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**PROMOTING EFFECTIVE CITIZEN-LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIALOGUE IN THE  
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MMDAs' INFRASTRUCTURAL  
PROJECTS –**

**THE PERSPECTIVES OF CITIZENS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN  
THE TOLON DISTRICT OF THE NORTHERN REGION**

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## List of Acronyms

AFD	French Development Agency
CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CIDA	Canadian Development Agency
CHPS	Community Health and Planning Services
DA	District Assembly
DACF	District Assemblies Common Fund
DANIDA	Danish Development Agency
DCD	District Coordinating Director
DCE	District Chief Executive
DDF	District Development Facility
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GSAM	Ghana's Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
KFW	German Development Bank
LGS	Local Government Service
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MP	Member of Parliament
MTDP	Medium-Term Development Plan
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
SALAR	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The introductory chapter provides a background to the study, which briefly describes the local governance system in Ghana, the role and responsibilities of Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) and the requirement for the MMDAs to dialogue with citizens in the planning and implementation of development projects, including infrastructure. The chapter also contains the problem that informed the study, the research questions, the objectives, the significance of the study and the scope of the study.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The Constitution of Ghana provides the basis for local governance in Ghana. Section 240 (1) states that “Ghana shall have a system of local government and administration which shall, as far as practicable, be decentralized.” Thus, in accordance with the Constitution, a Local Government Law (Act 462) was promulgated in 1993 to “establish and regulate the local government system” and it has since undergone some modifications. As per the act, a District (as well as Metropolitan and Municipal) Assembly is the highest political authority in the district and is responsible for exercising political and administrative authority in the district, providing guidance, giving direction to, and supervising the other administrative authorities in the district.

Section 10 of the act outlines the functions of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), some of which are summarized below:

- Prepare and submit development plans and their budgets to the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and Ministry of Finance for approval, respectively.
- Formulate and execute plans, programmes and strategies for the effective mobilization of the resources necessary for the overall development of the district.
- Promote and support productive activity and social development in the district and remove any obstacles to initiative and development.
- Initiate programmes for the development of basic infrastructure and provide municipal works and services in the district.
- Cooperate with the appropriate national and local security agencies for the maintenance of security and public safety in the district.

Aside from these, Sections 46 and 47 further designates the assembly as the local development planning authority and emphasizes the requirement that the assembly should prepare and submit its annual development plans for approval in accordance with guidelines provided by the NDPC.

As outlined above, one of the critical roles of MMDAs is to initiate, plan and deliver infrastructural development projects to address the developmental needs of citizens in the various towns and villages in each district, municipality or metropolis. As such, projects such as schools, clinics, CHPS compounds, water and sanitation facilities, markets, etc. form a critical part of assemblies' medium term and annual development plans.

MMDAs mostly fund infrastructural projects from their share of the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF). From 1994 to 2013, a total amount of 3072.89 million Ghana cedis was disbursed to MMDAs, according to the Common Fund Secretariat. Many projects are also funded from donor support, such through the District Development Facility (DDF), which is a pool fund contributed by the Danish Development Agency (DANIDA), Canadian Development Agency (CIDA), French Development Agency (AFD) and German Development Bank (KFW). Through the DDF, "MMDAs will have resources to provide more infrastructural facilities which will improve the living conditions of the population in their localities" (AFD, 2015). From 2009 to 2012, disbursements to MMDAs from the DDF totaled 210.65 million US dollars.

The planning and delivery of infrastructural projects is a process as summarized below:

**a) Initiation and Planning**

Based on consultations with citizens and other stakeholders, MMDAs are supposed to initiate projects to address the most prioritized needs of their constituents. These projects are included in the medium and annual development plans approved by the NDPC and subsequently budgeted for in the Annual Composite Budgets for review and approval by the Ministry of Finance. The District Works Department is responsible for architectural drawings of the projects, but in many cases, consultants are hired to perform this task due to capacity limitations.

**b) Selection and Engagement of Contractors**

In line with the Public Procurement Act, 2003 (Act 663), MMDAs advertise 'Invitation for Bids' in the media for interested contractors to submit their bids for a certain category of projects. Bids are openly evaluated by Tender Boards and successful bidders awarded

contracts upon submission of required documents, such as bid securities or bonds. Every MMDA is required by law to establish a tender board to advise the assembly on the award of contracts.

**c) Execution, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Section 10 (clause 4e) of the Local Government Law requires MMDAs to “monitor the execution of projects under approved development plans and assess and evaluate their impact on the people’s development, the local, district and national economy.” Consequently, MMDAs are supposed to supervise and monitor ongoing projects to ensure quality and timely delivery. They are also required to conduct post-implementation assessment to establish if the projects are in use and are serving the purpose for which they were provided.

In initiating development projects, including infrastructure, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are required to consult with citizens as much as possible as part of guaranteeing their participation in the development process. This is in line with the provisions in Chapter 20 of the Constitution, which stipulates that “to ensure accountability of Local Government authorities, people in particular Local Government areas shall, as far as practicable, be afforded the opportunity to participate effectively in their governance.”

The National Development Planning (System) Act, 1994 (Act 480) also stipulates that “A District Planning Authority shall conduct a public hearing on any proposed district development plan and shall consider the views expressed at the hearing before adoption of the proposed district development plan.” Again in Section 16, clause (1), of the Local Government Law, the first duty of an assembly member is to “maintain close contact with, and consult the people of the electoral area on issues to be discussed in the District Assembly and collate their views, opinions and proposals.”

In addition, as part of the ‘Service Delivery Standards for MMDAs’ developed by the Local Government Service (LGS), “MMDAs are required to regularly and systematically seek the opinion of the citizenry within their areas of jurisdiction on the provision of both current and future services” and to “involve relevant stakeholders, beneficiary departments and communities in quarterly and annual monitoring of projects.”

These provisions, thus, clearly establish the basis for local government authorities to have dialogue with citizens in a coordinated and fair manner to ensure that citizens' aspirations, views and concerns are taken into consideration in planning and implementing development programmes and projects at the local level. In 'A Guide to District Assemblies in Ghana' (2010: 76), it has been observed that participation may involve information-sharing, consultation, service access, programme inputting, election, representation, association and collaboration and that these forms of participation give the citizens the opportunity and power to engage in discussions and contribute to the decision-making process.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Although local government authorities in Ghana, that is the MMDAs, are required to have consultations with citizens and other stakeholders in planning their developmental projects, studies have shown that consultation of citizens in the planning of development projects has been inadequate, thereby limiting citizens' participation in the development process. One of such studies conducted by the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) in 2014 revealed that over 70 per cent of MMDAs failed to organize the mandatory public hearing sessions during the planning processes of the Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) in that year (citifmonline, 2015).

As such, there continues to be situations where infrastructural projects such as schools, markets, toilets, police posts, etc. are completed but not in use by citizens or do not meet their needs. A report published by SEND-West Africa (2014), following a review of planned and implemented DACF projects by 27 MMDAs in Ghana from 2010 to 2013, indicated that 46.4 per cent of citizens spoken to during the study were either not consulted or consulted on some projects and as a result, "most of the projects were not being utilized because of poor location or poor execution of project."

Again, even where there has been some form of consultation or dialogue between citizens and local authorities, it has been limited to the planning stage of the MTDPs and virtually non-existent during project implementation. As a result, citizens mostly claim little or no knowledge of projects in their communities, apart from seeing these projects spring up. They show a lack of knowledge of how the projects were initiated, who is funding the projects, what are the contract sums, who are the contractors, what are the timelines, what are the project specifications, etc. In

the absence of such an effective communication between citizens and their assemblies, citizens become apathetic to ongoing projects in their communities and do not get involved in monitoring, sharing their concerns and supporting the construction of projects.

To address these problems, SEND West Africa in its study, as cited above, recommended increased dialogue or engagement between citizens and local government authorities throughout the planning and implementation of development projects. It is, thus, important to establish how we can make this possible, especially from the perspectives of the key stakeholders themselves, that is citizens and local government officials.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The main question that formed the basis for this research, is: **“How do we ensure there is effective dialogue between citizens and local government authorities in the planning and implementation of MMDAs’ infrastructural projects?”**

To answer this broad question, the study sought to find answers to three specific questions:

- i. Through what communication mechanisms can citizens and local government authorities have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDAs’ infrastructural projects?
- ii. What should be the parameters based on which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDAs’ infrastructural projects; i.e. what should be the content of such dialogue, when and how often should it take place, who should do what to ensure that the dialogue is effective and what can be done to guarantee participation for all community members, especially women and youth.
- iii. What measures are required to ensure that effective dialogue is established and maintained between citizens and local government authorities in the planning and implementation of MMDAs’ infrastructural projects?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The overall objective of this study was to **“identify, from the perspectives of citizens and local government officials, how to promote effective dialogue between citizens and local**

**government authorities in the planning and implementation of MMDAs’ infrastructural projects.”**

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify, from the perspectives of citizens and local government officials in the Tolon District, the communication mechanisms through which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDAs’ infrastructural projects.
2. Identify, from the perspectives of citizens and local government officials in the Tolon District, the parameters based on which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDAs’ infrastructural projects.
3. Identify, from the perspectives of citizens and local government officials in the Tolon District, the measures required to establish and maintain effective dialogue between citizens and local government authorities in the planning and implementation of MMDAs’ infrastructural projects.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the findings of this study can be used as basis to engage with MMDAs and their oversight bodies, such as the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the Local Government Service, to take appropriate action to promote effective dialogue between citizens and local government authorities, especially in the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects.

