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**ENHANCING THE DECENTRALISATION  
PROGRAMME: DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES  
AND SUB-STRUCTURES AS PARTNERS  
IN GOVERNANCE**

*by*

*Hon. Kwamena Ahwoi*

**INSTITUTE OF  
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS  
ACCRA, GHANA**

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), Ghana was founded in October 1989 as an independent, non-governmental institution dedicated to the establishment and strengthening of a market economy and a democratic, free and open society. It considers improvements in the legal, social and political institutions as necessary conditions for sustained economic growth and human development.

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## PREFACE

The Institute of Economic Affairs is pleased to publish under its series of Occasional Papers, “Enhancing the Decentralisation Programme: District Assemblies and Sub-Structures as Partners in Governance.” This special Occasional Paper contains the full text of an address by Hon. Kwamena Ahwoi, the then Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, now Minister for Planning and Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration.

The paper reviews local government structure over a ten-year period (1989-99). It gives a broad overview of the District Assembly system: the main features of the decentralisation programme; the achievements of the programme in the following areas: political development, administration, decentralised planning, fiscal and decentralised management of public-private partnerships.

It is the author’s view that to enhance the decentralisation programme, certain problems and constraints ought to be confronted including the unsettled district boundaries, leading to several disputes; the debate over the “non-partisan” local government system subsisting under a partisan central government; the difficulties in managing the power balance between the MP and the DCE; and the administration of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF).

The author makes a few suggestions and defends the dual role of the DCE as the head of a decentralised District Assembly and at the same time the representative of Central Government.

I am delighted to place on record, the gratitude of the Institute of Economic Affairs to the Danish Government, through the Royal Danish Embassy in Accra and DANIDA, whose generous assistance has made this publication possible.

*Dr. George A. Apenteng  
Executive Director  
Institute of Economic Affairs*

*Accra, 2000*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Honourable Kwamena Ahwoi was born on 13th October 1951. He won a PTC scholarship to study at the University of Ghana, Legon from 1971 to 1974, and was awarded the LL.B (Ghana) degree in 1974. Thereafter as a Rhodes scholar, he studied at Hertford College in the University of Oxford from 1975 to 1977, and gained the B.C.L. (Oxon.) degree in 1977.

The author's entire working life has been in the public service, and he is currently Ghana's Minister for Planning, Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration. Before then, he had had varied work experience, including a lectureship in the Faculty of Law at the University of Ghana (1978 to 1993). While a Faculty member, he also held a number of important public offices including PNDC Coordinator for Revenue Commissioners, Investigations and Tribunals (1982 to March 1988) and PNDC Secretary (Minister) for Local Government (March 1988 to January 1993).

For long periods, he also acted as PNDC Secretary (Minister) for various Ministries. Following Ghana's return to constitutional rule in 1993, he served as Minister for Local Government and Rural Development (March 1993 to January 2000), with a stint as Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs (April 1997 to December 1997).

Hon. Kwamena Ahwoi has authored three publications, two of them in the University of Ghana Law Journal. He has represented the country at numerous international conferences including ECOWAS Summits, OAU and Commonwealth meetings, and the General Assembly of the United Nations. As a reward for meritorious services rendered to the state, he was honoured in 1997 with membership of the Order of the Volta (OV). He has held international appointments as President of the Afro-Asian Reconstruction Organization (1991 to 1995), and as Board Member of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (1995 to January 2000).

He is married with four children.

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## ACRONYMS

1. CAC — Credit Allocation Committee
2. CBO — Community Based Organisation
3. CHOGM — Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
4. DA — District Assembly
5. DACF — District Assemblies Common Fund
6. DACFA — District Assemblies Common Fund Administrator
7. DATO — District Assembly Treasury Office
8. DBO — District Budget Officer
9. DCE — District Chief Executive
10. DFO — District Planning Officer
11. DISEC — District Security Committee
12. DPO — District Planning Officer
13. DTB — District Tender Board
14. DTO — District Treasury Office
15. FAD — Financial Administration Decree
16. FAR — Financial Administration Regulations
17. FM — Financial Memorandum to Urban and District Councils



