

**A STUDY OF GOVERNANCE
IN GHANA
UNDER DECENTRALIZATION**

BY

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JANUARY, 1994

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Report was prepared by Dr Sam K Asibuo based upon field research in Ghana during the months of November and December 1993. The research officer and his research assistants would like to thank the following whose contributions to this study have been invaluable - The Assembly members, chiefs and other community leaders, Unit Committee members, the District Secretaries, officials of the District Administration and the Decentralized Departments - all in the communities of Gomoa, Agona, Kwabre and Suhum-Kraboah-Coaltar districts which we visited who provided the information on which this Report is based.

The research team would also like to thank Professor Rene Lemorchand of USAID, Ivory coast for his initial comments on the project and field trip to Gomoa and Agona districts.

Finally, to United States Agency for International Development for funding the project.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADRA	-	Adventist Development Relief Agency
CDO	-	Civil Defence Organization
CDR	-	Committees for the Defence of the Revolution
DA	-	District Assembly
DAO	-	District Administrative Officer
DAs	-	District Assemblies
DCD	-	District Coordinating Director
DCE	-	District Chief Executive
E E C	-	European Economic Community
J S S	-	Junior Secondary School
KVIP	-	Kumasi Ventilated Improved Pit-Latrine
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NPP	-	New Patriotic Party
PAMSCAD	-	Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment
PNDC	-	Provisional National Defence Council
S S S	-	Senior Secondary School
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1 1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The desire for decentralization in Ghana could be traced as far back as the late 1940s. The Reports of the Watson Commission of 1948¹ and the Coussey Committee of 1949² recognized the need for the sharing of functions between the central government and decentralized institutions. This commitment to decentralization was further reflected in the independence constitution of 1957 which brought about the creation of regional assemblies. Decentralization has also been the recurring theme of most of the post-independence Commissions of Enquiry³. For example, the Report of the Commission on the Structure and remuneration of the Public Service summed up the aim of Ghana's decentralization as follows

"In order to improve efficiency and economy and to provide a machinery of Government better designed to accomplish programmes for rapid social and economic development, there needs to be a radical decentralization of responsibility for the management of public affairs"⁴

Despite the recommendations of this commission, the Okoh Commission Report of 1976 stated that the machinery of government has been characterized by excessive centralization⁵. This comment is illustrative of the gravity of the problem of decentralization and underlines the fact that decentralization efforts in Ghana have so far not been successful⁶.

When the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) came to power on 31st December, 1981, it soon discovered that the country's administrative machinery suffered from several defects that needed remedying in the interests of development. The PNDC ascribed certain past failures to overcentralization. This, it maintained, not only hampered the formulation and implementation of grassroots development programmes, but also resulted in a complete lack of involvement on the part of the local people in the country's development effort⁷. The PNDC accused previous Ghanaian regimes of insufficient commitment to decentralization. In addition, the PNDC argued that rigid financial controls in central and local government administration had frustrated the implementation of several important development projects⁸.

The PNDC was determined to provide an effective institutional framework affording all Ghanaians the opportunity to participate directly in the decision-making process affecting their welfare. The PNDC also emphasized its commitment to rural development. It recognized that rural communities made significant contribution to development, yet received the least share of the resources allocated.⁹ It was to reverse this imbalance that the attention of the PNDC Government was turned to the districts and rural communities as focal points in mobilizing people to take active and keen interest in local participation and community development. This objective was reflected in the PNDC's policy of decentralization which was designed to provide the people at the grassroots with the authority and mandate for their development. It was also aimed at increasing the capacity of local communities to identify their own needs and priorities and explore options to meet these needs as far as possible for themselves through the mobilization of resources that they command.

In his reference to the PNDC's decentralization programme during the speech to the nation to mark the sixth anniversary of the PNDC regime, Flt Lt Rawlings stated that

"For the first time, we are seriously shifting the focus of decision-making in areas which directly affect our lives to the grassroots where they really matter. We are according primacy to the local level in the evolution of democracy."

The ideals of grassroot participation and development from below shall be meaningless unless the local people themselves take part directly in determining the issues affecting their own lives. It was in pursuance of this noble policy of decentralization that in November 1988, the PNDC Government passed Local Government Law (PNDC Law 207) to establish 110 district and Metropolitan Assemblies.¹⁰ The District Assemblies were regarded by the PNDC as

"the pillars upon which people's power would be erected - the focal points of development at the village and town levels - the solid foundations for participatory democracy throughout the country."¹¹

1 2 TASKS TO BE PERFORMED

USAID/Ghana is interested in developing a strategy which would enable it to help Ghana strengthen institutions which foster democracy. In order to do so, it is important for

USAID/Ghana to better understand how decentralized institutions are faring, how their institutional relationships among themselves and with other parts of government are developing, and whether decision-making has successfully shifted to decentralized institutions. This study is intended to provide a background report which will help the USAID Mission to better understand this critical area.

A major concern of the study is to assess the extent to which the District Assemblies and especially their sub-structures - the Unit Committees have been able to achieve the primary objective for which they have been established - the promotion of development of the rural communities of Ghana. Development in this study means undertaking infrastructural projects such as schools, markets, health posts/health centres, water/bore holes, public toilets, sanitation, electricity, lorry parks etc.

Other objectives of the study are

- to discuss how local organisations are contributing to the effective operation of the country and decision-making at both the local and national level,
- To assess measures which the central Government has taken or proposes to take to improve financial accountability and civil service performance and recommendations for future activities,
- finally, another major emphasis of the study is to find out changes that have taken place as a result of transition to constitutional rule since 7th January, 1993.

The following central questions will be addressed

1. What development projects have been undertaken by the DAS and to what extent have these projects been the result of the DAS as instrument of participatory democracy?
2. What community-based development activities have the Unit Committees and the Town/Area Councils initiated, completed and/or are still being initiated in support of general mobilization for community development and welfare?
3. How are resources mobilized in the communities and what type of support do they receive from the DAS, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the decentralized departments?
4. Are community members directly involved in decisions over

projects which affect their welfare?

- 5 What are the formal and informal structures by which civil society attempts to meet with, bargain with and communicate with government functionaries?
- 6 How do decentralized structures operate at the district level and how effective are their services to the communities?
- 7 Can a relationship be established between changes in community involvement in decisions over local projects and changes in institutional performance?
- 8 What are the major problems facing the DAS, the Unit Committees and the Decentralized Departments?

1 3 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Four District Assemblies (two old and two new) were randomly selected from Central (Gomoa and Agona), Eastern (Suhum-Kraboaa-Coaltar) and Ashanti (Kwabere District Assembly) Regions based on the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development four level classification. These are 'most deprived', 'deprived', 'moderately developed' and 'developed'. This classification is derived from the availability/ accessibility of infrastructural services especially in the district capital. Based on this, the following scores have been produced for each category: 'developed' (60+), 'moderately developed' (40-59), 'deprived' (20-39) and 'most deprived' (less than 20 points). The 'deprived' category accounts for 65 DAS. The 'developed' category covers only 7 authorities - the three Metropolitan Assemblies and four regional capitals. Of the four DAS selected for this study, only Gomoa DA falls under the 'most deprived' category, the other three are 'deprived' DAS. A total of 28 communities were involved in this study.

The study entailed holding of informal interviews and discussions with District Assembly members, Town/Area Council and Unit Committee members, District Chief Executives, District Administration Officials, head of district decentralized departments, chiefs and elders, some members of the National Association of Local Authorities in Ghana (NALAG) as well as other key actors in the District Assembly system. Secondary materials were also consulted.

1 4 THE CONCEPT OF DECENTRALIZATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

In this study, decentralization maybe defined as the transfer or delegation of legal and political authority to plan, make decisions, or manage public functions from the

national level to any organization or agency at the sub-national level ¹² Such a transfer, it is generally assumed, will allow development efforts to respond more expeditiously to local needs Grassroots/community participation, on the other hand, may be defined as the involvement of the rural people in the identification of their needs, the mobilization of local human and material resources and local implementation of plans to satisfy local needs It may also be used to mean not only taking part in DA election campaigns, voting to elect DA members, Town/Area Council and Unit Committee members but also directly taking part in DA business, either through meetings or as an Assembly member

Participation connotes two objectives

(1) a kind of local autonomy in which people discover the possibilities of exercising choice and thereby, becoming capable of managing their own development, (ii) a process that helps successful completion of projects, and that makes possible the beneficial impact of such development on people ¹³ These objectives are consistent with Ghana's decentralization programme with the District Assemblies as its cornerstone

1 5 BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON GHANA

Ghana has an area of 239,460 square kilometres and lies between latitudes 4° 11° North It is bounded in the south by the Atlantic Ocean, in the north by Burkina Faso, in the West by Ivory Coast and in the east by Togo The population was 6,726,815 in 1960 and 8,559,313 in 1970 and 12,205,574 in 1984 Currently the population of Ghana is estimated at 15 million ¹⁴

Ghana consists of a variety of socio-cultural groups There are, however, four major ethnic groups, namely the Akans comprising the Asante, Fante, Akwapim, Brong and Akyem, the Mole-Dagbanis, the Ewe and the Gas The Akans alone constitute 44 1% of the population, the Mole-Dagbani 15 9%, the Ewe 13%, the Ga-Adangbe 8 3%, the Guan 3 7%, the Gurma 3 5% and other minor ethnic groups 11 4%

The economy of Ghana is predominantly agricultural and involves more than 60% of the active population Agriculture constitutes about 50% of the gross domestic products Cocoa is the mainstay of the economy and the main source of external revenue Timber and mining represent more than 20% of the country's exports The main exports are cocoa, timber, gold, diamonds, manganese, bauxite, aluminium and electricity from the Akosombo dam

