

CHALLENGES OF DECENTRALIZATION AS AN INSTRUMENT TO SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE EAST GONJA DISTRICT OF GHANA AS A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The bottlenecks and failures of centralized planning in Ghana have provided the justification for decentralized planning. This paper explores the two interrelated questions with regards to decentralization in Ghana with particular reference to the East Gonja District; (1) Does decentralization allow for active participation of all interest groups in the development process at the district level? (2) Does decentralization guarantees accelerated rural development? A cursory look at the urban centers and rural areas in Ghana reveals a wide gap of development between them. To deal with these problems, various governments over the years have made frantic efforts to bridge the gap through several strategies of rural development. One of such laudable strategies is the concept of decentralization.

Based on the findings of the study, the paper concludes that although there have been enough institutional reforms for authentic decentralization at the district level but this does not necessary led to active participation in the decision making process at the district level. It is recommended that, Government and District Assembly should intensify educational campaign to get the local people to actively participate in the decision making process.

Keywords: Decentralization, Sustainable, Rural Development, Challenges and Poverty

INTRODUCTION

Northern Region has one of the highest concentrations of poverty in Ghana in spite of persistent effort to alleviate poverty. About 60% of the population resides in rural areas. The region has poor infrastructure. The level of education of the population is low. Poor health and sanitary conditions and

inadequate social amenities are characteristic of the region. There is considerable poverty with the majority of the population of the region living below the national poverty line. The society is patriarchal. Decision-making power in the family and society at large are vested in and exercised by husbands and males. Poverty in Ghana is generally described as a rural phenomenon. The statement that “poverty in Ghana is basically a rural phenomenon” is a common statement in the study of poverty in Ghana. This is buttressed by the study of Ghana Statistical Service publication, which stated that there is a general decline in poverty level in Ghana however, the proportion of the population defined as poor increased during the period for Rural Savannah (GSS, 2000). It concluded that poverty is still substantially a rural phenomenon.

Ironically, the Northern Region is the largest producer of cotton seed in Ghana, the highest producer of groundnut, sheanut, rice, guinea corn, millet and yam, the second largest producer of maize, beans, okro, and cassava. It is also the largest producer of livestock (cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, and poultry). All these are produced in the rural areas ((RCC, 1996).The decentralization concept has been adopted as one of the most vigorous and remarkable means by which the socio-economic development of the nation, especially the rural areas can be accelerated. It is against this background that this paper is geared towards identifying some of the challenges militating against the smooth implementation and operation of the decentralization in the East Gonja District.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

Rural Development in perspective

The term Rural Development has been given different interpretations and definition by different Authors and interest groups. According to Uma Lele, Rural Development is “improving the living standards of the mass of the low-income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self sustaining (Lele, 1975).

Rural development is improving the general welfare and standard of living of the rural people. The only way this can be achieved is through their active involvement in the decision making process. This is the only way to make the process self-sustaining. A distinctive and important feature of rural development which has substantial implications for the design and implementation of Rural Development programs is mass participation in the decision making process. Earlier approaches to Rural Development did not

take into consideration the important role that people themselves can play in their development to achieve their desired objectives, it is important to involve the people not only at the implementation stage but right from the decision making stage, implementation stage to the point of evaluation of completed projects. This has not been the case in the past. Most projects have been designed and implemented with little or no involvement of the beneficiaries.

Decentralization in Perspective

The call for decentralized reforms has been informed by the beliefs that, by virtue of increased proximity to the people they serve, democratic local institutions will provide a path to greater efficiency and equity in development and management activities (Suzuki, 2005). There is a widespread consensus among development professionals, backed by a large body of literature, that development can not be sustained unless the needs and priorities of the people concerned are reflected in the plans and programs, and unless decision making powers are devolved to the people. Logically therefore, empowerment of the local people is a pre-requisite for sustainable development.

