

# Promoting Local Governance in Ghana: The Role of Akan Queen Mothers

by

Isaac Owusu-Mensah

iowusumensah@yahoo.com

Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Legon

## Abstract

The participation of Queen Mothers in local governance in Ghana has gone through various spheres with different forms of regime arrangements. The Fourth Republic's legal framework on local governance established structures that alienate traditional authority from District Assemblies. In spite of this exclusion, traditional leaders have refused to be perturbed and continue to service their people. The communities that are served increasingly revere the contributions of these women in their development process. This study sought to establish the distinctive roles performed by Queen Mothers, challenges mitigating their contribution as well as the overall challenges of local governance. Adopting a qualitative research methodology with interviews and focus group discussions in four administrative regions, the paper concludes that Queen Mothers have enormous potentials that ought to be harnessed through training and integration into the mainstream local governance system for the benefit of the communities within their respective jurisdictions.

**Key Words:** Queen Mothers, local governance, chieftaincy, Ghana.

## Introduction

The Constitution of Ghana entrust the executive power in the President of the Republic who has the responsibility to define, formulate, implement and evaluate public policies on behalf of the people of Ghana. A key constituency that shapes the development of public policy process has been local governance, and thus, the significance of local governance in the entire governance structures in the country compels the state to invest enormously in the management of the sector to exercise the requisite management, direction and controls. Contributing to central government's exclusive interest in local governance, Tickell and Peck (1996) assert that local governance is almost always business led by 'Government' (Constitution of Republic of Ghana, Assembly Press, 1992).

The state monopolistic conducts relegate all perceived and real competing actors in local governance, including indigenous institutions, in spite of their historical contributions made to the development of the country. Stressing the significance of traditional institutions in local governance, Beall, et al (2005), argue that indigenous institutions ensure continuity of governance as well as fill the institutional vacuum created at the local level (Chieftaincy Act, 2008 Act 756, Accra: Assembly Press, 2008).

In Ghana, the current local governance system is a composition of the four-tier system, made up of: the regional coordinating councils; district assemblies; urban/area council and unit committees. This paper therefore assesses the contribution of Queen Mothers as a critical component of traditional institutions to local governance development. The paper also evaluates the legal framework on local governance, highlighting the position of traditional authority, and asks what have been the challenges of Queen Mothers in development pursuits, and what have been the core challenges of local governance in Ghana?

## **Methodology**

The study adopted a qualitative research design to collect data from four regions: Brong-Ahafo, Eastern, Western and the Central Region of Ghana. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were organized with Queen Mothers ranging from the paramount Queen Mother to the *Odikro* (hamlet woman leader). Focus groups discussions constituted of 7 participants per group to provide in-depth exploration of their role in local governance. Queen Mothers and some key stakeholders in the chieftaincy system in Ghana were purposively selected for the (engagement) research. Although there were initial challenges in the analysis and interpretation of the data, the process was rigorous with a great deal of care and judgment to ensure that the generalization of the findings reflected the broader population of Queen Mothers. The collected data was fully transcribed to establish evidence that the data was collected from a specific population within a particular period of time. The moderator filled in the gaps as well as the missing words as a mechanism for editing and cleaning the data; unfinished thoughts were further restructured without altering the essence of the ideas produced. A pragmatic content analysis and an attribution analysis were further helpful in making the interview data meaningful, along with focus group discussions.

## **Legal Status of Queen Mothers in the Fourth Republic**

The legal status of a Queen Mother can be scrutinized in the context of a broader legal framework of traditional authorities in Ghana. The Constitution of Ghana and the Chieftaincy Act 756, 2008 provides the appropriate basis for these analyses. Article 270 (1) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, guarantees the institution of Chieftaincy with the appropriate traditional councils as established by customary law and usage<sup>1</sup>.

Article 277 defines a 'chief as a person, who, hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskined or installed as a chief or Queen Mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage' The Act 756, further sets minimum qualifications for a chief to be a person who has never been convicted of high treason, treason, a high crime or for an offence dealing with the security of the State, has not been convicted for fraud, dishonesty or moral turpitude<sup>2</sup>. From these instruments the position of chiefs and Queen Mothers are consequently guaranteed within the appropriate customary laws and practices of the respective traditional area(s). These legal provisions of the indigenous institutions epitomize Ghanaian reverence for traditional leadership and its increased political prominence, which emanates from the roles performed during the pre-colonial and colonial administrative periods, as well as by the political legitimacy commanded by the institutions.

