

ENHANCING LOCAL LEVEL PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING THROUGH THE SUB-DISTRICT STRUCTURES IN THE BAWKU MUNICIPALITY, GHANA.

Mohammed Sulemana^a, Imruna Dramani^b, Abdul-Momen Salia^c

^a *University for Development Studies, Faculty of Planning and Land Management, Department of Governance and Development Management, Ghana*

^b *Institute of Local Government Studies, Tamale Campus, Ghana.*

^c *Institute of Local Government Studies, Tamale Campus, Ghana.*

Abstract

Decentralization as a strategy of governance is to ensure popular citizen participation at the local level to facilitate development. In Ghana, under the Local Governance Act 1993 (Act 462), Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are principal actors of development within their areas of jurisdiction and are expected to ensure popular and authentic participation of residents in the development process. The mixed methods design was adopted for this study while the study design deployed was the case study design. Questionnaire, interviews, and focus group discussions were employed in gathering data from a sample size of 397 respondents. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. It was found out that various forms of participation ranged from consultation, participation in planning, decision making, implementation, dispute resolution, monitoring and evaluation, among others. Equally, it emerged that level of involvement of the grassroots at the local level in terms of development decision was generally low at project planning stage and monitoring and evaluation stage. The study recommends that the Municipal Assembly should provide annual regular capacity training workshops for all members of sub-district structures (SDSs) in the area of minutes writing, basic bookkeeping, plan formulation and report writing and presentation as well as other relevant topics.

Keywords: Decentralization, Participation, Sub-District Structures, Sub-Saharan Africa

1. Introduction

Decentralization became an important policy objective since the 1970s and 1980s as governments in developing countries sought to create more socially equitable pattern of economic growth and to meet the basic needs of the poor (Ahwoi, 2006; Ayee, 2008; Ikeanyionwo, 2001; Inanga and Osei-Wusu, 2004). Many countries are decentralizing fiscal, political and administrative responsibilities to lower-level governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. There are a number of rational justifications for decentralization. Among others, decen-

tralization policy is pursued because of its important effects on resource mobilization and allocation, macroeconomic stabilization, service delivery and equity, all of which affect local economic development and poverty reduction.

Fiscal decentralisation covers the set of rules that defines roles and responsibilities among different levels of governments for functions such as planning and budget preparation, budget execution, revenue generation, the intergovernmental allocation of budgetary resources and public sector borrowing (Tettey, 2006). According to Ahwoi (2010) fiscal decentralization lies at the centre of

any decentralised local government system as its rules define the generation and distribution of financial resources that are utilised to respond to citizens' demands.

Political decentralisation involves the transfer of political power and authority to elected sub-national bodies that are autonomous and fully independent from the devolving authority (Ahwoi, 2010). Political decentralisation allows citizens to elect their own regional and local governments and participate in their governance by determining their own development priorities, and making and approving their own development plans (Shah and Shah, 2007; Steffensen and Trollegaard, 2003).

Administrative decentralisation involves the transfer of decision-making authority, resources and responsibilities for the delivery of selected public services from the central government to other lower levels of government, agencies, and field offices of central government line agencies. Administrative decentralisation allows regional and local governments to appoint approved statutory bodies; make ordinances and bye-laws; hire, manage and discipline personnel; manage their own payroll; and implement approved development plans (Shah and Shah, 2007; Steffensen and Trollegaard, 2003).

Decentralisation has been part of Ghana's public administration system since the colonial era. The British colonial indirect rule was a form of decentralisation (Ayee, 2000). During this period, the colonial administration governed the people indirectly through the native traditional political institutions by constituting the chief and elders in a particular location as the local authority. The institutional and legal arrangements of Ghana's public administration system after independence had gone through a number of reforms. In Ghana, the new local government system was launched to respond to the demands of the changing global administrative, socio-economic, political, administrative and financial matters of the state (Local Government Information Digest, 1991, World Bank, 1991; World Bank, 1997).