Secondly, the study would provide useful information that can be used in formulating interventions aimed at promoting citizen-government dialogue, particularly at the local level. Increasingly, international and local non-governmental organization and donor agencies have sought to improve accountability, transparency and improved service delivery at the local level by instituting and strengthening mechanisms for citizens to engage with local government authorities to influence decision making, get informed on key governance issues and to demand accountability from duty bearers on the use of public resources.

Thirdly, this study would enhance existing knowledge on how to establish and sustain effective dialogue between citizens and local government authorities, particularly in the provision of infrastructural projects. Whilst there is abundant literature on citizen-government dialogue, there is little on how such dialogue can be institutionalized and sustained at the local level during the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects.

Last, but not the least, this study (along similar studies) can provide the basis for further and more expansive studies to establish clearly what mechanisms (variables) are required for sustained and effective dialogue between citizens and local government authorities, especially during the planning and implementation of capital projects.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Citizens and local government authorities are expected to dialogue on a wide array of developmental issues and at different times. However, this study is focused on how to strengthen the dialogue that takes place or supposed to take place between citizens and local government authorities during the planning and implementation of MMDAs' infrastructural projects by the latter. The building of classroom blocks, clinics, CHPS compounds, water and sanitation facilities, markets and dams, etc. are among the key roles of MMDAs and it is expected that enhancing dialogue between citizens and the MMDAs will enhance the performance, transparency and accountability of the MMDAs in the delivery of these projects.

Focusing only on the perspectives of a cross section of the citizens and local government authorities means it will not be possible to draw generalizations from the findings of this study. Moreover, the study is conducted in a peri-urban community and as such the views expressed by the participants may reflect their environment and may differ from the views of those in urban areas, such as the metropolitan and municipalities, where people are more sophisticated due to the greater exposure to mass media and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One, titled Introduction, provides a background to the study as well as the problem statement, research questions, objectives, the significance of the study and the scope of the study. Chapter Two is titled Literature Review and it contains the conceptual framework that underpins the study and a review of existing studies related to the

topic and, specifically, the objectives of the study. Chapter Three, titled Research Methodology, describes the methodological approach and tools adopted for this study and the justification for this. Chapter Four ...

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This section contains a conceptual framework which examines the concept of dialogue and the role that dialogue between citizens and local government authorities is expected to play in a democracy. It also contains a review of existing studies related to the topic, and specifically the objectives of the study, with the aim of understanding clearly what research had been done already in that area, how these researches were conducted, what were the findings and conclusions and how they relate to the focus of this study.

#### 2.1 Conceptual Framework

##### 2.1.1 The Concept of Dialogue

Dialogue could mean many things depending on whether we are in a meeting attempting to resolve a conflict, in a theatre relishing a drama performance, in a contract negotiation session or facilitating an interface meeting between duty bearers and citizens. Notwithstanding the different context, what is clear is that in all these instances dialogue has something to do with an interaction between individuals or among groups. The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) defines dialogue as “the exchange of thoughts and ideas” and adding that “in a dialogue, all parties involved are givers and takers” (2006:6).

According to David Bohm, ....

For the purpose of this study, we can define dialogue as two-way communication. It involves the exchange of information and thoughts. In a dialogue, both sides are actively participating

##### 2.1.2 Citizen-Local Government Dialogue – An Ingredient for Good Governance

Dialogue between citizens and local government authorities is seen as an important part of good governance; a critical feature of a functioning democracy, where the rights of citizens are guaranteed. For instance, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established the right of people to have access to information, hold opinions and express these publicly, whilst Article 21 guarantees people’s right to participate in government and governance processes, either individually or through chosen representatives. Therefore, some see democracy

as “a process where citizens are heard by the state to a much greater degree and where citizens’ participate directly in deliberation and decision making on political and policy issues as opposed to their interests being managed by powerful third party patrons or representatives who intercede on their behalf” (Schattan et al 2010:3) cited by Action Aid (2012:10).

From a development perspective, citizen-local government dialogue is seen as an enabler of citizen participation in the development process. As the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its Human Development Report 1993 noted, “People’s participation is becoming the central issue of our time and participation requires communication.”

Ahenkan, Bawole and Domfeh (2013) argue in their paper on “Improving Citizens’ Participation in Local Government Planning and Financial Management in Ghana: A Stakeholder Analysis of the Sefwi Wiawso Municipal Assembly,” that an effective engagement of local communities and other stakeholders enhances transparency and improve upon service delivery within the local government systems. “A conscious effort to build capacities and create space for local engagement will enhance the efforts of decentralisation and fast track poverty reduction and national development in Ghana” (Ahenkan et al, 2013:191). They further observed that community involvement in planning and budgeting of MMDAs “has the potential to promote local democracy, enhance public policy making, improve service delivery, and poverty reduction” (Ahenkan et al, 2013:202)

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) describes dialogue with citizens as one that involves “using many different methods to find out what citizens think and value, and making the citizens in turn better informed about the responsibilities and activities of the local authority.”

According to the association, a systematic approach to citizen dialogue is critical for strengthening democracy and increasing the efficiency of local government. Consequently, the association has been focused on supporting its members to “develop systems and methods for citizen dialogue as part of the local governance process” and has identified what it sees as the possible gains from a systematic approach to citizen dialogue, some of which are stated below:

- Through dialogue, citizens may obtain a better understanding of the activities of the local authority. They may also obtain knowledge about the elected representatives' responsibility for prioritization of common resources.
- More systematic citizen dialogue may lead to better agreement between public service supply and the citizens' needs. The community's needs are always changing, and there is a risk that the local authority continues to offer services that few people, or nobody require. Changing needs may be clarified through systematic dialogue.
- Increased participation gives stronger legitimacy to the decisions made by the elected representatives.
- Citizen dialogue early on in the decision-making process leads to an increased engagement and sense of responsibility among the citizens. Even if they do not get what they want, they have gained knowledge and understanding of the background to the decision which makes it easier to accept it.
- Different interest groups are given the opportunity to meet and solve problems together. The dialogue provides an arena where people can argue their views, but it is also a forum for listening to other people's opinions on the same issue.
- Increased participation also means more transparency and knowledge about the conditions for local government.

### **2.1.3 Participatory Planning and Budgeting**

The conceptual framework for this study is also based on the concept of participatory planning and budgeting as expoused in the ...

## **2.2 Review of Empirical Studies**

Studies around citizen participation in development planning and implementation processes at the local level were reviewed, focussing mainly on the aspects that have to do with dialogue between citizens and local authorities and how to enhance the engagement between these two. The study also explored and evaluated any available materials on the communication

mechanisms through which such dialogue can occur and any other information related to the objectives of the study. These reviews are presented below under various thematic areas.

### **2.2.1 Level of Citizen-Local Government Dialogue in the Planning and Implementation of Development Projects**

Over the years, there have been several studies focused on assessing the extent to which citizens have participated in local development planning and implementation processes. All the studies reviewed for this study have pointed towards ineffective dialogue between citizens and local government authorities, which had contributed to the low level of participation of citizens in MMDA's planning and budgeting processes, as well as the implementation of development interventions. A few of these studies are discussed below.

In their research paper entitled "Improving Citizens' Participation in Local Government Planning and Financial Management in Ghana: A Stakeholder Analysis of the Sefwi Wiawso Municipal Assembly," Ahenkan, Bawole and Domfeh (2013) examined the role and level of participation of stakeholders in planning, budgeting and financial management of the Sefwi Wiawso Municipal Assembly, using Stakeholder Analysis. Based on the data collected, they noted that the participation of local people in community hearings, town hall meetings and other forms of engagements with their local authorities was very minimal and in some cases community members were not even aware of the process at all. "Most of them have never heard about any community hearing aiming at soliciting their inputs for development projects that concern them," (Ahenkan et al, 2013:203).

They found that "although members of the District Assembly and the Sub-District Councils are required to collate and analyze in detail all the major problems of their communities to facilitate the formulation of programmes, projects and activities, and also mobilize community members, and facilitate the needs assessment in the communities during community dialogue meetings for onward submission to the District Assemblies most members are not doing this" (p.203).

Contrary to the notion that citizens are apathetic towards participating in local government planning processes, the study by Ahenkan, Bawole and Domfeh (2013) revealed that the interest of youth in the development process of the Sefwi Wiawso Municipal Assembly was high but with low power to influence the process. The assembly members who represent the community

also have a high interest in the community development but seems powerless with low level of influence. The most vulnerable identified groups are the women and farmers. The study reveals that there has been very little inclination towards the involvement of the rural women and farmers in the development process of the district, although women have high interest in the development process of the district but with low power to influence decision making due to socio-cultural factors.

