

ROLES OF RESIDENTS, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
AND QUASI-PUBLIC AGENCIES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT
OF GHANA

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1. Introduction

Developing countries, especially those of Africa, face an urgent, complex and major as well as challenging and frightening task of under-development. There is a "revolution of rising expectations" of the people for government to deliver development quickly to:-

- reduce poverty, inequality, and powerlessness;
- eradicate disease and malnutrition;
- eradicate illiteracy and ignorance;
- reduce unemployment and under-employment;
- promote balanced spatial and sectoral development;
- reach the milliard of the people in the rural areas with the amenities of contemporary living;
- halting rural-urban migration; and
- generating sufficient revenue to finance and sustain these various programmes.

Historically, the response of the problem of under-development outlined above has been to provide for these or deliver development from the centre. Development planning has been to concentrate on plans that were national in scope and sectoral in nature, with the view that the benefit of economic development will trickle down to the peripheries. The Government administrative machinery was similar organised along territorial hierarchies of national, regional and districts; the last named, often being the basic unit of government. This approach to development, described above, is known variously as the "trickle down" approach, "development from above" approach, "top-down" approach, etc.

The analyses and evaluations of the approach described above have brought to the fore the realization that the strategy has not served

the various Third

World countries well, though it led to increase in the per capita income of the various countries. A number of criticisms are levelled against the approach:-

- it focused on economic growth as the overriding objective of development;
- it led to the over-centralization of administration;
- it led to the creation of dual economies urban/modern, and rural/ traditional sectors;
- it created spatial imbalance in development and its consequent growing disparity among regions;

Indeed, the various developing countries are still battling with how to increase agricultural productivity, provide basic services of health and education, provide basic infrastructure of access roads, electricity, and potable water, and re-allocate investment away from the few highly urbanised areas to economically stagnating areas.

The implications of the above according to Rondinelli¹ "is a political commitment on the part of, and of fundamental shift in the priorities of government to integrated rural development, involving agricultural modernization, rural industrialization, redressing spatial imbalance in the provision of services, concentrating public investment in smaller town and investing in rural infrastructure, education and social services".

¹1- Rondinelli D.A et al - "Political Commitment and Administrative Support" Journal of Administration Overseas
Vol.17 No. 1 1978.

A substantial body of literature attests to the fact that development must have meaning, purpose and carry the commitment of all, and must be founded on genuine popular participation, which is essential for effective national development. Therefore, since the ultimate purpose of development is to improve the quality of life for all, especially the mass of the people in the rural areas, the need is stressed for growth-with-equity approach which calls for:-

- the reversal of the planning process, from top-down to bottom-up; where local plans become the building blocks of the national planning and development;

- the problems, goals and the objective of the local planning areas to become the point of departure of the planning process rather than making economic growth the overriding objectives of development;
- conscious effort to be made to promote and sustain community participation in the process of decision-making for development, implementation of development programmes and projects and distribution and sharing of the benefits;
- comprehensive and integrated development planning to take due account of the many inter-linkages between the economic, social, political, physical as well as the spatial factors that impinge upon the development process, irrespective of the area or the level of planning;
- local/peripheral institutions which will be the foci/nuclei for harnessing of local energies (latent and real), enthusiasm, initiative and organization.

The question then arises through what structures or institutions, and by what methods of approach that the growth-with-equity strategy to development can be achieved? What will be the role of the residents (people), non-governmental organizations and quasi-government agencies in the new scheme of things?

This paper examines the role of residents, quasi-public agencies and non-governmental organizations in Local Government in Ghana. Sections (2) outlines the country profile; Section (3) dwells on the history of Local Government in Ghana and Sections (4) on the role of the residents, quasi-public agencies in local government in Ghana and Section (5), the conclusions.

2. Ghana - Country Profile

2.1 Physical Characteristics:

Ghana is located between Latitudes 5° N - 11° N of the Equator and between Longitudes 1° E- 3° W. It is bounded in the west by the Republic of Ivory Coast, in the east by the Republic of Togo, in the north by the Republic of Burkina Faso, and in the south by the Atlantic Ocean. It has a total land area of 238,535 square kilometres. (Annexure A).

