

**DECENTRALIZATION AND DEMOCRATIC LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN GHANA:
ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE OF DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES
AND EXPLORING THE SCOPE OF PARTNERSHIPS**

by

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Submitted to

The Graduate School of Public and International Affairs in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2005

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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To my parents, Tiizie Naab and Florence Saweri Naab; to my son, Kaito Puopila Naab;
and to my wife Yuko Suzuki Naab

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In many ways, my academic pursuits and purpose in life would not have been possible without the Almighty God, to whom I give glory. My profound gratitude goes to Professor Louis Picard, my academic and dissertation advisor at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA), for his guidance and trust in me. I have benefited immensely from his input and direction throughout my years at GSPIA. I am highly indebted to Dr. Ralph Bangs for his kindness; this journey would not have been possible without his foresight and support in getting me a two-year funding grant for my course work through the University Center for Social and Urban Research (UCSUR); he was indeed my guardian angel. To Professor Paul Nelson and Dr. Kenneth Kornher, members of my dissertation committee, a sincere and special gratitude for their very helpful insights and perspectives; these helped me tremendously in shaping the final dissertation.

I would also like to give special thanks and recognition to the following people: The Institute for Policy Alternatives, Ghana for offering me an institutional affiliation during the conduct of my field research. Many thanks to Dr. Sulley Gariba for his guidance and direction during my field research, and particular thanks to the Garibas for hosting me and making my stay in Accra very enjoyable and stress-free. To Coleman Agyeyomah and Jon Langdon, my two special friends, I am very grateful for making my stay in Northern Ghana very eventful and for all their kindness. To the entire staff of Gariba Development Associates in Tamale, and especially Lukeman Aminu, for all their help in my survey studies. To Mr. Owusu Bonsu at the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Accra, I will forever be grateful for

giving me access to documentation and for all his insights. Special thanks to the Huggins family for their encouragement and support and indeed for their friendship and kindness.

I am truly grateful to the officials of the Tema Municipal and the East Gonja District Assemblies for accepting my numerous demands and for offering such valuable information to me on their Assemblies. Many special thanks to the Assembly Members who were part of this study and offered their frank insights on issues. Most importantly, I am grateful to the numerous community members, village chiefs, and opinion leaders, as well as leaders of community associations and many others, for their kindness and generosity; their stories helped me to understand the realities and practical implications of my study.

Finally, I am particularly indebted to my wife, Yuko Suzuki Naab, and to my son, Kaito Puopila Naab, for their unconditional love and understanding and for all their support and encouragement through this entire process.

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This study examines decentralization and democratic local governance in Ghana by assessing the effectiveness of the performance of District Assemblies (DAs) in order to better understand how DAs plan, implement, and manage development activities in close partnership with communities. It applied the proposition that decentralization and democratic local governance are expected to result in more efficient, effective, sustainable, and equitable outcomes through the hypotheses that decentralization results in more effective local government; more responsive local government; local government that is democratic, more accountable, and more participatory; local people having more positive perceptions of government; and local governments providing high quality services that respond to local demands.

Engaging in both exploratory and explanatory research, this study identifies important variables and relationships as well as plausible causal networks that shaped local government and governance in Ghana. Using an inductive and theory-building design, it explains a model of decentralized governance and highlights potential partnership arrangements for the effective engagement of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in complementing the efforts of local governments.

The results of decentralization, interpreted through questionnaires as well as stories and conversations with local people in two Ghanaian District Assemblies, was a combination of

success and failure. In the two case study districts, the assemblies have resulted in a slight increase in development projects and services. However, the poor level of local revenue mobilization has limited the ability of the assemblies to finance significant development projects in their districts. Consequently, this has forced the assemblies to depend on the District Assemblies' Common Fund as well as on external donor funded projects and programs and on local people in self-help projects. The analysis of revenue and expenditure patterns in the two districts showed that per capita development spending was low, while recurrent expenditure and spending on local government infrastructure was high.

District assemblies and CBOs often remain unwilling partners, and both are faced with serious capacity constraints which militate against structuring effective partnerships for service delivery. The successful implementation of decentralization depends on the degree to which national political leaders are committed to decentralization, and the ability and willingness of the national bureaucracy to facilitate and support decentralized development. Therefore, the ongoing process of decentralization in Ghana must be seen in the broader context of a deliberate redirection and change in the internal regulatory framework of the state.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“The most powerful trends legitimizing democracy...are taking place, worldwide, at the local level” (Castells 1997, 350). The concept of decentralization has shaped the contours of development thinking, administration, and governance in both developed and developing countries. Indeed, the demand for decentralization is strong throughout the world because of its link to the concept of subsidiarity, which holds that decisions should be made at the most appropriate level of government and establishes a presumption that this level will be the lowest—the most local—available.

Decentralization and the development of democratic local governance¹ are taking center-stage in the current development discourse as we witness that an increasing number of countries are decentralizing central government administrative, fiscal, and political functions to lower-level governments in the hopes of improving governance and public service delivery. In a development context, decentralization has been linked with such benefits as equity, effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness. Rondinelli (1981) makes several claims regarding the economic benefits of decentralization. According to him,

By reducing diseconomies of scale inherent in the over-concentration of decision making in the national capital, decentralization can increase the number of public goods and services—and the efficiency with which they are delivered—at lower cost. (136)

¹ The phrase “democratic local governance” is adapted from Blair (2000) to connote a range of institutional arrangements that combine “the devolutionary form of decentralization (in which real authority and responsibility are transferred to local bodies (of different types), with democracy at the local level” (21).

In the context of developing countries, the alleged benefits of decentralization also have been promoted as a result of good governance initiatives launched by the World Bank and other donors in the late 1980's (World Bank 1989). It is, however, important to mention that I have used the term *decentralization* in this study to connote broad generalizations of the concept; I discuss the differing perspectives and definitions of the term in detail in Chapter 3.

Institutional development and decentralization have been considered key components in the emphasis on improving development activity as well as improving the effectiveness of governance in developing countries. Consequently, understanding the elements that make local government more effective—that is, that local government is able to set and achieve development goals, is responsive to popular preferences in service delivery, and encourages participation and accountability—has been of primary interest to political scientists and development practitioners. According to Uphoff and Esman (1984), effective local government “requires far-reaching changes in the over-centralized structures and rigid operating procedures of the agencies of public administration that have evolved in most developing countries” (31).

The literature on development management emphasizes the fact that decentralization has the potential to make local government more effective by making it more participatory and to lead to more efficient and sustainable development strategies (Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1984; Wunsch 1991; Crook 1994). These potential outputs parallel the goals of democratic governance and thus underscore the relationship between decentralization and governance in the literature; however, it is obvious that this relationship has not been adequately explored. Many past studies have failed to assess fully the impact of decentralization because they have lacked a set of independent, comparative indicators of the quality of decentralization being implemented in a given country. Studies of African experiences, in particular, tend to argue that the claims of

decentralization far exceed the empirical results (Conyers 1983, 106). Some proponents hold the view that decentralization and democratic transition experiments have failed in nearly every African state in which they have been initiated. The majority of studies on Africa have argued that decentralization has not facilitated development or democratization and has seldom lived up to initial expectations. In a review of decentralization experiments in Africa, Tordoff (1994) concluded that the success of decentralization is related to the availability of trained manpower and adequate finances and that the most important constraint on development at the local level is inadequate financial resources. Additionally, recent problems with decentralization have been attributed to underdeveloped civil society (Picard 2004), resistance from central bureaucrats, and hostility from political parties who in some cases fear loss of empire. In general, while there have been many decentralization efforts in third world development, their results have generally been disappointing (Wunsch 1991, Smoke 1994, Wunsch and Olowu 1996).

Local government, both as an institution and as a subject of study, has a mixed reputation in less developed countries, and the government of Ghana is no exception. Many practitioners consider that, given the human environment and the limited resources available, government and administration are bound to fail if they are set to achieve goals of socio-economic development. The arguments in favor of centralizing decision-making seem direct and compulsive compared with the more distant pleas for decentralization. Funds and qualified manpower for performing development tasks are scarce, and it seems logical to place their control in the hands of a few top leaders. At the same time, when the state itself is still young and insecure, most ruling groups would like to insulate the local administration from any political influence except their own. Set against these considerations, the benefits that democratic local governance is said to offer—

democratic accountability, popular participation, the horizontal coordination of functions, the fostering of local partnerships—pale into insignificance.

This study documents the results of an analysis of decentralization and local government performance in Ghana. The primary aim of this research is to contribute to the discussion of local government performance in achieving the larger objectives of effective government and democratic governance. Three central questions formed the basis for my proposed research: (1) How has the District Assembly structure and changes resulting from decentralization and democratic local governance affected the implementation of development projects and service delivery, and to what extent have the District Assemblies facilitated an increase in responsiveness, accountability, and local participation? (2) Do local governments have the authority and resources to meet their service provision responsibilities, and how do ordinary community members evaluate local government performance and their elected representatives? and (3) What is the scope of partnerships between local governments and other local organizations (Community-Based Organizations, or CBOs) in delivering development that is responsive to local needs and preferences?

For a period of four months, I conducted field research, concentrating on two local government units in the Tema Municipal Area and the East Gonja District. Engaging in both exploratory and explanatory research, I identified important variables, relationships, and plausible causal networks that shaped local government and governance in Ghana. Through an inductive and theory-building design, I attempt in this dissertation to explain a model of decentralized governance, highlighting potential partnership arrangements for the effective engagement of CBOs in complementing the efforts of local governments.

1.1. Overview of Decentralization in Ghana

Ghana, like many other developing countries, has identified itself with the movement to improve development performance and popular participation through decentralization. Without doubt, the concept of decentralization has come to symbolize a new era of development strategy in Ghana's socio-economic and spatial relations. In the context of contemporary Ghana, decentralization and local government mean

[t]hat within the framework of national policy, there is scope for local initiative, local policy formulation and local mobilization for development. They do mean that local people must participate in the decision-making and implementation processes. They do mean that the bureaucracy must be accountable to the people's representatives and that those representatives must in turn be accountable to the people. (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development 1994)

The current local government system in Ghana has its genesis in the colonial era. Since then, it has gone through a series of changes, particularly since its attainment of national political independence after the end of the Second World War . The present practice of decentralization and local government set-up emerged from the local government reform of the erstwhile Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) in 1988. This reform was launched as part of the government's program to restore economic stability and growth after a serious decline in the country's economy in the late 1970's and early 1980's. The reform involved a strong participatory element in order to make local government a more effective tool for local development.

The policy objectives of the 1988 decentralization program, as described by the PNDC government, included "popular participation, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, responsiveness, stability and issues of development" (Ayee 1993, 120). Thus, the current

decentralization policy seeks to create a kind of governance that will foster local participation of the majority of the people in decisions concerning their own development processes and well-being: responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating of programs.

Toward this end, District Assemblies were created in 1988 as integrated decentralized authorities with elected and appointed representatives to represent popular preferences and an executive office to oversee the administration of departmental programs and services. Unlike previous attempts to decentralize in Ghana, or in other developing countries, representatives were elected on a non-partisan basis. The assemblies were given a long list of responsibilities, making them both the basic political authority and the legislative and consultative body concerned with determining policy objectives and development programs. These responsibilities include, among others, the overall development of the district, mobilization of resources, and provision of basic infrastructure and services.

Ghana thus provides an innovative case of decentralization in which the central government still has some control over budget allocation, staff appointments, and salaries, but in which local government has, in theory, wide-ranging power in decisions regarding local development. This decentralization of responsibilities, combined with limited devolution of fiscal authority, marks a transformation in the structure and function of local government in Ghana.

In 1992, the Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana further strengthened the local government system by according the decentralization policy the status of a constitutional obligation. It also improved the financial position of the District Assemblies by instituting the District Assemblies Common Fund (DA CF). Pundits have cited these and other moves to claim that much has been done to overcome the short-falls and constraints of the new system.

However, the reform was implemented in an environment of centralized administrative and political institutions, as well as with the limited human capacities and resources available at that time. With the promulgation of the local government law (PNDC LAW 207, 1988) new legal and institutional frameworks were established, but these were challenged at various levels. In fact, from a pessimistic viewpoint, Ayee found that what was implemented during the early 1990's was "illusionary" decentralization or merely administrative deconcentration. In his view, local government units became mere agents of the central government (1994, 132). The policies only created new arrangements for the central government and bureaucratic agencies to control regional and district governments. Ayee argued that the decentralization implemented in Ghana was an illusion, devised by the previous military government to legitimize its regime and mask its implicit political agenda (1996).

Still, despite the limited capacity of local authority to initiate programs for local development, and widespread inadequacy of human and financial resources to implement development programs, Ghana underwent an increase in political participation and decision making that was locally rooted, and this raised several questions about government performance and democratic governance. How then do we understand government that is described as ineffective, with limited financial resources and political autonomy, but that also is characterized as responsive to local needs and encourages local participation?

There is little scholarly consensus on the impact of decentralization policies in Ghana; neither have scholars attended to the current structure of government or the effects it has had on fiscal policy, local infrastructure, or development in Ghana. Studies by Crook (1994) and Crook and Manor (1995, 1998) rely on field research conducted in 1992, before several aspects of fiscal and political decentralization had been implemented. Important questions about governance

remain unanswered even after their survey research and analysis of revenue and expenditure data. For example, is decentralization perceived by constituents and politicians as facilitating an increase in development and responsiveness to local needs and accountability? In chapter IV, I offer a more detailed discussion of Ghana's system of decentralization, providing a historical context as well as accounting for the current structure of the system.

1.2. Importance of the Study

This study is important from an empirical perspective because it could yield valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of decentralized local government structures, as well as provide policy recommendations for improving relationships between local governments and community-based organizations, which could bring new inputs to poverty reduction. They can also produce outputs that carry the seeds of multiplier effects that enormously enhance the potential for real incremental progress in improving the lives of the poor.

From a theoretical perspective, this research is oriented toward contributing to the theory of decentralization and local governance and is based on carefully selected questions and hypotheses of theoretical value. This is equally important because a more greatly elaborated theory of governance at the local level eventually will lead to a more precise formulation of the conditions under which specific partnership arrangements might work. In this sense, the study should directly or indirectly contribute to solving practical problems of decentralized democratic local governance. This study thus seeks to add to our understanding of decentralization and local government in three important ways. First, it reexamines some of the hypotheses formulated by other scholars using different methods, such as rigorous, in-depth interviews and extended field

research on local government effectiveness. Hypotheses suggested by previous research include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Decentralization increases political participation.
- Political participation yields improvements in government effectiveness.
- Successful decentralization requires political autonomy, financial autonomy, and an active, engaged civil society.
- Effective local governance requires decentralization and democratization.
- Decentralization will yield better governance-transparency, accountability, participation, and fairness.

Second, this research analyzes additional variables, as well as some conditional variables that have been neglected in other research, using a qualitative approach. It borrows its framework of variables used to measure government effectiveness from Crook and Manor (1998); I have measured effectiveness according to development outputs, responsiveness to popular needs, and the quality of governance, much as Crook and Manor have. However, most of my measurements are taken using qualitative methods-interviews, focus groups, guided conversations, and participant observation. Additionally, in examining development effectiveness, I considered the corresponding inputs; for instance, I looked at district expenditures on development projects and services. I also examined the activities of community-based organizations toward development and tried to explore the scope of partnerships existing between District Assemblies and local community groups or associations.

Finally, while most research has focused on the extent to which decentralization has resulted in development or increased capital expenditures, this research studies that the interpretation of that development by local people, based on their attitudes about what government should and could do for them and their communities.

The political changes implied by democratization and decentralization are primarily concerned with shifting the rules of the game between state and society in the broadest sense. Nevertheless, in order to simplify or schematize the argument, both state and society may be seen as basic reference points and partners for development. While partnerships might be a good idea in a variety of circumstances, this study claims that it is more important that partnerships are already emerging as a new development alternative. This is suggested by the changes in perceptions in the development community regarding the importance of social capital in the development process, particularly if development is to produce more equitable and sustainable patterns of growth. Since the original contemporary formulation of the notion of *social capital*² by Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988), and the immense interest generated by Putnam's (1993) study of its relevance to government performance in northern and southern Italy, interest in the concept of social capital and its relevance to development has grown. The study will contribute to this debate on the relevance of social capital but with specific reference to the nature of partnership arrangements between local governments and CBOs. The study thus seeks to address, among other things, the relationship between communities' social capital and the generation of synergistic relations between local government and CBOs. It is hoped that this study will thus contribute to the ongoing dialogue among development practitioners, development agencies, academics, governments, and local communities, with a goal of finding an appropriate channel for solving the problems related to the current development challenge faced by developing countries.

² Social capital is an asset, a functioning propensity for mutually beneficial collective action, with which communities are endowed to diverse extents. Communities possessed of large amounts of social capital are able to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation over a wide front. Communities that have low levels of social capital are less capable of organizing themselves effectively. Social capital is a resource, a stock that needs to be mobilized in order to achieve a flow of benefits. Community-Based Organizations help mobilize communities' stocks of social capital (Putnam 1993; Krishna 2001).

1.3. Objective of the Study

Democratic local governance is expected to result in more efficient, effective, sustainable, and equitable outcomes. But what sorts of local institutional arrangements can help achieve these goals in any given context? According to the principle of subsidiarity, authority for tasks more appropriately undertaken at subsidiary levels should be given over to local-level governance structures. But how exactly should these structures be designed in any given situation? What roles should central governments, local governments, businesses, and community associations' play, and how should relationships among these actors be structured to harness synergy in support of sustainable development?

Experience with decentralization has been mixed and suggests that original hopes may be misplaced, but the design of local institutional arrangements is a relatively new and understudied area. Overall, existing studies, as well as anecdotal evidence and theoretical works, indicate that the effect of decentralization on public service delivery depends on the design and institutional arrangements that govern the implementation of such decentralization. Consequently, the overall objective of the study is to analyze decentralization and democratic local governance in Ghana by assessing the effectiveness of the performance of District Assemblies with the aim of getting a better understanding of how DAs plan, implement, and manage development activities in close partnership with communities.

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

This study documents the results of an analysis of decentralization and local government performance in Ghana and reveals relationships within government that otherwise would remain unknown to outsiders. Using a framework of analytic induction, I studied the relationship between decentralization and local government effectiveness in order to understand the current structure of decentralized government in Ghana and to explore the impacts of decentralization on government effectiveness through qualitative methods. The research made comparisons, first within the cases, to understand correlation in predicted behavior and any contradiction in institutional framework and performance; and then across cases, to reveal instances of inconsistency among local governments. I was also interested in differences in perceptions of local governments, since this was part of the dynamics of democratic local governance that was not known at the onset of my research.

The chapters that follow provide insight into decentralization and democratic local governance in a country where there have been innovative decentralization efforts and a transition to democracy. In Chapter 2, I describe the design of the study and document the methodology used in the conduct of the research. In Chapter 3, I review the relevant literature on decentralization, local government, service delivery, and other related case studies. I give attention to the distinctions made in the literature between political and administrative forms of decentralization, the proposed relationships between decentralization and governance, and the likely impact of decentralization on citizen participation and public service delivery. The chapter also addresses the issue of local government partnerships with community-based organizations and civic associations as an alternative development strategy for promoting local development.

Chapter 4 documents the system of decentralization as practiced in Ghana from a historical point in time to the present. In that chapter, I provide a description of the current local government system in Ghana, including the District Assembly structure and functions, responsibilities, method of revenue generation, method for selecting local representatives, and relationship to district level bureaucracies. Other scholars have studied the District Assemblies in Ghana, and I also summarize their findings and discuss some of the limitations and/or problems with the implementation of decentralization in Ghana.

The argument that decentralization improves resource allocation, accountability, and cost-recovery relies heavily on the assumption that local and sub-national governments are better informed about the needs and preferences of the local population. Chapter 5 introduces the two case study districts and describes how these districts attempted to achieve their goal of providing development in the district that responded to local priorities and allowed for local participation in the decision-making process. The qualitative data and analysis of government documents reveal the development outcomes in the two districts and the real constraints on the effectiveness of local government. The chapter also discusses the impact of decentralization on development, responsiveness, and governance based on the case study districts. Chapter 6 addresses the scope of partnerships between district assemblies and local civil society. I present some of the significant reasons for the lack of effectively structured partnership arrangements in the case study districts, as well as document an instructive case study of an innovative program of building partnerships supported by USAID in select districts in Ghana. Based on the research and its findings, I discuss implications for theory-building and future research in chapter 7.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study examines decentralization and democratic local governance in Ghana by assessing the performance of District Assemblies with the aim of better understanding how District Assemblies plan, implement, and manage development activities in close partnership with communities. Three central questions guided this research:

1. How has the District Assembly structure and changes resulting from decentralization and democratic local governance since 1988 affected the implementation of development projects and service delivery, and to what extent have the District Assemblies facilitated an increase in responsiveness, accountability and local participation?
2. Do local governments have the authority and resources to meet their service provision responsibilities, and how do ordinary community members evaluate local government performance and their elected representatives?
3. What is the scope of partnerships between local governments and other local organizations (Community-Based Organizations, or CBOs) in delivering development that is responsive to local needs and preferences?

There are no universally agreed criteria for assessing the quality of decentralization and/or the performance of local government structures. Several analysts have made valuable contributions to our understanding by examining the impact of decentralization on a variety of development-related factors (Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1984) or identifying “successful” cases and factors contributing to their success (Olowu and Smoke 1992). While indicative of decentralization, the methods employed did not in effect provide a direct measure of local government performance. This study examines the relationship between decentralization and the performance of local government units in delivering development outcomes. It is therefore imperative to note that indicators based on the objectives of decentralization are more appropriate to determine the impacts of decentralization reforms. This study evaluates local government performance under Ghana’s decentralization program (covering the period from

1988 to the present) on the basis of its stated objectives of participation, effectiveness, and accountability. However, in order to assess effectively the performance of local governments, one must first assess the degree to which decentralization contributes to the achievement of broad political objectives, such as mobilizing support for development activities and policies and providing communities with an interest in the government structure. Second, one must measure the degree to which decentralization increases administrative effectiveness in achieving development goals. Third, one must also determine the degree to which decentralization promotes efficiency in development management. Finally, one must assess the degree to which decentralization increases government responsiveness to the needs and demands of the various interest groups within society.

In order to characterize the decentralization effort in Ghana, this study also adapted the indicators proposed in Andrew Parker's "Soufflé Theory" (1995). I considered the political, fiscal, and administrative issues implied in Ghana's decentralization; all these components must complement one another to produce more responsive local governments that will deliver effective, efficient, and sustainable services and maintain fiscal discipline. As Figure 2.1 shows, Parker's indicators of decentralization are critical in this study because it is evident that the fiscal, political, and administrative policies and institutions affect political accountability, fiscal soundness, and administrative capacity at both the national and sub-national levels. This in turn affects service delivery and ultimately affects development outcomes (see Figure 2.1).

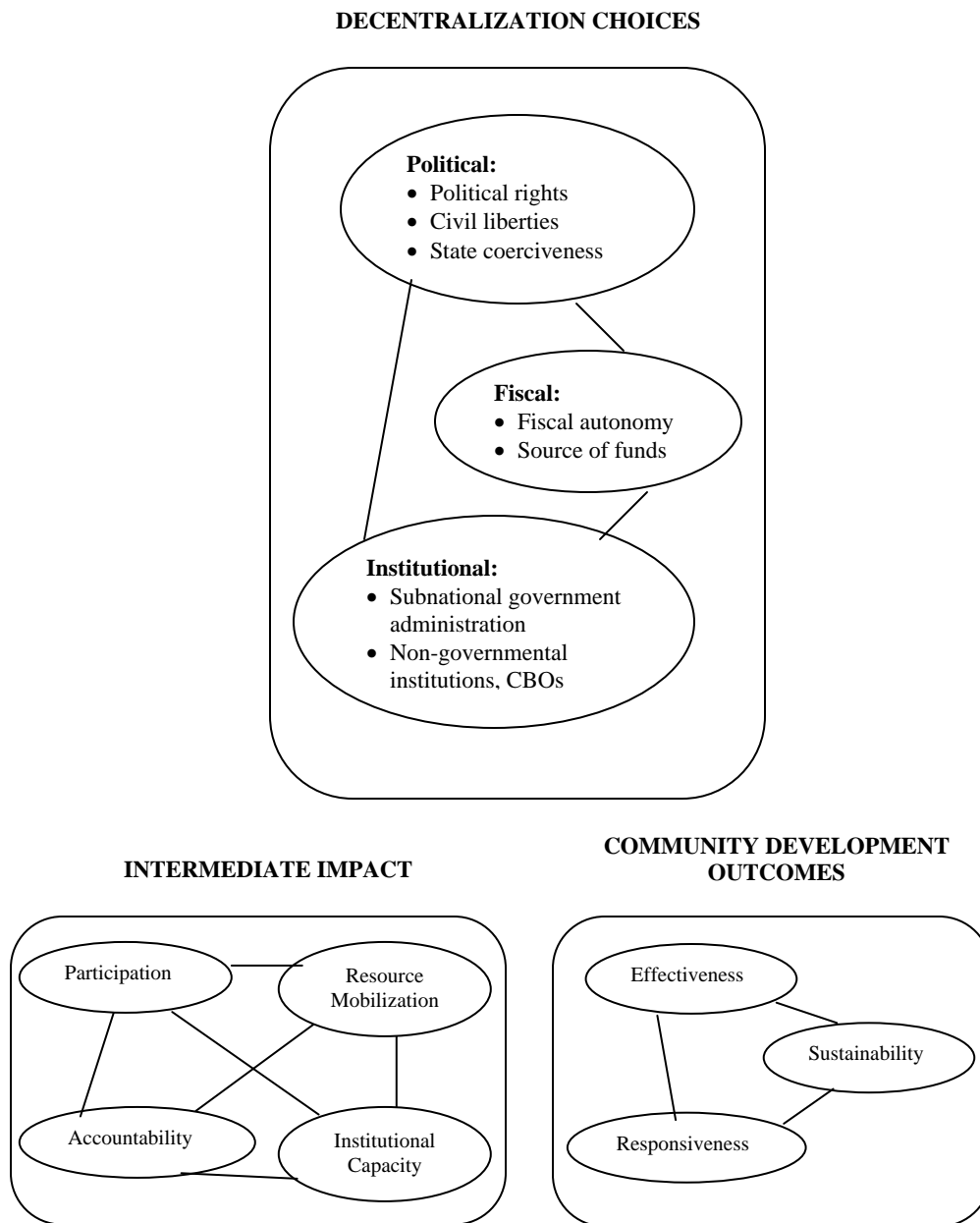


Figure 2-1: Conceptual Model for Analyzing Decentralization

Source: Andrew Parker, 1995

The “soufflé theory of decentralization” as espoused by Andrew Parker (1995) provides a useful framework for analyzing the separate dimensions of decentralization and their interconnections and permits the investigation of patterns of partnerships, decentralization, and

democratic local governance. Cheema and Rondinelli (1983) recognized the importance of the political, fiscal, and institutional elements of decentralization, but did not explicitly relate these three dimensions to community and rural development outcomes. According to Parker, these outcomes can be defined in terms of (i) the effectiveness of providing minimum standards of service delivery that are cost-effective and targeted toward disadvantaged groups; (ii) the responsiveness of decentralized institutions to the demands of local communities and to the aims of broader public policy; and (iii) sustainability as indicated by political stability, fiscal adequacy, and institutional flexibility. Factors that appear to have a positive impact on community development outcomes include enhanced participation, greater resource mobilization, more institutional capacity building, and increased accountability. The “soufflé theory of decentralization” thus attempts to combine the dimensions of decentralization and relate them to a set of intermediate outcomes that are likely to have an important impact on overall community development outputs and outcomes.

Some scholars have suggested that a local authority might be tested for its degree of political autonomy, and its effectiveness in attaining goals set by the national government. However, these variables, and especially the former, present great difficulties of measurement. Smoke and Olowu (1992), like others, have attempted to understand the determinants of successful performance of African local governments by focusing their analysis on resource issues such as fiscal performance, government funding, and revenue mobilization or on measuring development outcomes. Subsequently, Crook’s 1988 assessment of Ghana’s decentralization policy relied on testing district performance using the criteria set by Smoke and Olowu. Crook measured improved performance by the extent to which “any increases in total revenues... are transformed into the kinds of outputs (projects and services) that are required by

the official goals and which are viewed by the public” (1994, 345). Similarly, Mawhood suggests that decentralization can be measured through “local government budgets, bank accounts, estimates of revenue and expenditures” (1983). Furthermore, in their recent comparative evaluations of African and Asian decentralization experiences, Crook and Manor (1995, 1998) analyzed decentralization in terms of performance and participation and contact between elected representatives and the public.

I have endeavored to test competing explanations of decentralization against a qualitative data set in order to facilitate our understanding of institutional change, political participation, and issues of governance. The research had its foundations in the proposition, found in the literature, that decentralization and democratic local governance is expected to result in more efficient, effective, sustainable, and equitable outcomes and thus lead to improvements in government effectiveness. I applied this proposition through five hypotheses during four months of field research in Ghana. Based on the literature on decentralization and local governments in Ghana, I studied these five propositions:

- Decentralization results in more effective local government.
- Decentralization results in more responsive local government.
- Decentralization results in local government that is democratic, more accountable, and more participatory.
- Decentralization and elected local representatives leads to local people having more positive perceptions of government.
- Local governments provide high quality services that respond to the local demand.

The term *decentralization* has been used in the development literature to refer to many different institutional changes, as observed earlier. For purposes of this study, I have adopted the definition provided by Rondinelli and Nellis (1986):

Decentralization can be defined as the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and the raising and allocation of resources from the central government and its agencies to field units of central government ministries or agencies, subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities, or nongovernmental private or voluntary organizations. (Rondinelli and Nellis 1986, 5)

In assessing the performance of local government structures in Ghana, the study considered a variety of explanatory variables that may account for the changes in outcome of the performance of local governments. These variables were selected on the basis of their use in the literature as well as past studies on decentralization and democratic local governance. This study adopts a multidimensional view in defining the concept of local government effectiveness. As stated earlier, there are no universally agreed criteria for assessing the quality of performance of local governments. For purposes of this study, the relative quality of the performance of local governments, expressed as the effectiveness of local governments, can be judged on three important factors: changes in development outcomes, good governance, and institutional capacity.

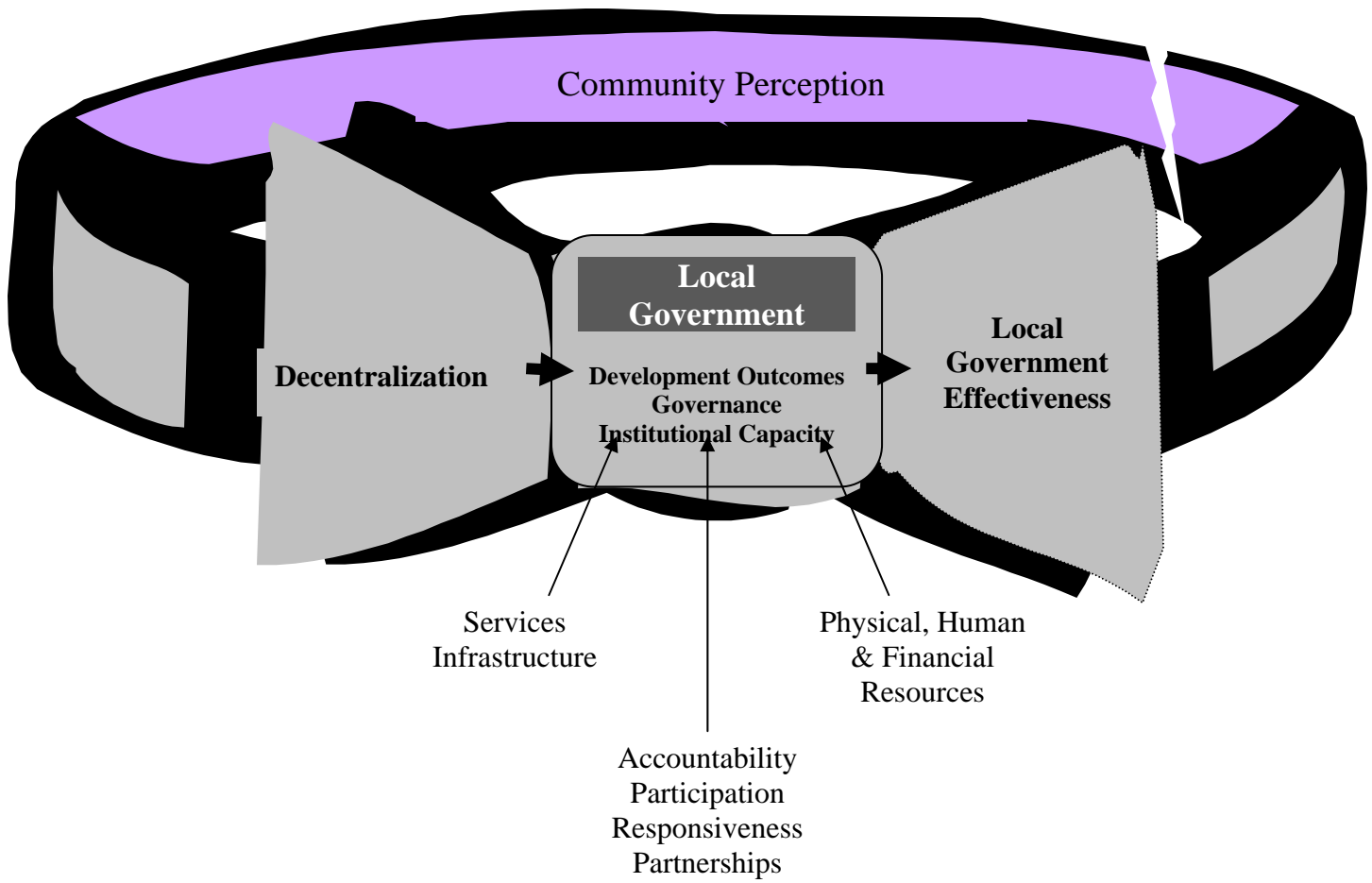


Figure 2-2: Bowtie Model for Assessing Local Government Effectiveness

Each of these three key factors affects the overall evaluation of local government performance. They refer to what government has provided the constituents, whether it corresponds with the needs expressed by the constituents and whether those constituents played a part in the process. It is important to note that, as the literature suggests, any of these aspects of effectiveness could be used to evaluate local government performance. However, it is my view that considering all three factors together is important in presenting a holistic picture of local governance in Ghana. This model for measuring effectiveness also provides a useful follow-up to and expansion of the research Crook and Manor conducted in Ghana (1988).

