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Our Perspective

Decentralization, Cities and Development: Some Retrospective Issues and Challenges



This year marks two decades of implementing decentralization reforms in Ghana – arguably regarded as the most extensive on the African continent - with the promulgation of Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law 207 in 1988. The initiative for reform was inspired by Rawlings' PNDC government's political philosophy of "power to the people" and its structural adjustment programme (SAP), whose principles concern the role and responsibilities of the state and the expanding role of the private sector, both in the sense of private commercial entrepreneurship and voluntary community initiative. These philosophy and principles

have been reinforced in the 1992 Constitution which not only regarded decentralization as a means of achieving democracy and participatory governance but also stipulates the establishment of a sound and healthy economy, with a reduction in the role of the state in the economic life of the country through shifting more responsibility to the private sector, and developing an environment of investor confidence.

Implementing decentralization in Ghana is therefore ultimately aimed at two things: (a) strengthening and expanding local democracy; and (b) promoting local, social

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and economic development, thereby reducing poverty and increasing choices of the people. Consequently, the objectives of decentralization in Ghana are consistent with those of the Victoria Falls Declaration of 2000 on an "African Vision on Decentralization", which, among others, stipulates that "the purpose of decentralization should be to devolve power and responsibilities to the lower echelons, promote local democracy and good governance, with the ultimate objective of improving the quality of life of the people".

Two decades of decentralization reforms is an occasion for stocktaking, highlighting some progress and challenges. The reforms over the last two decades involve those legal acts and administrative measures that initiate a transfer of responsibility (authority), resources (human and financial), accountability, and rules (institutions) from central government to local government units. This involves a long political, fiscal and administrative process.

It is important to understand what has, and has not developed from these reforms in Ghana over the period. In the view of *The New Legon Observer*, this can be done by asking the following questions in order to tease out the answers: (a) What has been the contribution of decentralization to the development of our cities and towns? (b) How does the structure of decentralization affect the development process in the districts? (c) What are the capacity challenges facing the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs)? (d) Will electing District Chief Executives, as some politicians propose to do, make them more effective and what are the implications for the supposedly non-partisan system of local government?

Our perspective is that the decentralization reforms over the past two decades have achieved marginal success and there is therefore more room for improvement in terms of what they sought to achieve. In spite of the reforms, Ghana is still regarded as a centralized state or what one might call "centralized decentralization". Admittedly, the reforms have made considerable progress in the establishment of political and administrative institutions to implement decentralization. They include (i) the use of the MMDAs by some people, notably Dr Paa Kwesi Nduom, the presidential candidate of the Convention People's Party (CPP), who was an assembly member of the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem District Assembly, as a training ground for launching their political career; (ii) the phenomenal increase in the number of districts from 65 in 1988 to 170 in 2008 – an increase of 262%, which President Kufuor said is to improve administration, deepen democracy and governance, ensure equitable distribution of the national cake as well as accelerate overall national development. There are calls by some politicians that all the 230 constituencies should be made districts without taking cognizance of the huge capital outlay involved in their creation; (iii) the

belated increase from 5% to 7.5% of total government revenues for the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) for disbursement to the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) for development by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government in the first quarter of 2008; (iv) the creation of the Local Government Service with the passage of Act 653 of 2003 aimed at securing the effective administration and management of local government by providing technical assistance to the decentralized institutions; and (v) the holding of District Assemblies and Unit Committee elections in 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2006.

The New Legon Observer notes that in spite of the progress, MMDAs have not performed creditably to the satisfaction of their constituents. First, they have done little to improve the quantity, quality or equity of public services in their areas. Our cities and towns are not cleaner than they used to be before the start of the reforms in 1988. Accra Metropolitan Assembly, for instance, epitomizes the several problems that have been inherited by all the MMDAs and their chief executives, which have largely contributed to their removal from office. Some of the problems include its ever-increasing population which results in increased responsibilities in terms of sanitation, planning, infrastructure and enforcing regulations and standards; inadequate logistics in terms of staffing, funding and basic logistics such as refuse containers; degenerative habits of some of the inhabitants including littering everywhere, defecation in gutters and beaches; hawking and marketing

all kinds of merchandise on pavements; motorists parking everywhere and even abandoning vehicles in the middle of the street at the slightest sign of functional disability thereby creating traffic jams; unauthorized building structures in every available space thus adding to enormous problems of inadequate planning, sanitation and infrastructure; lack of identification of unsanitary sites such as community refuse containers, choked drains and culverts and poorly maintained public toilets.

Second, decentralization has the potential to increase access to information about local needs, conditions and priorities, which are then incorporated into local development plans.



In the Ghanaian case, however, even though the Standing Orders enjoin the MMDAs to provide information on their notice boards, few of them have really met the requirement. If decentralization is to be regarded as a success, it should help in keeping the rural people, particularly the rural poor, informed of their rights and opportunities available to them. This may not directly improve their basic conditions of life, but it will make an

indirect contribution towards improving knowledge, choice and self-esteem. In addition, the public hearing of district, sub-district and local action development plans as envisaged by the National Development Planning (System), Act (Act 480) of 1994 has become a public relations hoax as these plans are prepared in a rush without the needed consultation of the local people. In cases where plans are discussed with the local communities, they are technical documents written in English, the translation of which is difficult to be followed by the ordinary citizen.

Third, structural challenges affect the ability of the MMDAs to properly deliver their responsibilities. For instance, the mixed model of representation, that is, 70% elected and 30% appointed members, who are to bring technical skills to the operations of the MMDAs, has not worked well as the central government has failed to make appointments based on expertise, stakeholder participation and gender balance but rather on partisanship. In most instances, the stakeholders such as traditional authorities were not consulted about the nominations thereby provoking anger and resentment.

Furthermore, the sub-district structures such as the Unit Committees, Town, Urban and Zonal Councils, which are to provide basic services such as the registration of birth and deaths are too many, small and non viable. In addition, they have too many members, which accounts for the problem with their composition and virtually have no personnel or financial resources to perform their functions.

Fourth, the non-partisan system of the MMDAs, which is supposed to keep their operations open for citizens without party affiliation and to reduce the risk of local and community conflicts, has become intensely partisan. The appointment of the 30% of nominated members is mainly based on party affiliation. Above all, the District Chief Executive (DCE), Presiding Member, the Member(s) of Parliament and the assembly members are all political representatives and certainly draw their authority, legitimacy and constituency from different sources. It is also an open secret that in the district assembly elections of 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2006, most, if not all, political parties either sponsored or supported individual candidates to win seats in the MMDAs, contrary to the Constitution. This is because the parties wanted to control the grassroots in order to boost their chances of winning national elections. Consequently, the so-called non-partisanship of the MMDAs operating within a multi-party democratic arrangement is a charade.

Fifth, the appointment of the DCE is a vexed issue. While some advocate that the present arrangement should continue, that is, s/he should be appointed by the President with the prior approval of the two-thirds majority of the MMDAs members present and voting, others hold a contrary view, that is, the DCE should be elected. Those who are in favour of the present arrangement argue that given the adversarial partisan politics prevalent in the country, it will be difficult for a DCE from a political party different from the ruling party to work effectively and achieve his/her objectives; anything to the contrary will result in frustration, tension and red tape which will eventually undermine the development of the district. In addition, there is the fear that a DCE who does not belong to the same party in power, will out of

frustration sabotage government policies and programmes. Those who are, however, in favour of the DCE directly being elected by the electorate do soon grounds of accountability. They argue that effective accountability of the DCE to the MMDA cannot be achieved under the present arrangement. The problem is that the DCE is centrally appointed, is far more powerful than the Presiding Member (PM) of the MMDA, and understands him or herself to be both the local chief executive and the representative of the central government. Through all this, s/he exerts great influence over the MMDA and simultaneously precludes development of effective institutions of collective choice. In addition, the DCE is the most influential member of the MMDA, as reflected by chairmanship of the Executive Committee (EXECO), the nerve centre of the MMDA. He or she exercises executive and coordinating responsibilities. Neither in law

nor practice does the PM, the chairman of the MMDA, ever present a real threat to the dominance and pre-eminence of the DCE. For example, the PM is specifically excluded from the membership of the EXECO, on the assumption that this would provide a balance when the DCE makes reports on the activities of the EXECO to the full MMDA. However, this has not worked. Instead of a "check or balance", the PM is essentially removed from these key decision processes of the EXECO, and the MMDA is ineffective in influencing the EXECO decisions. In short, the direct election will make the DCE accountable directly to the electorate in the district and the MMDA and this has the potential of contributing to socio-economic development.

Sixth, the Local Government Service, which is to provide the human resources development and management structure, is yet to be fully



operational. Some members of the Local Government Service Council are frustrated at the slow pace of implementing the Local Government Service Act in terms of detailed guidelines for recruitment, training, promotion, remuneration and disciplinary procedures in the Service. The integration of departments into the MMDAs has still not been done while it is unclear as to the extent of autonomy to be granted to the MMDAs in human resource management issues. Building capacity of the MMDAs to perform their functions and responsibilities is a key factor in the decentralization process and this has lagged behind in spite of ad hoc and piecemeal capacity building initiatives undertaken by institutions such as the World Bank, DANIDA, DfID, CIDA, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Government of Ghana itself.

In the view of *The New Legon Observer* (NLO) decentralization and its contribution to cities and development in Ghana over the past two decades can be characterized as a case of “missed opportunities”. Important problems lie within the legal and institutional framework, which must be revised. In addition, and more importantly, is the fundamental responsibility of the central government to provide a climate that is conducive to the adoption of innovative strategies and practices with potential to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the MMDAs. We need a proactive and efficient Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment to coordinate and lead in the reform process. However, the rapid turnover

of the political headship of the Ministry (five ministers under the NPP government) does not augur well for the robustness and effectiveness needed to implement the reforms.

In this issue of the NLO, three contributions are devoted to decentralization, cities and development. The first by Joseph R.A. Ayee deals with the objectives of decentralization in Ghana, the progress made so far in



terms of service provision in towns and cities, the reasons for the gap between the objectives and their realization and financial issues facing the MMDAs.

The contribution by Afua Branoah Banful draws attention to the fact that in spite of some of its challenges, the formula-based system used to allocate resources through the District

Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) provides the institutional framework for dealing with clientelism and patronage – challenges confronting government and politics in Ghana.

Frank Tackie in his contribution takes us through memory lane by reviewing the land-use structure of Accra and the various changes it underwent, pointing out the problems of urbanization and its toll on the city's infrastructure and development.

S.K. Gaisie's contribution though not directly related to decentralization emphasizes the interrelationships between population and development. Given the importance of demographic measures such as total fertility rate and life expectancy at birth as indicators of development he calls for their integration into the development planning process as a means of reducing poverty.

Helen Nankani and Anoop Mirpuri discuss Barack Obama's chances of winning the Democratic Party presidential race in the United States, focusing particularly on the factors that will work for and against him. Their contribution also dilates on the significance of Obama winning the US presidential election and its implications for people of African descent and the world at large.

Ebow Daniel provides a hilarious account of what he terms, “The Ghana Dictionary Project: Review of Incoming Entries”, in which he traces the history of the pronunciation of some words and abbreviations which have become part of Ghanaian formal vocabulary.

Decentralization and Town Development in Ghana

Joseph R.A. Ayee¹

Introduction

The potential contribution of decentralization (that is, the transfer of power, functions, responsibilities, resources and accountability from the central government to local government units) cannot be over-emphasized. This is because decentralization has been associated with a number of beneficial outcomes that have either a direct or indirect bearing on local governance. Local governance as pointed out by scholars such as Olowu and Wunsch, Rondinelli and Brian Smith may be evaluated in two ways. First is to focus on process: whether the transfer of authority, resources, and accountability, and the development of an open local political process and local political and administrative institutions are working in ways that suggest local priorities and needs are driving local decision making. Second is to focus on outputs and outcomes: whether local governance is bringing expected tangible benefits in terms of better schools, health systems, water supply, or roads, or intangible “empowerment” and social service delivery that enhance peoples’ welfare.