Based on these findings, the paper concluded that “there has been very little space for local participation and that most of the stakeholders lack proper understanding of the planning, budgeting and the financial management systems of the district assemblies. This lack of space for stakeholder participation has constrained the promotion of effective, responsive and responsible government at the local level for poverty reduction. Procedures and structures for community engagement in the monitoring and evaluation of development interventions seldom exist.”

A study conducted by..

### **2.2.2 Communication Mechanisms for Citizen-Local Government Dialogue**

Bedelleh and Nobabumah (2013) conducted a study in three districts in the Upper West region of Ghana using interviews and focus group discussions to examine the extent to which local people participate in District Assemblies’ activities. They presented their findings in a research paper titled: ‘‘Political Decentralization and Local Participation in Ghana: Perspectives from the Upper West Region’. One of the questions that they asked citizens was which of the district assembly officials usually keep them informed about the development activities the assembly undertakes.

Out of the total of 180 respondents, 42.8 percent indicated that it was their assembly man/woman who informs them about the assembly’s activities, 14 percent mentioned their Member of Parliament (MP) as the one who keeps them informed and less than five percent indicated that it was their DCE and Unit Committee members who informed them. Less than ten percent (i.e. 7.8%) of respondents indicated that all these officials keep them informed. Interestingly, almost

30 percent (i.e. 29.5%) indicated that none of these officials keep them informed about the activities of the DA.

To a large extent, this study confirms the fact that elected assembly members and MPs are a channel through which citizens and local government authorities communicate. Thus, assemblies relay information on development activities to citizens through their elected officials and also receive feedback from them. It will, however, be problematic to assume that through elected officials, citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue. This is because 30 percent of the respondents said they were not getting any information from their elected officials, which should not have been the case since these officials are supposed to be intermediaries between both central and local government and the people.

Indeed, Bedelleh and Nobabumah (2013) argue in their paper that based on the findings of their study, elected assembly members are not performing, effectively, their role of keeping citizens informed. “On one hand, out of a total of 180 respondents, only the assemblyman/woman keeps most people (almost 42.8 percent) informed about district assembly’s activities. If this is however examined in the context of the specific roles assigned to them as members of the assembly in section 16 of the Local Government Act (Act 462), the assembly members are not doing very well. This is because the remaining 57.2% of the respondents, who are in the majority, on the other hand, feel their assembly members do not get them informed about their respective District assemblies’ decisions” (p. 17).

Ghana’s Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralization conducted a study to among others (i) analyze existing communication strategies in Assemblies, determine their effectiveness and recommend practical ways for improving district assembly communication system. The study was conducted in three assemblies: Tema Metropolitan Assembly, Ga West Municipal Assembly and Shai-Osudoku District Assembly using both primary (questionnaires, discussion and interviews) and secondary sources of data collection.

The findings of that study, which were published in a report dated January 2014, showed that...

The report goes a step further to examine the appropriateness of the communication mechanisms being used by the assemblies. With regards to 'Notice Boards', it notes that "This tool may not be the most-appropriate given the mandate and scope of work performed by Assemblies and which they must of necessity relay to their localities. 'Notice Boards' and 'Information Services Vans' (the second highest tool) may not be the most appropriate tools relative to demands of timeliness, cost-effectiveness, noise, coverage, responsiveness, etc. in communication."

The report notes also that "the low use of electronic tools (Internet/Emails), the print media (especially Newsletters), Radio and TV is a major weakness which must be addressed. These tools are powerful and hold future prospects for making robust the communication systems of Assemblies."

However, the discussions in the report as stated above, are from the perspectives of the researchers and not the citizens or local government officials. In other words, the analysis of the appropriateness of the mechanisms employed by the assemblies in communicating with citizens is based on the perspectives of the Committee and not the stakeholders involved.

In 2014, SEND-West Africa, a civil society organization, published a report of a study conducted in Ghana on the utilization of the DACF. The study, using both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, reviewed planned and implemented DACF projects by 27 MMDAs from 2010 to 2013, the benefits derived from those projects and how the projects and benefits were distributed. The 27 districts were randomly selected from four regions, which happens to include the Northern Region where the Tolon District is located. One of the issues that the study explored was how community participation in the development of the projects has had an impact on the successful implementation of the projects or otherwise and through what mechanisms were community members consulted.

According to the report, most assemblies indicated that members of the communities were consulted before the projects were embarked on. About 46 percent (i.e. 46.4%) of them stated that consultations were done through the assembly members whilst 36.1 percent indicated that consultation was done during the development of the assemblies' Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP). Some assemblies (15.3%) indicated that consultations with community members

was done through public forums and the rest (2.2%) indicated that the consultations were done through opinion leaders.

Over 50 percent (i.e. 53.6%) of the communities who participated in the study confirmed that they were consulted, while 21.4% and 25% were not consulted and were consulted on some projects, respectively. For the communities that were not consulted, most of the projects were not being utilized because of poor location or poor execution of project.

The study by SEND-West Africa gives us an idea of how local government authorities and citizens establish dialogue in the planning of infrastructural projects. The study clearly identifies assembly members, who are the elected representatives of the communities, as intermediaries who are mostly consulted on behalf of all community members. In a few instances, some opinion leaders are consulted on behalf of their communities. The study also points to the needs assessment process that takes place during the preparation of the MTDP as one of the ways that local government authorities establish dialogue with citizens, but does not give specifics on how these needs assessment are conducted. The other mechanism is public forums, but there is no clarity on whether all community members are allowed to participate in these forums or it is only a selected few representatives.

However, the study by SEND-West Africa was not concerned with whether the communication mechanisms mentioned were indeed effective in ensuring proper consultations with citizens. In fact, these mechanisms were what the MMDAs claimed to have employed, but no justifications were provided for preferring one mechanism to the other. This study is therefore concerned with getting the perspectives of not only the local government authorities, but also that of the citizens, on the communication mechanisms through which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects.

In the various studies cited above, it is clear that the researchers were not interested in establishing whether the communication mechanisms mentioned were effective in promoting dialogue between citizens and local government authorities. So, whilst these mechanisms are known and used, it is important to ascertain from either side – citizens and local government authorities – if, indeed, through these mechanisms they are having or can have effective dialogue, especially during the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects.

### 2.2.3 The Parameters for Effective Citizen-Local Government Dialogue

Ghana's Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralization conducted a study to among others (i) analyze existing communication strategies in Assemblies, determine their effectiveness and recommend practical ways for improving district assembly communication system. The study was conducted in three assemblies: Tema Metropolitan Assembly, Ga West Municipal Assembly and Shai-Osudoku District Assembly using both primary (questionnaires, discussion and interviews) and secondary sources of data collection. Among the issues that this study touched on is the content and frequency of dialogue between citizens and local government authorities.

The findings of that study, which were published in a report dated January 2014, showed that district assemblies were not having frequent communication with the local people. Thirty percent (30%) of the respondents indicated that the assemblies communicates with the people on a quarterly basis and 18% indicated that it takes more than three months for such communication to take place. Twenty-two percent (22%) said the assemblies communicate with the people every month, 14% indicated it was daily and 10% said it was weekly. The rest said it was biweekly. Thus, almost half of the respondents (48%) indicated that communication between the assemblies and the people takes place either quarterly or beyond.

The study also examined the regularity of meetings between assembly members and their constituents. "As a conscious strategy to ensure that the local people participate in the DA decision making process, assemblymen/women have it as a duty to meet with their people, before and after each DA meeting to share their development concerns as well as get them know what actions the DA is taken to solve their **problem.**" (...)

Seventy-five percent (75%) of the assemblymen/women interviewed indicated that they were able to meet with their constituents only once or twice officially in a year, 22.5 percent indicated they were able to meet more than twice in a year and only one person, representing 2.5 percent indicated that he/she was able to meet with the people as many times as was necessary. "It can be inferred from these findings that, majority of these assemblymen/women are not able to meet with the electorates before and after every DA meeting. This re-affirms the earlier findings that,

in most cases, DA members are not able to meet the requirement that they should meet their constituents before and after DA meetings which was attributed to logistical problems (Ayee, 2003)” (.....)

According to the study, Assemblymen/women believe “their greatest problem with having regular contacts with their electoral areas is the lack of financial support from the DA or central government. They believe if they were equally given some kind of support as done for MPs, they would have been doing better in carrying out their responsibilities to their electorates.”

The study also examined what type of information that the assemblies communicate to citizens and it found that

The report observes that: “looking at the issues that are communicated show that Assemblies have put high on the agenda ‘Fee Fixing’, Revenue Mobilisation, Public Fora/Meetings and Development Projects. But a critical look at them shows that they most probably fall under a top-down/supply driven approach. That is to say, things that local people are obliged to do. When this is contrasted with the least communicated issues (Audit Reports, Budget Performance, Communal Labour, Staff Performance and Contracts in that order) a reverse situation is seen where local bureaucrats are weak in disseminating information on those critical issues needed by the local people to hold them accountable and promote good governance.”

