



**Policy Brief**  
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# Participatory Local Governance Practices in the Upper West Region:

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The Case of Wa Municipal, Lawra,  
Sissala East, Wa East and Wa West Districts





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## 1.0 Introduction

Functional local governance thrives in an environment of an informed citizenry and empowered media, popular participation in decision making, a responsive state with open, transparent and inclusive governing processes. Improving interaction between citizens and government requires simultaneous work on state responsiveness and effectiveness, and citizen empowerment. As such, the state alone cannot provide remedies for governance deficits – citizens’ action is required.

Governance has evolved. The new governance paradigm is about process, politics and partnership. Hitherto, government officials took decisions based primarily on technical knowledge and vested interests. Today’s governance structures and demands compel government agencies to engage in consultations, implement participatory practices, stimulate popular participation and develop partnerships with civil society organizations. Therefore, governance is no longer for only specialists and government officials. Government officials have to open up for a more transparent and responsive decision making process. Without transparency, citizen participation is less effective, and without accountability, those in positions of authority can ignore the will of the people.

This Policy Brief forms part of activities under the Media Foundation for West Africa’s (MFWA) local governance project titled: Enhancing Public Participation and Demand for Accountability in Local Governance and Promoting Decent Language Campaigning for Peaceful Elections, with funding support from OSIWA. The Policy Brief highlights the prevailing

local governance practices in the Wa Municipality, Lawra, Sissala East, Wa East and Wa West Districts of the Upper West Region of Ghana. It is divided into the following sections:

- The background, focusing on the legislative backing, location, size, the governance structures and economic activities prevailing in each of the 4 districts and municipality;
- The cross-cutting governance practices with emphasis on the nature and level of citizens' participation, and the relationship between key governance actors;
- Challenges of local governance in relation to effective participation of citizens across the five targeted Municipal and District Assemblies (MDAs);
- Policy measures and recommendations for improving local governance, emphasizing the role of government, civil society and the media;
- Summary of activities being carried out by the MFWA with the view to improving participatory local governance in the five MDAs.

The Policy Brief then concludes with a call on citizens, government, civil society and the media in the MDAs to work in tandem to make participatory local governance possible.

## 2.0 Knowing the four Districts and Municipality

### 2.1 The Lawra District

#### 2.1.1 *Background, location and size*

The Lawra District derives its legal existence from Legislative Instrument (L.I) 1434 of 1988 (PNDCL 207, Act 469).

The district lies in the north-western corner of the Upper West Region in Ghana. It is bounded to the north by Nandom District, Lambussie District to the east, to the south-west and west by the Republic of Burkina Faso.

The 2010 Population and Housing Census pegged the population of the district at 54,889 representing 7.8 percent of the population of the Upper West Region. The district is largely rural with about 88.2 percent of the residents living in rural localities. The district has a total area of 527.37 square kilometers representing 2.8 percent of the region's total land area giving it a population density of 104.1 per square kilometer.

#### 2.1.2 *Governance structures*

The Lawra District Assembly is the highest political and administrative body in the district. It is the local government authority responsible for the overall development of the district through the formulation and implementation of development plans, programmes and projects. The district's administrative system comprises the District Assembly (made up of 44 comprising 29 elected and 13 appointed members, the District Chief Executive and the Member of Parliament), Secretariat, Departments of the District Assembly, four sub-districts (namely Lawra Town Council, Babile, Zambo and

Eremon Area Councils) and the Unit Committees. Traditional administration in the Lawra District is under the Lawra Traditional Council. The Lawra Naa is the only paramount chief in the district and supported by 8 divisional chiefs, 16 sub-chiefs and 32 herdsmen.

### **2.1.3 Economic activities**

Agriculture drives the economy of the Lawra District employing about 78 percent of the workforce. More than 80 percent of agricultural activities are at the subsistence level, producing mainly maize, millet, groundnuts, soya bean and cowpea. Animal production is also undertaken to supplement incomes from crop farming. Small scale industrial activities such as shea butter extraction, pito brewing, smock making, basket weaving etc are also undertaken in the district.