18. GPRTU — Ghana Private Road Transport Union
19. IULA — International Union of Local Authorities
20. MMDAs — Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
21. MP — Member of Parliament
22. MTEF — Medium Term Expenditure Framework
23. NGO — Non-Governmental Organisation
24. PAF — “Poverty Alleviation Fund”
25. PNDC — Provisional National Defence Council
26. PUFMARP — Public Finance Management and Administration Restructuring Programme
27. TOR — Terms of Reference

*This Occasional Paper contains the text of an address delivered by the Hon. Kwamena Ahwoi, then Minister for Local Government and Rural Development at the Speaker's Breakfast Forum held at Parliament House, Accra on 13th December 1999.*

## **Introduction**

Ten years ago, Ghana embarked on a major programme of local government reform and decentralisation. Ten years ago in 1989, the phased programme of District Assembly elections was concluded and the Assemblies inaugurated. Ten years ago, the then PNDC was predicting through the paragraphs of the little “Blue Book”<sup>1</sup> that the District Assemblies were to be the foundation upon which Ghana’s new democracy was to be erected.

The story had however begun seven years earlier, in 1982,<sup>2</sup> when the PNDC declared its commitment to people’s power, grassroots democracy, and good governance at the local level.

## **The Global Context**

Ghana’s Decentralisation Programme must, however, be located within the world-wide movement towards greater participation of citizens in decision-making. The IULA is working on a revised draft of a World Charter on Local Government and Decentralisation.<sup>3</sup> At the Commonwealth level, the CHOGM has made a commitment to democratisation, decentralisation and local good governance.<sup>4</sup>

## **Main Features of the Decentralisation Programme**

The thrust of Ghana’s policy over the last 10 years has been to promote popular participation by shifting the processes of governance from command to consultation, and by devolving power, competence and resources and means to the district levels.

The main features of the Programme have included the following:

- (i) Redemarcation of districts to create more manageable and viable local government units;<sup>5</sup>
- (ii) Establishment of District Assemblies (DAs) as non-partisan local government bodies;<sup>6</sup>
- (iii) Empowerment of DAs as legislative, administrative, development planning, service delivery, budgeting and rating authorities;<sup>7</sup>
- (iv) Transfer of responsibility for 86 statutory functions of state to local government bodies;<sup>8</sup>
- (v) Integration of the local government system with the central government district administration system to institutionalise a fused system of public administration;<sup>9</sup>
- (vi) Establishment of sub-district councils and unit committees to create greater access to political authority;<sup>10</sup>
- (vii) Modification of the eligibility criteria for candidacy to open up local government elections to a more broad-based field of competitors;<sup>11</sup>
- (viii) Reservation of not more than 30% of the membership of DAs as Government appointees<sup>12</sup> to ensure the representation of certain local interest groups and to create access to skills and expertise;
- (ix) Restructuring of resource allocation and the establishment of a resource-sharing mechanism between central and local governments;<sup>13</sup>

- (x) Redefinition of the roles, functions and structures of government institutions at the national, regional and local levels by making the national level responsible for policy formulation, the regional level responsible for coordination, and the district level responsible for planning and implementation;
- (xi) Introduction of a decentralised planning system;<sup>11</sup>
- (xii) Efforts at establishing a system of fiscal decentralisation and composite budgeting;
- (xiii) Establishment of structures and mechanisms to enhance probity, accountability and transparency in public administration at all levels of government;
- (xiv) Capacity-building programmes for local governments;
- (xv) Using DAs as vehicles for implementation of district-focused, externally-funded credit projects.

## **Achievements**

The Programme has chalked some very significant successes. These are best seen in the five component areas which have formed the focal areas of the implementation strategy:

- (i) Political Decentralisation;
- (ii) Administrative Decentralisation;
- (iii) Decentralised Planning;
- (iv) Fiscal Decentralisation; and
- (v) Decentralised Management of Public-Private Partnerships.

## Political Decentralisation

As is well known, political decentralisation has involved the redemarcation of district and sub-district administrative boundaries, the establishment and empowerment of local government structures, and the promotion of advocacy and popular participation at the various levels of decision-making.

The Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies have been established as the “highest political authorities in the district”<sup>15</sup> to which powers of political decision-making have been decentralised. This is buttressed by the system of checks and balances introduced at the district level. The District Chief Executive is horizontally checked in the exercise of his power by the Presiding Member who takes his mandate solely from the Assembly. The District Assembly has the power to remove the DCE through a vote of no confidence. Vertical supervision of the DCE is provided by the Regional Minister. The individual Assemblymember is made accountable through the requirement for him or her to meet his or her electorate regularly, and also by the power of revocation of his or her mandate vested in the electorate.

The dual allegiance of the DCE to the DA and to Central Government, so essential for a decentralised system in a unitary state, is ensured through the appointment procedure. He is nominated by the President, approved by 2/3 of the members of the District Assembly, and formally appointed by the President.

## **Administrative Decentralisation**

Administrative Decentralisation has entailed decentralising the machinery of government by restructuring the ministerial institutions, transferring defined functions and their related powers and resources to the local governments, and ensuring an effective and meaningful integration of sectoral programmes, resources and assets into the District Assembly system so as to promote coordinated development and efficient resource utilisation.

Effective administrative decentralisation involves the transfer of functions and powers, the transfer of means and resources, and the transfer of competence and skills from the Centre to the districts. Section 10 of the Local Government Act, the Planning functions of District Assemblies under the National Development Planning (System) Act and the Schedules to the Legislative Instruments setting up the District Assemblies, all seek to transfer functions and powers to the District Assemblies.

Means and resources are being transferred in 5 main ways. First, the Assemblies are enabled to collect taxes and levies from the traditional local government revenue sources. Second is the Ceded Revenue. Third is the District Assemblies Common Fund which currently constitutes about 25% of the total development budget of the country from domestic sources. Fourth are the Specialised Transfers such as the Minerals Development Fund, Stool land royalties, and timber royalties. Fifth are the Central Government transfers for the payment of salaries and other emoluments of civil servants working in the District Assemblies, as well as for some operation and maintenance expenditures under the former items 2 and 3 (i.e. Administration and Services expenditures in the MTEF Budget Structure).

The transfer of competence and skills has taken the form of the transfer of officers from the Central and Regional levels to the districts, the creation of new posts such as the DPO and the DBO at the district level, the recruitment of new officers with the requisite specialised skills, and the proposed establishment of the integrated Departments of the District Assemblies.

The high water mark of administrative decentralisation was when the old Civil Service Act of 1960 was repealed, and a new Civil Service Law<sup>16</sup> promulgated on 5th January, 1993 with a Part V devoted specifically to "Decentralisation."

### **Decentralised Planning**

The new decentralised planning system is participatory and integrative, and is designed to ensure the active involvement of the population and service providers in the provision of services and the implementation of development programmes.

The new planning process is also expected to promote the development of service centres based on rational settlement patterns in the district, and to ensure sustainable environmental resource development. The National Development Planning (System) Act establishes a decentralised planning system and constitutes the District Assemblies into the District Planning Authorities. At the district level, a District Planning Co-ordinating Unit is set up as the technical planning wing of the Planning Authority. In consultation with the District Departments and the Sub-district structures, it evolves a District Development Plan which is submitted for political approval to the District Assembly as the District Planning Authority. The district plans are submitted to the Regional Planning Co-ordinating Unit which coordinates and harmonises them from



the regional perspective, and submits same to the Regional Coordinating Council for political approval. The 10 regional plans are synthesised into a draft National Development Plan by the National Development Planning Commission from where it is submitted to Cabinet for political approval. The National Development Plan as approved is what is then sent down for implementation as District Programmes and Projects, using the mechanism of the composite budget. The current plan is dubbed “Vision 2020.” It must be mentioned that sector inputs are also made into the National Plan, and there are provisions for sector implementation. There are also provisions for community participation in the plan formulation, and it is indeed a requirement of the law that district plans submitted must be accompanied by evidence that the required public hearings were held.

### **Fiscal Decentralisation**

All the actions taken under the component of Fiscal Decentralisation — the merger of the DTO and the DATO into the DFO, the creation of the Ceded Revenue Account, the establishment of DTBs,<sup>17</sup> the decentralisation of contract awards, the appointment of DPOs and DBOs — are designed to enable local governments gain access to national development resources for the implementation of development projects and programmes that have been prioritised in the district development plans; and to provide structures and identify processes for effective management of those resources. The Common Fund itself provides a mechanism for part decentralisation of the development budget. What is outstanding are the decentralisation of the recurrent budget and the introduction of the composite budget system.