The term decentralization has several meanings. It is multi faceted and it is use differently by different professions, groups and discipline to suit their own circumstance. There are multiplicities of views as to what really constitutes decentralization. The seminal and generally quoted definition of decentralization is that given by Rondinelli, Nelliss and Cheema (1983). They define decentralization as the transfer of responsibilities for planning, management and resource raising, and allocation from the central government and its agencies to: (a) field units of central government ministries or agencies, (a) subordinate units or levels of government, (c) semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations, (d) area-wide, regional or functional authorities, or (e) non-governmental private or voluntary organizations (1983:9). This definition would be adopted for this paper.

There are five major forms of decentralization; these are privatization, deregulation, devolution, delegation and deconcentration. The type of decentralization of interest in this paper is devolution. Devolution is defined as “the legal conferring of powers to discharge specified or residual functions upon formally constituted local authorities” (Mushi, 1992). Devolution therefore involves transfer of both the responsibilities and power to the local levels of government. The local levels are autonomous, independent and are legally recognized political entities with a corporate status and power to raise

resources to perform their functions. On their part, local governments discharge obligations as part of a national system of government. A key issue in devolution is the notion of autonomy.

In view of the foregoing one can posit that decentralization is used to solve various problems. In the first place decentralized structures can be used to facilitate genuine democratic participation: empower grassroots and channel their input constructively into the national effort. Secondly, decentralization would be designed to ensure that people express their real needs and hopefully take a bigger interest in seeing to their realization thereby reducing their poverty. Thirdly, decentralization can be a solution to an organization that is overloaded, over-centralized, hierarchied, and monopolistic.

For countries that are large and have geographical inequities, decentralization can reduce the size and clout of large units and therefore reduce inequalities. The case of Ghana with the creation of more District Assembly in recent past can be cited as an example. Decentralization can also be used to promote efficiency and effectiveness, improve delivery of services, allow for a careful consideration of local needs, as well as reduce conflicts, facilitate access to decision points, increase representation and enhance democracy. The above lists are an impressive list of noble values any government would strive to realize.

Decentralization: The Ghanaian Experiences

Ghana embarked on various programs to decentralize political and administrative powers for development decision-making since the early 1980s. Various reasons are responsible for the adoption of decentralization as an integral part of state governance.

Ghana's attempt to decentralize its political and administrative system has also been based on the realization that centralized authority based on some form of political arrangement has been ineffective in promoting political stability and national development. Reforms were thus necessary to unleash local initiative and invigorate the local democratic process, which together with sustainable development, will "enhance local capacities for self-governance and delivery of services" (Museveni, 1994).

Indeed, the demand for decentralization is strong throughout the world because of its link to poverty reduction and improving the quality of life of mass of the people.

