholars have observed, is that the status quo offers politicians the convenience of political manoeuvrings at the local level (Crawford 2004; Sumberg & Okali 2006; Tettey 2006; Gyimah–Boadi 2009; Kyei–Baffour 2009; Antwi–Boasiako 2010).

### **Is Ghana’s Local Government System ‘High–Functioning’?**

The discussions so far show that while there are constitutional provisions for a decentralised local government in Ghana, the system appears to be highly politicised. Interestingly, while Kyei–Baffour (2009, p. 32), and others (Asante 2009; Ahwoi 2010; Antwi–Boasiako 2010; Ghana Constitutional Review Commission Report 2011), assert that Ghana’s decentralisation process has stagnated and needs an overhaul, the World Bank considers it as high–functioning and better placed to implement CDD programs (Table 1.1). Below, we challenge this and criticise the indicators as vague and lacking robustness. Each of the World Bank’s four indicators is considered in turn.

#### **I. Decentralisation laws [that] create Autonomous Local Government Structures**

According to Crawford (2004, p. 32), autonomy of local governments refers to their ability to ‘initiate and coordinate local development’. Although Ghana’s 1992 Constitution (Article 240, 2b) and the Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462) provide for the autonomy of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (local authorities), the statutes appear to be inherently contradictory. Several examples will illustrate this. First, whereas the Local Government Act 462 stipulates that the District Assemblies (DAs) are responsible for the development at the local level, Article 10 (3) requires that their Medium Term Development Plans and budgets be approved by the central government (Tettey 2006; Ahwoi 2010). Section 88 of Act 462 also limits the amount of loans DAs can contact to only GHC 2000<sup>2</sup>; any amount above that requires the approval of the central government in accordance with the Financial Administration Act 2003 (Act 654). Given these ‘barrier statutes’, the ability [and autonomy] of DAs to undertake independent and creative programs is apparently restricted (Ahwoi 2005; Tettey 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Approximately USD 1100.

As earlier indicated, the autonomy of local authorities is further atrophied by the Local Government Act 462, which gives the President the authority to appoint 30% of its membership. Gyimah–Boadi (2009) argues that the law invariably advances strong partisan politics within the local authorities, as the appointments [tend to be] characterised by political scheming and ethnocentrism, while little premium is placed on technical competence and integrity of the officers (Democracy Watch 2005, cited in Gyimah–Boadi 2009). Others argue that Act 462 encourages allegiance of Presidential appointees to the central government and their political parties, rather than to the local people (Tettey 2006; Ahwoi 2005, 2010; Antwi–Boasiako 2010). Interestingly, DAs also do not have the power to recruit and retain their own employees, relying on the Head of the Civil Service and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Environment (MLGRDE) to provide staff (Tettey 2006). While the Local Government Service Act 2003 (Act 656) sought to address this by vesting control of employees of DAs in the local authorities, the process, as Ofei–Aboagye (2009) notes, has been hampered by various factors, including resistance to change.

While Act 462 stipulates that 70% of the DA membership be elected by popular votes, the President [under the same Act] has the Power of Revocation to dissolve those s/he deems ‘non–performing’, without consulting the electorates. Thus, a President can abuse the Power of Revocation to sack local officials who may be at loggerheads with the government (Tettey 2006). In fact, Gyimah–Boadi (2009) observed in 2005 that President Kufour used it to summarily dismiss some DA officials across the country. Considered critically, Ghana’s local government sub–structures are constitutionally subjected to the whims and mercies of the President and the central government.

The central government’s manipulation of DAs is further complicated by the fact that all bye–laws enacted by local authorities are subject to the approval of the MLGRDE (Ahwoi 2010). This provision, Tettey (2006) argues, weakens the autonomy of local authorities, while allowing politicians to interfere in local governance. There have been many instances in which certain decongestion and demolition exercises of local authorities [in the interest of the country] have been halted by the central government because of their political incorrectness or implications for the outcomes parliamentary elections (Tettey 2006; Antwi Boasiako 2010).

The ensuing discussions show that the existence of local government laws does not offer enough ground to categorise a country’s decentralisation as high–functioning. In the case of Ghana, while the country’s Constitution and the Local Government 462 Act provide for the autonomy of local authorities, the same statutes advance certain centralising and contradictory tendencies as well as politically exploitable loopholes, which compromise the independence of the local government sub–structures. This is consistent with Ahwoi’s (2005) description of Ghana’s local government system as ‘recentralisation within decentralisation’ (see also Sumberg & Okali 2006; Antwi–Boasiako 2010).