Administratively, Ghana is divided into ten regions, each

of which is further sub-divided into districts Figure 1 in Appendix I is a map showing the ten Regions and Districts of Ghana These regional administrative divisions tend to coincide with ethnic groups

Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast, became an independent state within the Commonwealth on 6th March, 1957 and was the first sub-Saharan African state to be granted independence from colonial rule Ghana became a Republic in 1960 Since independence to date the political fortunes of the country have oscillated considerably The political life of the country has been characterized by political instability as evidenced by successive military coups and the frequency with which governments are changed Since independence, Ghana has experienced four civilian and five military regimes

- 1 Gold Coast, Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Disturbances, H M S D No,231, 1948 (WATSON COMMISSION)
- 2 Gold Coast, Report to His Excellency, the Governor by the Committee on Constitutional Reform, 1949 Colonial No 248 (COUSSEY COMMITTEE)
- 3 See, Republic of Ghana, Report of the Commission on the Structure and Remuneration of the Public Service of Ghana (State Publishing Corporation, Accra, 1967) (MILLS ODOI COMMISSION) and, Republic of Ghana, Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Electoral Reform and Local Government, Part III, 1968 (Government Printer, Accra) (SIRIBOE COMMISSION)
- 4 Mills-Odoi Report, p 4
- 5 Republic of Ghana, Main Report of the Commission on the Structure and Procedures of the Ghana Civil Service 1974-1976, Vol 1 (State Publishing Corporation, Accra-Tema, 1976) (OKOH COMMISSION) p 48
- 6 See, Asibuo, S K (1992) "Decentralization in Ghana - Myth or Reality" Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol 38, No 2, pp 122-138
- 7 Ghana, Outlines of the Decentralization Plan of the Provisional National Defence Council, Accra Information Services Department, nd pp 2-3
- 8 Ibid
- 9 People's Daily Graphic, 31 December, 1982
- 10 For a comprehensive discussion of the 1988 District Assembly Law, See Asibuo, S K (1991), 'The Provisional National Defence Council and the District Assemblies in Ghana: An Analysis of the New Local Government Law, 1988 (PNDC Law 207)', The African Review, Vol 18, No 1&2
- 11 Rawlings, J J (1991), Broadcast to the Nation on New Year's Day, January 1, in Republic of Ghana A Year of Bold Actions, Information Services Department, Accra
- 12 Rondinelli, D A (1981), "Government Decentralization in Comparative Perspective Theory and Practice in Developing Countries", International Review of Administrative Sciences Vol 47, pp 22-42

13 See OPHOLT, Norman and Esman, H O (1974) Local Organization for Development. Analysis of Asian Experience (Cornell University Centre for International Studies Ithaca, N Y ; UNESCO (1979) Meeting of Experts on the Institutional Problems of Participation in the Strategies of Integrated Rural Development Lima, Peru, 4-8 September, 1978, UNESCO Paris and Korten, C and Klauss, R (eds) (1984) People Centered Development. Contribution Towards Theory and Planning Framework Kumarin Press West Hartford

14 Ghana in Figures, Statistical Service, 1992

2 1 NATURE AND SCOPE OF GOVERNMENT'S DECENTRALIZATION POLICY

Ghana's decentralization policy is designed to create monolithic institutions at the District, Town and Unit Committee levels to which some responsibilities of government should be transferred and through which access to state power can be created for the entire population of the country to exercise their democratic rights to participate in administrative and development decision-making and take up their obligations to contribute, each according to his best ability, to the development of the country. In accordance with the requirement of the policy new arrangement for the management of public affairs has been made in such manner that levels of administrative structures above the district level do not frustrate dialogue between the national and district levels.¹

Ghana's decentralization policy was designed against the background of centralized inefficient and ineffective management of public affairs that characterized previous regimes in the country, marginalized rural communities which never experienced and benefited from allocation of national resources, wasteful use of scarce manpower resources in a dual system of public administration in which very weak local government institutions existed side by side with relatively weak central Government field offices at the district level and the exercise of regional level powers by poorly organised regional level institutions in a manner which tended to stall and block local initiative and frustrate popular participation in government and development.²

In line with this broad direction of policy three macro policies have been developed to

- (1) convert national level ministerial structures into Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Organisations capable of co-ordinating sectoral policies, programmes and budget,
- (11) transfer implementation responsibilities along with appropriate resources, staff and authority to organizations operating from the regional level downwards and that such staff of Regional District and Town/Area organizations should belong to and be paid directly by the local institutions so as to eliminate any dual allegiance and give meaning to decentralization,
- (111) democratise access to political leaders and promote the use of the committee system for coordination in

decentralized organizations in such a way that there should not be a situation where only one person has the access and reports to a political boss

It must be noted that these policy decisions on decentralization which affect the very fundamental issue of exercise of democratic rights and obligations by the people, demand the restructuring of power and authority and the institutions involved in government of the country. Both the macro-policy and the three sub-macro policies clearly underline the government's political programme that power must be exercised by the people in local institutions which they should form and nurture into growth and strength

2 2 ISSUES OF NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION INVOLVED IN THE DECENTRALIZATION POLICY

The major issues of national administration which the policy is seeking to decentralize include

- (i) day-to-day administration,
 - (ii) preparation, implementation and monitoring of development plans and budgets,
 - (iii) mobilisation and utilization of human, physical, financial and other resources,
 - (iv) initiation, promotion, implementation and monitoring of productive activities, social and cultural development programmes and community services,
 - (v) regulation and control of economic and social activities
- These issues cover almost the entire range of matters involved in governance

2 3 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR DECENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATION

2 3 1 Structure and Functions

Ghana's local government system consists of Regional Co-ordinating Council (RCC), District Assembly (DA) and Urban, Town/Area Council and Unit Committee

The Regional Co-ordinating Council is composed of the Regional Secretary/Minister, all Deputy Regional Secretaries/Ministers, all District Secretaries and all presiding members (Chairmen) of the District Assemblies, while the Regional Administrative Officers - career civil servants - are the secretaries of the RCCs. The RCC is chaired by the Regional Secretary/Minister who is a Central government appointee

The primary duties of the RCC, as stipulated in Section 113 of the 1988 Local Government Law, include

- (1) the co-ordination and formulation of the integral plans and programmes of the DAS in the region and ensuring that these plans are compatible with overall national development policies and priorities, and monitoring the implementation of programmes and projects within the region and evaluating the performance of such programmes and projects, and allocating to the districts in the region as appropriate public funds, under estimates approved by the Central Government and grants-in-aid made to the districts in the region

Two-thirds of the District Assembly members will be elected directly, whilst one-third, including representatives of traditional authorities and of other persons /organizations involved in the productive life of the district, will be appointed by the Central Government in consultation with chiefs and organized economic groupings in the district. The District Secretary, a central Government political appointee and the chief executive of his area, will be an ex-officio member of the Assembly. The members of the Assembly will elect from among their own number a chairman, who is designated presiding member, and commanding the support of at least two thirds of the members, for a one year term, and may be re-elected. The appointed members will be allowed to hold office for not more than two consecutive terms.

The districts have been re-demarcated and the number increased from 65 to 110. This increase is a veritable affirmation of the Government's determination to broaden the decision-making process. The District Assembly is the highest political, administrative and legislative authority in each district which must provide guidance and give political leadership to the district. The DA is not only to formulate programmes and strategies for the effective mobilization of the human, physical, financial and other resources in the district but also promote and support productive activity and social development in the district. A District Assembly will also be required to coordinate, integrate and harmonize the execution of programmes and projects under approved development plans for the district and other development programmes being carried out by Ministries, Departments, Public Corporation, and other statutory bodies operating in the district.

Below the District Assembly are Urban, Town and Area Councils and Unit Committees. According to Legislative Instrument 1514, Urban, Town and Area Council will be composed of both persons elected from among the electoral areas within the area of authority of the council and appointed members.

ordinarily resident in the area concerned In the case of the Unit Committee, there should be ten persons ordinarily resident in the Unit elected as well as appointed members (L I 1514, Section 24(1)) The Urban, Town and Area Councils and the Unit Committees are essentially consultative bodies performing functions delegated to them by the DA and without budgets of their own

2 3 2 The Committees of the District Assembly

2 3 2 1 The Executive Committee

Two important arrangements have been made to facilitate the effectiveness of the District Assemblies (DAs) The first is the establishment of an Executive Committee by each of the 110 District and Metropolitan Assemblies The Executive Committee is the most powerful committee of the District Assembly (DA) The Executive Committee will act as the executing secretariat of the Assembly and will be responsible for its day-to-day administration The Executive Committee consists of the District Secretary as Chairman and one-third of the members of the whole Assembly and will be elected by the other members

The functions performed by the Executive Committee are many

- (1) The committee performs the Assembly's executive and co-ordinating functions and in-between sessions of the latter assumes its powers except in the legislative sphere,
- (11) It is responsible for the coordination of the plans and programmes of the sub-committees and has to submit these as comprehensive plans of action to the Assembly,
- (111) It is also responsible for implementing Assembly decisions and for supervising the routine administration of the District through the office of the District Secretary,
- (1v) In the case of non-decentralized agencies in the district, the Executive Committee can recommend to the appropriate central ministry, department or agency the appointment, replacement and firing with reasonable justification of officers within the jurisdiction of the Assembly,
- (v) Finally, the Executive Committee has powers to create and dissolve ad hoc committees

Where a District Assembly is dissatisfied with the performance of an Executive Committee, the Assembly may by resolution of two-thirds of the members dissolve the Executive Committee and elect another

The Executive Committee works through the following sub-Committees of the Assembly

- (1) Social Services Sub-Committee,
- (11) Technical Infrastructure Sub-Committee,
- (111) Economic Development Sub-Committee,
- (1V) Justice and Security Sub-Committee, and
- (v) Finance and Administration Sub-Committee

The Social Services Sub-Committee is responsible for social services including education, health etc. Indeed, all health plans, programmes and projects that are to be implemented in the district need approval from the DA through this Committee. The Technical Infrastructure Sub-Committee is in charge of the overall infrastructural development of the DA such as schools, markets, public latrines, bore holes etc. The main function of the Economic Development Sub-Committee is to make feasibility studies to assist whether it is viable for the Assembly to engage in any income generating venture. The Finance and Administration Sub-Committee is responsible for the financial development of the Assembly. It vets the annual estimates before it is sent to the Executive Committee and finally to the general Assembly for debate and approval. The Committee also makes proposals on rates, fees to the Assembly for approval. Finally, the Finance and Administration Sub-Committee has powers to inspect the income and expenditure or the accounts of the District Administration to know what is really happening. The Security Sub-Committee has to ensure law and order and to report troublesome areas in the district to the government.