Physically, most of Ghana lies below 300 metres above sea level, only small areas rise to 500 metres and above in the east. The climate is strongly influenced by the South West Monsoons from the Atlantic and the harmattan from the Sahara (north). The mean annual temperature ranges between 27°C - 29°C, while the mean annual precipitation varies from 2250mm in the west coastal areas to about 750mm in the eastern coastal areas, and to about 1000mm in the north.

The country is well drained by four major rivers of Volta, Pra, Ankobra and Tano. The Volta River for example, is dammed at Akosombo and Kpong for hydro-electric power, and forms a lake of an area of 8,500 km² and a 650-kilometre water-way.

The vegetation is mainly grassland in the eastern coastal and northern areas with the rest of the country covered by tropical rain forest.

2.2 Socio-Economic Characteristics:

Ghana recorded 12,205,574 people at the last census in 1984, with an annual growth of 2.6 per cent. Of the total population, 3.8 million people (31%) are found in 189 urban² areas, and the remainder, 8.4 million people (69%) are found in about 47,620 rural settlements.

The distribution of socio-economic infrastructure and basic amenities are generally skewed in favour of the 189 urban settlements, such that:-

- only 14% of the rural population (8.4 million) have access to safe drinking water;
- only 2% of the rural population have access to electric power; and
- 21% of the rural population have access to health institutions.

Economically, Ghana is still an agricultural country as the agricultural sector (including livestock, fisheries and forestry) still:

- contribute about 60 per cent to Gross Domestic Product;
- accounts for about 65 per cent of employment opportunities;
- provides about 98 per cent of food crops;
- accounts for about 78 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings.

The main industrial centres of the country are Accra-Tema, Kumasi, Tamale and Sekondi-Takoradi, of which Accra-Tema alone account for about 90% of the industrial establishments in the country.

²Settlements with population of 5000 and over.

2.3 Political and Administrative Structure:

Ghana is a unitary state. The country is divided into ten (10) administrative regions, each of which is further divided into basic administrative units called Districts. There are one hundred and ten (110) administrative Districts.

For the purpose of effective local government, there are below the Districts, the following structures:-

- (a) Zonal/Urban/Town/Area Councils; and
- (b) Unit Committees.

The government administrative machinery is represented in the fields of education, health, agriculture, roads, communication, community development, social welfare, housing, etc. These Ministries/Departments are organized as territorial hierarchies, as pyramids with their apexes in Accra and the Subordinate levels in the regions and districts.

The objective of these various Ministries/Departments has been to bridge the gap between rural and urban areas through the provision of social amenities, and to discourage rural-urban migration. The problem with these Departments/Ministries is that they work independent of each other, resulting in the duplication of programmes/projects, rivalry for clientele and confusion.

2.4 Quasi-Public Agencies (Parastatals)

These are found in all the sectors of the economy. There are those engaged in the development of basic infrastructure in the country - roads and expressways, development and marketing of electricity, development of water supplies, telecommunication, road transport, etc. Examples of these are Ghana Highway Authority, Volta River Authority, Electricity Corporation of Ghana, Ghana Water and Sewerage Corporation, Posts and Telecommunications Corporation, etc. There are others too in the agricultural sector like Irrigation Development Authority and Ghana Food Distribution Corporation. There are still others in Tourism Development Industry. This is by no means all of them.

The quasi-public agencies have the following characteristics - their management is technocratic, centralised and autonomous; they are independent of the field administration and have clearer orientation of achieving results within a time-frame.

2.5 Non-Governmental Organizations:

A number of foreign and local non-governmental organisations operate in Ghana. Examples include World Vision International, Technoserve

Incorporated, Farminus Services, etc.

Operating mainly in the rural areas, these NGO's undertake micro-development projects in fields of agriculture, nutrition, water and sanitation, adult literacy and cottage industries.

The method or approach of the service delivery has been paternalistic and without:

- (a) Cognisance of the long term and some short term development objectives of the country;
- (b) Any co-ordination or consultation with government field administration; and
- (c) regard to any future capacity and capability to maintain the facility.

There is no doubt that these NGO's play a vital part in improving rural conditions. However, the paternalistic approach negates self-help philosophy. Besides, most of their programmes are unco-ordinated and not tailored to the long term and some short term objectives of the country.