## II. Fiscal Decentralisation

Fiscal decentralisation deals with how public expenditure is organised and financed between different levels of government (Owusu 2009). According to Ahwoi (2010), the indicators of a strong local government financial framework include: 1) Clear assignment of responsibilities; 2) Authority to adjust revenues to needed expenditures; 3) Authority to generate sufficient local sufficient local government own revenue sources and to develop strong positive incentives to strengthen this; 4)

Developing an appropriate mix in expenditures and in revenues; 5) Efficient democratic and accountable budget procedures; 6) Appropriate financial relationship between central and local government; 7) Appropriate level of redistribution; 8) Efficient and timely transfers from central to local governments; and 9) Effective revenue collections. The underlying principle of these indicators is the ability of local governments to generate and control its revenues (Tettey 2006; Owusu 2009).

Ghana's 1992 Constitution makes provision for financial directions for local governments in Articles 245 and 252<sup>3</sup>. Despite these legislative provisions, in lieu of the nine indicators above, fiscal decentralisation appears not to have been achieved in Ghana, a fact widely acknowledged. For example, the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which was drawn up to free the country from its indebtedness, identified the lack of progress with fiscal decentralisation as a barrier to local development (Government of Ghana 2004). Owusu (2009) also argues that fiscal decentralisation lags far behind administrative and political decentralisations in Ghana, and that there is a 'vertical imbalance' between the functions of local authorities and the financial resources available to them. Ghana's Minister of Finance and Economic Planning also acknowledged this in his 2012 budget statement to the Parliament of the Republic (Government of Ghana Budget Statement 2012, p. 6). The literature identifies three factors as being responsible for the lack of fiscal decentralisation in Ghana: 1) Weak revenue base of DAs; 2) Laws, which limit the financial independence of the local government structures; and 3) Seeming unwillingness of the central government to undertake true fiscal decentralisation (Tettey 2006; Gyimah-Boadi 2009; Owusu 2009; Ahwoi 2010).

District Assemblies in Ghana have a weak financial base. Available figures indicate that 81% of their revenues come from the central government funding through the District Assembly Common Funds (DACF)<sup>4</sup>. According to Ahwoi (2010), although the law<sup>5</sup> which established the DACF requires that the central government transfers a minimum 5% of the total national revenue to the DACF; successive governments base this percentage on the total national tax revenue. Commenting on the DACF, a DCE is quoted by Owusu (2009, p. 36) as saying, "what comes is so small that the Assembly can't carry out any meaningful activity or undertake a physical project ... for the whole year you just have only one or two projects".

Despite the rhetoric of the World Bank and micro-political commentators in Ghana, local authorities do not determine how and where to utilise their DACF. Ahwoi (2010) reveals that in 2007, 41% of the DACF was pre-determined by the central government, and that while local authorities had the flexibility of determining the proportions of the use of the remaining 59%, they were limited to specific sectors. Research by Inanga and Osei-Wusu (2004) found that not all the ceded sums to local authorities get paid. Some local scholars have expressed concerns that the dependence of local authorities on central government funding limits them from taking independent, timely and responsive initiatives that address on-the-ground needs of the localities, apart from allowing for political machinations (Tettey 2006; Asante 2009; Ofei-Aboagye 2009; Kyei-Baffour 2009; Ahwoi 2010; Antwi-Boasiako 2010). While local authorities are legally allowed to levy and collect taxes, the reality is that they lack the capacity to do so effectively (Gyimah-Boadi 2009;

<sup>3</sup> The same are also catered for in Sections 43, Parts VII, VIII, IX and X of the Local Government Act 462.

<sup>4</sup> In the three Northern Regions it is 95% (Gyimah-Boadi 2009).

<sup>5</sup> District Assembly Common Fund Act 1993 (Act 455).

Ahwoi 2010). Owusu (2009) and Mahama and Otten (2008) attribute the weak tax collection tendency at the local level to the inadequate services in local government areas of jurisdiction, poverty and the reluctance of local people to pay taxes because of a perception that local authorities do very little to address their needs.