To ensure maximum participation in the Assembly's deliberations, every member is required to serve on at least one sub-committee during that member's tenure of office. Heads of the relevant sectors and decentralized government departments or organizations are to attend the meetings of the sub-committees in advisory capacity, but will not have a right to vote.

**The District Decentralized Departments and Organizations
Under the District Assemblies**

The second arrangement deals with the decentralization of 22 implementing departments and organizations, listed under Section 29 of the First Schedule of the 1988 Local government Law. These departments are Ghana Education Service, Ghana Library Board, Information Service Department, Departments of Social Welfare, Community Development, Town and Country Planning, Ghana Highways Authority, Public Works, Parks and Gardens, Rural Housing and Cottage Industries, Statistical Service, Births and Deaths Registry, Forestry, Feeder Roads, Animal Health and Production, Fisheries, Office of the District Medical Officer of Health, Controller and Accountant-General's Office, Agricultural Extension Services, Crops Services and Agricultural Engineering.

These departments and organizations have been placed under the control and direction of the DAs. This integration is intended to emphasize the strategic role these decentralized departments have to play in facilitating the rapid development of the DAs. As stated by Mr. Opoku Manu, the Regional Administrative Officer of Ashanti:

"the activities of the decentralized departments impinge on the very lives of the local people. This is why to make the decentralization exercise effective and complete government has decided that they should become part and parcel of the District Administration set-up."⁵

Section 30 makes the staff of these departments into staff of the DAs, with responsibility for their appointment ultimately vested in the DAs. However, in the interim, as a transitional measure, Section 133(2) of the 1988 Local Government Law specified that the staff will continue to be appointed by the Head of Civil Service or the Public Service Commission, presumably until proper arrangements are finalized.

2 4 DECENTRALIZATION UNDER GHANA'S FOURTH REPUBLICAN CONSTITUTION

This section discusses the constitutional position of decentralization under Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution which came into force on 7th January, 1993.

The constitution for the Fourth Republic of Ghana contains the most explicit and comprehensive statement of principles yet on the local government system as a decentralized form of the national administration system that

any of our post-independence constitutions has ever covered. The provisions take inspiration to a large extent from the law and practice of local government under the PNDC, in particular, the provisions of the Local Government Law, 1988

Section 240 (1) of the Fourth Republican Constitution proclaims that "Ghana shall have a system of local government and administration which shall, as far as practicable, be decentralized" and that the DAs shall be maintained. The principle of participation by all the people in government through the District Assemblies is entrenched in the Constitution. Participation of the people shall be through their election of 70 per cent of the membership of the DA and also their involvement in the implementation of the projects and programmes proposed by the Assembly. Communal labour for development is encouraged and recognized as a vital public service and duty.

Unlike the 1969 and 1979 Constitutions which exclusively reserved one-third of the number of seats on District Councils to traditional authorities, the Fourth Republican Constitution deviates from this practice. Section 151 stipulates that 30 per cent of the membership of the DAs shall be by appointment of persons from important and identifiable groups in the district. This will include representatives of traditional authorities.

Unlike the 1969 and 1979 Constitutions which did not specifically assign any functions to 'local government' units, the Fourth Republican Constitution lists two functions of the DAs. According to Section 151-153, these specific functions are

- (1) the formulation and execution of plans, programmes and strategies for the effective mobilization of the resources necessary for the overall development of the district,
- (11) the levying and collection of taxes, rates, duties and fees. Parliament is, however, enjoined to prescribe by law other functions of the DAs.

One of the major innovations of the Fourth Republican Constitution, unlike previous ones, is the non-partisan nature of elections to the DA. Section 248 (1) states that elections to the DAs shall be non-partisan and be held every 4 years. Political parties shall not sponsor candidates for election to the Assembly. Assembly members are required to have total allegiance to the community they represent irrespective of their party preference as individuals.⁴

Another fundamental innovation of the Fourth Republican Constitution, which was borrowed from the 1988 Local Government Law (PNDC Law 207) is the provision for revocation of the mandate of a member of a District Assembly by either the electorate or the appointing body for failing to perform his statutory duties. The provision for recall is intended to ensure accountability, which has featured prominently on the agenda of the PNDC since December 1981.

To ensure the availability of financial resources to fund district projects and programmes, the constitution establishes the District Assemblies Common Fund into which at least 5 per cent of the gross revenue of Ghana are to be paid annually in quarterly instalments. In this way the DAs have a reliable source of funding unlike grants-in-aid and ceded revenue which were irregular. Other financial resources shall come from government grants and also monies raised by DAs in exercise of their taxation and licensing powers.

Unlike the District Secretary who owed his position under the PNDC regime to the Head of State and could not therefore be removed by the District Council/District Assembly, the District Chief Executive (DCE) according to Section 152 of the Fourth Republican Constitution can be removed from office if "a vote of no confidence supported by the votes of not less than two-thirds of all the members of District Assembly is passed against him". Besides, the DCE shall be appointed by the President and approved by two-thirds of the members of the Assembly present and voting. The DCE is, therefore, accountable not only to the President but also to the DA and will be expected to respect and promote the interest of the district in which he serves within the framework of national policy.

The Principal Legislative Officer of the DA is the Presiding member. He will be elected from the membership of the DA by a two-thirds majority and is removable by the Assembly. His term of office is two years and he may seek re-election. His main function is to coordinate and ensure the smooth implementation of the Assembly's legislative programme as well as consult from time to time with the D C E.

Under the Fourth Republican Constitution, citizens shall have the right to petition the courts or the Commissioner for Human Rights and Administrative Justice for any violations of their freedoms resulting from the administrative and legislative actions of the DA and its officers.

Finally, Regional Ministers and Deputy Ministers shall be appointed by the President and shall co-ordinate affairs of all the districts through the Regional Coordinating Council which shall include all DCEs and Presiding Members in the

region

- 1 Ahwoi, Kwamena (1991), PNDC Secretary for Local Government Speech delivered at the 5th Franco-Ghanaian Workshop on Decentralization in Ghana held at the School of Administration of University of Ghana, Legon
- 2 Ibid
- 3 Opoku-Manu, K , Regional Administrative Officer of Ashanti, addressing Assembly members at an orientation seminar at the Great Hall, University of Science and Technology (U S T), Kumasi on 23rd January, 1989 on the topic "Relationship of the District Assembly with Decentralized Agencies and other Bodies
- 4 See Ayee, J R A (1992), "Decentralization Under Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution" The Journal of Management Studies, 3rd Series, Vol 8 January-December, pp 1-10

3 1 Socio-Economic Background of the Districts Under Study

(1) Gomoa District

Gomoa District, with its capital at Apam, was created in 1988 out of the erstwhile Gomoa-Effutu-Awutu District Council. The District has a population of 139,746 and consists of 185 communities. The productive activities of the district include fishing, farming, salt-winning, small scale industries, poultry, pottery, brick and tile making, distilleries and trading. The District also has great potentialities in tourism development. Out of the expected 22 decentralized departments, 13 have been established. The research team visited the following communities - Gomoa Aboso, Oguakrom, Dawurampong, Abaasa, Afransi and Awombrew.

(11) Agona District

Agona District, with its capital at Agona Swedru, was created in 1974. It lies in a forested area and farming is the predominant activity in the district. Commercial activities in the district especially at Agona Swedru, are buoyant. On social services, the Agona District has five second cycle schools, a government hospital, several clinics and private hospitals. In Agona District, the research team visited Lower Bobikuma, Abodom, Kwanyako, Mankrong Junction and Mankrong.

(111) Kwabre District

The Kwabre district occupies an area of 375 76 square kilometres and has an estimated population of 91,671, most of them farmers. Mampong is the capital of Kwabre District.

The area produces such exportable crops as cocoa, oil palm and various fruits. There are also crops like maize, cassava, plantain, cowpea, soya bean and a host of other vegetables. There are nine recognized market centres, namely Ahwiaa, Mampong, Ankaase and Ntonso markets. Others are the Aboaso, Wawase, Kodie, Adwumakase-Kese and New Sonomaso markets.

The natural resources of the District are rock deposits at Buoho, Kenyase, Sarfo and Aboaso, sand and stones which can be found all over the district, and isolated timber scattered over parts of the District. The Kwabre District's industrial establishments include the Ahwiaa Wood products and KAS Quarry Products at Buoho. There are also the Kumasi Stone Quarry at Buoho and Prakla Seismos at Aboaso.

There are five second cycle educational institutions in the district. The district's health facilities include nine maternity clinics, two health posts at Old Asonomaso and Aboabogya, two primary health care centres at Kodie and Mpobi and three homeopathic clinics at Atimatim, Fawoade and Adwumakase-kese.

In Kwabre District, the research team visited the following towns and villages: Fawoade, Apagya, Kasaam, Ntonso, Aboaso, Kodie, Mampong, Pintin, Akrofum and Buoho.