According to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (2005), the reforms

were aimed at establishing efficient decentralised government machinery as a means of building a strong foundation for grassroots participatory development, promote popular participation in the decision making process and good governance at the local level (Ahwoi, 2010 and Ayee, 2008). Development is a shared responsibility of the Government, District Assemblies (DAs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the Private Sector, the Traditional Authorities and the beneficiary communities and for this reason, the promotion of grassroots and popular participation is prerequisite to the attainment of development objectives.

The institutional structure of the Local Government system consists of the Regional Coordinating Council, a four-tier Metropolitan and three-tier Municipal/District Assemblies with their Sub-district Councils of the Urban/Town/Area/Zonal Councils and Unit Committees (Fynn, 2011; Kauzya, 2007; Ofei-Aboagye, 2000). The Local Government structure involves the transfer of responsibility, resources, accountability, and rules from Central Government to the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs), Urban/Town/Area/Zonal Councils and the Unit Committees. According to the Local Government Act (Act 462) and the LI 1589 (1994), these sub-district structures (SDSs) were to serve as the vehicle of facilitation and promotion of participatory development to the grassroots and rallying points of local enthusiasm (Ayee, 2008).

The successes of these reforms process cannot be overemphasized. The increased number of MMDAs and the SDSs between 1988 and 2016 has been encouraging. At the time of the study in March 2017, there were 216 MMDAs, 34 Sub-Metropolitan District Councils (SMDC), 934 Town and Area councils, 250 Town Councils, and 626 Area Councils and 108 Zonal councils and 5,000 Unit Committees (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2016). This has led to an increase in local level participation into governance issues and the bridge of the financial gaps to development initiatives through the creation of the District Assembly Common Fund

(DACF) Act 1994 (Act 455) in the country.

Notwithstanding the successes, the local government system has some challenges. At the sub-district level, unit committees and the area, town and urban and zonal councils have been ineffective and are still incomplete due to large numbers and lack of public interest (USAID, 2010). This is where the interest of this research lies. Sub-structures constitute one of the most important avenues for poor people, women and minorities to participate in the development of their communities and influence the decision-making processes that are directly relevant to their lives. As the centre of Ghana's decentralization programme, these sub district structures are supposed to be established, operationalized and supported to function to enhance the participation of the people at the grassroots in governance and issues affecting them. Studies by Gaventa (2002), Gyimah-Boadi (2009), and Inanga and Osei-Wusu, (2004) have proved otherwise.

The Bawku Municipal Assembly is one of the MMDAs in the Upper East Region and one of the only three Municipalities in the region. Staffs of the Zonal/Urban/Town/Area Councils and Unit Committees are therefore important players as far as their functioning is concerned coupled with the existence of the structure itself. The 2015 annual report of the Assembly report little on the contribution of these sub-structures to the overall development process of the Municipality. It appears these sub-structures have only its membership in books but physically are 'ghost membership' making them non-functioning.

The seal of decentralization as a strategy of governance is to ensure popular citizen participation and ownership of the governance system especially at the local level to promote development (Der Bebelleh & Nobabumah, 2013; Fritzen & Lim, 2006). In Ghana, under the Local Governance Act 1993 (Act 462), Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are principal actors of development within their areas of jurisdiction and are expected to ensure popular and authentic participation of residents in the development process (Aye, 2000; Bandie, 2007; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Ghana, 2010). To

achieve this objective of participation in the development process, the MMDAs have sub-structures, which are Sub metropolitan, Urban, Town, Zonal and Area Councils, and Unit Committees to facilitate the process (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Ghana, 2010).

The issue however, is that majority of the prior studies focused generally on local governments promotion of participation (Der Bebelleh & Nobabumah, 2013; Dufhues, Theesfeld, Buchenrieder & Munkung, 2011; Gyimah & Thomson, 2008; Kellow, 2010; Sana, 2011) with few concentrating on operations and activities of the sub-district structures that promote participation in the development process. Consequently, Aye (2000) argues that researches and studies on sub-district structures are not pursued strongly compared to that of the MMDAs because sub-district structures are perceived as concentrating on minor issues. The dearth of studies on sub-district structures' facilitation of engagement of the public in the development process creates a knowledge gap that requires an examination.