## **2.2 The Sissala East District**

### **2.2.1 Background, location and size**

The Sissala East District was carved out of the then Sissala District in 2004 by Legislative Instrument (L.I) 1766 with Tumu as the capital.

The district is located in the north-eastern part of the Upper West Region of Ghana. It shares boundary on the north with Burkina Faso, on the east with Kassena Nankana West and Builsa Districts, West Mamprusi District to the south-east, Wa East and Daffiama-Bussie-Issa districts to the South-west and Sissala West District to the West.

According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, the Sissala East District has a population of 56,528 representing 8.1 percent of the region's population. The district is essentially

rural with more than 80% of the population living in rural areas. The total land size of the district is 5,092.8 square kilometers representing 26.7 percent of the total landmass of the region.

### **2.2.2 Governance structures**

The administrative structure of the Sissala East District comprises the District Assembly and its secretariat, the departments of the assembly, the Tumu Town Council, Bujan, Wellembelle, Sakai and Nabulo Area Councils and twenty-one Unit Committees. The Assembly is made of 32 Assembly Members and it is the highest decision making body and responsible for the overall development of the district.

Traditional authority is vested in two paramountcies, viz Tumu and Wellembelle. The two paramountcies jointly form the Sissala East Traditional Council. There is a close collaboration between the traditional and formal authorities in terms of policy making, conflict resolution and the implementation of development projects and programmes.

### **2.2.3 Economic activities**

The Sissala East District has an agrarian economy employing up to 69% of the work force. Service and commerce constitutes about 15% while the industrial sector employs about 16%. Agriculture is practiced at the subsistence level with only a few engaged in commercial cotton farming. Major crops cultivated are cereals such as maize, millet, sorghum and rice. Groundnuts, yam and cowpea are also widely cultivated. Small-scale cottage industries such as shea butter, oil and fat extractive industries, brewing of local drinks, metal work including welding and fabrication dominate the industrial sector of the district

## 2.3 The Wa East District

### 2.3.1 Background, location and size

The Wa East District was carved out of the former Wa District by L.I 1746 in July 2004. The district is located in the south eastern part of the Upper West Region with Finsi as the District Capital. The capital is about 115 kilometers away from Wa, the regional capital. The district shares boundary with Sissala East to the north, West Mamprusi to the east, West Gonja to the south east, Daffiama-Bussie-Issa District to the north west, Wa Municipal to the west and Wa West District to the south west.

The population of the Wa East District is estimated at 72,074 representing 10.3% of the region's population according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census. Settlements in the district are completely rural.

The land area of the district is estimated at 4,297.1 square kilometers occupying 17.3% of the total landmass of the Upper West Region. The Wa East District is unarguably the most deprived district in the region and lacks basic social and economic infrastructure and services.

### 2.3.2 Governance structures

The Wa East District Assembly is the highest decision making body in the district. Finsi and Bulenga are the only two Area Councils in the district, and 25 Unit Committees/Electoral Areas. As such, there are 25 elected and 11 appointed Assembly Members. The District Assembly implements its policies and decisions through the District Assembly Secretariat which is made up of the permanent bureaucrats. This it does through the District Planning Coordinating Unit (DPCU) which is the

technical wing of the Assembly in charge of implementing, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects initiated by the General Assembly (Political Bureaucrats). The DPCU is made up of all the decentralized departments which meet quarterly to review activities and plans of the district.

The district has no paramountcy. However, it has divisional chiefs and sub-divisional chiefs who resolve conflicts and maintain law and order in their communities.