## **Decentralised Management of Public-Private Partnerships**

District Assemblies are to create an enabling environment that promotes public-private partnerships, and establishes the private sector as the engine of growth and development at the local level.

Their activities cover investment promotion, removal of obstacles to private sector development, provision of services, and the preparation and implementation of private sector-friendly economic development programmes.

Measures already taken have included the setting aside of 20% of the DACF share as revolving funds to promote private sector development, and through mechanisms such as “contractorising” and “franchising” of services.

## **Enhancing the Decentralisation Programme**

To enhance the decentralisation programme, certain problems and constraints ought to be confronted, tedious debates settled, and unfinished businesses completed.

Under political decentralisation, the first major issue is that of unsettled district boundaries, leading to several disputes about local government boundaries. At the community level, these have extended to disputes over boundaries of electoral areas and even units. Closely related to this trend are the “demands” for the creation of new districts. At the last count, 35 such demands were being pursued. To avoid a situation where every constituency or even every town wants to become a district, we may want to put a cap on the maximum number of districts that the country and its economy can accommodate, and perhaps tie its periodic review to major national demographic exercises such as the national census.

Another trend is the debate over the “non-partisan” nature of a local government system subsisting under a partisan Central Government. The dilemma however is that the partisan Central Government has to implement a significant part of its manifesto, plans and programmes through the non-partisan District Assemblies as a result of the decentralised planning system and the Common Fund mechanism. Where an Assembly turns out to be “hostile,” the Central Government may have problems implementing its programmes. But the case for a non-partisan local government system has been made in the following terms:

- (i) It is a constitutional provision which the NDC Government is not minded to amend;
- (ii) the issues of macro-economic policy, strategic alliances, foreign affairs, defence and others which divide political parties ideologically are the very issues which have been made “no go” areas for District Assemblies;
- (iii) at the district level, the issues of development, ie. provision of basic needs such as water, schools, health facilities, roads, electricity, unites the people rather than dividing them;
- (iv) the absence of party politics in the DAs compels the DAs to focus more on developmental issues rather than partisan interests;
- (v) in practice, issues of party politics in the DAs mainly arise when it comes to the approval of the DCE or the election of the PM.

The difficulties in managing the power balance between MPs and DCEs, and to some extent the DAs is another trend that ought to be watched. The structural difficulty is created by the Constitution itself — making the MP, a national legislator, a non-voting member of the DA, the local legislature. We have always had MPs and we have always had DCEs (or by whatever names they have been called) in Ghana and there has always been tension between them; but never have we had MPs struggling it out with DCEs over the allocation of market stalls (a purely local government function), or with the Assemblymember or the Unit Committee member over the management of public toilets (another purely local government function). Yet today, these are happening, and with increasing frequency too. The situation has been exacerbated by the allocation of part of the DACF to the MP for development in his constituency, separate from what the DA undertakes, raising claims of Assemblymembers wanting to be entitled to similar facilities.

Next is the controversy over the mode of appointment of DCEs. The current constitutional provisions recognise the difficulty inherent in implementing a programme of decentralisation within a unitary state, and therefore make the DCE doubly accountable to both the District Assembly and the Central Government represented by the President. Yet some have criticised this as undemocratic and argued for a “wholly elected” DCE, or an “executive mayor” as he/she is called in other jurisdictions. I agree that this is the democratic ideal. I have, however, elsewhere argued in favour of the current position as follows:

- (i) Ghanaians, in a free and fair referendum, adopted the Constitution which contains the present procedure for appointing DCEs. It is our duty to uphold and defend that Constitution.