Fiscal decentralisation in Ghana is also hampered by the existence of certain laws, which subject the financial transactions of local authorities to the approval of the central government. The Financial Administration Act, 2003 (Act 654) is an example. The law, which regulates the financial management of the public sector, makes the Ministry of Finance the primary authority for the preparation, publication and control of the national budget. Other controlling interests include the Financial Administration Regulation, 2004; the Internal Audit Agency Act, 2003, Act, (Act 655); the Public Procurement Act, 2003 (Act 663); and Section 88 of the Local Government Act 462, which caps the amount of loan a DA can contract to only GHC 2000. These statutes appear to centralise financial administration, while denying local governments the needed fiscal autonomy to operate effectively (Kyei–Baffour 2006; Gyimah–Boadi 2009; Ahwoi 2010). This is further confirmed by the unwillingness of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to implement composite budgeting to allow the separation of DAs from central government budgets, although Section 10 (3) of the Local Government Act 462 enjoins them to do so. The attitude seems to indicate a clear reluctance on the part of Ghana’s central government to undertake true fiscal decentralisation (Owusu 2009).

It is important to acknowledge though that Ghana has seen some progress in fiscal decentralisation, including: 1) The merger of central and local government treasuries at the District level into one District Finance Office; 2) Decentralisation of awarding and payment for contracts up to limits set by the Minister of Finance; and 3) Establishment of District Tender Boards (Ahwoi 2010). Even so, fiscal decentralisation is yet to be achieved in Ghana as local authorities rely heavily on central government funding, while ‘tied’ by several constitutional barriers and weak revenue mobilisation abilities. Based on these revelations, it can be concluded that Ghana does not measure–up to the second indicator of a high–functioning decentralised system.

### III. Local Government Elections

The World Bank’s third indicator of a highly functional inter–government system relates to local elections. It is argued here that local government election is not a robust indicator for measuring a country’s level of decentralisation. The reason is that while local government elections have been held in Ghana since 1978, the process appears not to be taken seriously at the government and local levels. As illustrated in Figure 1.3 below, Voter turnout to local government elections from 1994–2010 has averaged nearly 36%; significantly lower than the almost 70% patronage of presidential elections for the 1992–2008 periods (see Figure 1.4).

Before the 2010 DA elections, which coincided with the fieldwork, there were concerns about the level of preparation and readiness of the electoral commission for the polls; some even called for its postponement. For instance, Aborampah–Mensah (2010, p. 1) of the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD–Ghana) argued:

We appreciate the chain of avoidable and unavoidable circumstances leading to the unfortunate delays in getting the nation adequately prepared for the 2010 edition of the District level elections. We do recognize the harm being done to decentralised local government in Ghana with the District ... [CDD–Ghana] is also deeply disturbed by the implications of going into an election with so little visible preparation ... The entire local government election process appears to have received very little attention from key election stakeholders such as the media and the public at large .... We recommend that the electoral commission and stakeholders consider the possibility of postponing the polls”.

The elections were not postponed and were so poorly organised that they were ridiculed locally as being held in ‘batches’. The report of a Special Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate the poor organisation and the low turnout of the 2010 DA polls indicated that public trust and respect for local government institutions, as a source of information and service is low, while central government’s commitment to the entire process is also weak (Parliament of the Republic of Ghana 2011; Asante 2009). Many of the issues raised by the report were not new as they had been earlier expressed by others (see CDD–Ghana 2003; Crawford 2004; Commonwealth Local Government Forum cited in Tettey 2006).

Ghana’s local government elections are also characterised by low involvement of women, although they constitute 51.2% percent of the population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Women’s participation in parliamentary elections as candidates are also significantly lower, it is better than their involvement in DA and Unit Committee elections. For example, in the 2010 DA elections, only 7.3 % and 6.8% of women were elected as Assembly and Unit Committee Members respectively; nearly two hundred Unit Committee positions were uncontested nationally (see Figure 1.5) and Electoral Commission (2010). While these figures show an improvement on the representation of women in previous DA elections, together with the voter turns as illustrated in the figures above, it is evident that Ghanaians do not take the process seriously. People’s indifference to the election, some have argued, stems from the lack of confidence in local governments to fulfil their needs (Tettey 2006; Asante 2009; Gyimah–Boadi 2009; Ahwoi 2010; Government of Ghana 2011).

#### IV. Devolution of Service Delivery

Devolution is the third form of administrative decentralisation<sup>6</sup>. The notion of devolution stems from the principle of subsidiarity, and aims at shortening the distance between citizens and policymakers, while ensuring that critical services are available at the local level (Tettey 2006; Ahwoi 2010). Accordingly, the Local Government Act 462 and others<sup>7</sup> provide for the establishment of several Government Departments in Metropolitan (sixteen), Municipal (thirteen) and District (eleven) Assemblies. Despite these provisions, which make administrative decentralisation obligatory for key social sector ministries, Gyimah–Boadi (2009) argues that many of them are reluctant to decentralise and devolve authority. Consequently, Ahwoi (2010) notes that five critical services and departments (Health, Fire, Forestry and Game and Wildlife, and Education) are not decentralised in Ghana. Two factors explain this.