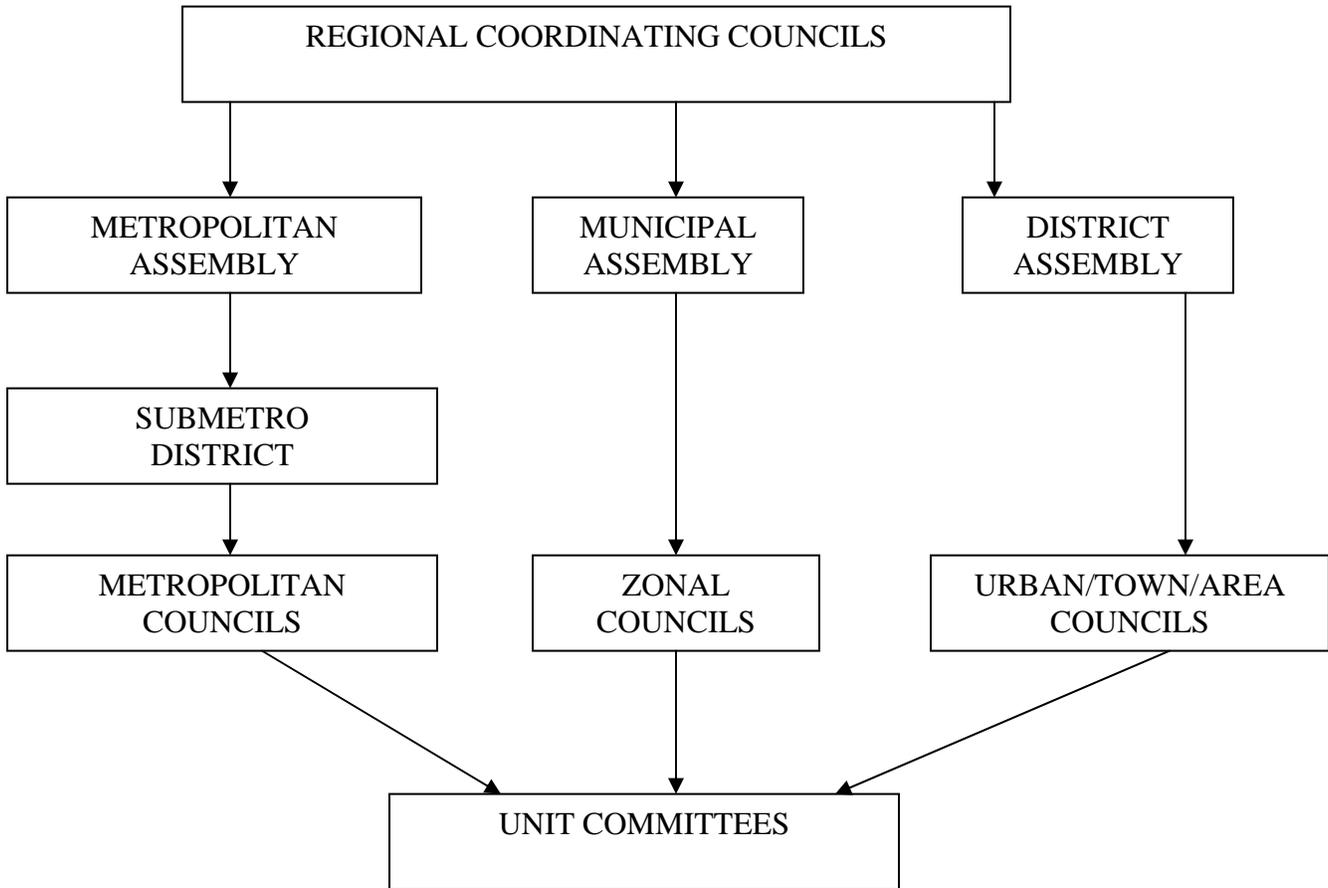
A major advance in connection with the establishment of a decentralized framework for political administrative and development decision-making was the enactment of laws and acts that were designed to serve as a framework for district political authority. Thus, Ghana's institutional structure for decentralization was, until recently, based on the Local Government Law of 1988 (PNDCL 207). This law made significant provisions for effective attainment of the goals of decentralization. In January 1993, PNDC Law 207 was revised to reflect constitutional demands in the form of the Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462).

Many of the provisions contained in the Fourth Republic Constitution of Ghana as well as the Local Government Act were attempts to place more power at the districts. The most important features of the laws establishing the districts included the following (Local Government Act 1993, Act 462:

- Separate legal entity
- Local planning and financial authority
- Local political representation, and
- Some level of political control

Figure I show the structure of the local government and decentralized system. It consists of a four tier Metropolitan and three tier Municipal/District Assemblies structure, with sub-structures, such as the urban, zonal, town/area and unit committees.