(iv) Suhum-Kraboia-Coaltar District

Suhum-Kraboia-Coaltar District has a total population of 130,814 and occupies a geographical area of 322.8 square miles. About two thirds of the district's land is given to crops cultivation - cocoa, oil palm, kola nuts, plantain, cassava etc.

Market centres are mainly located at Suhum, Anum Apapam, Coaltar, Nankese, Acheansa, Dondrochiwa and Teacher Mante. Natural resources in the district comprise the large deposits of clay at Obeasua and Anum Apapam, gold deposit at Obuoho, granite stones at Nankese. Industrial establishments include garment factories, bakeries and Akpeteshie distilleries in Suhum, Coaltar and Kukua. Others are the Nankese Esquire Stone Quarry, Saw mills and Furniture Manufacturing Industries all at Suhum.

There are three second cycle institutions. Health facilities are evenly spread at the district's main towns with the general hospital sited at Suhum.

3.2 The Organization and Functioning of the District Bureaucracy - The Functions of the District Chief Executive, District Coordinating Director and Their Staff

Executive power at the district level is exercised by the District Chief Executive (DCE) who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the District. He is the chairman of the Executive Committee which is the most powerful committee of the Assembly. The DCE is a non-voting member of the DA. As the central government representative in the district, he serves as the link between the district and central government. It is his duty to portray the good image of the government he is representing. The DCE addresses the DA in session on policies determined by the Government. Such an address throws more light on some of the policies and programmes of the Government to the Assembly members who are the representatives of the people and thus assists them to explain government policies to the electorate. This helps to

minimize some of the misgivings the people may have against some of the programmes and policies of the government

Besides ensuring the maintenance of peace and order, the DCE is expected to respect and promote the interests of the district in which he serves within the framework of national policy. As already pointed out, the D C E is, therefore, accountable not only to the President but also to the DA. His term of office is four years. He may be removed during the period for abuse of office by two-thirds of all the members of the DA. This ensures the principle of accountability.

The decentralization programme embarked upon by the Government since 1988 was preceded by an organizational restructuring of the Civil Service. An offshoot of the decentralization programme and the restructuring exercise is the creation of the position of District Co-ordinating Director (DCD) in place of the District Administrative Officer (DAO). While the title co-ordinating Director is used in some districts, in others, reference is still made to the DAO.

The District Co-ordinating Director (DCD) is the head of the General Administration and represents the Head of Civil Service in the district, particularly formulating and implementing Government and DA policies, directives as well as supervision, control and discipline of staff. The DCD, under the Fourth Republic continues to play the role of frontline adviser to the DCE on political, economic, financial, social and infrastructural development of the district. Given the wealth of his experience and training, the District Co-ordinating Director (DCD) is at the centre stage in meeting the developmental challenges which confront the district. The DCD is also responsible for the overall and efficient management of the finances of the DA and signs payment vouchers, cheques, and all other financial documents. As the Secretary to the DA, the DCD is in charge of organizing meetings of the plenary session, the Executive Committees and its sub-committees, District Security Committee, District Tender Board, Site Advisory Committee etc. In this respect, he ensures the preparation of the agenda and the timely submission of relevant papers (minutes, agenda, background materials, etc) to members prior to the meeting day. It is also his duty to implement the policies and programmes of the DAS.

As head of the Civil Service in the district, the DCD co-ordinates the activities of the decentralized Departments and Ministries, Boards, Corporations and Financial Institutions. In this capacity, he receives monthly and quarterly reports from these Departments concerning their activities. Pertinent issues raised in some of these reports are brought to the

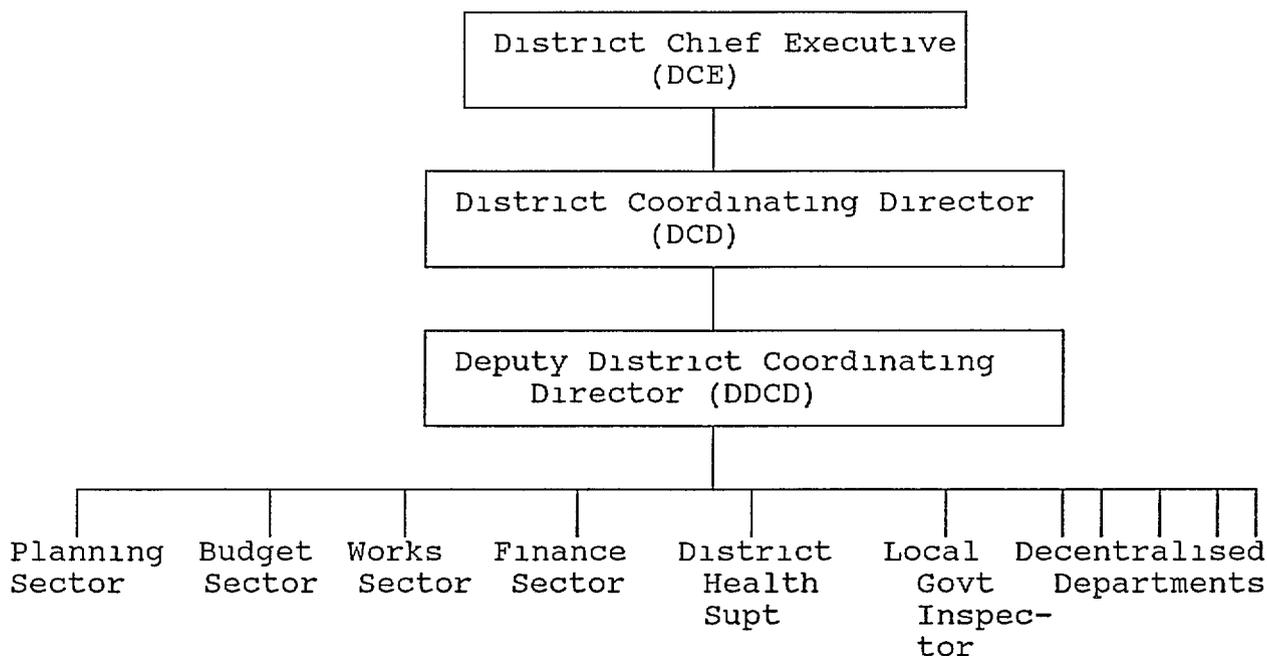
attention of the DA The DCD also holds monthly meetings with heads of Departments These provide a cordial forum for briefing them about government policies and programmes as well as DA activities. These meetings also enable the DCD to know more about the activities and problems of the Departments

In the performance of his duties, the DCD is assisted by a Deputy District Co-ordinating Director, District Planning Officer, District Finance Officer These officers operate directly under the District Assembly's outfit

The Deputy District Co-ordinating Director handles meetings of the DA and Executive Committee as well as matters relating to decentralized Departments and Ministries and other organisations and companies in the District He is also in charge of allocation of offices for Department/organisations, Bungalows, Quarters, Low Cost Houses, Rest Houses etc Besides speech writing, he is responsible for the submission of Quarterly, Annual and Periodic Reports of the DA The District Planning Officer is responsible for planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes and projects of the DA and Central Government He is also responsible for the preparation and establishment of statistical data bank on educational, health, food and agricultural, industrial, trade and other relevant sectoral activities within the district He assists the social services, Economic Development and Technical Infrastructural Services Sub-committees of the DA in the performance of their functions

It is the duty of the District Budget Officer to assist the Assembly's Development Planning and Budgeting Unit to work efficiently This involves the preparation of the budget of the DA, monitoring and advising on the revenue and expenditure pattern of the DA's accounts, and handling other budgetary, financial and developmental estimates and programmes of the DA He also assists the Finance and Administration Sub-Committee of the DA in the performance of their functions The Senior Works Superintendent is in charge of DA workshops and supervises technical and other staff of Works Division Besides designing and technical supervision of DA's projects, he is responsible for the maintenance of schools and other landed and specified properties of the DA The Local Government Inspector is responsible for inspection and auditing of Books of Revenue Collection Staff of the DA He assists in the preparation of DA's estimates, Trial Balance, Fee Fixing resolutions etc He handles matters pertaining to DA's bye-laws and Town/Area Council and Unit Committee affairs as well as matters relating to allocation of market stores/stalls of the DA

Finally, the District Finance Officer as the representative of the Controller/Accountant General, advises on all financial matters of the DA. He is in charge of Payment Vouchers, Accounting Records, Financial Statements, Reports and Documents including Trial Balance, Ledger, Cash Books, etc of the DA. He is also responsible for procurement and distribution of value books (receipts, tickets, licences etc). It is his duty to supervise and assign duties to accounting staff of the DA. Figure 1 illustrates the Organizational Structure of the District Administration.



3.3 The Role of the Decentralized Departments - Autonomy: Level of Services Provided

This section examines the nature of the work of some decentralized departments in the communities we visited to enable us understand the problems which undermine their effective performance at the grassroots level.