<sup>6</sup> The other two include: Deconcentration and Delegation.

<sup>7</sup> The Civil Service Law, 1993, PNDCL 327; Local Government Service Act, 2003, Act 656; and National Development Planning Act, 1994, Act 480.

First, as discussed above, the Local Government Acts 462 and 656, appear to promote centralisation. Thus, according to Ahwoi (2010), most Government Departments in the local authorities tend to operate as de-concentrated offices of their parent Ministries in Accra, the capital (Sumberg & Okali 2006). Crawford (2004, p. 33) puts it succinctly: “there is little to suggest that District Assemblies have [any] authority ... [as they] merely act as agencies for the central government with little or no discretionary powers” Administrative decentralisation in Ghana is also hampered by the lack of infrastructure and human resources. Second, owing to the paucity of infrastructure in some parts of the country, many public servants and national service personnel continue to refuse postings to the northern and other ‘infrastructurally-deprived’ regions of the country, as they consider it as a punishment (Gyimah-Boadi 2009). As the Ghana Medical Association revealed, for three years running [2007-2009] no medical doctor accepted posting to the Upper East Region<sup>8</sup> (Ghana Medical Association 2009).

The stalled nature of administrative decentralisation in Ghana has been described by Asante (2009) and Gyimah-Boadi (2009) as contributing to the stagnation in rural development, continued rural-urban drift, the worsening of the north-south divide, and congestion in Accra. In the words of Ahwoi (2010, p. 145): “there has been no administrative decentralisation [devolution] in the real sense of the term”. Ghana remains in political and in paper may seem to be high functioning entity but the reality is far from this.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

Ghana’s inter-governmental system is not high functioning as claimed by the World Bank. While the country’s constitution and various Local Government Acts make provision for a decentralised local government system, the same statutes promote centralisation, which hinders the autonomy of local authorities, and effective fiscal and administrative decentralisation. As the figures from the electoral commission also suggested, Ghanaians appear not to take local government elections as a serious political exercise when compared with their patronage of presidential elections. It is therefore not enough to cite local government elections as a yardstick for measuring the level of a country’s decentralisation system, without stating the percentage of patronage indicative of its success or otherwise. Additionally, as this paper has shown, the fact that a country’s constitution and legal framework makes provision for decentralised local governance does not make it high functioning.

Despite the facts presented above, the World Bank and many development agencies have long presented Ghana’s inter-government system as high functioning, a projection that has influenced the choice of the country as one of the preferred destinations for donor support and foreign aid in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the grounded-realities of Ghana, as this paper has shown, appear to contradict the picture ‘development experts’ tend to paint of the country, evident in the failure of many local development programs (see Botchway 2001; Azeem et al. 2006; Adusei-Asante 2012). Therefore, we suggest that the theories which influence CDD operations and development program in general, move beyond one-dimensional and vague indicators to include a specific focus on issues affecting the functioning of recipient-countries’ local institutions. From this focus, more realistic analysis of political systems can be drawn.

---

<sup>8</sup> The doctor-patient ratio in the three Northern Regions in 2009 was 1:57, 333. The national average in 2009 was 1: 13,000.