2.6 Residents/People:

There are a number of settlement level organizations in Ghana, some with their apexes in the capital, others not. These organizations are Town and Village Development Committees, Mobisquads, Women Groups, Committee for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR).

Either as individuals (farmers, non-farm workers, artisans, labourers or petty traders) or organized self-help groups (mobisquads), co-operatives, community watch-dogs), people's participation have been varied, as they have the ultimate responsibility to themselves.

Led by their leaders (be they Chiefs, pressure group leaders) and through their contribution of labour, cash, information, ideas and initiatives as inputs to the development process, the residents undertake a lot of projects they consider as their felt needs. The examples of such projects include health posts, water schemes, construction of schools, electrification schemes, establishment of farms, cottage industries and day-care centres.

There is no doubt that these residents' groups at the settlement level are too many and often they undertake uncoordinated and unrelated projects/schemes, which are also piecemeal, and hardly address the issue of rural development.

The above consideration have implications and raise a number of issues for development. That development must be relevant to a particular environment cannot be over-emphasized. The agricultural sector is still the most important sector of the country and must be modernized; which cannot be achieved from remote locations; alternative industrial centres must be created, albeit subordinately, to the three major industrial centres; development generally must ensure ready access to health facilities, potable water, education, power supply adequate supply of food, and tele-communication services; and the pattern of distribution of population, settlements and activities have obvious cost implications for the distribution of social services and facilities. Besides, development must ensure integration, complementarity, rather than rivalry for clientele, and also bring about tapping of every available resource.

1. Historical Development of Local Government

1.1 Local Government Up to 1974:

The first attempt at local administration was with the native authorities, which centred either around a chief or some unit of local royalty which was not very well defined. The native authorities were not democratic but were mere representatives (as they were handpicked). Their main interests were to help the British colonial Government, with limited involvement in local administration, to administer law and order rather than the administration of social services.

In the 1950s, Local Councils were introduced to replace the old native authorities. The introduction of the local councils was given legal backing by the Cap 64 (1951) and Municipal Law (1953); which established 262 Local Councils. These statutes dictated a clear and sharp distinction between Central and Local Government institutions. In terms of this principle, there had always been two different machinery for the administration of Ghana: One based in Accra with branches at the local level (districts) and the other separate and distinct, based on well defined localities and referred to as Local Government.

The Central Government bodies at the local level dealt with national matters. They also attracted to themselves, the better qualified in terms of management skills and professional expertise. These Central Government agencies had less clearly defined powers in terms of local responsibilities, but had a much better presence by reason of their de facto position as bodies of Central Government. Decision-making had taken an unduly long time because these bodies had to refer decisions

on most matters of any meaningful significance to a Ministry in Accra, which bogged down with matters of national significance, was unable to react quickly enough to problems referred from the local level, caused the tempo of activity to be slow.

The local government bodies were based in a number of well-defined localities. They had been set up and vested with authority specially for local matter, and had grown up side by side with Central Government agencies that operated at the local level. They were required to provide municipal services and amenities in their localities without regard to the fact whether or not they had the economic infrastructure that could sustain their efforts. These bodies lacked personnel with the requisite skills and professional expertise. Unable to raise funds to meet their obligations and attract able and competent offices, the local government bodies only succeeded in creating for themselves, an unpleasant image, in most cases of ineptitude and incompetence.

Certain problems had developed as a result of this state of affairs called the Dual Hierarchy Model of Administration. First, the Central Government agencies encroached on the rights and responsibilities of the weaker local government bodies because areas and limits of responsibility as between the two organizations had not been clearly defined. Resources had been duplicated over local agencies and central government bodies had not been fully utilized and had, therefore been partially wasted.

Secondly, the various bodies had gone their various ways without sufficient consultation with each other, even in areas where their ill-defined responsibilities points in the same direction; limited resources available to each had been dissipated without the required impact expected by reason of the size of the input in men and material resources.

What is more, the clear and sharp distinction between Central and Local Government agencies had only served to create a poor and distorted image of local government as a corrupt, inefficient and worthless relation of Central Government, without inculcating in the citizenry the civic relationship with central government, which would enable him to see himself as part of the whole system of government and administration. In effect, the ordinary citizen had been alienated at once from local government as from central government institutions and had grown to look at the whole system as a foreign imposition to be cheated and despoiled without any but the slightest twinges of compunction.