### **2.3.3 Economic activities**

The economy of the Wa East District has three major sectors comprising agriculture, industry and services. Agriculture engages 85 percent of the work force, industry 10 percent and the services sector 5% percent. About 96 percent of the farmers in the district are crop producers cultivating sorghum, yam, millet, maize, cowpea, groundnuts, rice, soya beans, cassava and vegetables. Post-harvest losses greatly affect crop production in the district and constitute a major and potential cause of food insecurity among farmers in the district. Factors associated with postharvest losses include limited knowledge on postharvest handling, poor harvesting methods, poor storage systems, and poor access to information on pest control methods and poor transportation.

## **2.4 The Wa Municipality**

### **2.4.1 Background, location and size**

The municipality was created in 2004 with Legislative Instrument (L.I) 1800. It shares administrative boundaries with Nadowli-Kaleo District to the north, Wa East District to the east and Wa West District to the west and south. The municipality has its capital as Wa, which is also the capital of the Upper West Region.

The population of the municipality, according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, stands at 107,214 representing 15.3 percent of the region's population. It is predominantly urban with about 66 percent of inhabitants living in the Wa Township.

The land area of the municipality is estimated at 579.86 square kilometers, which is just 6.4% of the landmass of the region.

### **2.4.2 Governance and social structure**

The municipality has five Zonal Councils (Wa, Busa, Kperisi, Kpongung and Boli), and 73 Unit Committees. The municipality is composed of 44 Assembly Members.

The 2010 Population and Housing Census revealed that 80.4 percent of the people in the Wa Municipality belong to the Mole-Dagbani group which comprises the Waalas who are the indigenous people, Dagaabas and the Sissalaa. Inter-marriages between the Waalas, Dagaabas and the Sissalaa has reduced language barriers to linguistically semantic variations particularly between the Waalas and Dagaabas. Peaceful co-existence is further enhanced by commerce as the municipality is the business hub of the region. The widespread adoption of Islam by the Waalas on one hand, and Christianity by the Dagaabas on the other hand remains the point of difference between the two groups. Other ethnic groups in the municipality include Frafra, Akan, Ewe, Ga, Dagomba, Grushi, Gonja and Moshi.

### **2.4.3 Economic activities**

The structure of the economy transitioned from one dominated by agriculture to a service economy over the past decade. The service sector employs about 51.3 percent of the

working population, agriculture 30.2 percent and industry 18.4 percent. The service sector is dominated by transport and commerce. In terms of agriculture, farmers in the municipality cultivate mainly maize, rice, cowpea, groundnut and millet on subsistence basis. The industrial sector is dominated by welding and fabrication, local drink making, pito brewing etc.

## 2.5 The Wa West District

### 2.5.1 Background, location and size

The Wa West District was carved out of the then Wa District in 2004 by Legislative Instrument (L.I 1751) under the Local Government Act 463, 1993 with Wechiau as the capital. The district is located in the western part of the Upper West Region. It shares borders to the north west by Nadowli-Kaleo District, to the east by Wa Municipal, to the south by Sawla-Tuna-Kalba and the west by Burkina Faso.

The total area of the District is approximately 1492.0 square kilometers, representing about 10 percent of the region's total land area. The population of Wa West, according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, is 81,348 representing 11.6 percent of the region's total population. The district is entirely rural with no single urban settlement.

### 2.5.2 Governance structures

The District Assembly is the highest political, administrative and planning authority in the District. The assembly has a membership of 35 composed of 27 elected and 8 government appointees. The Presiding Member, Member of Parliament and the District Chief Executive are all political heads in the District. The Presiding Member chairs the assembly sittings. There are five area councils which are Dorimon, Ga, Gurungu,

Vieri and Wechiau. There are also 140 Unit Committees.

Alongside the decentralized governance system is the traditional governance set up. Even though the two governance systems seek the development of the area, they are not able to team up towards achieving the common goal of development in the District. This may be traced to the subtle power dynamics and competition for control of resources between the two systems. The District has two paramountcies: Wechiau and Dorimon. There are also divisional and sub-divisional chiefs under the authority of the two paramountcies.