## References

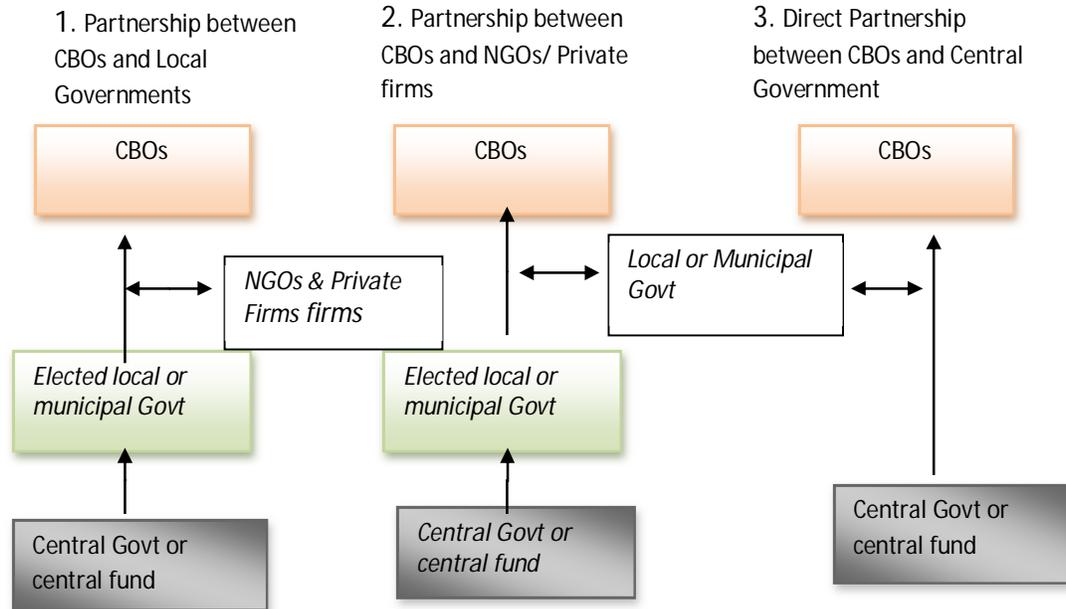
- Aborampah–Mensah, P. (2010). “Statement on preparations towards the 2010 District Assemblies elections”. Centre for Democratic Development, Accra, Ghana.
- Adusei-Asante, K. (2012). Towards Aid Effectiveness: contested theories and concepts. A case study of Ghana’s community–Based Rural Development Program. PhD Dissertation, School of Psychology and Social Science, Edith Cowan University, WA.
- Ahwoi, K. (2010). *Local Government and Decentralization in Ghana*. Accra, Ghana: Unimax Macmillan.
- Antwi–Boasiako, K.B. (2010). “Public administration: Local government and Decentralization in Ghana”. *Journal of African Studies and Development* Vol. 2(7), pp. 166–175.
- Asante P. K. (2009). “Reviving Ghana’s Stagnating Decentralization Reform Agenda”. In: Reflections on Ghana’s Decentralization: Progress Stagnation or Retrogression? Papers from a symposium. CDD–Ghana.
- Asian Development Bank (2006). *A review of Community-Driven Development and its application to the Asian Development Bank*. Manila, Philippines.
- Ayee, J.R.A. (1999) “Sub-district Structures and Popular Participation in Ghana: A Preliminary Assessment”. Paper presented at A National Conference on “A Decade of Decentralization and Local Government Reform in Ghana, Retrospects and Prospects”, September 29-October 1, 1999.
- Azeem, V. Akolgo, B., Breakell, L., Paalman, M., Poate, D., Rothmann, I. (2006). *Evaluation of DFID Country Programmes: Country Study Ghana 2000-2005*. EV662. Available online at <http://www.oecd.org/countries/ghana/36277867.pdf>.
- Baird, S., McIntosh, B. & Ozler, M. (2009). *Targeting in a Community–Driven Development Program: Applications & Acceptance in Tanzania’s TASAF*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Binswanger–M. H.P., Jacomina P. de Regt, Spector, S. (2010). *Local and Community Driven Development*, Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Botchway, K. (2001). Paradox of Empowerment: Reflections on a Case Study from Northern Ghana. *World Development* 29 (1), 135–153.
- Constitution of the Republic Ghana* (1992). Ghana Publishing Company Limited, Accra.
- Crook, R.C. & Manor, J. (1998). *Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crawford, G. (2004). “Democratic Decentralization in Ghana: Issues and Prospects”. POLIS Working Paper Number 9, February School of Politics and International Studies, Leeds University.