The Department of Social Welfare is responsible for rehabilitating the physically handicapped people in the communities and ensures the maintenance of children from broken marriages. The maintenance of children has been very effective because it has helped children to get money from their fathers who for sometime had been irresponsible by neglecting them. It also operates Family Tribunals where fathers who refuse to maintain their children are prosecuted. Besides undertaking public education programmes on a variety of national programmes - teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, AIDS,

family planning etc, the Department of Social Welfare's hospital welfare services have also been helpful Under the hospital welfare programme, the Department interviews patients and contacts their relatives to enable them know the whereabouts of the patients

For example, on 14th December 1993, there was a fatal accident at Suhum in which 21 passengers died The Social Welfare Officer could trace the relatives of one of the survivors, Baba Guruma at Asante Akim Bansa The mother of 22 year old Linda Yeboa who had a serious eye problem sought the assistance of the Social Welfare Department at Suhum Through the Department's intervention, the Suhum-Kraboa-Coaltar District Assembly provided a vehicle to convey her to Korle Bu Teaching Hospital The DA has also agreed to pay Linda's drug bill of ₵29,700 pending the submission of receipts

The Department of Agriculture handles all crops with the exception of cocoa, sheanut and coffee which are dealt with by separate statutory bodies The seedlings nursed by the Department are sold to farmers at a cheap price The Department of Agricultural Extension has technical officers who give technical advice to farmers, conduct farm demonstrations on individuals' own farms, and undertake farm visits to find out about progress and problems They also hold general meetings and discussions with farmers in the villages and towns It is the duty of these agricultural officers to communicate to farmers whatever research findings emanate from the country's universities and the various agricultural research institutions such as those at Kwadaso, Bonsu and New Tafo

The main function of the Information Services Department is to explain government laws, policies and programmes to communities and to learn about the latter's reaction to government policies and programmes There are information centres in some of the communities where people can go to read about government programmes and play in door games The Department of Health deals with the health and sanitation aspects of the people in the district It is the duty of the Department to ensure that the health of the people and their surroundings are of a reasonable standard Besides the hospitals, health centres and clinics, every zone of the districts has a Health Inspection Assistant Maternal Child and Health Services are provided through outreach visits of health personnel to the communities The Education Department is basically responsible for the effective running and supervision of the primary and Junior Secondary Schools in the district It also deals with the salaries, transfers and postings of teachers Through the work of the Inspectorate Division, the Department ensures that the quality of teaching and the operation of the various schools under its

jurisdiction conform to the standards of the Ghana Education Service This is an important way of assessing the performance of teachers

The main function of the Town and Country Planning Department is to see to the planning and lay-out of the towns and villages in the districts It is also responsible for approving building plans in order to ensure that they conform to acceptable standards both from the point of view of space and sanitation In the process, the officers of the Department have to inspect on-going private and public buildings and other construction projects and structures such as kiosks and chopbar locations They can also order all unauthorised buildings and structures to be demolished

The Department of Community Development is concerned with four major programmes these are adult education, adult literacy, self-help projects and home science extension The adult education programme in the rural communities takes the form of mass meetings and study groups to educate them about government policies and programmes The aim of this programme is to make the rural people conscious of their living conditions Throughout 1987 and 1991-1992, for example, the emphasis of the adult education programme was on educating the public to understand the importance of the registration exercise for the 1988 and 1992 district and national assembly elections respectively The aim of the adult literacy programme is to enable the adult have clear understanding of community issues and thereby help promote community development Literacy classes are therefore organized for adult illiterates in the communities through locally trained voluntary instructors The self-help programme involves mobilizing the local people to undertake projects with technical assistance from the Department Finally the Home Science Extension Programme is concerned with teaching rural women the rudiments of nutrition, personal and environmental hygiene and sanitation, maternal and childcare, home management and handicrafts The Department trains women in soap, pomade and powder making, palm oil processing, etc and provides the initial capital for them to start production Later the capital is refunded to the Department It is significant to note that some women who have acquired such skills are in business and contributing to the upkeep of their families These services are quite effective because they have provided women interviewed at Suhum with a regular source of income

The level of services provided by these decentralized departments have been hampered by several problems

The financial situation of decentralized department has so deteriorated that at times there is no money to purchase

stationery and other office materials In fact my investigations revealed that many departments did not have office equipment such as typewriters, duplicating and stapling machines, filing cabinets, materials for duplicating, typing paper and, above all, office furniture The Departments of Social Welfare and Community Development at Suhum for instance, had to purchase office stationery through the personal contributions of office staff Decentralized Departments in most cases have to rely on the District Administration for such logistics support The Departments of Social Welfare and Community Development at Suhum were given annual allocations of ₦58,000 and ₦60,000 respectively for the 1993 financial year These allocations are grossly inadequate to enable these Departments render effective services to the 250 communities in the district

According to the heads of Departments of Community Development in the four districts we visited the acute financial problem they are facing has hampered the training programmes organized for local leaders and voluntary instructors for the adult literacy programmes

Mobility is also a major problem The work of these Departments involves a lot of trekking and without departmental means of mobility, it becomes very difficult to attend to all the numerous communities - Gomoa District has 185 communities, Kwabre District has 86 communities and Suhum-Kraboia-Coaltar District has 250 communities The transport allowances, too, are inadequate Between July and September 1993, the Agricultural Extension department and the Department of Social Welfare in the Kwabre District had quarterly transport allowances of ₦30,000 and ₦12,000 respectively During the same period, the Departments of Social Welfare and Community Development at Suhum received ₦9,000 and ₦14,000 respectively as transport allowances My investigations revealed at times transport allowances are paid from staff own resources The motor bikes for some Departments like Agricultural Extension are not all on the road

One of the major obstacles to decentralization is the acute shortage of skilled and trained personnel to work at district level to assist with the developmental programmes of decentralized departments and the DAS The restructuring of the Civil Service has led to a situation of fluidity and "permanent transience" of the Civil Service Promotions have been frozen with officers both in the Administrative class and the departmental grades having to serve in one grade for about 10 years without promotion Even though additional 45 districts were created in 1988 and personnel were required to fill positions in these new districts, recruitment has also been frozen for sometime This has resulted in the dearth of

competent personnel to occupy key positions in both the new and old Districts

Another problem concerns the issue of dual allegiance. In theory, the 22 decentralized departments are to work under the umbrella of the District Assemblies, in practice, they take and implement decisions in consultation with their respective national headquarters and in some cases through their regional heads. The consensus among those senior civil servants interviewed is that Ghana's decentralization is yet to be manifested in the civil service. Recruitment of personnel is directly done in Accra. Monthly salaries of civil servants are vetted and approved in Accra. The decentralised departmental staff receive funding and promotions also from their respective parent ministries and as such it is very difficult for the DAS to have maximum control over them.

Another issue worth mentioning is that not all the 22 decentralized departments have been firmly established four years after the inauguration of the DAS. Kwabre District and Agona District have 12 and 19 respectively. Gomoa District and Suhum-Kraboa-Coaltar have 13 each. Besides, lack of both office and residential accommodation is a major impediment to decentralization. This has severely affected the establishment of some district departments. This problem is more acute in the Kwabre and Gomoa Districts. For example, in Kwabre District, four Departments are sharing one office. Most of the staff of Kwabre District also stay at Kumasi and travel some seven kilometres to Mampong for work. Besides the risks entailed in this daily travel and the inconvenience to staff, it is also expensive - staff salaries are meagre.

Finally, there is also the reluctance on the part of many civil servants to accept transfers to the rural areas, even though the shortage of competent staff makes their services greatly needed. An important cause of reluctance to transfer is the lack of administrative and infrastructural facilities such as electricity, pipe-borne water, clinics, hospitals, schools and a good communication network.

3 4 The Role of the District Assemblies (DAs)

The District Assemblies have made modest contribution to the socio-economic needs of the numerous communities competing for Assembly assistance. The DAs have assisted some communities which lacked certain essential amenities such as good drinking water, markets, public toilets, classroom blocks, J S S Workshops, good roads to provide them. It should be pointed out that DA assistance to communities has been in the form of supplying building materials such as

cement, nails and roofing sheets

The Suhum-Kraboa-Coaltar District Assembly has rehabilitated the markets at Nankese, Amanase and Asuboi at the cost of ₵1 5 million, ₵2 5 million and ₵1 million respectively. Other Assembly assistance to communities include 25 bags of cement and 1 packet of roofing sheets to support the J S S Workshop at Teacher Mante, 30 bags of cement to support the construction of hand-dug wells at Amanhyia, 30 bags of cement for the construction of 2 hand-dug wells and ₵500,000 to support the construction of 6 classroom blocks for the local primary school at Akote-Ayisikrom, and 20 bags of cement to assist the construction of a pit latrine at Bron Densuso. It is worth mentioning that the people of Nankese has received various forms of assistance from the Suhum-Kraboa-Coaltar D A. Besides the rehabilitation of the market already pointed out, the DA also provided the building materials worth ₵300,000 towards the construction of KVIP toilet and also 150 bags of cement and two packets of roofing sheets for the construction of Ayim Aboagye J S S classroom block. Again 3 packets of roofing sheets were provided for the Day Care Centre at Nankese.

The Gomoa and Agona DAs have provided assistance to their respective communities. For example, 20 bags of cement and two packets of roofing sheets were provided by the Gomoa DA to assist the rehabilitation of public toilets at Gomoa Aboso. Again the Gomoa DA contributed ₵2 5 million towards the Senior Secondary School project at Dawuramong. The people of Gomoa Oguakrom received 2 packets of roofing sheets from the Assembly to assist the J S S classroom block project.

The Kwabre District Assembly has also made some modest contribution towards the development of the district. During the 1991/92 academic year the DA instituted a scholarship scheme to help educate the children in the district. Five scholarships of ₵78,000 each were awarded to 5 children attending boarding schools. Five other scholarships of ₵48,000 each were also given to 5 day students. Due to the importance the DA attaches to education, it has established an education fund of ₵1,500 per annum to be paid by every senior secondary school student. Those in primary and junior secondary schools pay ₵300 per annum. The amount realized from the educational development levies, is used for educational development activities including the scholarship schemes.