### 2.5.3 Economic activities

The major economic activities in the district include agriculture, rural commerce and industry, tourism and social services. Agriculture accounts for 86.0% of the district's economy. The predominant agriculture activity is farming. Most farmers undertake a combination of crops and animal production. The main crops grown are maize, millet, cowpea and groundnut. The District is blessed with a number of water bodies including the Black Volta, making it possible for inland fishing to be undertaken as an economic activity. The proceeds from the sale of fish supplement household income, though on a small scale.

## 3.0 Participatory Governance Practices in the MDAs

A study of the four districts and municipality shows that participatory governance processes take various forms and levels with a mix of truly participatory and pseudo participatory processes. Basically, the citizens, civil society and media participate in governance processes through

avenues offered by the decentralization framework especially during the preparation of District Medium Term Development Plan (DMTDP). Citizens get information about government programmes through the activities of the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and the Information Services Department. But these are information largely relating to national government events such as voter education, visits of high profile politicians etc. During planning and budgeting, activities such as community needs assessment, stakeholder consultations and public hearings are great opportunities for a truly participatory local governance system, but the inadequacy of funds makes it difficult for the District Assemblies to conduct these activities in a truly participatory manner. However, fee fixing meetings for revenue mobilization purposes is one principal activity that the citizens especially those with ratable properties get involved.

### 3.1 Levels and forms of involvement of Citizens, Sub-District Structures and Other Stakeholders in the Governance Process

The most common form of participation in which majority of citizens, Assembly Members, Area/Zonal Council members and Unit Committee members are involved is political decision making (voting), resource mobilization, project sustainability and disputes resolution. Their involvement in political decision making processes is attributable to the fact that the Constitution and electoral laws of Ghana make it a democratic right for people to vote in local level elections. As can be observed in many locations, although the office of the Assembly Member is constitutionally supposed to be non partisan, some Assembly Members are involved in

campaigning for the political parties they belong to, with some acting as party executives. This contravenes Act 72 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

As should be expected, the high involvement of citizens and sub-district structures in resource mobilization especially in fee fixing meetings is no surprise. Resources are considered the 'life-blood' for local governance and development. As such, when people are engaged in the processes, more resources are raised and enhanced standard of living can be achieved. In the light of that, the District Assemblies identify citizens with ratable properties and the sub-district structures as critical players and would do anything to have their buy-in in order to mobilize revenue for the running of the central administration.

The District Assemblies and the decentralized departments also recognize the indispensable role of the sub-district structures as far as project sustainability is concerned. As such, they are normally deeply involved during the handing over ceremonies and informed about the need for their communities to take ownership of such projects.

Another area of governance that witnesses the strong involvement of the sub-district structures is disputes resolution. The first point of call for most community level disputes is the Assembly Member and the Unit Committee. Besides, dispute that involve the intervention of the District Security Council (DISEC), the Assembly Members and Unit Committees are usually the community entry points for the DISEC.

Other stakeholders including NGOs and the media are mostly involved in stakeholder consultations and the unsystematically organized mid-year and annual review meetings in the District

Assemblies. Recognized civil society organizations get invited in these events. The media on their part are invited to give coverage.

However, other key governance processes such as project planning, project implementation, monitoring & evaluation and environment protection do not witness a strong involvement of the citizens, sub-district structures and other stakeholders. Although members of the sub-district structures are normally consulted during community needs assessment and public hearings during the preparation of Medium-Term and Annual Action Plans, there is a dearth of their participation in prioritizing and selecting the exact projects to implement in the wake of inadequate funds to execute the overall plan of the assembly. Furthermore, the bidding and contracting processes for projects are not opened to their participation and critique. Projects follow-up, monitoring and evaluation are carried out by the District Assembly Secretariat and decentralized agencies almost to the neglect of the sub-district structures and all other interest groups. It must be emphasized that the limited involvement of sub-district structures and some key interest groups in some relevant aspects of decision making is inimical to the full realization of political decentralization in Ghana which seeks to give citizens voice in making decisions that affect their lives

## 3.2 Relationship between Governance actors in the districts

### 3.2.1 Governance Actors

The key governance actors are the *tendaanas* (traditional land owners), chiefs, opinion leaders (sectional heads, Imams, Pastors,

Magazias), civil society organizations, Assembly Members, Area/Zonal Council members, Members of Parliament (MPs), the Municipal and District Assemblies (MDAs) with the Regional Coordination Council (RCC) providing oversight.