Towns are economic and social units as well as administrative and political communities. Therefore, town development is an aspect of local governance. It refers to the capacity of local institutions to mobilize human and financial resources to implement policies and programmes that will lead to effective and efficient provision of basic services such as sanitation, to improve citizens’ standards of living in their defined areas of jurisdiction.

In other words, town development is the outcome of improved responsiveness to local demands for effectiveness and efficiency in public service delivery. This enables the institutions to gain legitimacy and support from the communities and has the potential of enhancing systems of public accountability.

The objectives of decentralization in Ghana

Even though the political objective of decentralization in Ghana according to the 1992 Constitution is to “make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative and financial machinery of government to regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life and in government”, its town development role cannot be glossed over. Accordingly, the Metropolitan (population over 250,000), Municipal (population over 95,000) and District (population 75,000 and over) Assemblies (MMDAs) have been designated the: (i) highest political and administrative authorities; (ii) planning authorities; (iii) development authorities; (iv) budgeting authorities; and (v) rating authorities. Specifically, the functions of the 170 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) as contained in the Section 10 (3) of the 1993 Local Government Act (Act 462) include, among others, the following:

- To be responsible for the overall development of the district and to prepare and submit for

approval a district development plan and a budget. The development plan goes through the Regional Coordinating Council to the National Development Planning Commission for approval and the budget to the Minister of Finance;

- To formulate and execute plans, programmes and strategies for the effective mobilization of the resources necessary for the overall development of the district;
- To initiate programmes for the development of basic infrastructure and provide municipal works and services in the district;
- To ensure, through control of all physical planning in the district, the development, improvement and management of human settlements and the environment;
- In cooperation with appropriate national and local security agencies, to be responsible for the maintenance of security and public safety in the district.

In addition to these functions, the individual Establishing Acts for each of the MMDAs, which supplement the Local Government Act (Act 462), include a list of 86 specific responsibilities, which include the following:

- To promote and safeguard public health;
- To regularly inspect the metropolitan area for the detection of nuisance or any condition likely

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to be offensive or injurious to health;

- To establish, install, build, maintain and control public latrines, lavatories, urinals and wash places;
- To establish, maintain and carry out services for the removal of night-soil from any building and for the destruction and treatment of such night-soil; and
- To provide, maintain, supervise and control abattoirs.

The functions of the MMDAs relating to waste management and sanitation have been given a further impetus in the Environmental Sanitation Policy published in May 1999 by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. The policy enjoins them to set up structures with effective mechanisms to coordinate waste management with other aspects of environmental sanitation.

This is a tall list of functions and responsibilities, some of which are also provided by other service agencies such as the Ghana Highway Authority, ministries of Health and Education, Environmental Protection

Agency and Community Water and Sanitation Agency. The reality on the ground, however, is that there is passing of the buck between the MMDAs and service providers as far as the provision of some of the utilities and services, namely, water, roads, education, electricity, cemeteries and crematoria are concerned. There is therefore the need to review the legislative instruments creating the MMDAs so that appropriate modifications can be made to their functions vis-à-vis those of similar service providing institutions such as the Ghana Education Service, the Ghana Health Service, the Ghana Library Board, the Ghana Highways Authority, the Ghana Water Company, the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), Ghana National Fire Service, Forestry Commission and the Mortuary and Funeral Facilities Committee.

Progress thus far with decentralization and town development

Some progress has been made towards the devolution of authority to MMDAs. Specifically, they, on the advice of the District Tender Boards, have been given the power to award contracts not exceeding GHC 2,500;

they are the sole taxing authority in the districts; they make by-laws, which are subject to approval by the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment before they become operative; they prepare their own annual budgets that reflect their estimated and actual recurrent and capital expenditure; they are corporate bodies which can sue and be sued; and they are the sole district planning authorities, charged with the overall development of the districts.

The decentralization programme has also made some contribution to local economic development in a number of ways. First, it enabled the local people to show some interest in their own affairs and participate, even if minimally, in policies and programmes of their areas. Second, it has led to an incremental access of people living in previously neglected rural areas to central government resources and institutions. In spite of the huge costs involved, the increase in the number of districts from 65 to 110, 138 and 170 in 1988, 2004 and 2007 respectively has brought some human and financial resources to some of the districts. Most of the Assemblies have undertaken development projects such as the construction and

maintenance of feeder roads, school classroom blocks, clinics and markets as well as the provision of water and electricity. Thirdly, decentralization has created a huge number of opportunities for mostly young people who aspired to a career in politics. In the first Parliament of the Fourth Republic, it is estimated that about 35% of the Members of Parliament used to be assembly members.



These achievements may be said to be marginal because decentralization has not led to improved town development. There is therefore a gap between the promise of decentralization and its town development reality in Ghana. The 2005 African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Report on Ghana laments that “Stakeholders generally agree that decentralization is not working as it should. Participants at Wa generally feel that unless one has contacts in Accra, one will not be attended to. Consequently, one of the critical issues that emerged from the Ghana National Programme of Action ... is to ... hasten the decentralization process to create opportunities for citizen participation in local governance and to promote sustainable local development”. Similarly, the National Decentralization Action Plan of 2003 acknowledges that in spite of the constitutional provision that Ghana must be a decentralized administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts, “The reality has been a growing concentration of power and resources in key Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) that plan, implement, monitor and evaluate essential services to communities”.

One of the basic functions of the MMDAs is sanitation. However, they have not been able to do this, prompting President J.A. Kufuor in 2006 while inaugurating the DAs to pay more attention to sanitation. This call was a follow-up to an earlier one in January 2004 at a “People’s Assembly” to mark three years of the rule of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government at which the President said that the most critical problems facing the country’s cities as a result of population explosion with its attendant economic, security and social problems is the chaotic and chronic sanitation condition

confronting them, especially Accra, with a population of four million. In addition to poor sanitation and inadequate provision of other basic services, natural disasters such as floods, bush fires and epidemics occur and the MMDAs are not in a position to solve them immediately because of lack of resources.

The decline in service delivery by the MMDAs led to the recognition of the importance of other players and alternative institutional approaches in the delivery of services. The main players in service delivery are voluntary and citizens-based organizations such as the youth groups, residents associations, town or area development associations (such as the La Mansaamo Kpee (LMK)) and urban “home town” associations and elite diaspora groups (those with connections outside the community and thus the ability to raise funds and overseas Ghanaians). They provide services in areas such as education, health, sanitation, water, conflict resolution, land management and citizens’ security. Many of these groups became more prominent in the cities in the 1990s and have played a large role in self provision of services and developmental projects. Some started providing infrastructure such as clinics, schools and new toilets with others providing labour to tackle the waste and drainage problems and maintenance of sanitary facilities, while others mediated in disputes.

The education sector is rich in parent-teacher associations (PTAs) (many linked to hometown associations), which raise money and try to improve educational standards. The faith-based organizations (FBAs) including missions and churches have come to play a big role in this respect. For example, the Ahmadiyya PTA in Kumasi founded in 1974 has not only raised money to support physical infrastructure such as classrooms and

water supplies, but also annual bonuses to teachers for good work. The Otumfuo Educational Fund launched by the Asantehene, Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu II provides scholarships and helps motivate school children and teachers.

In spite of the contributions of these civil society organizations to the development of towns, there are unanswered questions about accountability and the interest of these bodies in articulating their members’ concerns as service providers.

Explaining the gap between promise and delivery

How can one explain the gap between the promise of decentralization and its delivery of services as part of town development? This is mainly due to the incapacity of the MMDAs to perform their statutory responsibilities. Their administrative capacity has been undermined by a number of factors. First is the resistance of the line ministries and departments, to their placement under the MMDAs. Under the Local Government Act (Act 462) of 1993, instead of each district having 22 decentralized departments, Metropolitan Assemblies, Municipal Assemblies and District Assemblies are to have 16, 13 and 11 decentralized departments respectively. This shift is to enable the DAs to perform their functions effectively. However, considerable difficulties have been experienced in the integration of the line ministries and departments. For instance, there is an apparent conflict between certain decentralized departments and organizations and the line departments or organizations, namely, education (Ghana Education Service Act (Act 506, 1995)), health (Ghana Health Service and Teaching Hospitals Act (Act 525, 1996)), fire (Ghana National Fire Service Act (Act 537, 1997)), forestry (Ghana Forestry Commission, Art. 269 of 1992

Constitution and Act 571)), disaster management (National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) (Act 517)) and library facilities (Ghana Library Board, Act 327). All these services and organizations are listed among the decentralized departments of Assemblies under Act 462. The apparent conflict between Act 462 and the enactments raises issues of both policy and law – whether these Services could and should be decentralized. The creation of these Services seems to have undermined the Local Government Service, which came into being with the passage of the Local Government Service Act (Act 656) of 2003. The Service is to comprise persons holding non-elected public office in the Regional Coordinating Councils, District Assemblies and their sub-district structures. Its objective is to secure the effective administration and management of local government in the country. The creation of the Services may therefore be seen as a means towards re-centralization.

Second is the loss of institutional memory as a result of either a change in government as happened in 2001 which resulted in the transfer of some civil servants or the local government elections in 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2006, which resulted not only in the loss of position of some assembly members but also the replacement of some of the one-third government appointees to the MMDAs. This loss of institutional memory shows the unpredictable nature of the process of capacity building. Furthermore, most of the MMDAs do not have adequate staff and logistics to perform their responsibilities. For instance, in a study conducted by Ayee and Crook in 2006 on the Accra Metropolitan Assembly,

there were inadequate numbers of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and building inspectors. In addition, poor conditions of service of the staff served as a source of de-motivation.

Third, district chief executives (DCEs) who are expected to be managers at the district level are not always properly performing their roles but are rather overloaded with a lot of workshops and meetings, most of which do not seem to be productive and relevant to their managerial roles.



Moreover, there appears to be a duplication of their functions with the Executive Committee (EXECO). In terms of Article 243(2)(b) of the 1992 Constitution and Section 20(2)(b) of Act 462, the DCEs are responsible for the day-to-day performance of the executive and administrative functions of the MMDAs. Similarly, Section 19(1) of Act 462 charges the EXECO with responsibility for the performance of executive and administrative

functions of the MMDAs. This has been a potential source of bureaucratic conflict, which seems to have impeded effective administration of some of the MMDAs because DCEs and the EXECO are performing the same but parallel functions.

Fourth, there are also serious structural problems. For instance, the legal and institutional framework has placed too much emphasis on the district to the detriment of the sub-district structures, namely, Area, Town and Zonal Councils and Unit Committees, which are closer to the ordinary citizen, given the functions they are expected to perform such as the registration of birth and deaths, naming of streets and education of the people on their rights, privileges and obligations. Some of the challenges facing the sub-district structures are difficulty in constituting their membership because of the large number of members required, inability of the MMDAs to provide operational resources for sittings, payment of staff and inadequate financial and human resources. This has limited the flow of community-based inputs into planning and implementation.

Fifth, there seems to be weak responsiveness of the MMDAs to the needs of their communities. Responsiveness involves the ability of the MMDAs to involve the people in projects and programmes so that they become sustainable. Consequently, district plans and sub-district or local action plans must be subject to public hearing before adoption. It has not been possible to do this for the following reasons: (a) most of the MMDAs are in such a rush to submit their plans that there is no time for them to subject them to the hearing; (b) in districts

which held the public hearing, the officials found that contributions on the plan are not far-reaching enough and therefore are discouraged to send them the next time round; (c) general apathy on the part of citizens and the feeling that the MMDAs have not satisfied their expectations as well as the perception of corruption within the Assemblies have precluded most of them from attending the public hearing which they see as time-wasting.

The assembly members, on the other hand, are to discharge their responsibilities in due regard to the national interest and the interest of the people in their district. However, the requirement that, assembly members should meet their constituents before and after every Assembly meeting has, in most cases, not been met for obvious logistics problems such as the meagre sitting allowances while at the same time monetary demands are made on them by some of their constituents.