Figure I: The New Local Government Structure in Ghana



Source: The New Local Government System: Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development (MLGRD, 1996)

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study adopts the survey method to collect data from 600 people in selected areas of the East Gonja District in the Northern Region. A qualitative approach is used for the analysis of these data to understand the perceptions and challenges of decentralization as an instrument to sustainable rural development in the East Gonja District. The Northern Region is the largest politically administrative region of the Republic of Ghana. The vegetation of the region is largely guinea savannah. The region is characterized by a mono modal rainfall pattern with a prolonged period of dry season. The Northern

Region is situated north of the Black Volta River and the Volta Lake. The Northern Region is sparsely populated with a population less than a fifth of the country. Although sparsely populated, the mean household size is higher than the national average. Over 60% of the region's population is rural, engaged in subsistence agriculture. Income levels and consumption expenditure are below national averages.

Sampling Procedures and Data Collection Techniques used for the Study

All of the major traditional authorities and adults above eighteen years constituted the population for the study. The East Gonja District was purposively selected for the study. This is because the researcher hails from the district and has in-depth knowledge of the area. The researcher speaks fluently the major languages spoken in the area (Gonja, Hausa, and Akan). Cluster sampling was used to select suburbs while simple random sampling technique was used to select areas for the study. Systematic sampling technique was then used to select houses. In each house only one household member was interviewed. A total of 600 questionnaires were administered at the household level. Purposive sampling was also applied in selecting some institutions, civil society organizations and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Personal or face-to-face interviewing was employed as the major technique for data collection. This technique offered the respondents the opportunity to express themselves freely as much as possible and allowed the questions to be explained clearly to them.

DATA ANALYSIS

Educational Status and Understanding of the Concept of Decentralization

The data analysis from six (600) respondents revealed that, 384 of them did not obtain formal education (illiterates) representing 64% of the total respondents and the rest (216) are literates, accounting for 36%. These revelations attest to the fact that, the district has a low level of education. The data analysis further revealed that, many of the respondents do not understand the concept of decentralization even though most of them are indirectly involved in the decision making process. Ironically, many of the literates could not explain the concept of decentralization. On the contrary, though majority of the illiterates could not also explain what the concept was, they had an idea about how the system was operating through their unit committees and Assemblymen. However, they were quick to add that, the unit committees were ineffective and that, their views and problems never reached the Assembly. They

reiterated that, the Assembly was there to benefit the District Chief Executive, the “Big men” at the Assembly and party faithful.

Perception of Decentralization at the Grass Root Level

When the question “Have you ever heard about the term decentralization was posed: fifty five percent replied yes, whilst the remaining 45% replied no. When the 55% of those who responded yes were asked, “What is your understanding of the concept decentralization?”, about 60% said they could not explain the concept. Further more, when the question “Are you in any way involved in the decision making process of the District Assembly” was posed: seventy percent of the respondents replied no whilst the remaining thirty percent responded yes.

Participation in Decision Making

The studies revealed that majority of the people do not participate in the decision making process of the District Assembly. When the question “do you participate in the decision making process of the District Assembly in the district was posed” seventy percent of the respondents responded no whilst the remaining thirty percent responded yes. When the seventy percent why asked to assign reasons why they were not involved in the decision making process, the following reasons were given.

- We are not involved by any body in the decision making process
- We are not involved by the district Assembly in the decision making process
- Our views does not matter to the District Assembly
- We don’t know how to get involved
- We would not get any benefit if we get involved

Not withstanding the fact that the decentralization concept is meant to benefit the grass root people and to get them involved in the decision making process, many of them are not involved in the process in the East Gonja District. One can say that, the decentralization concept in the East Gonja District is not effective. This is buttressed by the fact that, when the question “Do you understand how the decentralization concept operate in the East Gonja District was posed” about 80% of the respondents responded no. The remaining 20% who responded yes could not explain well how the concept works. However, majority of the respondent new about the Assembly person and they explained that he was the

link between them and the Assembly. They were quick to add that, they haven't benefited from this link and that they were ignorant of what was happening at the Assembly.

Challenges of decentralization in the East Gonja District

The study revealed that there are myriad of challenges militating against the smooth operation of decentralization in the East Gonja District. Some of the challenges are peculiar throughout the country whilst others are specific to the East Gonja District. These challenges are discussed below.