Different authors have subjected the term *development* to widely varying definitions. For purposes of this study, development was defined as the tangible economic development output provided by local governments, including both infrastructure and services leading to a change in people's lives. As in previous studies, it was measured by comparing revenue and expenditure patterns across time within the same districts while relating outputs to district objectives. Analysis of revenue and expenditure accounts was focused at a district level on total revenue over time, locally generated revenue as a percentage of total revenue, total expenditure, and development expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure. I considered several variables that help operationalize the concept of development, such as service delivery or the types of services provided, the development needs expressed by communities, resource mobilization and allocation, and sustainability issues. I also considered the amounts allocated through decisions of the local representatives in comparison with total public expenditure for the area, as well as the allocating process itself. Interviews of administrative personnel and assembly representatives, as well as assembly documents, provided data.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of local government performance was considered to be driven by local *government capacity*, that is, the ability to engage in something. Local governments may have political authority and access to financial resources, but unless they have the capacity to do the work, decentralization is unlikely to produce desired results. Inadequate capacity is often used as a counterargument in proposals for decentralization. *Institutional capacity* refers to the ability, competency, and efficiency of local governments to plan, implement, manage, and evaluate policies, strategies, or programs designed to impact on social conditions in the jurisdiction (Shafritz 1986). The World Bank views capacity as the combination of people, institutions, and practices that permits the attainment of development goals. Viewed this way, capacity development is a process by which individuals, groups, institutions, organizations, and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner. It means investment in human capital, institutions, and practices.

Fiszbein (1997) identified three key factors that influence local government capacity: human capital, physical capital, and incentive structures within local governments. The quality of civil servants—a function of their skills and knowledge and of the way these skills and knowledge are utilized within the government—is the key dimension of capacity. . Skills and knowledge are commonly measured by the level of education, training, and on-the-job experience. This study measured *local government capacity* as suggested by Uphoff (1997), who notes four general skill areas in which local governments need to demonstrate capability: identification and analysis of local problems in order to plan appropriate responses, mobilization and management of resources, communication and coordination of policy implementation, and resolution of local conflicts. While local governments may possess some of these skills, they may lack others. For example, they may have the needed information to assess local problems

but not the skills and knowledge to manage large projects and budgets or to coordinate policy implementation. This can be the case particularly in developing countries, where managerial capacity is often in short supply.

Finally, the concept of *governance* evokes a multiplicity of definitions by different scholars. This study followed the model of USAID, which defines local governance as governing at the local level, viewed broadly to include not only the machinery of government, but also the community at large and its interaction with local government officials. Governance was measured by considering explanatory variables such as local government responsiveness to local needs; local government accountability; and issues of participation, equity, and communication among others (USAID 2000).

It is important to note again that these three factors and concepts—*development*, *local government capacity*, and *governance*—comprise the operational definition of effectiveness and were selected on the bases of their use in the literature. Specific indicators were taken from previous studies of decentralization and democratic governance. Indeed, while few scholars (i.e. political scientists) typically agree on the definitions of these concepts, most would agree that a careful operationalization helps avoid confusion, despite the fact that some might choose to label a phenomenon by another name. The literature reveals the multiple interpretations and meanings given to the use of some of these concepts and variables by academics and practitioners alike. However, I have undertaken to operationalize these concepts through an in-depth literature review, while taking into consideration the original and overall objective of the study, that is, to analyze decentralization and democratic local governance in Ghana by assessing the effectiveness of District Assemblies in order to better understand how DAs plan, implement, and

manage development activities in close partnership with communities. In doing just that, this study made a number of assumptions that further helped in meeting its stated objective.

First and foremost, the study assumes that decentralization is an intrinsically political process, since it determines who legitimately has the right to participate in politics and therefore determine how resources are allocated. It also assumes that decentralization is inherently linked to the democratization movement, or the attempt to consolidate democracy, since there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the two. Moreover, the stated objectives of Ghana's decentralization program were to increase participation, effectiveness, and accountability at the district level, as well as to increase the overall level of development. As a result of the relationship between decentralization and democratic reforms, this research considers the effect of decentralization as well as electoral democracy on indicators of effectiveness. In a previous study on the impact of decentralization on institutional performance, Crook and Manor (1995) avoid distinguishing between the decentralization in Ghana and the effort to consolidate its democracy. Instead, they measure a new variable they called democratic decentralization. However, the problem with this new variable is that one can not see where they are referring to aspects of the 1988 decentralization policy and where they are referring to components of democratization that took place later.

Second, local governance is viewed broadly to include not only the machinery of government but also the community at large and its interaction with local authorities. Flexible arrangements and "multi-centered local governments" are being observed with interest in Europe (Bogason 1998), and observers in the Third World are asking similarly for *inter-organizational* partnerships for local-level development rather than the pre-occupation to date with an *inter-governmental* approach (Olowu 1999, 411). Such inter-organizational partnerships between

local governments and community organizations (civil societies) are necessary and useful in many circumstances. However, “relatively little has been done to link decentralization, participation, and good governance” in the academic and policy discourse (Litvack et al. 1998, 5). This study does assume that local government performance is improved when CBOs provide access and information to citizens and when they help bring communities’ social capital to bear upon local projects. Decentralization is deeper, more effective, and more sustained in places where community organizations have had important roles from the start (Agrawal 2001). CBOs can help improve the functioning of local governments, and conversely, the utility and effectiveness of CBOs can be enhanced considerably when appropriate incentives are provided through government action (Abers 2000, Tandler 1997). Successful national economic strategies have been built upon exploring synergies between the state and societal organizations (Evans 1996). The analog at the local level consists of organizing appropriately structured partnerships between local governments and CBOs.

Decentralization and community-driven development are mentioned as alternative means for achieving some or all of the following ends:

- Effectiveness: Project design is improved when local preferences are consulted; consequently, resources are more efficiently allocated. Local resource mobilization helps enlarge the pool of available resources.
- Sustainability: Benefits are more likely to be sustained when local residents are involved in project selection and implementation and when they contribute resources for maintenance and improvement.
- Accountability: Accountability and transparency are both better served when decisions are taken at levels that are local and easier for people to access.
- Equity: Relatively poor persons can also access these forums more easily.
- Democracy: Political stability is also better assured when citizens have regular and reliable channels of communication with state agencies. Local-level governance functions as a school for democracy and leadership development.

However, none of these expected gains comes about automatically each time power is devolved upon local governments or when community organizations implement some project. For a variety of reasons, including elite capture and low mobilization capacity, local governments may be quite incapable of achieving these ends by themselves. And community-based organizations (CBOs) may be ephemeral and thinly spread, so large-scale efforts may be hard to mount relying on CBOs alone. Acting separately, neither local governments nor CBOs may be capable of achieving the gains expected of democratic local governance. When they act in association, however, CBOs can help overcome local governments' shortcomings in terms of outreach and mobilization. Also, local governments can provide the stability and external linkages that CBOs quite often fail to achieve. Why these synergies should exist and how they can be built upon is explored in the present study.

This research also adopted the recommendations of Rondinelli et al. (1984), and more recent scholarship (Picard, 2004; Chabal and Daloz, 1999), by giving attention to issues of responsiveness, political consciousness, and popular participation in assessing local government. Qualitative methods may reveal that decentralization has not been meaningful for a variety of reasons, such as (1) bureaucratic opposition to a transfer of authority, (2) central government resistance to empower village- or district-level government officials, (3) lack of local government financial autonomy that would allow for the collection and retention of revenue at the local level, or (4) rivalry among government units at the district and regional levels over scarce resources. Similar conclusions have been suggested in other studies on decentralization (Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1984), and this study also hypothesizes relationships that would explain problems with decentralization.

2.1. Methodological Approach

This section addresses the extent to which a dual-methods approach, rather than reliance on a single method, was more suitable for a study of this nature. In this study, concepts of quantitative and qualitative approaches were taken to be associated with positivist and non-positivist epistemologies, respectively. The philosophical positions have been considered different from each other because of the different conceptions of ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions that guide inquiry. Reichardt and Cook (1979) defined quantitative methods as those which encompass “the techniques of randomized experiments, quasi-experiments, paper and pencil ‘objective’ tests, multivariate statistical analysis, sample surveys, and the like,” and qualitative methods as those which comprise “ethnography, case studies, in-depth interviews, and participant observation.”

Quantitative methods of inquiry have proven useful in identifying some of the correlates of socio-demographic characteristics. The method is more precise in the way it formulates the initial theory driven hypothesis and the ways it will be measured and ultimately rejected or confirmed. The qualitative aspect is more permissive in its formulation of new hypotheses. The strengths of qualitative methods lie in their ability to describe and contextualize phenomena by eliciting varying interpretations and capturing the interplay that occurs over time between structure and agency; qualitative research also helps develop insight and understanding into the processes, motivations, events, and actions that have contributed to an observed variation. Hinds and Young (1987) confirmed that “combining two methods in research enhances the description of a process under study; identifies the chronology of events and serves to corroborate or validate process for study findings.” This results in an expanded understanding and contextual representation of the study’s phenomenon and results.

In this study, a dual-methods approach provided a rich cross-fertilization and corroboration. The qualitative data methods enriched the variables under study by linking them to specific case histories, incidents and observations, and the meanings attached to those observations. A combination of both methods, it was believed, could minimize threats to internal validity, a result which is desirable for any researcher.

This study sought to analyze decentralization and democratic local governance in Ghana by assessing the effectiveness of the performance of District Assemblies with the aim of getting a better understanding of how DAs plan, implement, and manage development activities in close partnership with communities. During four months of field research in Ghana, I sought to perform the following specific tasks:

- Review progress made in the implementation of the decentralization program in Ghana, considering specifically the legal aspects, organizational structure, and roles and responsibilities of the DAs in the preparation and implementation of development programs;
- Analyze the development-planning and decision-making processes, actual investment decisions, role of DAs, communities, and other external agencies in the development and implementation of district annual programs;
- Review ongoing development programs, sources of funding, types of support to DAs and communities, implementation arrangements, eligibility criteria, and so on, and identify commonalities and differences among programs and concerns raised by the districts and communities; and
- Identify, examine, and document instructive case studies of projects involving effective partnerships between local governments and CBOs.

I evaluated the effectiveness of local government performance through qualitative interviewing, focus groups, document analysis, and participant observation as well as through the use of aggregate statistical data. I collected information from the national, district, and community levels; during the research, I interviewed the District Chief Executives, District Assembly members, Sector Department staff and officials within the districts as well as other

government officials, politicians, and representatives of non-governmental organizations working in the districts. I also held interviews and focus groups with community leaders and village opinion leaders, as well as members of town and village development committees and other people living and working in the villages and towns of the districts to obtain opinions on the assemblies' performance and the provision of services. Indeed, this research sought to expand upon previous research and case studies of a hypothesized relationship between decentralization and local government effectiveness in Ghana by using more qualitative methods.

The methodological approach used to generate theory is analytic induction. This process encourages the generation of theory and the testing of propositions through the careful observation of the phenomenon to be expanded. Borrowed from sociology, analytic induction contrasts with the deductive models of analysis and testing of theory. This approach argues that the formation and reformulation of hypotheses and themes can best be achieved through a rigorous examination of a small number of cases without imposing a conceptual structure on the data. Johnson suggests that analytic induction "attempts to maintain a faithfulness to empirical data gathered from a relatively small number of cases as the research process moves from those data to the construction of categories and from the elucidation of their case features to theorization and generalization" (1998, 46). In this approach, the researcher begins with a tentative hypothesis explaining the phenomenon observed and then attempts to verify the hypothesis by observing a small number of cases. If the hypothesis does not fit the cases, it is either rejected or reformulated so that the cases account for it. If, on the other hand, the researcher does not begin with a tentative hypothesis, one is created during the research based on the observations made in the cases. In the final stage, the researcher has an inclusive set of propositions, or a model, to explain the totality of the phenomenon.

It is important to note that this methodological approach is similar to grounded theory, in which the researcher develops conceptual categories from the data and then makes new observations to clarify and elaborate categories and themes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In applying the framework of analytic induction to this study, I started from a tentative hypothesis or theme in the literature about the relationship of decentralization to development and good governance. This theme suggested variables that might be important and served as a guideline for beginning the data collection. At the same time, it was important to let the data drive the research so that when informants introduced concepts and categories in the interviews and focus groups, I was able to incorporate them into my conceptual framework.

The primary methodology was qualitative interviewing of the key officials and community members, including focus groups, although I also analyzed finances and documents. I administered a survey questionnaire consisting of primarily closed-choice questions to both elected officials/representatives and community residents in the selected districts. The basic aim of this community survey questionnaire was to obtain information from community respondents on the effectiveness of the performance of the District Assemblies and their elected officials in meeting their development needs. It was also designed to gauge elected officials' understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as to seek their opinions on the challenges they face. Information from the surveys shed light on the performance of District Assemblies, as well as on other issues of accountability, participation, effectiveness, etc.

The sampling method included purposive and random sampling for both the selection of elected officials (district assembly members and unit committee members) and members of the community. I purposely selected the two study areas: East Gonja (rural) and Tema (urban), based on two factors: the need for comparative analysis between a rural and an urban area and the

objective to select locations that are accessible and likely to have the desired information and experience. My design of the sample for the household survey assumed that location is related to the availability of information and experience. Consequently, perceptions of the District Assemblies' performance might differ among different localities.

2.1.1. Sampling of District Assembly Members and Unit Committee Members

In the East Gonja District, there were a total of 48 District Assembly Members and 102 Unit Committees within the 13 Area Councils. All 48 elected assembly members took part in the survey. In addition, five to ten elected unit committee members representing various unit committees within each of the 13 area councils were also randomly selected to participate in the survey (with a total of 120 unit committee members). In Tema, there were a total of eleven electoral areas (in the Ashaiman Zonal Council) and 40 Unit Committees; all eleven assembly members representing the electoral areas were therefore surveyed. In the Ashaiman Zonal Council of the Tema Municipal Assembly, only 17 of 40 Unit Committees were actually inaugurated and functioning; consequently, I was limited to selecting four to five unit committee members from each of the established 17 Unit committees (a total of 72). In total, 168 elected officials from the East Gonja District and 83 elected officials from Tema Municipal Area representing assembly members and unit committee members took part in the survey questionnaires. I administered the questionnaire for elected officials to both assembly members and unit committee members, since these are the elected representatives of the people.

2.1.2. Sampling of Community Members

The selection of informants for the survey interviews was based on a two-fold sampling method: selecting towns and villages within sample area councils or electoral areas in the study districts and then selecting informants within villages/communities. I randomly selected eight or ten members of the community from each area council or electoral area. On average, each area council governed about 5000-15000 persons, or approximately 1000-3000 households. Therefore, I randomly chose the first household (by selecting a number between 1 and 100) and then selected one person for every 100 households in the area council or electoral area thereafter. In East Gonja, a random sample of 130 mass respondents (ten people per area council) was recruited as informants for the survey. In Tema, eight people from each of the eleven electoral areas were recruited for the community members' survey (88 in total).

I personally administered the survey instruments; I preferred a face-to-face approach because it enabled me to clarify certain instructions or questions for the respondents and interviewees, to probe for clarification, and to ensure a high completion rate.

Finally, I held focused discussions with groups of four to five people representing different groups within the district (i.e. village residents, assembly and unit committee members, district assembly staff, and local community-based associations). The aim was to obtain collective viewpoints on major issues. Therefore, the sampling for the focus group was not random but rather representative of all the major stakeholders in the governance and efficiency issues being surveyed. The focus groups and interviews helped in many ways to provide corroboration of the information between what I was hearing and the questionnaire findings.

I examined revenue and expenditure data in combination with planning documents, and this further afforded me the opportunity to develop an in-depth analysis and understanding of the

key variables. Through these data collection techniques, I was able to maintain a close link between what I was hearing from my informants and the theory I was trying to understand by inductively working through the problem. Therefore, I learned much more about government and governance at the local level while simultaneously ensuring credibility or “trustworthiness” (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Credibility of the findings was established through prolonged engagement in the field to build trust with informants and test for bias or misinformation; persistent observation to provide depth of understanding; and triangulation of sources (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1988, 90-91).

Since the primary research questions targeted issues of effectiveness and changes in governance, the dependent variable was measured using indicators of institutional performance. Consequently, the conclusions regarding effectiveness, especially of development outcomes and responsiveness to popular preferences, are easily replicable and verifiable through district records and administrative documents. The conclusions, however, would only be tentative without the opinions and beliefs of constituents and those who are part of the decentralized institutions. Hence, by asking about local government performance of the people who deal with these institutions on a daily basis, I was more likely to find realistic conclusions about the impact of decentralization on development and governance. In the end, I was able to have a thorough description of the structure of local government and the socio-political and economic context surrounding decentralization; an exploration of the combination of causes that affect local government performance; and an explanation, or theory, that allows us to understand how decentralization and democratic institutions have changed the effectiveness of government in terms of its development outcomes, responsiveness, and governance.

This methodological approach helps us to see clearly where there are links between decentralization and democratic local governance. However, there are certain limitations to this study. While no findings of statistical significance can be generated by this sample, the interviews can generate hypotheses and suggest explanatory ideas that are persuasive. The study also provides a unique perspective on local government that adds to our understanding of decentralization and democratic local governance.

2.2. Case Selection

This dissertation is a comparative case study of two Districts Assemblies: the East Gonja District Assembly in the Northern region of Ghana and the Tema Municipal Assembly in the Greater Accra Region in the South. The two case selections allow us to contrast the performance of local government over time—from the late 1980's to the present—and to understand the dynamics of decentralization and local governance in a predominantly rural District in the North versus an urban Municipal Assembly in the South. The Northern region of Ghana is one of the poorest in the country, falling below the national average in almost all poverty indicators, according to the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS). As a result of the underdeveloped nature of the region as a whole, there is particular interest in learning how decentralization had influenced outcomes in districts that stood to benefit the most from the policy.

In selecting the study districts, I first gathered information through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, collecting general data about all 110 districts under the current decentralization program in Ghana. The emphasis is on the district as the unit of analysis with comparisons made across cases. Particular attention was also given to the dangers of an urban-tarmac bias (Chambers, 1983), which make it difficult to get to more remote areas to

measure the extent and variability of local governance. The concern was addressed in the selection of the study districts and communities, villages, and informants. The two districts were chosen to provide opportunities to collect data on the proposed relationship between decentralization and local government effectiveness. After discussions with government and non-government informants, I chose to emphasize the changes in local government using the rural East Gonja District Assembly located in the Northern Region and the urban Tema Municipal Assembly in the Greater Accra Region.

The East Gonja District is located at the south-eastern section of the Northern Region. It borders the Yendi and Tamale Districts to the north, West Gonja District to the west, Nanumba District to the east, and the Volta and Brong Ahafo Regions to the south. The total area of the district is 10,787 square kilometers and is second to the West Gonja District in terms of size among the districts of the Northern Region. The District occupies about 15.3 percent of the landmass of the Northern Region; its population, according to the 1984 census, stood at 126,335. A 1998 District Water and Sanitation Program (DWSP) survey indicated that 213,574 people live in a total of 264 settlements in the district. The district's population is projected to reach 277,477 by the end of 2005, given a growth rate of four percent.³ Currently, the district population is about eleven percent of the total population of the region (see Table 5-1 on East Gonja District Population 1960-2000).

Tema, which serves as the administrative capital of the Tema Municipal Assembly, is a coastal city situated about 30 kilometers east of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. The Assembly shares boundaries on the North and East with the Dangme West District Assembly (DWDA), on the West with the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), and on the Northwest with the Ga District Assembly (GDA). It is bounded on the South by the Gulf of Guinea. (Interestingly, the

³ Population estimates are based on projections of the 1984 census.

Greenwich Meridian (0° longitude), passes through the city of Tema.) Tema was a small fishing village until 1952, when the Government of Ghana decided to develop a deep-sea port there. Since its creation, Tema has undergone various stages of development, from being an initial Local Council, and then becoming part of the Accra-Tema City Council, to becoming an autonomous District Council in 1974. In December 1990, the Tema District Assembly was elevated to the status of a Municipal Assembly. The Municipality covers an area of 396 square kilometers, made up of 163 square kilometers government acquired area and a remainder belonging to traditional authorities, stools, and families. The 2000 Ghana Population Census and Household Survey put the total population of the Municipality at 511,459, a figure comprised of 252,109 males and 259,350 females. The Municipality is also known to have a high population growth rate of 2.6 percent. This could be attributed to more migration factors due to the fact that many people migrate from other parts of the country in search of non-existent jobs in the Tema Harbor and industries or factories. It is no wonder that Ashaiman Zonal Council, a migrant community in the municipality, has the highest population growth rate in Ghana: 4.6 percent.

In testing the relationships across cases (districts), I was looking for congruence or incongruence as suggested by the propositions in the literature. Therefore, in testing for a positive relationship between decentralization and effectiveness, I wanted to see if decentralized governments in the two cases experienced improvements in development outcomes, responsiveness, and process over time. Additionally, I was looking for variations among cases, since I wanted to know whether the uniform structure of decentralized districts yields uniform performance outputs. It is important to mention that in this research, all the cases from which I chose are decentralized; hence, the variation in the independent variable (decentralization) comes from looking at local governments over time: before and after 1988. All the decentralized

districts in Ghana have the same formal structure and relatively similar implementations of the decentralization policy. I also looked for other explanatory variables, besides the decentralized structures of decision making and implementation that might be influencing local government performance. In so doing, I assumed that if the decentralization implemented in Ghana appeared to have yielded little in the way of improved effectiveness, then I would be looking for variables or conditions that might explain why such relationships did not occur.

As stated earlier, I administered a survey questionnaire to community members or village residents in the selected case districts and another survey questionnaire to elected officials (District Assembly members and Unit Committee members). In administering a questionnaire to ordinary village residents, I was interested in gauging the community members' own perceptions of effectiveness of the performance of the District Assemblies, based on the explanatory variables and their views on a variety of issues. With particular reference to elected officials, I was interested in assessing their own understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the degree to which they think they are performing their tasks. I based my selection of informants for interviews on a two-fold sampling method: selecting towns and villages within the study districts and then selecting informants within villages. It is important to note here that most community informants were very willing to participate as informants, and I got equivalent interest from the elected officials. Villages were selected within the districts based on distance from the district capital, number of unit/zonal/town communities in the village, and accessibility. This was necessary because people living in villages far from the district capital were likely to have different opinions about government than those living close to the capital, a difference which would in turn affect the kinds of responses made about the effectiveness and responsiveness of

government. Hence, villages were chosen to include those both near and far from the district capital.

3. DECENTRALIZATION, LOCAL GOVERNANCE, AND SERVICE DELIVERY

In a 1983 issue of *Public Administration and Development*, Dianne Conyers referred to decentralization as “the latest fashion in development administration” (Conyers, 1983). Since then, decentralization has remained a prominent topic of interest and debate among scholars, international agencies, and the governments of a number of developing countries. This interest and debate could be attributed to the linking of decentralization with such benefits as equity, effectiveness, responsiveness, and efficiency. Rondinelli (1981), for instance, makes several claims regarding the economic benefits of decentralization. He maintains that

as societies, economies, and governments become more complex, central control and decision-making becomes more difficult, costly, and inefficient. By reducing diseconomies of scale inherent in the over concentration of decision-making in the national capital, decentralization can increase the number of public goods and services and the efficiency with which they are delivered at lower cost. (Rondinelli 1981)

An increasing number of countries are decentralizing the administrative, fiscal, and political functions of the central government to lower-level governments. Though these decentralization efforts are typically politically motivated, they have profound impacts on economies by influencing, among other things, governance in the public sector, including public services; decentralization is often thought to “bring government closer to the people.” The advocates of decentralization argue that decentralizing the delivery, and, in some cases, the financing of local public goods improves the allocation of resources, cost recovery, and accountability, and reduces corruption in service delivery (Conyers 1983, Cohen et al. 1981, Landau and Eagle, 1981). However, as Landau and Eagle (1981) point out in their survey of the literature, “decentralization is presented as a solution to a rather large number of problems” (10). They argue that the claims for the effectiveness of decentralization are just that: claims, not hard

facts. Those claims and arguments are reviewed in this chapter and used to provide a guide for evaluating decentralization outcomes in Ghana. This chapter attempts to find an operational definition for the term decentralization; I also review the evolution of the concept of decentralization from simple dichotomy to multidimensional concept. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss in greater detail the relevant literature on the likely impact of decentralization on public service delivery, analyzing some of the theoretical and practical considerations and evidence. This discussion forms the basis for the assumptions and data analysis of the dissertation. I also provide a synthesis of the comparative practice of decentralization in Sub-Saharan Africa. The latter part of this chapter addresses the issue of local government partnerships with community-based organizations as an alternative development strategy for promoting local development.

3.1. Concept of Decentralization and its Significance

There is much confusion concerning the exact meaning of the concept of decentralization. In fact, the term “decentralization” has been used to encompass a variety of alternative institutional and financial arrangements for sharing power and allocating resources (Martinussen 1997). According to Olowu (1989), it “evokes different images among policy makers, administrators, political scientists, and the public.” The confusion surrounds not only the definition of the concept but also the various forms of decentralization, which include devolution, deconcentration, delegation, and privatization, among others. This is why Aaron Wildavsky would prefer to use the term “non-concentration” instead of decentralization to refer to local bodies acting independently of each other and semi-independently of the center (1990). Smith (1986) refers to the concept as “reversing the concentration of administration at a single center

and conferring powers on local government.” In general, one definition of decentralization exemplifies the variety of institutional changes that are now subsumed under this term:

[Decentralization] can be defined as the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and the raising and allocation of resources from the central government and its agencies to field units of central government ministries or agencies, subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities, or nongovernmental private or voluntary organizations. (Rondinelli and Nellis 1986, 5)

Many scholars have undertaken historical reviews of the term decentralization and provided good accounts of the ways this word has been applied to a rapid expanding array of changes in institutional structure (Conyers 1983, 1984; Mawhood 1983; Mawhood and Davey 1980; M. Cohen 1980). Accordingly, the first modern referent for the term in the development literature can be traced back to the set of institutional changes introduced in the 1950’s in preparation for the granting of independence to many African countries (particularly in the former colonies of Great Britain). This classic decentralization, as Mawhood and Davey (1980, 405) describe it, was organized around five principles. First, local authorities should be institutionally separate from central government and assume responsibility for a significant range of local services (primary education, clinics and preventive health services, community development, and secondary roads are the most common). Second, these authorities should have their own funds and budgets and should raise a substantial part of their revenue through local direct taxation. Third, local authorities should employ their own qualified staffs, who could be temporarily transferred from the civil service as necessary in the early stages. Fourth, the authorities should be governed internally by councils predominantly composed of popularly elected members. Fifth and finally, government administrators should withdraw from an executive to an advisory, inspectorial role in relation to local government. Mawhood (1983, 4)

expressly refers to these newly created bodies (which often took the form of district or provincial councils), as “local governments.”

The second round of decentralization efforts began in the 1970’s, and since then, the word has been used in the development literature to refer to many different institutional changes. Ostrom, Schroeder, and Wynne (1993) maintain that because of the proliferation of institutional changes, a precise meaning for the term no longer exists. They argue that the political leadership of developing countries has tended to use the word indiscriminately to refer to any kind of institutional change. In their view, many new initiatives that were called decentralizations did, in fact, involve extensive redistribution of executive authority among the employees of national ministries or departments closely tied to them, but the reorganizations still tightly constrained the independent legislative, taxing, and spending authority of what Mawhood calls local governments (Mawhood 1983).

Because governments had captured the term decentralization to describe what were, in many cases, administrative reorganizations, other words were coined by academic observers sensitive to the need to differentiate among the different types of institutional changes. I present below a typology of the forms of decentralization as observed in the development literature today.

3.1.1. Multiple Dimensions of Decentralization

Decentralization can be categorized in four main types involving a variety of forms, namely Political, Administrative, Fiscal, and Market (Litvack et al. 1999). Each type of decentralization has unique characteristics, policy implications, and conditions for success.⁴

⁴ This typology is discussed in great detail in a World Bank document authored by Litvack et al. 1999. The document also discusses the rationale for decentralization and conditions for successful decentralization.

3.1.1.1. Political decentralization

Political decentralization aims to give citizens and their elected representatives more power in public decision-making. It is often associated with pluralistic politics and representative governments, but it can also support democratization by giving citizens or their representatives more influence in formulating and implementing policies. Advocates of political decentralization assume that decisions made with greater participation will be better informed and more relevant to diverse interests in society than those made only by national political authorities. The concept implies that the selection of representatives from local electoral jurisdictions allows citizens to know their political representatives better and allows elected officials to know the needs and desires of their constituents better. Political decentralization often requires constitutional or statutory reforms, development of pluralistic political parties, strengthening of legislatures, creation of local political units, and encouragement of effective public interest groups.

3.1.1.2. Administrative decentralization

Administrative decentralization seeks to redistribute authority, responsibility, and financial resources for providing public services among different levels of government. It is the transfer of responsibility for planning, financing, and managing certain public functions from the central government and its agencies to field units of government agencies; subordinate units or levels of government; semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations; or area-wide, regional, or functional authorities. Administrative decentralization has three major forms—*deconcentration*, *delegation*, and *devolution*—each with different characteristics.

Deconcentration—the redistribution of decision-making authority, financial, and management responsibilities among different levels of the central government—is often considered the weakest form of decentralization and is used most frequently in unitary states.

Within this category, however, policies and opportunities for local input vary: deconcentration can merely shift responsibilities from central government officials in the capital city to those working in regions, provinces, or districts, or it can create strong field administration or local administrative capacity under the supervision of central government ministries.

Delegation is a more extensive form of decentralization. In delegation, central governments transfer responsibility for decision making and administration of public functions to semi-autonomous organizations not wholly controlled by the central government but ultimately accountable to it. Governments delegate responsibilities when they create public enterprises or corporations, housing authorities, transportation authorities, special service districts, semi-autonomous school districts, regional development corporations, or special project implementation units. Usually, these organizations have a great deal of discretion in decision-making; they may be exempt from constraints on regular civil service personnel and may be able to charge users directly for services.

Devolution is the transfer of authority for decision-making, finance, and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government with corporate status. Devolution usually transfers responsibilities for services to municipalities that elect their own mayors and councils, raise their own revenues, and have independent authority to make investment decisions. In a devolved system, local governments have clear and legally recognized geographical boundaries over which they exercise authority and within which they perform public functions. It is this type of administrative decentralization that underlies most political decentralization.

3.1.1.3. Fiscal decentralization

Financial responsibility is a core component of decentralization. If local governments and private organizations are to carry out decentralized functions effectively, they must have

adequate revenues raised locally or transferred from the central government as well as the authority to make expenditure decisions. Fiscal decentralization can take many forms, including (1) self-financing or cost recovery through user charges; (2) cofinancing or coproduction, in which users participate in providing services and infrastructure through monetary or labor contributions; (3) expansion of local revenues through property or sales taxes or indirect charges; (4) intergovernmental transfers of general revenues from taxes collected by the central government to local governments for general or specific uses; and (5) authorization of municipal borrowing and mobilization of national or local government resources through loan guarantees. However, in many developing countries, though local governments or administrative units possess the legal authority to impose taxes, the tax base is so weak and the dependence on central government subsidies so ingrained that no attempt is made to exercise that authority (Litvack et al. 1999).

3.1.1.4. Economic or market decentralization

The most complete forms of decentralization from a government's perspective are *privatization* and *deregulation*, in which governments shift responsibility for functions from the public to the private sector, allowing functions that had been primarily or exclusively the responsibility of government to be carried out by businesses, community groups, cooperatives, private voluntary associations, and other nongovernmental organizations. Privatization and deregulation are usually accompanied by economic liberalization and market development policies.

Privatization can range in scope from the provision of goods and services based entirely on the free operation of the market to public-private partnerships in which government and the private sector cooperate to provide services or infrastructure. Privatization can mean allowing

private enterprises to perform functions that had previously been monopolized by government. It can also mean contracting out the provision or management of public services or facilities to commercial enterprises. There is a wide range of public-private institutional forms and of ways in which such functions can be organized, particularly in infrastructure. Privatization can also include financing public sector programs through the capital market with adequate regulation or measures to ensure that the central government does not bear the risk for this borrowing, and allowing private organizations to participate. And finally, it can mean transferring responsibility for providing services from the public to the private sector through the divestiture of state-owned enterprises.

Deregulation reduces the legal constraints on private participation in service provision or allows competition among private suppliers for services previously provided by the government or by regulated monopolies. In recent years, privatization and deregulation have become more attractive alternatives to government provision of services in developing countries. Local governments are also privatizing by contracting out service provision or administration.

However, there is still much controversy and debate about what labels can be attached appropriately to different reform efforts. Cohen and his colleagues observe that “decentralization is not one thing; nor is it even a series of degrees along a single spectrum or scale.” For them, the overarching abstraction “decentralization” must be split into a host of separate and occasionally conflicting entities (S. Cohen et al. 1981, 5-6). Leonard and Marshall (1982, 30) propose a typology based on four dimensions that can be represented by a matrix containing twenty-four (24) subtypes of decentralization. Each institutional change can be located in one of these 24 cells depending on what type of organization is involved at both the intermediate and local level, whether mediating organizations are representative, private, or agencies of the central

government; whether governmental bodies are generalist or specialist; and whether representative entities are inclusive or alternative organizations limited to the poor.

Similarly, Conyers (1985) emphasizes that institutional changes regarded as decentralization vary widely on a number of dimensions, five of which she considers characteristic of all decentralization efforts. These dimensions point to the deeper structure of the institutional changes involved in a decentralization initiative and include the functional activities over which authority is transferred; the type of authority, or power, which is transferred with respect to each functional activity; the level(s) or area(s) to which such authority is transferred; the individual, organization, or agency to which authority is transferred at each level; and the legal or administrative means by which authority is transferred (Conyers 1985, 24).

Furthermore, recent scholarship on decentralization has stressed that the term refers not to phenomena that can be arrayed along a single dimension, but rather to many different phenomena that can only be represented by multiple dimensions. This multi-dimensional approach to understanding the structure of decentralization may seem reasonable. However, these dimensions do not necessarily help develop a cumulative body of knowledge about how various institutional changes affect the incentives of participants, their resulting actions, and the effects of their cumulative behavior. According to Ostrom, Schroeder, and Wynne (1993), what is needed is a more general set of dimensions closely tied to a body of knowledge.