Sixth, and more importantly, even though theoretically the decentralization system is non-partisan, in practice, it is not. DCEs have to deal with several masters or political layers such as the President, regional ministers, ministers, party officials, minority parties, assembly members, multinational corporations, donors and residents. These are certainly huge power players. Most DCEs therefore become fish in a big political pawn in a boiling political crucible. Some lost their job² largely as a result of circumstances beyond their control; similar circumstances which also made the work of their predecessors difficult and unenviable.

Most of the jobs that DCEs are asked to do such as pulling down illegal/

unauthorized structures, removing hawkers from the streets and enforcing bye-laws, especially in the big cities of Accra and Kumasi, have political implications in horribly partisan Assemblies. To enable them have a political base, they should have been popularly elected but are rather "appointed by the President with the prior approval of not less than two-thirds majority of the members of the Assembly present and voting at the meeting" as stipulated by the 1993 Local Government Act, Act 462.

Financing the decentralized units

Finance is an important aspect of decentralization since it more or less determines, to a significant extent, the autonomy of decentralized units. Without adequate sources of revenue, decentralized units cannot perform their functions, roles and responsibilities. Internally generated funds (IGF) of the MMDAs are rates, lands, fees and fines, licenses, rent, investment income, which constituted 18% of their revenues in 2006. IGF was low for a number of reasons. First, tax bases of the MMDAs are static because of weak databases for determining revenue potentials. Second, there are complex structures in terms of planning for revenue collection in most districts. Extracts from the Auditor General's report in 2006 reveal that over 200 revenue collectors misappropriated revenues generated. Third, mechanisms for collecting internal revenues are ineffective. For instance, revenue collections from property rates are low because properties have not been properly valued. This

problem is exacerbated by the poor logistics for revenue collection. Fourth is the absence of appropriate sanctions or punishment for tax defaulters. Most residents, especially those in the informal sector, do not feel obliged to pay taxes.

To deal with the low level of IGF, a unique feature of the 1992 Constitution



is the creation of the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) into which not less than five percent of total government revenue is paid for disbursement to the Assemblies based on criteria to be approved by Parliament. The amount is paid into the DACF in quarterly instalments. In 2006, the DACF provided 51.8% of revenues for the MMDAs while total grants given by the central government, in the form of salaries, proceeds from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and donor support account for the remaining 30.2% (see Table 1).

The DACF is the main source of revenue of the Assemblies and provides a constitutionally guaranteed minimum share of government revenue, and thus some financial independence. Some of the arguments against the DACF are that the five percent minimum of average is insufficient,

² The Accra Metropolitan Assembly since 1983 to date has the following as its chief executives: (i) E.T. Mensah (1983-1989); Kofi Portuphy (1989-1991); Ishmael Aryeetey (1991-1993); I.S. Akai Nettey (1993-1994); Nat-Nunoo Amarteifio (1994-1998); Samuel Addoquaye Addo (1999-2001); Solomon Ofei-Darko (April 2001-January 2004); and Nii Adjiri-Blankson (January 2004 to date).

given the broad range of responsibilities devolved to the Assemblies, central government directives to the Assemblies determine about 75% of expenditure, which gives one the impression that the dependence of the Assemblies on the DACF leads to a loss of operational autonomy and the delay in disbursement. Other challenges include the failure of the Assemblies to submit promptly their budgets for the prompt release of their share of the DACF, the failure of DCEs to strictly abide by laid down procedures for the disbursement of the DACF which has landed them in trouble after they have left office and the delay in releasing the disbursement which sometimes has been in areas for two quarters.

revenue to 7.5%. In all, a total of GH¢ 55.5 million was released for the first quarter of the year. In addition, each of the 230 Members of Parliament were allocated GH¢14,482.10 to enable them continue with their projects and programmes. The allocation of funds to MPs, a source of tension between DCEs and MPs, is a controversial one as one school of thought is that they are legislators and therefore have no business engaging in development. Even though there is some merit in this argument, it is instructive to note that MPs campaign and make promises to the electorate, which should be fulfilled; otherwise they will not get re-elected at the expiration of their term of office.

government attached. Some officials of MMDAs have complained that reliance on central government has reduced their autonomy and independence in the pursuit of local governance agenda.

Conclusion: what can be done?

The problems facing decentralized units especially in the cities are increasingly formidable. Expanding populations demand more services, and the rising expectations of citizens reinforce these demands. Yet resources are scarce so that demands are not fully met. The consequent disappointments have helped breed frustration, which sometimes has turned to apathy and alienation from the MMDAs.

There is no doubt that some political choices are needed if decentralization is to contribute to the development of towns in Ghana. Its success is neither uni-dimensional nor spontaneous – it is a complex, ongoing and cumulative process that is enhanced through the positive action taken by both local and central government officials. In addition, important measures such as the collection of better data for use in planning and budgeting, further streamlining of operating procedures, revenue base diversification, upgrading and expansion of certain services, improved professional training of employees, broader access to capital finance and reform of central-local fiscal relations, should be taken. Underlying all these measures should be a sense that the

primary responsibility of the MMDAs is to their constituents, not to the central government, politicians and bureaucrats.

Table 1: Composition of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies Funding Sources (2006)

Sources	Percentage (%)
Internally Generated Funds (IGF)	18
Rates	4
Lands (e.g. royalties)	2
Fees and fines	6
Licenses	3
Rent	1
Investment income	1
Miscellaneous	1
Total grants given by the central Government: salaries, HIPC, donor support, other transfers	30.2
DACF	51.8
Total revenues	100

Source: Office of the District Assemblies Common Fund Administrator, 2007.

To increase disbursement from the DACF, the NPP government since January 2008, has increased the not less than 5% of total government

It is clear that since IGF falls short of expectations, the MMDAs have over-relied on central funding with its attendant strings from the central

Reducing Clientelism and Patronage: The District Assemblies Common Fund

Afua Branoah Banful¹

Introduction

The prevailing empirical conclusion about resource allocation in Africa is that governments provide more funds to regions that support them politically. Indeed, the African electorate has come to believe that it is gravely detrimental if the candidate that one supports does not assume power. This perception has been perpetuated by a history of rulers preferentially developing areas where their political support is concentrated. For example, in Ghana, Miguel and Zaidi² show that in 1998 Ghana government spending per pupil at an average of \$23 was \$15 higher in districts that voted overwhelmingly for the political party of President Jerry John Rawlings. In Kenya, Barkan and Chege³ find that new road resources in the 1980s were largely targeted to President Daniel Arap Moi's political strongholds.

In the latter part of the 20th century, many African governments began to reject the development paradigm of monolithic planning and implementation. The continent saw various degrees of decentralization. Typically however, no central government fully ceded its political and financial mandate for local development to lower levels of

government. Often central involvement in local government takes the form of life-giving grants. Aside from the efficiency-related perils of local governments' heavy reliance on central grants, there is the troubling possibility that these grants become nothing more than patronage tools for incumbent governments.

There is ample evidence that politics as the basis of relative development between tribes, classes and geographic regions elicits negative con-

the pernicious nature of African politics. In addition, resource allocation and social policy based mainly on economic and welfare considerations could bolster the furtherance of development. The institution of the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) is Ghana's attempt at separating resource allocation from the political realm. The evidence reveals that a district's (DACF) outcomes have become increasingly unrelated to its political affiliation. One cannot say that all is well with the system; but it is maturing in a desirable direction.

The District Assemblies Common Fund: A Solution?

Ghana is a pioneer in its formula-based approach to making financial transfers from the central government to local government bodies. These District Assemblies were established during the decentralization drive of 1988 and are mandated to carry out a substantial share of local government. However,

for several years after their creation, they performed dismally primarily because of their inability raise revenue. The 1992 constitution of Ghana recognized the need for a financial life-line for the District Assemblies and the District Assemblies Common



sequences both economically and politically. As such, a plausible expectation is that if development funds reaching an area can be made less sensitive to its political affiliation, the ensuing reduction in the high stakes of losing power could possibly temper

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Correspondence: abanful@post.harvard.edu I would like to acknowledge Professors Michael Kremer, Matthias Schündeln, Rohini Pande, Kwame Boafo-Arthur and Joseph Ayee; Mr Fred Tetteh, Mr Samuel Aidoo, Mr Patrick Zioku, Mr Magnus Nicol, Dr Grace Bediako, Dr Regina Adutwum, Mr Occy Banful and Mr William Baah Boateng. All errors are my own.

² Miguel, E. and F. Zaidi (2003) Do Politicians Reward their Supporters? Regression Discontinuity Evidence from Ghana Working Paper, University of California, Berkeley.

³ Barkan J.D. and M. Chege (1989) "Decentralising the State: District Focus and the Politics of Reallocation in Kenya" The Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 27, No.3, pp 431-53, September

⁴ Real cedis with 2000 as base year.

Fund (DACF) was established in 1994. By 2005 more than ₵2046 billion (equivalent to 204.6 million new GH cedis)⁴, a figure roughly equal to 25% of total Ghana Government local expenditure, had been disbursed directly to Districts. By all accounts, the DACF galvanized the District Assemblies. On average, 88% of each Assembly's annual expenditure is derived from this grant thus creating a direct link between central government influence and the welfare of citizens.

A general difficulty in showing that some government transfers are influenced by political considerations is that the criteria for resource allocation can often be arbitrarily amended to justify any action. The institution of the DACF minimizes this problem because there is a documented formula for determining each district's annual allocation. Nevertheless, there is a possibility that the choice of the formula variables, their weighting, and non-linear transformations used in calculating district allocations can be manipulated to achieve politically motivated targeting of certain areas.

What do the data from the headquarters of the DACF and the Ghana Electoral Commission say? The data shows that the amount of funds actually released to districts, their DACF Disbursements (henceforth Disbursements), generally differs from the amount derived from a strict application of the formula, their DACF Allocation (henceforth Allocation).

Figure 1 shows that both the districts' per capita Allocations and

Disbursements in real terms have been growing over time for government-supporting as well as non gov-

Allocation ratio is also shown and has in general been decreasing over time⁵. The difference between

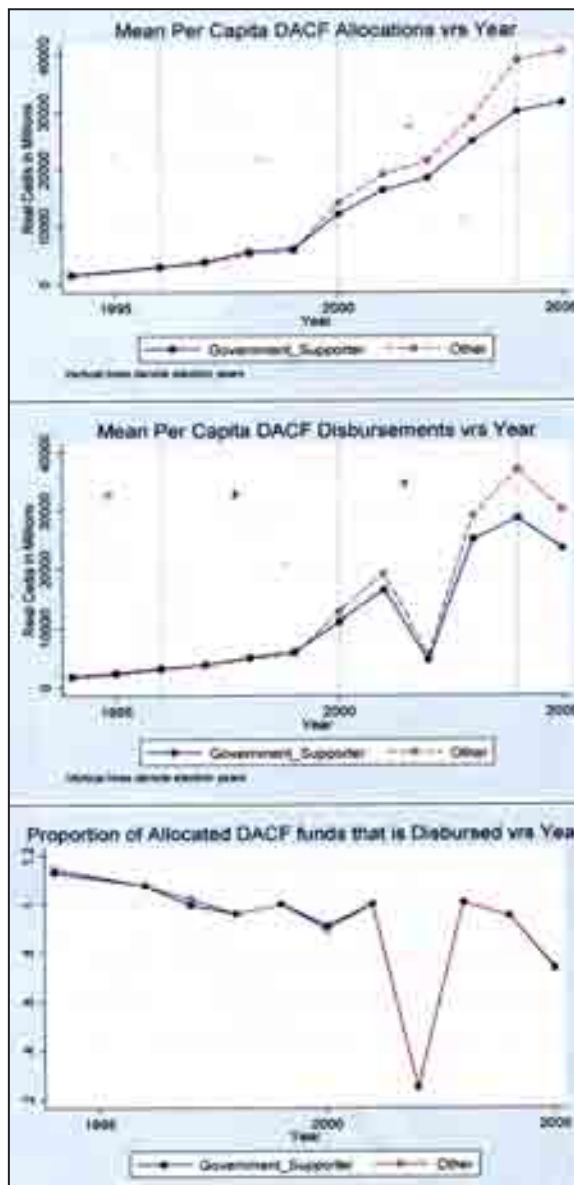
Allocation and Disbursement creates an opportunity for the government to achieve political goals by exploiting districts expectations while using non-random deviations of Disbursement from Allocation to achieve a variety of economic outcomes⁶. But other than these cursory observations, how does the DACF fare?