### **3.2.2 Interaction among the Governance Actors**

To build consensus and be able to identify and address the felt needs of people at the grassroots, effective interaction among key actors is essential. These actors interact through various platforms. An examination of the situation in the districts shows that community forums and festivals are the leading means of interaction or communication. This suggests that community fora and festivals present an opportunity for involving key decision makers at the local level. Political campaign is also a key mode of interaction. As should be expected, the canvassing for votes during electioneering times brings key power seekers and decision brokers together.

However, General Assembly meetings, launching or handing over of projects and visit to the Assembly continue to remain a preserve of only few especially among Assembly Members and chiefs. Even with the penetration of media including the availability of community radio stations in all but two of the focus MDAs, the media is still not a key mode of interaction among these actors except during electioneering periods.

### **3.2.3 Cordiality of Relationship among Key Governance Actors**

A genial relationship among key stakeholders in governance ensures respect for ideas which results in the acceptance and sustainability of decisions taken. Besides, cordiality of relationship is needed because actors cannot work without the support of each other. A cross-sectional field study of the level

of cordiality among selected key actors revealed that only 26 percent of Unit Committee Members, Assembly Members and MDA staff believe that there is fairly cordial relationship between the governance actors. As much as 36 percent of them are of the opinion that the relationship between the actors is not cordial. Only 19 percent think the relationship is cordial while another 19 percent is undecided. While MDA staff are convinced that they have a cordial relationship with the rest especially during the preparation of DMTDP, the others believe the activities of the MDA staff are exclusive. Whilst people are divided in opinion on the degree of cordiality, there is general consensus on the cost of non-cordial interaction. It has been identified that non-cordial relationships hinder the development of the districts.

An effort to adduce reasons for the non-cordial interaction pointed to differences in political party affiliations and the lack of orientation for the actors.

## 4.0 Factors Militating Against Participatory Governance in the Municipality/Districts

Although local governance has come to stay as a legislative requirement since its introduction in 1988, the practice of local governance has been and still fraught with a myriad of challenges. A study of the five target MDAs reveal several factors as bottlenecks to participatory local governance as follows:

### **Weak functionality of the Sub-District Structures**

Unit Committees and Area/Zonal/Town Councils are the bedrock of Ghana's local governance set up. They constitute

the intermediary between the community and the MMDAs and serve as the conduit for community participation in decision making. Although unarguably the most important pillar of Ghana's local governance set up, their performance in the scheme of things in the target MDAs can best be described as poor. Factors accounting for this are not far-fetched; the lack of understanding of their roles and lack of motivation have been identified as the key reasons for their poor performance.

### **Financial and logistical constraints**

The inadequacy of funds and logistics necessary for the functions of the District Assembly Secretariat and the Sub-District Structures ineffectively engaging grassroots in decision making is a major challenge to participatory governance. The District Assemblies and their Sub-District Structures are poorly resourced; the primary sources of revenue to them are the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) and Internally Generated Funds (IGF). Sadly, the DACF is unreliable and in most cases in hugely unpaid arrears. This makes it difficult for the Assemblies to contain their operational expenditure, as such; efforts to promote citizen participation are not prioritized.

### **Staffing gaps at the Sub-District Levels**

Although there is unanimity on the fact that a full complement of human, financial and capital resources are essential for a truly participatory local governance system, there are gross inadequacies not only in capital and financial resources but also in the personnel needed to make participatory local governance possible. The proposed three permanent staff (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) of the Area/Zonal/Councils are not in place in most of them. This has created a situation for the employment of casual staff who abandon the job after getting dissatisfied with the low and irregular commissions being paid from their IGF.