The large number and therefore the small sizes of these local councils have made it very difficult, if not impossible, for the local government bodies to raise enough revenue to finance municipal service delivery. Quasi-public agencies and non-governmental organizations have been sidelined in such arrangements.

Against this background of duplication and confusion, of ineffectiveness and slow development at the local level together with disorientation in the popular mind, as a result of the dichotomy in the administrative machinery, commissions and committees of enquiry were appointed at various times to enquire into the administration of the country long before the attainment of independence in 1957 and some time thereafter. The reports of these bodies made conclusive recommendation for the devolution of central administrative authority to the local levels. The most significant of these commissions and committees of enquiry were the:-

- (a) Watson Committee (1949);
- (b) Sir Coussey Committee (1949);
- (c) Sir Sydney Philipson (1951);
- (d) Sir Frederick Bourne (1955);
- (e) Greenwood Commission (1957);
- (f) Regional Constitutional Commission (1957);
- (g) Akuffo-Addo Commission (1966); and
- (h) Constituent Assembly (1979).

In spite of the far reaching nature of the recommendations which were accepted, attempts at decentralization could not materialize because "of what is generally alleged to be lack of political will and the unwillingness of those entrusted with power to divest themselves of part of the power"³.

3.2 Local Government System 1974 - 1987:

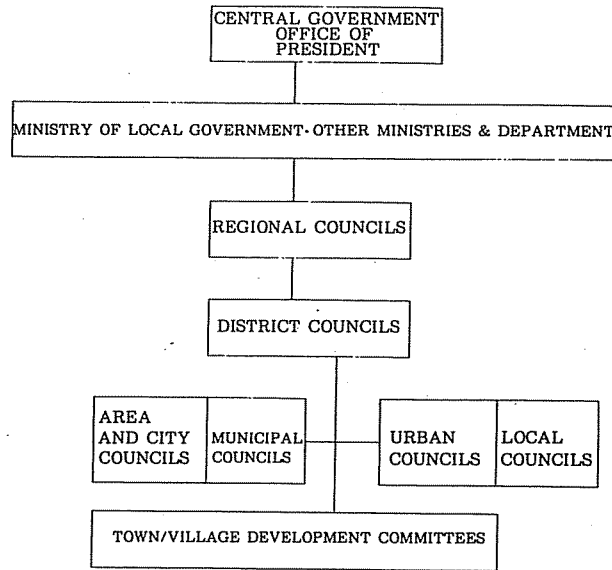
In 1974, an attempt was made to decentralize the administration of the country through a new structure called the single Hierarchy Model which sought to abolish the distinction between Central and Local Governments at the local level and create one solid monolithic structure (District Councils) to which was assigned the responsibility of the totality of government at the local level. The legal framework was provided (NRCD 258), with a degree of decentralization to the local (district) level in the fields of Agriculture, Administration, Treasury, Education, Survey and Town Planning, Social Welfare and Community Development, Public Health, Engineering, Fire Service and Sport. Some

of the hitherto smaller local council areas were merged to create districts, resulting in the creation of 65 District Assemblies. The structure proposed is as shown below:-

³Ahwoi - "Local Government System in Ghana"

A paper presented at a Decentralization Workshop at the School of Administration, University of Ghana, Legon (Oct. 1989).

Local Government System
Structural Chart



Though well-intentioned, the system never worked. A number of factors militated against its success.

In the first place, no effective political authority was established at the district level to oversee the structure. Its implementation was left to bureaucrats who were the same persons who were looking to the centre for direction.

In decentralizing, the regions were made very strong and therefore became an additional bureaucratic road block in the attempt to decentralize to the local (district) level. Another reason was that, the functions that were transferred to the district council (under NRDC 258) were not accompanied by a simultaneous transfer of power and means which are a sine qua non to effective decentralization. What is more, a Financial Administration Decree (FAR 1234) was enacted which centralized all financial control in Accra; and hence lack of financial resources to match delegated authority. No conscious effort was made to ensure that the departments which were to become the departments of the District Councils under the law (NRCD 258) actually operated.

Rather curiously, during this period moves were successfully made to even over centralize further in Accra, functions which had hitherto been exercised with moderate success by District Councils, examples being Omnibus Service Authority (OSA), Ghana Education Service (GES) Decrees.