Does the Political Affiliation of a District affect its DACF Outcomes?

The simple answer is yes, but not as much as one would have expected. In terms of per capita Disbursement, per capita Allocation and ratio of Disbursement to Allocation, government-supporting districts had an initial advantage over non government-supporting districts which has been decreasing over time. Furthermore, the advantage for government-supporting districts is more pronounced in terms of per capita Disbursements than in per capita Allocations.

It seems then that there is more political influence in the grants districts actually receive than in the announcements of their grants. Specifically, the initial advantage of government-supporting districts over similar non government-supporting districts in terms of per capita Disbursement was 7.2% but only 3.1% in terms of per capita Allocation. The proportion of Allocation that is disbursed to districts was also initially a statistically significant 0.04 higher in gov-

Figure 1: Summary of DACF Outcomes by political affiliation of District



Source: District Assemblies Common Fund Office memoranda and author calculations

ernment-supporting districts. The average of the Disbursement to

5 The DACF office explains the low disbursement to allocation ratio in 2002 as a result of difficulties involved with changes in the DACF personnel during transfer of administration from the first DACF Administrator to the second.

6 Allocations are announced at the beginning of a fiscal year and signal to districts how their grant levels compare with other districts'. On the other hand, information on other districts' disbursements is much less readily available and is typically available after a lag of more than four quarters.



dential election have better four-year aggregated outcomes while the political party it supported is in power. A possible explanation is that the ruling government disburses more DACF funds to areas where it faces stiff competition in its road to victory to detriment of areas that it is assured of winning.

Is There a Political Cycle in the DACF?

ernment supporting districts. Considering the four years comprising each election cycle since 1992, government-supporting districts have a statistically significant advantage over others in all outcomes in the first election cycle. During these years government-supporting districts received on average 17.3% more DACF Disbursement and 15.2% more DACF Allocation than non government-supporting districts. Again the advantage for government-supporting areas is less pronounced in the more commonly available Allocation data.

In the second and third election cycles, there is no significant difference between the four-year total outcomes of government-supporting districts and others. This evidence does not imply that the advantage or disadvantage that a district faces in any particular year is eliminated. Time and credit constraints are typically very important in the production function of public goods and the timing of the release can have important ramifications for how the funds benefit a population.

The evidence also points to some political manipulation of the district outcomes based on the competitiveness of the political market there. Districts in which the incumbent faced more competition in the last presi-

The answer to this question is a resounding yes. Ghana's presidential and parliamentary elections are held in December while announcements of DACF grants are typically concluded by the end of the first quarter. Even the least astute political strategist would advocate for the total endowment of the DACF to be extra large in an election year to remind the people of the generosity of the incumbent. The evidence points to exactly this sort of manipulation of the Disbursement and Allocations in that they consistently show the highest growth in election years. In an election year, the increase in Disbursement is 25% higher than in other years and the lowest growth is experienced two years after an election. Whether by coincidence or design, the election cycle in Disbursement is significantly more pronounced than that in Allocation. There is also some evidence of targeted differences in the election cycle by political affiliation of a district. Government-supporting districts perceive a lower variation in the growth of their disbursement over the election cycle compared to non government-supporting districts.

Is the DACF formula manipulated for political reasons?

The fact that all of the major formula changes were in election years and in

2002, when a new regime appointed the DACF administrator, raises speculation about political manipulation. The DACF formula from the previous year is used to calculate counterfactual Allocations for years in which formula underwent a dramatic change. In the election years, 1996, 2000 and 2004, I find that government-supporting districts would have received on average a larger proportion of the fund than non government-supporting districts if the formula had not been changed. It appears that the DACF formula is manipulated to achieve a political goal of attracting votes for the incumbent government in non government-supporting districts in election years. The non election-year formula change of 2002, suggests a different motivation which is borne out by the evidence. The counterfactual in 2002 suggests that the formula was changed to benefit districts which had brought into power the new government in 2001.

Was there Political Influence in the 2004 redistricting?

On the whole, the 2004 redistricting was not exploited as much politically as it could have been. Using the fact that population density and population are the main statutory considerations for delineating district boundaries an estimation was made of the correlation between a district's political affiliation and the probability that it was split in 2004. The evidence is encouraging that there was no political influence in the re-demarcation of district boundaries in Ghana. There is however strong evidence that more constituencies, which are sub-district bodies, were created in districts that were deemed National Democratic Congress (NDC) political strongholds. Simply put, the probability that a constituency that supported NDC in the 2000 presidential or parliamentary elections is split is 10% higher than a

similar constituency that voted for the New Patriotic Party in either of these elections.

The DACF formula has a factor that divides a proportion of the total DACF allocation equally between all districts. In addition to this base amount, each Member of Parliament receives an equal amount of Constituency funds. Therefore a possible avenue for channelling more funds to an area because of its political affiliation would be through creating smaller districts and constituencies than warranted by population and land area considerations. Also creating smaller constituencies increases the representation that an area has in the country's parliament.

Is there Political Influence in the performance of District Assemblies?

This question is particularly interesting because of the formal non-partisan politics required for election to a District Assembly. Even though elected members form a majority, final decisions are made by the District Chief Executive (DCE), an appointee of the central government. One can expect that Assemblies in government-supporting districts are more politically harmonious because elected Assembly members are more likely to belong to the same political party as the DCE.

If this structure results in antagonism that impedes the planning and budgeting functions of the Assemblies, those that are more politically harmonious are more likely to achieve a higher percentage utilization of their disbursement. One can also imagine that a more politically disharmonious Assembly has to convene several meetings in order to reach any con-

sensus thereby driving up administrative costs. On the other hand it may be easier for a politically harmonious Assembly to use money in costly administrative endeavours such as visits to program sites and official perks⁷.

There is evidence that in the early years of the DACF, District Assemblies in areas that voted for the ruling central government were better able to spend down their Disbursement. In 1994 and 1997, Assemblies in government-supporting areas were able to achieve percentage utilization ten and twelve percentage points more respectively than non government-supporting areas. Part of the higher utilization rate likely comes from intervention by the office of the DACF itself. In 1994 during the transfer of projects centrally run by the government to district assemblies, the office of the DACF handled the payment of some projects for some districts. The amount paid by the DACF on behalf of districts is larger in government-supporting districts than in similar non government-supporting districts.

Another measure that is indicative of an Assembly's overall performance is administration costs as a proportion of Disbursements or of total expenditure. Except for the year 2000, there is no systematic difference in this measure between government-supporting and non government-supporting districts. However in 2000 and only 2000, there is evidence that administration costs as a proportion of both total expenditure and District DACF disbursement is higher in Assemblies in government-supporting districts. I suggest that this observation is linked to the fact that 2000 was a major election year. Some Assemblies may have engaged in higher community outreach and in

other activities requiring Assembly funds. It follows that such activities would only happen in government-supporting districts because typically, the performance of a District Assembly is attributed to the political party in power at the highest level of government.

Conclusion

The results of the analyses of the DACF Allocations and Disbursements are encouraging and suggest that even though there is scope for political influence in a formula-based system of central transfers, over time the institution shows a tendency to limit the extent to which politics drives resource allocation. Such formula-based systems of monetary transfer could become the instrument of precipitating local development that is relatively free of central political influence.

There are however many challenges that still have to be addressed. While these results are reassuring about the increasing de-politicization of resource allocation from central government to local government in Ghana, critical questions remain on how efficiently DACF funds used at the district level.

Can one declare the DACF a success at resource allocation if grants are captured for use by special interest groups at the District level? It is also important to continuously evaluate the political influence in the DACF outcomes and encourage District Assemblies to share of data on actual grants received. It seems the system is working but continued vigilance is needed to restrain politicians from exploiting the political influence of the DACF as the endowment continues to grow.

⁷ Personnel emoluments for Assembly members and co-opted members of Assembly sub-committees are decided by Assembly members. A more politically harmonious Assembly can have higher administrative costs because members vote to give special officers with whom they share political allegiance relatively higher perks.

Accra - The Threat from Urbanization and Some Economic Dimensions

Frank Tackie¹

The Historical Context

From a population of around 600,000 in 1970, the working population of Accra now stands at nearly four (4) million. This is a phenomenal increase by all standards. The population is still growing – currently around 4% per annum. The city has sprawled to the extent that it now functionally overlaps into both the Central and

ment – the population density has steadily declined whereby the current density is only 30% of the figure in 1990.

From its historical beginnings, the planning of Accra was taken for granted. Moving the capital from Cape Coast to Accra and the spill over effect soon took the city by storm. The growth was spontaneous but

a certain core area of the central area, there was a functional central business district i.e. around the Ministries, the Supreme Court and old Parliament buildings, the central library, the Finance sub-district of Barclays, Standard Bank and Ghana Commercial Bank, all complemented by a chain of high-end shops owned mainly by the Lebanese and then good old Kingsway stores and UTC shopping edifice.



Eastern Regions. Accra and Kasoa are interlinked even though Kasoa is in the central Region. Similarly, Accra and Nsawam, or Berekuso are interlinked with the latter being in the Eastern Region. An illustration of the extent of sprawl is that the geographical coverage of the city has tripled between 1991 and 2007. Regrettably, the tripling in size is not commensurate with the intensity of develop-

ment – the population density has steadily declined whereby the current density is only 30% of the figure in 1990. From its historical beginnings, the planning of Accra was taken for granted. Moving the capital from Cape Coast to Accra and the spill over effect soon took the city by storm. The growth was spontaneous but fairly rapid. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was relatively easy to manage the city given its size both in terms of land coverage and population. The travel time by Bus No. 36 from Circle through Korle Bu to La and back was less than 20 minutes. Even though there was no real formal land use structure, there was a semblance of a central Accra that largely functioned as a central business district – within

There was night life in the centre as well. Rex cinema was a high profile outing for cinema goers and so was Opera cinema, as well as a chain of restaurants and night clubs such as Maharajah and Metropole Hotel. There was then a clear distinction between residential and non-residential zones and even within the residential classifications, areas such as Airport, Cantonments and Ringway Estates were so distinctly first class. There were no squatters, no kiosks no containers to devalue the investments. The land use structure of the 1960s gave sufficient room for cultural dominance of the Ga with well defined routes and rallying points for the annual twin festival and the yearly regalia at James Town. Significantly the beaches were much much cleaner and pleasurable. James Town had its share of the middle-class spending. The Bukom night market and Sea View hotel were hot spots that attracted the middle class from other parts of the city. All the lagoons, especially Korle lagoon, were healthy with aquatic life to support fishing. There was also a very lively and functional central bus terminal at Opera.

¹ CEO, The Consortium (A Consulting Firm of Planners, Architects and Engineers) and President, Ghana Institution of Planners

A Comparison with the Landuse structure of 2000 onwards

Even though there were no conscious efforts to plan Accra in the 1960s or 1970s, there was some effort at urban management that makes a comparison with the current situation totally unfavourable. Currently, the structure and function of Accra have hardly changed but the pressures of rapid urbanization and inefficient urban management capacity have combined to throw the city into a near state of chaos. The central area retains its structure but in content there has been a lot of damage. It is no longer the choice destination for shopping because of the excessive congestion and filth – there is visible decay of property that should have been appreciating and viable for up-market renewal. The central area no longer typifies functions of a central business district as it used to. Hawkers, squatters, social deviants, trotro-taxi terminals, kiosks and the uncontrollable sprawl of foodstuff markets now dominate the centre, relegating the prime functions of the Ministries, Seat of Government, the finance district and the Court premises all to the background. In 2000, Accra recorded a staggering figure of 4% of the total population living in kiosks – that is 160,000 people living in kiosks, not counting those who are street or pavement dwellers. This phenomenon certainly never existed in the 1960s and 1970s! Squatters are now a pronounced feature of Accra's landuse structure – it is more than Sodom and Gomorrah. Surprisingly, the squatters invade prime areas in the inner portions of the city rather than international experiences where they perch at the outskirts. Unlike the 1970s, now the

travel time from one part of Accra to the other say, Weija to Adenta could be well over 2 hours. The sprawl has ensured that Accra no longer has farmlands, hunting grounds and unadulterated villages. Hitherto, even Kaneshie was a huge forest and mango plantation. Pokuase, Achimota, Dome, Abeka, Abokobi, Agboogba were all typical rural settlements to the core.