Financial

Inadequate District Assembly Common Fund (DACF)

Information obtained from the study revealed that inadequate finance is one of the major challenges that militate against the smooth operation of decentralization and development of the district. The study showed that, the central government does not release the common fund early for the implementation of projects in the district. Again, the funds released are not adequate for the implementation of plans. This is because the funds disbursed to the district forms part of the 5% of national tax revenue, which is woefully inadequate for intended development projects in the respective MMDA.

Inadequate Internally Generated Funds

The DACF is normally supposed to be complimented with locally generated revenue. However, according to the District Finance Officer, the internally generated funds are woefully low and inadequate which does not meet budgetary expenses of the District Assembly (DA) in development projects of the district. According to him, every year, the amounts collected are always below the projected figures. The DA thus has to postpone the implementation of plans every year due to inadequacy of funds. Some projects are abandoned halfway due to shortage of funds. Targeted development projects are thus not met.

Low Salary and Remuneration

Low wages and salaries of personnel in the decentralized departments of the District Assembly also account for low morale of workers. Planners and Budget officers vacate their post for other high paying jobs especially in the NGO. Again, staffs in the Area Councils and Unit Committees are paid nothing for the services they render. This does not encourage them to put up their best to perform up to the task.

Many of the casual workers employed by the Assembly do not receive their wages promptly. Again, the amount paid to the casual workers especially the revenue collectors and laborers are woefully inadequate. Finance thus poses a major challenge to the effective operation of decentralization and rural development in the East Gonja district.

Administrative

The challenges relating to administration identified by the study are discussed below.

Inadequate Qualified Personnel

According to the DA, they do not have enough qualified personnel needed for the effective operation of decentralization. This becomes a major problem when it comes to the execution of plans and projects. The Assembly mentioned inadequate personnel in the District Planning Coordinating Unit (DPCU). All planning activities are carried out by the Acting District Planning Officer. Despite the fact that there are no adequate personnel, the Assembly is also not given power to recruit personnel. The recruitment of personnel is still a centralized issue. Personnel are sometimes only hired to perform certain duties but cannot be retained. The Assembly sometimes does not meet its revenue target in a year due to lack of personnel to mobilize revenue. This has often resulted in underperformance of the DA.

Inadequate Logistics

Inadequate logistics in the form of office accommodation, vehicles, equipments and accommodation for staff in the district is a major challenge. The District Assembly has only one vehicle that is used to carry out its activities. The clerical staff declared the inadequacy of filing cabinets in the offices to keep documents. Documents are littered on the ground and hanged in few shelves where they are exposed to dust and rodents. This has often led to the loss and destruction of important documents. Interaction with officers in the DA revealed that they have inadequate working tools and equipments such as filing cabinets and computers. Only two offices in the Assembly have computers. Offices, of the Assembly are also not furnished with enough furniture. The few available ones are not in their good condition. Tables and chairs are old, broken and inadequate in supply to all the offices and departments of the Assembly. The issue is escalated by inadequate accommodation in the district for some officials of the DA.

Corruption

Some of the respondents pointed to the fact that some office holders are corrupt. Funds meant for the execution of projects are embezzled. Contracts are over valued and top officials share the proceeds with contractors. Works are poorly executed, and because of corrupt practices, officials certify the projects as well executed. The contractors take their money and barely two years elapse and projects fall into disrepair.

Bureaucracy

Administrative bureaucracy is another challenge that was captured during the study. Officials of the DA did indicate that the long chain of decision making processes delay execution and implementation of development projects. Major decisions and plans need central Government approval. Again, some of the respondents mentioned that, it could take you more than six months to get information or decision taken on a simple request. Every day, they say “go and come”. An Assembly man Reiterated.

Strong Tiers between Mother Departments Against District Assembly

There is still a strong allegiance between decentralized department at the district level and their parent agencies and departments at the regional and national headquarters/ministries.