- (ii) The decentralised development planning system combined with the Common Fund mechanism, compels the Central Government to implement some of its policies and programmes through the District Assemblies. If the DCE who is the head of the executive arm of the Assembly and representative of the executive arm of Government, is not loyal to the Central Government of the day, he or she can work to undermine its policies and programmes.
- (iii) Decentralisation within the framework of a unitary state requires a delicate arrangement that will ensure the cohesion of the nation-state. The presence of the DCE as the President's representative in the Assembly is to serve as a reminder at all times of this fact.
- (iv) The DCE as the Chairman of the DISEC must have the confidence of the Central Government before he can be entrusted with sensitive security material.
- (v) Historically, it is significant that the Government of the Second Republic, whose members had stood on the pre-independence platform of federalism, found it necessary to opt for a Chairman of the District Council to be appointed by the Prime Minister, without the participation of even the District Council itself, let alone the populace through direct elections.
- (vi) Those who advocate a change in the present system are advised to make it a part of their election manifesto so that if they are able to win the elections, they effect the change as the NDC Government is not about to initiate such a change.

Whether DAs should be wholly elected or whether to continue with the present constitutional arrangement of 70% elected and 30% appointed, is an aspect of the dilemma of decentralising within a unitary state, but has been made into an issue by the trend suggesting that it goes against the grain of democratic theory. In response to this, I have explained that we are in favour of the present system for the following reasons:

- (i) It is a constitutional provision which we are committed to upholding and defending.
- (ii) The case I have made about decentralising within a unitary state and the constitutional requirement for DAs to “operate within the framework of national policy”, argue for Central Government presence in the DA.
- (iii) The provision is utilised to try and achieve our affirmative action policy objective of 40% political representation for women by ceding 3% of the 30% to women.
- (iv) It is also utilised to achieve representation for the traditional authorities in the DAs by again ceding 30% of the 30% to chiefs or their representatives.
- (v) It is used to infuse persons with special skills, professions, expertise, experience and knowledge into the Assemblies.

Is the Unit Committee really necessary? Do we have too many Unit Committees (16,000 of them)? Is the membership of the Unit Committee (15 members) too unwieldy? Does not the non-establishment of some of the 16,000 Unit Committees (about 3,000 are currently non-functional because of inadequate numbers) reveal a lack of public interest in the Unit Committee system? Should not the structure of local government end at the Urban/

Zonal/Town/Area Council level? These, and other issues relating to the nature of the district/sub-district structures as well as the functions they are to perform, represent trends in political decentralisation that must engage our attention. We ourselves have been reviewing the situation with respect to the number of Units (16,000) and the number composing the Unit Committee (15) and are minded to recommend some amendments as follows:

- (i) the number of units is too large so the criteria for their demarcation should be reviewed with the objective of reducing the number and increasing their viability as local government bodies;
- (ii) the composition of the Unit Committee should be reduced from 15 to 9;
- (iii) Unit Committee elections should be conducted by show of hands.

A Task Force at the MLG&RD is working on the details of these recommendations.

The major issues under administrative decentralisation are sectoral conceptual differences in the interpretation of the policy, and sectoral differences in approaches to institutional reforms for decentralised management. The first takes the form of “we have decentralised because we have opened offices in all the districts” (talking of deconcentration and not devolution). The second takes the form of the establishment of centralised public services parallel to the proposed Local Government Service but whose staff are essentially in the service of the local governments (District Assemblies). We have seen this with the Ghana Education Service,<sup>18</sup> the Ghana Health Service<sup>19</sup> and the Forestry Commission.<sup>20</sup>

Another trend is the tendency of Ministries and Departments to continue to hold programme funds in their budgets at the centre and the regions, when the functions in respect of which they are holding those funds have been transferred to the districts. We have seen this with the Ministry of Roads and Transport, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. However, this trend is only a consequence of our delay in integrating the decentralised departments into the District Assembly system; a delay whose causes must be analysed and for which answers must be found.

There is a very healthy trend towards decentralised planning which indeed appears to have assumed a momentum of its own. Two major problems ought to be addressed though:

- (i) inadequate numbers of qualified and experienced personnel to operationalise the designated roles of the DPCUs; and
- (ii) the sub-district structures are relatively ill-equipped to undertake the bottom-up processes involved in participatory and integrated development planning and community governance.

A related problem is the lack of reliable database for planning and resource mobilisation at the district and sub-district levels.