#### **2.2.4 Measures Required to Promote Effective Citizen-Local Government Dialogue**

Bedelleh and Nobabumah (2013) in their paper on ‘Political Decentralization and Local Participation in Ghana: Perspectives from the Upper West Region’ outlined a number of recommendations made by respondents in their study on how to enhance local participation in local governance decision-making. Twenty-seven percent (27) suggested the need to have more district forums and radio programmes; 34 percent recommended the sensitization of citizens on Assembly’s activities; 17 percent recommended resourcing Area Councils, Assembly and Unit Committee Members; 12 percent recommended making District Assembly Officials more transparent and responsible; three percent recommended the election of District Chief

Executives; another three percent recommended making District Assemblies' activities less partisan and one percent recommended instituting deterring sanctions for non-accountable District Officials.

“The issues of provision of incentives to motivate people to participate; making unit committees system functional; making formal education more accessible; carrying out more education on the functions of DAs; organizing regular forums on the assembly's activities; and the election of DCEs, as suggested by the respondents demand that government will have to take appropriate actions by providing the necessary funding and/or policy framework to address them” (Bedelleh and Nobabumah, 2013:23).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section describes the methodological approach that was adopted for this study and the justification. Specifically, it describes how sampling was done to select the citizens and the local government officials who took part in the study, as well as how the community where the focus group discussions took place was arrived at. The section also describes the methods and instruments that were used to collect data and how the data was analysed.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically the phenomenological approach, as it sought to understand from the perspectives of citizens and local government authorities what mechanisms can bring about effective citizen-local government dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDAs' infrastructural projects by the authorities. "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009:13, cited by Western Sydney University).

The purpose of the phenomenological approach, as Lester (2014) wrote: "is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. In the human sphere this normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant(s)."

Lester (2014) also adds that "Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore at challenging structural or normative assumptions."

Therefore, by adopting the phenomenological approach, the study was focused on interpreting the findings from the lenses or social reality of those who took part in the study. In fact, the views of citizens was of particular interest to this study as many communication efforts targeted at citizens had been based on expert assumptions. For instance, identifying what channels of communication are appropriate for establishing effective dialogue with citizens can best be

determined by citizens based on their preferences, capacities and/or convenience. Moreover, due to the unequal power relations in various communities (between men and women, youth and adults, the rich and the poor, minority and majority ethnic groups, etc.) and between citizens and local government authorities and politicians, it is important to get a better understanding of what can guarantee effective participation in dialogue for various groups.

### **3.2 Study Population and Sample Size**

The population for this study comprised citizens of the Tolon District and local government officials of the Tolon District Assembly. The local government officials include both elected and appointed members of the General Assembly (the local legislative body), administrative staff of the assemblies (including District Coordinating Directors – DCDs, District Engineers and District Planning Officers) and political heads, that is Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs).

In selecting a sample size for this study, the study was minded by the fact that smaller sample sizes are most suitable for qualitative studies and should only be as large as is required to get an appreciable amount of the various perspectives or viewpoints of the issues under study, so as to avoid saturation. “Obtaining most or all of the perceptions will lead to the attainment of saturation. Saturation occurs when adding more participants to the study does not result in additional perspectives or information” (statisticssolutions.com). In fact, “for phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends five to 25 and Morse (1994) suggests at least six” (statisticssolutions.com).

As such, 18 citizens and two local government officials were targeted for this study. In the end, it was 10 citizens and two local government officials who took part in the study, details of which are captured under data collection methods.

### **3.3 Sampling Techniques**

In line with the research design, the study employed non-probability sampling techniques in selecting the study community and the participants for this study since the findings were not intended to be generalized, but to give an insight into what citizens and local government officials believe are the ways to promote effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects.

With non-probability sampling, also known as non-random sampling, “samples are selected based on the subjective judgement of the researcher, rather than random selection (i.e., probabilistic methods), which is the cornerstone of probability sampling techniques” (Lund Research Ltd, 2012). Again, non-probability sampling is “Convenient and cost effective” and “Can be used for idea generation” (Harrison, 2006).

Specifically, the purposive sampling technique was used to select Nyankpala for the focus group discussions. This was because the study was interested in identifying a community in which some degree of interactions between the assembly and citizens had taken place as that would make the citizens more appreciative of the importance of citizen-local government dialogue and better able to share some insights on how to promote such dialogue. A few months before the study, the Tolon District Assembly had implemented a three-unit classroom project in Nyankpala, one of the large towns in the district, and through the intervention of a USAID-funded social accountability project (Ghana’s Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms), there were some engagements between the citizens and District Assembly officials to discuss issues pertaining to the project.

Purposive sampling was also employed to select the interviewees; that is the Assembly Member for the Nyankpala Electoral Area and the District Works Engineer. The Assembly Member, an elected member of the District Assembly, played a crucial role in facilitating the engagements between the citizens and the assembly and so had a lot of experience worth sharing. By virtue of his role, the Engineer happened to be at the forefront of the implementation of infrastructural projects in the district and had also been part of some engagements between the citizens and the assembly.

For the citizens, the study employed non-proportional quota sampling, a variant of non-probability sampling, to select participants into various age and gender categories for focus group discussions. This was to allow some flexibility in the number of participants for each group, so far as it falls within the six (6) to ten (10) range. The Assembly Member was relied upon to identify citizens who were interested in this study.

### **3.4 Methods of Data Collection**

Data collection for this study occurred in August, 2017. The study employed two qualitative methods of data collection. They are focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant

interviews. The FGD method was employed for collecting data from citizens. The reason for this was that the issues under study concerned all citizens and it was expected that the perspectives of the citizens will, to a large extent, be similar. Therefore, having an FGD will reduce the time spent in collecting data and also prevent the situation where so much data is collected and analyses is challenged. Again, as observed by the UK's Overseas Development Institute (ODI), "the strength of FGD relies on allowing the participants to agree or disagree with each other so that it provides an insight into how a group thinks about an issue, about the range of opinion and ideas, and the inconsistencies and variation that exists in a particular community in terms of beliefs and their experiences and practices" (ODI,2009).

A total of 10 participants took part in the FGD and they comprised: five (5) adult males (i.e. 36 years and above), three (3) adult females (i.e. 36 years and above) and two (2) youth (18-35 years), who were both females. The initial plan was to hold separate FGDs for the different groups to make it more comfortable for the participants, especially the women and youth to express their views. However, that could not happen because of the limited number of citizens who turned up for the discussions. Again, the participants were mainly traders and farmers and they had given an indication that they had to complete these discussions in good time and attend to their activities, especially as these discussions were taking place during the farming season. Any delays could have led to a participant withdrawing from the study.

In view of this, efforts were made to ensure adequate participation of the women. Indeed, the men were very vocal and so the women had to be prompted a number of times to share their views on each topic being discussed. In some instances, the women were made to start the discussions before the men joined. Dagbani, which is the dominant and the indigenous language of the people of Nyankpala, was used for the discussions. In the end, it was a fruitful activity as the participants reinforced each other's views most of the time and some also made unique contributions.

The study conducted interviews with two local government officials: the District Works Engineer of the Tolon District Assembly and the Assembly Member for the Nyankpala Electoral Area, who is an elected local government official. This was the preferred method of gathering data from these participants because of the different experiences and expertise that each of them

had in relation to the topic. The interview with the Engineer was conducted in English, whilst the interview with the Assembly Member was conducted in Dagbani.

### **3.5 Data Collection Instruments**

The study employed two data gathering instruments: an FGD guide and an interview guide. Both guides were developed based on the objectives of the study. Each guide, which are attached to this report as appendix one and two, had two sections. The first section is an introduction that provides brief information on the study, the rights of the research participants and other ethical issues. The second section contains the discussion areas and questions under each objective. Open-ended questions were used to elicit adequate information from the participants and to allow for follow up questions.

### **3.6 Data Presentation and Analysis**

The following procedures were followed to present and analyse the data collected. Firstly, the recordings of the interviews and FGDs were transcribed. Secondly, the data was content analysed to get a clear understanding of the views being expressed and to identify which areas of the study that these viewpoints related to. Even though the FGD was conducted with the help of an FGD guide, views expressed by a participant at some point may be related to various themes of the study. For instance, in discussing what communication mechanisms were appropriate for promoting effective citizen-local government dialogue, participants also expressed views that bordered on what should be discussed during meetings, what should be done to ensure active participation in the dialogue for everyone, etc. So, thirdly, the data was reorganized and discussed under various themes based on the objectives of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This section presents and analyses the data collected during the interviews and FGDs in line with the objectives of the study. Being a phenomenological study, the perspectives of citizens, the Assembly Member and the District Works Engineer are presented under each objective or thematic area.

#### **4.1 Communication Mechanisms for Effective Citizen-Local Government Dialogue**

The study sought the perspectives of the citizens and the two local government officials on the communication mechanisms through which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects and what attributes make them effective. These perspectives are presented below.