## **Historical Perspective**

The local government system in Ghana takes root (from) in 1951 as a component of the British Colonial Administration. The Colonial Governor involved the traditional authority in the management of the country in a form of indirect rule. As per the 1951 Municipal Councils Ordinance, Ghana operated a two-tier local council system, whereby two-thirds of the members were elected by universal adult suffrage and one third reserved for the traditional authority. The councils' were not development oriented. The core responsibility was limited to the collection of taxes imposed by the colonial administration. The attainment of independence and republican status, led to the promulgation of a new Local Government Act 54, 1961. The Act abolished the one-third seats reserved for tradition authorities. Non-partisan elective principles that guided the local council elections were also scrapped. Members of the council were elected from the one-party Convention Peoples Party with the introduction of a centralized planning system to dictate to the local councils with critical management practices. With the inception of the Second Republic, Local Government Act 359 of 1971 was introduced. The new Act was initiated to rectify the deficiency in the 1961 Act. Act 359 further introduced a four-tier system which consisted of Regional, District, Urban/Town and Area Councils. Membership was non-elective, public and civil servants managed the councils as district administrative officers.

Chiefs were re-introduced into local governance with the responsibility to chair town and area councils. The subsequent legislations in the military regimes and the Third Republic failed to introduce any structural amendments on the position of traditional authorities in local governance. Thus, the local governance system in the Fourth Republic is enshrined in chapter twenty of the 1992 Constitution. The chapter enjoins Parliament to enact the appropriate legislations to regulate the development and growth of local governance. Consequently, Parliament has enacted a series of legal instruments which define, direct and control the mandates of the District Assemblies. The jurisdictions of these instruments cover the entire operations of the local government system from planning, through financing and implementation to evaluation. These are:

- The Local Government Act 462 (1993)
- The Civil Service Law 327 (1993)
- The National Development Planning Act 480 (1994)
- The District Assemblies Common Fund Act 455 (1994)
- The Local Government Service Act 656 (2003)
- The Decentralization Policy Framework 2010 (April)
- Ghana National Decentralized Action Plan 2010 (April)

In spite of the contributions of these laws to the development of the local governance, none of these laws specify any automatic inclusion or clear roles of traditional authorities in the decentralized governance system in the country. By extension, these laws slight the role of Queen Mothers in local governance. Consequently, any forms of contributions or negotiated platforms provided by the Assemblies are discretionally delivered on their own conditions and terms within a stipulated period of time.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual and theoretical analysis of Queen Mothers must be positioned in the broader analysis of indigenous institutions, which span across various different configurations and manifestations within the context of an African political system wherein institutions defined as rules, designs and structures in a given political environment. Rules that alter the threshold of participation in the political system are likely to be contested by sets of political actors to their advantage. And thus, rules are not neutral; their versatility is dependent on the changing political dynamics of the actors in the system<sup>1</sup>.

Martin (2000) distinguishes between two main components of institutions to include institutional environment that is the systems of informal conventions, customs, norms and social routines; and formal structures of rules and regulation, which controls and constrains social behaviors and conducts<sup>2</sup>. And Pike et al (2014) maintain that formal institutions comprise the system of government and governance within a country while information institutions comprise cooperative work between the private and public sectors. These two institutions interact within the productions of actors and conditions within a given political system<sup>3</sup>. The Queen Mother, as a key component of traditional institutions, constitutes a part of the informal institutions.

Hence, Mannheim (1996) positions chieftaincy institution in the context of a tradition which is explained as a provision which a given people have a sense of identity with and belonging to, which shapes them and identifies them as a distinct group, different from other people with a common destiny<sup>4</sup>. For Giddens (1984:25), institutions take roots in social systems in the context of 'reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices'<sup>5</sup>. Next, Leach et al (1999:226) suggest that institutions encompass all the structures and practices that influence and have control over whatever resources, and arbitrate contested resources claims<sup>6</sup>. In the context of control of resources, chieftaincy is in partnership with government in that it principally controls human and natural resources such as land and forestry. And further, O'Riordan and Jordan (1996) maintain that institutions are structures of power that shape possibilities within a context<sup>7</sup> as Watson (2003) corroborates this position with the argument that institutions are fluid, and change with time alongside the balance of power which they regulate<sup>8</sup>. Thus, Queen Mothers as a component of traditional authority are subsumed under the O'Riordan and Jordan perspective, as their dynamic functions progress with the changing political systems in the country.