The DAs have not been able to undertake adequate development projects in the communities because they spend greater percentage of their income on recurrent items. For example, in 1991 total revenue for Kwabre District Assembly was ₵26,169,760. Out of this amount ₵6,946,550 was spent on

development projects - 26.5% of total income The breakdown
of development expenditure is as follows

(i)	rehabilitation of SSS	-	¢2,360,790
(ii)	rehabilitation of feeder roads	-	¢1,212,650
(iii)	rehabilitation of public latrine at Mamponteng	-	¢ 148,000
(iv)	the provision of building materials- cement, roofing sheets, nails for Community projects	-	¢3,217,710

In 1992 Kwabre District Assembly received a total revenue of ¢40,329,630. This figure included ceded revenue of ¢17.6 million. Out of the total amount, ¢14,916,660 - approximately 36.9% was used for development projects. The detail expenditure is as follows

(i)	rehabilitation of toilet/latrines	-	¢2,721,900
(ii)	rehabilitation of markets	-	¢1,841,740
(iii)	provision of building materials to assist community projects	-	¢6,989,220
(iv)	mineral exploration	-	¢ 420,000
(v)	education projects	-	¢4,591,600

The DAs have not been able to provide a number of services to the communities due to several factors. Finance, the 'lifblood' of decentralization is a major stumbling block. Despite the collection of taxes by the DAs and the disbursement of ceded revenue to them, the DAs are still incapable of performing their statutory functions. Money is unavailable because people are fed up with paying several taxes a year, and more importantly, the DAs have become more dependent on the centre for allocation of ceded revenue which fails to come on time. In the absence of adequate funding the DAs cannot undertake projects in their localities. The DAs have retrenched several of their labourers due to financial difficulties and this has affected the regularity, quality and quantity of certain Assembly services especially sanitation. Most DAs have not been able to pay fully the 50% of the salaries of their employees which they are obliged to pay. Lack of logistics and financial support has conspired to render the Executive Committees impotent. This has affected the activities of the DAs concept. Meetings are irregular because the DAs find it difficult to pay Assembly members transport allowances. Sitting allowances are in arrears of payment. Throughout 1993 the DAs we visited did not receive any grant-in-aid from the Government.

As an additional mechanism for transferring funds from the central government to the local government units and thereby enhancing their capacity to undertake socio-economic

activities in their localities, the 1992 Constitution as already pointed out, makes provision for the establishment of the DAs Common Fund, into which "not less than five per cent of the total revenues of Ghana" are to be paid annually in quarterly instalments for the development of the DAs. In this way the DAs may be able to count on some reliable sources of revenue, unlike grants-in-aid, ceded revenue and dues which are sometimes unreliable and inelastic.

Another obstacle to the smooth implementation of DA programmes is that some of the powers divested to the DAs are themselves unrealistic and over-ambitious. They have tried to accomplish many objectives at once without consideration of how some of the objectives are competing or conflicting. A classic example of the lack of realism of some of the powers divested is the stipulation that staff of the DAs should be appointed by the DA and should include officers of the DAs except the DAOs, and all civil servants and public officers in the districts, who are employees of the 22 departments and organizations. This stipulation seems grandiose and does not take into account the capacities and capabilities of the various DAs and the fact that some of the departments and organizations are parastatals, whose employees are not civil servants and whose Instruments of Incorporations will have to be substantially reviewed if they have to be placed under the DAs.

Another administrative issue centres on the Capacity of the District staff to implement policies of human development. The problem is two-fold. On the one hand, there has been a reluctance on the part of the qualified and highly competent persons to opt to serve in the hardships of the rural areas. On the other hand, those already there as staff of the local branches of the central government departments that have been transferred to the DAs have refused allegiance to the DAs, preferring to remain the staff of the central government.

The position is gaining ground that the DAs should establish their own personnel system so that they can recruit, appoint, direct and control their staff in the tasks of human development. Independent civil services for the DAs will ensure loyalty and devoted service to the DAs.

The role of staffing in evolving and implementing human development programmes is so crucial that the building of a competent district bureaucracy requires the greatest attention.

3 5 Measures to Ensure Financial Accountability

- 1 The Finance and Administration Sub-Committee of the DA meets regularly to audit the accounts of the Assembly. The Committee's Report on the Trial Balance of the DA is issued every two months to Assembly members for their study. This is one way of ensuring accountability because the trial balance shows the income and expenditure of the DA. If there are any expenditure items they do not understand, Assembly members can also ask for explanation. No officer of the DA can incur any expenditure outside the budget without prior approval or subsequent ratification. In between sessions of the Assembly, the DCE has the right to approve withdrawal of money but he has to make sure he seeks ratification of such withdrawals at subsequent Executive Committee meetings.

- 2 This brings us to the issue of 'Authority Limits'. In some Districts, authority limits have been set by the Assembly members for the spending officers. Such authority limits cannot be exceeded by the spending officers in such districts. Consequently, approval has to be sought from the Executive Committee in respect of any expenditure above such authority limit. This is no doubt an important regulatory mechanism to protect the financial resources of the DAS. However the worst such an authority limit can do will be to deliberately frustrate efficiency and effectiveness in the web of its red-tapeism.

- 3 Another measure of control is the internal and external auditors' report about the accounts of the DAs. The main objective of internal auditing is to assist management in the effective discharge of their responsibilities by reviewing management policies, seeing to the compliance of rules and regulations and other management policies. In the Ghana Civil Service, the Auditor-General is the auditor and therefore external auditors periodically audit the accounts of the DAs and issue reports which sometimes advise the District Administration on certain lapses. The DAO/District Coordinating Director is then expected to report to the Auditor-General/Regional Auditor about the measures so far taken to remedy the lapses detected within the period probed.

- 4 Revenue Collectors - The receipt books are kept in the office of the District Finance Officer. Before the revenue collector is given any new receipt books, he must be vetted by the Local Government Officer (Internal Auditor) and recommended to the effect that he has

accounted for the previous receipts issued to him The revenue collector pays in the revenue collected to the Bank Account of the DA and brings the pay in slip to the cashier who in turn will issue him with a receipt to the effect that he has submitted his pay in slip The internal auditor checks the cash book of the revenue collector against that of the cashier This is another way of minimizing fraud

- 5 Another way of checking fraudulent expenditure is that before any money is spent a payment voucher must be prepared which has to be vetted by the Assembly's internal auditor and signed by the DAO and the Finance Officer This is to check and ensure that the expenditure is rightful one and that it is based on the item approved in the budget

The Technical Infrastructure Sub-Committee also monitors Assembly projects to ensure that money allocated for particular projects are being used or serving the intended purpose The Executive Committee of the Assembly which oversees day-to-day activities of the DA can also query the work of the Assembly staff It is the Executive Committee which sees to the implementation of Assembly decisions The performance of the Executive Committee is assessed by how well it is able to implement the decisions of the Assembly as well as other assignments given by the DA The DA has the power to dissolve the Executive Committee if it is found wanting and appoint new one

- 6 The communities also control the DA through the Assembly members who inform them of the programmes and other decisions of the DA The communities' views or reaction are reported back to the Assembly Local pressure groups and the Traditional Council of the District can also raise query concerning the financial administration of the DA Accounts of Unit Committees are audited at the end of every year

- 7 Concerning decentralized departments/agencies, the Accountant-General's Department in Accra issues Financial Encumbrance This is a statement indicating how much a department can spend in a quarter The District Treasury is given a quarterly drawing limit Copies of the drawing limit are also sent to the Banks so that when a department issues a cheque more than its drawing limit, the Bank concerned will not honour the cheque This method is intended to check fraud

On Wednesday 22nd December, 1993, Parliament passed the Serious Fraud Office Bill which establishes an agency of Government to investigate, monitor and prosecute offences involving serious financial or economic loss to the state. The Bill is the longest to be processed and debated by Parliament. During the four-day debate, 54 members spoke on the bill, the largest number to have contributed to any bill.

It is significant to note that despite all these measures and the emphasis of the erstwhile PNDC regime on accountability and probity¹, the latest Auditor-General's Report on the 10 years of PNDC rule (1981-1991) has exposed massive fraud during this period. It shows a catalogue of unprecedented incompetence, misappropriation of public funds, corruption, gross mismanagement and complete disregard to and utter contempt for government financial regulations².

3 6 Brief Description of Local Participatory Structures

Since a district has many small towns and villages, Town/Area/Urban Councils and Unit Committees have been formed. It is at these levels that members of the communities play crucial developmental roles in social mobilization. Chiefs and elders (Traditional Authority), Assembly and Unit Committee members and local associations play conscientizing roles in social mobilization by creating an enabling environment for the achievement of community participation and involvement objectives.

(1) The Chief

Chieftaincy is a traditional political institution which also plays a major role in the development of our rural communities. The chief is the traditional head of the community. His presence fosters unity in the community and his views on community affairs are respected and taken seriously.

As the first citizen of the community he is actually involved in the administration of the community and no decision on development projects can be taken by the Unit Committee, the Assembly member and other local associations without his knowledge. When decisions on communal labour have been taken, it is the chief alone who can authorize the town-crier to inform the community. It is through the inspiration of the chiefs that some unit committees have performed well.