The Underlying Factors for the Discrepancies

The rapid rate of urbanization has been a major contributing factor to the demise of Accra. Ghana is increasingly becoming urbanized and the trend which is irreversible will see Ghana becoming predominantly urban within the next two (2) decades. Unfortunately, the urban



growth is skewed – out of the 385 urban centres, Accra alone accounts for over 40 percent of the total urban population. Rapid urbanization on its own is not a negative phenomenon – the success story of the South East Asian economies is partly hinged on how they positively managed urbanization. In the case of Accra, urbanization has so negatively impacted the growth and development of the city

because of three (3) related factors:

- (i) There is as yet no national human settlements and urbanization policy that seeks to manage the distribution of urban population across the national territory.
- (ii) There is no political will and technical capacity to implement any of the plans that have been prepared for Accra. The 1992 Strategic Plan for Greater Accra Metropolitan Area if implemented could have minimized the sprawl and low density development of Accra, and there would have been a clear buffer zone separating Accra from Kosofo, Winneba, and Aburi.
- (iii) Even in the absence of a strategic plan, Accra would have performed better if only there was some minimum acceptable level of urban management and good urban governance i.e. enforcement of some basic Metropolitan bye-laws, etc.

The Journey from the 1960s to now and some Economic Implications

The distortions in the landuse structure from the 1960s through to now coupled with poor urban management practices in an unplanned city continue to have serious repercussions on the economy. A summary of key economic concerns is as follows:

- (i) Low-density sprawling development – in principle, the cost of infrastructure delivery has virtually tripled as the density of development keeps dropping to

- 30 percent of the value of the 1980s. This same phenomenon negatively affects the cost of haulage for waste disposal and distribution of bulk materials within the Metropolis.
- (ii) The sprawl itself has a tendency of creating a false scale of land scarcity with the attendant pressure on the price of land.
 - (iii) Avoidable traffic congestion which has resulted from landuse conflicts translates to losses to the economy both in terms of wasted man-hours and cost of fuel wastage.
 - (iv) The emergence of squatters, kiosks dwellers and street or pavement dwellers is a major factor in the unsanitary conditions that prevail.
 - (v) The incidence of malaria keeps rising as all the water bodies and drains have become breeding grounds for mosquitoes – cost of malaria per annum in recent times has risen to \$700 million.
 - (vi) Property values have depreciated in several instances due to unfavourable external circumstances of poor urban management.
 - (vii) The rising state of urban insecurity is worsened with the escalating costs of policing a city which is forever sprawling yet so unplanned.
 - (viii) The cost of treatment of water from the Weija dam has escalated to alarming levels because of uncontrolled expansion of the city and lack of capacity to enforce a protection code for water bodies.

Conclusions

The city of Accra is at the cross roads – a turn to the left will plunge the city into an ungovernable state, where urban insecurity, crippling traffic congestion, and life-threatening unsanitary conditions and such negative trends will become acceptable as the norm. However, a turn to the right will be the beginning of the journey to our dream land – creating a city

comparable to that of a middle-income economy. The rage of urbanization is irreversible and non-negotiable. We only have one option but to manage it such that we reap the benefits thereof.

For a start, work has already started on a human settlements policy which only requires a political direction to get it adopted. We also can capitalize on emerging opportunities to create new growth poles and thereby redistribute urban population and minimize the pressure on Accra. The twenty-five (25) settlements that are beneficiaries of the MCA funding as well as the Bui project are viable as growth centres.

The private sector can play a supportive role in beefing up the deficient technical capacities of the Metropolitan Assembly for effective urban management practices. We need not reinvent the wheel – there are several best practices even within the African Continent at our disposal - *is anybody out there listening to us!*

The Ghana Dictionary Project (Review of Incoming Entries)

Ebow Daniel¹

North Americans are easily identified by the spoken English that is distinct from what obtains in the country of origin. The written form has also acquired distinct forms, at least, as to spelling. We must have noticed the ease with which the computer rejects “centre” and “programme”, preferring “center” and “program”. It is because the computer is by and large an American national. But reflecting the

British Empire at its widest spread, there are other Englishes besides America’s. Ghanaian English is only one more. The dictionary project seeks to update the word list which is growing.

We were introduced the other day to one of us who said he was visiting from “Trono”. We thought that might be some place in Italy. But as we

were to discover, this compatriot of ours lives in Toronto where he attends the University of Toronto, Canada. In other words, he was visiting from Toronto, even if pronounced “Trono”!

The visitor from “Trono” has returned to his base, but not all of him yet, considering that some who never stepped out once across our borders in any direction also dabble in speech

¹ Ebow Daniel is a retired registrar of the University of Ghana, Legon.

of the order of “Trono”. Inspired by the stay-at-home who speaks like the been-there, LAFA has gained a place on the word list. LAFA? “Locally acquired foreign accent”!

We are in the presence of LAFA when on a visit we are asked whether we want to be served tea or coffee, because *eether one* (nasalized to good effect), is good for us. Frankly, for the time of day, Club or Star would be better, and we say so, only to be told in another nasalized effort that *neether one* is available, but we are welcome to *war-rer!*

War-rer, indeed! Why, there is plenty of beer to be had at Tema; where also we can have “eyether” Club or Star; or if “nyether” is available, we can hope for “water”, more familiar than *war-rer!*

We noted before other Americanisms that show in the gratuitous use of the pronoun as in “meeting *with* friends”. It turns out that “meeting *with*” in North America refers to the initial contact and first introductions. Thus, as it was his first, President Bush’s recent visit to Ghana was to “meet *with* us”. If he should come a second time, he would only be “meeting us”, not with us. We are impressed that the intrusion of prepositions where we thought they are not needed (as in “beating *on* me”; “cheating *on* me”; or “visiting *with* us”) is in not any bad habit, but a studied preference, America’s.

America’s other peculiar preferences include the one billion that comes short of a million multiplied by a million, which somehow is condoned by the rest of the world, from counting fatigue, perhaps? America also wants the rules of soccer changed to provide for more than one call-off to allow more commercials, the better for business. Happily, for the present, FIFA is not keen to give in to America.

Meanwhile, bold and confident *verb-ing* (allow!) walks the corridors of the World Bank and the IMF. It was there we first heard that GIHOC and other state enterprises were to be “privatized”. Next, we heard inflation had “plateaued” and the economy was to be “mainstreamed” into the global scheme of things, whereupon others opined that in shallow waters the Ghanaian economy can barely hold its nose above water, wondering how being thrown into the deep-end could help. Well, Alexander Pope may be dead, but even out of context, “drink deep or taste not” still reads good.

The new vocabulary being outdoored by “globalization” (inclusive) should come on the word list, but for the controversies they arouse. There are sections of the society that cannot live with external interventions in matters as intimate as the economy. They resent developments of the order of having to declare ourselves HIPPIC, believing national self-abasement does not sink any lower. On the other hand, including additional infrastructure provided for schools and sanitation, the derivatives of HIPPIC seem quite welcome.

Possibly because of awareness of local opposition, external policy prescriptions come in encrypted forms that rely on initials or acronyms such as GPRS I & II, MCGs or MCA, all of which must be de-encrypted for the word list. But encrypting proves infectious, considering that Ministries, Departments and Agencies do not come that self-explanatory any more; they are MDAs. MOE designates one Ministry; MOA another; and MOWAC yet another. There is also MOFA, different from MoFA. No Government Ministry is without the designation that effectively masks it.

For the better understanding of public discourse, the “Federation of African Public Relations Associations”

might be prevailed upon to join the campaign for unveiling the needlessly veiled, but we must first pierce through FAPRA before the federation can be reached. Meanwhile, PRIC is finally here. But it also needs unveiling to discover the “Pensions Report Implementation Committee.” And now in the presence of PRIC that is in a state of undress, who has eyes for any committee or its report?

Budgets provide for Salaries and Recurrent Expenditures, but not in so many words, only as Items 1 and II. As for Item 13, it is not listed anywhere, but is still provided for, as it is known to facilitate media work especially. Before approval of any organization’s budget, the IGF must be disclosed, where IGF refers to Internally Generated Funds. We are persuaded that the dictionary project must also show IGFS or Internally Generated Speech Forms.

We know already that certain developments derived from periods in our national history when private newspapers were deliberately starved of newsprint, to prevent any criticism of government. It made sense at the time to make savings by word economy. The suppressed article where “fact” begins a sentence must have come about that way. Even in these liberated times, article-shyness is still observable as in “fact is politicians are liars”!

Besides the missing article, we are too eager to pass off mere opinions as facts or established truth. But while it is not known for certain that “politician” and “liar” are interchangeable, we should be happy that we have the capacity to acknowledge “untrue facts”. Elsewhere, it is appreciated that “fact” is not well served by adjectives. Here, we have well paid spokespersons who define their work in terms of putting out the “correct facts”, which is ever so tautologous.

On the other hand, “untrue facts” is not unlike “pregnant virgin”, icons of contradiction, both of them.

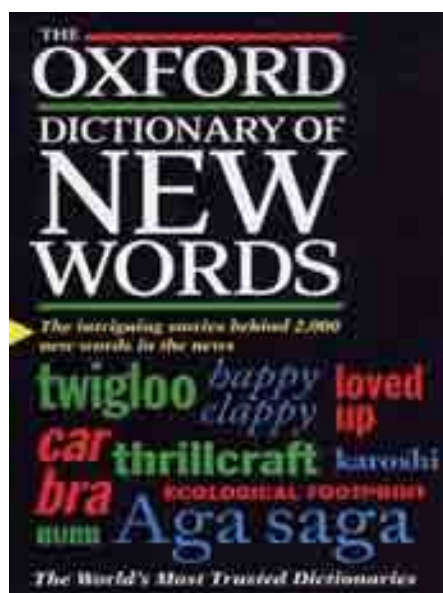
Truncated from “Professor,” “Prof” designates the successful academic. There are indulgent wives who do not call their husbands by name any more, knowing only “Prof.” There are also professorial people who, from self-love no doubt, do not hesitate to announce their presence in such terms as “I’m Prof So-So”. Endearment leads also to “Doc” to designate the physician. It is also beginning to happen that “Ing” designates the Engineer while “Arc” goes for the Architect. Pastor is “Ps”. We wait for Accountants to make their move, to go for “Acc”. Such proceedings combine both economy and decorum.

Lawyers do not care for abbreviations. But “Lawyer Asemdzi” is peculiarly Ghanaian; so is the invitation that goes to “Lawyer & Mrs. K Asemdzi.” In England where Ghanaians were first called to the bar, there is no Lawyer Tony Blair. As a matter of fact, “Lawyer” does not precede any name. There, the brass plate pasted outside the walls of the Chambers identifies the practitioner by name, and beneath the name occurs “Barrister at Law” written in full. If not before, now, indeed, there are Ghanaians practicing law in England. Not to be laughed out of court, they are careful not to do their Ghanaian thing, the letterhead that reads “Lawyer K. Asemdzi, LLB (Hons), BL”!

Everywhere else young people marry for the wife to get pregnant, eventually to have a baby. Peculiarly in our case, the woman “takes seed” to “bring forth”. It comes from reading the Good Book, almost to the exclusion of any other literature. Some of us are also convinced that from wearing glasses, better known as “spectacles”, we become “spectacular”. If

we never heard “call me that spectacular girl”, then we never traveled much around the country.