##### **Citizens' Perspective:**

According to the citizens, meetings are the best communication mechanism for citizens and local government authorities to dialogue in the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects. Through meetings between citizens and local government authorities, citizens get the opportunity to share their views and it also promotes consensus building. At meetings, citizens can get accurate information and ask questions about what they hear on radio.

*“Such meetings are very important because they help us to come to an agreement on issues” – FGD participant.*

*“[At the meetings] Everybody says what he or she thinks and then we discuss and select the best suggestions that will benefit the community. So even if you say something and it is not taken on board, it is not a problem” – FGD participant.*

*“For the assembly and the citizens to meet and talk, the assemblyman will have talk to work with the chief to mobilize the people and they will hold a meeting just like we have met here so that the assembly and the citizens will dialogue and everybody present will get informed of the issues” – FGD participant.*

*“On radio, anything can be said. Lies can be told and no one can question, but at the meeting we can seek the truth” – FGD participant.*

Radio can also be used by assemblies to share information about infrastructural projects with citizens. Many citizens listen to radio and can afford to buy radio sets, unlike TV. Most citizens listen to radio during the early hours of the day and evening.

*“When we have met and discussed and the assembly wants the information to reach other citizens, they can use radio. When it goes on radio, many people will hear it. In this area, people listen a lot to [Radio] Justice, Savannah [Radio] and Simli [Radio], the one in Dalun” – FGD participant.*

*“I also see that Simli [Radio], [Radio] Justice and Savannah [Radio] are those that we listen to very well. If the assembly has information or issues it wants to share with the people, if the assembly puts it on radio, it is something that will reach everyone and everyone will get to hear what the assembly has said” – FGD participant.*

*“Many of us listen to radio mostly in the night because during the afternoon, we do not have time. It is in the night that we are idle and you can hear any issue being discussed on radio” – FGD participant.*

*“After dawn prayers, people sit to have breakfast before leaving. During that time, if you have your radio on, you can hear what is being said on radio. You will hear the news around the country. But after you have had breakfast and set off to work, you will not be able to listen to radio again. It is others who will listen and inform you. If you finish your day’s activities, come home, bath and have supper, during that time you can also listen to radio” – FGD participant.*

*“Television is not as common as radio. Not everyone has TV. But for radio, I am sure however poor a woman [or man] is, she has a radio. So, it is through the radio that we mostly get information” – FGD participant.*

In addition, information vans can be used to share information with citizens about projects. It has been used before and it worked because people acted based on the information they got from the information van.

*“Sometimes we see a vehicle going around and giving announcements. Sometime back, they were announcing about some work that was to be done by some doctors. Another time, they were announcing to the people sitting close to the main road to move and, later, they moved. Whatever they have been doing to get this vehicle to make these announcements, they should continue. If*

*that is strengthened, it can be another way we can get information from the assembly” – FGD participant.*

*“Every district should have an information service van so that it can be used to share information with the citizens. If that is done, it will be very good” – FGD participant.*

### **Assembly Member’s Perspective:**

In the view of the assembly member, meetings are the most effective mechanisms through which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects. Community members such as farmers can best participate in the dialogue through meetings other than any other means. Even citizens who do not get the opportunity to participate in meetings get the information because after the meetings, those who participate go to tell others what was discussed.

*“In my view, the meetings help a lot. I say so because most of our people are farmers. During farming season, many farmers do not listen to radio that much; not to talk of watching of TV. But if you organize a meeting, you can get them to take part. Even if they do not take part, they will be told the issues discussed by other community members who attend the meeting. Even me, I am so busy that I mostly do not listen to radio or watch TV unless when I have a particular programme on radio that I monitor.”*

*“The meetings target people who need to be involved. When the information is given on radio, many people do not border because the issue does not affect them. So, with the meeting, you can get those who will be affected to attend and do what is expected of them.”*

Assembly members are another channel through which citizens and local government authorities can exchange views and information on capital projects. The assembly member is the first point of contact when citizens have concerns to share with the assembly about capital projects. In cases where the assembly member is not within reach, citizens can share their concerns with members of the unit committee who will then convey these concerns to the assembly member. Assembly members convey citizens’ concerns to local government authorities and share feedback. They also convey to citizens, information on capital projects that the assembly provides them.

Sometimes, they organize community durbars when the information is targeted at the larger community and other times, they simply meet with those who need to have the information.

*“When citizens have concerns, they can share them through their assembly members. The assembly member is usually the first person they approach to make their concerns known. Sometimes when the assembly member is not around they also talk to unit committee members and they in turn talk to the assembly member. We (assembly members) send citizens’ concerns to the assembly.”*

*“When we attend meetings at the Assembly or unit committee, it is a must that we share the information with citizens. I always share information from our meetings when I go to sit with the traders at the market. In the night, there are people I sit with to converse. I tell them also any information I have.”*

*“Depending on the kind of information that we get from the assembly, sometimes I go to the palace for them to make an announcement to citizens to gather at the chief palace for me to share with them the information. Sometimes, the information is meant for a particular group of people. In that case, we go to meet with those people and give them the information. For example, when the Nyankpala road was to be constructed, it was going to affect traders along the road and so we went to meet those traders and gave them the information. When the assembly told us that subsidies to fertilizers were going to be withdrawn by the Government, we, the assembly members came to tell the farmers.”*

Radio is also used to promote dialogue between citizens and local government authorities.

*“Through the GSAM project, we had radio discussions a number of times and people called to tell us how happy they were with the discussions we were having. They told us that we educated them a lot about how assembly and citizens need to dialogue.”*

### **District Works Engineer’s Perspective:**

In the view of the District Works Engineer, meetings are usually the most used mechanism for dialogue between citizens and local government authorities on MMDA’s development projects. From the planning stage through to the execution of a project and the handing over, meetings are

used to maintain dialogue with the communities either directly or through their elected assembly members or chiefs and opinion leaders.

*“Before we arrive at any project, it has to go through the usual planning process. And the planning process starts with the community. They select the projects because through the community action plans. At the area council level, we are able to get the communities to tell us what their needs are. You know these community action plans is a way we use in finding out the needs of communities. And we do the necessary planning and we come, we call the assembly members to a meeting. We discuss these community action plans we try to disseminate it to the various stakeholders, including development partners. That feeds into our Medium-Term Development Plan and from these plans we tease out the annual action plans. After all these things, we do procurement plans. The assembly members are part of the process.”*

*“So by this time, everybody would have known where projects would be going to based on the resources that we have. You know we prioritise. And everybody knows which community is going to have what. It goes through the procurement process and the project is awarded and then we will take the contractor to the community, meet with the community and then we tell them what their roles would be in the execution of the physical project. And we make them to know that they have a monitoring role. And as part of their monitoring roles, they are supposed to ask certain questions, things that are not clear to them, that is demanding accountability.”*

*“You know, we do have area council meetings. At the area council level, you know we have meetings with them. Through that, we are able to inform them of plans we have for them.”*

Radio can be used to share information with the citizens on MMDA’s infrastructural and other development projects.

*“Through radio talk, we can share information. You see, radio goes wide. It has wide listenership. After the plans have been approved by the General Assembly, we can go on radio.”*

Social media can also be used to promote dialogue between citizens and local government authorities.

*“We could have created platforms similar to WhatsApp or Twitting [Twitter} enabling citizens to ask assembly questions. So that we can also disseminate information to them through that platform. I know some NGOs, like Savannah Signatures, were trying to do something like that. If*

*we could get partners to do that, it would have been very good. Projects, like GSAM, can create such platforms.”*

#### **4.2 Barriers to Effective Dialogue and How to Deal with Them**

The study also sought the perspectives of the citizens, the Assembly Member and the District Works Engineer on what factors may hinder the effectiveness of the communication mechanisms that they have identified and how to avoid or deal with those barriers or challenges.

##### **Citizens’ Perspective:**

According to the citizens, the failure of the authorities to address citizens’ concerns or fulfill commitments agreed during dialogue with citizens can reduce citizens’ interest in continuing with such dialogue. They said that sometimes when they come to a consensus that something should be done, some of their leaders will go behind them to take bribes and do the wrong thing which serves their interest and not the community interest. The authorities should therefore act on some, if not all, commitments agreed with citizens.

*“We need to see results. If the issues we discuss from the beginning of the project up till the end of the project are not addressed, we lose interest. Next time they call people, they will not come -*

*“Sometimes, a community does develop because of the actions of its leaders. When we all know that this is the right thing, those who lead us will be given bribes and because we the citizens have no power, they the leaders will take the money and take no action because they have connived with those who will be doing the work to do the wrong thing.” – Ibrahim.*

When meetings do not start at the time that was announced or are called off after citizens gather, it also demotivates citizens from attending similar meetings. People may turn up early but will leave afterwards and may not come back again.