- Dongier, Philippe, Julie Van Domelen, Elinor Ostrom, Andrea Ryan, Wendy Wakeman, Anthony Bebbington, Sabine Alkire, Talib Esmail, and Margret Polsky. (2003). "Community Driven Development." In *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper Sourcebook*, Washington DC.
- Electoral Commission of Ghana election results. Various years. Accra, Ghana.
- Ghana Centre for Democratic Development. (2003). *2002 District Assemblies Elections in Ghana: Observers' Report*. Accra, Ghana.
- Government of Ghana (2011). *Report on Apparent Difficulties Surrounding the Just Ended District Assembly and Unit Committee Elections. Parliamentary Debates. Official Report*. Parliament of Ghana March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Col.3348
- 2012 Budget Statement, Accra, Ghana.
- Ghana Medical Association Communique (2009). Tamale 3-8 November. Available online at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/223247/1/doctors-refuse-posting-to-upper-east-region.html>.
- Gyimah–Boadi, E. (2009). "Political Decentralization: Achievements and Challenges". In: Reflections on Ghana's Decentralization: Progress Stagnation or Retrogression? Papers from a symposium. CDD–Ghana.
- Ghana Statistical Service (2012). 2010 Population and Housing Census. Summary of Final Results. Ghana Statistical Service, Accra, Ghana
- Government of Ghana (2010). *The report of a Special Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate the poor organization and the low turnout of the December 2010 local government election*. Accra, Ghana.
- Institute of Local Government Studies and Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development and Environment (2006). *A Handbook: The role of Assembly Member in Ghana's local Government System*. ILGS/ MLGRDE: Accra
- Local Government Establishment Instrument 1967, 2010.
- Local Government Act 1993, Act 462.
- Local Government Act 2003, Act 656.
- The Financial Administration Act, 2003 (Act 654)
- Financial Administration Regulation, 2004;
- The Internal Audit Agency Act 2003, Act, (Act 655)
- The Public Procurement Act, 2003 (Act 663)
- Kyei–Baffour, G. (2009). "Two Decades of Decentralization in Ghana. Practitioner's Assessment". In: Reflections on Ghana's Decentralization: Progress Stagnation or Retrogression? Papers from a symposium. CDD–Ghana.

- Mansuri, G. & Rao, V. (2004). “Community–Based and –Driven Development: A Critical Review”. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 19, (1), 1–39.
- Mahama, C. & Otten, D. (2008). *Public Perception about Local Government in Ghana. A Survey of Selected Districts in the Northern Region*. Research Report, ILGS.
- New Patriotic Party 2008 Manifesto. Accra, Ghana.
- National Democratic Congress 2008 Manifesto. Accra, Ghana.
- Ofie–Aboagye, E. (2009). “Administrative Decentralization: Implementation, Impediments and the way forward”. In: *Reflections on Ghana’s Decentralization: Progress Stagnation or Retrogression? Papers from a symposium*. CDD–Ghana.
- Owusu, G. (2009). “Fiscal Decentralization and Rural Economic Development in Ghana”. In: *Reflections on Ghana’s Decentralization: Progress Stagnation or Retrogression? Papers from a symposium*. CDD–Ghana.
- Sumberg J. & Okali, C. (2006). “Tomatoes, Decentralization and Environmental Management in Brong Ahafo, Ghana”. *Society and Natural Resources*, 19, 19-31.
- Serrano-Berthet, R., Helling, L., Van Domelen, J., Van Wicklin, W., Owen, D., Poli, M., and Cherukupalli, R. (2010). *Lessons from Africa*. In Binswanger–M. H.P., Jacomina P. de Regt, Spector, S. (2010). *Local and Community Driven Development*, Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Tettey, J.W. (2006). “Deepening Decentralization: Is Ghana ready for subsidiarity”? Presented at the CDD/FNF Third Annual Liberal Lecture.
- van Domelen, J. (2007). “Reaching the Poor and Vulnerable: Targeting Strategies for Social Funds and Other Community–Driven Programs.” *Social Protection*. Discussion Paper 0711, Washington DC: World Bank.
- (2008). “Global Perspectives on Community–Driven Development.” Paper presented at SDN Week.
- Whitford, P. & Kavita, M. (2006). “The Effectiveness of World Bank Support for Community–Based and –Driven Development” *Independent Evaluation Group*. World Bank, Washington DC.
- World Bank (2002). *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook*. World Bank, Washington DC.
- (2006). *Empowerment in Practice. From Analysis to Implementation*. World Bank, Washington DC.
- (2008). *Project Paper on a Proposed Additional Financing to the Republic of Ghana for the Community Based Rural Development Project*. World Bank, Washington DC.
- (2010). *IDA at Work: Community Driven Development—Empowering People to Lead their Development*. World Bank, Washington DC.