The Chief and his elders provide moral support to members of the Unit Committees and other sub-committees of the community. Some chiefs stand solidly behind Unit Committee

members in imposing fines on sanitary offenders and communal labour defaulters Besides, some chiefs support the Unit Committee members in reprimanding those who fail to pay their special development levies promptly

To promote development, some chiefs have installed prominent citizens of the communities who have contributed immensely to development projects as "Nkosuhene"- chief in charge of development This is an honour which has further stimulated the recipients to mobilize their respective communities to undertake more development projects

(11) The Unit Committee

The Unit Committee is composed of elected members of the community and one of whom is made a chairman It is the responsibility of the Unit Committee to see to the development of the community The Unit Committee is not only in charge of law and order in the community but also mobilizes the people in the community to undertake self-help development projects Almost all development projects are initiated by the Unit Committee and subsequently presented to the entire community for final approval

The Unit Committee can also make proposals to the District Assembly for the levying and collection of special rates/taxes for special projects The Unit Committee usually liaises with non-resident citizens on issues pertaining to development and welfare of the community

(111) The Assembly Member

The Assembly member is a prominent figure in the community Where an Assembly member is in frequent contact with his constituents, he commands respect and has the confidence of the people because they elected him to represent them at the District Assembly His major role is initiating and mobilizing people to undertake development projects In fact the 1988 Local Government Law specifies that an Assembly member during his tenure of office should lead his community to undertake communal labour and development projects He should also visit his constituency regularly so that he would be familiar with their problems and needs The Assembly member for Gomoa Oquaakrom, on our visit, has not been seen since the last three years

The Assembly member is also the middleman or the link between the government, the DA and the electorate AS the mouthpiece of the people, he informs the electors by holding meetings of the activities and programmes of the Assembly and to explain the reasons behind such programmes He also sends feedback of the people's reaction to policies/programmes to the Assembly

The Assembly member receives complaints and suggestions from his electors and investigates such matters and does what is possible in each case. Finally, it is evident from the field trip that the performance of the Assembly member depends on his personality and his influence in the local political arena.

(iv) Other Local Associations

The Asafo Company which is composed of both young and old people plays significant role not only in decisions about community development but also in communal labour. The Asafo Company was the community army during the pre-colonial period. This was found in all the communities the research team visited in Gomoa and Agona Districts. However, in the post colonial era, the role of the Asafo Company has been re-oriented towards community development. The Youth Associations comprising both the local and non-resident members/citizens also exert strong influence over community development decisions. This is because of their huge financial contribution towards development projects. In fact, under constitutional rule the combined efforts of the youth associations, the chiefs and traditional council and the parliamentarians in the Agona District have pressurized the Government to remove the Acting District Chief Executive for Agona District.

There is also the Association of Concerned Citizens of Nankese in the Suhum-Kraboia-Coaltar District formed recently not only to promote development but also to protest against violations of human rights. The 'Wunsum' group is also found at Lower Bobikuma which mobilizes the community for development projects. Finally, the supporters of the various political parties in the communities also serve as watchdog on the activities of the Unit Committees, the DAs and Assembly members.

3 7 The Role of the Unit Committees-Community Ability to Make Itself Heard for District Services

People in the communities led by their Unit Committees and Assembly members are actively involved in development activities. The communities we visited, have initiated and completed a number of projects to improve their welfare. These include electrification, pit latrines, Kumasi Ventilated Improved Pit-latrines (KVIP), Day Care Centres, rehabilitation of primary school buildings, J S S classrooms and Workshops, rehabilitation of streets, markets and post office buildings. However, several projects also remain uncompleted due to financial difficulties.

Self-help spirit is very much understood in the rural communities the research team visited. Community projects are financed through special rates contributed by resident citizens and non-resident citizens of the communities working in the cities, from money obtained from fund raising harvests and from community farms and donors (NGOs) such as World Vision International, PAMSCAD, Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA)

It should be noted that not involving the communities in the planning of projects that affect their welfare is a very important cause of their apathetic attitude towards development programmes. Projects which are usually planned and imposed on the communities may not necessarily be relevant to their needs. An important factor in ensuring community participation is thought to be the involvement of the communities from the very onset of the programme. The study has revealed that there is active involvement of the communities we visited in decisions concerning the planning and implementation of development projects and that no project can be imposed on the communities without their consent.

Any development project initiated by the Unit Committee and the Assembly members should first be discussed with the chief and the elders before it is presented to the entire members of the community at a special meeting summoned to debate and arrive at consensual decision. It is after this community approval that decision about how much levy to be imposed is taken and an implementation committee set up. This is the general pattern of community decision-making found in all the 28 communities the research team visited.

In the case of Afransi in the Gomoa District, the decision making process is broad based and that the traditional council is brought directly into the mainstream of community development decisions. There is the Afransiman Council composed of chief and elders, Unit Committee and Assembly members, representatives of the Asafo Company and elders of the various clans. At Aboaso in the Kwabre District, there is an advisory board composed of experienced opinion leaders who must first be informed about any project initiated by the Town Committee before the chief and elders and finally the community members are informed. The Advisory Board does not only advise the Town Committee on development issues but also audit their accounts and monitor the on-going projects. It is significant to note that Town/Unit Committee members render account of their stewardship at a general meeting of the community every year and that committee members who embezzle community funds are handed over to the police for court action.

Community leaders mentioned that once they have been involved in the planning and implementation of programmes they

would have no problems in monitoring to ensure that the actual programmes are being implemented. According to them, community participation has helped to reduce apathy considerably and people now feel free to pay development levies. However, project implementation becomes a problem where there is inadequate involvement of the communities at the planning stage.

Besides the issue of community participation, another important finding of the study is that several communities have misplaced their priorities. They face acute water and sanitation problems, yet they have spent huge sums on electrification projects. For example, the people of Gomoa Oguakrom, Afransi, Abaasa, Mankrong Junction, Nankese, Dawuramong, Amanase, Ntonso, Kasaam, Aboaso, Mampong etc have spent huge sums on electrification projects but have no decent public toilets and good drinking water. It seems community self-help development projects, although well intentioned for rural development, are in general being guided by a laissez-faire policy in most communities in the districts and perhaps in other parts of the country. This will require some scrutiny.

It is also important to mention that under the District Assembly system, the ability of the community to make itself heard for district services depends on the personality and leadership qualities of the Assembly member representing the area. It may also depend on the quality of the Unit Committee members, the availability of prominent local residents and their influence in the local political system. For example, concerning the rehabilitation of the markets at Aboaso and Ntonso by the Kwabre DA, the Assembly members for these two towns played significant roles in convincing the DA to allocate money for the rehabilitation exercise. They threatened that due to the financial viability of the markets if the DA refused to rehabilitate them, the two towns would take over the collection of market tolls from the DA. This was to afford the communities the opportunity to generate enough revenue to renovate the markets.

3 8 Changes That Are Taking Or Have Taken Place AS a Result of Constitutional Rule Since 7th January 1993

This section discusses the changes that are taking place or have taken place as a result of the transition from military rule to constitutional rule. These are based on interviews and discussions held with dignitaries at the national level and also with opinion leaders and Assembly members in the communities the research team visited.

- 1 The first major noticeable change is the freedom of speech and association. It may be recalled that the 11

year PNDC rule was characterized by what became known as the "culture of silence" The phrase the "culture of silence" was understood to mean that people and other pressure groups and organisations were not participating in or contributing their views to, national debate on important social and political issues The main factors responsible for this "culture of silence" were general intimidation of the people-fear of arrest, physical abuse and insult, media partisanship and incessant denunciation of the actions of people who have been outspoken on national issues and above all the Government's heavy censorship of the press ⁴

The Catholic Weekly Standard and the Free Press both private media, which were critical of government policies and activities especially the rampant violations of human rights, were regarded as dissenting papers and closed down The sycophancy of the state-owned newspapers damaged the image of the government and created a serious credibility problem A large section of the Ghanaian public had to rely on foreign media for the "truth" of events happening in their own country ⁵

The fundamental human rights of every person has been guaranteed by the Fourth Republican Constitution People now feel free to discuss and debate national issues and even challenge government views/policies without any fear of molestation A commission on Human Rights with an Administrator has been established to protect violations of people's fundamental human rights In July 1993, the Supreme Court of Ghana ruled that political parties and other interest groups/associations could now hold rallies and meetings without police permit This was the first major victory for the New Patriotic Party which took the National Democratic Congress Government to Court on that issue This ruling superseded the previous arrangement whereby police permit was required and which was manipulated by the PNDC Government to deny its opponents the opportunity to hold rallies/meetings Democracy thrives in an atmosphere of tolerance and free exchange of ideas, this assertion was forgotten under military rule Besides, the private media has been very vociferous and critical of the activities of the government-serving as a watchdog in the absence of opposition in parliament

Interestingly, this time some state media do publish dissenting views or criticisms coming from individuals or pressure groups against the ruling government Examples are the debate over the Serious Fraud Office Bill and the privatization of the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation

This is a new healthy and positive development because in the past only government versions of issues of national interest were published leaving the 'other side of the story' unpublished

2 The phasing out of the CDRs and other revolutionary organs of the erstwhile PNDC Government such as the Civil Defence Organisation (CDO) - a paramilitary organisation - has created an enabling environment which has not only broadened the scope of local participation but has also promoted local development. Molestation of innocent people for their dissenting political views created fear among many rural dwellers. Molestation of people now appears to have been reduced and as a result people who hitherto were apathetic toward community affairs are actively engaged in community development affairs. For example, at Ayekokoso in the Suhum-Kraboia-Coaltar District, the research team were told that due to the conflict between cadres of the local CDR and some members of the community, only few people attended communal labour. However, since the inauguration of the Fourth Republic, communal labour has resumed with all the seriousness it deserves. Moreover the proliferation of various political parties with new ideas and programmes with local branches has helped to broaden the horizon and awareness of most rural dwellers to national issues. This has generated lively discussions and debates about community affairs. Now it is not easy for the Government to impose programmes on the communities without their involvement.

There is also peace and discipline among the youth in most communities. Now the youth discuss development project/issues and problems with the elders.

