



GHANA CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

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Highlights from Findings of CDD-Ghana's Local Government Survey (May 23 – June 3, 2021)

Background

In early 2019, the President, Nana Akufo-Addo, introduced two bills seeking to achieve two major local government reforms in his bid to fulfil one of the 2016 campaign promises – amendment of Article 243[1] of the Constitution, which gives the President the power to appoint all Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) to make these positions elective; and to hold a referendum to seek citizens support to amend Article 55[3] of the Constitution (an entrenched provision), which bans political parties from participating in local level elections and make such elections partisan. However, in December of 2019, the referendum was suspended due to ‘a lack’ of broad national consensus and the then Attorney General and Minister for Justice withdrew the Constitution Amendment Bills 2018 (meant to amend Articles 55[3] and 243[1], respectively) from parliament.

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), conducted a local government survey to ascertain whether there still exists that high level of support for election of MMDCEs, assembly representatives (including the one-third appointees), and unit committee members; determine the election format (i.e. partisan, non-partisan, or any other) that appeals most to Ghanaians; and to find out citizens’ knowledge and evaluations of the local government system.

Methodology

Every adult citizen had an equal chance of being selected for the survey. A nationally representative sample of 2,400 adult citizens were randomly selected. The sample is distributed across regions and urban-rural areas in proportion to their share in the national adult population. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in the language of the respondents’ choice using a standard English questionnaire which was translated into Twi, Ewe, Ga, Dagbani and Dagaare. A sample size of 2,400 cases yields a margin of error of +/-2 percent at a 95% confidence level. Fieldwork (or data collection) was

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conducted from May 23 to June 3, 2021.

Highlights of the Findings

Local government functions, citizens' perceptions and participation

- Majority of Ghanaians correctly ascribe some service delivery and local revenue mobilization functions to MMDAs. However, they are split on whose responsibility it is to manage public health and keeping communities clean.
- There seems to be a lack of connection between Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) and the community members. Large majorities of respondents say their MMDAs never held meetings with them to discuss salient issues such as local revenue mobilization, expenditures, service delivery, and development issues. However, among the few respondents who had engagement with their MMDAs, majority found the interactions to be “very or somewhat useful”, giving an indication of strong opportunity for MMDAs-citizens interface.
- Generally, there is little or no engagement between Ghanaians and their formal and informal leaders, although engagement with traditional leaders, unit committee members and local government representatives is relatively better. Similarly, Ghanaians think that it is “very easy or easy” to get assembly men or women (61%), unit committee members (57%) and traditional rulers or opinion leaders (52%) to listen to ordinary citizens as compared to district assembly and political party officials (29% each), government officials (15%) and MPs (12%).

Support for Election of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs)

- More than seven in 10 Ghanaians (76%) favour election of MMDCEs. Only 20% want them to be appointed by the President.
- While over two-thirds of the respondents (71%) say they prefer MMDCEs elected on non-partisan election format similar to that used in local government councillors' election, only 20% opted for a partisan election format.
- Reasons given for the preference for non-partisan election format for MMDCEs include, ensuring competent persons get elected (29%); promotion of inclusivity/forestalling “winner takes all” challenges (22%); prevention of partisan influences/conflicts (21%), and promotion of transparency and accountability (19%).
- Among those calling for partisan election of MMDCEs, majority believe the current format for local government election had been tainted by partisan influences and must be opened up to promote public interest in local elections (54%). Others think it will promote responsiveness and development (19%); ensure that competent persons get elected (11%); and promote transparency and enable citizens to exact accountability from political parties (10%).

Support for Election of all Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly (MMDA) Representatives

- Just half (50%) of all Ghanaian adults want the 1992 Constitution amended to empower citizens to elect all local government representatives, including the one-third appointed by the president. However, a sizeable minority (43%) want the status quo maintained.
- Close to seven in every 10 Ghanaians prefer non-partisan election format for the selection of local government representatives (including the one-third appointees) to ensure citizens' participation and selection of competent person (13%); reduce political interference (11%); and bring solutions to community problems (11%).
- Ghanaians are nearly equally divided in their opinions on whether the current system of electing assembly members is really non-partisan. While almost half (48%) say the current system of electing assembly men/women to MMDAs is non-partisan, about a similar proportion (43%) say the current system is partisan.

Marginalized groups and traditional leaders' involvement in local governance

- There seems to be a strong approval for the full participation of marginalized groups – particularly women (89%), youth (89%), and persons with disabilities (77%) – in local governance processes.
- Most Ghanaians want reservation of a number of seats in MMDAs for persons with the required knowledge and skills (91%); persons from marginalized groups – women (87%), youth (85%); and persons with disabilities, 78%).
- Majority (71%) of Ghanaians think traditional leaders should play a role in the administration of MMDAs. An appreciable majority (65%) of respondents “strongly agree” or “agree” that traditional leaders have a better appreciation of the local political issues than ordinary people and should therefore have greater influence in MMDAs' administration.

Evaluations of Local Government Performance

- In general, Ghanaians negatively rated MMDAs performance in service delivery and revenue mobilization over the past five (5) years.
- The majority of Ghanaians believe MMDAs have for the past five (5) years performed “very or fairly badly” in a number functions such as ensuring transparency and openness in the affairs of the Assembly (75%), responding to development challenges of communities of time (75%) and soliciting inputs from community members into annual district development plans (78%).
- Overwhelming majority of Ghanaians consider MMDAs as lacking financial accountability and efficiency in the usage of the district assembly common fund (DACF) and internally generated revenue (IGR). A huge majority of citizens say they never had explanations from their MMDAs on how DACF was spent (88%), how it was used to address key issues in the district (87%), how local taxes, rates, fees and fines were spent (88%) nor used to tackle development needs of the district (87%).

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About CDD-Ghana

With a mission to promote and deepen democratic consolidation, good governance, and inclusive growth and development, the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) works to support and promote a free, peaceful, and a well-governed democracy in Ghana and in other parts of Africa. The Center has over two decades of experience, expansive reach, and a robust network of partners at the national, continental and global levels. CDD-Ghana has cultivated an enduring reputation as a leader in the field of democracy and governance, which enables the adoption and implementation of targeted strategies aimed at addressing the fundamental issues hindering citizens from enjoying the full benefits democracy and good governance has to offer.

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