Clash of Authority between the Administrative Class and the Planning and Budget Class

The planning function at the District Assembly is vested with the District Planning Coordinating Unit (DPCU), which is composed mainly of the Planning Officer(s), Budget Officers, etc. The first question that arises is who heads the DPCU? Is it the Planning Officer or the Budget Officer? This is not explicit in Act 462. Others are of the opinion that, the senior most among the two should head the DPCU, whilst others are of the opinion that, the District Planning Officer solely heads the DPCU.

The biggest challenge confronting the decentralization process at the district level is the clash of authority between the Administrative class and the Planning and Budget class. For example, a Principal Planning Officer who has work in the District Assembly for about fifteen years will still report to the Deputy Coordinating Director who has just worked in the Assembly for one, two, three etc. This is especially true if he is the only Deputy Coordinating Director assisting the Coordinating Director at the District. This is because, if the Coordinating Director is traveling, the natural thing to do is to hand over

to the Deputy who has probably just done one, two or three years. In the absence of the Director every body including the Principal Planning Officer, The Principal Budget Officer etc reports to the Deputy Coordinating Director. The worse situation is that, with the other classes (i.e. The Planning Class and the Budget Class) they can never head the District Assembly no matter how long they work at the Assembly. In this case, many of them out of frustration live the Assembly. These days what they do is to opt for the administrative class. Although the new Civil Service Act is intended to correct some of these abnormalities, we await its effective and efficient implementation.

Political

The crux of decentralization is its political synclines. In the confines of this description is the issue of partisan tension between the MPs and the DCE especially if they belong to different parties. This fortunately wasn't the case in the East Gonja District. Information from the study showed that there was a difference between the DCE and MP, although they belong to the same party. The problem normally arises during the award of contracts and implementation of plans and development projects in the district. Political tension is always mounted between the two political gurus in the district.

Though, politically this is denied, it is an open secret that it does exist. This creates differences among the people and hampers the process of decentralization. Award of contracts do not follow the due process. Contracts are awarded to party faithful and disciples of MP.

Another major challenge to the decentralization process is the tension between the Presiding Member and the District Chief Executive. Although, the Presiding Officer presides over Assembly meetings, practically, he has no powers because it is the DCE who controls the purse. It is said that, he who blows the piper dictates its tune. This tension becomes more serious when the two belongs to different political parties. In theory, the Assembly members are supposed to be non-partisan, but practically, every body in the Assembly knows who belong to which party. Issues are therefore discussed on party lines. Again, it is argued that, the thirty percent Government appointees would be loyal to the Government and not the people.

The DCE who is a government appointee is used as a tool to carry decentralization to the grass root through the District Assembly concept and therefore supposed to be a servant to the people, he/she is

said to be more accountable to the government than the local people. According to the data gathered from the study, the DCE tends to pursue the interest of the government rather than the local people. Development projects and plans are implemented along partisan lines to suit government desire and favor rather than what the people may want. The needs and aspirations of the people are often suppressed for government interest by the Assembly.

Vote Buying By Persons Nominated For the Position of Chief Executive

Concerns have been expressed over the situation where some Assembly members demand money from persons nominated for the position of Chief Executive, as a pre-condition to confirm or reject their appointments. This situation compromises the moral authority they wield to keep chief executives accountable to them and their people. There have been several reports in the media claiming that some Assembly members had demanded as much as Gh¢ 3,000.00 from President's nominee as a condition to approve their appointment. Mr Kofi Dramani, one of the rejected Government nominee in a radio interview on Joy FM on Friday, 8th May 2009 confirmed giving each Assembly person Gh¢ 500.00 before the voting and yet he was not confirmed.

The assembly members are crucial partners in the effective and efficient implementation of the decentralized system of governance, if the person's responsible for checking the district chief executive could be that vulnerable to influence, then the objectives and aims of decentralization is defeated.