3.2. Decentralization and Service Delivery: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives

Decentralization of local public goods, finance, and delivery is argued to improve governance in public service provision in at least three ways: (1) by improving the efficiency of resource allocation; (2) by promoting accountability and reducing corruption within government; and (3) by improving cost recovery. These three dimensions of governance are closely linked and depend on local governments being at least quasi-democratic.

The most common theoretical argument for decentralization is that it improves the efficiency of resource allocation. Decentralized levels of government have their *raison d'être* in the provision of goods and services whose consumption is limited to their own jurisdictions. By tailoring outputs of such goods and services to the particular preferences and circumstances of their constituencies, decentralized provision increases economic welfare above that which results from the more uniform levels of such services that are likely under national provision (Oates 1999, 1121-22). The argument advanced here is that because subnational governments are closer to the people than the central government, they are considered to have better information about the preferences of local populations (Hayek 1945, Musgrave 1959). Hence, they are argued to be better informed to respond to the variations in demands for goods and services. Subnational governments are also considered to be more responsive to the variations in demands for and cost of providing public goods. Decentralization is thought to increase the likelihood that governments respond to the demand of the local population by promoting competition among subnational governments (Tiebout 1956).

Decentralization is also argued to promote accountability and reduce corruption in the government (Ostrom, Schroeder, and Wynne 1993). Since subnational governments are closer to the people, citizens are considered to be more aware of subnational governments' actions than

they are of the actions of the central government. The resulting competition among sub-national providers of public goods is seen to impose discipline on subnational governments, as citizens averse to corruption may choose to work with alternative jurisdiction or providers. Corruption represents a breakdown of cooperative behavior, in which the few collude to the detriment of all. Devolving functions to smaller units that are closer to the population should, in theory, increase consensus and legitimacy concerning the choice of public services. This, in turn, can be expected to foster cooperation and vigilance, as well as acceptance of and adherence to rules of public sector integrity (Meagher 1999).

Making services more demand-responsive through decentralization is argued to have the added benefit that it increases households' willingness to pay for services (Briscoe and Garn 1995, Litvack and Seddon 1999). Households are argued to be more willing to pay for and maintain services that match their demands. Moreover, a relatively close match between supply and local demand, if coupled with transparency and with local cost sharing or cost recovery, can provide the incentives and information base for effective local monitoring.

Surprisingly, the empirical evidence on the impact of decentralization on the efficiency of resource allocation, accountability and corruption, and cost recovery is limited. Studies, however, have indicated that experience with decentralization is mixed. Furthermore, there has been little empirical research on developing countries with regard to the argument that decentralization promotes demand-responsiveness of government services. This lack notwithstanding, existing research tends to focus on the effect of decentralization on expenditure allocation or on the impact of public services provided; it does not address whether the resource allocation is tailored to local demand.

Consequently, some observers have cautioned against a shift in the division of powers in favor of subnational governments in developing countries, referring to the “dangers of decentralization” (Prud’homme 1995. Tanzi 1996). These observers have expressed concerns ranging from macro mismanagement, corruption, red tape, and widening gaps between rich and poor regions under a decentralized fiscal system. For example, Bird, Ebel, and Wallich (1995), in their examination of decentralization in Eastern and Central Europe, suggest that public services can suffer as a result of decentralization, at least in the short run. West and Wong (1995) note that in China, decentralization increased regional disparities in the provision of health and education services. Similarly, Winkler and Rounds (1996) attest to the fact that decentralization created inequities in school expenditures in Chile.

A study by Isham and Kähkönen (1999) presents yet more empirical evidence that addresses the demand-responsiveness of decentralized service delivery. These scholars analyze the performance of community-based water services in Central Java and find that when users themselves were directly involved in service design and selection, the services were more likely to match users’ preferences. Their results indicate that informed user participation in service design and decision-making led to different water technology choices: households expressed a willingness to pay for more expensive technologies than village leaders and government officials would have chosen.

With regards to accountability and corruption, there is very little developing country evidence of the impact of decentralization. However, one study suggests that corruption is greater in decentralized than in centralized systems (Treisman 1998). Anecdotal evidence also indicates that there is more corruption among local officials. This evidence notwithstanding, some advocates and observers assert that there are case studies of governance improvements

arising from local efforts in decentralized systems. (Litvack et al. 1998, Klitgaard 1988). Overall, these studies, as well as anecdotal evidence and theoretical work, suggest that the performance of decentralized service delivery depends on the design of decentralization and institutional arrangements that govern its implementation. In the next section, I explore the literature on the influence of citizen's participation in the performance of service delivery in terms of allocative efficiency, accountability, and cost recovery.

3.3. Decentralization and Citizen Participation

The argument that decentralization improves resource allocation, accountability, and cost recovery relies heavily on the assumption that subnational governments have better information than the central government about the needs and preferences of the local population, and that the population is more aware of the actions of subnational governments than those of the central government. However, whether subnational governments have information about the preferences of citizens depends critically on the existence of mechanisms for the local population to participate in the delivery of public services and have their voices heard in decision-making.

Citizen participation ensures that public goods are consistent with voter preferences and public sector accountability and facilitates information flows between the government and local population (Manor 1996). Fiszbein (1997) find that community participation increased demands for effective local governments and forced government accountability in Columbia. Participation made local authorities more accountable to citizens by increasing the political costs of inefficient and inadequate public decisions. Putnam's 1993 study of Italian regional governments also finds that governments that were more open to constituent pressure managed and delivered services more efficiently.

The argument that decentralization strengthens citizen participation is further corroborated by the findings of Huther and Shah (1998). Using data from a sample of 80 countries, they find that political stability and political freedom indices and a composite index of citizen participation are positively correlated with the index of fiscal decentralization. In their analysis, they claim this relationship is statistically significant, suggesting that citizen participation and public sector accountability go hand in hand with decentralized public sector decision-making and service delivery.

Hirschman (1970) suggests the voice and exit mechanisms available for citizens/users to participate in service delivery, as well as express their preferences for public policies. The extent of “voice” users have about service delivery depends on the decision-making processes that citizens are allowed to use. Governments can establish several mechanisms through which the local population can participate and express, in a systematic way, their preferences and perceived problems with public service delivery. Participation through these mechanisms can take many forms: voicing demand and perceived problems with delivery, making choices, or being involved in projects and service management. Citizens can also have their voices heard through direct participation in service delivery. They may participate in the implementation of specific projects by contributing to the design, construction and/or operation, and maintenance of services. In other words, government and communities may co-produce services (World Bank 2001).

The failure of governments alone to provide adequate levels of services has in the past decade led to the adoption of a community-based approach to the delivery of some local services, in particular rural infrastructure services such as village water and irrigation. This approach typically relies on co-production of services by the government and users, and adopts a demand-responsive focus on what users want and what they can afford. In projects taking a community-

based approach, users typically participate in service design and manage the service as a group. Indeed, the evidence on the rural water sector indicates that water systems provided by projects that followed the community-based approach have, on average, performed better than systems built and managed by government alone (Narayan 1995, Isham and Kähkönen 1999).

Finally, when voice mechanisms either do not exist or have proven ineffective, and the service provided is unsatisfactory, citizens have in principle the option to “exit” —that is, to stop using the service. Citizens can exercise this option by either switching to alternative service providers within the same jurisdiction or by moving to another jurisdiction. However, whether citizens can exit by simply switching the service provider in the same jurisdiction depends on the existence of alternative suppliers (Hirschman 1970, Paul 1992).

3.4. Local Governments and Partnerships for Local Development

There has been a great deal of debate over the past decade on the importance of good governance as a precondition for realizing poverty reduction. Despite the fact that development actors interpret the concept of good governance in different ways, there is growing consensus that it involves more than just the institution of government itself. The ability of local governments to achieve sustainable development also depends on the extent to which they are capable of working with other institutions in society. A more pluralistic institutional structure needs to be built, one that allows for a more decentralized way of promoting development and that offers a greater role for different forms of public-private and public-community partnerships. It is through this kind of structure that more effective, efficient, and equitable service provision to communities can be realized. Moreover, strengthening the formal democratic structures through which citizens interact with governments may not always be sufficient to counteract the eroded legitimacy of governments’ own institutions in developing countries; hence the need for

promoting partnerships between local governments and civil society to plan, implement, and review development programs and projects.

Currently, the development community is seeking innovative strategies to address the challenges of local development and poverty alleviation, decentralization, local governance and improvement of aid transfer effectiveness. This section focuses on what partnerships between local government (LG) and community-based organizations (CBOs) mean in practice as an alternative development approach. The focus on how partnerships can be nurtured and practiced will help policy makers and practitioners translate policy into effective implementation strategies.

It is clear by now that central governments will need to play an ongoing role, albeit a different, more supportive, and less directive role (Leonard 1977, Pirou-Sall 1997, World Bank 2001). Top-down support is required for bottom-up initiatives to succeed (Uphoff 1993), but top-down designs can often work to stifle local initiative, particularly if they are imposed in standardized ways, insensitive to regional and local differences (Samoff 1990). Decentralization efforts have been less successful where they have “treated local governments as if they were homogenous entities” (Smoke and Lewis 1996, 1294). Flexible arrangements and “multi-centered local governments” are being observed with interest in Europe (Bogason 1998), and observers in the Third World are asking similarly for “*inter-organizational*” partnerships for local-level development rather than the pre-occupation to date with an *inter-governmental* approach (Olowu 1999, 411). Such inter-organizational partnerships between local governments and community organizations are necessary and useful in many circumstances.⁵ However,

⁵ Co-production—in which citizens and government agencies act together to produce results—is the preferred arrangement in many if not most sectors where results depend as much on citizens’ actions as on government provision (Ostrom 1996).

“relatively little has been done to link decentralization, participation, and good governance” in the academic and policy discourse (Litvack et al. 1998, 5).

During the 1980's and 1990's, Africa entered a far-reaching process of political and institutional reform, a process that has transformed the institutional and policy environment within which development takes place. These reforms emerged in response to a mix of internal and external pressures for change, representing an assault on the *Development State* that had, for nearly three decades, assumed the lead role in managing development, excluding other actors in society. This reform process, though far from complete, has resulted in the gradual dismantling of the centralist model of development, and in so doing has created conditions for a more participatory development approach. Furthermore, from the outside, structural adjustment programs introduced by the IMF and the World Bank during the 1980's, as well as the ending of the Cold War and the discrediting of the socialist model in the 1990's, created space for neoliberal and liberal democratic ideology to influence the change process across the continent.

More generally, the external development community of multilateral and bilateral agencies, which had privileged the role of the state in development, started to question the validity of this approach. With growing evidence that aid resources channeled through central governments was not being put to best use, the expected impact of such assistance on addressing basic development needs, and in particular on arresting poverty, had seldom been realized. Concern was expressed, for instance, about lack of local ownership and participation in development processes, inadequate attention paid to building capacities outside of the government sector, and pervasive inefficient use and misuse of aid resources by government bureaucracies (World Bank 2001).

These external pressures coincided internally with growing public frustration with the failure of post-independent governments to respond to popular demands, to stimulate economic growth, and to provide a basic level of development and embrace basic democratic rights. These concerns reflected a deeper crisis in governance; and calls for more open, accountable, and effective government and the creation of opportunities for more active participation by civil society and the private sector in the development process. These processes have included the shedding of functions to non-governmental actors and have given rise to a wider recognition of the potential benefits of a more participatory approach to development management. The legitimate role of civil society and of the private sector in participating in the formulation and the execution of policy has been increasingly accepted.

The institutional context of development has therefore changed dramatically over the past decade. Consequently, new and more participatory forms of governance are beginning to emerge. The role of the state in development has changed (less doing, more facilitating) and greater onus is placed on an approach that values the participation of different actors in achieving common development goals (Doornbos 1990). It is with this perspective in mind that the discussion on decentralization and local government partnerships can be examined.

What have these changes meant for development at the local level? In both urban and rural environments, new opportunities have arisen for local actors to influence the development process. In place of central government departments, new local administrations have started to enjoy varying degrees of administrative and political autonomy to attend to local development planning and service delivery. Compared to earlier attempts to deconcentrate central government departments, the recent wave of decentralization has gone further, giving discretionary authority to local governments bound only by broad national policy guidelines; their own financial,

human, and material capacities; and the physical environment within which they must operate. There is an expectation that “well functioning, staff sufficient local authorities can more accurately identify needs and mobilize people and resources on a sustained basis and thus better implement development strategies.... A tremendous potential exists for local authorities to provide a full range of services in support of national economic development” (World Bank 1989).

Several arguments have been put forward in support of decentralization and the strengthening of local government. First, transferring governance to local government levels provides significant opportunities for popular participation and increased involvement of people and communities in decisions that directly affect them. Second, it is through strengthened local governments that municipal/district programs, plans, and service provisions are likely to reflect local needs more accurately than in centralized systems of governance. Last but not least, more autonomous local governments charged with service delivery and accountable to their local political constituencies will manage local fiscal bases and revenue collection systems more efficiently and effectively than have central administrations (MDP 1991)⁶.

Experience shows, however, that the problems that characterized central government may be recreated at the level of local government. Over-zealous support for decentralization, without careful attention to the necessary preconditions to implement it, may do little to ensure a more effective and accountable development paradigm. There are no guarantees that local policy-making will necessarily be more relevant than national or regional policy-making. Local governments stress the fact that financial constraints, caused by both weak revenue bases and retention of resources at the center, mean that they lack the necessary resources and technical capacities to carry out their new responsibilities. Others point to the importance of local

⁶ Municipal Development Program, (1991): Program document for Eastern and Southern Africa; Part 1.

accountability and transparency and of ensuring good governance. If governance is understood as the process of interaction between the public sector and the various actors or groups of actors in civil society, then, at the local level, governance is the relationship between the local authority and the civil society.

These organizations continue to play a key role in supporting local development initiatives where local authorities are unable to provide support or where they are considered not to have a comparative advantage to offer. But there have also been concerns expressed that the actions of NGOs fall outside any agreed policy or planning framework, leading to possible duplication or conflict in service provision; in their dissatisfaction with state performance, donors have perhaps gone too far in switching their support to non-state actors, and in so doing have undermined the credibility and legitimacy of state institutions at all levels (Bossuyt 1994).

More generally, civil society organizations have grown in numbers and in strength over the last decades and have claimed a more direct role in influencing the local development process. Moving out of a role focused primarily on service delivery, they have sought a role in program design as well as in wider policy dialogue. This has raised new questions concerning their mandate, representativeness, and legitimacy vis-à-vis formally elected councilors and parliamentarians and the roles of different actors and stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation (Corkery et al. 1995).

Finally, the formal and informal local private sector is recognized as a stakeholder in the local development process and as a potential partner for local government and the not-for-profit sector. Increasingly, this sector is being encouraged to play a more dynamic role in stimulating local economic growth, contributing to the debate on local development strategies, as well as participating in the delivery of key services. However, this sector has probably the least

experience in discussing and implementing local development policies, and, in general, is poorly organized to do so.

It is widely accepted that local municipal and district councils cannot do the job alone. Moreover, they should not repeat the mistakes of central governments and try to monopolize the process. If properly supported, they can play the essential role of nexus between central government and local communities, providing an institutional framework that facilitates the participation of the different local development actors. Yet this is no easy task. It must be recognized that the different actors have been “reluctant partners” in the past and have all too often worked in splendid isolation. But given the pressing development challenges, resource scarcity, and the acknowledged inadequacy of previous development approaches, new options based on the mobilization of all existing actors, resources, and skills need to be explored. It is in this regard that the concepts of decentralized cooperation and partnerships are of particular relevance.

Decentralization and community-driven development are mentioned as alternative means for achieving some or all of the following ends:⁷

- Effectiveness: Project design is improved when local preferences are consulted; consequently, resources are more efficiently allocated. Local resource mobilization helps enlarge the pool of available resources.
- Sustainability: Benefits are more likely to be sustained when local residents are involved in project selection and implementation and when they contribute resources for maintenance and improvement.
- Accountability: Accountability and transparency are both better served when decisions are taken at levels that are local and easier for people to access.
- Equity: Relatively poor persons can access these forums more easily.

⁷ These benefits of local-level governance arrangements are discussed, for example, by Bird and Vaillancourt (1998); Cohen and Peterson (1999); Cheema and Rondinelli (1983); Rondinelli, McCullough and Johnson (1989); and World Bank 2000.

- Democracy: Political stability is better assured when citizens have regular and reliable channels of communication with state agencies. Local-level governance functions as a school for democracy and leadership development.

However, none of these expected gains comes about automatically, either each time power is devolved upon local governments or when community organizations implement some project. For a variety of reasons, including elite capture and low mobilization capacity, local governments may be quite incapable of achieving these ends by themselves. And civil society organizations (CSOs), referred to in this dissertation as community-based organizations (CBOs), may be ephemeral and thinly spread, so large-scale efforts may be hard to mount relying on CSOs alone.

Acting separately, neither local governments nor CBOs may be capable of achieving the gains expected of democratic local governance. When they act in association, however, CBOs can help overcome local government's shortcomings in terms of outreach and mobilization. And local governments can provide the stability and external linkages that CBOs quite often fail to achieve. Three key elements—*information*, *access* and *collective action*—are critically implicated in local governments' interactions with their constituents (World Bank 2001). Attending to these elements helps achieve the objectives held out by democratic local governance. Prospects for effectiveness and sustainability of any project are enhanced substantially when large numbers of citizens are well informed and when they act collectively to contribute resources and provide maintenance support. Accountability improves when citizens empowered with adequate information can collectively mount pressure on local officials. And democracy and equity are better served when large numbers of citizens can gain access relatively easily to public decision-making forums.

However, access, information, and collective action are not guaranteed just because governments are local, nor are these factors assured just because CBOs exist in a particular area. The route to a participatory, transparent, accountable, and effective local government depends as much on supply as on demand factors. Local governments that act in concert with organized groups of well-informed citizens function better and have deeper roots (Agrawal and Ribot 1999, Esman and Uphoff 1984, Rondinelli 1982). Access to all citizens is not assured each time authority is devolved upon local-level governments. The evidence of the past two decades indicates only too clearly that local governments are prone to capture by small groups of local elites.⁸ Elite capture results in reducing access to local bodies by other citizens, and it is particularly likely in situations characterized by restricted information flows.⁹

In addition to equity, efficiency and sustainability are severely impaired when citizens do not know enough about the projects that local government is mounting and when they cannot indicate their preferences to the local government. Accountability is also hard to achieve without adequate information, while democracy and equity are also impaired when the participation of all sections of local society is limited by the extremely poor information that they possess (Parry 1997, Westergaard and Alam 1995). Tandler and Serrano (1999) maintain that “information asymmetries are a key problem ...: either they must be righted, or an otherwise desirable course of action will not produce the assumed results” (51). By acting as a channel of information in

⁸ The “most important caveat,” stresses the World Bank (2001, 106), “is that decentralization can bolster the power of elites.” Instead of facilitating equity—in participation, representation, influence and benefit sharing—decentralization can “reinforce local elites or self-serving leadership” (Esman and Uphoff 1984, 31). “Local government...may be no more responsive to the needs of the poor – and even less responsive if controlled by a local elite” (UNDP 1998, 56).

⁹ Some authors have regarded elite capture to be more likely in post-colonial situations where government rests “upon traditions that are less than a century old... [and where] colonial structures and patterns make up the only model of large-scale administration” (Mawhood 1993, 257). “State-society relations have long been a concern in states that inherited a colonial, imperial administrative structure” (Pieterse 2001, 3). Post-colonial situations are a special subset, however, of a larger class in which information flows are restricted between citizens and the state.

both directions, community organizations can help build better links between local governments and the citizens they serve.

Community-based development organizations, it is observed for the United States, “bring insights and awareness as well as access...that government agencies simply cannot match. Local knowledge allows CBOs to pinpoint where government aid could help, rather than simply distributing subsidies to whomever can yell the loudest” (Rubin 2000). By enhancing information flows in both directions—from local governments to citizens and from citizens to local governments—CBOs can help realize the benefits that are expected of decentralization (Alkire et al. 2000, Korten 1990). Sharing information over long periods of time can lead to improved communications and trust; repeated interactions can help create webs of functional interdependence between local governments and community organizations (Forrest 1998). Citizens participating in these networks can be more easily mobilized to act collectively.

Collective action is in many senses the lifeblood of democratic local governance. Local resource mobilization is not possible when there is extensive free riding. Consequently, accountability requires mounting collective pressure on CBO leaders and government officials. Collective action is critical for achieving the ends expected of democratic local governance, yet local governments are by themselves particularly ill suited for organizing it. First, many of the local authorities created through decentralization are supra-local in character: they stand above (often far above) the local level, and even when decentralized bodies are congruent with single villages, they still face problems. People are often heartily cynical about any government initiative, and free riders are reluctant to lend their efforts. According to Manor (1999), “collective action is best fostered by local volunteer associations or non-governmental organizations and not by decentralized authorities” (115). By disseminating information,

providing access, and organizing collective action, CBOs can help enrich governance at the local level.

The foregoing discussion takes us beyond the simple dichotomy—CBO *versus* local government—that has, so unfortunately, captured the attention of some observers.¹⁰ Local governments' performance is improved when CBOs provide access and information to citizens and when they help bring communities' social capital to bear upon local projects.¹¹ Decentralization is deeper, more effective, and more sustained in places where community organizations have had important roles from the start (Agrawal 2001). CBOs can help improve the functioning of local governments; conversely, the utility and effectiveness of CBOs can be enhanced considerably when appropriate incentives are provided through government action (Abers 2000, Tandler 1997). Successful national economic strategies have been built upon exploring synergies between the state and societal organizations (Evans 1996), and the analog at the local level consists of organizing appropriately structured partnerships between local governments and community-based organizations.

¹⁰ The trade-offs that are sometimes implied in assisting CBOs or LGs *at the expense of* the other party are well summarized by Parker and Serrano (2001, 33-35).

¹¹ Social capital is an asset, a functioning propensity for mutually beneficial collective action, with which communities are endowed to diverse extents. Communities possessed of large amounts of social capital are able to engage in mutually beneficial cooperation over a wide front. Communities that have low levels of social capital are less capable of organizing themselves effectively. Social capital is a resource, a stock that needs to be mobilized in order to achieve a flow of benefits. CBOs help mobilize communities' stocks of social capital (Putnam 1993; Krishna 2001).

3.5. Decentralization: Comparative Practice in Sub-Saharan Africa

Like its conceptualization, the practice of decentralization in the developing countries had several variations in their scope and methods. Regional surveys of the decentralization programs that were launched in Africa show that what passed for decentralization was in fact, for the most part, deconcentration. Almost all the central governments were faced with a common dilemma: to treat local government as an end (i.e. autonomous) or as an instrument (i.e. extension of the center for decentralized development and administration).

The literature on the practice of decentralization by postcolonial African governments suggests that these governments have failed to achieve their goals because they have tended toward deconcentration rather than toward the real practice of decentralization. It is, however, important to position such evaluations within the context of the duality of contemporary African societies. Sklar (1993) points out that in the political arena, it is normal for auxiliary states, headed by traditional authorities, to occupy a second dimension of political space behind the sovereign state; he terms it “dual authority.” It is a sociopolitical reality with which nearly all African governments, with the possible exception of the Maghreb, have had to contend in their various attempts at decentralization. Unlike the Maghreb region, the rest of Africa has had a long history of states, large and small, that predate those of Europe. Nevertheless, traditional authorities were either marginalized by the French through “assimilation” or “association” or were actively co-opted by the British in their policy of “indirect rule” through a native authority system. In both cases, the overriding goal was the same: to serve the interests of colonialism.

3.5.1. Francophone Africa

In Francophone Africa, the colonies were treated as departments of the central French government and governed through the Prefectural system of territorial administration. Public administration outside of the few cities designated as communes was placed in the hands of chiefs who were, nevertheless, under the firm control of the central agencies. Although many governments in Francophone West Africa have attempted to reform the inherited prefectural system through the creation of lower level *communes*, local government continues to play a limited role, as decentralization is still conceived within the overall framework of the prefectural system and central control. The experience of Cote d'Ivoire vividly illustrates this general Francophone pattern.

The exception to the general pattern was Cameroon, which began differently but ended up the same. Whereas Anglophone West Cameroon arrived at independence in 1961 with a functioning native authority system, Francophone East Cameroon had no such comparable system. In the latter, public administration was enacted through communes, with the traditional authorities marginalized as subordinate agents in spite of the fact that they could offer themselves for election. After unification into a single state in 1972, a provincial system of government was set up in Cameroon, and the House of Chiefs was abolished in favor of a single system of local government based on the Francophone *commune* model. The Biya regime of 1982 initiated changes in the center-local structural relations without a simultaneous shift in political values, and thus, the state remained a centralizing, bureaucratic, and de facto single party.

3.5.2. Anglophone Africa

In Anglophone Africa, the inherited structures of local government were first marginalized in the centralization drives that marked the immediate independence period. In the wake of the failure of centralized development planning and administration, the inherited structures of local government were abolished in favor of provincial or district development administration units headed by officials who were exclusively responsible to the center. Touted as decentralization, these moves were, for the most part, deconcentration strategies within an overall modernizing framework that aimed not only at achieving central control of development, but also at eliminating or considerably reducing traditional influence, especially in the political arena.

The postcolonial attempts by Anglophone African governments to repress or marginalize indigenous constitutional forms of traditional political authority did not, however, go far in all countries due to the resilience of traditional institutions as revealed by anthropological studies such as those conducted by Dryden on Tanzania (1968), Whitaker on Nigeria (1970), and Saaka on Ghana (1978). By employing political science methodologies, these studies are able to show that traditional institutions did not simply disappear in the face of penetration from the so-called modernizing center; instead, they adapted themselves in varying degrees of new and complex configurations.

These findings, however, did not receive as much attention as those revealed by works in political science that employed anthropological methodologies in the study of state-society relations. Works in the latter category such as those by Owusu on Ghana (1970) and Bates on Zambia (1976) show that even where there was considerable political penetration from the center, not all local politics occurred according to the sanctions of the state, for both within and outside the state apparatus, informal patterns of patronage and factionalism prevailed. They

depart from the prevailing behavioral paradigm of political science by replacing macro theory applicable to whole systems with the individual political actor in the rational pursuit of personal goals within the framework of the state. But such a statist approach, reminiscent of an earlier political science paradigm—legalism—diverts attention from the collective basis of local politics in Africa. By focusing on the sovereign state as the only principal institution with chiefs and other local elites portrayed only as rational actors within and without, this approach obscures the dynamic role of chieftaincy as a collective local political authority outside of the state apparatus. This shortcoming has been addressed by researchers like Callaghy (1984), whose work on the state-society relationship in Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC) conceived of historical parallels between contemporary Africa and the age of absolutism in medieval Europe.

Due to the many feudal practices that still lingered in that era in spite of the social change brought about by new economic forces, the leading political idea then was “double majesty,” commonly manifested in “mixed governments” (Sklar 1993). Sklar draws on the resiliency of traditional institutions and Callaghy’s thesis of historical parallels to propose “mixed governments” as an analytical tool to identify dualistic forms of political authority in contemporary Africa. The most notable examples of such Anglophone countries are Botswana, Nigeria, and Ghana. In these countries, dual authority continues to inform and to be informed by decentralization policy formulation and implementation.

3.5.2.1. Tanzania

Tanzania, like Cameroon among the Francophone countries, had an exceptional beginning but ended up with dual authority. In the rural areas of East Africa, loyalties and traditional values of duties and rights stayed confined, for the most part, within the boundaries of kinship, village, and ethnic group. According to Rondinelli (1983), “under these conditions the

concept of nationalism was virtually meaningless and traditional leaders and elites opposed or undermined decentralization policies and maintained control over local decision making.” This situation contributed greatly to the failure of one of the boldest decentralization attempts in Africa, Tanzania’s *Ujamaa* experiment.

At independence in 1961, Tanzania inherited a thriving local government system made up of urban councils and a network of ‘democratized’ Native Authority councils. Beginning in 1962, however, the new central government embarked on creating a system of local administration, replacing the generalist administrative officers with regional and area commissioners, and the native authority councils with modern district councils. Thus, all executive and judicial powers were removed from the traditional chiefs/rulers. Following the Arusha Declaration of 1967 outlining the *Ujamaa* policy, a Decentralization of Government Act was enacted in 1972 that replaced the country’s local government system with a three-tiered administrative structure below the national level and granted limited devolution to the *Ujamaa* villages.

Although this administrative structure provided the framework for bottom-up planning, Rondinelli (1983) notes that “reorganization was based on principles that rural development be locally managed, with widespread popular participation, but coordinated from the center.” In the process, the popular representatives in the advisory committees at each level became subordinated to the government officials from the central ministries leading to an overall decline in popular participation in the newly created institutions. The removal of the democratized native authority councils, which through a network of sub-district traditional councils had provided an indispensable communications link and forum for discussing central-local relations, contributed a great deal to the failure of the program. In turn, the failure prompted the government in 1982 to

embark on reforms reinstating the abandoned structures of local governments, even though the powerful centralizing pull continues to plague the reforms.

3.5.2.2. Botswana

In the midst of the disjunctions and dispossession faced by almost all African countries, Botswana stands out as the exception to the rule: a unique symbol of change with continuity (Picard 1987). The so-called stable democracy of the country's political institutions, manifested in the survival of constitutionalism, has been attributed to their origin from a pre-colonial democratic culture—the Tswana *kgotla*. According to Holm and Molutsi (1992), since the early part of the 19th century, the *kgotla* was a gathering place for adult commoner males to consider issues raised by the chief and headmen. Women, young people, and non-Tswana minorities might attend but had to remain silent during discussions.

Prior to the establishment of land boards and the town and district councils at independence in 1966, tribal administration through the *kgotla* was the only local authority. Soon after independence, the central government rendered tribal administration extra-constitutional by transferring all formal powers of the chief, with the exception of the right to chair the *Kgotla* and the traditional courts, to the newly created councils and land boards. In 1979, a Local Government Structure Commission recommended that the *kgotla* be retained as a local institution to confer grassroots legitimacy to programs from the center. Since then, the success of the *kgotla* has prompted the suggestion for its formal incorporation into the local government system. However, Reilly and Tordoff (1993) argue that there is an advantage in retaining the *kgotla* in an ambiguous position, since the effect of incorporation would be to convert a locally authorized, semi autonomous forum of the various tribes into an appendage of the state. According to Reilly and Tordoff, the fact that government ministers and other civil servants of

the state have to come to the *kgotla* gives the people a sense of some power rather than powerlessness.

3.5.2.3. Nigeria

Nigeria, obviously the most populous and ethnically diverse country in Africa, has a rich repertoire of extra constitutional dual authority with significant implications for local government. At independence in 1960, the country had two basic types of local government system. In the north, due to a strong legacy of “indirect rule,” the nationalist movement was captured by the traditional rulers, where the Emir and a nominated council of elders constituted the statutory local authority. In the south, where local government was effectively wrested from the chiefs by the nationalists, local government was patterned on the British consular system, with the chairman and majority of the representatives elected. It was, however, subverted by the patron-client relationship between the local and regional politicians. Thus, the decentralization that obtained in both the north and south was one of deconcentration or administrative decentralization.

In 1976, local government reforms aimed at moving from the traditional administrative decentralization towards a genuine devolution of powers by creating a third tier level of government below the federal and state levels. The new local governments were constitutionally guaranteed a 10 percent share of the national revenue through their respective states. Under this arrangement, however, the local governments became effectively subordinated to their states as extensions of the central bureaucracy, rather than to the public as self governing institutions.

In spite of such shortcomings, the legitimacy and durability of traditional authority at the local level stands in sharp contrast to the political instability that has marked the country’s history since independence. The cultural norm of an enduring respect for traditional authority is

conceptualized in Whitaker's 1970 study of Northern Nigeria as "institutional change with social continuity." Whitaker confirms that even though tradition and modernity may form the polar opposites of ideologies and movements, there is a dynamic two-way linkage between the so-called polar opposites: through creative adaptations to change which utilize or manipulate new and alien elements to serve established ends and values, and vice versa. A similar study by Ekeh (1975) complements Whitaker's assertion by confirming the existence of two publics: a "moral" *primordial public* and an "amoral" *civic public* with the former trusted more than the latter.

Sklar (1993) maintains that "everywhere in Nigeria, respect for traditional authority is a cultural norm even though its modern role is highly controversial and its impact on modern government varies greatly among peoples and sections of the country." In 1989, the Federal constitution of Nigeria sanctioned a role for traditional authority by permitting the individual states to establish Traditional Councils presided over by chiefs and traditional elders. However, with no executive, legislative or judicial powers, their role was strictly to advise and assist the local government on various matters. Despite the intensive debate that resulted from this arrangement, a consensus emerged, described by Joseph (1991) as a "dualistic federation in transition" comprising an informal federalism of cultural groups, relatively permanent, and the ever-changing constitutional federalism.

3.6. Conclusion

In most developing countries, decentralization is an important political issue, and most countries have adopted strategies for decentralization. On the theoretical level, decentralization of the powers, functions, and resources from central governments to local level administrations may be initiated for many reasons. The positive classical arguments are, among others, that the planning

and implementation of services are best performed by those concerned with the delivery of the services; that a better quality will be achieved if the producers and consumers of the services are close to each other; and that decision-making will be more participatory or democratic if elected officials and their electorates are in close contact. On the other hand, it may be argued that decentralization processes may enhance the inequalities between richer and poorer regions of a country, could undermine the national unity, and might trigger political or ethnic conflicts as well as elite capture. Obviously, it is essential to analyze carefully the motives behind any process of decentralization and its actual implementation in any given national context to be able to assess whether the specific process at hand is a progressive development. The critical question, therefore, is under what conditions decentralization promotes effective government? Smith (1986) argues that specific responses must be made to three key factors related to service provision if decentralization is to improve access and participation: (1) eligibility to participate in schemes and services, (2) prioritizing to determine inclusion and exclusion, and (3) the services to be assigned to decentralized organizations (1986, 455-6).

In this study, I analyze decentralization and democratic local governance in Ghana by assessing the performance of District Assemblies in two local government units with the hope of getting a better understanding of how DAs plan, implement, and manage development activities in close partnership with communities. The experience with decentralization has, however, been mixed and suggests that the original hopes may be misplaced. Overall, the existing studies as well as anecdotal evidence and theoretical works indicate that the effect of decentralization on public service delivery depends on the design and institutional arrangements that govern the implementation of such decentralization. However, the understanding envisioned in this study could help provide a more clearly elaborated theory of governance at the local level and

eventually lead to a more precise formulation of conditions under which specific partnership arrangements might work.