The attempts to create a monolithic service at the local level with Central Government taking responsibility for the payment of all remuneration resulted in a 'rat race' for recruitment by the District Councils. Overnight, unemployed and unemployable relatives of Councillors found themselves on the payroll of District Council bureaucracy and other staff of the District Councils became over-bloated and financial discipline broke down. No efforts were made to address the office and residential accommodation, staffing and other logistic needs of the District Councils. Some of the districts were so large that administration was not reaching some areas.

Other limiting factors included the dual allegiance of district departmental officers to the regional and national head on one hand, and to the District Chief Executive on the other. No attempt was made to establish sub-district structures which were a necessary part of the 3-tier system. There were no overt or covert initiatives to promote the participation of the non-governmental organizations and parastatals (quasi-public agencies).

The lessons learnt from the close study of Ghana's Local Government system and development literature have brought to the fore the realization and the conclusion that development is not an exclusive responsibility of either government, an agency, or the people. It is a shared responsibility between decision-makers, persons working within and outside the bureaucracy non-governmental organizations, local people and their leaders, field staff and administrators all of whom must be closely linked together, to be effective. This then provides for the structure, form, and the content for the local government reform via decentralization being pursued by Ghana.

3.3 Local Government System to Date

3.3.1 District Assemblies:

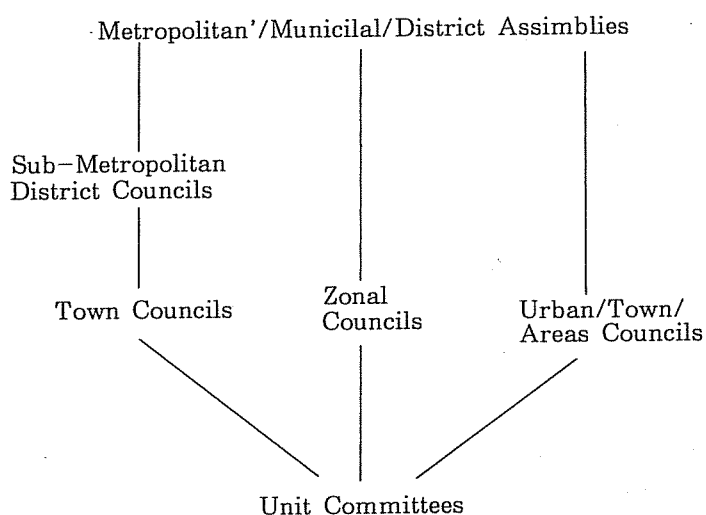
Guided by the lessons of the past systems and convinced that local government institutions can contribute to the socio-economic development of their areas and control of their environment, Ghana has since 1988, embarked on yet another local government reform, via decentralization

programme. In an apparent answer to the question as to through what structures/institutions, and by what methods of approach that a growth-with-equity strategy to development can be achieved, what appeared necessary is to create a forum at the District level, where a team of development agents, and the representatives of the people concerned and other relevant agencies (voluntary agencies, and other bodies such as para-statal which operate in the area) will agree on the problems of the area, and their underlying causes and decide on the combined action necessary to deal with them. Thus the decentralization programme, given legal backing by the Local Government Law (PNDC L 207), 1988 seeks to:-

- (a) create District Assemblies as the pivot of decision-making in the District and to assign to this pivotal structure with deliberative, legislative and executive functions;
- (b) constitute the District Assembly as the Planning Authority and charged with comprehensive and integrated development within the framework of long medium and short term national strategies and perspectives;
- (c) establish the District Assembly as a monolithic structure to which has been assigned the responsibility of the totality of government at the District level.

3.3.2 Structure of District Assembly:

The structure of the new Local Government system is as shown below:-



The structure envisages four(4) tiers for the Metropolitan District Assemblies and three(3) tiers for the Municipal and other District Assemblies (as outlined above).