The pattern of interaction between the youth and elders has changed. The traditional domineering character of the elders over decision over community development affairs has come to an end. More importantly, age is no longer a barrier to participation in community decision-making. Besides, the rancorous antagonism that existed between the CDRs and some traditional rulers and local dignitaries has reduced considerably. In fact most chiefs and opinion leaders in the communities the research team visited mentioned this as one of the noticeable changes that has happened due to constitutional rule. The phasing out of the CDRs has brought some relief to some chiefs and local dignitaries because the former took the law into their hands and indulged in several acts which disturbed the peace in most rural communities. More importantly, the CDR Complaints and Arbitration Committee was so powerful in

the rural areas that it virtually usurped the traditional arbitration role of the chiefs and their traditional councils Under constitutional rule, community members now send civil cases to traditional councils for arbitration There is also greater cooperation between chiefs and elders and community members in order to promote development

3 The Police are also free to perform their traditional function of maintenance of law and order This is because the CDRs and CDO performed police functions which brought them into open confrontation with the police especially in the rural areas Under constitutional rule, an important change is that complaints especially criminal cases which used to be handled by the local CDRs are now reported to the police for action

4 Another significant change is the effort by some chiefs and local politicians especially in the Ashanti Region - a predominantly opposition area - to reconcile many citizens irrespective of their political affiliation to support the ruling government in the interest of national development

5 The scope of participation of the communities in the management of education has been broadened Since the new education programme is community based, the government has decided to involve the communities in the appointment of headteachers at the basic education level.

6 At Kasaam in the Kwabre District of Ashanti Region and the hometown of the DCE for the District, my investigation revealed that previously those local residents who had not paid their special development levies were not allowed to contribute to discussions about the affairs of the community However, under constitutional rule people protested vehemently during the 1993 easter meeting of the town and this practice has been stopped

This time accountability is vigorously enforced at the local level Community members insist that DA auditors audit the accounts of Unit Committees members at the end of their tenure of office Besides, chiefs can no longer handpick their favourites to serve as Unit Committee members Under constitutional rule, community members insist on electing their own Unit Committee members who will be accountable to them

7 Another significant change is the influence of some Traditional Councils and pressure groups/party

dignitaries over the appointment of District Chief Executives (DCEs) Under the PNDC regime, it was difficult for opinion leaders and traditional authorities to oppose the appointment of District Secretaries Since the transition to constitutional rule, local pressure groups with the collaboration of their national counterparts have opposed appointments of certain political appointees For example, opinion leaders, Agona Youth Association and the Agona Traditional Council have jointly opposed the appointment of Miss Beatrice Hammond as the new Acting District Chief Executive for Agona District This local pressure, it is believed, has compelled her with the advice of the Government to resign Similar criticisms have been made to the Government by the Youth Associations and the Traditional Councils of Begoro and Wenchi against the DCEs for Fanteakwa and Wenchi districts respectively The key issue to note here is that under the PNDC regime, as already pointed out, such open criticism against government political appointees would not be tolerated or listened to This is happening because the Fourth Republican Constitution makes the DCE accountable not only to the head of state but also the DA The DCE can be appointed and removed from office with two-thirds approval from the DA members

- 1 For a comprehensive discussion of the problems facing the DAs, see Asibuo, S K (1993) Problems and Prospects of the Implementation of the New Local Government System Under PNDC Law 207, School of Administration, University of Ghana, Legon
- 2 See, Asibuo, S K (1991) "The Revolutionary Administration of Justice and Public Accountability in Ghana" Phillipine Journal of Public Administration, Vol 35, No 3, pp 253-261
- 3 Free Press, December 24, 1993-January 6, 1994
- 4 See, A Adu-Boahen, "Ghana 'Non-Political' Politics", West Africa, 28th March, 1988
- 5 See West Africa 10 August, 1987 "The Culture of Silence", pp 1528-1530, and West Africa, 31 August, 1987, pp 1684-1685

4 1 Findings

1 The District Assemblies (DAs) have been able to inculcate the spirit of self-help and self-reliance in their communities. This is because the DAs have maintained closer contacts with the communities thereby raising the people's political awareness and communal spirit. This has again heightened the people's involvement in local projects, majority of which are locally initiated. The DA concept has provided a forum for the community members to meet, discuss and identify their felt needs and draw action plans. Gradually, dependency mentality is being eradicated. In all the communities there was a realization that it is better to "own" projects by initiating them and by taking part in the building of projects.

The DA concept has given birth to another unique phenomenon. This is the high sense of patriotism that has been demonstrated by some Assembly members especially those of the new DAs visited. Some Assembly members have chosen to forgo their allowances to help in the development programmes of their districts.

2 The study has revealed that there is a complete involvement of community members in decisions concerning community projects and that no decision on projects can be imposed on the communities without their consent. Chiefs and their elders, Assembly and Unit Committee members and local associations play conscientizing roles in social mobilization by creating an enabling environment for the achievement of community participation and involvement objectives. Community projects have proceeded more rapidly and smoothly because they attracted the interest and active participation of the local people.

Community projects are financed through voluntary contributions from resident citizens and non-resident citizens of the communities working in the cities, from money obtained through fund raising harvests and from NGOs.

3 The DAs face financial problems which have prevented them from providing sufficient services to the communities. The inability of the DAs to finance development investment places them at great risk of losing their political credibility. In fact, unless rural dwellers begin to perceive that local government institutions are able to meaningfully respond to some of

their demands, local interest and support for the decentralized political process will wane. The financial situation of the decentralized departments has so deteriorated that at times there is no money to travel. Inadequate transport allowances for staff have also affected their service delivery. Civil servants in the districts also face serious office and residential accommodation problems.

4 The DAs and the decentralized departments also face personnel problems. The DAs lack technical personnel, especially artisans to assist the various communities in the execution of their projects through communal labour. The frequent transfer of administrative personnel has also made for difficulties, affecting continuity and therefore administrative efficiency. Besides, there is the reluctance on the part of many civil servants to accept transfers to the rural areas, even though the shortage of competent staff makes their services greatly needed.

5 The Communities are also facing a major problem - the absence of infrastructural facilities - inadequate health facilities, no electricity, lack of good drinking water, poor communication networks, poor public toilet facilities. Sanitation is a major problem in most communities we visited.

6 One of the important findings of the study is that several communities have misplaced their priorities. Although many of community projects are successfully completed thus justifying the efforts and the money expended on them, quite a number of them have been unplanned, are too grandiose to be completed, and many have been abandoned mid-way.

7 The Government's enthusiasm and political will for the 1988 local government reform seem to be flagging. This be because a number of issues stipulated in Law 207 which became operational in 1988 have till now (1994) not been implemented. For example, the integration of the decentralized departments of central ministries with the DAs has not taken place. Heads of decentralized departments in the district still owe allegiance and report to their regional bosses and headquarters in Accra. Besides, not all 22 decentralized departments stipulated in Law 207 have been established in all the districts we visited. More importantly, financial decentralization and the financial autonomy of the DAs, which represent a key measure of true independence, has yet to be resolved. Decentralization will remain a dream unless measures are worked out to promote financial

8 The Government has introduced certain measures to motivate civil servants. Civil servants now enjoy free medical care though it takes longer period to get a refund of medical bills. Training programmes which were neglected have been revived. There are also efforts to promote civil servants. For example, some senior civil servants have been interviewed recently by the Public Service Commission and will be considered for promotion.

9 The transition to constitutional rule has brought about many changes in the Ghanaian society. The most noticeable one is the freedom of speech and association. People now feel free to discuss issues of national and local interests without any fear of molestation. Many private newspapers have emerged and serve as a watchdog on the activities of both the government, individuals and organisations. Democracy thrives in an atmosphere of tolerance and free exchange of ideas.

10 Under constitutional rule, stringent measures have been taken to ensure accountability. The most important one is the Serious Fraud Office Bill. Besides the DCE is not only accountable to the President but also to the electorate.

11 A new development is the centre-local linkage. Under constitutional rule, the locality is linked to the centre through a number of key political functionaries and intermediaries. The party hierarchies are made up of a number of patrons and clients. The political patrons at the centre such as ministers, parliamentarians, party officials are linked to the locality through local chairmen of the ruling party - the National Democratic Congress and other key local patrons. In the process a lot of lobbying for appointment have been going on. For example some Acting District Chief Executives are lobbying through local party patrons who have connection with top party hierarchy in Accra to ensure that their appointments will be maintained/confirmed. This patronage has generated various clientelist resources for loyal party supporters and their communities.

4.2 Recommendations

1 Communities should set their priorities as far as projects are concerned and endeavour to complete one project before tackling another. This will help end the habit of projects being abandoned at various stages for lack of funds.

- 2 Communities should be urged to sustain their self-help spirit, to ensure approved living conditions. There is also the need for a well organized village/unit committee members

- 3 Leadership is very crucial to help sustain democracy and governance at both the national and community levels. Communities need effective leaders who can mobilize them for development. Leadership training courses should be organized for community leaders to help improve their organizational and communication skills

- 4 The credibility of the DAs will depend on their ability to provide services. Adequate funding for DAs is important to help sustain decentralization and local governance. Central Government should take over the full payment of salaries/wages of staff of the DAs. This will enable them to concentrate their resources more on development projects. There is also the urgent need to consider giving some allowances as incentives for District Assembly members. The Government has recently announced the payment of ₦200,000 covering the period 1988-92 as allowances to every Assembly member

- 5 Central Government must ensure that the financial decentralization which is to pave the way for composite budget is implemented. This will ensure that intersectoral collaboration at the district level become financially viable and effective

- 6 Infrastructural facilities such as schools, hospitals, houses, good drinking water, electricity must be provided in order to attract civil servants to the rural areas

- 7 An atmosphere of tolerance to encourage sharing of ideas is necessary. Democracy thrives in an atmosphere of tolerance and free exchange of ideas

- 8 Continued public education is needed in the provision of the right information for consultation and for monitoring community activities whenever possible and for strengthening those initiatives. There is also the need for political authorities to be really interested in community mobilization for social and economic development

Finally, the DAS should establish their own personnel system so that they can recruit, appoint, direct and control their staff in the tasks of human development. Independent civil services for the DAS will no doubt ensure loyalty and devoted service to the District Assemblies (DAs).

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