Social

These include lack of knowledge and apathy on the part of masses on the concept of decentralization.

Lack of knowledge of the masses and apathy is a major challenge to the effective operation of the decentralization process. People at the grass root lack knowledge of the concept and their right to involvement in the decision making process. The masses are therefore indifferent about decentralization because the process is indirect. To this, official of the DA blamed the ineffectiveness of the work of the DA on the lack of co-operation and apathy of the masses. This hinders the effectiveness of the process because they do not throw their weight behind the decentralization process and development efforts of the DA.

However, the masses also attributed their lack of knowledge and co-operation to lack of sensitization and awareness created by the DA. Tribalism and discrimination were also mentioned by the masses as problems they face in trying to deal with the DA. As to why some of them are not involved in the decision making process, it was disclosed that they are discriminated against because they probably do not belong to some preferred or particular ethnic group. Some tribes are favored against others when it comes to decision-making and even share of the benefits of the process. With the share of project and implementation, some people are not consulted and are not involved. This has resulted in inequitable distribution of the economic and social benefits of the decentralization process thereby retarding the development of the entire district.

According to some of the respondents the Assembly was not up and doing in getting the people well informed and involved.

IMPLICATION OF THE CHALLENGES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISTRICT

It is clear that, the challenges identified above cutting across area of finance, administration, social and political, have negative implication for the social and economic development of the district. These challenges can cause a major drawback to the development of the district. The implications of the challenges are critically examined below.

Delay in release of funds and their inadequate nature in conjunction with administrative bottlenecks has resulted in a piecemeal implementation of projects in the district as well as inequitable distribution of facilities since funds may only allow the putting up of few projects or facilities in a particular area at a time. Again, many projects that have started have been abandoned due to lack of funds to complete them. This can therefore result in low economic and social development of the area. It is not surprising that the area has since not yet attained the level of development it aspires, despite the implementation of decentralization.

The administration of the process is hampered by lack of logistics. Inadequate vehicles, computers, accommodation etc do not give the atmosphere for proper planning and execution of plans and effective working of official of the DA. In effect the work of the DA, operation of the decentralization process is

hampered as well as development. Functions of the Assembly cannot be carried out effectively. Inadequate vehicles hamper effective monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Politically, lack of co-operation between the various decentralized departments is a major impediment to the work of the Assembly and the progress of the district since the Assembly cannot work in isolation as far as the development of the district and decentralization is concerned.

Decentralization is meant for the grass root people, without them there will be no need for the concept. The people of East Gonja District seem to say; the concept should not operate in the district because they are not actively involved in the decision making process. They refuse to get involved in the process due to what they consider as being discrimination and cheating against them. However, the fact is that, there is no requirement to get involve in the process. Again they masses argued that, they can only get involved if they are given the chance to get involved. To them, it is a deliberate attempt of the District Assembly not to get them involved so that, they can indulge in their corrupt practices. Others also argue that, they haven't benefited by their involvement and therefore they are no more interested in getting involved. Refusal to be involved in the decision making process is detrimental to the process and stands the chance of retarding the development efforts of the District Assembly. In sum these challenges could present debilitation consequences on the development of the East Gonja District and therefore need to be quickly addressed if the district is to accelerate its intended development through the decentralization process.

In accordance with Act 462, section 46, the district assembly is responsible for managing the bottom-up planning processes from the unit committees' level through the area/town councils up to the district levels. Similarly, feedback will also need to go through the same mechanism. Evidence from the study showed that this stipulated bottom-up process is not operational. Most of the area council has been taken over by weeds and rodents, similarly, the unit committees are non-existence on the ground. The few unit committees members and area councils members interviewed had no idea about the existence of the Assembly medium term plan. Similarly, the local people reiterated that, they were not aware of any such plan and that they did not make any input into its preparation. The evidence from the study is that, the decentralization process of involving communities from the unit committees, through the

area/town council up to the district Assembly is yet to be achieved.