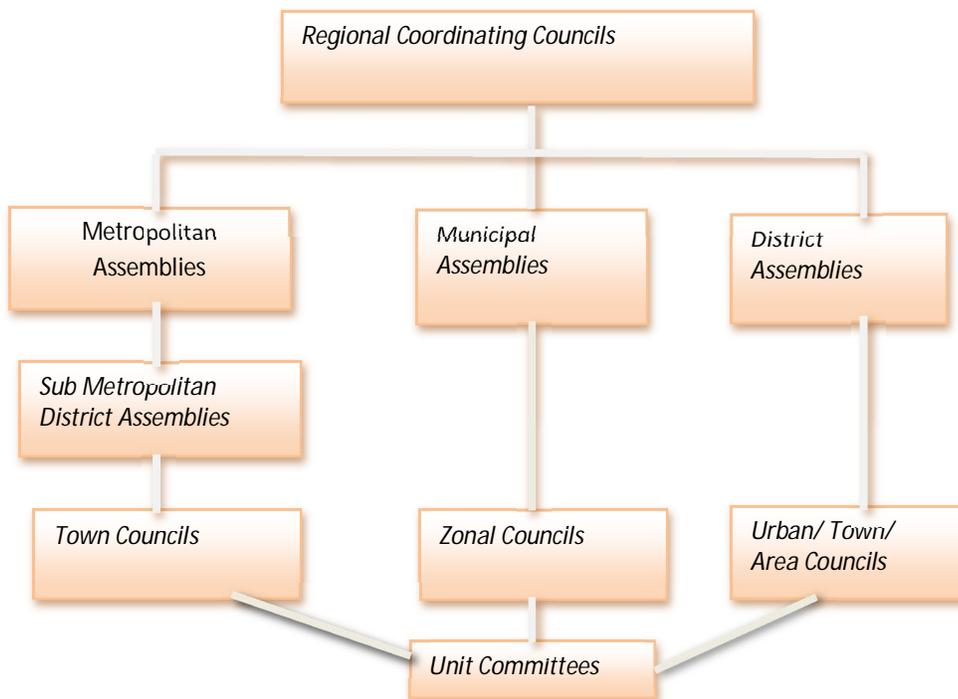
Figures and Tables

**Figure 1.1 CDD Institutional Alternatives**



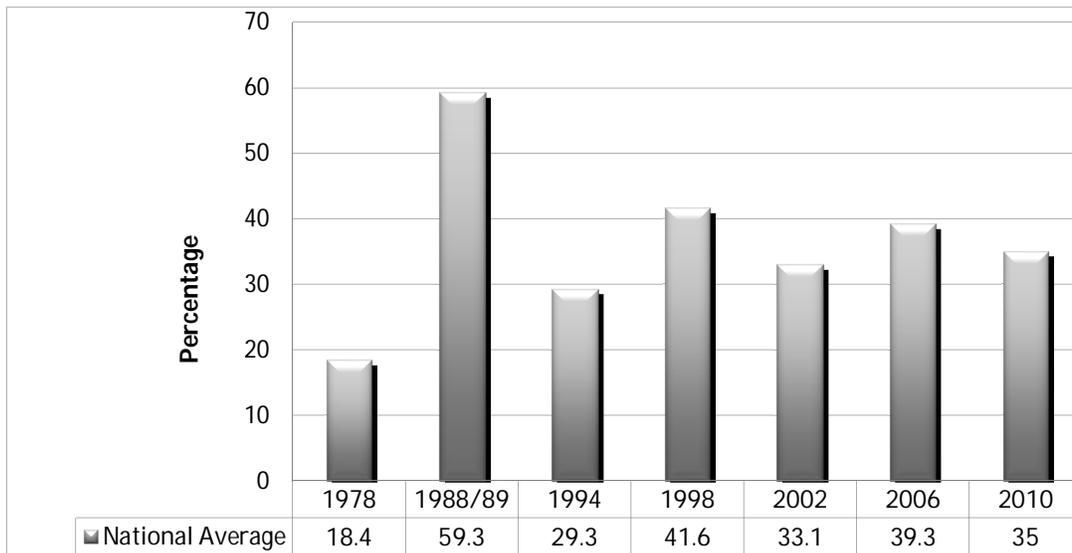
Source: Adapted from Dongier et al. (2003).