4. THE SYSTEM AND PRACTICE OF DECENTRALIZATION IN GHANA

Ghana's experience with decentralization spans several decades. Since 1957, there have been eleven commissions of enquiry on local government structures and functions in Ghana and several laws and decrees related to decentralization. Efforts made to decentralize included forms of regional devolution and district focused public administration. In 1988, the government of the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) embarked upon an extensive program of decentralization, perhaps the most ambitious in Africa, entailing the creation of 110 District Assemblies (DAs), which were given discretionary authority, and two-thirds of whose members were elected. Following a brief discussion on the historical perspective of local government in Ghana, I present the decentralization reform efforts under the PNDC government led by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings. In order to provide a clearer picture of the current status of decentralization in Ghana, I introduce the policy, legal and regulatory framework for Ghana's decentralization. The current structure of decentralization, as well as the functions and responsibilities of the decentralized institutions, are also discussed. Previous research has been done on District Assemblies in Ghana, and I provide a summary of the findings, including a discussion of some of the limitations and/or problems with the implementation of decentralization in Ghana. Most of the literature argues that local government has been ineffective, due largely to its limited financial resources and political autonomy. This chapter provides a summary of Ghana's decentralization policy from an historical point in time to the present. It is my conviction that the understanding provided in this chapter helps guide the objective of the current study.

4.1. Historical Perspectives on Decentralization in Ghana

The history of decentralization in Ghana can be divided into six phases: Phase 1, the Colonial period; Phase II, 1951-1965; Phase III, 1966-1974; Phase IV, 1974-1988; Phase V, 1988-1992; and Phase VI, 1993 to date. All, with the exception of Phases V and VI, involved attempts by governments to promote mainly administrative decentralization. In addition, the state of decentralization during the phases was vertical, undemocratic, expensive, time wasting, and highly centralized. Phases V and VI, however, involved a blend of administrative and political decentralization with emphasis on the latter, as two-thirds membership of the local government units are popularly elected. Like other developing countries, Ghana has identified itself with the movement to improve development performance and popular participation through decentralization, as seen by the various attempts by different and successive governments and regimes shown in Figure 4-1.

Table 4-1: History of Ghana's Regimes, 1957-2005

Regime	Dates in Power	Head of State	Type of Government
1. Convention People's Party (CPP) 1 st Republic	Mar 1951-Feb 1966	Dr. Kwame Nkrumah	Civilian, later one party
2. National Liberation Council (NLC)	Feb 1966-Apr 1969	Lt. Gen J.A. Ankrah	Military, police
3. National Liberation Council (NLC)	Apr 1969-Sept 1969	Lt. Gen A.A. Afrifa	Military, police
4. Progress Party (PP) 2 nd Republic	Oct 1969-Jan 1972	Dr. K.A. Busia	Civilian, multi-party
5. National Redemption Council (NRC)	Jan 1972-Oct 1975	Col. I.K. Acheampong	Military
6. Supreme Military Council (SMCI)	Oct 1975-July 1978	Col. I.K. Acheampong	Military
7. Supreme Military Council (SMCI)	July 1978-June 1979	Lt. Gen F.W.K. Akuffo	Military
8. Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)	June 1979-Sept 1979	Flt Lt. J.J. Rawlings	Military
9. People's National Party (PNP) 3 rd Republic	Sept 1979-Dec 1981	Dr. Hilla Limann	Civilian, multi-party
10. Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC)	Dec 1981-Jan 1993	Flt Lt. J.J. Rawlings	Military
11. National Democratic Congress (NDC) 4 th Republic	Jan 1993-2000	Flt Lt. J.J. Rawlings	Civilian, multi-party
12. National Patriotic Party (NPP) 4 th Republic	Jan 2000-Present	John A. Kuffuor	Civilian, multi-party

Decentralized government in Ghana began in 1878, when the British colonial authorities introduced Indirect Rule, a policy aimed at providing a statutory basis for the exercise of local government functions by chiefs and at effecting measures of reform to modify the indigenous system to suit modern conditions. Under colonial rule, local government tended to be organized along the lines of a command structure emanating from the governor in Accra. The colonial government established a system of administration based on indirect rule through what was referred to as Native Authorities (NAs). The NAs not only performed judicial functions, like trying cases relating to disputes over ownership, possession, or occupation of land within the

areas of their jurisdiction, but also operated as local government units and were given the power to pass by-laws relating to local matters and to raise funds in order to improve development programs. The NAs did not offer opportunities to develop local democracy and democratic local government because they were made up of paramount chiefs, sub-chiefs, and elders, who behaved like an enlightened and benevolent oligarchy (Ayee 1994).

In 1952, a new form of decentralized authority based on the recommendations of the Watson Commission (1948) and the Coussey Committee (1949) was introduced. The local government councils were now comprised of two-thirds elected membership and one-third chiefs, with paramount chiefs as presidents of the councils. The areas of jurisdiction of the councils were re-demarcated not on the basis of chiefdoms, as was the situation under the NAs but on the basis of two factors: population size and viability, that is, potential ability of the areas to generate local level revenues to support the local government units. These recommendations were reinforced by the Greenwood Commission (1956). The recommendations by the various commissions and committees of enquiry were to design an effective local government system that would be responsive to the needs of the people of Ghana. However, the post-colonial government of Kwame Nkrumah (1957-1966), fearing that decentralization would promote fissiparous or divisive tendencies, encouraged centralization of authority in the nation's capital, particularly the Office of the President. He even resorted to the fragmentation of the local government units as a way of weakening them. By 1965, Ghana had 282 local councils, most or none of which were not viable (Ayee 1994).

In 1974, another attempt at reform of decentralization resulted in the establishment of 65 district councils. Membership was again two-thirds elected officials and one-third representatives of traditional councils. This reform, which sought to assign central government functions of

administration to local government units, also failed. In November 1978, district council elections were held under General Akuffo's Supreme Military Council (SMC) government. In June 1979, junior officers of the army led by Flight Lieutenant Rawlings overthrew the SMC government. Under the civilian government of the People's National Party (PNP), which came to power in September 1979, an announcement was made in August 1981 that an additional 40 districts would be created, bringing the total number to 105. Before the proposal could be implemented, however, the PNP regime was toppled by Jerry Rawlings' Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) on 31 December 1981. In June 1982, the PNDC passed PNDC Law 14 to dissolve the district councils elected in November 1978. Management committees nominated by PNDC-appointed District Secretaries (DSs) replaced the councillors. In December 1983, the Government announced a new policy on decentralization, which had the following aims: to reduce the "massive" gulf between the rural people and urban dwellers, to end the drift of people from the countryside to the towns, and to increase initiative and development at the sub-national level.

Like previous regimes, the PNDC at this point was interested in deconcentration, or administrative decentralization, because it regarded decentralization as the devolution of central administrative and not political authority to the local level (Ayee 1994). Perhaps it is worth noting that the 1983 decentralization program did not make any reference to the election of local representatives because the populist institutions of the People's Defence Committees (PDCs) and Workers Defence Committees (WDCs) were considered to be the appropriate representative institutions (Ayee 1994). Below are some of the shortcomings of local government before the reforms of 1988 initiated by the PNDC:

- i. misadministration involving corruption, mismanagement of funds, failure to perform functions assigned to the local government units;

- ii. inability of the local councils to generate adequate funds to support their activities;
- iii. the divorce of planning from implementation;
- iv. inadequate transfer of financial resources from the central government to the local government units;
- v. extremely weak manpower of the local government units vitiated by nepotism in appointments;
- vi. portrayal of local government units as poor, inept, inefficient, and worthless development partners of central government; and
- vii. lack of participation of the citizenry in their own development process due to stifling of local initiatives by the centralized system. These shortcomings were exacerbated by military coup d'états in 1966, 1972, 1979 and 1981.

4.2. The PNDC and Decentralization in Ghana

On December 31, 1981, the Provisional National Defense Council, under the leadership of Ft. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, came to power after overthrowing the popularly elected government of Dr. Hilla Limann's People's National Convention (PNP) government. The PNDC immediately promised Ghanaians a "new" democracy, a "true" democracy, a "real" democracy, and a "participatory" democracy. To realize this rather loosely defined democracy, the PNDC established populist institutions¹² like the People's Defense Committees and the Workers Defense Committees in 1982. The PDCs and WDCs were charged with decision-making in the community and the work place and with elimination of various corrupt practices, as well as with actively engaging the public in new processes of political, social, and economic change.

¹² These were pro-government leadership organizations (para-military in nature) at the community level focusing on mobilizing communities for development initiatives, coordinating community activities, arbitrating conflicts, and disseminating government information.

The PNDC decentralization program started with the launching of the *Blue Book* on district political authority and modalities for district level elections in 1987 and was then followed by the demarcation of districts in 1987/88, the holding of the District Assembly elections in 1988/89, and their inauguration. The District Assemblies which were created as a result of the PNDC policy

were to become pillars upon which the people's power would be erected, ... the focal points of development at the village and town levels ... The principle of popular participation was given meaning through the assemblies, where decisions directly affecting the lives of the people were to be taken. The objective of the elections was for a system of local government of the people, by the people, and for the people ... it was for a system that gave the voters power to exercise control over their affairs.¹³

To promote and enhance the policy objectives of its decentralization program, the PNDC took some measures to strengthen the District Assemblies (DAs). First and foremost, the government promulgated PNDC Law 207 in 1988 to give legal backing to the creation of District Assemblies. The number of districts was increased from 65 to 110, with the rationale of not only promoting participatory democracy but making them viable and more homogenous manageable units. Table 4-1 shows the three categories of District Assemblies under the reforms initiated by the PNDC.

Table 4-2: The Three Categories of District Assemblies

Categories of District Assembly	Number in each Category
Metropolitan Assemblies	3
Municipal Assemblies	4
District Assemblies	103
Total	110

¹³ J.J. Rawlings, Broadcast to the Nation on New Year's Day, January 1, 1991, in the *Republic of Ghana*, 1991: "A Year of Bold Actions," Accra, Information Services Department, 1991, 14.

The DAs were expected to promote development in their areas. Section 6 of PNDC Law 207 assigned deliberative, legislative and executive functions to the DAs and gave them responsibility for the overall development of their districts as well as a role in the formulation of the district composite budget, the mobilization of the district's resources, the promotion of productive activity, the development of basic infrastructure, and provision of municipal works and services. Additionally, District Assemblies were to be responsible for the development and management of human settlements and the environment as well as for the maintenance of security in the districts. Certain measures were also taken to ensure the districts performed their development roles, including the placement of 22 functional departments listed under section 29 of PNDC Law 207 under the DAs; the creation of District Development Planning and Budgeting Units; the creation of the post of District Planning Officers and Budget Officers; the merger of the dual district treasury system into a single office of the District Treasury; the creation of the post of District Coordinating Directors; the ceding to the DAs of seven revenue sources like entertainment duty, casino revenue, daily transport and advertisement taxes; and the establishment of District Tender Boards, among others.

The PNDC adopted a four-tier administrative structure of local government, consisting of Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs), District Assemblies, Town/Area/Village Councils, and Unit Committees (see Figure 2-1.). Several studies have suggested that the PNDC, to preserve its legitimacy and stability, made the District Assembly and locally elected individuals the focus of its policy. Apparently, this was part of Rawlings' creation of an alternative civil society in Ghana and the beginning of the transformation of society in Ghana. It is imperative to note that the District Assemblies under the PNDC regime had far more power than their predecessors,

including statutory control over a deconcentrated civil service and an increased taxing authority, more than any previous district level government in Ghana.

The Regional Coordinating Councils were headed by Regional Chief Executives appointed by the President, with Regional Coordinating Directors, career civil servants, as administrative advisors. The Regional Coordinating Council coordinated and integrated the plans of the assemblies and certified their budgets and balance statements. Below the district level were town/area councils, urban councils, and zonal councils, depending on the classification of the assembly, as shown in Figure 4-1. At the lowest level were the unit committees, representing the subdistrict structures that performed functions delegated to them by the assemblies, with no independent funding of their own. The district assemblies elected in 1988/89 remained in office until after the national level multi-party elections and a new government was inaugurated in 1993. The decentralized system was recognized by the 1992 Constitution and a new Local Government Act 462, which provided for assembly elections every four years.

4.3. The Policy, Legal and Regulatory Framework for Decentralization in Ghana

Today, the policy framework of Ghana's decentralization is influenced by three factors, namely the 1992 Constitution, Chapters 6 and 20; the Economic Reform Program (although it does not specifically refer to decentralization, it does provide the enabling environment or background); and finally, the Role of the Public Sector (although this too does not specifically refer to decentralization, it does provide the enabling environment or background). However, the 1992 Constitution and its stated provisions and elements relating to decentralization are the focus of this section.

Ghana's decentralization program under the Fourth Republican National Democratic Congress (NDC) government of Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings is a continuation of the one initiated by its predecessor government, the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). The government's initiative in reform of decentralization started in 1988 with the promulgation of PNDC Law 207 and was inspired by the government's political philosophy of "power to the people."

The 1992 Constitution and the various legislations on decentralization have been able to articulate the explicit objectives of decentralization such as empowerment, participation, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness, decongestion of the national capital, and the checking of the rural-urban drift. The 1992 Constitution under Chapter 20, "*Decentralization and Local Government*," addresses the policy objectives, the role of regional and central government, the role of the district or the structure of authority at the district level.

Three of the significant provisions of the Constitution establishing policy objectives for decentralization are as follows:

- i. "Local government and administration ... shall, as far as practicable, be decentralized" (Article 240[1]);
- ii. "To ensure the accountability of local government authorities, people in particular local government areas shall, as far as practicable, be afforded the opportunity to participate effectively in their governance" (Article 240 [2][e]); and
- iii. "A District Assembly shall be the highest political authority in the district, and shall have deliberative, legislative, and executive powers" (Article 241[3]).

The essential features of this system are given in Article 240 (2) of the Constitution, viz:

- i. functions, powers, responsibilities, and resources should be transferred from the Central Government to local government units;
- ii. measures should be taken to enhance the capacity of local government authorities to plan, initiate, coordinate, manage, and execute policies in respect of matters affecting the local people;

- iii. local government units should have sound financial bases with adequate and reliable sources of revenue;
- iv. local government staff must be controlled by local authorities; and
- v. there should be popular local participation in local decision-making.

4.3.1. Central and District Government

Nine of the significant provisions of the Constitution address the role of the central government with respect to its relationship to district level governments in Ghana. Six of those provisions specify responsibilities of Parliament:

- i. “Parliament shall enact appropriate laws to ensure that functions, powers, responsibilities and resources are at all times transferred from the Central Government to local government units in a coordinated manner” (Article 240[2][a]);
- ii. “Parliament shall by law provide for the taking of such measures as are necessary to enhance the capacity of local government authorities to carry out their responsibilities” (Article 240[2][b];
- iii. “Parliament may by law make provision for the redrawing of the boundaries of districts or for reconstituting the districts” (Article 241[2]);
- iv. “Parliament shall, by law, prescribe the functions of DAs and the levying and collection of taxes, rates, duties and fees” (Article 245);
- v. “Parliament shall annually make provision for the allocation of not less than five per cent of the total revenues of Ghana to the DAs for development” (Article 252[2]);
- vi. “Parliament shall enact laws and take steps necessary for further decentralization of the administrative functions and projects of the Central Government but shall not exercise any control over the DAs that is incompatible with their decentralized status, or otherwise contrary to law” (Article 254).

One additional provision specifies that “the member or members of Parliament from the constituencies that fall within the area of authority of the DA [shall be] members of the [District Assembly] without the right to vote” (Article 242[b]). Two more important provisions specify responsibilities of the President:

- i. “The President, in consultation with the traditional authorities and other interest groups in the district shall appoint not more than thirty per cent of all the members of the DA” (Article 242[d]); and
- ii. “The President shall appoint a District Chief Executive for every district with the prior approval of not less than two-thirds majority of members of the Assembly present and voting” (Article 243[1]);

Finally, “the Auditor-General shall audit the accounts of the DAs annually and shall submit his reports on the audit to Parliament” (Article 253).

4.3.2. Structure of Authority at the District Level

The District Assemblies are responsible for performing legislative functions while the Executive Committee (EXECO) —a sub-committee of the DAs and chaired by the District Chief Executive (DCE) —is responsible for performing executive functions. Although there is overlapping membership between the DAs and their EXECO, the influence of the Central Government is more significant and direct with respect to its relationship with the EXECO. The intended role of the DAs is to represent the interests of their constituents within the districts. There is a system of checks and balances under which the Presiding Member, the head of the district legislature is not a member of the EXECO. An Assembly member’s mandate may be revoked by the electorate. The DCE is paid by the Central Government, while the DAs are responsible for the payment of the emoluments of the Presiding Member (PM) and the members of the DA. In addition, the system of local government is non-partisan. Section 248 of the Constitution provides that “a candidate seeking election to a District Assembly or any lower local government unit shall present himself as an individual, and shall not use any symbol associated with any political party.” Similarly, Article 248[2] states that “a political party shall not endorse, sponsor, and offer a platform to or in any way, campaign for or against a candidate seeking election to a District Assembly or any lower local government unit.”

The range of functions entrusted to the EXECO makes it the nerve center and the loom of administration at the district level. The EXECO is specifically responsible for implementing resolutions of the DA such as overseeing the administration of the district in collaboration with the office of the District Chief Executive (DCE), coordinating plans and programs of its sub-committees, and developing as well as executing approved plans of the sub-district structures. It is noteworthy that the Presiding Member (Speaker/chairman) of the DA is excluded from membership of the EXECO to forestall a personality clash between him and the DCE. The EXECO works through five statutory sub-committees, plus any other sub-committees, which the EXECO itself may decide; these are (1) Development Planning, (2) Social Services, (3) Works, (4) Justice and Security, and (5) Finance and Administration.

Heads of Department of the DA are technical advisers to the EXECO and statutorily members of the sub-committees. The sub-committees cater to the critical decentralization objective of installing a horizontal system in which local level political authorities supervise the local level officials and ensure the relevance of the sector plans to the needs of the district and that implementation is efficient. Notwithstanding the important role which the EXECO plays, the DCE remains the most important and powerful figure in district administration. The DCE is not only the chief representative of the central government and the conduit for transmitting its concerns to the district at large but also the ex-officio chairperson of the EXECO. In this capacity, he is the chief executive of the entire district administration. Indeed, the DCE is responsible for the day-to-day performance of the executive and administrative functions of the DA and the supervision of its departments. He is the only member who addresses the DA in session on policies determined by the President. The District Coordinating Director (DCD), the most senior career civil servant at the district and his staff, is in theory answerable to the DCE in

the performance of his and his staff's functions. The DCD heads the district administration and is secretary to the DA and the EXECO. In law and practice, the Presiding Member (PM) and the Member of Parliament (MP) do not present any counter balance to the dominance of the DCE. The PM and the MP are specifically excluded from the membership of the EXECO (Ayee 1994; 1997).

Twenty-two line departments and organizations have been placed under the DAs to provide functional specialization and technical expertise that the EXECO and the sub-committees require in order to fulfill the executive and administrative functions. The original 22 departments are, however, to be replaced by sixteen, thirteen, and eleven departments under the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies respectively, with the coming into force of a Legislative Instrument (LI) enacted by the Minister of Local Government. Figure 4-2 shows the 22 departments that ceased to exist, and Figure 4-3 shows the eleven departments that were created at the district level and that were to perform the functions hitherto performed by the 22 central government departments.

Table 4-3: Departments Ceasing to Exist After PNDC Law 207

Departments Ceasing to Exist After PNDC Law 207	
Ghana Education Service	Information Services
Ghana Library Board	Agricultural Engineering
Community Development	Town and Country Planning
Statistical Service	Ghana Highways Authority
Births and Deaths	Public Works Department
Department of Forestry	Department of Parks and Gardens
Fire Service	Rural Housing & Cottage Industries
Animal Health and Production	Controller & Accountant General
Department of Fisheries	District Medical Officer
Agricultural Extension Services	Feeder Roads
Crop Services	Social Welfare

In addition to the general administration under the DA, each DA is required to establish a District Planning and Coordinating Unit (DPCU), made up of professional staff certified by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), to help the DAs perform their planning functions.

Table 4-4: Composition of District Departments

Department	Central Government Constituents
Central Administration	General Administration District Planning & Coordinating Unit Births and Deaths Registry Information Services Department Statistical Service
Education, Youth and Sports	Education Service Youth & Sports Ghana Library Board
Social Welfare and Community Development	Social Welfare Community Development
Works	Public Works Department Department of Feeder Roads Rural Housing
Physical Planning	Department of Town Planning Department of Parks & Gardens
Finance	Controller and Accountant General
Natural Resource Conservation	Department of Forestry Games and Wildlife
Trade and Industry	Trade & Cottage Industries Co-operatives
Health	Office of District Medical Officer Environmental Division
Department of Agriculture	Department of Animal Health & Production Department of Fisheries Department of Agricultural Extension Department of Crop Services Department of Agricultural Engineering
Disaster Prevention	Fire Service Department

It is, however, important to note that the placement of the departments and organizations has been fraught with difficulty. Department personnel are employed by the central government and depend on their parent ministries or organizations for practically all resources needed for the

running of their departments in the districts. This has created the problem of double allegiance. Assuming the 22 departments are replaced, the more limited deconcentration would still not resolve the question of double allegiance, which ultimately hinges on the question of who “hires and fires” the staff of the decentralized institutions.

There are other features of decentralization that are not necessarily contained in Chapter 20 of the Constitution. District Assemblies are enjoined in Article 34 to have regard to Chapter 6 of the Constitution, “The Directive Principles of State Policy” in the performance of their functions and in exercise of their powers. In this regard, it is instructive to note that under Article 35[5], the State shall actively promote the integration of the peoples of Ghana and prohibit discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of place of origin, circumstances of birth, ethnic origin, gender or religion, creed or other beliefs. To achieve this objective, Section 35[6][d] states that the “State shall take appropriate measures to make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level of national life and in government.” It is also important to state that Article 190[2] envisages the possible creation of a separate Local Government Service.

The 1992 constitutional provisions with respect to decentralization are quite specific concerning the ultimate responsibilities of Parliament. However, with respect to specific responsibilities of District Assemblies, the Constitution’s language is fairly broad. More importantly, the structure of relationships between the so-called decentralized central government ministries and departments, statutory public corporations, and the DAs is not substantively addressed. Also, no differentiation is made in the Constitution of the choices made among different forms of decentralization.

Some of the objectives of decentralization, however, could be incompatible. For instance, popular participation could militate against local revenue generation and mobilization on the one hand, and/or demands for increased expenditures on the other hand. Similarly, what might most likely foster popular participation in discretionary decision-making might sub-optimize managerial efficiency.

Although the government has indicated explicit objectives of decentralization, it has not been able to indicate the implicit objectives of decentralization, that is, what one might call the politics of decentralization; for instance, either using decentralization as an instrument of mobilizing support for specific objectives or as a form of political patronage.

4.4. Current Structure of Decentralization

The structure of decentralization in Ghana as shown in Figure 4-4 is one of a “mixed” or “fused” type of decentralized authority—a system in which institutions extending from the central government (like the District Chief Executive) and deconcentrated departments and organizations) and locally based institutions (like the District Assemblies) are linked into one organizational structure at the local level. The Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies are the political and administrative authority in the districts, and they exercise deliberative, legislative, and executive functions. They also provide guidance, give direction to, and supervise all other administrative institutions and authorities in the districts.

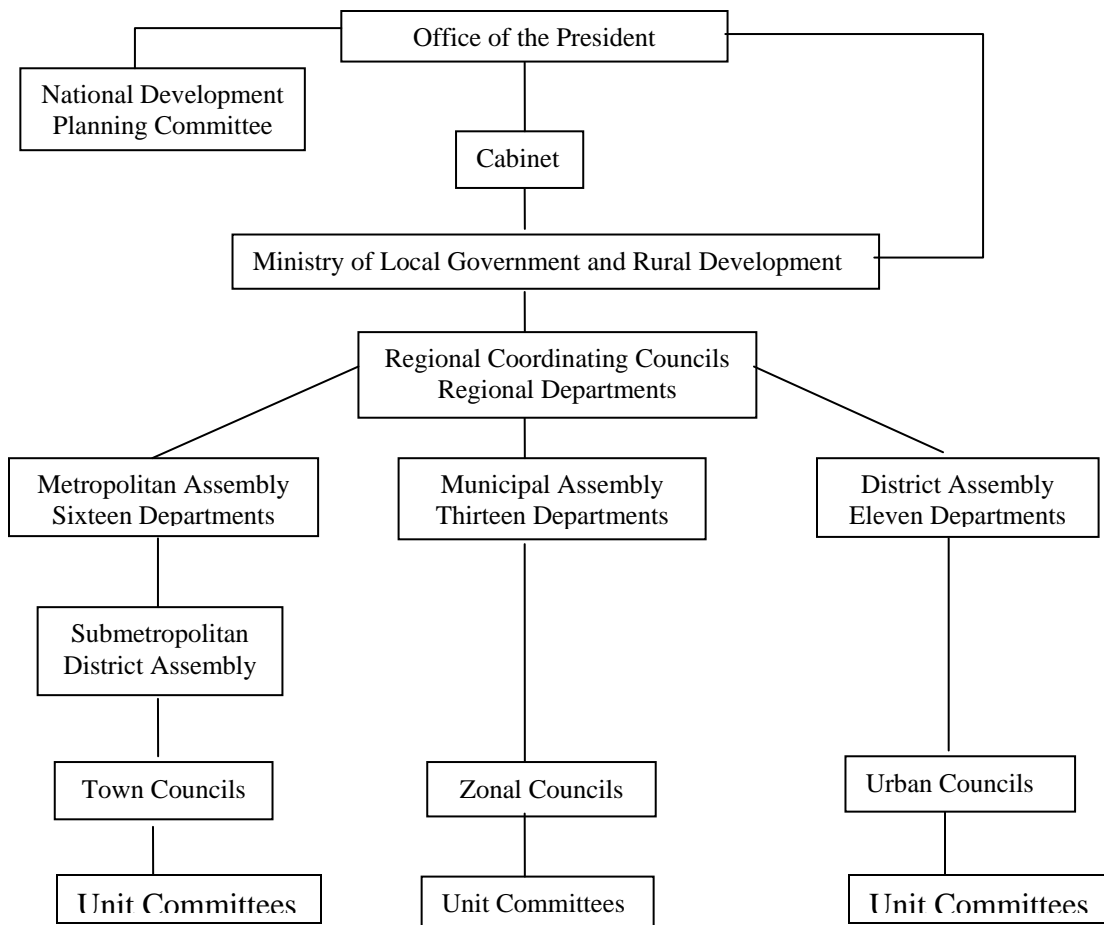


Figure 4-1: The Structure of Local Government in Ghana

The system is designed ultimately to abolish the distinction between “local government” and “central government” field agencies. This, it is hoped, would improve efficiency and effectiveness of administration through the transfer of both human and material resources to the rural areas (Ayee 1994, 1996).

The general features of decentralization in Ghana are described below. Three aspects are of particular interest: a) the different levels of government to which decentralized functions are given; b) the nature of the authority given; and c) the powers and duties which are decentralized. Specifically, the features include the following:

4.4.1. Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs)

Section 255 makes provision for the establishment of a Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) in each region, to be chaired by the Regional Minister who is appointed by the President. The Constitution does not specify the functions of the RCCs but rather leaves Parliament to prescribe the functions by an Act. The Constitution, however, does make provision for the membership of the RCC, which consists of the Regional Minister and his deputy, the Presiding Member and the District Chief Executive from each district in the Region, two chiefs from the Regional House of Chiefs, and the Regional Heads of decentralized ministries in the Region as members without the right to vote. The RCCs perform a number of functions: monitoring, coordinating, and evaluating the performance of the District Assemblies in the Region; monitoring the use of all monies allocated to the District Assemblies by any agency of the central government; reviewing and coordinating public services generally in the Region; and performing such other functions as may be assigned by or under any enactment.

4.4.2. District Assemblies (DAs)

The role of the District Assemblies (DAs) is implied in Article 240[2][b], in which Parliament has the responsibility for ensuring that the DAs have the capacity to “plan, initiate, coordinate, manage and execute policies in respect of all matters affecting the people within their areas, with the view to ultimately achieving localization of those activities.” To that end, “a sound financial base with adequate and reliable sources of revenue” shall be established for the DAs (Article 240[2] [c]) and “as far as practicable, persons in the service of local government shall be subject to effective control of local authorities” (Article 240[2] [d]).

The general objectives of the DAs include all-encompassing functions such as responsibilities for overall development of the districts; formulation of strategies for the effective

mobilization of human, physical, financial and other resources; and provision of basic infrastructure and municipal works and services.

There are 110 District Assemblies (DAs), three of which are Metropolitan Assemblies (Accra, Kumasi and Shama-Ahanta districts with population over 250,000) having a four tier structure, and four of which are Municipal Assemblies (with population over 95,000), which like the 103 DAs (with population 75,000 and over) having a three tier structure. Composition of the DAs is made up of 70 percent elected representatives of electoral units within the districts; the District Chief Executive (DCE) —the chief representative of the central government in the district; Members of Parliament (MPs) whose constituencies fall within the area of authority of the DAs, but who are non-voting members; and 30 percent of the total membership of the DAs appointed by the President in consultation with traditional authorities and interest groups. In other words, the DAs are a hybrid form of decentralized authority, combining elected and appointed members.

Membership of the DAs ranges between 54 to 130 while the Urban, Zonal and Town Councils have membership ranging between 25 and 30 and the Unit Committees (for every 500-1,500 people at the grassroots level) have fifteen members. The sub-district structures were established after the DA and Unit Committee elections were held in the first week of August 1998.

Twenty two departments and organizations were placed under the DAs to provide technical and managerial back-up to the DAs. Some of the districts do not have the full complement of the 22 Departments. Consequently, the Local Government Act (Act 462) of 1993 empowered the Minister for Local Government to enact a Legislative Instrument that abolished

the 22 Departments and replaced them with sixteen, thirteen, and eleven Departments for Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies, respectively.

4.4.3. Sub-District Structures

These are essentially consultative bodies with no budgets of their own. They carry out functions as delegated by the DAs and assist them in the performance of their functions. Thirteen sub-metropolitan district councils were created to meet the complex and peculiar socio-economic, urbanization, and management problems which confront the three metropolises, namely, Accra (with 6 sub metropolitan district councils), Kumasi (four metropolitan district councils) and Shama-Ahanta (with three sub metropolitan district councils).

There are 1,306 Urban, Zonal and Town/Area Councils which are not elective bodies. The Urban Councils are created for settlements with populations above 15,000 and that are cosmopolitan in character, with urbanization and management problems, though not of the scale associated with the metropolises. Thirty-four such councils have been created since August 1998. The Zonal and Town Councils, on the other hand, are established for settlements with population between 5,000 and 15,000. The Urban, Zonal, and Town Councils consist of representatives of the relevant Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, Unit Committees (UCs) and government appointees, selected by the District Chief Executive (DCE) on behalf of the President, after consultation with the Presiding Member and traditional authorities and organized productive economic groupings in the urban, area, municipality, or town. The Councils are a rallying point of local enthusiasm in support of the development objectives of the District Assemblies.

The 16,000 Unit Committees (UCs), on the other hand, are elected bodies, consisting of not more than fifteen persons, made up of ten persons elected by universal adult suffrage and

five government appointees, selected by the DCE on behalf of the President, after consultation with the Presiding Member and traditional authorities and organized productive economic groupings in the Unit. A Unit is normally a settlement or a group of settlements with a population of between 500-1,000 in the rural areas, and higher in population (1,500) for the urban areas. The UCs perform roles like registration of births and deaths, organization of communal labor, revenue raising and public educational campaigns. Elections to the UCs were held in August 1998.

With regards to the finance and budget, the constitution provided for the establishment of a District Tender and Advisory Board made up of some DA members and selected technical personnel working in the district and chaired by the DCE. It advises the DA on all contract awards and other procurement matters. The DA, however, is the authority for the award of contracts. Members of the Board are required to declare their assets upon becoming members. The Board also provided for the expansion of the financial base of the DAs through the establishment of a District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) into which not less than five percent of total government revenues are paid. Proceeds of the DACF are shared according to a revenue sharing formula approved by Parliament. Additionally, ten sources of revenue were identified for the districts, and composite budgeting was also to be introduced. The DAs are also entitled to contract awards not exceeding 250 million cedis (approximately \$27, 700 US at an exchange rate of 9000 cedis to \$1 US).

The accountability features provided in the provisions of the 1992 Constitution also included the following: revocation of the mandate of a DA member by the electorate at a referendum organized in the district by the Electoral Commission to decide whether he should be recalled or not; establishment of the Rate Assessment Committee to look into the grievances of

persons affected by valuation policies of the DAs; and the establishment of grievance redressing and accountability mechanisms, for example, the establishment of a Public Relations and Complaints Committee, chaired by the Presiding Member (PM), to receive complaints made against the conduct of members and staff of the DA. Finally, the ancillary features enjoined in the constitution included the establishment of bottom-up planning system (envisaged under the National Development Planning Systems Act (Act 480) of 1993, the establishment of a Local Government Service by an Act of Parliament, with the District Coordinating Director (DCD) — the highest career civil servant in the district and secretary to the DA as a member—and a non-partisan decentralized system to ensure consensus building and promote development.

While success in achieving such goals is very difficult to measure, the legislative instruments setting up each Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assembly provide a very specific list of up to 86 particular duties (including the provision of health and education facilities, electricity, water and road maintenance). Such legal duties do form a useful benchmark against which to measure the outputs of the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (Republic of Ghana 1992, 1993).

This structure and these features show two things. First, it is the intent that there should be a decentralized system of administration in which functions, powers, responsibilities, and resources are transferred from the central government to the local government units, referred to as District Assemblies (DAs). Some of the functions, deconcentrated, devolved and delegated, have not been performed because of lack of financial and manpower resources. Secondly, decentralization involves a delegation of power as well as a change in power relationships and distribution of tasks between levels of government. Figure 4-5 shows the administrative structure of decentralization in Ghana with the corresponding levels of government, political authority,

roles, and institutions of management. Additionally, Figure 4-6 documents the several programs implemented in support of the decentralization initiative in Ghana.