3.3.3 Functions of the District Assembly:

Irrespective of whether they are Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assemblies, the functions of the Assemblies are deliberative, legislative and executive. Section 6(3) lists them among others as:-

- (a) be responsible for the overall development of the District and shall ensure the preparation and submission to the Council for approval the development plan and budget for the district;
- (b) formulate programmes and strategies for the effective mobilization and utilization of human, physical, financial and other resources in the district;
- (c) promote and support productive activity and social development in the district and remove any obstacles to initiative and development;
- (d) initiate programmes for the development of basic infrastructure and provide municipal works and services in the district;
- (e) be responsible for the development, improvement and management of human settlements and the environment in the district;
- (f) in co-operation with appropriate national and local security agencies be responsible for the maintenance of security and public safety in the district;
- (g) ensure ready access to the courts and public tribunals in the district for the promotion of justice;
- (h) initiate, sponsor or carry out such studies as may be necessary for the discharge of any of the functions conferredand;
- (i) perform such other functions as may be referred to it by the Council.

⁴These are three(3) Districts of concentration of industrial, and commercial activities, namely Accra, Kumasi and Shama-Ahanta East.

⁵Districts which are "one-town Districts" with sizeable population concentration but not of the magnitude of the Metropolitan Assemblies. These are Tema, Cape Coast, Tamale and Koforidua.

⁶Districts with few large towns (30,000 - 60,000) and with very large rural population. There are 103 such districts.

The Law provides for an Executive Committee and a number of sub-committees of the Executive Committee, made up of members of the Assembly and appropriate sectoral and governmental departments heads, who really created forum for evolving district sectoral plans. The sub-committees are:-

- (a) Economic Development Sub-Committee;
- (b) Social Services Sub-Committee;
- (c) Technical Infrastructure Sub-Committee;
- (d) Finance and Administration Sub-Committee;
- (e) Justice and Security Sub-Committee;
- (f) such other sub-committee as the District Assembly may determine.

The sectoral plans have implications for one another. An economic development plan for example will raise the need for social services as well as technical infrastructure. To provide a point of convergence for all these sectoral plans, and to bring about integration, thereby minimize duplication and unnecessary inter-sectoral rivalry for clientele, the Law also provides for an Executive Committee, to be chaired by the Chief Executive (District Secretary) aided and advised by the Development Planning and Budgeting Unit. The functions of the Executive Committee are:-

- (a) co-ordinates the plans and programmes of the Sub-Committees and submit these as comprehensive plans of actions to the Assembly;
- (b) implements the resolutions of the Assembly;
- (c) adopts measures to develop the activities and execute the approved plans of the units, areas, towns and sub-metropolitan districts within the area of authority of the Assembly.

3.3.4 Functions of the Sub-District Structures:

By the Sub-District Structures is meant those structures below the District Assemblies. These are sub-Metropolitan District Councils, Urban/Town/Zonal/Area Councils and Unit Committees.

Section 7 of the Local Government Law (PNDC L 207), 1988 requires these sub-District structures to perform delegated deliberative and executive functions and not the legislative functions of the Assembly. The functions assigned to the Urban/Zonal/Town/Area Councils by Legislative Instrument are:-

- (i) To take over, as appropriate, all the functions formerly performed by the Town and Village Committee concerned.

- (ii) To enumerate and keep records of all rateable persons and properties in the Urban/Zone/Town/Area.
- (iii) To assist any person authorized by the Assembly in the collection of revenues due to the Assembly.
- (iv) To be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Urban/Area/Zone/Town.
- (v) To recommend to the District Assembly the naming of all streets in its area of authority and cause all buildings in such streets to be numbered.
- (vi) To plant trees in any street and to erect tree-guards to protect the same: Provided that the streets are not unduly obstructed thereby.
- (vii) To prevent and control fire outbreaks including bush fires.
- (viii) Subject to the approval and direction of the Assembly, prepare plans for economic development and social justice.
- (ix) Subject to approval and direction of the Assembly, implement schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them.
- (x) Be assigned such taxes, duties, tolls and fees levied and collected by the Assembly for such purposes and subject to such conditions and limits as may be determined by the Assembly.
- (xi) Organize with any other relevant organization annual congresses of the people of the Urban/Zone/Town/Area for the purpose of discussing the development of the Urban/Zone/Town/Area, including the raising of voluntary or other contributions to fund such development.
- (xii) Perform such other functions as may be delegated by the Assembly.