**Figure 1.2 Structure of Ghana's Local Government System**



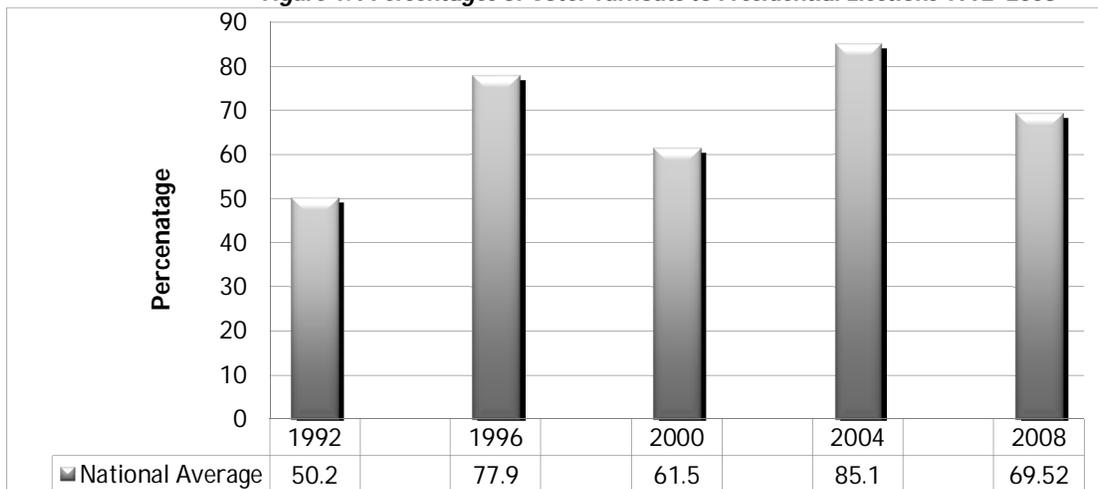
Source: Adapted from Ahwoi (2010).

**Figure 1.3 Percentage of National Average of Voter Turnouts in District Assembly Elections 1978–2010**

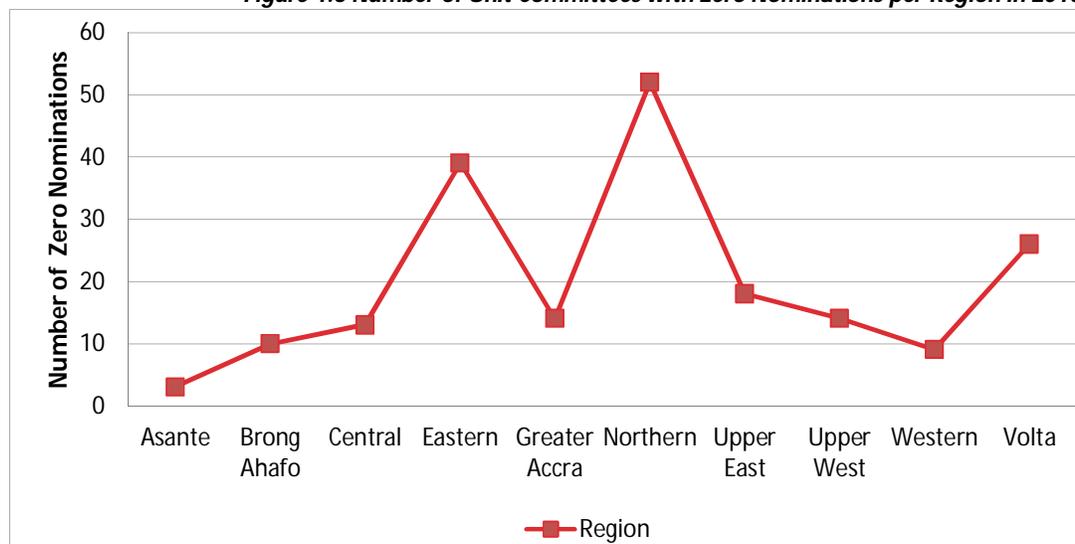


Source: Electoral Commission of Ghana (2010).

**Figure 1.4 Percentages of Voter Turnouts to Presidential Elections 1992–2008**



Source: Electoral Commission of Ghana (2010). 2000 & 2008 are averages of the first and second round voting.

**Figure 1.5 Number of Unit Committees with Zero Nominations per Region in 2010**

Source: Ghana Electoral Commission (2010).

**Table 1.1 Classification of some African Countries Context**

	Low-functioning Intergovernmental System		High-functioning Inter-governmental System	
Description	Dysfunctional Government	Deconcentrated System	Incipient Decentralization	Consolidating Decentralization
Characteristics	CPIA cluster D is less than 2.5	Local state bodies are upwardly accountable, but not elected	Decentralization law creates local governments with some autonomy in resource management & local elections are held	Conditions for incipient decentralization are met, combined with fiscal decentralization & devolution of service delivery
Countries	Angola, Chad, Dem. Rep. Of Congo, Rep. Of Congo, Liberia, Sudan	Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, São Tomé and Príncipe	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Zambia	Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda

Source: Binswanger et al. (2010).