### **Low levels of education and lack of understanding of the governance processes**

In the Upper West Region, where illiteracy is very high, many of the people who put themselves forward for Assembly positions and Unit Committee elections and eventually get the nod are either completely illiterate or half-literate. This limits their ability to engage not only the people they represent but also articulate the concerns of their communities during Assembly sessions as their understanding of local governance is impeded. A review of literature on the educational status of Unit Committee members for instance revealed that about 30% of them have never had any formal education or literacy training. Besides, there is a general lack of understanding among the citizens of the governance processes while those with responsibility to educate them are not doing enough and in some cases do not have the capacity to educate the population.

### **Political interference and polarization of local governance**

Despite constitutional provisions requiring local level governance to be non-partisan, political interference continues to be a major challenge to promoting participation in the MDAs. It continues to undermine engagement of citizens and stakeholders in decision making.

### **Lack of and improper information flow**

An examination of the flow of information among the actors shows that the MDA staff do not give adequate and timely information to Assembly Members and Unit Committees with regard to development issues in their communities. Even with the advent of media, the MDA staff have not risen to the occasion in effectively using the media to

disseminate information. Political leadership in the MDAs has also been found to be passing information through their party representatives in the communities to the neglect of established governance structures. This undermines the relevance of the local governance actors at the community which tends to breed anguish and apathy.

### **Other constraints**

Other factors identified to be militating against participatory local governance include general apathy among citizens emanating from low rate of implementation of projects captured in the MDAs plans, poor accountability of IGF, corruption, mutual distrust and low civil society action on educating people on the governance processes.

## **5.0 Policy measures and recommendations**

The following suggested policy measures are geared toward improving participation in local governance within the five MDAs. They could also be important for policy makers and implementers. The recommendations are also directed towards addressing the challenges on participatory local governance in the districts and ultimately promote grassroots participation and decision making.

### **5.1 Recommendations for the Central Government**

#### **Provision of financial assistance**

In order for citizens to play active roles in the governance process, community level and sub-district level governance

actors must be resourced to carry out their responsibilities as outlined by the Local Governance Act 462. Motivation in any form from the central government and the District level could be a major boost to participatory governance at the local level. Therefore, as a policy recommendation, the central government should allocate a fund or include in the DACF Guidelines, a directive to District Assemblies to allocate a fraction of the DACF to sub-district structures for community engagement activities as a way of deepening participation in local governance.

### **Provision of needed logistics**

The provision of logistics like bicycles, motor bikes, computers and office space could significantly improve citizen and stakeholder participation in local governance. Such basic logistics will beef up the capacity of Assembly Members, Area/Town/Zonal Councils and make them able to conduct grassroots participation activities. Therefore, the Upper West Regional Coordinating Council should enforce the retention of 30% of revenue collected by the Area/Zonal and Town Councils and ensure the full utilization of such funds in running the activities of the sub-district structures.

### **Orientation of Sub-District Structures**

The Sub-District Structures (Unit Committees and Area/Zonal/Town Council members) constitutes the basic level of Ghana's local government system. As the link between the general population and the MDAs, any efforts at building their capacity to better understand and carry out their responsibilities will be rightly placed. Therefore, the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS) and the Ministry in charge of local government should as a matter of policy provide regular orientation for the sub-district structures to strengthen their capacity and keep them afloat with changing government national development policy priorities.

## **Strengthening Information Flow and Communication among Key Actors**

Effective communication and information dissemination is key to building trust and consensus in governance. As such, the MDAs should take conscious steps to use opportunities offered by modern media to share information with all decentralized structures timely and appropriately. The availability of community-based radio stations in three of the MDAs offers a great opportunity to disseminate information at a minimal or no cost. Regular meetings with decentralized structures would also allay any mistrust issues between the MDAs staffs and the decentralized structures.