*“We live our homes early to come for a meeting, but the meeting does not start early. When we agree on time, the meeting should start at that time.” – FGD participant.*

*“We have work to do, but we live it and come to the meeting. Sometimes you come and the meeting has not started only to be called to come back again. Sometimes the people we are to*

*meet do not come and we feel deceived. Next time you will not go when they call because you think they will not come.” – FGD participant.*

*“One day, they told us to come out for a meeting at 9am and we did. We sat there till it was past 10am and the people we were to meet with had still not arrived.” – FGD participant.*

The situation where only those considered to be leaders are those allowed to talk whilst many citizens are not given the opportunity to share their views or their views are not taken on board is another factor that limits the participation and interest of citizens during such meetings. It demotivates citizens from participating in such meetings. Citizens should be given adequate opportunity to express their views.

*“Sometimes, the citizens do not talk because it looks like it is the leaders who have the right to talk, but what the leaders say is not enough to bring the desired results. So, when we are meeting, the leaders should open the way and announce to everyone that they can bring on board their contributions.” – FGD participant.*

*“Sometimes we sit for the meeting and there is no way for everyone to make their contributions and it is only the views of the leaders that will be accepted. Yet, the fact that you are a leader does not mean it is you alone that have the wisdom that can develop the area. So, anytime we are to hold meetings again, they should give opportunity to everyone to share their views. Whether you are a woman or child, you should be given the chance to make your contribution. If what you say is not right, the gathering will realise it. It is not good to say that if you are not a leader do not talk.” – FGD participant.*

*“Sometimes we choose leaders to represent us and everyone knows that they are our leaders. Then we come out to meet, they the leaders will say that they had an executive meeting and took some decisions. It is what they decided that will work. All that the others, who see what is right, will say will not be accepted. This can make meetings or development not to progress. Because what the leaders, who are just a few, about four, will say may not be good enough, yet it will be taken to represent the views of the whole community. They can make decisions without consulting us and because we chose them as our leaders, you cannot say anything. When that happens, we become fed up and get discouraged. Next time they call us to the meeting and we are not interested in participating.” – FGD participant.*

Lack of information or understanding of issues being discussed at a meeting can affect a citizen's contribution to a dialogue even though he or she is present at the meeting. Also, when citizens are not giving information about the projects being implemented, it makes it difficult for them to raise issues even when they see things going wrong.

*“When you don't know much or understand what is being discussed, you will just be quite and say nothing because you do not know how to contribute to the discussion”* – FGD participant.

*“If you do not get proper information about the project, when you see something that you think is not going well, you are not sure how to intervene. You may give a suggestion and the people doing the work will say that your suggestion cannot be accepted because it is not in line with the contract. It's all because there was no dialogue between us.”* – FGD participant.

#### **Assembly Member's Perspective:**

The ...

#### **District Works Engineer's Perspective:**

According to the District Works Engineer, the failure of MMDAs and politicians to fulfil commitments made during previous dialogue with communities makes some citizens uninterested in participating in meetings.

*“Sometimes, there is this kind of attitude. Do I call it apathy? The apathy stems from the previous experiences they have had with the assembly that makes them to develop this kind of attitude because sometimes we say certain things [and do not live up to it]. Some of them would not understand why we come and do community action plans, you make them to prioritise projects, then in the end [we do not fulfil their needs], even though we tell them how limited resources of the assembly are.”*

The situation where citizens are not given prior or adequate information about the meetings they are to attend makes the dialogue between citizens and local government authorities ineffective because citizens are not able to make informed inputs.

*“Sometimes, the challenge has been that we just call them on phone [to come to a meeting] and they come without knowing anything. They just come and sit down and now listen to what the meeting is about. I have heard of Assembly members complain of that.”*

*“Before meetings of such nature takes place, the information about that in the form of invitation with the agenda is sent to them so that they would prepare to come and participate meaningfully. Even if it is not a letter, time should be taken to tell them what they are coming there for.”*

The use of the wrong language can also limit participation in the dialogue for some community members.

*“The dialogue should be in the language that they can understand. If you are going to communicate to a large audience like that, you need to choose the language very well. And even the one going to present it must be an expert. You can say something and it would mean something else to somebody if you do not present it properly.”*

### **4.3 The Parameters for Effective Dialogue**

The study sought the perspectives of citizens and local government officials on what should be the parameters based on which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDAs’ infrastructural projects. Specifically, what should be the content of such dialogue, when and how often should it take place, who should do what to ensure that the dialogue is effective and what can be done to guarantee participation for all community members, especially women and youth. These perspectives are presented below under each theme.

#### **4.3.1 Content of Dialogue**

Below are the perspectives of citizens and local government officials on what information or issue should be discussed or communicated for citizens and local government authorities to have effective dialogue during the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects. In other words, for citizens and local government authorities to have effective dialogue during the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects, citizens and local government officials think that the issues mentioned below should form the basis of the dialogue.

#### **Citizens Perspective:**

According to the citizens, the dialogue should be used to give information about the projects to citizens, such as the names of contractors and the persons in charge of supervising the construction. This information can also be given to the assembly members to relay it to citizens.

*“We need to know the people given the work and those who asked them to do the work. We need to know who will be supervising the work. Sometimes, people come to construct a project and they do not want anybody to intervene even when they are doing the wrong things. When that happens, those projects do not go well”* – FGD participant.

*“The Assembly has to tell the assembly member the contractor who will do the work and who is the next person in charge, who also represents the contractor. As for the construction workers, anytime you go to the site, you can see them”* – FGD participant.

During the dialogue, local government authorities should also make it clear the resources they have to implement the projects and the support they expect from citizen.

*“When they are to give a contract, they should come out clear that this is how much they have and it can be used to pay the contractor. We will sit with them to know where we have to support. However, if they just go to start the work, we will also look on thinking our contribution is not needed.”* – FGD participant.

*“As citizens, we can support contractors to execute projects, when they have problems”* – FGD participant.

### **Assembly Member’s Perspective:**

According to the assembly member, during the initiation of development projects, the assembly is supposed to meet with the communities to discuss the developmental priorities or needs of the citizens. based on the needs of the citizens, a number of projects would then be prioritized.

*“When the assembly and the citizens meet, the citizens indicate which development projects they need. They will say we need a school, toilet, road, or some other project. The assembly officials do not tell the people what they need. Instead, they listen to what the people want to be done for them.”*

*“For instance, sometime back in my community, the authorities of the basic school said they needed more classrooms for the school. We wrote a letter to the assembly and we were not hearing anything. One day, the assembly officials visited the school and we discussed the concerns of the school, based on which the new classroom project was approved and constructed.”*

At the start of a project, the assembly should provide adequate information about the project, such as cost, duration and contractor selection, to the citizens and they should emphasise the need for the citizens to monitor the project to ensure success.

*“The assembly tells the community the cost of the project, the duration and how the contract was awarded. The assembly also reiterates the fact that the project is for the community and not for the assembly and therefore entreats the citizens to monitor the project very well so that it is well executed.”*

When the project is ongoing or nears completion, the assembly should meet with the community to know their views on the progress of work. The assembly should give the community information about the status of payments to the contractor and why the project is progressing or not.

*“The assembly will ask the community whether they are okay with how the project is going. Is it going well and are they satisfied. This will bring out a lot of issues from the citizens. Sometimes, they tell the community whether funds have been given to the contractor or not and whether money is readily available to continue the project so that the citizens can understand why the project is progressing or not. For instance, during the recent construction of two three-unit classroom blocks in Warivi and Nyankpala, the assembly made it clear during a \*GSAM meeting that the project in Nyankpala was delaying because of delays in the release of the common fund by the Government. They said the three-classroom project in the other community was progressing because it was funded from the DDF (District Development Fund).”*

### **District Works Engineer’s Perspective:**

Firstly, for the dialogue to be effective, information about the projects must be shared and discussed.

*“You [local government official] need to tell them about the cost of the project, the duration and who the contractor is. All this information they [the citizens] must have.”*

Secondly, for the dialogue to be effective, feedback from the monitoring of the projects must be given to the communities.

*“You see, Assemblies do monitoring and we do it in conjunction with the communities. During the construction stage, you can monitor three or four times. If it is a six-month project, it could be more. The assembly man, the chiefs and some opinion leaders, we involve them when we are doing the monitoring. You see when we go for the monitoring, we have different stakeholders in the monitoring team and every stakeholder has his interest. For example, as the Works Engineer, I am interested in things like have they complied with the specifications. I am also interested in the schedule, whether the contractor is going by that. May be, the Planning Officer and others are interested in physical stages. Just looking at it, they can also know whether things are moving well or not. Okay, the functional areas of the building they said the building was going have, are they present. So, everybody has some interest. It would be of no use if there is no feedback.”*

*“The community, they would normally want to hear whether it is in line with specifications, whether the timelines are being followed. That is what they are interested in. And if there are delays, what is the cause of the delays. In fact, a lot of questions.”*

Thirdly, the content of dialogue should also be about citizens’ concerns. For instance, through the meetings organised by the GSAM project for citizens and the assembly to dialogue on infrastructural projects, citizens ask a lot of questions and raise concerns.