There is also “suitable” which, for some of us, identifies the man wearing a suit. But “suitable” is not half as exciting as when two friends reunite and one of them begins to swear that he nearly saw the other. The nearly seen is truly puzzled. It turns out that the “seer” is talking about a recent visit to Cape Coast where he saw a boy attending school who was intro-



duced to him as his friend's son, “how he resembles you!”

Happily, “I nearly saw you” for expressing close resemblance has limited currency. Very much widespread, however, is the tendency to pair up words such that “inadequate”, for instance, is never without “woefully” for company. That is how it comes about that salaries in Ghana remain “woefully inadequate”. Remarkably also, everybody who files a complaint to the media about personal injury is concerned about their “hard-won reputation”, as opposed to which other?

By Papal Dispensation, “His Eminence” designates Cardinals. Now, by courtesy of the Ghanaian media, wherever “economist” is sighted, “eminent” lurks somewhere. Somehow, all “needy” students are also “brilliant”. This is why we agree with the media that the “needy but brilliant” need everybody's support. Again, for many of us, “identical” must always be conjoined with “twins” like some Siamese product. Notwithstanding that we can see for ourselves that the newly born are a boy and a girl, we insist that they are identical, merely for being twins?

When law-enforcers shoot into a crowd of street demonstrators, they do not target anybody; therefore any who is hit must indeed be the victim of a “stray bullet”. Somehow, the two words have come to be inseparable in the public mind, such that recalling an execution once witnessed at the Teshie Military Range, an elderly man is able to say that the “stray bullet” struck the condemned man at the forehead!

In compiling the word list, “academician” is reserved for membership of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences and similar bodies. Academic staffs of universities are “academics”. Some of them may be elected some day to join the Academy. We wait for that to happen; only then do academics or others of whatever calling become “academicians.” For sitting on the Bench others are not already “jurists.” They could become that, but it is not for any journalist to say, surely? As for those at the bar, the media's attitude oscillates between tagging them as persons of no fixed address as in “an Accra lawyer” or “a Kumasi-based practitioner” and the startling hyperbole as in “legal luminary” or “legal guru”! “Savvy” comes with annotation to the effect that it has entered Akan as “sabe” and in the process has lost its

benign meaning of the knowledgeable person. "Sabe" is affecting to have the answers to everything. Reduplicated, "sabe sabe" is the pretentious know-all or the "too-know" person. Often mistakenly rendered "too-known," "too-know", rid of the gratuitous "n", is by no means a comfortable tag. "Mouth-mouth" is another reduplication effort that also signals disapproval, in this case, of the boastful person who is short on delivery, who performs only with the mouth.

The phrase "by heart" is native, one so close to our hearts it cannot be left out. It is a compliment when we say somebody can sing all the songs in the hymn book "by heart". On the other hand, "speaking by heart" is no compliment while the "by heart person" is not one anybody wants to invite home. Assistance to capture the phrase in all its different contexts is welcome. More welcome still is the researched contribution, not any thing "by heart"!

"Personnel" is welcome for old times' sake, more to please old folk, some of whom worked as personnel officers in earlier versions of our republic. They have been replaced by hyper-professionals who require everybody's "cv" or "biodata", "vision" and "mission statements" as well before they are engaged. Sitting behind computers in HR Departments, HR Managers do not manage personnel, staff or human beings any more, only "human resource". The good news is that for rudely supplanting the familiar, "human resource" itself is about to have its comeuppance.

A new kid sighted on the block comes with the name of "humanware". Hardware; and software; and now also humanware! For its prominence in the events schedule, "death" has a long write-up already, but no link to "kicking the

bucket" or "giving up the ghost", which are not much in currency now, anyway. It is true that in our various languages, we rarely refer directly to death. Instead, our chiefs "go to the village" while the rest of us merely "take off" or "become God's own" or get entangled in other euphemisms, which for being rooted in the culture are fully understood. As for "kicking the bucket", it is not known to have killed anyone yet in these parts.

Nor is there room for "French leave", having discovered AWOL which is a better substitute. AWOL is native of the barracks, but with the rank and file of the military refusing to be confined, AWOL too is all over the place. AWOL is absence without leave.

"Annual leave" is authorized or approved absence. At the insistence of the trade unions, Saturdays and Sundays and public holidays do not count. This is how with only "working days" counting, "annual leave" of 30 days proves ever so elastic and inexhaustible. At the point of retirement, some discover two years of unspent leave! Commuted to cash, unspent leave makes a tidy sum. In retirement and on pension, others elsewhere are pensioners; here, we are pensioners (sic), one vowel too many.

"Forum" was the place in ancient Rome where citizens convened to discuss matters of state. "Forum" comes to us retaining its Latin form and meaning; so does "stadium." For the plural, "fora" and "stadia" are in good form. But while in Rome, to do as the Romans do, is what everybody says. So, now that we have "forum" and "stadium" visiting *with* us parts, life should be much simpler by giving them the English treatment in plural formation, "forums" and "stadiums" rather than any other, surely? Who cares for "auditoria" or "aquaria"?

Exception to the rules, the plural of "syllabus" is not "syllabi" but "syllabus" or in English, "syllabuses". Not known to Latin, "sylallabi" originates from America where they want to have their way in everything. But for the continuing detente with Latin, we must be "circumspect" (beloved of the media) in borrowing to show off. Lately, the proprietor of one preparatory school is getting more attention than he bargained for, on account of the prospectus that says the school is *primus inter paris*(sic). Naturally, the French connection excites many, but not half as much as "fees *per annus*(sic) are affordable." The complaint is not about "affordable" which remains a favourite, but the mode of payment!

For a people who have banned Latin from our schools, how we love *per se*! It is the one phrase that is borrowed more frequently than any other. "A Ghanaian pair that shows up in the most unlikely places" is the tentative entry against *per se* in the word list. "As for me *per se*, I love reading subjects" is very much the Ghanaian in full linguistic flight. We are still in flight when it comes across in public discourse that we *prefer* peace *than* chaos; or that for peace to prevail, we must desist from *putting into the public domain facts that are not true*, because that could *destabilize our infant democracy*.

Further to "in-flight service", we are told *we have only one country* which the government *is doing all it can* to develop; it is up to *we*(sic) to contribute our *quota* to *move the country forward*. With respect to *the way forward*, the clever among us do not recognize problems any more, only *challenges*, to confront which there is need not only of a *paradigm shift* to the nation's *mind-set* but also a *pro-active* outlook. "Book-long" is the put-down expression that deserves a place. It is another contribution by

the military. It targets clever talk, *so-so book-long!*

In actual fact, no English-speaking people anywhere express themselves like we do. It is the reason an agreed word list becomes urgent; for not to

be understood by others does not *auger well* for us. But the computer alert for "virus" is showing. If we had any stereotyped ideas about the plural of "virus", we will be surprised that it is not "viri" but "viruses". We are also warned that, on or off

screen, in any encounter with a virus, we should know we are in the presence of a germ, the reason we had better run our fastest, to be alive to carry on from where we left off.

Functional Integration of Population and Development Planning: A Viable Planning Tool

S. K. Gaisie¹

Justification for Integration

Population and development are dynamically interactive. The relationships between the two phenomena are complex with each one affecting the other in many diverse ways. The intricate interrelationships stem from the fact that the focus of development is people and development is made possible by the fact that people are both producers and consumers. Demographic variables are therefore both determinants and consequences of development. Demographic measures such as total fertility rate, infant and child mortality rates, life expectancy at birth etc. are all indicators of development. Awareness of the nature of these interrelationships is crucial to understanding of both population and development. Functional Integration of the two phenomena is therefore a fundamental requirement for the construction of viable development plans; particularly those designed to fight poverty.

Meaning of Integration

Generally, integration of population factors into development planning is a process of explicit consideration of

the linkages between population and socio-economic variables in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development policies, programmes and specific projects for the achievement of stated goals and objectives.

There are, however, two broad types of integration: *Substantive Integration* and *Functional/Technical Integration*. The thrust of substantive integration is to create awareness of the need to



incorporate population variables into development planning. It encompasses, among other things, Administrative as well as Service Integration. In what follows we examine *functional integration* as a valuable instrument for constructing realis-

tic development plans. In technical terms, functional integration means that the relevant population variables are incorporated into some projection mechanism, along with some pertinent social and economic development variables with which they are expected to interact over the plan period to achieve specified goals or objectives. Adequate integration of demographic variables into the development planning process therefore provides a much more realistic basis for designing a better and more viable development strategy for poverty reduction. Hence, the involvement of the United Nations in population issues in the 1970s.

The Role of the United Nations

Population was not considered as one of the core variables of development planning in many countries prior to the mid-1970s and it became increasingly clear during this period that some of the development strategies adopted in the preceding two decades had not been capable of addressing the major social and economic problems of developing countries. Thus, development objectives other than economic growth surfaced in a

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number of countries during the mid-1970s. Employment generation, income equity and provision of basic needs became equally important as economic growth itself. It was, therefore, suggested, inter alia, that the scope of development planning should be extended to incorporate demographic variables in the planning process. Realizing the crucial role that population plays in the development process, the United Nations (UN) elevated the population issue to an international forum for discussion and eventual mobilization of international and regional initiatives and resources to address population and development problems in the developing countries.

The first International Conference on Population convened by the UN in Bucharest in 1974 produced a document entitled *World Population Plan of Action* (WPPA). In this document, governments were urged to integrate population measures and programmes into comprehensive social and economic plans and programmes and make sure that the integration should be reflected in the goals, instrumentalities and organizations for planning within the countries.

Countries were advised to create a population planning unit and “place it at a high level of the national administrative structure and staff it with qualified persons from the relevant disciplines.”

The Kilimanjaro Programme of Action (KPA) which was adopted by the second *African Conference on African Population and Self-Reliant Development* held in Arusha in 1982, also advised Governments of the member states of the Economic Commission of Africa to “create or strengthen high-level population units which ensure adequate integration of population and development policies and programmes especially in the

rural areas.” At the second International Conference on Population held in Mexico City in 1984, the *Mexico City Declaration* emphasized that development policies, plans and programmes must reflect the intricate links between population, resources, environment and development, and recommended that priority should be given to action programmes integrating all essential population and development factors. In response to the need for trained personnel to undertake integration, recommendation 75 of the implementation of the World Population Plan of Action urged Governments to “develop an adequate corps of trained persons for the effective formulation of policies, plans and programmes and to facilitate the *integration of population studies into training curricula for policy makers and executives who plan and implement development programmes*” (emphasis ours)

In December 1992, the *Dakar Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development* that was adopted at the third African Population Conference held in Dakar in 1992 and endorsed by the Heads of States and Governments of the Member States of the Organization of African Unity, appealed to African Governments to “Integrate population policies and programmes into development strategies ...”

The importance of integrating population and development strategies was also reiterated in the document entitled the *Programme of Action* that was adopted by the third UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) that was held in Cairo in 1994: “Explicitly integrating population into economic and development strategies will both speed up the pace of sustainable development and *poverty alleviation and contribute to the*

achievement of population objectives and an improved quality of life of the population” (emphasis ours). Governments were advised to enhance political commitment to integrated population and development strategies by public education, increasing resource allocations and improvement of the knowledge base through research and national capacity building.

Dismal Performance

All the evaluation studies carried out in most African countries identified, among other things, lack of political will and non-commitment of the leadership, non-participation in the development process by the bulk of civil society, lack of viable institutional structures, inadequate cooperation between the relevant sector ministries and lack of a critical mass of trained personnel with the requisite skills as the major factors responsible for the dismal performance in adequately integrating population variables into development planning process.

Although the first of the sixteen population policy objectives is “To ensure that population issues are systematically integrated in all aspects of development planning and activity at all levels of the administrative structure”, reviews of the implementation of Ghana’s population policy underscore poor performance in the area of functional integration as a result of lack of technical expertise, inadequate resources and institutional constraints (see *Implementing the National Population Policy: An Overview*)

A review of a district’s Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) plan by the author indicates that the districts in the country lack the necessary capacity to undertake adequate integration.