## **Queen Mothers in African Society**

Societies use sex differences as a primary basis for apportionment of social and political roles. The degree of differentiation allotted to male and female members of society of these allocations forms the basis of a growing controversy and power struggle<sup>9</sup>. These controversies are driven by the dynamics of patriarchy. In African traditional societies, authority emanates with special lines of genealogy from which an individual emerges. The genealogy forms the basis of the establishment of social strata, and it determines the social stratum where royals and commoners are segmented. And thus, the membership of a particular group regulates the degree of rights and responsibilities over other members of society. Amongst African communities that recognize a singular hereditary ruler, the decent group is distinct from other groups in the society<sup>10</sup>. The kinship also determines the settlement and economic life of an individual<sup>11</sup>. Arhin (2002) argues that the socio-political systems in Africa is defined as the system of maintaining order and social control that has transformed over years with the introduction of colonialism as well as the programmes of nationalist movements as elitist political space has enlarged over time with the integration of several individuals in the community considered important<sup>12</sup>.

The Queen Mothers derive their political power from the social organization, or the system of inheritance of a specific ethnic group. The historical genealogy significantly contributes to this prominence. For example, in Ghana, amongst the *Akan*, the mode of recruitment of members is determined through the female genealogy; therefore the Queen Mother's prominent political stature is recognized by the society because the female serves as the nexus of generations as compared to the *Wala* Queen Mothers who are recruited into the ethnic group through male genealogy. Consequently the Queen Mother position is imperceptibly identified by the community amongst the *Wala*. In spite of the genetic contributions and the ascribed significance of females in the matrilineal societies, Aidoo (1977) argues that the sole position accorded to women in both *Akan* and *Wala* society is the office of the Queen Mother<sup>13</sup>. Queen Mothers are eclipsed and greatly overwhelmed by the numerically superior prowess of male actors in the political arena<sup>14</sup>. Rattray (1923) and Fortes (1950) personifies the Queen Mothers in matrilineal societies as a symbol of motherhood of the social systems<sup>15</sup>. For Fortes, the foundation of the authority of Queen Mothers depends on the moral aptitude of the Queen Mothers, rather than the sanctions of the legal system; he concludes that the position ought to be recognized as an office rather than an elevated domestic status<sup>16</sup>. Stoeltje (2003) corroborate this position by asserting that Queen Mothers occupy their own stools as a symbol of authority as compared to other African countries where the authority of Queen Mothers is derived from their relationship to the chiefs<sup>17</sup>.

### **Convergence of Responsibilities of Queen Mothers and District Assemblies**

The current local governance system entrust all spheres of responsibilities to District Assemblies. However, the Queen Mothers continue to perform significant customary duties for communities and peoples entrusted to them, as their contribution towards the development of local governance.

### **Queen Mothers: Custodians of Customs and Tradition**

The traditional authorities with the Queen Mother as lynchpin have over the years served as the custodians of custom and culture of the people. The Chiefs and the Queen Mothers have original jurisdiction in all matters relating to a paramount stool or skin. They are the embodiment of oral tradition and traditional knowledge passed on from generation to generations. The Queen Mothers assume the responsibility of the properties of the stool with a significant role in the celebration of festivals as well as in the performance of funerals of dead chiefs in the area of their jurisdiction. The Queen Mothers collaborate with Assemblies on these special occasions because of the potential of a threat to human security in the community. Furthermore, social welfare issues which the Assembly may not have the requisite knowledge of in the respective cultural environment, such as child abuse, child labour, defilement, girl child education, inheritance, marriage, domestic violence and teenage pregnancy are assessed with the support of the office of the Queen Mothers.

The Queen Mothers act as experts and consultants to the Assemblies and handle issues as they relate to culture and customs of the people in the respective traditional area. This is accomplished within the context of the role of the police and the legal system in the settlements of disputes. This cooperation of Queen Mothers with the local government unit can be contextualized within the work of Gertler (2010) who maintains that certain levels of interactions by the formal and informal institutions lead to the establishment of an equilibrium that emerges to produce for the benefit of the entire society<sup>18</sup>. Bradhan (2005) further corroborates with assertion that these coordinated functions of institutions determine the level provisions of public goods and social infrastructure which shape the development process of people<sup>19</sup>. Consequently, the positive collaboration of traditional institutions with the modern state, with the objective of social progress, will translate into the development of communities.