*“...as part of their [citizens] monitoring roles, they are supposed to ask certain questions, things that are not clear to them, that is demanding accountability.”*

*“If for example, it is a school building you are putting up, they take keen interest in finding out about the project being disability-friendly and all those things. When you do not incorporate some of these things, they question it. It is because of the awareness [they got under the GSAM project]. Sometimes, you will be surprised. They ask you certain questions. [In] Warivi for instance, they are a little remote from the capital. Now you go there and they ask you some kind*

*of questions. They asked us to do disability ramps to make it easy for the children with disability to access the building. They now know some of these things.”*

According to the District Works Engineer, when citizens raise concerns through the dialogue, it sometimes leads to remedial actions on the part of the assemblies.

*“Sometimes, the contract would have been signed already. And through the interactions they [the citizens] would bring certain things up and we are able to persuade the contractors to influence change in certain things to suit what [has been suggested].”*

### **4.3.2 Timing and Frequency of Dialogue**

Below are the perspectives of citizens and local government officials on when it is appropriate for citizens and local government authorities to have effective dialogue during the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects and how often such dialogue should take place.

#### **Citizens’ Perspective:**

According to the citizens, local government authorities and citizens can meet several times to discuss a project, depending on the project duration. There should be more dialogues if the project takes longer to finish because the citizens need to be regularly informed of why the delays. It is not necessary to hold several meetings if the project goes on well and is completed in a short time.

*“The projects are in types. Sometimes we are given a project and it takes a year or three months to complete. Some are completed in four or five months. If it is a one year project, we may have many meetings with the assembly because we need to regularly be reminded of the project and progress so far. But if the project will last for only five months, then we and the assembly should have between three to four meetings before the project is completed.”* – FGD participant.

*“The best is that in a year, there should be, at least, three meetings. Waiting for the project to complete before meeting is not good. If we were having meetings, the road in Nyankpala would have been properly constructed. We would have asked questions and put forward our concerns. It is the absence of such meetings that allowed the contractor to do shoddy work.”* – FGD participant.

When citizens have concerns, they can organize themselves to meet and put forward their concerns to their assembly member to take it to the assembly for redress.

*“We come together to hold a meeting, we call the assemblyman to come. Then we all put forward the issues that are of concern to us. Then the assembly can also take the issues to the assembly.”* – FGD participant.

### **Assembly Member’s Perspective:**

According to the assembly member, dialogue between citizens and local government authorities should begin when the assembly is preparing its development plan.

*“There is a period when the assembly comes to our communities and we sit with the people to draw their community plan. That is the start of the dialogue. That is when the citizens are able to discuss their development challenges and prioritize their needs. Everybody gets the opportunity to say their concerns. Based on this, the assembly can decide what it is going to do.”*

Dialogue should also take place when the assembly gets funding to implement its planned projects. The needs of citizens can change, especially when they get support from another entity other than the assembly. Therefore, the assembly needs to reconfirm that the projects that it intends to construct are still relevant.

*“What is sometimes done is that, when the project is approved or the assembly gets money to implement the project, the assembly will come and you the assembly man will organize the community for them to remind the people of what development projects they requested for and indicate which one they are ready to implement. You see we have MPs, we have the assembly and we even have those contesting for MP (All of them provide projects to their communities). So sometimes a community may say that light is their problem and by the time the assembly gets money to do this, someone else (MP or candidate) has already provided the light.”*

*“So, when the assembly gets the money, the assembly will come and ask the community whether the project they requested is still their prioritized need, then the people will confirm. For instance, you see our villages, some of them will tell you their main problem is the gutter. They will say that during the rains they are not able to sleep due to mosquitoes from the gutter. But after the rains are gone, they will change their prioritized need because they do not see the open gutter as a concern anymore.”*

The number of times that dialogue between citizens and local government authorities should take place when a project is ongoing, depends on the project. Projects, with secured funding, mostly progress well and there is usually no need for several meetings to discuss those projects. However, there is a need to hold several meetings when the project is not progressing so that the citizens can be given explanations about the delay.

*“We had two projects that were being implemented. Funds were available for one of the projects and so it was progressing very well. So, there were no meetings because there were no problems to meet and discuss. But for the project in our community, we needed to meet often, like every month, because the project was not progressing well and if we do not meet regularly to explain to the people why the project was not continuing, the people will take it as an issue. So, in such cases, a meeting every month is good. However, if it happens that everything is available and the project is going on well, the Assembly and the community can meet every three months for the people to be given more information and to hear from the contractor any challenges that he has.”*

#### **District Works Engineer’s Perspective**

According to the District Works Engineer, dialogue between citizens and local government authorities takes place during the planning and implementation stages, as earlier discussed under content, and it can also take place during the defects liability stage.

*“When the contractor has finished with the job, then it moves into the defects liability period. There is still some monitoring role we have there. When the project is practically completed, we expect that the project be put into use. As the monitoring team, we again will have to be monitoring to see how it is functioning and to see how defects have appeared on the project and what is the nature of those defects. During this stage, we basically will hand over the project to the user agency, sometimes through the community chief. It is not a grand event, but everybody can come. We tell them what their roles would be up to when the project is completed.”*

#### **4.3.3 Inclusiveness and Participation**

Below are the perspectives of citizens and local government officials on what limits citizens’ (especially women’s) participation in community dialogues and how to ensure that women and

youth take active part in dialogue between citizens and local government authorities in the planning and implementation of MMDAs' infrastructural projects.

According to the citizens, when they are gathered at a meeting, it is possible the women may be hesitant to talk and so conscious efforts must be made by the organizers of the meeting to give opportunity to the women to talk. The women must be encouraged to share their views on whatever is being discussed. Fourthly, women's hesitation to speak up during meetings limits their participation in the dialogue. When a woman is silent, it is sometimes because she is not comfortable to speak because of the fear of saying something that contradicts what has been said by their husbands, fathers or other elderly men. The women should be given the opportunity and encouraged to share their views.

*"Some of the women are shy to talk. Some also fear to talk" – Sayibu*

*"The women might be afraid to talk and so whoever is leading the meeting should make sure that they say what bothers them or what suggestions they have. That is why they have been brought to the meeting." – Abu.*

*It's a meeting, so everybody should be given the opportunity and encouraged to say what he or she thinks. People should not wait and go home and say that this was what they were thinking about the issues discussed. That is why we call it a meeting. We have all met to come to an agreement and discuss the issues that affect us. So, our mothers should be encouraged to share whatever concerns they have or whatever in their own thoughts will benefit our Ghana and the work being done. Whoever is leading the meeting" – Mr Sayibu.*

*"You see, we do not show respect to each other at the meetings that is why some people have gotten fed up and do not want to attend meetings. When they express their views, it is not accepted. So, if we want things to go well, let us accept each other's views. That is all. The women even have more sense than us. They have more ideas than us. It is because we do not accept people's views that is why when they attend meetings, they do not talk. Because if she speaks, they will not accept what she says. You see that." – Abu Mohammed.*

According to the assembly member, women and youth are sometimes hesitant in sharing their views during meetings out of respect or fear for their mothers, fathers or husbands and as a result, the men dominate the dialogue. It is good to separate the men, women and youth or encourage them to share their views by letting them know the importance of doing so.

*“Sometimes, when the men and women are called together to a meeting, the women do not talk. The men dominate the conversation and in so doing, the women and the youth are not able to share their views. The young people are not able to talk when their mothers and fathers are at the meeting. Likewise, the women are not able to talk when their husbands are at the meeting. So the meetings are good, but it is sometimes good to meet the men, women and youth separately.”*

*“When we need the views of the women, we let them know that what we are discussing has benefits for both men and women and so if they fail to share their concerns, tomorrow if their needs are not met, it will be their own doing. At some meetings, the women are told that there is no need for anyone to be shy and that there is no big or small person. Everyone’s views are important.”*

According to the assembly member, meetings should be organized through the assembly members so that they can mobilize every section of the society including chiefs, opinion leaders, women and youth to participate.

*“If we go through the Assembly Member, that person will then mobilize the people who are required to participate. Just using radio to call people to a meeting is not enough because you may not get everyone who needs to participate to come. When I, the Assembly Man, comes to invite you [a citizen] to the meeting, you will not refuse to attend. You see that. So, if you want them [youth and women] to be at the meeting, you will have to pass it through the Assembly Member and then he or she will make sure that everyone who needs to participate does so.”*

#### **4.3.4 Roles and Responsibilities**

Below are the perspectives of citizens and local government officials on the roles and responsibilities of local governance authorities, on one hand, and citizens, on the other hand, in promoting effective dialogue between citizens and local government authorities in the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects.

### **Citizens' Perspective:**

According to the citizens, the responsibilities of the assemblies will be to:

- Work with assembly members to organize community meetings to discuss issues of capital projects with the citizens.

For the citizens, their responsibility is to monitor MMDAs' infrastructural projects in their communities to ensure that these projects are properly constructed.

*“When they are building a project in a community the people have to come together and visit the project regularly to see how work is going so that no construction worker gets the opportunity to steal any construction material from the site; whatever amount of cement is provided is used on the project. This is to ensure quality projects, especially our schools.”* – FGD participant.