An equally important fact to note is that albeit many of the earlier researches centred on participation (Dufhues et al., 2011; Gyimah & Thomson, 2008; Sana, 2011), they neglected assessing the level of public participation in the sub-district structures. Only few studies (Agyemang, 2010; Forkuor & Adjei, 2016) examined the level of public's participation in the development process within the district sub-structures. It is nevertheless, significant to state that participation in the sub-district structures activities for local level development is hardly guaranteed in the localities (Forkuor & Adjei, 2016). This produces a grey area, which necessitate an enquiry.

Furthermore, the previous explorations on participation in local governance hinged on general challenges faced in participation (Abubakari & Ayuune, 2014; Gyimah & Thomson, 2008; Sana, 2011) with little attention paid to the issue of challenges to the public's participation in the development process within the sub-district structures of the MMDAs. Although Abanga (2014) looked at the challenges of sub-district structures but this will not focused on participation in the

development process. This generates knowledge gap, which calls for an interrogation.

Besides, though some of the earlier studies examined some issues on sub-district structures (Ayee, 2000; Forkuor & Adjei, 2016), they nonetheless, ignored examining the issue of improving public's participation in the development process within the sub-district structures of the assembly. Researchers, like Bandie (2007), nonetheless, proposed measures such as strengthening of the sub-district structures in terms of financial and human resources as a means of facilitating public participation in the development process at that level. The limited research in this area, therefore, creates a grey area that demands a probe. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates local level participation in the development process within the sub-district structures in the Bawku Municipality.

The questions this research seeks to answer is: how can local level participation in the development process be achieved through the sub-district structures in the Bawku Municipality and what is the public's level of participation in the development planning process within the sub-district structures?

2. Theoretical Framework

This research adopted the rational choice theory to explain public's participation in the development process at the sub-district level in the Bawku Municipality of the Upper East Region of Ghana.

2.1. Rational Choice Theory

The rational choice theory of participation centres exclusively on the individual and the choices that he or she makes (Whiteley, 2005). The theory sees citizenship engagement emerging from the choices which individuals make, and these reflect the costs and benefits of the choice situation, broadly defined (Whiteley, 2005). The thought is that individuals choose their levels of participation in the light of these costs and benefits and at the same time, they are influenced by norms and beliefs about the rights and obligations of

citizenship. In the view of Uhlaner (1986), the distinguishing characteristic of the rational actor approach to the explanation of behaviour is the opinion that individuals have preferences and act instrumentally to achieve what they desire. Rational actor models bring to the study of participation a concentration on the motivations of individuals (Shiraz, 2015).

Downs (1957) posits that individuals will participate, for example by voting, only if the benefits of such involvement outweigh the costs. The rational choice theory denotes that political action is the product of a calculus of costs and benefits (Whiteley, 2005). As far as participation is designed to produce collective benefits, rational individuals are unlikely to get involved. Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Barry (1996) argue that in the context of rational choice theory of participation education aids individuals to be more capable in making decisions.

The rational choice theory is bedevilled with some limitations. Uhlaner (1986) asserts that, though the rational actor models give a coherent account of motivations for political action, it fails to deal adequately with the community within which action occurs and does not give predictions of future behaviour. Despite these weaknesses in the theory, it will be useful for the research. Particularly, it will be applied in elucidating sub-district structures that promote participation in the development process, participation level in the development process within the sub-district structures, challenges to participation in the development process at the sub-district, and strategies to improve participation in the development process at sub-district.

2.2. Equation of citizen participation

In discussing citizen participation and the likelihood of a person's participating or not participating, Downs (1957) equation of voter turnout is adopted to formulate the citizen participation equation as:

$$B = |(O)(S)+D-\lambda\log C|\leq 1$$

Where λ is a constant whose value ranges from 0.1 to 0.001

Where B is the total benefit a citizen will derive from participation, O is the probability that his or her opinion will be considered, S is the persons' perception of the probability that his or her participation will change his or her situation, C is the cost to the individual in participation in terms of time, money, and other resources, and D is the emotional satisfaction the person would derive from participation.