Table 4-5: Structure of Administrative Decentralization

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT	POLITICAL AUTHORITY	NEW ROLE AND LINKAGES	MANAGEMENT INSTITUTION
National	Presidency, Cabinet, Ministerial Institutions and Public Sector Commissions (e.g. NDPC)	National sector policy formulation, Programming and budgeting, Standards setting and Monitoring and setting and Monitoring, Sector evaluation National projects	Civil Service operations including MLGRD Proposed Local Government Service
Region	Regional Coordinating Council	Harmonization, coordination and monitoring of national level policies and local level policies as well as development interventions	Local Government Service operating in Departments of RCC
District	Metropolitan, Municipal, District Assembly	Local level policy formulation within context of implementation of national sectoral policies; rating, Local level planning budgeting and implementation	Local Government Service operating in departments of DA
Town	Urban, Zonal, Town/Area Councils	Day-to-day administration and management of services	Local Government Service
Unit	Unit Committee	Mobilization for participation in implementation and enforcement	Secretary (LI 1589, 29i)

Source: Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, March 2002 “Decentralization in Ghana: Implementation Status and Proposed Future Directions”

Table 4-6: List of Programs in Support of Decentralization

NO	NAME OF PROJECT/SUPPORT MEASURES	FUNDING AGENCY	DURATION
	(A) INFRASTRUCTURE		
1	Local Government Development Project	IDA/GoG	July 1994-Dec 2001
2	Secondary Towns Project	KFW/GoG	July 1994-Dec 2001
3	Urban Environmental IDA, Sanitation Project	Nordic Development Fund, AFD	Sept 1991-Dec 2002
4	Promotion of District Capitals	KFW/GoG	Sept 1996-Sept 2002
5	Infrastructure Support for communities	World Vision International	
6	Community Water and Sanitation Project	CIDA, DANIDA/GoG	
	(B) CAPACITY BUILDING		
7	Urban Environmental Sanitation Project	Netherlands Association of Municipalities (NAM)	Sept 1996-Dec 2002
8	Promotion of District Capitals II (GTZ)/GoG	German Technical Co-operation	Feb 1996-June 2002
9	Program for Rural Action	German Technical Co-operation (GTZ)/GoG	July 1995-June 2002
10	Capacity Building for Decentralization of Ghana (CBDG)	Government of Netherlands, GoG, EU	May 1998-April 2002
11	EU/Human Resource Development Program (Lome IV)	European Union	Feb 1997-Feb 2001
12	Danish Support to District Assemblies	DANIDA	2003
13	Strengthening Community Management Project	DANIDA, UNDP/GoG	
14	Rural Community-Based Development Project	UNICEF/GoG	1994-2003
15	Seminars, Workshops, Forums&Roundtable discussions on the Legal and Institutional Framework for Decentralization and Governance	Friedrich Ebert Foundation	
16	Workshops, Forums Seminars on Decentralization on Governance	Konrad Adenauer Foundation	Support activities
17	Sankofa Project in Kadjebi District	SNV/Gov.t of Netherlands	
18	Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at Local Level (ECSELL)	IFES/USAID	July 1997-2000
19	Support to District Assemblies	ACTIONAID	
20	Training of District Assemblies	Ricerca c Cooperazione	
21	Civil Society Improvement Project (CSPIP)	DFID/GoG	
22	Integrated Human Development Project	JICA/GoG	
23	Fiscal Decentralization Project	CIDA/GoG	
24	Government Accountability Improves Trust (GAIT)	USAID/CLUSA	Feb 2001-2004

Source: Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, March 2002 “Decentralization in Ghana: Implementation Status and Proposed Future Directions”

4.5. The New Planning and Budgeting System

The traditional approach to planning for development in Ghana has been a top-down, highly centralized approach based on national goals. Plans were national in scope and were typically divided according to central ministries and the departments within the ministries. The decentralization policy resulted in deconcentration of central government ministries and departments, and at least partial integration of the planning and budgeting processes, making the District Assembly the primary planning authority in the District. The District Planning Officer (DPO) and the District Budget Officer (DBO) were important new positions in the decentralized local government system. The DPO and the DBO were the primary members in the District Development, Planning and Budgeting Unit (DPBU), but they worked closely with the DCE, DCD, District Finance Officer (DFO), as well as the other senior administrative staff. The Development Planning and Budgeting Unit was required to submit annual plans and five-year plans to the Regional Coordinating Council. Districts were also required to submit detailed budgets to the region stating the revenue and expenditure of the district in the past year through monthly trial balance statements and annual balance sheets. The planning and budgeting process are shown in Figure 4-2.

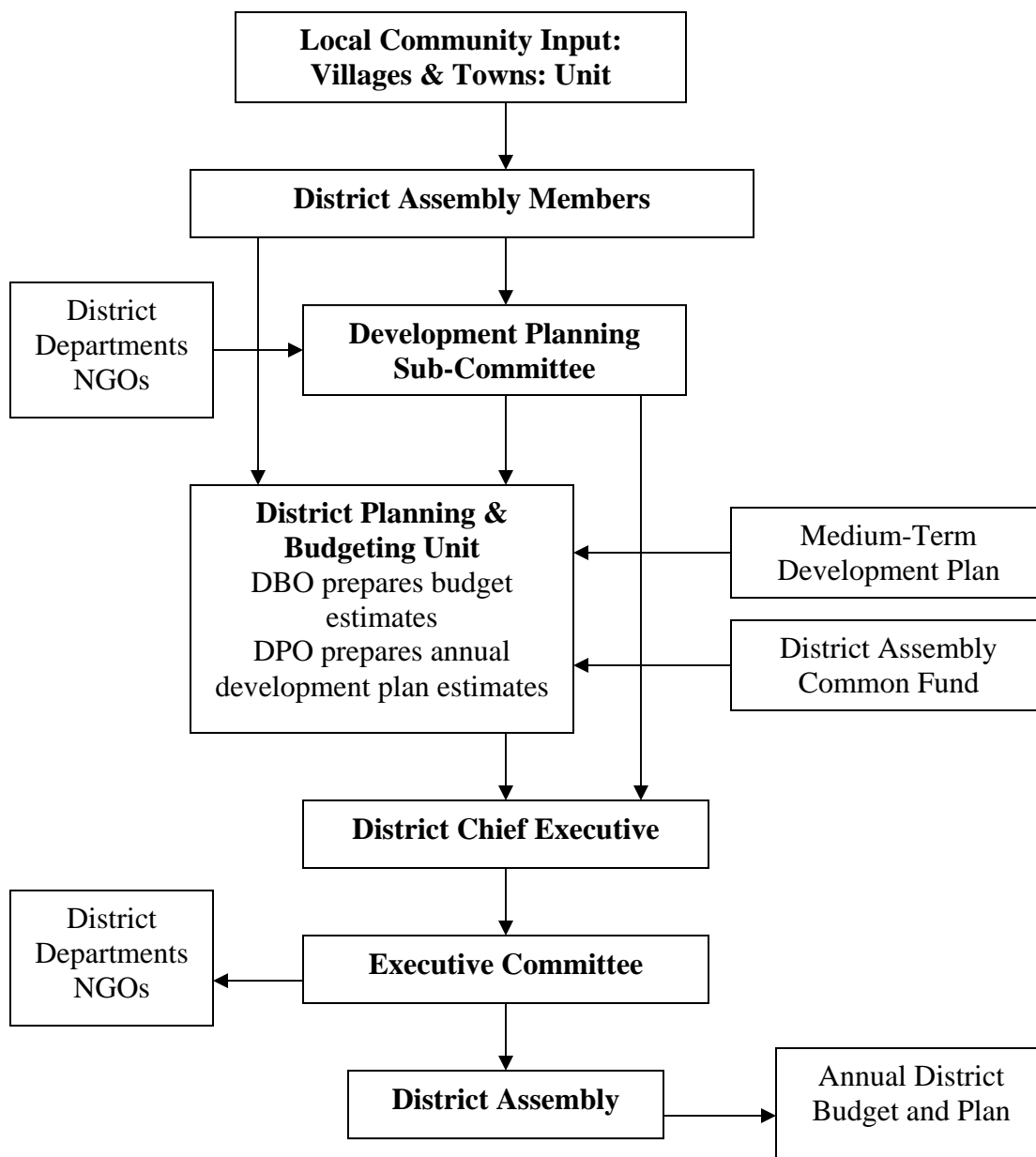


Figure 4-2: District Planning and Budgeting Process

As Figure 4-2 shows, the annual planning and budgeting within the Assembly goes through an extended period of review where Assembly members, senior District Assembly administrative officers, the District Chief Executive, and the Executive Committee have roles to play in the process.

The planning process started with the communities' problems, where popular preferences were expressed through the Unit Committee level up through the Town/Area/Urban Councils and the District Assembly. District Assembly members, District Assembly administrative officers, and representatives of the deconcentrated departments brought community problems to the appropriate sub-committees and the Executive Committee for discussion and here, the District Assembly conferred with district departments, agencies, and NGOs about which of the proposals they would be able to fund. As projects were approved, they were incorporated into the district's long and short-term plans. The District Tender Board then started the tendering process (either open or selective tendering) to award contracts, up to 250 million cedis (approximately \$27,700 US).

Local governments in Ghana had the power to translate plans into development projects and services largely because they had access to locally generated revenue and central government transfers. Local government in Ghana had failed in the past in part because of inadequate financial resources. PNDC Law 207 provided for six sources of revenue:

- i. Local taxes collected by the district assembly
- ii. Bank borrowing within Ghana, for investment
- iii. Investment income
- iv. Central government development grants
- v. Shares of revenue collected from natural resource endowments (i.e stool lands)

vi. Ceded shares of seven central government revenues (i.e. casino, entertainment, etc.)

The ceded revenue sources were shared by the 110 District Assemblies and were not required to be shared with the central government. According to Ayee (1991, 121), ceded revenue “added 271.3 million cedis to the total revenues of the DAs in 1989, 303 million cedis in 1990, 594 million cedis in 1991 and 2.1 billion cedis for 1992.” It is very likely that high inflation accounted for an important part of the large increase in ceded revenue in 1992.

Local Government Act 462 divided financial resources into locally generated revenues and central government transfers. Locally generated revenues were derived from six main sources: rates (basic rates and property rates), lands, fees, licenses, trading services, and other sources. A relatively large portion of assembly finances were raised from local taxes, making people tax conscious, sharpening their sense of local responsibility, and encouraging them to insist on accountability to ensure that money was used for development (Oquaye 1995).

On the other hand, central government transfers included grants-in-aid, recurrent expenditure transfers, ceded revenues, specialized transfers, and the District Assemblies’ Common Fund (DACF). It is important to mention here that, of all the sources, the DACF was the most important, often accounting for nearly all of the spending on development and service projects at the district level. The DACF, established by law in 1993 and implemented in 1994, was to be allocated annually by Parliament as not less than five percent of total national revenues, payable in quarterly installments directly to the districts. The allocation of the DACF is based on a formula involving need, responsiveness, and service pressure factors. The need factor is measured by health and education facilities, such as number of doctors per population and teacher/pupil ratio. The responsiveness factor is a measure of local revenue generation, or the

ability of the district assemblies to improve per capita revenue from one year to the next. Service pressure is measured by population density.

The DACF was the most important source of revenue for the assemblies and had a significant impact on district and local development. It was not, however, a block grant to the district assemblies, since the central government earmarked half of the fund for certain national priorities such as sanitation, poverty reduction, and rural housing. Unfortunately, the release of the fund has been consistently delayed, a case in point being that the assemblies did not receive the second quarter installment of the 1999 fund until April 2000.

4.6. Past Studies on Decentralization in Ghana

The current study purports to analyze decentralization and democratic local governance in Ghana by assessing the performance of district assemblies with the aim of getting a better understanding of how District Assemblies plan, implement, and manage development activities in close partnership with communities. The literature suggests that there appears to be evidence of both successes and failures regarding decentralization and the attainment of development objectives. I am particularly interested in the information which improves our understanding of how decentralized government is working and whether local government has made a difference. What I found as a striking theme in the literature, however, is that decentralization under the PNDC has not done much beyond superficial changes in the structure of local government and deployment of some civil servants to the districts. Some of the problems cited in the literature include: ineffective integration of local development activities; people were not effectively involved in all the stages of development; civil servants were still not accountable to the District Assembly; development programs were no more effective or efficient than the past, and had no

greater flexibility; simply put, the District Assemblies were short on organizational capacity. Additionally, a number of key problems face the implementation of the decentralization as contained in the 1992 Constitution: (1) absence of an implementation program for directing action and for monitoring progress of decentralization; (2) absence of maps to identify firm boundaries that will enable Ministries/Departments/Agencies plan for the development of their areas of jurisdiction; (3) difficulties in how to sustain the non-partisan local government system subsisting under a partisan central government; (4) lack of enough adequately trained human resources; and (5) inadequate funding, especially to the DAs to perform delegated, devolved, and deconcentrated functions. Furthermore, there is no clarity at various levels of government and within different sectors, ministries, and departments regarding how the intended shifts in power, functions, and resources should look and how they should be managed, in addition to the continued retention of funds in central ministries and departments when the functions have been delegated or deconcentrated or devolved to DAs among others.

In his 1996 survey of attitudes in Ho and Keta Districts, Ayee (1996) found that 91 to 94 percent of respondents said there was no difference between the operations of the District Councils and those of the District Assemblies. The survey also reported that majority of the respondents rated their assembly members from fair to poor. Forty percent of respondents in the Ho District rated their assembly member as poor, while 45 percent rated their assembly member as fair. In Keta District, 30 percent rated their assembly member as poor while 50 percent rated their assembly member as fair. Ninety-one per cent of respondents, the study reports, were of the view that the position of the District Chief Executive (DCE) and the presence of some of the government appointees undermined local decision-making.

According to Crook and Manor's (1998) study on decentralization in two Ghanaian districts, spending on development projects increased, but service provision declined due to staff retrenchments and problems with the payments of salaries. Crook's 1994 results suggest that total development expenditure and development spending as a percentage of total spending increased after decentralization, and local development priorities of voters were not reflected in education or sanitation spending of the two selected districts (1994, 50). The report suggests that other popular preferences such as health facilities, electricity, and water were virtually ignored in district budgets.¹⁴

Crook's contention is that selected district assemblies were falling short of their objectives. He cites survey results showing that only 22 percent of respondents said the assembly was an improvement on the former district council, while 70 percent said the assembly was incapable of addressing their development needs (1994, 354). Consequently, he argues that District Assemblies were ineffective and unresponsive to popular needs because local accountability was undermined by central control over staffing and finances. Crook further asserts that there was a contradiction in the local government system where representative district governments were supposed to provide development based on their tax revenues, only to emphasize community-based self-help development at the grass roots level. The district government literally had to trade development projects for people's ability to pay their taxes. In other words, those who paid their taxes would get development projects.

The decentralization program according to Ayee (1997, 38) "was to empower communities to be able to effectively participate in the decision-making process that relates to

¹⁴ Crook and Manor (1998) sought to determine the impact of decentralization on institutional performance in a comparative study of India, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, and Bangladesh. The book summarizing their findings was published in 1998, but fieldwork was conducted in 1992. Note also that other versions of that work appear in journal articles (see Crook 1994, Crook and Manor 1995).

the overall management and development of the rural areas.” However, Ayee argues that the decentralization implemented in Ghana has been an illusion, a policy implemented to preserve the power status of the PNDC and later the NDC. Despite the potential for more effective development, service delivery, and better governance at the local level, Ayee concludes that decentralization failed to achieve its stated objectives (Ayee 1997). Functions and responsibilities to be performed by the Assembly raised expectations that could not be fulfilled due to limited resources. Only assembly members in larger towns or with political connections could bring development to their areas. Others resorted to taxation or self-help, often in collaboration with NGOs and other donor agencies.

Ayee is especially critical in his claim that district assemblies never really accepted local responsibility for local development, although they were intended to do so. He asserts that most assembly members “felt betrayed,” “embarrassed,” and “disappointed” because they were unable to fulfill promises made to the electorate during the 1988-89 elections (1997, 40). It is also imperative to note that success or failure of elected assembly members was largely based on their ability to encourage and bring development to their areas. District assemblies generally fell far short in their duties to provide and maintain water, roads, electricity, sanitation, and schools. This led to Crook’s (1994) conclusion that “even services and projects that were provided did not respond closely to popular conceptions of needs, and were therefore not highly valued by the public” (354).

Yet another explanation in the literature for Ghana’s poor performance regarding development and service provision, and responsiveness, is located at the institutional level. Crook and Manor summarize the argument regarding responsiveness in their statement that “the failure of the assemblies to participate fully in the policy making and control of implementation

and to establish the accountability of government-appointed officials and civil servants to elected representatives resulted in low levels of responsiveness” (1995, 330).

One of the important factors that influence the successful implementation of decentralization is the support of, and commitment to, decentralization by the bureaucracy (Cheema and Rondinelli 1983, Rondinelli 1981). In other words, decentralization may be undermined if the bureaucracy opposes arrangements that threaten its power and control. In the Ghanaian experience, for instance, the bureaucracy (made up of line ministries in Accra and their deconcentrated offices in ten regions and 110 districts) had been blamed by the government of the PNDC that ruled the country from December 31, 1981 to January 6, 1993, as the main stumbling block to the implementation of the government’s decentralization program. In the words of the minister of local government,

Decentralization has not taken place in Ghana. The reason largely is that the bureaucracy...particularly the top management personnel...is not in favour of decentralization. Every impediment has been placed in the way of implementing the decentralization programme. Top civil servants do not want to know. Some have deliberately confused it with an exercise in deconcentration (Ahwoi 1992)

Ayee (1997) maintains that the bureaucracy at the national, regional, and district levels was unable to perform its functions assigned to it under the decentralization program, mainly because of implementation difficulties. Most, if not all, districts failed to prepare and submit their composite budgets to their Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) because all 22 departments and agencies still received their budgetary allocations from their parent ministries in Accra through their regional offices. Secondly, the placement of the 22 departments under the DAs also posed a major obstacle since there was a lack of office and residential accommodation as well as logistical resources available to the districts.

Recent scholarship on decentralization in Ghana by Picard and Groelsema (2004) affirms that what has been created in Ghana over the past decade is a system of mini-parliaments called District Assemblies, which in theory have wide ranging authority over all aspects of government but in fact have actual distinct authority over almost none. According to Picard and Groelsema, District Assemblies face four key challenges, namely (1) engaging in economic growth activities; (2) expanding the availability of social services, particularly health and education; (3) increasing community participation in decision-making; and (4) developing better internal implementation skills. They also observed that there were far too many unfunded mandates at the district level and hinted on the fact that although local level authority was inadequate, district governments still underutilized their existing limited authority. Decentralization from a sectoral perspective, according to their recent study, has in reality focused on more administrative deconcentration than political devolution (Picard et al. 2004).

4.7. Conclusion

Since the early 1980's, Ghana has been involved in a decentralization process that has surpassed earlier attempts. Its origin can be traced back to the economic crisis that emerged from inappropriate top-down approaches to development that characterized earlier decentralization efforts. Initially, decentralization was seen as a policy that would empower local communities to initiate local development projects in a period when government was critically short of resources. Gradually, the emphasis shifted to institutional reforms that promote democratization at local level, linkages between state and civil society and processes of dialogue, representation, and accountability. Decentralization has been a complex and fragile process. Local governments

have been confronted with problems of legitimacy, lack of technical and planning capacities, and limited financial resources.

The PNDC/NDC differed from previous government policies in three important ways. First, previous governments were unable to transfer political authority to the districts to oversee structural reforms and implement district objectives (Ayee 1996). Second, previous governments vested power at the regional level rather than the district level, whereas the PNDC made the RCC weak, limiting its powers to coordination and oversight. Third, while previous regimes have talked about empowering local people and their local governments, only the PNDC/NDC has blended the rhetoric of decentralization with practice (Ayee 1996).

Despite the limitations of the District Assemblies, they have allowed local people to participate in government decision-making and planning. The decentralization program also enabled local people to show some interest in their own affairs and participate, even if minimally, in local policies and programs. Indeed, the program awakened the spirit of voluntarism and awareness among most sections of the communities.

Earlier studies on Ghana's decentralization are conclusive in their arguments that the decentralization program has led to an incremental increase in access of people living in previously neglected rural areas to central government resources and institutions. The DAs undertook development projects, such as the construction and maintenance of feeder roads, school classroom blocks, clinics, places of convenience, and markets, as well as the provision of water and electricity.

However, notwithstanding these modest or marginal benefits, the literature suggests that decentralization failed to achieve its stated objectives as a result of a plethora of factors. The function and responsibilities to be performed by DAs raised high expectations among both the

elected and appointed DA members; these expectations could not be fulfilled given the limited resources. Consequently, only a few DA members, representing larger towns or those with special political influences or “connections” succeeded in bringing “development” to their areas. The less influential DA members either resorted to taxation, which was resisted by most communities, or self-help projects, mostly in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (Ayee 1996). The success or failure of the DA members was largely judged by their ability to encourage and bring development to their areas.

Furthermore, recurrent expenditure of the DAs, according to Ayee (1994), accounted for between 85 and 87 percent of their spending. Much of it went into administrative costs, including official travel and transport, entertainment, and the costs of decentralization reform itself. Crook (1994) has pointed out that in the East Mamprusi District Assembly in the Northern region, the amount spent on official vehicles, travel and transport, and entertainment in 1991 was four times greater than the whole development budget. The DAs also generally fell far short of both their general and specific statutory functions; this was particularly true in respect of their duties to provide and maintain water, roads, electricity, sanitation, and schools (Ayee 1994). Moreover, as Crook (1994, 354) has emphasized, “even services and projects that were provided did not respond closely to popular conceptions of needs, and were therefore not highly valued by the public.” The lack of tangible development results undermined the other objective of the DA, that is, the creation of a more legitimate and responsive form of government at the local level (Crook 1994).

The process of decentralization is complex and fragile, involving a struggle between different paradigms of development, some of which have become institutionalized in bureaucratic and sector organs and agencies and others which are in the process of being

institutionalized into new frameworks for development. In the past, local administration was hampered by top-down bureaucratic traditions that tended to protect elite interests and systems of patrimony rather than solve economic and social problems. The Ghanaian experience with decentralization reinforces a number of findings in the literature. The successful implementation of decentralization depends on the degree to which national political leaders are committed to decentralization, the ability and willingness of the national bureaucracy to facilitate and support decentralized development activities, and the capacity of field officials of national agencies and departments to coordinate their activities at the local level (Rondinelli and Cheema 1983).

Finally, decentralization must not be seen as a “quick fix” for the administrative, political, or economic problems of African countries. It is obvious that, despite the somewhat constrained capacity of District Assemblies to plan and execute their own development agendas in the midst of limited human and financial resources, Ghana’s experience has been an increase in political participation. At issue in Ghana as decentralization evolves is the extent to which this means the democratic devolution of authority, as opposed to an administratively driven deconcentration of authority (Picard et al. 2004). In the following chapter, I report the findings from the analysis of the study of the two case District Assemblies.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS: DEVELOPMENT, RESPONSIVENESS AND GOVERNANCE

District Assemblies in Ghana were set up to perform basic development functions. In order to achieve the set objectives of District Assemblies, the enabling Act establishing these bodies also made them the highest political authorities at that level of decentralization. The primary objective of this study is to analyze decentralization and democratic local governance in Ghana with the aim of getting an understanding of how district assemblies plan, implement, and manage development in close partnership with community members and community associations. My aim is to know how to interpret the impacts of decentralization and to understand the current effectiveness of governance. This chapter examines how the two case study district assemblies attempted to achieve their development goals and how that development in the district was responsive to local priorities and allowed for local popular participation in the decision-making process. The data analyses from the survey questionnaire, as well as the analysis of government documents and the qualitative data, reveal the development outcomes in the two districts and the real constraints on the effectiveness of local government.

The chapter begins with an introduction of the case study districts, showing the basic characteristics of the districts and providing a basis for comparison among the assemblies. I explain how the two districts provided development projects and services using similar approaches by showing the variations in their revenue and expenditure patterns and the relationship of these variations to development outcomes. Second, I discuss the communities' perception of development—or lack of development—and show the ordinary local people's understanding of and reflections about what government should and could do for their communities. The chapter addresses managerial and technical capacity issues in the district assemblies in relation to service delivery, and I also discuss my understanding of the financial

mobilization and management issues of the two case study districts. Local government responsiveness to popular preferences was also part of my evaluation of government effectiveness, and so I look at the structures in place for making the assemblies responsive. Then I consider the process of governance in the District Assemblies: how the work of government was done in the districts, how people participated in the decision-making process in influencing the planning and implementation processes of the assemblies, and how accountable District Assemblies were to the communities. In chapter 6, I consider two important issues within the District Assemblies: the nature and scope of partnership between local governments and Community-Based Organizations in promoting local development and the significance of nurturing such partnerships, and the realities and challenges of integration and intersectoral coordination within the case districts.

5.1. Decentralization and Characteristics of the District Assemblies

The two case study districts in this study were chosen for purposes of a comparative analysis and to provide opportunities to collect data on the proposed relationship between decentralization and local government effectiveness. The East Gonja District in the Northern Region of Ghana provided a singular opportunity to examine questions about decentralization and local government effectiveness, since this region has often been overlooked by researchers. More importantly, the poor rural regions of northern Ghana evidently have the most to gain from decentralization, since it allows local people to take development into their own hands. The choice of the Tema Municipal Assembly as the second case study district provides the opportunity to compare and contrast the level of development between an urban and rural assembly and to understand clearly the dynamics in the relationship between decentralization and

local government effectiveness. I focused particularly on one Zonal Council (Ashaiman Zonal Council) within the Tema Municipal Assembly in administering the survey questionnaires to elected officials and community members. Figure 5-1 shows the geographic boundaries of the ten regions within Ghana and the 110 districts.

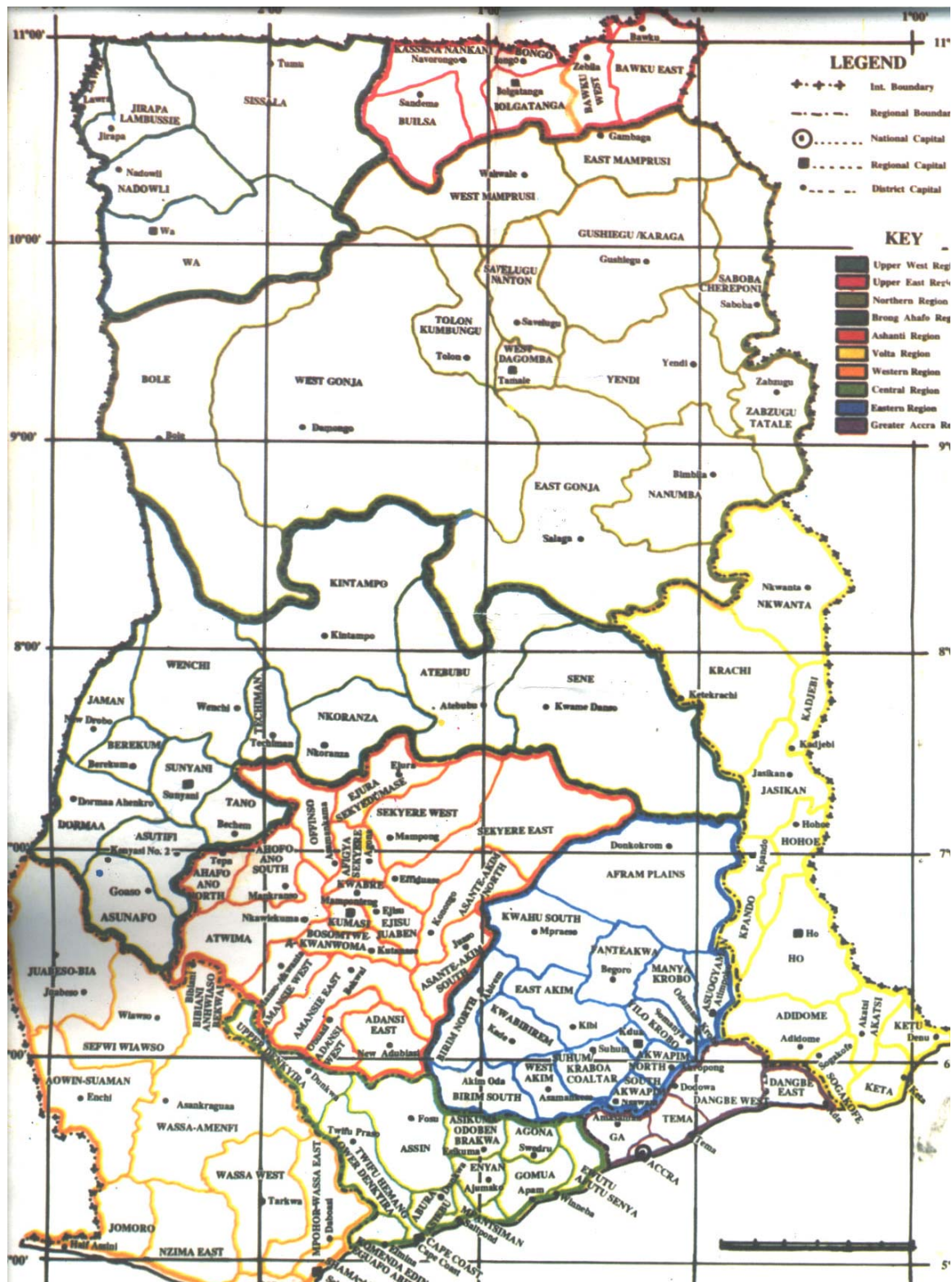


Figure 5-1: District Map of Ghana

The East Gonja District, as stated earlier, is located at the southeastern section of the Northern Region of Ghana and shares borders with Yendi and Tamale Districts to the north, West Gonja District to the east, and Nanumba District to the west. Table 5-1 shows that the population of the East Gonja District was 126,335 in 1984 and was projected to reach 236,623 by the year 2000. The district has the second largest population among the districts of the Northern Region after Tamale District; its population is about eleven percent of the total population of the region, although it occupies about fifteen percent of the total land area of the region.

Table 5-1: East Gonja District Population: (1960-2000)

YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION	INTERCENSAL CHANGE (%)	INTERCENSAL GROWTH RATE (%)
1960	54,503	31.0%	2.7%
1970	73,029		
1984	126,335	71.0%	
1995 (est.)	194,486		4.0%
2000 (est)	236,623	54.0%	

Source: Ghana Bureau of Statistics: 1960, 1970, 1984 Population Census

The District has a population growth rate of four percent, which is higher than the regional average of 3.4 percent (1970-1984) and the National average of 2.6 percent. The population of the district is predominantly rural even though there has been a gradual but not so significant shift in the population. The percentage of urban population was 0 in 1960; by 1995, it had grown to about 18. Table 5-2 shows the rural/urban share of the population of the East Gonja District from 1960-1984.

Table 5-2: Rural/Urban Share of Population-East Gonja District (1960-1984)

YEAR	URBAN TOTAL	RURAL TOTAL	TOTAL POPULATION	URBAN % OF TOTAL POPULATION	RURAL % OF TOTAL POPULATION
1960	0	55,792	55,792	0	100.0
1970	6,412	66,616	73,209	9	91
1984	16,637	109,698	126,335	14	86
1996 (est.)	35,018	159,468	194,406	18	82

Source: Ghana Bureau of Statistics: 1960, 1970, 1984 Population Census

The higher growth rate in the district is not reflected in the growth in size of settlements and urbanization in the district except in few cases (i.e. Salaga and Kpandai); rather, it is related to the increase in number of settlements, particularly with settlements of less than 600 people. Most of the settlements are far away from the district capital, Salaga. For example, as much as 81 percent of the total settlements are more than 20 kilometers away from Salaga. The scattered nature of the settlements in the district limits the extent to which facilities (i.e. potable water supply and health and sanitation facilities) can be efficiently provided to the people.

The economy of the district is purely rural, dominated by agriculture. In 1984, agriculture including fishing and forestry accounted for 76 percent of total employment, scattered all over the district. Agriculture in the East Gonja District is dominated by crop farming, which provides the main farm income; the District is a major producer of maize, rice, cassava, yam, and sorghum. One of the distinguishing features of the East Gonja District is limited access to social services such as education, health, and safe drinking water. Health care coverage in the district is very poor and, coupled with low economic development, a low literacy rate, an inadequate supply of safe drinking water, and malnutrition, this lack has led to poor health status of the people of the district. According to the Chief Medical Officer of the district, the current infant mortality rate among children of less than one year old is about 170 per 1000 births, compared to the national average of 20 per 1000 births. Malnutrition is common, particularly among children

between ages 0-5 years and women, and this is due mainly to the seasonal changes and shortage of food. Guinea worm is still prevalent in the district in spite of the government's efforts at eradicating the disease. And with regard to education, the district's low level of literacy is a feature common to the entire Northern Region.

Statistics on employment and poverty are lacking. However, available statistics indicate that most of the people, about 86 percent in the working age group, are economically active. Of these, 99.4 percent are actually working (District Assembly Medium Term Development Plan, 1996-2000). Unemployment, according to these statistics, does not seem to be the problem ; the problem is under-employment, as most people are unable to utilize their capabilities to the fullest. Their productivity and incomes are low, and most people are virtually idle during the off season, as farmers depend wholly on rainfall. This might account for the high incidence of poverty in the District.

Under the government's decentralization program, each District Assembly is supposed to have eleven decentralized departments. With the exception of the Department of Fire Service, the Department of Youth and Sports, and the Department of Parks and Gardens, all other departments are in place in the district. These include the Ghana Education Service, Information Services Department, Town and Country Planning, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Community Development, Public Works Department and the East Gonja District Assembly. Accordingly, the District Assembly is doing all it can to ensure that all the remaining departments are put in place, since their continued absence will greatly hamper effective plan implementation.

Tema, which serves as the administrative capital of the Tema Municipal Assembly, is a coastal city situated on the Gulf of Guinea coast, about 30 kilometers east of Accra, the capital

city of Ghana. The Tema Municipal Assembly was formerly part of the Accra-Tema city council. Tema district council was established in 1974, and with the adoption of the current Local Government system under the PNDC in 1988, Tema District Assembly was established in 1989. The Tema Municipal Assembly (TMA) derives its legal existence from the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution; the 1993 Local Government Law, Act 462; and the Legislative Instrument (L.I.) 493, which set up the Assembly. The Municipality covers an area of 35, 959 square kilometers; 163 square kilometers of this is government acquired area, and the remainder belongs to traditional authorities, stools, and families. The Tema Municipal Assembly's mission statement states that it "exists to improve the living standards of the people in the municipality through the provision of effective and efficient municipality services within a conducive physical, socio-economic environment and established legal framework."

The 2000 Ghana Population Census and Household Survey put the total population of the Municipality at 511,459, including 252,109 males and 259,350 females. The Municipality is known to have a high population growth rate of 2.6 percent, possibly related to the high numbers of people who migrate from other parts of the country in search of non-existent jobs in the Tema Harbor and industries/factories. It's no wonder that Ashaiman, is a migrant community, has the highest population growth rate in Ghana (4.6 percent).