## **5.2 Recommendations for civil society organizations**

### ***Support and development of citizen tools such as complaint desks, integrity pacts, citizens' report cards and multi-stakeholder forums***

Civil society organizations working in the focus MDAs should begin to implement practical tools and practices for concrete citizen engagement. These tools and practices should be evaluated and disseminated for the information of all. Events such as town hall meetings, citizen forums and other multi-stakeholders forums are becoming increasingly important in the local governance discourse and have proved to be successful in holding local development authorities accountable. These forums should be institutionalized in the activities of NGOs and CBOs in the districts.

### ***Facilitating transparency in planning and budgeting process***

Although citizens are somewhat engaged in the planning process, this does not mean the final budget reflects their priorities. One way to ensure consistency would be to allow citizens to participate in certain budget preparation meetings especially when the initial budget is developed by the MDA budget team. While it is recognized that preparing the budget is the prerogative of government, citizens' oversight at crucial stages of the preparation process makes it difficult for vested interests to influence budget allocation.

### ***Strengthening budget advocacy and oversight***

Budget advocacy and oversight actions can expose unresponsive local government practices such as inconsistency in planning and budgeting, low allocation to public services and excessive operational costs. Such actions can also make complex budgets more transparent through budget posters, calendars and budget hearings.

### ***Improve CSO transparency and accountability***

Transparency and accountability are key prerequisites for successful advocacy. So, for CSOs to be successful in holding local government authorities to promote participatory governance, it is only beneficial for CSOs to hold themselves to the standards used to hold local government authorities.

## **5.3 Recommended Media Actions**

### ***Providing the platform for debate on local development issues***

Media organizations should undertake agenda setting by leading and providing the platform for local level debate on development issues in local governance. The radio stations available in the target MDAs should set this agenda.

### ***Mobilizing citizens to demand good governance and accountability***

Media organizations should move beyond just reporting events to mobilizing the citizenry to demand responsive, accountable and transparent local governance.

### ***Strengthening information and education to citizens***

The media must strengthen its role in informing and educating the citizenry, organizing awareness creation events for the communities on local governance issues.

### ***Strengthen collaboration with the MDAs and CSOs***

In order to promote dialogue among stakeholders and play its watchdog role, the media needs to strengthen its relationship with the MDAs. This would give the media a bigger network and knowledge base for it to live up to its responsibility to the people.

## **6.0 Contribution of the Media Foundation for West Africa**

In its bid to contribute to improving participatory local governance in the Upper West Region, the Media Foundation for West Africa through the 'Enhancing Public Participation and Demand for Accountability in Local Governance and Promoting Decent Language Campaigning for Peaceful Elections' and 'Access to Information' projects been engaged in several activities in the five MDAs.

Through the projects, the MFWA seeks to promote citizens' participation in local governance processes by creating appropriate platforms and developing capacities for effective

information sharing between citizens and local authorities in development process. Under the projects, staff of local radio stations are trained to enhance capacity to effectively cover issues of local governance. Assembly officials and CBOs are also trained on effective use of media for information dissemination on local governance issues. Apart from strengthening the use of media as a tool for information sharing, the use of town hall meetings and community durbars which are organized in collaboration with the MDAs, CBOs and local radio stations enable community leaders and the populace to share perspectives on key development issues.

## 7.0 Conclusion

Ghana has come a long way in the practice of decentralized governance. There is much excitement about the opportunities offered by local governance and people with vested interests are eagerly seizing the opportunities. So, government, civil society, the media and all other stakeholders must work towards a participatory and meaningful governance system that can provide inclusion, equality and the welfare of all citizens. Therefore, local governments must be in the forefront. They need to work closely with citizens in delivering better lives for the people. CSOs and the media on their parts can mobilize citizens to strategize in addressing local needs while holding their local governments to account for their stewardship. For them to be successful however, they need capacity, integrity and healthy partnerships.



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