If, B is positive, the citizen is assumed to gain a reward from participating that outweighs the costs and will therefore participate in the decision making process. The more positive B is, the more likely an individual is likely to participate in the decision making process. Therefore, the sense of satisfaction gained from participation (D) must make up any deficit caused by the cost and provide sufficient incentive for a citizen to participate (Sulemana, 2014).

3. Research Design

The research used the mixed methods research design by combining both qualitative and quantitative research approaches.

The cross-sectional study design guided this research. According to Kumar (2011), a cross-sectional design is best suited to the research that aimed at finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon, situation, problem, attitude or issue, by taking a cross-section of the population. Kumar adds that such a design is useful in obtaining an overall picture as it stands at the time of the study. This design is appropriate because it gives a snap shot of the public's participation in development planning at the sub-district level at a particular period.

The study population covered the unit committee members, Assembly members, staff of the Bawku Municipal Assembly, civil society organisations involved in promoting participation in local governance, traditional authorities and the residence of the Municipality.

The sample size comprising 397 respondents was determined using Yamane's (1967) statistical method, which is: $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$, where: n = the desired sample size; N = the population size is 47,780; and e =

the acceptable sampling error (0.05). Stratified random sampling was used in selecting the public based on sex, as the population is heterogeneous. This was critical to ensure that both sexes are captured in the sample. The sample distribution were 177 for males and 220 for females which was on a proportional basis. For the sample distribution of the key informants, it is presented in Table 1. Purposive sampling was employed in choosing the assembly members, presiding member, unit committee members, planning officer, budget officer, coordinating director, chiefs and staff of civil society organisations as key informants because they have adequate knowledge about the public's engagement in development planning at the sub-district structures.

Table 1: Sample Distribution of Key Informants

No.	Respondent category	Sample
1	Assembly members	4
2	Presiding member	1
3	Unit committee members	4
4	Planning officer	1
5	Budget officer	1
6	Coordinating director	1
7	Civil society organisation	2
8	Traditional authority	2
	Total	16

The collection of data from the respondents of the research was done with the aid of the interview guide and the interview schedule. The interview method was used in consonance with the research design. The unstructured form of interview was used to collect data. Furthermore, not many residents of Bawku can read and write in the English language. The interview (unstructured) enabled the researcher and the field assistants to translate questions into the local languages which are widely spoken in the area. The unstructured form of interviewing also enabled the researcher add, subtracts, and explain issues to the understanding of the respondents. This was supported with tape recordings. The interview guide and interview schedule was used as the instruments for collecting data.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis, presentation and discussion of the data gathered on enhancing local level participation in development planning through the sub-district structures in the Bawku Municipality. The first section of this chapter begins with a description of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents to serve as a foundation for understanding the factors facilitating or impeding enhanced grassroots participation in decision making. The second section examines the level of involvement of the sub-district structures and other stakeholders in development decision-making process in the Bawku Municipality and also presents an analysis of the relationships between the District Assembly, the sub-district structures and other stakeholders in the community level development decision-making process. It continued with an examination of the challenges that hamper the public's participation in the development process. The last section identified ways to improve the public's level of participation in the development process within the sub-district structures.

4.1. Socio-Demographic characteristics of respondents

According to Gyimah and Thompson (2008), basic socio-demographic variables such as age, sex, level of education, and occupational type are known to have an influence on an individual's enthusiasm and capability to participate in decision making at any level. It was therefore important to highlight some of the socio-demographic characteristics of the community respondents which have the potential to influence their positions in participation in development process within the Municipality.

4.1.1. Sex distribution of respondents

The research found that there are more female 220 (55%) than male 117 (45%) respondents captured in the sample.