A sizeable proportion of the population in the Municipality is youthful (between ages 10 –16), mostly due to migration. These youths can be seen in the major towns of the Municipality parading as shoeshine boys, truck pushers, hawkers, etc. This trend not only exposes the youth to dangerous practices, but it also strains the limited available socio-economic facilities: toilets, water, housing and so on. Hence, the phenomenon of street children is now a major problem

facing the Municipal authorities, as well as other agencies involved in ensuring the wellbeing of the youth.

The Municipality is also polarized into urban and rural settlements with population and economic and social conditions following district patterns. Whereas major towns such as the Tema township, Tema Manhean, Ashaiman, and other new urbanizing communities including Ashaley-Botwe, Adenta, Adjiringnanor, Sakumono have higher populations and a sizeable proportion of socio-economic facilities, the approximately 40 communities in the rural areas, such as Oyibi, Appolonia, and Katamanso, are sparsely populated and have limited access to socio-economic facilities, thus contributing to high incidence of rural poverty in the Municipality.

The Municipality has the country's biggest port and harbor facilities situated in Tema, the capital of the Municipal Assembly; Tema is also the country's leading industrial city. It is thus the most important production sector of the country in terms of local revenue generation, as well as employment opportunities with companies such as VALCO, GTP, GPHA, and GAFCO employing more than 1000 people. More than 400 factories in Tema have been categorized in eight major areas: chemical, textiles, food processing, engineering, paints, fish cold stores, printing and woodwork industries. Commercial activities are carried out extensively in the port city of Tema, with goods ranging from consumables to automobiles, though trading in foodstuffs appears to be the most common activity. According to the Municipal Planning Officer, Agriculture in the Tema Municipal area (both urban and rural) is a lifesaver for a majority of the people. Predominant agricultural activities include fish and meat processing, livestock, and food production among others.

The educational system in the Municipality has undergone tremendous changes due to the Government's new educational policy. The Ministry of Education gives policy direction on all educational matters in the country, and the Ghana Education Services (GES) implements these policies. Educational matters relating to Basic school in the Municipality are handled by the Tema Municipal Directorate of Education. Table 5-3 below shows the statistics of both public and private schools in the Municipality.

Table 5-3: Statistics of Schools (Public and Private): Tema Municipal Assembly

LEVEL	NO. OF SCHOOLS: PUBLIC	NO. OF SCHOOLS: PRIVATE	TOTAL
Nursery	31	127	158
Primary	133	133	266
Junior Secondary	172	65	237
Senior Secondary	7	5	12
Vocational /Technical	1	2	3

Source: Ghana Education Service, Tema.

Although the Municipality can boast of more than 600 educational facilities, there are still many children who have no access to these educational facilities in the urban centers. Classrooms have 40 or more students, and most schools have been compelled to run the shift system. In the rural settlements, pupils have to travel long distances to attend school, a practice that discourages most of them from going. Besides, most teachers prefer to teach in urban areas, a fact that leads to a lack of teachers in the rural communities. The low level of household incomes also compels children to take to early hawking, a situation that exposes the children to many dangers, including dropping out of school.

The Tema Municipal Assembly (TMA), with 84 members, is the highest political and administrative authority in the Municipality. It has a non-partisan character and is composed of the Municipal Chief Executive and assembly members, two-thirds (i.e., 54 members) of whom are directly elected by universal male suffrage and one-third (i.e., 25 members) of whom are

appointed by the President of the Republic of Ghana in consultation with chiefs and other interest groups in the Municipality. Members of Parliament are ex-officio members in the Assembly. Similar to other decentralized arrangements in the country, the Assembly has a Presiding Member who presides over the General Assembly meetings. The Municipal Coordinating Director, a career civil servant, serves as the Secretary to the Assembly and performs administrative functions. The Assembly decides on policy issues; these are implemented by an Executive Committee comprised of not less than one-third of the total membership of the Assembly and chaired by the Municipal Chief Executive. The Chief Executive is responsible for the day-to-day performance of the executive functions of the Assembly and oversees the departments of the Assembly as the chief representative of the central government.

The Executive Committee implements resolutions of the Assembly and oversees the administration of the Municipality in collaboration with the office of the Chief Executive, among others. It also coordinates sub-committee plans and programs and submits these as comprehensive plans of action to the Assembly. Sub-committees include Development Planning, Social Services, Works, Justice and Security, Finance and Administration, Environmental/Sanitation, and Women/Children. These sub-committees are responsible for collating and deliberating on issues relevant to the Assembly. They submit to the Executive Committee their recommendations, which are considered and ratified by the General Assembly at its thrice-yearly meetings.

5.2. District Assemblies and Local Development Outcomes

One of the central research questions of the dissertation addresses how the District Assembly structure, and changes resulting from decentralization and democratic local governance, affected the implementation of development projects and service delivery. Recent studies on decentralization and district level development in Ghana agree that the District Assemblies generally fell far short of both their general and statutory functions. These studies made several claims to the fact that the district assemblies have performed poorly in providing development and services to their constituents. Moreover, Crook (1994, 354) has emphasized that “even services and projects that were provided did not respond closely to popular conceptions of needs, and were therefore not highly valued by the public.” Similarly, Crook and Manor note that total development expenditure and development spending as a percentage of total spending increased after decentralization, and local development priorities of voters were reflected in the education and sanitation spending of two selected districts (Crook 1994; Crook and Manor 1998, 282). They also claim that other popular preferences, such as the provision of health facilities, electricity, and water, were virtually ignored in district budgets and that recurrent cost and the costs of setting up decentralized governments largely influenced district spending. It is obvious that the district assemblies, especially the newly created districts in 1988 were overwhelmed with the cost of setting up new district administration offices in the district capitals. Consequently, all the costs of building new administrative offices and providing housing for senior staff, as well as office equipment and furniture, became the responsibilities of the district assemblies. The old districts were sometimes more fortunate in the level of infrastructure they inherited from the previous district councils, while new districts on the other hand found themselves having to

create an entirely new administrative office from the scratch. Evidently, this greatly increased the burden of local government expenditure in the districts.

The districts studied by this research all witnessed increases in total development spending as a percentage of total spending in comparison to the case studies by Crook and Manor (1998). Even though there were constraints on district spending, with nearly half of all central government transfers earmarked for certain expenditures, the districts did see increases in development spending in some priority services, such as education, health, water, and sanitation. In fact, there was an obvious and undeniable increase in development projects and services since the early 1990's in the districts. There are clinics, roads, and schools in the districts where there used to be none. However, before attempting to further the discussion on district development, it is imperative to understand some of the constraints and challenges faced by the district assemblies with regard to their ability to mobilize and generate the needed revenue and resources with which to undertake and provide the development that is responsive to local preferences.

5.2.1. Financial Mobilization and Capacities of the District Assemblies

The effectiveness of the two districts can be measured in terms of the level of expenditure and development project output. The districts had two main sources of financing: funds that are generated locally, and funds that are derived from central government transfers. Locally generated funds came from the imposition of special development levies, assistance from non-governmental organizations, voluntary contributions in kind or cash by wealthy individuals and associations, proceeds from farming, rates, licenses, fees, and trading activities. Central Government transfers include grants-in-aid, ceded revenue, District Assemblies' Common Fund, specialized transfers, and recurrent expenditure transfers. Under the PNDC, seven other revenue sources that were formally collected by both the central government and the local government

units were ceded to the Districts to strengthen their revenue sources: entertainment duty, casino revenue, betting tax, gambling tax, income tax (registration of trade, business, profession or vocation), daily transport tax, and advertisement tax. Grants-in-aid that predated the introduction of the present local government system were administered by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. As a form of central government transfer, grants-in-aid were supposed to be project specific. It is important to note here that grants-in-aid to the districts have since ceased, even though they still remain on the statute books.

The major problem that faced the two District Assemblies was finance. Most respondents in both districts identified the lack of finance not only as the biggest problem facing their District Assembly but also as the cause for the abandonment of projects. It is important to note, however, that the revenue position of the District Assemblies improved as compared to the pre-1989 period. Resource mobilization and utilization form the basis of the decentralized administrative system, and without the effective mobilization of their financial resources, the extensive responsibilities of administration and development entrusted to the District Assemblies cannot be discharged to the satisfaction of their rate payers. Tables 5-4 and 5-5 show the revenue and expenditure patterns of the East Gonja District Assembly and the Tema Municipal Assembly respectively.

Table 5-4: Revenue and Expenditure Performance: East Gonja District Assembly (1991-2001)

REVENUE-EAST GONJA						
Year	CPI	Official Exchange rate US\$ per cedi	Estimated- Constant Cedi	Actual-Constant Cedi	US \$ Estimated Constant	US \$ Actual Constant
1991	37	0.002717391	1,049,769.08	815,349.36	2,852.63	2,215.62
1992	40	0.00228833	1,285,956.65	1,376,880.57	2,942.69	3,150.76
1993	50	0.001540832	1,339,300.00	739,775.92	2,063.64	1,139.87
1994	63	0.001044932	1,272,936.51	1,008,767.82	1,330.13	1,054.09
1995	100	0.000833333	4,950,150.00	3,834,615.52	4,125.13	3,195.51
1996	147	0.000610874	5,528,557.14	4,115,928.95	3,377.25	2,514.31
1997	187				-	
1998	215				-	
1999	241	0.000374672	5,232,568.46	4,865,973.35	1,960.50	1,823.14
2000	302	0.000183318	4,882,649.01	5,701,012.12	895.08	1,045.10
2001	402	0.000139451	6,088,504.64	4,123,350.11	849.05	575.00

EXPENDITURE-EAST GONJA						
Year	CPI	Official Exchange rate US\$ per cedi	Estimated- Constant Cedi	Actual-Constant Cedi	US \$ Estimated Constant	US \$ Actual Constant
1991	37	0.002717391	1,049,769.08	815,625.49	2,852.12	2,216.37
1992	40	0.00228833	1,285,956.65	1,376,880.69	2,942.69	3,150.76
1993	50	0.001540832	1,339,300.00	739,775.92	2,063.64	1,139.87
1994	63	0.001044932	1,272,936.51	1,008,767.82	1,330.13	1,054.09
1995	100	0.000833333	4,950,150.00	3,834,615.52	4,125.13	3,195.51
1996	147	0.000610874	5,528,557.14	4,115,928.95	3,377.25	2,514.31
1997	187			-	-	-
1998	215			-	-	-
1999	241	0.000374672	7,056,763.49	5,644,539.00	2,643.97	2,114.85
2000	302	0.000183318	8,103,973.51	5,701,011.92	1,485.60	1,045.10
2001	402	0.000139451	6,832,534.49	4,123,350.11	952.80	575.00

- - Data missing or not available

Source: East Gonja District Assembly, Budget and Planning Documents

Table 5-5: Revenue and Expenditure Performance: Tema Municipal Assembly (1997-2001)

REVENUE-TEMA						
Year	CPI	Official Exchange rate US\$ per cedi	Estimated-Constant Cedi	Actual-Constant Cedi	US \$ Estimated Constant	US \$ Actual Constant
1997	187	0.000487805	38,186,903.72	36,945,766.59	18,627.76	18,022.33
1998	215	0.000432152	42,438,199.62	37,278,191.26	18,339.76	16,109.85
1999	241	0.000374672	43,599,573.86	40,382,063.34	16,335.55	15,130.03
2000	302	0.000183318	42,150,520.18	38,252,800.40	7,726.95	7,012.43
2001	402	0.000139451	50,113,479.21	42,862,150.95	6,988.35	5,977.15

EXPENDITURE-TEMA						
Year	CPI	Official Exchange rate US\$ per cedi	Estimated-Constant Cedi	Actual-Constant Cedi	US \$ Estimated Constant	US \$ Actual Constant
1997	187	0.000487805	38,186,903.72	30,440,015.51	18,627.76	14,848.79
1998	215	0.000432152	42,438,199.62	39,041,022.04	18,339.76	16,871.66
1999	241	0.000374672	43,599,573.86	36,766,772.15	16,335.55	13,775.49
2000	302	0.000183318	42,150,520.18	36,330,454.42	7,726.95	6,660.03
2001	402	0.000139451	50,113,479.21	34,183,750.67	6,988.35	4,766.94

Source: Tema Municipal Assembly, Municipal Budget and Planning Documents

As the Tables above indicate, there are sharp differences between revenue targets and actual revenue collected. Revenues in both districts have been declining¹⁵. This means that the District Assemblies are not able to raise enough revenue on a consistent basis to support any meaningful development programs at the community level; as a result the districts rely heavily on the Common Fund and other central government grants for most of its development projects.

¹⁵ Consumer price index-CPI (1995 = 100): The CPI was used to calculate and adjust revenue and expenditure data for inflation. The Consumer price index reflects changes in the cost to the average consumer of acquiring a fixed basket of goods and services that may be fixed or changed at specified intervals, such as yearly. The Laspeyres formula is generally used. The based year used to adjust for inflation is 1995. The official exchange rates for the years was also taken from the computations found in the World Development Indicators Sourcebook published by the World Bank

Inadequate revenue generation has limited the ability of the District Assemblies to finance development projects in their districts. The analysis of the revenue and expenditure patterns of the Tema Municipal Assembly further support the general trend of low revenue performance, that actual revenue collection has been falling short of estimated/budgeted revenue.

What is particularly interesting in the case of the Tema Municipal Assembly is the fact that total actual expenditures for 1997-2001 have not far exceeded the total actual revenues for the same years in review. In the case of the East Gonja District Assembly, estimated expenditures always far exceeded actual revenues; this fact further explains the dire financial predicament facing the Assembly.

As a result of the poor performance of the districts at revenue mobilization, the districts have been increasingly dependent on central government grants. Both Assemblies have been receiving huge sums (compared to their internally generated revenue) of money from the District Assemblies' Common Fund (DACF). Tables 5-6 and 5-7 show the yearly distribution of the districts share of the District Assembly Common Fund allocation for the periods.

Table 5-6: DACF Allocation: East Gonja District Assembly (1994-2001)

DACF ALLOCATION-EAST GONJA				
Year	CPI	Official Exchange rate US\$ per cedi	Allocation Constant Cedi	Allocation Constant US \$
1994	63	0.001044932	3,973,015.87	4,151.53
1995	100	0.000833333	3,284,000.00	2,736.67
1996	147	0.000610874	3,383,537.41	2,066.91
1997	187	0.000487805	3,780,021.39	1,843.91
1998	215	0.000432152	4,619,265.12	1,996.23
1999	241	0.000374672	4,723,362.31	1,769.71
2000	302	0.000183318	6,871,254.52	1,259.63
2001	402	0.000139451	9,567,164.18	1,334.15

Table 5-7: DACF Allocation: Tema Municipal Assembly (1997-2001)

DACF ALLOCATION-TEMA				
Year	CPI	Official Exchange rate US\$ per cedi	Allocation Constant Cedi	Allocation Constant US \$
1997	187	0.000487805	12,805,085.65	6,246.38
1998	215	0.000432152	9,326,370.91	4,030.41
1999	241	0.000374672	9,316,081.28	3,490.48
2000	302	0.000183318	10,746,590.26	1,970.04
2001	402	0.000139451	8,073,309.10	1,125.83

The DACF was an important source of financing for the two District Assemblies because it not only boosted their financial positions but also helped to improve local capacities to plan and implement projects to a large extent. For instance, it enabled both case districts to undertake some projects to provide basic infrastructure in areas such as health, education, water and sanitation, transportation, etc. Consequently, we can posit that decentralization has caused at least some incremental access (though minimal) of people living in these districts to government resources and services. This issue will be addressed again in the later sections of the chapter in terms of people's perceptions of the performance of the district assemblies in development and service delivery.

Most studies agree to the claim that the effectiveness of decentralized bodies depends on the financial resources available for their operations.¹⁶ Smoke and Olowu (1992) suggest that having some degree of control over local finances is usually a critical factor in evaluating the effectiveness of decentralized local government. There are a few possible reasons for marginal performance of the two Assemblies in providing development projects and services to meet the multiple needs of their constituents.

¹⁶ See Rondinelli and Nellis (1986), Mawhood (1983), Ayee (1994) and Crook and Manor (1995, 1998)

First, the Assemblies operated on a shoe-string budget and survived mainly on government subventions. They were assigned more functions than could be financed from the revenue sources allocated to them. Ayee (1998) refers to this mismatching of functions and finance as a “vertical imbalance.” The result was that the Assemblies were generally dependent on central government grants, which were often not enough to undertake their general functions given them by PNDC Law 207 and the specific 86 functions assigned under their respective legislative instruments that created them. Due to inadequate financing in both Assemblies, it was observed that some projects were stopped while the supply of materials was irregular and uncoordinated. For instance, in the Ashaiman Zonal Council within the Tema Municipal Assembly, the construction of a lorry park and extension of the central market projects were suspended by the Assembly, mainly due to financial constraints. the East Gonja District Assembly also had to suspend the construction of five Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) and three Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) due to a similar lack of finances.

Second, the Assemblies failed to maximize the revenue sources available to them, and their actual expenditure patterns frequently demonstrated a poor and erratic commitment to development services. For instance, the bulk of their spending went to recurrent expenditures like entertainment, travel and transport (TNT), and maintenance of official vehicles for district officials. Third, the corruption that emerged on the part of some officials of the two assemblies. There were allegations that some tax collectors failed to report and/or submit all taxes collected to the Assembly. In some cases, respondents also cited the lavish life style of officials of the Assembly and the misuse of official vehicles as other forms of corruption. Consequently, the issue of accountability of District Assemblies is challenged since the Assemblies failed to

establish realistic forms of local taxation for the districts as a whole, resulting in poor revenue mobilization and generation.

5.3. Community Perceptions of the Assemblies and Local Development

Moving beyond revenue and expenditure statements to understand the meaning behind the development that was provided in the case study districts, this section presents a discussion of people's perceptions and evaluations of the District Assemblies. Talking about perception deals with people's opinions about the Assemblies. How have perceptions of government changed since the government's initiative in decentralization reform in 1988 and did services and projects correspond to popular preferences and conceptions of need? How did people feel about their elected representatives, and how did the elected officials themselves feel about their work in the Assembly?

A survey questionnaire was administered to community residents and a separate questionnaire to elected officials (both assembly members and unit committee members).¹⁷ This section is a documentation of the analysis of the questionnaires. As a way of assessing the knowledge level on functions of the Assemblies, both questionnaires asked respondents to name some of the functions of the district assemblies. A majority of the respondents—both community members and elected officials—had an idea of the functions of the assemblies, which include agents of development; agents of decentralization; organs for revenue generation and mobilization; bodies for control of the environment; organs for the maintenance of law and order, peace and security; and organs for public education.

¹⁷ The sampling method used for the survey questionnaire is discussed in the section on the Methodological Approach in Chapter II. Copies of the questionnaires are also attached on Appendix B.

The most important needs of district residents, as evidenced in the survey findings and corroborated by the interviews and village focus groups, were potable water, sanitation, electricity, educational facilities, health clinics and hospitals, roads, and access to credit and agricultural assistance. As a mostly urban district, the Tema Municipal Assembly was faced with intense pressures on service delivery—waste and trash collection, provision of teachers and healthcare workers, housing—in addition to frequent demands for new infrastructure. There was a general perception in both districts that development has increased marginally when compared to the period before 1988 and that the District Assemblies had contributed to this perception of change.

However, a majority of the community survey respondents are of the view that the bulk of their needs have not been met by the Assemblies. Community respondents were first asked to list their priority needs and to indicate which needs were met by the assembly. 64.6 percent of community informants in the East Gonja District believe the Assembly has partially met some of their needs, as compared with 29.1 percent who said the Assembly did not meet their needs. In the case of the Tema Municipal Assembly, 53.8 percent said the Assembly did not meet their needs, while 33.3 percent claim their needs have been partially met. Overall, 52.7 percent of respondents in the two study districts said the assemblies had partially met their needs, as opposed to 38.5 percent who said the assemblies did not meet their needs. On the contrary, an interesting dichotomy exists between elected officials and community respondents on this same issue of needs being met. 92.7 percent of elected officials in the Tema Municipal Assembly said that “yes,” the assembly had met the needs of communities, compared with only 6.7 percent in the East Gonja District. Two reasons may account for this significant difference of opinion. Elected officials in the rural East Gonja District are somewhat overwhelmed by the numerous

basic social needs of their electorate; coupled with the high levels of poverty in the district and the very low financial status of the assembly, they believe it will take a while for the assembly to meet most of the needs of communities. And for self-serving reasons, elected officials in the Tema Municipal Assembly believe the assembly is addressing most of the needs of their electorate. Community members in both districts credited the District Assemblies and aid agencies for bringing projects to their communities. However, with regard to their satisfaction with these projects, 38.2 percent said they were very satisfied and 43.5 percent somewhat satisfied with these projects. Table 5-8 shows statistically significant differences in perceived performance for each parameter between Tema and East Gonja.

Table 5-8: Independent Sample T-tests: Community Perceptions

	Scale*	Tema	East Gonja	Mean Difference	Significance
Meeting Community Needs	1-3	2.40	2.75	0.35	.000 **
Community Satisfaction with Projects	1-3	1.90	2.34	0.44	.000 **
DA's Effectiveness at revenue collection	1-3	2.47	2.26	0.21	.024 **
Individual assessment of DA's performance	1-4	1.98	2.41	0.43	.000 **

*Each scale measures the parameter from a lowest level, i.e. 1 to the highest level (3/4).

** Indicates a significant difference between means of the two regions.¹⁸

Furthermore, in characterizing their assessment of District Assembly performance, 46.9 percent of community respondents in the East Gonja District rated the performance of the Assembly as good, and 32.8 percent believed the DA performance was fair. On the other hand, 19.8 percent of respondents in the Tema Municipal Assembly rated the DA performance as good, while 46.9 percent thought it fair and 29.6 percent found it poor (see Table 5-9). Overall, however, statistics

¹⁸ Independent sample T-tests were used to compare the means of parameters between the two case districts, using Levene's test for equal variance (assumed). In every case, there was a statistically significant difference in perceived performance for each parameter between the Tema Municipal Assembly and the East Gonja District Assembly.

show that 74.7 percent believe the Assemblies' performance is between fair to good, and 21 percent saw their performance as poor.

Table 5-9: Community Assessment of District Assembly Performance

			Region		Total
			East Gonja	Tema	
DA Performance	Poor	Count	20	24	44
		% within Region	15.6%	29.6%	21.1%
	Fair	Count	42	38	80
		% within Region	32.8%	46.9%	38.3%
	Good	Count	60	16	76
		% within Region	46.9%	19.8%	36.4%
	Excellent	Count	6	3	9
		% within Region	4.7%	3.7%	4.3%
Total		Count	128	81	209
		% within Region	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Ayee (1996) found that people were cynical and less satisfied with local government. His survey research in Ho and Keta Districts in Southern Ghana found that only 25 percent of respondents believed performance of the DA had changed since 1989, while 40 percent said performance had not changed, and 35 percent were unsure (1996, 45-46). In most cases, in my conversations in both districts, people acknowledged the fact that there were differences between the former District Councils and the current District Assemblies. Although some informants had several complaints about the lack of development in their villages or electoral areas, a majority still reported that they found the district assembly to be an important improvement over the previous form of local government.

In practically every interview or focus group at the village and town level in the two districts, informants emphasized that their communities did have problems and multiple needs that their assemblies were incapable of meeting. For instance, there were demands in their communities—for clinics, schools, water, access to markets, electricity, poverty alleviation—that the assembly was not meeting. In the mostly rural district of East Gonja and some rural areas

within the Tema Municipality, basic needs for education, water, and health care are the major demands of local people. In the urban areas of the Tema Municipality, there were more likely to be problems with service delivery and infrastructure, such as providing latrines, waste and rubbish bins, or expanding market structures and lorry parks.

In general, however, perceived needs were somewhat differentiated from what community members saw as the major problems facing their District Assemblies. The overriding problems facing the two assemblies differed significantly between East Gonja and Tema. Respondents in both districts were asked to list and prioritize the three major problems facing their assemblies. In Tema, the general public perceived that finance (51.4 percent) is the most important problem facing the DA, compared to only 2.3 percent in East Gonja. Only 16.7 percent in Tema listed basic infrastructure as the most important problem, but most participants (38.6 percent) list it as the third most important. 46.7 percent cite logistics as the second most important problem facing the Tema Assembly, while only 4.2 percent cited the poor relations between DCE and MP as the most important problem. However, the number one problem facing the DA in East Gonja was found to be a combination of basic infrastructure needs (29.5 percent) and poor relations between the District Chief Executive and the Member of Parliament (29.5 percent). In fact, these two problems may be so overwhelming in the perception of the general public in East Gonja that many (98 percent—125/129) did not list a second or third problem.

Furthermore, an important observation was the fact that when projects and services were provided in the districts, they did not automatically translate into effective government in the eyes of the electorate. Herein lies the case in the argument about the impacts of decentralization on development and service provision. It is true the assemblies were often struggling to provide even basic infrastructure in their districts. When districts experienced increases in overall

development expenditure, or increases in certain sectors, or even when a district was able to translate its resources into a form of infrastructure development—such as building classroom blocks, and expanding markets—the public may still not have appreciated the outcome. Consequently, this study confirms the argument that decentralization does not necessarily mean that appropriate and realistic development will take place. Two factors also support this claim: that development may not be appreciated as long as (1) it does not reflect popular preferences for the projects and services, and (2) the level of development, or degree of investment in the infrastructure, is too low to meet the demands of the public.

I also found out during the conduct of this research that an important part of local development, which determined how effective a district, would be in providing infrastructure and services, was the role of self-help. Some informants described projects that had been provided in their village or communities, emphasizing the roles played by the community through self-help contributions and their attempts, or the attempts of their assembly member, to seek assistance from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). There was a very clear pattern in the district assemblies of requiring communities to make an effort in starting a development project or raising funds to support a project before seeking assistance from local government. Studies by Crook and Manor (1998), however, found that the increase in self-help development projects was not seen as a success of the decentralization policy but as a shortcoming of local government. In rural communities in the East Gonja District, people complained of the burden that self-help placed on them to make community-based contributions to development projects. Some informants, however, conceded that they did value projects more, and took more pride in them, when they were forced to bear part of the cost. Others also believed that the community would be more likely to maintain the infrastructure if it was required to make financial contributions to the

project. On the other hand, there was also a high level of frustration among local people with demands of financial contributions; most people were frustrated that they were required to engage in self-help when the assembly was already taxing them. Local people “could not see the purpose of assembly taxation—or indeed of the assembly itself—when the only projects or services they obtained were through their own local efforts” (Crook and Manor 1998, 222).

5.4. District Assemblies and Responsiveness to Local Preferences

In assessing the effectiveness of local governments in Ghana, this dissertation seeks to question not just whether local people believe that government was delivering development, but whether they believe local government was more responsive to their needs and preferences.

Responsiveness was defined as the congruence between popular preferences and development outputs. Decentralization has become essential in developing countries to ensure that projects are realistic and adapted to the local context and to ensure local support for government policy decisions. A major planning function of the District Assembly as a Planning Authority is to initiate and prepare district development plans and to ensure that the plans are prepared with the full participation of the local communities. Major avenues required in the determination of needs and priorities are the grassroots communities that, through their Unit Committees and the Assembly members representing the various wards, are expected to indicate their priority needs. These together, with the plans of the district departments and functional agencies are expected to be synthesized by the District Planning and Coordination Unit (DPCU) as a major input into the district’s plan formulation. Consequently, the plan that emerges is supposed to outline the priority needs, the resources available or expected to be available, the alternative courses of action, and the constraints and opportunities to plan implementation. However, the question is to

what extent have the communities been involved in the determination of their priority needs, and how responsive have the assemblies been to the popular preferences of community members?

The Assemblies are linked to their various communities through their Assembly men and women. Area Councils and Unit Committees have been established only recently, but these, it was observed during the research, are not firmly established at the district level. In many cases, their absence and/or ineffectiveness has indeed affected the involvement of the people at the grassroots level in decision making. Assembly members were required to regularly consult and maintain close contact with their electoral areas. They had to discuss with the people their needs and priorities, as well as the issues before the assembly once a month. However, there is evidence that an appreciable proportion of the Assembly members did not consult their constituents—chiefs and people as well as opinion leaders of their electoral areas—on regular basis. According to Ayee (1994) and Crook and Manor (1998), this requirement was hardly met, as assembly members were plagued with logistical and financial difficulties. Evidence from the field suggests that when assembly members continued to live in their electoral areas after their election, they were more likely to meet this requirement and maintain close contact with their constituents. Those who relocated to the district capital, or spent time between their home in the electoral area and a second residence in the district capital, rarely made the expected trips to their electoral areas.

In the case of the study districts, even though a majority of the elected officials claimed they are always resident in the districts, and even though most community members knew and/or had knowledge of their elected representatives, there was still an apparent disconnect between elected officials and their constituents. This disconnect is often reflected in the lack of detailed knowledge of local problems and issues by the assembly members. Consequently, 67.1 percent

of respondents in both districts said they were satisfied with the performance of their elected representatives. However, in specific case scenarios, only 37.8 percent of community respondents in the Tema Municipal area were satisfied with the performance of their assembly members versus a significant majority of 85.9 percent in the East Gonja District.

It is important to state here that, by design, the electorate was given the power to remove an assembly member from office if they felt the assembly member was not doing his or her job. Section 19 (i) of PNDC Law 207 provides that the mandate of an elected member of a DA be revoked by the electorate if they lose confidence in him or her in such a manner on any of the following grounds: that he or she had abandoned the ideas and programs for which he was elected, that he or she has systematically neglected his duties, or that he or she has committed acts incompatible with the office of the District Assembly. However, the procedure for the removal of an erring member seems laborious, and in practice this deterred the local people from taking any action against elected assembly members.

During the fieldwork, I did not come across instances or examples of electoral areas that attempted to remove their elected assembly members. In some of my focus group meetings with community members, there were still some complaints about assembly members who were referred to as “absentees”, meaning the elected assembly members did not reside in their communities and therefore hardly visited or interacted with their electorates. Some respondents even described their assembly members as tin gods, tyrants and corrupt, even though these accusations could not be substantiated. Crook and Manor (1998) conclude that the option to remove an assembly member was not understood by the electorate and was a difficult process to undertake, and hence such initiatives were almost never pursued. Ayee (1996) also finds in his

surveys that he could identify no one who was able to initiate any action to remove an erring assembly member.

The literature on decentralization suggests that when government is structured in such a way that it allows local government officials to make independent decisions, politicians and bureaucrats at the grassroots level are more likely to be aware of and sympathetic to local needs and problems. In addition, local government officials will be aware of how the local conditions will be conducive to proposed development projects, and certainly will have a sense of how people will react and adapt to the projects (Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1984).

Decentralization, therefore, has the potential to make government more responsive to popular preferences. However, as seen in the experiences of several informants in the case study districts, the District Assemblies were not automatically more responsive to local needs.

As in other studies, I measured popular preferences in the case study districts through a survey questionnaire administered to community members, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. Popular preferences of the two study assemblies centered on demands for potable water, education, health, access to markets, poverty alleviation, electricity, roads, and agricultural assistance. In assessing the responsiveness of the district assemblies, I included development outputs with which to compare local preferences. In the East Gonja District, the priority development needs frequently discussed and suggested by informants were potable water and education, followed by healthcare, roads, electricity and sanitation. In the case of the Tema Municipal Assembly, most respondents, especially in the Ashaiman Zonal Council, identified sanitation and waste/refuse disposal, job creation, potable water, and health care as the most important priority needs, followed by education, roads, and access to markets. The needs by residents in the Tema Municipal area varied depending on whether they lived in the city or the

rural outlying villages. Another important issue of major concern to informants in the East Gonja District was peace and security. In nearly every focus group discussion, mention was made relating to the issue of peace and security. This need and most often fear was a result of the protracted ethnic conflict between the Kokombas and the Nanumbas in the Northern Region of Ghana. Some respondents even reported that their assembly members could not visit their communities to interact with them because they were not members of their ethnic group and feared for their lives venturing into those communities.

An important concern that this research sought to address was which popular preferences were incorporated into district development plans and outputs and how well did these preferences match the development plans and budgets of the assemblies? Unfortunately, assembly budgets showed more spending on local government than any other sector, and annual spending did not always reflect popular preferences. Evidently, District Assemblies were more likely to spend money on assembly offices and residences, defined as local government institutional strengthening. It was observed that when districts were able to address popular preferences, they often relied on NGOs and other donors, or the central government, to fund the projects.

In the case of Ghana, one can conclusively say that after decentralization, development may continue to be unresponsive to local needs for a variety of reasons: (1) if sector departments are not under the jurisdiction of the elected officials and the District Assemblies¹⁹, (2) if plans continue to be centrally directed, (3) if planning does not include the adequate local input from the electorate, or (4) if benefits continue to accrue to local elite. It is obvious by now that despite the legal mandate for decentralization in Ghana, little progress has been made in terms of

¹⁹ I have provided a detailed discussion of the “District Assemblies and Inter-Departmental Coordination and Integration” in a separate section of this chapter.

implementation. There is clearly a lack of a common vision and dialogue on decentralization within the government. The ministries, agencies, and sector departments have differing notions on what it means to decentralize their operations and tend to distrust the capacity of the local government institutions to properly manage and monitor the use of public resources. Local planning and budgeting systems struggle to incorporate local ministerial departments and agencies, which report to their respective head offices in Accra.

Furthermore, the revenue and expenditure patterns of the District Assemblies also reveal the fact that fiscal decentralization is incomplete and show that local government can be unresponsive due to centrally directed mandates on expenditure. It has been observed that the District Assemblies have had poor performance in mobilizing local revenues and therefore are heavily dependent on the Common Fund for their capital and recurrent expenditures. The Common Fund is now obviously the most important source of revenue for almost all of the 110 districts. However, there are strict specifications for the use of the Common Fund. For instance, the guidelines specifically earmark 50 percent of the districts' allocations to be spent in certain sectors. The largest of these specifications are the Productivity Improvement, Employment and Income Generation Fund, also known as the poverty alleviation fund, which consumes 20 percent of the Common Fund allocation; and Community Initiated Projects (ten percent), Sanitation (five percent), Training (two percent) and Rural Electrification (three percent), are deducted at source by the central government before the Common Fund is distributed to the districts. It can thus be concluded that there is a low level of fiscal decentralization as a result of these central government restrictions on local government expenditure decisions. In addition, it is obvious that the purpose of these guidelines was to maintain some central government control

over the local governments and to ensure that national policy goals would be achieved through local development expenditures.