Conceptual framework

The technical integration process is an extensive and complex task that requires adequate attention from government planning agencies as well as from the scientific research agencies. It requires a wider conceptual framework that comprises, among other things, provision of quantitative data for planning, understanding the interrelationships between population and development variables and their assessment by application of techniques of integration; projection of integrated socio-economic and population variables over the plan period, policy or strategic analysis, formulation of goals and objectives, design of strategies and setting up of targets. Monitoring and evaluation are also essential elements that generate the requisite information for controlling and steering the planning processes and for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency with which the goals and objectives of the plan are being attained.



Requirements of Successful Functional Integration

A successful integration requires data, technical knowledge, demographic and statistical techniques, appropriate institutional arrangements for population planning and a team of interdisciplinary professionals with expertise in disciplines such as demography, economics, statistics, planning etc. Coordinated research therefore becomes a fundamental activity in the wider conceptual framework. Major research activities, as outlined in the conceptual framework, include collection, evaluation, adjustment and analysis of the basic data; assessment of assumptions underpinning population and socio-economic projections by all

stakeholders; construction of integrated demographic-socio-economic projections over the plan period; utilization of the integrated projections for policy analysis, determination of goals/objectives, design of strategies, setting up of targets; economic analysis; implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the development plans.

And as pointed out earlier on, viable institutional infrastructure is *sine qua non* for an effective and efficient integration. An historical experience indicates that a structure cannot be effective alone; all structures depend on the work assigned to them. Structure alone does not create integration. A workable administrative system lies in the heart of successful integration. A strong central planning unit manned by an interdisciplinary team of professionals will be required to build, among other things, the capacities of the regional and district teams to carry out satisfactory functional integration.

Poverty Reduction

The poor do not automatically benefit from economic growth at the macro

level. There are a number of proximate factors that need to be identified and examined before it will be possible to design strategies to translate economic growth into poverty alleviation. And plausible linkages between macro- and micro-levels can only be efficiently and effectively ascertained through functional integration of population and development strategies. It will be difficult to achieve any significant poverty reduction without adequate functional integration.

Achievement of development goals and objectives depends, to a large extent, on functional integration of population variables into urban/rural, regional and district development planning with a view of assessing the impact of demographic variables on socio-economic factors and vice-versa.

The outputs of the exercise provide empirical basis for policy analysis, review of goals/objectives, design of strategies and determination of targets that reflect a balance between population and resources.

In Ghana, it will presumably be a good idea to merge the National Planning Development Council and National Population Council into one entity (National Population and Development Council) in order to bolster, *inter alia*, adequate functional integration.

In fact, if governments had heeded to the pieces of advice given in the World Population Plans of Action since 1974, the African poverty landscape would have been different by now. The changing demographic landscape underscores the critical need to pay a serious attention to adequate functional integration by all stakeholders.

Son of Africa: Barack Obama and the Changing Tide of History

Helen Nankani¹ and Anoop Mirpuri²

Barack Obama's candidacy for the presidency of the United States raises important questions about America's relation with the rest of the world. Where does our future lie in a period characterized simultaneously by resurgent international conflict and growing global interconnectedness? How will the US respond to a new global landscape in which Brazil, South Africa, India and China are positioning themselves as world powers? Will the US relinquish its attitude of global dominance to do the difficult work of building international coalitions? Can the US finally begin to live up to its self-proclaimed ideals of freedom and democracy in its foreign policy? Indeed, can America develop a richer, more humane understanding of the emerging powers and their peoples?

These questions emerge now in part because of the failure of the US foreign policy over the last decade. More importantly, the upcoming presidential election in the US has the potential to dramatically shift the course of America, its people, and their relation with the world. Of the three candidates running for the US presidency, the only one who has shown deep understanding of this historical movement—in part a direct result of his own worldly upbringing—is Barack Obama.

Obama's experience as a boy with his Kenyan father, later with an Indonesian stepfather growing up in muddy lanes in a concrete house in Jakarta, and then living in the multicultural swirl of Hawaii, gives him a powerful feel for

the world beyond America. To many living outside the US, he represents an idealistic version of America—the hope of a more benevolent superpower. This article will explore (1) what is working in favor of Obama, (2) what complications exist that might derail his candidacy, and finally, (3) the historical significance of his quest for the White House.



Anyone can make it in America, they say.³ Ghana's own first president got his education at Temple University in Philadelphia, and the streets of Harlem. Now an American son of Africa is pursuing the ultimate dream of becoming president of the US. For all Africans, this merits deep reflection: at this historic moment, a son of Africa is at the center of world attention.

What is working in Obama's Favour?

Obama's educational background and fierce intelligence are well known. After graduating from Columbia, he

went on to earn a Harvard Law degree where he became the first African American president of the Harvard Law Review. He proceeded to teach Constitutional Law, later served for 8 years in the Illinois State Senate before being elected to the US Senate in 2004, becoming the third African American US Senator. What is less emphasized is his community activism. After college when most young men headed for better paying corporate jobs, he opted to be a low-paying community organizer to improve the lives of people in neighborhoods plagued with crime and unemployment.

Presidents, they say, govern the way they campaign. President Clinton's campaign was brilliant but chaotic; Bush's in contrast, was disciplined, hierarchical, loyal and ruthless. Of the three candidates still running, Obama's campaign has been more sophisticated and energetic than his competitors'. John McCain's was so top heavy and slow-moving that it eventually became bankrupt. Even he was surprised that, by attrition, he became the presumptive Republican nominee for President. Hillary Clinton's has been plagued by infighting and has come near bankruptcy many times. The Obama campaign has married state of the art web technology and social networking with professional financial management and prowess. It has been described as a political wonder. He has been raising an average of over \$1 million a day, twice as much as Hillary. More impressively, his donor base is broad, with donations as

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³ "A Chance to make History, Either Way" *Anyidoho*, NLO Vol.2 No. 5.

small as \$25. The voter registration drive at the onset of his “vote for change” campaign, using an army of volunteers in 47 states, has led to a record number of first-time voters. This has earned him tremendous respect and support among the democratic establishment.

Among the qualities that people most admire in Obama is that of a gifted and relentless consensus builder ‘around issues that make sense’. Scholars agree that the American Presidency is not all that powerful, except as a bully pulpit. ‘It comes down to your ability to get people to follow you, to inspire’.⁴ In explaining why he supports Obama in spite of their differences on abortion, Robert Casey of Pennsylvania said Obama has the unique skills to try to lower the temperature and foster a sense of common ground and to figure out ways that people can agree.

And Obama seems to be the man of the moment at this juncture in American history. Polls consistently show that 30% of Americans do not want another Clinton in the White House. Further, there is a change in the political sentiment of Americans. This change is partly due to the incompetence and ideological rigidity of the Bush administration. Eighty one percent of historians across the political spectrum agree that Bush is a serious contender for the title of the worst president of the US.⁵ Barring a miracle such as U.S. Special Forces capturing Bin Laden or North Korea renouncing its nuclear program, Bush will end up handcuffed to the bottom rungs of the presidential ladder. Chief among the reasons: Iraq. Five years ago, he decided to unilaterally declare war on Iraq on the pretext that Saddam Hussein was stockpiling weapons of mass destruc-

tion. Attacking the wrong country, at the wrong time, for the wrong reason, together with generous tax-cuts for the enormously wealthy has contributed to a massive budget deficit (\$400 billion p.a.), overextending the country's resources and making it unable to deal with domestic problems like education and unemployment. America is ready for change.

What is working against Obama?

Obama's supposed lack of experience (two years service as a US Senator) has been a frequent refrain in the attacks on him by his detractors. What would President Obama do (as opposed to Phenomenon Obama)? The description of his campaign's superior organization gives credence to his impressive managerial abilities. Indeed, Hillary's claim of experience is based on her years at the White House as the First Lady, during which she had no decision making role. The only initiative she led, on health care reform, is universally seen as having been a failed initiative. Toni Morrison, the African American Nobel Laureate, says of Obama, “in addition to keen intelligence, integrity [he has] a rare authenticity which has nothing to do with age, experience, race or gender... a creative imagination which coupled with brilliance equals wisdom”. This wisdom led him to oppose the Iraq war when it seemed foolhardy to do so.

Obama's politics has also been an easy target for the conservative establishment. His voting record in the Senate puts him on the left of center in a nation where, since the late 1960's, the electorate has remained largely on the right. However, there have been signs of a changing trend over the last few

years. This change is in part due to the disastrous policies of the Bush administration: the belief in the necessity of global US hegemony and military supremacy, and in the unchallenged ideal of unfettered markets. Bush has also overseen a wide variety of crises that have disillusioned many right-leaning middle-class Americans away from free-market economic policies and what many see as its concomitant disdain for poor people and the natural environment of the planet. While the fall of the Soviet Union had, during the 1990s, generated an unabashed acceptance of global free-market capitalism as the only viable choice to run a successful democracy, there is a growing demand for what many thought to be obsolete and archaic: the welfare state. The combination of the debacle in Iraq, the handling of the disaster of Hurricane Katrina, widespread corporate/political corruption, growing unemployment, and pervasive financial crises have resurrected the long-standing debate over how much government should intervene in securing the welfare of its population and shrink the widening gap between rich and poor both in the US and globally. In light of these changes in the recent political climate, Obama seems well positioned to win the presidency, provided he can decisively wrest the Democratic Party nomination away from Hillary Clinton. Obama's failure to win decisively in a majority of large industrial states, such as Pennsylvania, Ohio and California--and hence demonstrate his appeal to America's blue-collar workers and rural population--might be his biggest setback so far.

Of the things that might complicate Obama's quest for the Presidency, perhaps the most complex is race. Whether overtly recognized or not, race plays a role in every election. In

⁴ “The Choice”, *New Yorker*, 1/28/08.

⁵ Sean Wilentz, *Princeton*, April 2006.

1989, the advertisement depicting the menacing “black rapist”, Willie Horton, was used by the present Bush’s father’s campaign to appeal to white voters’ fear of “black crime,” resulting in a resounding victory over his opponent Michael Dukakis, who was framed as “soft on crime”. This time around, however, it is the actual candidate who carries the representational burden of being “black.” So what role, then, will race play in Obama’s candidacy? His “blackness” has provided a seemingly endless reservoir for dirty politics played by his opponents and the media. This can be seen particularly with right-wing admonitions of Obama as being somehow “anti-American” or “secretly” a Muslim—attempts to discredit his position to speak for Americans as a whole (as opposed to just black Americans). These tactics could only work so well because Obama is black, and thus viewed suspiciously in American culture as someone incapable of speaking “universally”. The story goes: only whites can be “neutral,” while black viewpoints are clouded by their own “bias,” or “particular” experience. Hence, the question may have less to do with whether Americans can vote for a black man. Rather, will Obama have the kind of “universal” appeal that is expected of American presidential candidates? In other words, can he appeal to the key voting bloc of blue-collar workers rather than simply the educated liberals in metropolitan centers? This point explains why so many (including the Clintons) have been quick to dismiss any votes on his behalf by blacks because somehow they do not “count” like white votes—a disturbing hearkening not only to the days in which black peo-

ple were unable to vote in many states, but also to the presidential elections in 2000 and 2004 in which many critics have charged the Republican Party with disallowing black votes in key states, such as Ohio and Florida, thereby giving the presidency to George W. Bush.

In this vexed context, it is extremely difficult for Obama to convince the nation that he can speak for “all people,” because historically, white Americans have been the group most invested in securing the division between white and black as a way of protecting their political and economic interests. Whether or not people recognize it, then, the challenge for Obama is that in order for him to appeal to the nation as a universal candidate, he must somehow disavow his racial identity, and yet he must do so in a nation where the majority believe that “race no longer matters”. This is an enormous contradiction given racial politics and demographics in the US today. For example, as the country has become seemingly less racist and more enlightened, there has been an exponential growth of the number of black people in the US that are poor, living in isolated urban ghettos, unemployed, and incarcerated in one of the hundreds of prisons built in the US in the last twenty-five years.⁶ These are facts that most people in America adamantly refuse to see. It is believed that racism is over, and this belief is fueled by the idea that if black Americans are in prison or poor, it is so because they deserve it. This is precisely what has generated the anger among many black Americans to which Obama gave voice in his historic speech on race in America

last March. In the context of these potentially divisive realities, Obama’s campaign and his supporters must struggle to reshape national and international conversations.