4.1.2. Age distribution of respondents

The age of the respondents ranges between 20 and 65 years as presented in Figure 1. The age of

the respondents were categorised into five year intervals in order to know the particular age group that contains the majority of respondents. From the category of 20-25 to the category of 56-60 form the labour force grouping. Cumulatively, 395 (98%) of the community respondents were within the labour force and were self-employed. The labour forces are the "bread winners" of their families.

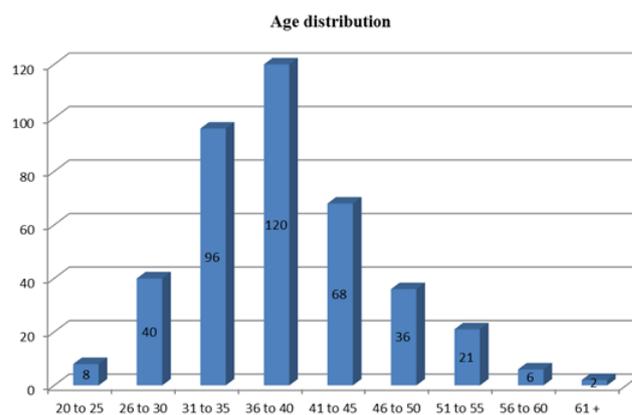


Figure 1: Age distribution of respondents

In Ghana, mostly in rural areas, age are likened to wisdom and for this reason adult age groups are given priority when it comes to decision making. It is therefore not surprising that the Bawku Municipality has the factor of age as consideration in selecting members to be on the Unit Committees. This is because the people in the Municipality also buy into the idea that consider the elderly to be more tolerant, mature and are wise when it comes to decision making.

4.1.3. Level of education of respondents

Literature demonstrates that formal education has a significantly positive influence on willingness to contribute to the development process. It is therefore anticipated that these citizens may be more aware of developmental prospects and challenges, leading to a higher willingness to contribute to development initiatives. Regardless of whether the education was gained through a formal or an informal process, it is anticipated that well-informed citizens are more aware of developmental prospects and challenges and have stronger developmental attitudes, because they

are more knowledgeable about the possible damage (Whiteley, 2005). The research found that the minimum level of education of the respondents was primary level while the highest was Post-Graduate Degree (see Table 2).

Table 2: Level of education of respondents

Levels	Fre- quency	Per- cent	Valid Per- cent	Cumula- tive Percent
No formal Education	75	18.9	18.9	18.9
Primary	102	25.7	25.7	44.6
Mid- dle/JHS	150	37.8	37.8	82.4
SHS	48	12.1	12.1	94.5
Tertiary	22	5.5	5.5	100.0
Total	397	100.0	100.0	

4.1.4. Occupation of respondents

Besides educational attainments, occupational status, although not always the case, which directly influences the income level of an individual plays an important role in one's participation in grassroots decision making. This is because financial and other resources are needed to get involved, campaign and participate in local level governance such as becoming an Assembly member or a Unit Committee member. From the research's investigation of the occupational status of unit committee members, it was revealed that farming is the dominant (44.6 percent) economic activity among the members in Bawku Municipal whilst only 4 percent and 10.1 percent of respondents worked in the Teaching and civil service in the Municipality respectively. The predominantly rural nature of the Municipality explains the high engagement of Unit Committee members in farming. Table 3 presents the occupational status of the respondents.

4.1.5. Marital status of respondents

Table 4 presents the marital status of respondents. The research revealed that most of the respondents were married as at the time of the data collection.

Table 3: Occupational distribution of respondents

Occu- pation	Fre- quency	Per- cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Arti- san	70	17.6	17.6	17.6
Civil service	40	10.1	10.1	27.7
Farm- ing	177	44.6	44.6	72.3
Trad- ing	94	23.7	23.7	96.0
Teach- ing	16	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	397	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Marital status of respondents

Sta- tus	Fre- quency	Per- cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sin- gle	78	19.6	19.6	19.6
Mar- ried	294	74.1	74.1	93.7
Di- vorce	25	6.3	6.3	100.0
To- tal	397	100.0	100.0	

4.2. District Sub-Structures promotion of public participation

This section examines the extent of involvement of community members in development process of the district by the sub-district structures. In other to justify the response of the community members towards the issues on public participation in the development process of the Municipality, respondents were first asked to indicate the length of stay (number of years) they have lived in the community. A majority (95%) of the respondents have lived in the community for more than 5 years which is an indication that they would have had enough information concerning the Municipal Assembly and developmental processes of the Municipal office.