### **Mediation and Negotiation Roles**

Queen Mothers have traditionally contributed to the promotion of peace in the respective traditional councils. They educate women and children on values and tenets of good neighbourliness as well as seek to educate belligerent factions of consequences of conflicts to families as well as to communities. Conflict resolution has been at the centre of their core responsibilities; disputes between women and amongst women, marriage and curse disputes of various degrees are settled by the Queen Mother. Odotei (2006) argues that amongst the Nanumba, the *Kpandiglipona* (the female chief) had established a court to settle disputes with the support of a linguist<sup>20</sup>. Corroborating this position, Obeng (2002) maintains that amongst the *Ashanti*, the Queen Mother has her court with the support of six orators and a male impanelled jury<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, for Bay (1995), the Queen Mother is politically empowered to intercept and alter decisions made by the King's court<sup>22</sup>. Tools of these settlements includes the use of proverbs, songs and dirges to lure, convince and encourage disputants to accept their differences, accommodate each other and live in harmonious relationship for the development of the society.

Also, some disputes between women from various communities are settled by the paramount Queen Mother. The mediation responsibility offered forms a fundamental ingredient of good local governance in the traditional area as a result of the speed and impartiality exhibited. From the perspective of traditional institutions and conflict resolution, Warren et al (1995) stress that indigenous institutions as ready-made power structures that define how, who and when decisions are made; how regulations are enforced, and to resolve conflicts between individuals and communities within societies<sup>23</sup>.

### **Role in the Selection and Installation of Chiefs**

The selection and installation of chiefs in African societies entails complex traditional operational procedures and structures. Queen Mothers have a significant contribution in the selection and installation process in their respective traditional areas, although this function varies from one ethnic group to another.

The system of inheritance is a major determinant factor in these processes. In the matrilineal society, this function is a core component of elements of responsibility for the Queen Mother. Obeng (2002) asserts that the Queen Mother in the matrilineal societies confers as well as expels chiefs<sup>24</sup>. It is the belief of the people that the Queen Mother is the embodiment of the unadulterated political history of the people. Also the deity of the stool or the skin is expected to communicate through the Queen Mother. The Queen Mother determines the next chief of the traditional area because of the solitary appointment roles conferred on her. She supervises the installation process including the administration of the stool oath (*Ntam Kese*). Odotei (2006) asserts that the political power of the Queen Mother in the matrilineal society varies from society to society based on genealogical history of the people; for example amongst the Dindani, the Queen Mother is expected to just notify the potential candidates for the office of chief when a vacancy is created<sup>25</sup>. Farrar (1997) concurs with this position by arguing that in the Maigira of Kogu, the Queen Mother plays a significant role in the installation, but has no role in the selection process<sup>26</sup>. In the patrilineal Ga-Adangbe, Ewe, Mamprugu and Dagomba societies, the Queen Mother is not a party to the determination of future chiefs. The role of selection and installation or exorcising of a chief, guarantees a position of critical stakeholder in local governance that a respective communities accepts as an indirect manager of resources of the society.

## **The Challenges of Queen Mothers in Local Governance**

In spite of the pre-eminence of gender issues in the structures of a democratic process, little attention has been devoted to an analysis of the challenges of women in local governance<sup>27</sup>. These challenges affect the optimal participation of women in local governance as well as their interaction with the broader civil society and regulatory institutions in local governance. An analysis of these challenges exposes the issues which ought to be confronted to expand the role of Queen Mothers in communities across the country.

### **Lack of Representation of Queen Mothers at the District Assembly**

Queen Mothers, as component of traditional authorities, are not represented at the respective assemblies. The opportunity provided by the Local Government Act, 1993, Act 624, for government to appoint a third of the assembly members are exercised in favour of political party sympathizers to whip these supporters to vote for government policies and programmes. The absence of any traditional authority alienates them from the core activities of the Assembly. The opportunity to attend general assembly meetings and to be a representative on committees is closed even though the decisions and policies of the district assembly are formulated at the general assembly meeting. The channels therefore available to make inputs are through their respective assembly members or through a memorandum to the District Chief Executive; these are secondary sources with minimal effect.