This research also found that the planning process in both case districts did not usually include sufficient local input from the electorate and tended to result in a low level of responsiveness. As mentioned earlier, there is a process for local input to enter into the planning process, usually through the Unit Committees and assembly members; a majority of informants said they know their assembly members and have met them at meetings. However, the research findings suggest that levels of direct participation in the Assemblies were very low. These findings support Ayee's (1994) observation that the few people who attended meetings said that they did not contribute to discussions, not only because they had little to say but also because the literate people at the meetings doubted their competence. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that 49.8 percent of community respondents from the two case districts believe the Assemblies were responsive to their needs, with a score of 3 or higher measured on a scale of 1 to 5.

5.5. District Assemblies and Democratic Local Governance

The relationship between decentralization and governance has not been adequately explored in the literature because many past studies have failed to assess fully the impact of decentralization because of the lack of a set of independent, comparative indicators of the quality of decentralization being implemented in a given country. Sustainability of decentralization programs depends on the participation of the people in the decision-making process. There is, however, evidence to suggest that the ordinary people were not involved in projects and programs earmarked for them under Ghana's decentralization program. Usually, representatives

of the electorate suggested programs or projects at District Assembly meetings without any prior consultation with the electorate. As a result, it has been argued that the ordinary people are apathetic to local development and issues because they are primarily concerned with “day-to-day, hand-to-mouth issues.” This assertion may or may not be true. The heart of the matter, however, is that decentralization has not been able wholly to stir the enthusiasm of the ordinary people in Ghana. In his most recent work, Wunsch asserts that the evidence regarding local government in several developing countries suggests that when the redistribution of authority and resources does not translate into locally responsive development, there is cynicism and apathy (1999). People will not participate or invest other resources in local government when it is not responsive to their needs.

How has local government in Ghana affected the quality and sustainability of local governance and good governance in general? First, it has enabled the local people in the two districts to show some interest in their own affairs and participate, even if minimally, in policies and programs of their areas. Indeed, the decentralization program has awakened the spirit of voluntarism and “awareness” among most sections of the communities, which is reminiscent of the period 1957-1960. It has dawned on communities that the development of their areas laid on their shoulders. However, this initial enthusiasm and euphoria have waned because of the inability of the District Assemblies to effectively deliver development and services.

Second, the decentralization program has led to an incremental increase in access of people living in previously neglected rural areas to central government resources and institutions in the two districts. The District Assemblies have undertaken development projects such as the construction and maintenance of feeder roads, school classroom blocks, clinics, places of convenience and markets, as well as the provision of water and electricity. But these are

marginal. Moreover, some of these local initiatives are undertaken either in collaboration with or solely by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other donor agencies. For instance, NGOs like World Vision and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) have provided water, clinics, latrines, and schools to vulnerable communities in the East Gonja District. Donor agencies such as the World Bank, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) have assisted in areas of infrastructure programs and capacity building. For example, the World Bank has supported the Tema Municipal Assembly in infrastructure programs through what is termed the “Urban II Project.” CIDA and DANIDA, on the other hand, through their funding for local initiatives, have provided assistance for basic needs to the DAs in the form of support for schools, clinics, water, latrine construction, and income-generating activities. However, the presence of International NGOs and donors has created legitimacy problems for the District Assemblies because most local people, most often than not, mistakenly credit NGOs and donors for every project that is executed in the districts. The issue of partnerships and joint action will be discussed in the next section.

Third, decentralization has opened development opportunities in the two assemblies. The improved infrastructural development through the activities of the donor community and, to some extent, the District Assemblies has improved health and sanitation infrastructure and thereby removed some of the barriers to social and economic development. Finally, environmental issues have also been tackled as Environmental Management Committees of the two DAs have drawn up by-laws to prevent, control, and monitor bushfires, as well as check environmental degradation generally. Social factors that affect development are also been considered and addressed; for instance sub-committees have been set up to protect vulnerable

groups such as women and children, to prevent the exploitation of children by irresponsible adults as well as to end anachronistic customary practices such as female circumcision.

In this study, *participation* refers to the ability of community members to influence decisions affecting their lives aimed at their empowerment. One of the basic objectives of the decentralization policy of the PNDC is the participation of the people in projects/programs and decisions affecting them. In other words, the decentralization program was expected to give “power to the people” and to ensure “participatory democracy.” In the two cases under study, it is observed that there was some level of participation in development projects by community members through their involvement in self-help projects and contact with their district assembly officials. In the case of the East Gonja District Assembly, there was an increase of participation in development projects and self-help contributions, an important component of decentralized governance. As a result of the limited financial resources available to the assemblies, communities are required to make financial contributions of their own to a project before receiving funding from the assembly. This certainly puts a burden on the community to take responsibility for their own development, but it also indicates their willingness to work with government to solve community problems. In general, the decentralization program has revived the spirit of voluntarism and awareness as well as an increase in the level of political consciousness among some sections of the communities of the two case districts. The two District Assemblies have embarked on projects such as the construction and maintenance of feeder roads, clinics, markets and latrines, and provision of buildings for schools and workshops as well as water and electricity. However, given the needs and tasks at the district level, these achievements have been very marginal.

The essence of local administration is to encourage maximum participation of all citizens in the affairs of government. This participation should come from both sexes. It was observed during the research in both case districts, however, that the representation on local government structures seems lopsided, with only a few women in the district assemblies. Against the background of this information, this study asked respondents to evaluate women's interest and participation in the work of the assemblies. The question of women's participation and interest in the activities of the assemblies was also raised against the background of women's apathy towards issues bordering on politics. Information on the participation of women in the work of assemblies indicates that majority of respondents believe that women's participation and interest was low. Indeed, Tables 5-10 and 5-11 show a dire picture of women's participation in the affairs of the districts assemblies. Overall, 82.2 percent of all respondents rated the performance of women to be very low to low. Both tables show that there are no significant differences in the levels of participation of women in the assemblies between the two districts.

Table 5-10: Level of Women's Participation in the District Assembly

Women's participation * Region Crosstabulation					
			Region		Total
			East Gonja	Tema	
Women's participation	Very Low	Count	41	20	61
		% within Region	31.8%	23.5%	28.5%
	Low	Count	65	50	115
		% within Region	50.4%	58.8%	53.7%
	High	Count	23	15	38
		% within Region	17.8%	17.6%	17.8%
Total	Count	129	85	214	
	% within Region	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 5-11: Level of Women's Participation in District Assembly

	SCALE*	TEMA	EAST GONJA	MEAN DIFFERENCE	SIGNIFICANCE
Women participation in DA activities	1-4	1.94	1.86	.08	.392

*Each scale measures the parameter from a lowest level, i.e. 1 to the highest level (3/4).

Sub-district structures have been part of the structure of decentralization in Ghana before and after independence. With the establishment of Unit Committees in 1998, the district assemblies were able to create further links between government and the people through elected committees of men and women in every electoral area. In other words, the provisions in Legislative Instrument 1589 suggest that the sub-district structures are meant to promote participation of people in their own affairs. In practice, however, this has not been achieved by the sub-district structures for a variety of reasons.

First and foremost, there have been conflicts between the District Assemblies and the sub-district structures over roles, functions, and resources. For instance, in the Tema Municipal Assembly, unit committee members who were not sworn in protested against the behavior of the elected assembly members who they claimed had usurped their functions and did things in their units without their permission. Secondly, the study found that in the East Gonja District, most of the Unit Committees have been polarized around local disputes, especially the ethnic conflict that had plagued the entire Northern Region of Ghana. Some of the members of the Unit Committees have even engaged in chieftaincy disputes, even though they need traditional authorities to complement their efforts. In fact, the Unit Committee elections held in June 1998 created a great deal of antagonism among communities. For instance, in a village in the East Gonja District, the village chief refused to allow the unit committee to operate because, in his view, unit committees are mandated to take over the functions of town or village development committees, a move he felt was inappropriate since he saw nothing wrong with the performance

of the village and town development councils. In some areas, it was observed that influential opinion leaders who would have contributed to local development of their areas refused to work with the unit committee members who defeated them in the elections. In addition, some of the unit committees cannot operate because they lack the required numbers for membership. Finally, there is general apathy towards the operations of the unit committees because members are not paid any sitting or transport allowance. As a result, most unit committee members have become disenchanted and frustrated because, contrary to their expectations, being a member of the unit committee is voluntary and sacrificial. It must, however, be noted that some unit committees have been successful at mobilizing communities for self-help projects and communal labor, organizing village meetings, etc. even amidst their frustrations, limited resources, and mandate.

Another area of governance that was of concern for this study was the issue of accountability. What mechanisms exist for the electorate to hold their officials responsible for their actions and how effective are the mechanisms in ensuring accountability? Accountability of the assembly members to the electorate was supposed to be promoted by two requirements in PNDC Law 207. Assembly members were expected to maintain close contact with their electoral areas, consult with them on development issues and priorities, and collate their views for onward submission to the assembly. In this connection, an assembly member was required to meet the people of his or her electoral area once a month; again, this requirement was not met. The second requirement of accountability is the revocation of the mandate or appointment of the assembly member. However, the procedure for the removal of an erring member seems laborious and in practice deterred the local people from taking any such action against their elected representatives.

Ayee has argued that the decentralization implemented in Ghana has been an illusion, devised by the previous military government only to legitimize their regime and mask their implicit political agenda (1996). However, she later concedes that the program “seems to be structured to improve effectiveness and promote participatory democracy as well as accountability” (1996, 48). This was so because, despite the intentions of the PNDC, local people might be able to use the local government structure to achieve more effective and responsive governance. This study found that, despite the limited amount of local authority to initiate programs, and widespread inadequacy of human and financial resources to implement development programs, Ghana has seen an increase in political participation and decision making that is locally rooted.

Another variable influencing the performance of the district assemblies is the issue of civic education—the extent to which society is informed about and interested in the performance of local government and willing to participate through elections and other means in the functioning and monitoring of government. One of the steps the PNDC took was to organize non-partisan district assembly elections (a practice that has continued to date) in which two-thirds of the membership to the assembly is elected by the people. The remaining one-third is usually appointed by the president in consultation with chiefs and other interest groups within the district. This study observed that the election of the two-thirds membership of the District Assemblies by universal adult suffrage may be considered advancement over the former district councils. Where there is a higher level of civic engagement, which could be measured in electoral turnout or frequency of contact with local government representatives, we might expect to see more responsive government with correspondingly higher levels of satisfaction among the electorate.

6. DISTRICT ASSEMBLY PARTNERSHIPS AND INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION

Another issue that this dissertation seeks to address is the scope of partnerships between local governments and other local organizations (Community-Based Organizations, or CBOs) in delivering development. It is widely accepted that District Assemblies cannot perform their development tasks alone. Partnerships between local governments and CBOs can help overcome the limitations that are associated individually with each of these organizations. Appropriately designed, such partnerships can attain solidarity together with scale—a combination that neither organization can usually achieve by itself. If properly supported, district assemblies can play the essential role of nexus between central governments and local communities, providing an institutional framework that facilitates the participation of the different local development actors.

In this section, I present some of the significant reasons for the lack of effectively structured partnership arrangements between district assemblies and community-based organizations drawn from the two case districts. I also document an instructive analysis of an innovative program initiated by USAID in some other districts in Ghana aimed at fostering effective partnerships between civic unions/associations with district assemblies.

6.1. District Assemblies and Local Partnerships for Development

Failure of governments alone to provide adequate levels of services has in the past decade has led to the adoption of a community-based approach to the delivery of some local services, in particular, rural infrastructure services such as village water and irrigation. This approach typically relies on coproduction of services by the government and users and adopts a demand-responsive focus on what users want and what they can afford. In projects following the

community-based approach, users typically participate in service design and manage the service as a group. Indeed, the evidence on the rural water sector indicates that water systems provided by projects that followed the community-based approach have, on average, performed better than systems built and managed by government alone (Narayan 1995, Isham and Kähkönen 1999)

There are several problems associated with the management of the interface between district assemblies and local organizations. These emanate from the absence of clear-cut regulations, procedures, and boundaries of good practices. In the two study districts, I held focus group discussions with a number of local associations or CBOs in addition to meetings and focus groups with elected officials and administrators. Nearly every focus group raised the issue of the lack of confidence and trust between district assemblies and CBOs as partners in development. As a result, many CBO informants held the view that the bureaucratic tradition of district assemblies undermined their commitment because of certain actions and inactions of assembly officials. Once the community loses confidence in the decision-making processes of the assemblies, the result is the breakdown of trust and community associations who prefer to act alone in delivering services.

With regard to attitudes, several informants noted that community-based organizations regard the assemblies with suspicion and are concerned that their autonomy and freedom of action may be constrained should their relationship with the assembly become too close. Such was the case in the Tema Municipal area, where a number of CBOs would conduct development activities—clean-up campaigns, building school blocks and KVIPs (public latrines)—without informing the assembly member or even the assembly. Interestingly, CBOs could take such actions for reasons of self-interest; local NGOs funded by separate donors may see little

incentive to sit down and seek compromises and strategic partnerships, either among themselves or with the assemblies.

In the case of the two study districts, it was observed that the district assemblies and CBOs often remain unwilling partners, suspicious of each other. Local authorities are criticized for being hierarchic and directive, rather than flexible and facilitative, and for not acknowledging the contributions of other local organizations and associations. The assemblies are also criticized for demonstrating a lack of commitment to partnership.

Similarly, community-based organizations are criticized for being too concerned about retaining their autonomy and freedom to act. This may be due to bad experiences, but it can also be for reasons of self-interest and self-preservation. Community-based organizations also face organizational difficulties, particularly concerning representation and accountability. Self-interest can frustrate efforts to build a common platform, while sometimes the transient nature of local communities can make it difficult to institutionalize a constituency of civic organizations. The study observed that in both assemblies, there was usually a competition among local organizations for resources that undermined their efforts to collaborate.

Both assemblies and CBOs are faced with serious capacity constraints that militate against structuring effective partnerships for service delivery. Serious capacity constraints exist within the district assemblies as a result of the ongoing decentralization processes. Inadequate management capacities, fiscal constraints, and basic incentive factors affect the performance and motivation of local administrators and elected officials. Poor levels of remuneration have led to high staff turnover, especially in the Tema Municipal Assembly, while most civil servants refuse to take up postings in the rural East Gonja District. Furthermore, the technical capacity of community associations and groups is woefully inadequate for them to maintain effective lines

of communication and accountability with district assemblies and constituencies. Effective partnerships require new skills and aptitudes—skills in dialogue and communication, presentation, negotiation, conflict resolution, consensus-building, and compromise—to enable assembly members and officials to engage in a meaningful way in consultative and participatory processes.

6.2. Fostering Partnerships and Civic Engagement: The Case of Civic Unions

The past decade has seen a great deal of debate on the importance of good governance as a precondition for realizing poverty reduction. Despite the fact that development actors interpret the concept of good governance in different ways, there is growing consensus that it involves more than just the institution of government itself. The ability of local governments to achieve their development goals also depends on the extent to which they are capable of working together with other institutions in society. A more pluralistic institutional structure needs to be built that allows for a more decentralized way of promoting development and that offers a greater role for different forms of public-private and public-community partnerships.

What can partnerships between local governments and other local organizations help achieve that neither party can accomplish by itself? What types of partnership arrangements are advisable for achieving different objectives? And how can an appropriate design be achieved in any given situation? These questions will preoccupy analysts and development practitioners for a long time to come. Formalized partnerships between grassroots organizations and local governments have not so far been common in development practice. And there is justifiable concern that such partnerships might be exceedingly hard to establish and sustain (Narayan 2000). However, some scholars are optimistic that the emerging practice and “experience of co-

production, the process by which goods and services result from inputs from individuals from different organizations, is a healthy way to combine citizen contributions and those of local government for sustainable development outcomes” (Picard et al. 2004). In this section, I attempt to document an instructive case study of an innovative program initiated by USAID/CLUSA in some select districts in Ghana, which is aimed at fostering effective partnerships between district governments and their local civil societies. The examination presented here is intended to provide a comparison between the two case districts studied under my research and those of the beneficiary districts of this program, showing what such partnerships can accomplish and how such initiatives could be replicated in other districts.²⁰

6.2.1. Program Evolution

USAID’s support for decentralized governance and civil society in Ghana evolved from the STEP program (Supporting the Electoral Process Project) and dates back several years (Picard et al., 2004). The current program of support, Government Accountability Improves Trust (GAIT), is a continuation of an earlier project, Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at the Local Level (ECSELL Project)²¹. The implementing partner for the GAIT project is the Cooperative League of the USA (CLUSA; its overall goal is to strengthen civil society and district governance according to several specific and corresponding objectives: (1) increase the capacity of Ghana CSOs to advocate the interest of their members to local government; (2) increase government responsiveness to citizens at the local level; (3) promote transparency,

²⁰ Information and documentation to write the synopsis of this case is taken specifically from an Assessment Report by Professor Louis Picard and others who conducted an Evaluation of the GAIT program in Ghana in 2004. I also relied heavily on my conversations with Professor Picard and Papa Sene, Chief of Party, Ghana (CLUSA) and other publications by Professor Picard.

²¹ An active civil society appears to assist significantly in implementing decentralization and democratic local governance. Here again, it is important to mention that Putnam’s (1993) concept of “social capital” is useful in focusing on the level of associational life in different societies highlighting the range of institutions available to participate in decentralization programs. In Ghana for example, as found in the study by Picard et al., (2004), local communities possess identities that have been encouraged through political competition and participation.

accountability, and anti-corruption in local governance institutions; and (4) increase voter turnout and political participation of CSOs at all levels of government. To work toward these goals, the GAIT program carried out a number of activities in twenty select districts in Ghana:

- CSO capacity building training in strategic planning and management;
- Promotion of formal CSO networking through support for civic unions in each of the project areas and networking between civic unions around the country;
- Support for town meetings that brought together civic union members, district assembly representatives, and citizens to express concerns and air various community issues; and
- The provision of modest matching grants to civic unions.

6.2.2. GAIT/CLUSA Strategy

The cornerstone of CLUSA's activity has been the selection of district facilitators for each target district and the support for the establishment of civic unions. According to the assessment conducted by Picard et al. (2004), CLUSA's strategy embraced a self-selection approach that encouraged community-based organizations, professional trade associations, cooperatives, producer groups, and others to participate freely in CLUSA's self-help programs. The strategy revolves around three clusters of CLUSA activities, namely confidence-building activities; organizational development, support and training activities; and pre-advocacy activities.

The objective of confidence-building activities is to build rapport with district assembly members and officials by opening the lines of communication and building trust. In the initial phase of the project cycle, the district facilitator visits the district assembly, participates in several assembly meetings, and offers some form of technical assistance as well as undertaking some public relations activities for the DA administration. Other confidence-building activities are undertaken at the community level and are aimed at stimulating the spirit for self-help

activities. These include organizing town hall meetings (community/village meetings), publicly promoting revenue mobilization, briefing on security issues, and sponsoring self-help activities, to name a few.

CLUSA's organizational development, support, and training activities range from support for the establishment of civic unions, identification, and enrollment of community-based organizations to training civic unions on several capacity themes. Under the GAIT program, the district facilitator organizes several capacity training events each year . These training opportunities are made available not only to the civic unions but also to the district assembly, and in some cases consultants with specialized expertise are hired to deliver specific training workshops. Training activities have included

- Strategic planning;
- Financial management skills including revenue collection and budgetary process;
- Revenue mobilization training, budget and financial management training;
- Governance training (nature of local government, seminars on elections and transparent government); and
- Organizational development (skills in proposal writing, leadership skills, basic accounting and record keeping, communications).

Finally, major pre-advocacy goals include linking up statutory and non-statutory bodies at the district level; attempting to include DA members and technical officials in workshops; encouraging civic unions and civil society interaction with district assembly political and administrative leadership; and establishing a process to support district assembly transparency in terms of district finances, budgets, and plans. Civic unions are also encouraged to undertake advocacy activities aimed at creating awareness and effecting change. Consequently, civic

unions have set up town forums to promote information dissemination on issues such as education and health.

6.2.3. Progress and Prospects

The experiences and lessons of the GAIT program reinforce some of the claims made by advocates in support of local partnerships. As documented by Picard et al. (2004), the GAIT districts had a high level of discourse on associational life compared to the non-GAIT districts (i.e. East Gonja and Tema Municipal Assembly); these districts also had a high level of awareness of civic rights and responsibilities. Overall, “the GAIT program has made a very good start in the districts where they are working. The new aspiring civic unions are beginning to have an impact on community life and a level of trust has started to develop between civil society and the district government” (Picard et al. 2004). The GAIT districts have seen significant improvements in the relationships between the district government and civil society.

Furthermore, the GAIT program facilitated access to both local governments and civic unions. Civic unions had access to involvement in district budget reviews and planning meetings. There has certainly been a rise in participation in the GAIT districts; indeed, one of the significant achievements of the GAIT program was getting district budgets presented in public. The civic unions in most districts have become the vehicle for effectively engaging the district assembly. Picard and Groelsema write that

district government officials concede that where previously they were afraid to face angry young men in public for a, they now understand that town meetings, public budget hearings, and health forums are a means of airing policies, problems, issues and initiatives. The forums are utilized ...to answer questions, address grievances, and to gain an understanding of community needs. As a result, in some districts decentralized government is becoming less opaque and more responsive to citizens and civil society demands.

Accordingly, many civil society focus groups felt that the assemblies had become transparent about fund management and budgetary processes as a result of the GAIT program. The capacity-building training activities did help in equipping both civic unions and district assemblies with the necessary and relevant skills for effective collaboration in the discharge of their respective duties in support of local development. For instance, some CLUSA target districts improved their revenue mobilization strategies as assisted districts realized tax receipt increases by “as much as 50 million cedis in the first three quarters of 2003 compared with the same period in 2002” (Picard 2004).

Picard and Groelsema’s 2004 assessment reports that some district assembly administrators have stated that a “major benefit from GAIT is that communities have come to better understand the rules and regulations and limitations of government” and that this has allowed the district assembly to interact with sub-district structures on the ground. According to the report, GAIT has been able to involve a number of organizations “rais[ing] concerns about local government and channels that can be used to get civil society concerns heard” (Picard et al. 2004).

Partnerships between District Assemblies and community-based organizations can help overcome the limitations that are associated individually with each of these organizations. Appropriately designed, such partnerships can attain solidarity and promote effective local development at the local level. It is also helpful to distinguish between partnership types that serve different ends and in which local governments and CBOs have different roles to play. In particular, it is useful to know whether CBOs will play deepening or stretching roles in any particular enterprise. When they play stretching roles, CBOs extend the territorial reach of local government. They function, in effect, as sub-contractors of the local government. Where they

play deepening roles, however, CBOs organize their communities in collective action. To do so effectively, CBOs need to be legitimate and embedded within the communities they represent. They must be agents of the community itself, and not so much of the local government.

6.3. District Assemblies and Inter-Departmental Coordination and Integration

Under PNDCL 327, ministries were created as the highest organizations for the specific sectors and charged with (i) initiating and formulating policies, (ii) undertaking development planning, and (iii) coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of their sector's performance. Twenty-two departments and organizations were supposed to be placed under the District Assemblies to provide technical and managerial back-up to the DAs. However, because most districts including the study districts did not have the full complement of twenty-two departments, Local Government Act 462 empowered the minister for local government to enact a Legislative Instrument abolishing the twenty-two departments and replacing them with sixteen, thirteen, and eleven Departments for Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies, respectively. These departments are expected to perform the functions hitherto performed by the twenty-two central government agencies. It was envisaged that DAs would have responsibilities under PNDCL 327 for the preparation, administration, and control of budgetary allocations of these departments. However, it is important to note that the placement of the departments and organizations has been fraught. The personnel of the departments are employed by the central government and depend on their parent ministries or organizations for practically all resources needed for the running of their departments in their districts; this has created the problem of double allegiance for these decentralized departments.

In my discussions with the District Budget Officers of the two study districts, it was clear the Assemblies have not been able to prepare composite budgets because the departments and agencies still receive their budgetary allocations from their parent ministries in Accra through their regional offices. The district offices of the various ministries and departments are unlikely to submit to a district budgeting process when their funding is still controlled and allocated by negotiations with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning in Accra (Crook, 1994). District Department officials lamented the fact that they were faced with this problem of double allegiance, which further complicated their understanding of their specific roles and functions within the decentralized structure. Furthermore, some district officials of the decentralized departments still have to make numerous trips to their regional capitals and in some cases to Accra (the national capital) to collect their financial encumbrances (FEs). “It’s all about control of finances” says one decentralized department official. “If today, our budgets were approved and financed by the District Assembly, we would owe our allegiance and loyalty to the District Assembly and hence integrate into the District Assembly structure.” Consequently, financial integration of the decentralized departments with the District Assembly structure cannot be achieved in a situation that might be referred to as “centralized decentralization” or “distributed institutional monopoly” (Ayee, 1994).

Secondly, the issue of logistics is identified as a major problem militating against the process of integration at the District Assembly level. The lack of office and residential accommodation and other logistics has made it impossible to accommodate the physical presence of all departments. National officials of sector ministries are using the apparent capacity limitations at the district level as a justification for limiting further decentralization. Ayee (1994) argued that the objective of placing the departments under the District Assemblies was too

ambitious and utopian, especially when the District Assemblies themselves lacked the financial capacity to “hire and fire” staff. Certainly, Ghana would have been one of the most “decentralized” countries in the world if the departments operated under the umbrella of the District Assemblies (Ayee 1990). However, in spite of decentralization, the departments continued to report to Accra through the regions, while their staffs were appointed, promoted, remunerated, and disciplined by their national and regional offices because the District Assemblies, as noted earlier, lacked the financial resources and logistics to recruit and dismiss staff. Indeed, almost all the informants interviewed admitted that the pull of functional ministries to direct the affairs from Accra is still strong.

Furthermore, national, regional and district level officers are reluctant to accept the redefinition of their roles and relationships with the District Chief Executives (DCEs). Some departments continue to operate independently of the District assembly and refuse to acknowledge the authority of the Assembly over them. Interestingly, officials at the district level representing the decentralized departments cited personnel behavior and attitudes of local government officials as a major obstacle to integration efforts at the district level. Particular reference is made to the fact that the District Chief Executive, an appointed representative of the party and government in power, is usually the one to dictate the process of integration. In most cases, however, these DCEs are party loyalists and sometimes have questionable qualifications. On the contrary, the district heads of departments are usually career professionals with many years of experience to their credit. In most cases, therefore, there is an apparent legitimating problem, as department heads feel they are more qualified and experienced than District Chief Executives (DCEs) and therefore should not be reporting to them and/or receiving instructions from them.

However, one District Director of Education thinks otherwise. She holds the view that the issue of behavior and attitudes should be considered from both sides. She boasts about the very positive and excellent relationship she has with the District Assembly through the DCE and the District Coordinating Director. This positive relationship is further manifested in the fact that the District Assembly currently houses the offices of the District Education Directorate, and the Assembly is currently financing the construction of a new District Education Office Block. Indeed, this Director maintains that the personal attitudes and behaviors of the respective actors at the district level are key to promoting the effective integration of activities at the local government level.

At any rate, overlaps in functions and poor role differentiation give rise to jurisdictional and turf conflicts. The impression gathered from interviews and focus groups with key functionaries was that there was not much communication between district departments and the Assembly. This lack of effective communication channels has made it even more difficult for effective coordination and integration of all the activities of the decentralized departments into the District assembly structure. The absence of clear-cut lines between the tasks of different departments further complicates the already precarious problem of coordination. Informants pointed out that plans and programs of departments and units were carried out without regard to the work of other departments. Some have argued that this situation has made it difficult for District Planning and Coordinating Units to be effective. Furthermore, the resistance to integration is also manifested in the structural composition of some ministries and agencies. Ministries like education, health, and the forestry department are seen to be assuming autonomous structures as “SERVICES,” thus making them fall outside the authoritative and jurisdictional purview of the district assemblies.

According to the principle of subsidiarity, authority for tasks more appropriately undertaken at subsidiary levels should be given over to local-level governance structures. But how exactly should these structures be designed in any given situation? What roles should central governments and local governments play, and how should relationships among these actors be structured in support of sustainable development? It is obvious by now that despite the legal mandate for decentralization in Ghana, little progress has been made in implementation; there is clearly a lack of a common vision and dialogue on decentralization within the government. The ministries, agencies, and sector departments have differing notions on what it means to decentralize their operations and tend to distrust the capacity of the local government institutions to manage and monitor properly the use of public resources. Local planning and budgeting systems struggle to incorporate local ministerial departments and agencies, which report to their respective head offices in Accra.

Leadership is arguably the most central factor in a reform related to administrative decentralization; national-level leadership is essential to carrying out administrative reform. Several studies and conferences on administrative decentralization have concluded that without strong political commitment, reforms, or programs aimed at decentralizing, public sector tasks and related roles are unlikely to succeed. In the case of Ghana, the lack of detailed legislation, political commitment and leadership, and policy coordination serves to reinforce problems of weak capacity, confusion, and limited accountability in the process of integration into the District Assembly structures.

Consequently, there is the need for clear policy guidelines and firm political backing by the government. This is essential to advance the process of decentralization. As mentioned earlier, the successful implementation of decentralization depends on the degree to which

national political leaders are committed to decentralization, the ability and willingness of the national bureaucracy to facilitate and support decentralized development activities, and the capacity of field officials of national agencies and departments to their activities at the local level (Rondinelli 1981, Cheema and Rondinelli 1983). Every effort must be made to secure the understanding and agreement of key ministries to the proposed measures on the government's decentralization efforts.

Furthermore, in almost every conversation with informants of District Assemblies and officials of sector department staff, virtually all informants agreed that there is a need for the clarification of the roles, functions, and responsibilities of all the institutional actors involved in the decentralization process. This can be accomplished with effective legislation backed by strong political support from all government functionaries. The proposed Local Government Service Bill will just be one more legislation if it is not backed by a strong political will to enforce compliance. The various ministries, agencies, and departments will automatically feel the need to be integrated into the District Assembly structure if the necessary incentives are made available by government, hence the need for an effective government involvement in the policy direction of Ghana's decentralization efforts.

It is imperative to note that centralization and decentralization are not either-or conditions. Top-down support is required for bottom-up initiatives to succeed (Uphoff 1993), but top-down designs can often work to stifle local initiative, particularly if they are imposed in standardized ways, insensitive to regional and local differences (Samoff 1990). Decentralization efforts have been less successful where they have "treated local governments as if they were homogenous entities" (Smoke and Lewis 1996, 1294). In most countries, an appropriate balance of centralization and decentralization is essential to the effective and efficient functioning of

government. Not all functions can or should be financed and managed in a decentralized fashion. And even when national governments decentralize responsibilities, they often retain important policy and supervisory roles. They must create or maintain the enabling conditions that allow local units of administration or nongovernmental organizations to take on more responsibilities. Central ministries often have crucial roles in promoting and sustaining decentralization by developing appropriate and effective national policies and regulations for decentralization and strengthening local institutional capacity to assume responsibility for new functions.

6.4. Other Findings

This study has observed that there is inconsistency in the effectiveness of local governments and the whole decentralization enterprise for a variety of reasons, including (1) bureaucratic opposition to the transfer of power, (2) central government resistance to empower village or district level officials, (3) lack of local government financial autonomy, (4) rivalry among government units at the district level over scarce resources, and (5) lack of control over the decentralized departments. Although similar conclusions have been suggested in other research on decentralization, this study documents several other findings in explaining the impact of decentralization at the local level.

One of the most important issues that came across in the course of this research with regard to the political future of the present local government system is the maintenance, or the future, of the non-partisan status of the Assemblies, subsisting with a national multiparty system of government in the context of ideological divide between political parties. In my discussions with informants, one of the main arguments for a non-partisan local government system was that the main issues at the local level relate more to local development than to ideological

orientations and that party politics would create disunity at the local level. Party politics was seen as the most significant intervening variable in the relationship between decentralization and more effective development and governance. Whereas people in the rural district appeared more optimistic about government's promises of bringing development, people in the urban district believed that one had to belong to the ruling party to receive development from the assembly. This was the view of several of the assembly members in the Tema Municipal Assembly who did not belong to the ruling National Patriotic Party (NPP) and who felt they were not bringing the needed development projects to their constituencies because they were seen to be in the opposition.

In addition, the study observed that there are serious problems with the capacities of the District Assemblies in terms of quantity and quality of staff. Adequacy of human and fiscal resources is an important ingredient to sustain policies and programs of decentralization. The quality of bureaucratic personnel assigned to the two districts is, with important exceptions, modest. There are no incentives for working in the districts and no separate statutes establishing conditions for the employment of cadres at this level. Some district officials even claim that assignment to the districts is viewed as having negative implications for one's career. An overwhelming number of employees of the two District Assemblies lack the training necessary for the functions that they actually perform. Apart from unattractive conditions of service in the Civil Service, from which the District Assemblies draw their staff, there is the human factor of attitude, local government employees are held in contempt by employees in other sectors.

On the basis of this research, some new ideas have emerged that may help explain the different experiences with local government in different countries. The reader is given a broader insight into local government in Ghana, where there has been innovative decentralization

attempts and a concurrent transition to electoral democracy. The dissertation supports the idea of a causal relationship between decentralization and good governance, as well as a relationship between decentralization and democracy. Manor (1999) argued that there are areas where decentralization has considerable promise: promoting greater participation, enhancing the responsiveness of government institutions, increasing the communication between government and local people, promoting great accountability, and reinforcing national-level democracy. Ghana seems to be a case that provides evidence for each of these claims.

6.5. Overview of Field Research

The result of decentralization, interpreted through the questionnaires, stories, and conversations with, local people in two Ghanaian District Assemblies, was a combination of success and failure. Based on a comparison of popular preferences articulated in answers to the survey questionnaire, interviews, and focus groups, and their congruence to Assembly development priorities, local needs were reflected in development plans and budgets and the rhetoric of assembly officials. However, it also seems that district assemblies spent a significant portion of total annual expenditure on local government infrastructure; in many cases, this included construction of new assembly offices, assembly halls, and residences for senior staff. At the same time, where demands for specific infrastructure and services were high, the districts responded, though not at the level demanded by the constituencies.

In the East Gonja district, the overwhelming priority identified by the population was potable water, a need that had not been reflected in the development expenditures of the district before 1999. In the urban Tema Municipal Assembly, demands were increasing for better sanitation and waste disposal, market centers, education investments, and lorry parks among

others. With the support of external donors such as USAID, DFID, GTZ, DANIDA, some of these priority needs were met but only marginally. In both cases, we observe that expenditures on local government far surpassed those allocated for water, sanitation, education, or any of the other multiplicity of needs.