Fiscal decentralisation, which appears to be the most intractable of the problems of the decentralisation programme, now appears to be on the way to being solved, thanks to the establishment of the Fiscal Decentralisation Sub-Committee of the PUFMARP Secretariat. Actual fiscal decentralisation involving a fundamental review of the FAD, the FAR and the FM to Urban and District Councils is part of the TOR of the Fiscal



Decentralisation sub-committee which is also studying the restructuring of the public financial procedures and processes to accord with the demands of decentralisation. We have in place, however, procedures and processes that ensure public accountability in the management of funds by the DAs. The DACF is disbursed and monitored not only by the constitutionally independent DACFA, but is also monitored together with all other revenues available to the DAs, by the monitoring teams of the RCCs, the Inspectorate Division of the MLG&RD, the external audit conducted by the Auditor-General, and finally by the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament. A CAC at the DA level vets all applications for the recently introduced “Productivity Improvement and Income Generation Fund,” popularly called the “PAF.” Also at the district level, there is a Finance and Administration sub-committee that examines the financial transactions of the DA before making recommendations to the DA through the Executive Committee.

Decentralised management of public-private partnerships is a trend, and though critical, is still not a very discernible one. In the Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies, the privatisation of waste management, public toilets, revenue collection, road construction and road cleansing represents aspects of this decentralised management. In the majority of districts, however, it is only the presence of commissioned revenue collectors that symbolise the involvement of the private sector in decentralised management, though the uniform franchising of lorry parks to the GPRTU to manage as agents of the DAs represents an important concession to public-private partnerships.

As NGOs and CBOs become more and more prominent in the districts, it becomes important for clear-cut policies on their roles to be made, and for an institutional framework for their operations to be provided. Whether it is time to revisit the abortive draft

NGO Bill which was to be sponsored by the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare is one of the issues that need to be addressed. Indeed, the tendency of some NGOs and CBOs to bypass the structures and programmes of the DAs, and establish structures and programmes of their own for the sake of staying “independent” of government institutions, without regard to the sustainability of those structures and programmes, is one of the trends that ought to be seriously questioned.

### **District Assemblies and Sub-Structures as Partners in Governance**

The established Sub-District Councils and Committees (Sub-Metropolitan District, Urban, Town, Zonal and Area Councils and Unit Committees) constitute a very closely-knit network of secondary institutions to complement the District Assemblies in the performance of their social mobilisation, day-to-day public administration and development initiation and implementation functions. These councils and committees have the highest representation ratios, and are the people’s closest and core institutions for making their voices work for them towards the realisation of their social, economic and political development expectations. Their responsibility for the following functions<sup>21</sup> make them the most critical partners of the District Assemblies in decentralised management, promotion of local democracy and development that is really responsive to the needs of the people:

- day-to-day administration;
- initiation of the District Development Plan;
- supervision of management and maintenance of services;
- data collection for planning and administration including the registration of births and deaths;

- promotion of effective linkages and communication channels for citizens into the governance system through regular meetings;
- mobilisation for implementation;
- monitoring policy and its implementation, spatial development control and performance of public administration institutions.

Their horizontal functional linkages with the people; their vertical linkages of co-ordinating decisions and activities each with the level above; membership of Urban/Zonal/Town/Area Councils coming from both the Assemblies and Unit Committees; and resource sharing with the DAs, are innovations expected to enhance the social partnership between them, the people and their DAs.

Development of the expected functional linkages between the Sub-District Structures and the DAs should have created partnership between the local governments and central government in the decentralisation process, but the democratically-elected Sub-District Structures, planned at the same time as the DAs, are late arrivals. The DAs had savoured the sweetness of power and authority, and have developed some resistance to downward decentralisation of their functions, and sharing financial resources with the sub-district structures. The reluctance of the DAs to:

- delegate functions to the Sub-District Structures;
- assign revenue areas to the Sub-District Councils for collection to activate the 50% retention of revenue collected by them; and
- DAs' interference in the performance of functions allocated by legislation to the sub-structures,

frustrate the councils and committees and erode the enthusiasm and confidence with which most of the 13,000 functioning Unit Committees and Councils took office. These problems and some genuine problems of overlap of functions between the Councils and Unit Committees, and a need to restructure the linkage of the Councils with the DAs for a more structural communication, stand out to be addressed to remove frustration and enhance the partnerships.