In the case of the Unit Committees, the functions include:-

- (i) To take over, as appropriate, all the functions formerly performed by the Village Committee concerned.
- (ii) Assist the Town Council to enumerate and Keep records of all rateable persons and properties.
- (iii) Assist in the collection of revenue due to the District Assembly.
- (iv) Assist in the implementation of self-help and development projects.
- (v) Monitor the implementation of self-help and development projects.

- (vi) Take all lawful steps to abate any nuisance.
- (vii) Be responsible under the guidance of the Registrar of Births and Deaths, for the registration of births and deaths in the Unit.
- (viii) To provide a focal point for the discussion of local problems and to take remedial action where necessary or make recommendations to the Assembly where appropriate.
- (ix) To organize communal and voluntary work especially with respect to sanitation.
- (x) To make proposals to the Assembly for the levying and collection of special rates for special projects and programmes.
- (xi) To educate the people on their rights, privileges, obligations and responsibilities.
- (xii) To perform such other functions as may be delegated by the Assembly or the Town Council.

3.4 Policy Initiatives:

As part of and an impetus to the local government reform, Ghana has taken certain policy initiatives and decisions to:

- (a) provide all the 110 District Capitals with potable water by the end of 1991;
- (b) supply electric power to all the 110 District Capitals by the end of 1992; and
- (c) link all the 110 District Capitals with first class trunk roads.

It is also part of the local government reform that the headquarters of the Urban/Town/Zonal/Area Councils will become the focal points for the stimulation of agricultural production - offering of extension advice, input delivery, marketing centres, establishment of agro-processing industrial plants, etc.

4. Role of Quasi-Public Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations And Residents In Local Government

The preceding sections have shed some light on the local government system in Ghana. In essence, it shows the seriousness and commitment Ghana is making to bring about integration, and the political and administrative support needed to achieve significant re-distribution of power, wealth and geographically dispersed development.

But Rondinelli argues that

"building political commitment and expanding administrative capacity are two elusive but essential pre-conditions for achieving redistribution". "Political Commitment" he writes "involves a pervasive and sustained determination by the highest leadership to achieve goals of rural transformation, economic and administrative re-organization and social equity" and "...must rest on broad base of political support from governmental agencies, private organizations and local groups".

What then are the roles of quasi-public agencies (parastatals), non-governmental organizations and people (residents) in the new local government system.

4.1 Quasi-Public Agencies (Parastatals)

As noted earlier, the parastatals are found in all the sectors of the economy - roads, electricity development and marketing agricultural development and marketing.

In the case of agricultural development and marketing, the parastatals that readily come into mind are - the Upper Region Agricultural Development Programme (URADEP), and Volta Region Agricultural Development Programme (VORADEP).

Both the VORADEP and URADEP are two different organizations which have been involved in the development of all facets of agriculture in two regions in Ghana - crop farming, livestock development, construction of small scale dams and use of modern methods of farming. In fact, the two organizations have been instrumental in the promotion of modern method of farming and the development of service centres in the two regions, where agricultural input are within easy reach of the farmer.

Again, as noted earlier, as part of, and an impetus to the local government reform, all the 110 District Capitals are to be:-

- (a) connected to the national electric grid, by the end of 1992;
- (b) provided with potable water by the end of 1991;
- and
- (c) linked with first class road by the end of 1992.

These are objectives which are to be attained by quasi-public agencies concerned with these sectors of the economy. In the case of electricity, that facility was extended to the northern part of the country where about a quarter of the country's population live, about a year ago. At a recent seminar to evaluate the project - it was noted that, the project "is a living monument and a pragmatic commitment (on the part of the government) to ensuring that national resources are fairly and equitably distributed"⁷.

The project (extending power supply to the northern sector of the country) has led to:

- (a) commercial activities picking up and have kept a sizeable number of people in employment;
- (b) small and medium scale industries benefiting from cheap power because they can now make maximum use of their time of operation and maintain maximum capacity utilization of their plants; and
- (c) the government laying the necessary basic infrastructure for the industrial development of the northern sector.

Thus it can be said that the project has in fact galvanized socio-economic development of the region besides serving as a kingpin to bridge the gap between the south and the north. There is no doubt that quasi-public agencies can be relied upon to deliver development. In fact their financial, technical expertise and management resources are beyond dispute, nor are their capacities and capabilities in question. However, Ghana has been rather cautious to involve them in local government. In the Local Government Law (PNDC L 207) 1988, the only provisions concerning them are:-.