The World-Historical Significance of Obama

What are the consequences of Obama winning, or being rooted out by the harsh reality of dirty politics? It is well accepted that a great deal is at stake in the coming election for Americans of all backgrounds. What is less discussed is the importance of this election for the future direction and potential of the planet. This is not to say that everything rides on a single election, nor to overemphasize the role of American electoral politics on the day-to-day lives of most of humanity. Rather, it is to highlight that great changes are occurring throughout the world today, and this election could mark a turning of the tide in how the US, the world’s self-proclaimed superpower, envisions its relations with humanity as such.

At the dawn of the 20th century, the great black American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois, made a now famous proclamation at the first meeting of the Pan-African Congress in London in 1900. It was at this meeting that Du Bois solemnly declared that the problem that would define the twentieth century was the problem of the “color line.” The virtue of Du Bois’s diagnosis was that he was able to extrapolate a seemingly domestic US problem (“race”) to a global level, a prediction that was borne out with the two world wars, Nazi genocide, anti-colonialism, decolonization, and the civil rights movement in the US.

⁶ In 1971, there were approximately 350,000 people incarcerated in the US, and the rate of imprisonment had held constant since the 1920s, at approximately 1 in every 1,000. By the end of 2006, there were approximately 2.3 million people in federal and state prisons and local jails, not including those being held in immigration detention centers, or in military prisons run by the US around the globe. Between 1980 and 2005, the incarceration rate increased from 1.4 to 4.9 for every 1,000 persons. Today, the US incarcerates one in every 100 adults, more than any nation in the world. While blacks make up approximately 12 percent of the US population, they make up about half of the total prison population. According to the US Bureau of Justice, in 2004 approximately 8.4 percent of black men aged 25-29 were incarcerated. At year-end 2005, there were 31.5 black men in prison for every 1,000; 12.4 hispanic male inmates per 1,000; and 4.7 white male inmates per 1,000 white males.

Looking back at the political struggles in the twentieth century, a period which gave witness to the most destructive wars, devastating massacres, and resounding calls for justice and equality in human history, it would hardly be an overstatement to call Du Bois's formulation prophetic. At a distinctively similar juncture in world history, Americans today are in

a pivotal position to take us a long way towards establishing whether in the 21st century, seemingly outdated notions like justice, equality, freedom, and humanity can be re-animated for our political future and put back on the agenda of a truly global community, or whether the next century will come to look as violent and conflict-ridden as the one previous. In short,

the choice we are facing today is that between being consigned to a perpetual present, or that of forging a new and more participatory and just future. Certainly the choice is hardly America's alone to make, but we can only hope that Americans will do their part in recognizing that hope can only lie with imagining an alternative future.

Zimbabwe - Africa's Greatest Current Challenge

Discussing Zimbabwe has always been problematic for many Africans. There is always the danger that when Africans are obliged to speak frankly about the regime and its methods it will be misrepresented in the western world as supportive of their hypocritical attitudes over the years towards Zimbabwe. That is not what is intended here. This piece is about Africans concerned for their fellow Africans, mindful of the fact that the western world has contributed in no small way to the mess in that country. But that does not obviate the need for Africans to show concern and speak up against unacceptable behaviour.

On one hand, Zimbabwe represents the tough side of Africa, able to withstand all the machinations of western powers to dominate its economy. Its government and people have often represented a justifiable struggle against manipulation by a former colonial authority. The regime has often confronted industrial powers in a manner that not many African leaders would dare, for fear of losing development assistance. In periods when no African leaders would openly speak up in the face of significant global challenges, Zimbabwe has

often led a small pack to dissent on global governance arrangements that did not favour Africa.

On the other hand, however, and with time, Zimbabwe has come to represent everything that many Africans hated about their own countries. Many Africans spent most of the 1980s and 1990s engaged in



conflicts that were often intended to free one group of citizens from another. It could have been civilians fighting military dictatorships; it could easily have been a people trying to remove an early post-independence tyrant wanting to hold on to power for life; and it could, again, have been a case of one ethnic group

feeling disenfranchised by an electoral system that only favoured large ethnic groups and who had no respect for minority rights. Ideological fights with strong influences from outside the region helped to destroy countries. Despite the ambivalence in attitudes towards Zimbabwe, there is for many Africans, the question of why the leaders of Zimbabwe have opted to do to themselves and their people everything that most Africans do not want to see again in their own countries.

There is no doubt that Zimbabweans have one of the most unequal land tenure systems in the world, which by all means, must be reformed. Many Africans, including Ghanaians, wish their own countries would pursue land tenure reforms considering that land markets do not function well and do not support productivity enhancement. The problem however, is that faced with an extremely difficult reform process, the government in Zimbabwe has chosen a path that is clearly self-destructive. In effect, unable to solve the original problem of huge inequality, not the least because the U.K. has not been at all helpful, the leaders have resorted to means that no self-respecting African can

condone. It uses force on its own people that may easily remind one of the apartheid police in South Africa. We condemned it then, quite rightly, and should condemn it again now. For many Africans today, especially the younger ones, it is a mystery that Zimbabwe does not get discussed in any serious manner by Africans publicly. Not even by the press! Is it because we are afraid of what westerners would do with our words? Turn those words against us? Well, there are other ways of fighting that also!

The Observer Notebook is forced to do this piece in view of the unnecessary suffering that Zimbabweans are going through. Zimbabweans have been reduced to a nation of poor people stripped of much of their dignity. This obviously reminds Ghanaians of when they used to travel to Lomé to buy toilet paper some thirty years ago. It was the result of unnecessarily bad economic policies. Zimbabwe seems to be doing today everything Ghana did wrong thirty years ago and more. Currently, the annual inflation rate in Zimbabwe stands at over 165,000%. This is the world's highest by any margin, and is most absurd. The situation is so dire that experts speculate inflation will hit 1,500,000% by the end of this year if the economy continues to spiral out of control. And there is nothing to stop it from doing just that. Why does that have to be? What land problem can be solved with that? Coupled with this is the increasing violence meted out to those who dare protest against President Mugabe and his friends.

Zimbabwe, a nation once known as the "bread basket of Africa" now faces famine. The country is plagued by stark food shortages that continue unabated. In the past eight years,

the economy has endured the devastation normally inflicted only by war or natural disaster. The country's gross national product today is about 40 percent smaller than it was in 2000. The Reserve Bank simply prints money to keep the economy afloat. The entirely predictable consequence of churning out trillions of Zimbabwean dollars is the unprecedented inflation rates mentioned earlier, rendering the currency quite valueless. In early May 2006, Zimbabwe's government produced about 60 trillion Zimbabwean dollars in order to finance salaries for



soldiers and policemen and other civil servants. The best illustration of the Zimbabwean dollar's headlong collapse is that, eight years ago, Z\$14 million would have bought a mansion in Harare; now the same amount may not be enough to buy a can of Coke.

Millions of Zimbabweans have been internally displaced or are seeking asylum in many countries. Most of them are jobless, with about 80 percent of workers out of jobs. Putting aside the absence of support from donors and limited sanctions, the ZANU-PF's poor economic policies, corruption and repressive governance are directly responsible for the severe economic slide, growing public

discontent and international isolation being suffered by the masses of people in Zimbabwe. HIV/AIDS and malnutrition kill thousands every month. The city of Harare displays mounds of uncollected garbage on the streets in the slums, with water pollution increasing the spread of dysentery and cholera.

What has incensed many Africans more recently has been the recent elections and the embarrassing failure to release results. There are many people who believe that Morgan Tsvangirai is no saint. But that cannot provide any justification for denying the people of Zimbabwe access to much-awaited election results. In the bad old days, when leaders were not sure of what election outcomes would be, they either did not organize one or ensured that they 'won' before it started. And this is a game that Robert Mugabe has played very well in the past. May be the old man is simply too tired for the job he is in; and who would not be, at his age?

The supposed results of the recent presidential and parliamentary elections say a lot about the ordinary Zimbabwean. Despite the heavily uneven playing field, Zimbabwe's people clearly signalled their rejection of a status quo characterised by political repression and economic decay. While the current political scene remains uncertain, Mugabe and his allies show few signs of accepting defeat. Further violence threatens as ZANU-PF hardliners seek to retain their grip on power.

An initiative launched by the regional intergovernmental organisation, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to facilitate a negotiated political solution to end the crisis failed. Yet African leaders

generally look on in silence. For many Africans it became extremely embarrassing when they heard European leaders exhorting their African colleagues to speak up on the issue. Did they need that? Why did they have to wait for that? The SADC has lost all credibility as an institution that reflected the development aspirations of the people of the region. Even when African children could see that there was a major problem with the non-declaration of election results, South African President Thabo Mbeki continued to state that "there is no crisis in Zimbabwe". In a very late move, the African Union began to ask the regime in Harare to declare election results, and with very little conviction.

Interestingly the European Union, led by the U.K. has used every opportunity to ridicule African leaders and their people over Zimbabwe. Their current sanctions, however, have been quite hopeless and not designed to make any difference. The U.K. only uses the current problems in Zimbabwe to run from its responsibilities towards the country.

Many have questioned why African leaders are not condemning Mugabe and the ZANU-PF party for their handling of the elections and the economy. Indeed, South Africa's attitude towards the crisis gripping its northern neighbour has baffled many. Some have argued that South Africa would like to see how land reforms in Zimbabwe might be used to influence one in South Africa. Granted that this was the case, do so many Zimbabweans have to die in order to make the experiment work? How many Zimbabweans have to die before the land experiment is given a

proper structure in a democratic environment? What one does not understand is why President Mbeki cannot be seen to be openly putting pressure on President Mugabe. It might very well be a case of 'quiet diplomacy' but it does not offer much hope to the people. If they do not know what is going on at the few meetings they have had, and do not hear any encouraging words from President Mbeki, it is difficult to build up any hope. If South Africa fails to be more openly engaged in Zimbabwe, it is



clear that the degeneration of Zimbabwe will continue to have severe adverse social and economic impacts on South Africa, which will ultimately have severe consequences for regional stability. Already South Africa is seriously inundated with thousands of Zimbabwean political and economic refugees escaping the crisis. The poor victims of the Zimbabwean crisis are not even regarded as refugees who deserve protection under international law but just as illegal immigrants, who are hunted down like criminals, detained in the most deplorable conditions and deported back to Zimbabwe.

What about the other African leaders? Why their silence? It is simple;

they have no clue what to do! And many of them are afraid of annoying Robert Mugabe. When one has seen an angry Robert Mugabe doing his thing, it is not too difficult to imagine why they would not like to be in his bad books. So, just to stay out of the way of Robert Mugabe, they watch him do to his countrymen what many of them have vowed not to see happen in their own countries again.

Interestingly it was Mr Raila Odinga, the new Prime Minister of Kenya who openly said that the political crisis in Zimbabwe was an embarrassment to Africa. "We are going to ask the African Union to be more proactive when dealing with this issue.

The fact that elections can be held in an independent country and it takes more than a month for the results to be announced is sad. That is not really how you want to run a democracy. The rest of Africa is silent and this is not good for democracy.

We must speak when an injustice is being done." Of course, one can understand him. He was speaking as someone who had just been saved by our countryman from an almost similar predicament.

Presently, the date for the presidential run-off has been set for 27th June. The economic situation would have further deteriorated by then, with more people losing jobs and dying of hunger while Africa and the rest of the world wait in silence. It is time African leaders developed a new set of principles that allow them to tell erring brothers or uncles, "Now, you are going too far!" May be Ghana can take the lead in bringing salvation to Zimbabweans, just as we led other African nations to independence.