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4.2.1. Key Stakeholders to development in the district

Information from the key informants showed that, there are various stakeholders involved in the development process in the district. This include; Community members, Assembly members, Unit Committee members, Zonal Council Members, traditional authorities, youth and traditional authorities etc. These stakeholders participate in the development process of the district in various forms according to the key informant interviews. The various forms of participation ranged from consultation, participation in planning, decision making, implementation, dispute resolution, monitoring and evaluation, among others. These forms of participation are geared toward the deep involvement of the people to influence and take control over decisions and projects that affect their wellbeing.

The research revealed that, the mechanisms the Assembly has put in place to facilitate grassroots participation in development processes include the preparation of action plans, the presentation of annual accounts, the keeping of accounting value books and the keeping of minutes of meetings as mechanisms from the sub-districts to the people. In addition, regular local elections or electoral accountability were other mechanisms the Assemble adopted to facilitate participation of the grassroots in development process of the district. Finally, they relied on mechanisms such as town and interest group meetings, hearings, and community involvement in budgeting and planning. The findings is in line with the assertion of Bland (1999) that, public participation is encouraged when citizens are generally informed and provide input into key local decisions directly at public meetings through surveys, occasional referenda, or other means.

Respondents were asked questions to assess their knowledge on the members of the Unit committee. This was to complete the examination of the involvement of the public in the development process of the Municipality. Sixty five (65%) of the respondents agreed they know the members of the unit committee members.

4.3. Level of participation

Table 5 presents the results on the forms and level of participation of key stake holders in local level decision making.

Table 5: Forms of public participation in development process

Forms	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	0.3	0.3	0.3
Planning	4	1	1	1.3
Dispute Resolution	2	0.5	0.5	1.8
Project Identification	62	15.6	15.6	17.4
Project Implementation	6	1.5	1.5	18.9
Resource Mobilization	148	37.3	37.3	56.2
Monitoring and Evaluation	6	1.5	1.5	57.7
Project Sustainability	12	3	3	60.7
Environmental Protection	10	2.5	2.5	63.2
Political Decision Making	128	32.2	32.2	95.5
Social Activities	18	4.5	4.5	100
Total	397	100	100	

The major involvement of the unit community members by the sub-district structures in the development processes of the Bawku Municipality is in political decision making (32.2%) and in resource mobilization (37.3%). This was not surprising as local politics and resources mobilization are often considered as the 'life-blood' for local

governance and development. When communities engage their citizens and partners deeply in community development agenda, more resources are raised to enhance living standard and develop the community in a more holistic and beneficial way. This implies that the Bawku Municipality consider the grassroots as key partners in resource mobilization towards the development of their communities.

The level of involvement of the grassroots at the local level in terms of development decision was generally low at project planning stage and monitoring and evaluation stage. Participation was however high in resource mobilization and political decision making.

Interview with some of the members of the Area/Zonal council showed that, the MDA implemented some projects in their communities without their involvement. They indicated that they are given information only when there is the need for contribution to be made toward such projects, either in terms of money or labour. The limited involvement of the sub-district structures, the youth and Assembly members in relevant aspects of decision making such as project identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is inimical to the realization of the objectives of political decentralisation in Ghana which seeks to give citizens the 'voice' in making decisions that affect their lives. It is also important to note that the involvement of the grassroots in resource mobilization can be effective and result in maximum benefits to the area only if people and their representatives at the local level are actively involved in every stage of the development decision making. Local people will naturally be committed to the mobilization of resources as well as the implementation and sustainability of development projects they are actively involved in and perceive them to be their own but not development activities/projects imposed on them.