This leads to potential social control, and a marginalization and an exploitation of the traditional authorities by the Assembly. The lack of knowledge of the functioning of the district assembly and its systems, such as the appropriate period to present project proposal, prevents most Queen Mothers from integration into the planning process and budgeting for the allocation of resources. This exclusion undermines the Queen Mothers' sense of ownership of assembly programmes and projects. The Queen Mothers consider the Assemblies as agencies of government, performing government business for and on behalf of the government from the centre. It serves as a powerful inhibitor to greater participation, irrespective of the degree of enthusiasm demonstrated. Contributing to the raging debate of exclusion, Larson and Ribot (2004) maintain that reintegration of traditional authority into local governance is reminiscent of a modern version of indirect rule practiced during the colonial administration<sup>28</sup>. Corroborating this position, Marfo (2007) argues that traditional authority programmes and activities fail to meet the elements of public accountability and basic democratic principle requirements, especially in natural resources management. Consequently, integrating Queen Mothers into the assemblies will provide too much power, at the expense of the citizens and constitute an anathema to local democratic development<sup>29</sup>.

### **Male Dominance in Local Governance**

The genesis of male dominance in public life is attributed to the female experience of child bearing and the subordination of females to domestic responsibilities. The universality of male domination in various spheres of governance questions equality principles in contemporary societies<sup>30</sup>. The number and the levels of females in the local governance are low, as a reflection of women participation in national polity. Women are feebly represented at the district assemblies in the country. Pathetically 6.7% of women candidates who contested in the 2010 district level elections won to form part of the two-thirds of elected members across the country<sup>31</sup>. Women are further poorly represented in the Regional House of Chiefs which represents the forum of traditional authority to augment their alienation at the District Assemblies. The male domination is visible in all spheres of the local level administration to the extent that females are poorly heard. This affects their ability to make contributions towards any development process. This perspective contradicts Rogers' (1973:1) findings of studies of peasant societies, where he argues that social and political structures demonstrate the male monopoly of power in public spheres. However, in a larger dimension, women wield real power and exercise a very high degree of control that is not based on models and definitions of power in the political science and anthropological discourse<sup>32</sup>. The assertion by Rogers is challenged by Fox (1969:31) who claims that in most societies, men usually exercise control with their sheer physiological existence in the decision-making process with virtual dominance, by consigning secondary responsibilities to women which are purely domestic<sup>33</sup>. The political anthropology over the years has empirically supported this position.

## **Lack of Resources**

An enhanced participation of Queen Mothers in local governance is contingent on availability and access to resources as a motivator. Resources defined as goods and services and intellectual acumen. The level of formal education of the majority of Queen Mothers is minimal, consequently, they lack trained administrative and management practices and skills demanded by the office. Queen Mothers are compelled to solicit the support of other individuals to assist in the day-to-day activities and operations at their palaces. Most Queen Mothers interviewed complained of a lack of basic office equipment such as computers and printers to enhance their responses to the responsibilities entrusted to them. The option available to most Queen Mothers is the method of oral evidence and the power of memory. The norms and values of the community are passed on from generation to generation as muzzled knowledge. The potential for the women to deliver at the optimal level is reduced. This affects the capacity of the Queen Mothers to contribute to local governance development in particular, and the development process in general. Comparing the challenges of Queen Mothers' accessing resources to those of women generally in South Africa, McEwan (2003) posits that women's access to power and resources, as well as their lived experience as citizens at the local level, are poorly understood and this inhibits their participation in community development<sup>34</sup>.

## **Emerging Insights and Challenges of the Local Governance System**

The management of the local governance system changed with the introduction of the Fourth Republic. The aspirations of internal and external actors also transformed. The growth of the expectations of the citizen of a local government system that can deliver public services has been on the ascendancy as the role of national political party elites to use the system for political mobilization has also expanded. In spite of these anticipations, the performance of the local governance system has been abysmal over the years, epitomized by a poor delivery of basic public goods and services such as the provision of basic sanitation services to communities under their respective jurisdictions. Several factors may account for these administrative deficiencies but a few are numerated here.