- (a) Section 6(4) states
"... it shall be the responsibility of the District Assembly to take steps and measures as are necessary and expedient to;
- (b) "guide, encourage and support ... public agencies and local agencies and local communities to exercise their roles in the execution of approved development plans;
- (c) "initiate and encourage joint participation with other bodies to execute approved development plans".

⁷ Daily Graphic No. 12467, of Friday December 21, 1990.

Section 6(6)(b) also enjoins the District Assembly "to act in co-operation with appropriate public corporations or other statutory bodies, and it shall be the duty of such public corporations or statutory body to co-operate with the Assembly in the discharge of such function.

This rather limited and almost negligible provision in the Law, and especially for the delivery of services which are closest to the hearts of the residents and which in many countries are the responsibility of local government bodies, is rather deliberate, for given the antecedence of poor performance of local government bodies,

it would be suicidal placing the quasi-public agencies under the control of the District Assemblies. Their immediate decentralization is at least not healthy. As much as possible, quasi-public agencies, then must tailor their programmes to the needs of local government units. Greater efficiency and effectiveness will depend on the availability of money. Thus greater budgetary allocations are being made to them.

4.2 Non Governmental Organizations

The active role being played by the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the service delivery in the fields of agriculture, nutrition, water and sanitation, adult literacy, etc., have been noted. In fact, the resources – financial, technical expertise, logistic support, etc., – at their disposal, make them a potential force to be reckoned with and to be tapped for micro level development. However, as noted earlier, the activities of these non-governmental organization do not take cognisance of the long-term and some short-term development objectives of the country and without any consultation or co-ordination with those of government field administration. Another problem noted is that, the activities of the NGO's are without any regard to any future capacity or capability of the community to maintain such facilities.

In recognition of their active and potential role in development especially at the micro level, the Law⁸ provides that District Assemblies "initiate and encourage joint participation with other bodies to execute approved development plans". Thus the Non-Government Organizations will be co-operating with the Local Government Units (District Assemblies) in the planning and implementation of programmes. They will also be integrating and co-ordinating activities with the Assemblies. They will also be mobilizing funds (assistance) from the external non-governmental sources for the development of micro-project in local government areas.

⁸ Local Government Law (PNDC L 207) Section 6(4)(c)

In order that the local government bodies will fully benefit from the resources of the Non-Government Organizations, their registration (both at the National and District levels), which hitherto has been overlooked is being called for and being pursued. Administrative guidance, waiving of customs duties on equipment are some of the measures being adopted to encourage and promote non-governmental organizations activities.

4.3 Residents

The residents form the base of the local government structure—represented by the Unit Committee.

As the overriding philosophy of the local government reform is the participation of the people (residents in the decision-making process at the appropriate level, the residents have an important role to play in the administration of their units or villages or towns. Their roles in problem discussion, plan formulation, project identification and execution must be underlined.

Perhaps more importantly, the contribution of residents of ideas, cash, kind and communal labour to such projects, sanitation programmes and commitment to pay tax are also very important. This has several advantages apart from inculcating a spirit of self-reliance in the people. Where people take part in planning and designing a project, they feel that the project is theirs, and it responds to their own expressed need and not something from a remote government agency.

In fact, it is the realization of the potential role of residents in the local government that the reforms aim at promoting their involvement from plan conception to execution and monitoring and evaluation, hence the base structure — the Unit Committees. Their roles can be listed as:-

- (a) living up to their civic responsibilities of tax obligations;
- (b) undertaking environmental and sanitation improvement programmes;
- (c) co-operating with village level organization in undertaking community fire defence and watch-dog activities.

5. Conclusion

The fore-going have given some useful insights into the local government reform and the development process in general that by and large, the ultimate of any local government system is improvement of human welfare. However, problems associated with improvement of human welfare cannot be solved piecemeal. Nor will marginal improvements have any effect at all. In our circumstances where financial resources are limited, let alone setting aside a substantial proportion over a long period for local government reform, the desired benefits may in the long run be a mirage. The conclusion to be drawn is that local development process, is a partnership venture between Government, quasi-public agencies, non-governmental organizations and the residents. Therefore government must elicit the active involvement of all.