In-depth interviews with some key informants at the Municipal Assembly rather revealed different responses on the level of grassroots participation in decision making from that obtained from the interviews and discussions with the grassroots representatives. Almost all the key staff

were unanimous in indicating that the sub-district structures were totally involved in every aspect of decision making ranging from planning (preparation of Community Action Plans), project identification, selection, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects and finally to the handing over and maintenance of the project. The Municipal staff interviewed however identified the lack of adequate financial resources to organize workshops or meeting as a major challenge to facilitating the participation of the communities in the planning and provision of projects at the local level.

Questions were asked to find out the level of satisfaction of the representatives of the Sub-District Structures about their involvement in community development processes. The information revealed that 74 percent of the respondents were not satisfied with their level of involvement especially in project planning and implementation, only 16 percent were somehow satisfied, 7 percent reported being satisfied and only 3 percent were very satisfied. When the 74 percent of unsatisfied respondents were further asked the reasons for their non-satisfaction, they indicated that due to their non-involvement during the planning process and the implementation of projects, some projects which are sometimes not the priorities of the community members, are implemented.

4.4. Challenges to public's participation at the sub-district level

Although the concept of decentralization in local governance has come to stay as a constitutional and legal requirement in Ghana since its introduction in 1988, its implementation has been and is still faced with a number of challenges. Following the field surveys, the study identified the following factors as hold-ups to effective grassroots participation at the Sub-District Level.

4.4.1. Finance

As identified by Dukeshire and Thurlow (2002), in order for communities to play active roles in the policy-making process, it is necessary for their members to have access to resources including financial resources. Despite this basic requirement,

the study identified that community development actors at the sub-district level do not or have very limited access to financial resources which in turn affect their ability to effectively impact the policy-making process. All respondents mentioned lack of adequate funding as a major constraint in carrying out all their duties with respect to grassroots participation in local decision making. For instance, the Assembly members and Unit Committees mentioned that they do not have the financial resources to organize community sensitization programmes to educate community members on certain government policies and the need for them to also pay their taxes for the development of the Municipality. This according to the Assembly members and Unit Committees create a situation where they are unable to perform these functions and hence limiting the ability of the community to derive the intended benefits of this exercise.

As stated in local governance Act 462, for example the Unit Committee members and Assembly members are to go round their electoral area to meet with people at the grassroots to collate views and also dissemination government policies to them but as a results of inadequate funds they are unable to perform these functions.

4.4.2. Staffing

It emerged from the findings of the research that the Bawku Municipality could not employ the proposed three permanent staff (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) of the Area/Zonal councils which has created a situation for the employment of casual staff in all the Area/zonal councils in the Municipality. During the FGDs, the Area/Zonal council members expressed concerns about the effects of the situation and revealed that due to the voluntary nature of the work of the casual workers of the Area/Zonal council coupled with the very low allowances of those who are lucky to get remuneration), such causal workers relinquish their jobs when they find paid jobs elsewhere whilst others abscond with the revenues mobilized. Human resources serve as the driving force of any organization.

4.5. Low educational levels and lack of understanding of the decision making process

The low educational levels among persons who contest for Assembly positions and Unit Committee elections and subsequently get elected also limit their ability to be engaged effectively in the decision making process as it tends to impede their understanding of the decentralization process. The study revealed that about 30% of Unit Committee members in the study area have never had any form of formal education or literacy training. This affects the extent to which they can be engaged in local level decision making. The low literacy levels also affects communication among the grassroots actors such as the Unit Committees, Chiefs and Assembly Members as some of them do not understand the working language of the District Assembly which is English. Discussions with the youth groups on the functions of the Unit Committee and the Assembly members revealed a general lack of understanding and knowledge among the youth on the workings of the local government systems and the functions of the Unit committees and the Assembly members. Also, out of the two (2) FGDs held with the Area/Zonal council members, only one group was very familiar with the working of the Area Council and the role they need to play for the development of their electoral areas and the Municipality as a whole. This means that the capacity of the council members needs to be upgraded to integrate them fully into the system for effective grassroots participation.