### **Dysfunctional Sub-District Structures**

The Local Government Act, 462, 1993 sought to deepen the decentralization process by increasing the participation of every citizens in the country through the involvement of every village to contribute to the governance system in the country by the creation of sub-district structures to support the district assemblies as the apex body. These include Area and Urban Councils and Unit Committees. The responsibilities of the sub-structures include the articulation of interests, needs and development priorities of the communities that also generate interest in democracy by initiating debates on critical local issues, and support the collection of revenues.

Unfortunately these sub-structures are in place, but they are dormant and incapable of organizing any meetings, mobilizing revenue or making decisions on critical local issues that affect the development of these communities under their jurisdiction. Amongst the myriad of reasons provided in the field that include the communities' sparseness which hinders the flow of information and opportunities available, access to the people, the lack of motivation, and the voluntary nature of the unit committees, all disincentive to performance. Most assembly members who are also members of the unit committees and area councils fail to contact their constituent communities, and a significant number live outside their electoral area, thereby reducing the influence and legitimacy of local development. This generates as well as promotes a patron-client relationship at the local centre whereby the Assembly Member becomes the sole source of community representation tactically accepting the ideals of the local political class at the detriment of the people. Local political actors have introduced stringent processes to perpetuate and preserve the status quo to ensure that the levels of negotiations are reduced to the barest minimum to foster this patron-client relationship. The Assemblies have the capacity to influence the members to accept programmes and activities without any analysis on the development of the communities whose mandate they represent, and thus, a community's participation in the various stages of the development process with the assemblies is essentially non-existent.

### **Multiplicity of Centres of Power and Fragmentation: Sources of Authority at the Apex of Local Governance**

The multiplicity of (vigorous) strong political actors and the complexity of these centres of power at the District Assemblies pose a difficult challenge to the achievement of any good local governance. There is no effective well-defined and coordinated administrative accountability system to ensure any development outcome on the part of the District Chief Executive (DCE). The District Chief Executives are occasionally confused regarding whom they are answerable to with respect to the administrative chain of command. The DCE is nominated by the President, and appointed by the Assembly, and is technically under the Minister of Local Government. However, the regional minister, exercising authority over the affairs of the entire region, including the Assemblies, gives directives to the DCEs to the extent of deciding the allocation of some projects in the district. And the Office of the President more often than not, issues directives to the DCEs through the Regional Minister, but on some occasions directives go directly from the Office of the President to the DCEs. The DCE is expected to meet the demands of the people in the district as well as those of the ruling political party executives in the district. The DCEs must also respond to the demands of the traditional authority in the district. The situation is compounded in conflict afflicted districts, where the DCE is further expected to act under the instructions of the Minister of National Security. These multiple authority structures make the line of accountability in the district confusing. The DCE may end up trying to win favour with all of them at the expense of meeting the developmental objectives of the district under control. Hence, the confused chain of the administrative command poses a great challenge to good local governance.

## **Low Interest of Civil Society in Local Governance**

Ghana has a growing and vibrant civil society sector made up of professional groups such as the Ghana Bar Association, the Ghana Medical Association, the University Teachers Association of Ghana, critical think-tanks such as the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Centre for Democratic Development, the Institute of Democratic Governance, analytical religious groups such as the Christian Council of Ghana, the Ghana Pentecostal Council, the Federation of Muslim Councils of Ghana (FMC), vibrant opposition political parties, numerous and diverse non-governmental organizations as well as independent media. All these groups concentrate and converge to demand accountability of the central government and its institutions. Reports of Auditor-General and various commissioned reports are properly scrutinized to educate the public of government actions and inactions. Unfortunately, a diminutive effort is channelled towards local governance development, such as the demand for accountability in local governance. Stakeholders in local governance emerge at four-year intervals during elections of Assembly members. These stakeholders discontinue their activities immediately after the elections. The nature of the disinterest has propelled the managers of local government units to conduct the affairs of local government to fulfil sectarian interests and needs. In a very rare circumstance a report from the Auditor-General stipulating details of financial misappropriation in any Assembly will be discussed at the Public Account Committee in parliament as a committee business, and this without any public interest whatsoever. This state of affairs entices public servants in local governance to perpetuate personal sectarian interest with disdain for a superior authority.