In this study, we found that local people did perceive a change in government from district councils to the district assemblies. However, people in the Tema Municipal area were less likely than people in the East Gonja District to appreciate the performance of local government or the idea that local government was more responsive to their needs. This may be because those living in the urban areas witnessed few infrastructural changes over time compared to the rural areas in East Gonja. It was also observed that the approaches to providing development in the two districts were similar, even though the development needs were somewhat different. Both districts depended heavily on central government transfers as a source of revenue. Tema Municipal Assembly was slightly more successful in mobilizing local revenue through the basic rates, taxes, fees, fines and levies, while the rural assembly of East Gonja struggled to increase locally generated revenue.

The analysis of revenue and expenditure patterns in the districts showed that per capita development spending was low, while recurrent expenditure and spending on local government infrastructure was high. A poor level of local revenue mobilization forced the assemblies to depend on the Common Fund to support their annual plans and to rely on external donor funded projects and programs and local people in self-help projects. Furthermore, the case study district assemblies did not take advantage of the spirit of voluntarism demonstrated in self-help projects and communal labor to nurture effective partnerships with community-based organizations as partners in development.

7. CONCLUSION

This study sought to analyze decentralization and democratic local governance in Ghana by assessing the performance of District Assemblies with the aim of getting a better understanding of how District Assemblies plan, implement, and manage development activities in close partnership with communities. The ongoing process of decentralization in Ghana must be seen in the broader context of a deliberate redirection and change in the state's internal regulatory framework. While some scholars suggested that there was reason for cautious optimism for decentralization, others argued that the claims made about decentralization far exceeded the empirical results. The apparent inconsistency between theory and practice raised questions about the impact of decentralization on governance. In this study, I observed local governance in Ghana to describe how people think about government and how decentralization and the push for more democratic government have influenced the lives of people at the local level.

The research suggests new ways of thinking about the practice of decentralization and governance at the local level and reveals some interesting perspectives on the relationships among district assemblies, elected officials, and the electorate that otherwise would remain unknown to outsiders. Through a framework of analytic induction, I have analyzed the relationship between decentralization and democratic local governance in order to (1) describe the current structure of decentralized government in Ghana, (2) understand the impacts of decentralization on government and the electorate through qualitative methods, and (3) explain the complex network of interactions that influences local government. I was also interested in exploring the scope and nature of partnerships between district assemblies and other community organizations and/associations and the processes by which such partnerships translated into tangible development outcomes.

This study on the Ghanaian experience with decentralization using two case districts reminds us yet again that although good theoretical reasons exist to expect improved performance through decentralization, the results have so far been disappointing. In the words of Rondinelli et al., “despite its vast scope, decentralization has seldom, if ever lived up to expectations.” Some descriptions of local government in the literature have suggested that decentralization has been “illusionary,” a means of consolidating power. At the same time, Oquaye (1995) argues that the District Assemblies provided for participation, transparency, and accountability in local government.

7.1. Assessment of the Propositions

This study provides a description of the contextual practice of decentralized governance at the local level, which allows us better to have an understanding of what local government is and how people perceive their own effectiveness in service delivery. The research contributes to the literature through the replication of work done by others regarding the impact of decentralization on local development, government responsiveness, and local governance. The findings from this study support the following hypotheses suggested in the literature:

- Decentralization increases political participation.
- Political participation yields improvements in government effectiveness.
- Successful decentralization requires political autonomy, financial autonomy, and an active, engaged civil society.
- Effective local governance requires decentralization and democratization.
- Decentralization will yield better governance-transparency, accountability, participation, fairness.

Additionally, this research analyzed a number of variables in the current hypotheses using a qualitative approach. With regard to the relationship between decentralization and governance, the two case study districts enabled a better understanding of the ways decentralization influenced the effectiveness of local government. Based on the literature on decentralization and local government, I studied five propositions:

- Decentralization results in more effective local government.
- Decentralization results in more responsive local government.
- Decentralization results in local government that is more accountable and more participatory.
- Decentralization and elected local representatives leads to local people having more positive perceptions of government.
- Local governments provide high quality services that respond to the local demand.

For the purpose of this research, *effectiveness* was defined according to development outputs, responsiveness to local needs, and the quality of governance. I also assumed that there were other factors influencing the effectiveness of local governments and the ability of local governments to provide the projects and services demanded by the public. Consequently, by considering other variables that might appear in the relationship and affect the performance of local government, I allowed for a more realistic explanation of the phenomenon of local governance.

Furthermore, the research has shown how decentralization, local development, and governance were perceived and interpreted by local people. Community members who are the consumers of government services were able to describe the impact of the district assemblies on development, the responsiveness of the district assembly to local preferences and needs, and their perceptions of the quality of governance in the district.

The Ghanaian experience with decentralization reinforces a number of issues raised in the literature. The successful implementation of decentralization depends on the degree to which national political leaders are committed to decentralization, the ability and willingness of the national bureaucracy to facilitate and support decentralized development activities, and the capacity of field officials of national agencies and departments to coordinate their activities at the local level (Rondinelli 1981, Cheema and Rondinelli 1983). Successful decentralization requires more than simply (1) declaring a policy of participatory local development, (2) reorganizing the administrative structure, and (3) creating new district planning procedures. Districts that succeeded in providing development projects and services succeeded because they listened to and incorporated the needs of local people, understood those needs, and forged partnerships with local NGOs and Community-Based Organizations, the decentralized departments, and village development associations in order to meet those needs. However, the districts reviewed in this study were unable to generate sufficient local revenues to support development and were therefore heavily dependent on the District Assembly Common Fund.

This study found that the districts did achieve some of their goals. The original goals of the decentralization policy, as outlined in Chapter 4, were development-related: to increase developments at the sub-national level and eventually to reduce the inequalities between rural and urban areas. The PNDC made the district assembly and locally-elected representatives the focus of its policy and also promised democracy in Ghana and ensured popular participation in the decision-making process. The district assemblies have made some progress in these areas, but they succeeded most in cultivating a democratic and participatory culture at the local level.

We observed in the two case study districts that the assemblies have resulted in a slight increase in development projects and services. Each of the districts experienced an increase in

development projects, including water projects, schools, health clinics, roads, markets, and latrines over previous periods and levels. However, there did not appear to be any reduction in the inequality between rural and urban areas, and considering the extreme underdevelopment in the rural areas, this may take several more decades to accomplish.

Informants believed that the new local government system resulted in improvements in the level of development. Most held the view that life was getting better and that there was more development in the districts than under the previous system of district councils. Furthermore, informants credited district assemblies, together with aid agencies, for bringing development to communities in addition to community-based self-help initiatives. Part of the evidence of increased development and local participation in the activities of the District Assemblies was the high rate of community-based self-help projects. However, self-help was also seen as a burden on communities, especially in rural villages and areas with concentrations of poor, subsistence farmers who have little disposable income to contribute. But overall, there has been an increase in development in the districts, due in part to the efforts community members themselves through their self-help initiatives and commitments.

Regardless of the perceived improvements in the provision of some development, there was still widespread frustration with government, particularly local government, when the new expectations for development and services were not fulfilled. The assemblies were charged with the overall development in the districts, which meant that local people had an opportunity to be involved in the development process. This meant in turn that when development projects and services did not materialize, local people knew whom to blame; I found in the course of my interviews and interactions with informants across the two districts that blame was usually

directed at the district assembly member for the electoral area, or even at the District Chief Executive.

District Assemblies did not always provide better development in the districts and therefore were not always able to be responsive to popular preferences due a variety of constraints. Limited by Common Fund guidelines, inadequate local revenue mobilization, heavy demands for projects and services, inadequate local input on local development plans, and problems coordinating development projects with decentralized departments and CBOs, the district assemblies were not effective in bringing about development in the districts. As noted in Chapter 4, we should not assume automatically that decentralization would result in the ability of locally elected officials to provide development where none existed before. The assemblies did, however, attempt to respond to local needs, and increased perceptions of responsiveness through meetings and contact of assembly members with their constituents. The assemblies appeared to be responsive because the elected assembly members were required to return to their electoral areas to report on the proceedings of the assembly and forward the concerns of local people to the sub-committees and Executive Committee within the assembly.

Decentralization also resulted in a change in local governance, which made the district assembly a slightly more transparent, more democratic, and more participatory form of local government. District assemblies have facilitated an increase in democratic culture at the local level. Although rural communities often did not see all of their needs met through the District Assembly, they did benefit from a more democratic form of local government. For instance, local elections were held every four years to allow local people to choose their own representatives; assembly members were selected to represent the needs of the electoral area and to link the electorate to their local government, as well as to mobilize community-based

development. Through community-based initiatives and the sub-district structures, such as the Town and Area Councils and Unit Committees, local people had the opportunity at least to influence the decision-making process of the Assembly; and finally, community involvement and ownership of projects—through self-help, communal labor, or co-payment—were seen as important and complementary components of Ghana's nascent democracy. It can thus be said in the case of Ghana that decentralization resulted in better representation and better responsiveness in three ways: locally elected representatives are held accountable to the electorate through regular elections, local people participate in the planning and decision-making process of the assembly, and local government provides for a close relationship between individuals and institutions. The district assemblies have become more and more the platforms for the articulations of local agendas, which then constitute the building blocks for national development. Through the 1988 decentralization reforms, there has been a political opening that facilitated the transition to democracy. It is the decentralization that has made local governments responsive (so that preferences are linked to outcomes) and more representative (so that elected representatives are linked to their constituents). Government is responsive when it adopts policies that citizens prefer, and it is representative when it acts in the best interest of the public.

Nevertheless, despite the progress that has been made in this respect, the present situation of decentralization and local governments in Ghana is far from optimal in terms of the potential benefits of decentralization. Indeed, local governments and communities find themselves in a predicament: their dependence on national government funding and subjection to national government controls keeps them subordinate to the center and discourages local autonomy. In addition, poor institutional incentives discourage socially efficient decision-making at various levels. Local government officials are locked into dependent relationships with central

governments through central financing arrangements and regulations; they lack incentives to deal with important local needs and preferences, such as potable water, sanitation, education, markets, latrines, health clinics and hospitals, and roads, among others.

7.2. Implications for Theory Building and Future Research

This research is oriented toward contributing to the theory of local governance and was based on carefully selected questions and hypothesis of theoretical value. This is because a better elaborated theory of governance at the local level will lead eventually to a more precise formulation of conditions under which decentralization influences governance at the local level in relation to development and service delivery. This dissertation also seeks to add to our understanding of decentralization and local government and will, directly or indirectly, contribute to solving practical problems of decentralized democratic local governance.

The dissertation sought to understand how decentralization had translated into changes in governance and how the electorate interpreted those changes. This study of decentralization and effectiveness variables confirms the current literature, which says that decentralization, when it has been tried, often fails to result in better governance at the local level. What is encouraging in this study is the impact that decentralization has on democratization.

In the case of Ghana's decentralization experiment, the district assembly structure, as a model of local governance, increased opportunities for local people to take part in their government, to participate in choosing their representatives, and to voice their demands for infrastructure and services. That was a significant change in local governance and in turn influenced local attitudes about what government should and could do for people and their communities. Despite the relatively low levels of social capital and inexperience in politics, the

people living in the districts were learning the practice of pluralist politics and contributing to the growth of local-level democracy. Hence, the decentralization designed and implemented in Ghana has somewhat facilitated the growth of democracy; this fact should not be underestimated, especially considering the dearth of African democratic institutions in the early 1990's. The qualitative data here strengthen the propositions that were raised at the beginning of this research: decentralization leads and/or contributes to effective local government that is accountable and responsive to local preferences, allows for more participation, and results in more positive perceptions of government from constituents.

However, there were some limitations to this study due to a variety of reasons. First and foremost, no findings of statistical significance can be generated by this sample, although future research could be build from this data set. Secondly, there was inadequate revenue and expenditure data to discuss at length the trends in local government finance or the changes that may have occurred before and after 1988; this made it difficult to analyze district finances with any certainty. Furthermore, the analysis of the effectiveness of the district assemblies in providing development outputs is tentative. On the other hand, the findings do suggest persuasive explanatory ideas regarding the impact of decentralization on good governance and allow us to raise new questions about local government in Ghana. Specifically, there are important implications for local government based on the recent changes in Ghanaian national politics with the New Patriotic Party (NPP) as the ruling government. The question that must be addressed in future research is this: to what extent will the NPP, as the ruling party, actively intervene in local politics as the NDC has done? Of particular concern and interest should be the question of how regional party affiliations will affect the practice of decentralized government in regions that are not sympathetic to or traditionally affiliated with the NPP.

Still another problem, to which no significant studies have been devoted, is the participation of women in local politics. Although the problem of women's participation is general, it appears at all levels of political structure. This study suggests that the basic local unit would be a rewarding research field in this respect. One could risk the hypothesis that local politics are a particularly suitable field for the political initiation of women, especially in countries that have no traditions of this kind of activity. Problems emerging at the local level are usually of the most direct interest for women. Future research in this regard could lead to significant initiatives for the political initiation of women.

The literature on decentralization and democratic local governance provides some perspectives on the role of people in decentralized government, reminding us that local interest in political participation "is only likely to be generated through experience with decentralized structures over time" Haynes (1991). This appears to have been true in the case of Ghana, as decentralization continues to be implemented and institutionalized at the local level. The Ghanaian experience with decentralization reinforces a number of issues in the literature, and thus provides an interesting case for more observation and research.

7.3. Policy Recommendations and Future Prospects for Decentralized Governance

The ongoing process of decentralization in Ghana must be seen in the broader context of a deliberate redirection and change in the internal regulatory framework of the state.

Decentralization, and the strengthening of District Assemblies, go beyond the decongestion of public sector activities and the decomposition of power. The focus on decentralization represents an opportunity to involve more people and more institutions in the formulation and delivery of development policy for poverty reduction and growth. It has become clear that the

decentralization policy in Ghana is more than a one-stop policy implementation measure and that the government and the people expect a lot of development benefits from it. Decentralization is a complex process with an overarching influence on the political, administrative, social, and economic scene in the districts, regions, and the entire nation. Based on the findings in this study, it is obvious that the local government system and its role in national development have become firmly established and matured under Ghana's Fourth Republic. More and more, the District Assemblies have become the platforms for the articulation of local agendas, which then constitute the building blocks for national development. Nevertheless, despite the progress that has been made in this respect, the present situation is far from being optimal in terms of the benefits that can be derived from decentralization.

In order to sustain and further improve the ongoing process, it is necessary to establish achievable targets in the management of decentralization and local government reform programs. While there is no single solution to the various problems confronting reform efforts, it is important that the relevant institutions and agencies make future decisions in constant discussion and close consultation with the various stakeholders involved in the implementation of the program to ensure acceleration of implementation on a common platform understood by all. I present below some of the possible areas to be considered for further and future intervention. My aim is to discuss some of the pros and cons of these future options of decentralization in Ghana and to highlight some important policy issues.

The most outstanding issue with regard to the political future of the present local government system is the maintenance of, or the future of the non-partisan status of the assemblies subsisting with a national multi-party system of government in the context of ideological divide between political parties. There are several arguments for and against the

current practice of non-partisan district assemblies. One of the main arguments for non-partisan local government system is that the main issues at the local level relate more to local level development than to ideological orientations and that party politics would create disunity and conflict at the local level resulting in the possible inability of the DAs from fully mobilizing their human and material resources for the development of the districts. Currently, decision making does not appear to be affected by the issue of the non-partisan character of the assemblies. The future of the decentralization process in Ghana will not be determined primarily by the non-partisan or partisan nature of the district assemblies. The lesson learnt so far on the political nature of the assemblies is that their non-partisan nature has enabled the assemblies to contribute to development in general. However, it is recommended that future studies be conducted to help determine the nature and extent of interests in party politics as well as their possible positive and negative impact at the district level. Furthermore, the current constitutional provisions require District Chief Executives and up to thirty percent of the Assemblymen to be appointed by the President. District Assemblies have been in place now for more than a decade and it is imperative for consideration to be given to the desirability of having all assembly members, including the DCE elected in the interest of the democratic electoral process.

Fiscal Decentralization poses a considerable problem in view of the limited capacity in most Districts. Local governments can not be completely financed through their own internally generated revenues and their continuous dependence upon central government subventions seriously undermines their political autonomy. The situation is further exacerbated by inadequate supervision and weak oversight functions. Skills on financial management and budgeting, with particular reference to the composite budget and the use of the budget as a planning tool, are particularly weak. Looking at the needs of the districts and their responsibilities, one could raise

the issue in support of increasing the percentage of allocations to the DACF. Furthermore, the following should be considered with regard to the district budgeting process. The district budget:

- should be integrative to include the budgets of all the decentralized departments operating at the district assembly;
- have four items of expenditure i.e. Personnel Emoluments, Administrative costs, Service costs and Investment costs. Revenue should also include Internally Generated Funds; Central Government transfers i.e. Common fund, O&M to support the recurrent costs to the decentralized departments, ceded revenue and the donor funds.
- be based on strategic planning with the priorities determined by the district and not handed down from the head office of the departments or the central government.

There is clearly a lack of a common vision and dialogue on decentralization within the Government. The ministries, agencies and sector departments have differing notions on what it means to decentralize their operations, and tend to distrust the capacity of the local government institutions to properly manage and monitor the use of public resources. Local planning and budgeting systems struggle to incorporate local ministerial departments and agencies, which report to their respective head offices in Accra. Resolving the sectoral conceptual differences in the interpretation of the decentralization policy may entail the following:

- Resolving the outstanding difficulties created by the establishment of public sector services for health, education and forestry in respect of which many key functions have been identified and decentralized under the policy.
- Enacting legislation to clarify the functions and related powers that are to be exercised by the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) at the various levels of the decentralized system.
- Developing the capacity of sector ministries to transfer power and functions and the capacity to appreciate the nature and scope of the change entailed in decentralization.
- Co-ordination of public finance and development planning policies and programs within the framework of decentralized development

In addition, in order to resolve the sectoral differences in approaches to institutional reforms, it would be necessary for the government through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to undertake the following measures:

- Set up the Local Government Service and establish clear conditions and schemes of service for the various professional groups.
- Build consensus on restructuring of ministries.
- Clarify institutional relationships at the national and local government levels and the functional relationship among various structures.

Consequently, there is a need for clear policy guidelines and firm political backing by the government. This is essential to advance the process of decentralization. As mentioned earlier, the successful implementation of decentralization depends on the degree to which national political leaders are committed to decentralization, the ability and willingness of the national bureaucracy to facilitate and support decentralized development activities and the capacity of field officials of national agencies and departments to their activities at the local level (Rondinelli 1981; Cheema and Rondinelli 1983). Every effort must be made to secure the understanding and agreement of key ministries to the proposed measures on the government's decentralization efforts.

There is also a need for the clarification of roles, functions and responsibilities for all the institutional actors involved in the decentralization process. This can be accomplished with effective legislation backed by strong political support from all government functionaries. The proposed Local Government Service Bill will just be yet legislation if it is not backed by a strong political will to enforce compliance. The various ministries, agencies and departments will automatically feel the need to be integrated into the DA structure if the necessary incentives are

made available by government, hence the need for an effective government involvement in the policy direction of Ghana's decentralization efforts.

Finally, the role of traditional authorities in the local government structure raises important policy considerations. Traditional authorities command the respect of large numbers of people and communities particularly in the rural areas. Traditional authorities are dedicated to the development of their traditional areas and the education and enlightenment of their people and do offer positive contributions to economic and social transformation. As such, they should be seen as part of the decentralization process. The formation of District House of Chiefs to work with District Assemblies in partnership would provide a mechanism for consultation and cooperation and could strengthen the role of assemblies.

APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTORY LETTERS FOR RESEARCH CLEARANCE



University of Pittsburgh

Graduate School of Public and International Affairs

Wesley W. Posvar Hall
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260
Fax: 412-648-2605

October 3, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: MATTHIAS ZANA NAAB

Mr. Matthias Zana Naab is a PhD dissertation candidate from the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. He is examining decentralization and democratic local governance in Ghana and will also be exploring the scope of partnerships between local governments and community-based organizations.

I believe Mr. Naab's dissertation and field research would compliment much of the work that has been done on decentralization and democratic local governance and would add significant value to the existing body of literature on politics and administration in Ghana. His dissertation will also serve the development community at large as an assessment of the decentralization experience in Ghana.

I would be very grateful if you can offer him any assistance needed to enable him to complete his dissertation research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louis".

Louis A. Picard, PhD
Chair, Dissertation Committee
Professor, International Development Division
LAP/k1

*In case of reply the number and
date of this Letter should*

Be Quoted.

Our Ref. No.....

Your Ref.....

Tel. M 66 54 21 D
66 60 30 D
66 47 63



Ministry of Local Government and
Rural Development P. O. Box M
50 Accra

17th October, 2002

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The bearer, Mr. Matthias Zana Naab, is a PhD candidate from the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. His main topic for his PhD dissertation is decentralization and democratic local governments and community based organizations.

Mr. Matthias Zana Naab wants to use Tema Municipal Assembly (Ashaiman) and the Gonja East District as his case study. Since his Dissertation will serve the development community at large as an assessment of the decentralization experience in Ghana, the Ministry stands to benefit immensely from such study.

We would therefore be grateful if you can offer him the required assistance.

Counting on your usual co-operation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Owusu Bonsu'.

FOR : THE MINISTER (MLGRD)
K. OWUSU BONSU
P. R. P. O.

CC:
THE MUNICIPAL CHIEF EXECUTIVE, TEMA MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY
THE DISTRICT CHIEF EXECUTIVE, EAST GONJA, SALAGA

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

(Community Members and Elected Officials of the District Assembly)

Name of Interviewer:

Place of Interview.....

District:Date of Interview.....

SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- 1 Informant's age
2. Informant's sex
3. Informant's level of education
4. Informant's principal occupation
5. Informant's residence in district

SECTION B: PERCEPTION OF THE ELECTORATE

(To be answered by all respondents)

6. District Assemblies (DAs) were established to perform certain functions. Could you list some of the functions?
7. Which functions of the DAs were well performed?
8. Which functions of the DAs were poorly performed?
9. In your opinion, what have been some of your DA's important achievements?
10. What are the most important needs of the people in this area?
11. Have they been met by the DA?
 - (i) Yes
 - (ii) No
 - (iii) Partially
 - (iv) Don't know

12. Can you tell me about any projects or services which have been provided for your village or locality during the past 5 or 6 years, including those that have stopped functioning or have been abandoned?

ITEM	COMPLETED	ABANDONED	IN PROGRESS
Classrooms			
Water: pipe/borehole			
Latrines			
Sanitation			
Market			
Lorry park			
Feeder road			
Any Other			
None			
Don't know			

13. Who brought the projects or services which you have mentioned to the village?

- (i) District Assembly
- (ii) Assembly man
- (iii) Member of Parliament
- (iv) District Chief Executive
- (v) Aid Agency
- (vi) Any Other

14. How satisfied are you with the projects?

- (i) Very satisfied
- (ii) Somewhat satisfied
- (iii) Dissatisfied (give reasons)

15. How effective is the DA at revenue collection?

- (i) Very effective
- (ii) Somewhat effective
- (iii) Not effective
- (iv) Don't know

16. In general, what is your assessment of the performance of your DA so far?

- (i) Excellent
- (ii) Good
- (iii) Fair
- (iv) Poor

17. In what ways can the general public be made to effectively participate in the work of your DA?

18. How will you rate the level of participation and interest of women in the activities of your DA?

- (i) Very high
- (ii) High
- (iii) Low
- (iv) Very low

SECTION C: PERCEPTIONS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC OF THE DISTRICT
ASSEMBLIES *(Not to be answered by officials of the DA)*

19. Do you know your Assembly member?
(i) Yes (ii) No
20. How many times does your DA member or any elected member call a meeting of residents in your Electoral Area in a year?
(i) Once (ii) Twice
(iii) Thrice (iv) Between four and six times
(v) Can't tell (vi) Have no knowledge of any such meeting
21. How many of such meetings do you attend in a year?
(i) Once (ii) Twice
(iii) Thrice (iv) Between four and six times
(v) Can't tell (vi) Have no knowledge of any such meeting
(vii) None
22. If you ever attended any such meeting, what is your assessment of the meeting?
(i) Very useful (ii) Useful
(iii) Waste of time (iv) Not applicable (did not attend any meeting)
23. Have you personally called on your Assembly member or elected official to discuss a community issue?
(i) Yes (ii) No
24. If yes, what was the nature of reception received?
(i) Very satisfactory (ii) Satisfactory
(iii) Unsatisfactory
25. Are you satisfied with the performance of your DA member (elected official)?
(i) Yes (ii) No
(iii) Cannot assess him/her
26. Are you aware of any projects funded from the District Assemblies Common Fund?
(i) Yes (ii) No
27. What are your suggestions for improving on the management of the Common Fund?

28. What, in your opinion, are the three most important problems facing your DA today?
(Please prioritize)
- (i) Finance
 - (ii) Logistics
 - (iii) Housing/Accommodation
 - (iv) Basic Infrastructure
 - (v) Chieftaincy/Land disputes
 - (vi) Poor relations between District Chief Executive and MP
 - (vii) Problem of implementation of DA decisions by Executive Committee
 - (viii) Controversy over the siting of development projects
 - (ix) Any Other (Please specify)
29. Are you are aware of the establishment of Unit Committees?
- (i) Yes
 - (ii) No
30. Do you think the establishment of Unit Committees will further enhance decision making and development in your Electoral Area?
- (i) Yes
 - (ii) No
 - (iii) Can't tell
31. Did you vote in the last District Assemblies and Unit Committees election?
- (i) Yes
 - (ii) No
32. Do you think the District Assembly and Unit Committees elections were fairly conducted?
- (i) Completely fair
 - (ii) Fair, but with some problems
 - (iii) Very unfair (Give reasons)
 - (iv) Don't know
33. Have you personally participated in any officially organized meeting or activity of either the DA or Unit Committee?
- (i) Yes
 - (ii) No
34. What suggestions do you have for improving on the work of your DA?
35. To what extent is the DA responsive to the needs of the community?

Not
Responsive

Very
Responsive

1 2 3 4 5

SECTION D: PERCEPTION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS AND ASSEMBLY MEMBERS OF THE DA *(to be answered by elected officials of district assemblies only)*

19. Are you an old (i.e. re-elected) or newly elected Assembly man or Unit Committee member?
(1) Re-elected (2) Newly elected
(Note: If (2), do not respond to questions 20-26, and proceed to questions 27-31; If (1) respond to all questions).
20. What is the quality of the relationship between the DCE and MP?
(i) Good (ii) Average
(iii) Poor (iv) Don't Know
21. How do you generate revenue within your district (list?)
22. Do you think there have always been fair deliberations in the DA to determine the use of its share of the DA Common Fund?
(i) Yes (ii) No
23. Would you say that deliberations in your DA are influenced by members' allegiance to one or the other political party?
(i) Yes (ii) No
24. How many committees of your DA are you a member of?
(i) One (ii) Two
(iii) Three (iv) Four
(v) Five (vi) More than five
25. How will you rate the functioning of the committees of your DA?
(i) Very effective (ii) Effective
(iii) Not effective
26. What is the relationship between the DA and the central government?
(i) Cooperation (ii) Neutrality
(iii) Interference (iv) Don't know
27. What are the roles and responsibilities of an Assembly man or a Unit committee member?
28. What do you expect to accomplish for the community during your term as an elected official?

29. What are the three most important problems facing your DA? (Prioritize)
- (vii) Finance
 - (viii) Logistics
 - (ix) Housing/Accommodation
 - (x) Basic Infrastructure
 - (xi) Chieftaincy/Land disputes
 - (xii) Poor relations between District Chief Executive and MP
 - (viii) Problem of implementation of DA decisions by Executive Committee
 - (viii) Controversy over the siting of development projects
 - (ix) Any Other (Please specify)
30. What suggestions do you have to improve upon the work of your DA?
31. To what extent is the DA responsive to the needs of the community?
- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
| Not
Responsive | | | | | Very
Responsive |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

KEY DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS

Basic District Information

Name of district

Name of region/state

District population Total ...
 Of which, rural: ...
 Urban: ...

District area: ... sq.km.

Distance to: State/regional capital
 National capital

Major ethnic group in district:

Main minority group(s):

Number of villages/local communities in this district:

District Administration

1. Can you please explain the structure of the district government? What powers and responsibilities does it have?
2. How are people elected and are rural and urban areas represented in the government?
3. What are the sources of revenue for the district administration, in order of importance?
 - Rural land taxes
 - Urban land taxes
 - Sales taxes
 - Allocations from central government
 - Allocations from regional level government
 - Foreign donations
4. Can you please explain the process through which the district administration draws up its annual budget and its annual plans, particularly explaining the roles that other government authorities and local civic institutions play in this process?
5. What is your perception of the roles that government, NGOs, and local civic organizations should play in the district development process? Have they been able to play these roles? Why? How would you organize relationships among them more effectively?
6. How are Area Councils/Zonal Councils integrated into the work of the DA and which CBOs are active in the district and what is the nature of their relationship with the DA?

LEADERS OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

1. General Information

- Name of organization
 - Date of founding
 - Membership: How does one become a member?
2. Can you please explain the history of your organization? How did it emerge, and what are its objectives?
 3. What is the role of your organization in local development, and how does this compare with the roles of other community associations/organizations? What activities/projects are you engaged in?
 4. How would you characterize your (organization) relationship with local government (District Assembly)? Good, Fair, Bad, and why?
 5. Have you ever tried to influence local government (DA) decisions and activities? If so can you give examples, explaining what happened and what factors determined you were successful or failed?
 6. How would you describe your relationship with other community-based organizations and NGOs? Do you collaborate, or are there conflicts and why?
 7. What do you think should be the respective roles of your organization and others in this district?
 8. Do you have relationships with other organizations in other districts/regions? Describe? What are the benefits, if any, of these relationships?
 9. Have you ever partnered or collaborated with the DA to under a major development activity/project? If yes, tell me how the partnership was structured? What were your roles and responsibilities in the partnership?
 10. Why do you think or believe partnerships between CBOs and Local Governments are important or not important?

APPENDIX D

DISTRIBUTION OF DACF UTILIZATION BY SECTORS

The following table and figure provide additional information on the distribution of DACF utilization by sector for the East Gonja District Assembly.

Table A-7-1: Distribution of DACF Utilization by Sectors: East Gonja District Assembly (1994-1999)

SECTOR	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Education	61.007	50.826	173.694	289.318	179.822	319.189
Health	57.558	10.797	4.295	110.055	79.872	89.091
Local Government	103.376	100.284	277.992	185.603	434.177	435.512
Water & Sanitation	16.376	55.131	26.888	38.667	62.443	117.986
Energy	9.171	94.634	0.415	7.401	6.000	51.149
Poverty Alleviation	-	-	-	-	190.000	-
Others	2.781	16.729	14.095	69.820	40.827	125.401
TOTAL	250.300	328.400	497.380	700.864	993.142	1,138.330

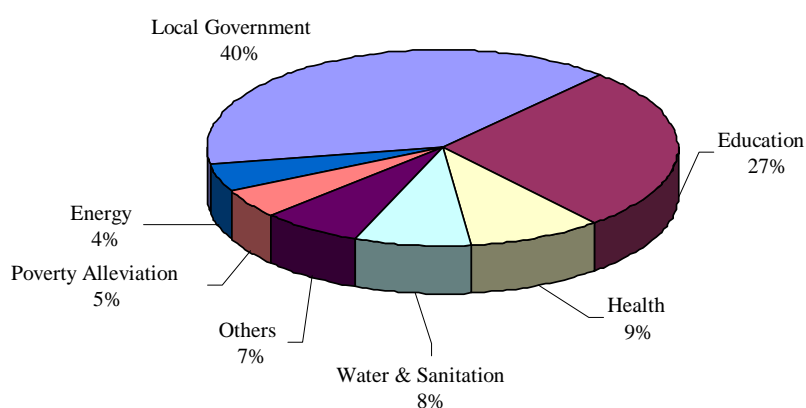


Figure A-1: Distribution of DACF Utilization by Sectors: East Gonja District Assembly (1994-1999)²²

²² The bulk of the amount representing 40 percent of the total share for the period was used to provide and improve upon the amenities in the local government sector, building and furnishing a new office space, and staff residential accommodation, among others. In the education sector, 27.5 percent of the total share was spent on the construction of classroom structures, teachers' accommodations, and a science resource center, while 9 percent of the total share was spent in the health sector on the construction of maternity wards and clinics and the provision of training for Traditional Birth Attendants. This information is taken from the Medium Term Development Planning Documents of the East Gonja District Assembly.

APPENDIX E

ACRONYMS USED IN STUDY

NAME**ACRONYM**

Adventist Development and Relief Agency.....	ADRA
Canadian International Development Agency.....	CIDA
Civic Union.....	CU
Civil Society Associations.....	CSA
Civil Society Organization.....	CSO
Community Based Organizations.....	CBO
Cooperative League of the USA.....	CLUSA
Danish International Development Association.....	DANIDA
Democracy and Governance.....	DG
Department of Education.....	DOE
District Agriculture Office.....	DAO
District Assemblies Common Fund.....	DACF
District Assembly.....	DA
District Budget Officer.....	DBO
District Chief Executive.....	DCE
District Coordinating Director.....	DCD
District Development Planning and Budget Unit.....	DPBU
District Finance Officer.....	DFO
District Planning and Coordinating Unit.....	DPCU
District Planning Officer.....	DPO
District Secretary.....	DS
Enhancing Civil Society at the Local Level.....	ECSELL
Executive Committee.....	EXECO
German Technical Assistance.....	GTZ
Ghana Education Service.....	GES
Government Accountability Improves Trust.....	GAIT
Government of Ghana.....	GOG
International Foundation for Electoral Systems.....	IFES

International Monetary Fund	IMF
Local Government	LG
Member of Parliament	MP
Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development	MLGRD
Municipal Development Program	MDP
National Democratic Congress	NDC
National Development Planning Commission	NDPC
Native Authorities	NA
Non-Governmental Organization	NGO
People's Defense Committee	PDC
People's National Party	PNP
Presiding Member	PM
Provisional National Defense Council	PNDC
Regional Coordinating Council	RCC
Supporting the Electoral Process Project	STEP
Supreme Military Council	SMC
Tema Municipal Assembly	TMA
Unit Committee	UC
United Nations Development Programme	UNDP
United States Agency for International Development	USAID
Workers Defense Committee	WDC

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