CONCLUSION

A number of factors impede against the effective implementation of the decentralization concept in the East Gonja District. These among others include: low involvement of the masses in the decision making process, poor staffing situation in the district assembly, inadequate finance and logistics to support and equip the unit committees, area/town councils, low level of awareness of the local people of their right to get involved, high degree of paternalism from the central government, regional coordinating councils and district assembly.

In reviewing the ongoing decentralization process in Ghana with special reference to the East Gonja District, it was discovered that institutional reforms have given enough policy and legal backing to the devolution of power to the District Assembly in term of a bottom-up planning process. These reforms should have translated to the active participation of the local people in the decision-making process resulting in accelerated rural development. However, the evidence from the East Gonja District is the contrary. There is much concentration of power at the District Assembly, the process of involving the local people directly in the decision making process or through the area/town council level up to the district is yet to be effectively operational.

For the ongoing decentralization process to achieve its set objectives of grass root participation in the decision making process leading to accelerated rural development, then the following are recommended:

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that, central government should release funds (DACF) early enough to the local level for the implementation of project. This will facilitate the quick implementation of plans and projects as well as minimize their failure. The funds should also be increased to enable the DA meet budgetary expenses or development projects of the Assembly.

Again, the District Assembly should also intensify the collection of revenues to increase the internally generated funds. These funds can be used to accelerate the development of the district. The Assembly should devise imaginative revenue collection methods. The revenue collectors should be well remunerated and trained. The Assembly should intensify its education of the masses on the need to pay

taxes to the Assembly. The District Assembly on its part is empowered to mobilize local revenue for development project. It should strengthen efforts at mobilizing revenue to compliment the DACF. New and effective methods of revenue mobilization should be discovered and the tax network should be broadened.

With regards to the lack of knowledge and involvement in the decision making process by the masses, it is recommended that the District Assembly should take steps to sensitize and educate the masses on the operation of the concept and their right to involvement in the decision making process. The District Assembly should create awareness and devise ways and means of getting the people educated on the concept. This would increase their involvement in the process, improve upon decision-making and facilitate effective operation of decentralization in the district. The people should be educated and sensitized about the decentralization process and the need for them to get involved. They should see it as their right to be involved in decision making in order to increase participation and improve upon the decision making process of the DA.

The Assembly could liaise with the National Commission on Civic Education to carry out educational program on the decentralization concept in the district. The Education should emphasized on the aim of decentralization as developing rural areas by bringing decision making to the door steps of the people in order to help identify their own needs, participate in the governance and development of their own lives as well as getting economic and social benefits to people in deprived areas. Education and sensitization will also erase the negative impression that they are discriminated against and raise their interest to be involved.

Like the Assemblymen, the DCE should be elected by the local people rather than appointed by the government in order to make him more accountable and responsive to the people. This would help resolve the problem of lack of accountability and the partisan nature of the DA. If the DCE is elected by the local people devoid of partisan influence, he/she is believed, will be more accountable to the local people rather that the central government. In that case, it is argued that, he/she would represent the people and not the central government. The distribution of the benefits of decentralization and dealing with the people by the DA will be neutral devoid of politics. Partisan tension between the DCE and the MPs will also be minimized since party issues may not be much carried to this level even if they are of different political affiliations.

Also for the various decentralized departments to work co-operatively, they should be made to work in conjunction with District Assembly by the government and to work under the close supervision of the DA. The composite budget advocated should be implemented.

Since the recruitment of staff for the DA is centralized, the government should also recruit or employ the required skilled and qualified staff needed by the DA to carry out the decentralization process effectively. Otherwise the DA should be vested with the power to recruit and retain qualified staff for their work. The staff of the Assembly should be well remunerated to bring out their best. If they are well remunerated, they would stay and work in the Assembly in perpetuity. Officials should strictly monitor the use of DACF to minimize corruption and misappropriation of funds.

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