## **Corruption**

Corruption is a huge challenge in local governance development. From the composition of the Assemblies to their service delivery, all sectors are fraught with elements of systemic and structured corrupt practices. Act 642 stipulates that two-third members of respective assemblies are to be elected on a non-partisan basis; unfortunately the majority of elected members represent the interest of political parties. A key lamentation of Assemblies over the years has been the lack of finance to implement development programmes and projects. A major source of the problem is attributable to poor revenue collection mechanisms. Assemblies have failed to adopt any modern technology in revenue collection activities. Insincere, fatigued and manual revenue collection staff continue to be pillars of the assemblies' revenue collection points. Lack of supervision, and through official conspiracy, revenue collectors print and issue fake receipts to taxpayers at the expense of the Assembly. Public accountability of collected revenue is weak and with that knowledge of spending, officers use the collected revenues for unbudgeted expenditures such as a visitation of the First Lady and of ruling political party functionaries. Furthermore, the least revenues generated and received through the District Assemblies Common Fund are profligately utilized through the Tender Entity Committee (TEC) established to procure services, goods and work for the Assemblies.

Therefore few projects are implemented, because projects are over-valued to the detriments of the communities. Also, withholding taxes meant to generate income for national development are added to project value to be paid by the Assemblies as a trade off with the procuring officer to add to his/her percentage to the project value. Finally, the District Chief Executive of the ruling party effectively sponsors the political party in the district. All major partisan activities are financed from the Assembly's budget, irrespective of there being no relationship with assembly's budgeted programmes and activities. The expenses incurred are splashed under various expenditure items. This contributes significantly to bad local governance with an inefficient delivery of public service. In some Assemblies, the provision of streetlights with public security services are absent; the organization of sub-committee meetings has been affected, with a 'no resources' excuse. The five sub-committees of social services, finance, development, works and security are required by law to meet monthly, yet, the inability of Assemblies to pay sitting allowance affect committee meetings wherein some committees cannot meet in a quarter which affects the decision-making process of the assembly as implemented projects are not completed on schedule, coupled with a poor quality of service, and work delivered.

## **Conclusions**

Local governance in Ghana is undergoing a series of transformations by various actors who demonstrate their stake in the management of the resources in their respective communities. The Metropolitan, Municipal, District Assemblies are charged with the responsibility to develop the social and economic resources in the towns, cities and villages in their areas of jurisdiction. The process has failed to recognize the involvement of the people who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of their services; and has excluded key actors of development such as the Queen Mothers from consultation, planning and implementation of programmes and projects. Although the traditional authorities in Ghana, including the Queen Mothers, are not constitutionally mandated and empowered with any defined and specific roles in the promotion of local governance, several tangible and intangible development projects are implemented by Queen Mothers for the benefit of the people in the communities.

This paper argues without legal foundation that Queen Mothers contribute significantly to the development as well as the progress of the communities under their jurisdictions in spite of the varied problems encountered. It is important that the converging appropriate points are established to promote good local governance. The Queen Mothers provide services to augment the programmes of the Department of Social Welfare such as widow homes, orphanages, caring for abused women victims, HIV/AIDS patient care, and therefore, they ought to be supported materially by the respective Assemblies. Assemblies are required to develop programmes which will build the capacity of Queen Mothers to sharpen their skills on Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR), financial management and fund raising.

The Assembly has the capacity to assist the Queen Mothers to be able to organize a thought, a speech and do presentations on subjects that affect their communities to achieve eventual benefits. The Assemblies need to officially recognize the Queen Mothers with an invitation to the general assembly meetings as well as to serve on committees as ex-officio members of the Assemblies as a process to integrate them into the mainstream development process for the purpose of promoting good local governance in the country.

Corruption, financial and material leakages at the district assemblies are extremely high, and thus, none of the Assemblies has been courageous to produce an annual financial statement of the Assembly detailing all incomes and expenditures attributed to the Assembly. Public procurement is a major channel for this deviant public behaviour. It is recommended that potential and implementing contractors must be evaluated. Assemblies must determine the standard drawings and prices of projects, the beneficiary areas of the project must be represented at the Tender Entity Committee meetings to share the time and value of the contract with the community. Next, the community should be empowered to monitor the project(s) implementation process within the context of available documents. Legislation should be promulgated instructing all Assemblies to prepare annual financial statement showing all revenues accrued by the Assemblies and how these incomes were disbursed with appropriate beneficiaries. Such progressive action will undoubtedly contribute to a process to sanitize the local management of public resources in Ghana.

## End Notes

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