The effectiveness of the District Assemblies depends on the quality of manpower available to them, and well-structured standards practices. This brings me to the final issue which is an appropriate local government public service, and training for capacity building which are integral parts of the Decentralisation Policy and Local Government Reform Programme. At the inception of the policy, it was recognised that Ghana did not have the culture of decentralised management, and that the centralised public administration system left the sub-national levels very weak and totally dependent on the centre for policy making, programming, budgeting and implementation, which was incompatible with the new policy. This system also burdened Cabinet and Ministers with cross-sectoral co-ordination of even minute implementation issues.

We have now established the Institute of Local Government Studies, commissioned in May, 1999, to take over and expand training that the Ministry had been conducting with me, my Deputies and staff as the core resource persons. Training of Assemblymembers, staff of the departments and civil society partners is being rapidly expanded and put on continuous basis. Negotiation skills, economic management skills and participatory planning skills, hitherto unknown in local government in Ghana, are being imparted through the medium of the Institute which

has campuses in Accra and Tamale. Other courses being introduced at the Institute include Stores Management, Ethics for Local Government, Human Resources Management, Leadership and Supervisory Skills, The District Chief Executive as Manager, Information Technology, Environmental Management and Public-Private Partnerships.

## **Conclusion**

The trends in Local Government Reforms and Decentralisation in Ghana today are quite clear. They are towards democratic local government structures, and accountable systems of public administration that are able to deliver on the developmental demands of the people. They have been very positive achievements, but a lot also remains to be done. What we all ought to remember, however, is that decentralisation is a process, not an event. We must therefore not throw up our hands in despair when we confront obstacles. Ours is to devise strategies to overcome those obstacles.

## NOTES

1. *District Political Authority and Modalities for District Level Elections, July 1987.*
2. *PNDC Policy Guidelines for Ministries and Regional Organisations, May 1982.*
3. *International Union of Local Authorities Draft World Charter on Local Government and Decentralisation.*
4. *The 1993 Commonwealth Harare Declaration as confirmed by the Auckland (1995), Edinburgh (1997) and Durban (1999) CHOGMs.*
5. *See the 110 Legislative Instruments setting up the various Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies.*
6. *Constitution, Article 248.*
7. *Local Government Act, 1993, Act 462.*
8. *Supra, note 5.*
9. *Act 462 and Civil Service Law, 1993, PNDC 327.*
10. *Local Government (Urban, Zonal and Town Councils and Unit Committees) (Establishment) Instrument, 1994, L.I. 1589.*
11. *Literacy in English as a qualification criterion for candidacy in local government elections is removed, as is the payment of deposit by candidates. Indeed the entire elections to local government bodies is state-sponsored.*
12. *Constitution, Article 242 (d) and Act 462, Section 5(1) (d).*
13. *The Ceded Revenue and the District Assemblies Common Fund represent the major resource allocation mechanisms. Ceded Revenue under section 86(3) (Sixth Schedule) of Act 462 comprises*

*Central Government revenues collected by the IRS from the following sources and shared to the DAs on the basis of a formula approved annually by Cabinet:*

*Entertainment Duty, (ii) Casino Revenue, (iii) Betting Tax, (iv) Fee payable on registration of trade, business, profession or vocation, (v) Gambling Tax, (vi) Advertisement Tax, (vii) Daily Transport Tax, (viii) Taxes chargeable on the incomes of identified categories of self-employed persons.*

*DACF under Article 252 of the Constitution and the DACF Act, 1993, Act 455, comprises a minimum 5% of total annual national revenue shared annually to the DAs by a constitutionally independent DACFA on the basis of a formula approved annually by Parliament.*

- 11. National Development Planning (System) Act, 1994, Act 480.*
- 15. Constitution, Article 241 (3).*
- 16. PNDCL 327.*
- 17. Local Government (District Tender Boards) (Establishment) Regulations, 1995, L.I. 1606.*
- 18. Ghana Education Service Act, 1995, Act 506.*
- 19. Ghana Health Service and Teaching Hospitals Act, 1996, Act 525.*
- 20. Passed by Parliament but yet to be published.*
- 21. L.I. 1589, Second and Fifth Schedules.*

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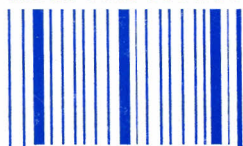
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