4.6. Political Interference/Polarization of Grassroots Decision Making

Despite constitutional provisions for local level governments to be non-partisan, political interference and power struggles has been one major challenge to effectively engaging development actors at the grassroots in decision making. Discussions with the Zonal/Area council members indicated that there is an issue of power struggle within the Area/zonal council as to who become the Area/zonal council chairman. The respondents traced political differences as the main cause of the power struggle. The Unit Committee

also presented similar concerns of not being given attention at the Assembly level if staff of the Assembly suspect that they are politically inclined to a particular political party that they do not support.

4.6.1. Inadequate Lack of Information Flow

According to the Unit Committee and Assembly members, the Municipal Assembly staffs do not give them adequate and timely information with regard to development issues within their communities they represent and sometimes pass such information directly to the ordinary members in the community thus undermining their relevance. In a similar view, the chiefs also mentioned that, during their interactions, they had never reached any final point in terms of decision making and in some cases, they are not even consulted. Efforts need to be put in place to ensure genial interrelationships among the various actors to ensure free flow of information which is essential for effective grassroots decision making.

4.6.2. Ways to improve the public's level of participation in the development process

The following measures were suggested by the respondents geared toward promoting effective grassroots participation in local governance within the Bawku Municipal Assembly

4.6.3. Provisions of financial assistance

One way of improving grassroots participation is to allocate funds to the actors of development to facilitate them to work and to move round their Electoral areas for proper consultation with the people at the grassroots level for their concerns according to the respondents. Therefore, funds should be created and set aside for meeting budgetary requirement and enhancing actors' participation in grassroots decision making process.

4.7. Education, training, and orientation

Education, training and orientation are major components in the improvement of grassroots participation, according to respondents, orientation on the programmes and project of the Municipal Assembly will open up their horizon and deepen

their level of understanding of government programmes and projects toward improving the lives of the grassroots people.

5. Conclusion

The level of involvement of the grassroots at the local level in terms of development decision was generally low at project planning stage and monitoring and evaluation stage. Participation was however high in resource mobilization and political decision making.

Information flow in any organization is crucial for the survival of organization; therefore major stakeholders for every organization must co-exist and interact well to yield good results for the organization. This means that sub-district structures must also interact well to promote grassroots participation in local governance. Lack of information flow in any organization does not promote good relationships. According to the Unit Committee and Assembly members, Municipal Assembly staffs do not give them adequate and timely information with regard to development issues within their communities they represent and sometimes pass such information directly to the ordinary members in the community thus undermining their relevance. Convivial interrelationships among individuals, groups, and organizations are key to the smooth running of any governance system. Therefore, regular meetings and orientation workshops should be organized by the Municipal Assembly. This will ensure genial interrelationships among the various actors and free flow of information which is essential for effective grassroots decision making. The absence of adequate logistics necessary for the performance of functions of the Sub-District Structures to aid in effectively engaging grassroots in decision making is one major challenge of the Sub-District Structures. One way of improving grassroots participation is to allocate regular and sufficient funds to the actors of development to facilitate them to work and to move round their Electoral areas for proper consultation with the people at the grassroots level for their concerns.

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6. Recommendations

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the Common Fund Secretariat should team up to revise the DACF disbursement formula to capture Operational Sub-Districts as a second indicator under the Responsiveness factor in addition to the existing improvement in Internally Generated Funds factor. Consequently, MMDAs that provide permanent office accommodation, recruit, maintain and pay the salaries of staff of SDSs and for that matter make their Sub-Districts operational, be awarded more points which would qualify them to earn relatively higher common fund allocations.

The MMDAs should intensify their monitoring roles over the SDSs in the following areas: the keeping of minutes of meetings, keeping of receipts and simple financial records, regularity of meetings, regular presentation of accounts to the people and self-initiated and executed projects. So as to collate enough data on the performance of the various SDSs to guide them in the allocation of funds to the Sub-Districts. This measure would motivate the Sub-Districts to apply standard and acceptable administrative practices.

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