*“It should not be only men monitoring the projects. We the women can also do it. I even think they fear we the women than the men. When the men monitor them, it does not really border them. But when we the women monitor, they will be saying that even the women in the area come to monitor the work. This will benefit all of us and our community”* – FGD participant.

*“Without citizens' involvement, projects are poorly constructed and it leads to a waste of resources. For instance, many roads are poorly constructed and after a few years, they are degraded and the government has to divert money for other projects to reconstruct these roads. This is a waste of money”* – FGD participant.

### **Assembly Member's Perspective:**

According to the Assembly Member, the responsibility of the assembly is to work with assembly members to organize community meetings and radio programmes to discuss with citizens' issues relating to development projects.

*“The Assembly cannot just come and call the people of an area to come out for a meeting. They will not respond.”*

For the citizens, their responsibility is to use the right channels to put forth their concerns.

*“Sometimes, we remind the citizens that when you [citizen] see something you think is going wrong at the site, inform your assembly member or the unit committee to inform the assembly. There was a case in our community. The contractor had to pay the workers at some point and he had no money to do so. He decided to pick some of the cement they were not yet using and send it back to the supplier to replace it with cash so that when he gets money he can go back to buy the quantity he needs to continue working. Because of this, some citizens accused him of stealing the cement meant for the project and it became an argument. So, we do not approve of a situation where you [citizen] see something you think is going wrong at the site and you assault the contractor right away. Get the Assembly Man as soon as possible to inform him and then he will come and find out why.”*

#### **District Works Engineer’s Perspective:**

According to the District Works Engineer, the assembly’s responsibilities include monitoring the projects and meeting with the communities to dialogue on the projects. However, the assemblies are not able to fulfil these responsibilities because of the challenges they face, which is mainly financial.

*“Some of these things, we are aware, but we are not able to do them because of the challenges. We are constrained in some ways. Most of the challenges has to do with logistics that we are lacking. Those are the factors militating against our being able to achieve some of these things.”*

*“I am speaking for most work departments of the assemblies. They have staffing challenge and then even the means of transport to monitor projects properly. And apart from the vehicle, there is this problem of fuel. As for that, it is a big problem.”*

For citizens, their responsibility is to participate in community meetings organised to discuss issues relating to development projects, but sometimes they are apathetic because of failed promises.

*“We wish that they participate and participate effectively, which they sometimes do. Sometimes the huge promises made to the communities, they view the assembly as a kind of political entity. If you do not do it, it dampens their spirit.”*

Citizens also have to identify issues affecting the implementation of projects and bring them to the attention of the assembly through the proper channels.

*“As a community, when you see something, there is a channel through which you have to follow to get that something or problem to be addressed. So, they should try as communities to always use the right channel to get their concerns addressed. There is a problem, you do not attack the contractor, you get the assembly man informed. Then the assembly man will first call the engineer because we work with them or the coordinating director. And the coordinating director, if it is a technical issue he cannot address, he will call the other officers concerned and put the problem across and then get the feedback to the community.”*

#### **4.4 Measures Required for Effective Citizen-Local Government Dialogue**

The study sought the perspectives of citizens and local government officials on measures that are required to establish and maintain effective dialogue between citizens and local government authorities in the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects.

##### **Citizens’ Perspective:**

According to the citizens, local government authorities must implement commitments made during the dialogue with citizens. This will encourage citizens to be part of such meetings.

*“What I would say is that if whatever we agree at the meetings yield fruits, definitely we will be encouraged to continue dialoguing with the assembly. Having a meeting and discussing an issue and not seeing any result can make us disinterested in subsequent meetings. It is good to see what has been agreed being implemented from the beginning and to the end. If that happens, anytime there is an issue and we are called upon, we would take it seriously”* – FGD participant.

Every community should be made to select people to monitor the projects on behalf of the community. This will empower them to raise concerns where necessary.

*“It would be good for the community to select people to lead in monitoring the construction of the project. Instead of the situation where they will bring somebody else to come and monitor, I*

*would wish it is left to us the community to choose people to see how the project will be started and continued. For instance, they can monitor if the right quantity of cement is actually used. Otherwise, they will just do the work till the end and no one will understand what has been done” – FGD participant.*

Local government authorities should be encouraged to act right. There are laws, but the laws are not obeyed.

*“There are a lot of laws, but they do not work. The assembly has engineers and they have knowledge about projects. Yet we have projects poorly executed and when they finish, the engineer will go and say that the work is perfect. The engineer knows what the laws says but is not following it. We need to have mercy on each other and respect each other.” – FGD participant.*

### **Assembly Member’s Perspective**

According to the Assembly Member, MMDAs should provide logistical support to their assembly members to enable them go round to share information and to mobilize citizens for meetings to discuss capital projects. For instance, the assemblies can purchase motorbikes for its members.

*“The assembly man or woman represents the community. That person is a link between the community and the assembly and so needs to be supported. Going round to mobilize people or talk to people is not easy. We need motorbikes to facilitate our transportation. Sometimes even moving from the Tolon Assembly to the Nyankpala Chief Palace is a challenge due to the distance.”*

The Government should institute laws that will make it compulsory for assemblies to consult with citizens before any project is provided to make sure the project is really in line with the priorities of the communities.

The Government should also ensure that existing laws that require local government authorities to consult with citizens on their developmental needs are enforced.

### **District Works Engineer's Perspective:**

According to the District Works Engineer, there is need for the Central Government to ensure timely and adequate release of funds to MMDAs so that they can do what is expected of them in terms of planning and implementing infrastructural development projects.

*“We budget every year for some of this logistics I am talking of, for capital expenditure and goods and services, you understand. But what we get for the departments or for that matter the assembly as a whole is sometimes too ... [small]. May be in year, one quarter's errn...this thing [funds] will just come. The rest will not come. And if it is coming, you budget for something realistic and what is sent to you is not realistic.”*

Development partners should support MMDAs to perform their roles.

*“We had this partner, USAID/RING. They have come to strength us. They even gave the Works Department a motorbike, but it is not sufficient.”*

MMDAs should support their assembly members to engage more with the communities.

*“Assembly members' work is more of voluntary. To be frank, most of them, they should have been given logistics like fuel. Helping them to acquire motorbikes would have been very good. In some rich assemblies, they help them to acquire motorbikes. If it is loans they will give them or they can buy them the motorbikes and they will be paying on some soft terms.”*

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section presents a summary of the findings of the study under the various objectives. It also includes conclusions arrived at based on the findings and recommendations for further studies.

#### **Summary of Key Findings**

##### **Communication Mechanisms for Effective Citizen-Local Government Dialogue**

In the perspective of the citizens and local government officials in the Tolon District who took part in the study, meetings, radio, assembly and unit committee members, information vans and social media are communication mechanisms through which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDAs' infrastructural projects.

##### **Meetings**

Meetings make it possible for participants to share their views and to build consensus. They are an effective communication mechanism for reaching out to farmers and other community members. Although meetings are limited to a few people, those who attend meetings mostly relay the information to other community members. From the planning stage through to the execution of a project and the handing over, meetings can be used to maintain dialogue between citizens and local government authorities either directly or through intermediaries such as elected assembly members, unit committee members, chiefs and opinion leaders.

##### **Radio**

Radio can be very useful for sharing information with citizens on MMDA's infrastructural and other development projects. Information disseminated through radio is more likely to reach a large number of people since many people listen to radio. Radio sets are inexpensive and, as such, many citizens are able to afford them, unlike TV. There has recently been radio discussions on matters bordering on infrastructural projects and many citizens confirmed having heard the

discussions. The best times to reach citizens with information through radio is the early hours of the day and the evenings, because many people listen to radio around those periods.

### **Assembly and Unit Committee Members**

Assembly and unit committee members serve as intermediaries between local government authorities and citizens. They are the first point of contact when citizens have concerns to share with the assembly and this should include concerns about infrastructural projects. Assembly members convey citizens' concerns to local government authorities and shares the feedback with the citizens. Assembly and unit committee members must share with citizens any information on infrastructural projects that the assembly provides them.

### **Information Vans**

Information vans are also effective in reaching citizens with information about MMDA's infrastructural projects. On many occasions, information vans have been used to share information and many citizens have taken some action based on the information received.

### **Social Media**

Social media can also be used to promote dialogue between citizens and local government authorities. Social media platforms can be created to function like WhatsApp and others where citizens can ask local government authorities questions relating to capital projects.

### **Barriers to Effective Dialogue and How to Deal with Them**

In the perspective of the citizens and local government officials in the Tolon District who took part in the study, there are a number of barriers that can limit the effectiveness of citizen-local government dialogue through the communication mechanisms identified. First of all, the failure of local government authorities to address citizens' concerns or fulfill commitments agreed during dialogue with citizens reduces citizens' interest in continuing with such dialogue. Again, citizens' commitment to participating in meetings to have dialogue with local authorities wanes

when meetings do not start at the time announced, when meetings are called off after citizens have already gathered, when only leaders are allowed to share their views or when the views expressed by citizens are not taken on board. In addition, dialogue may become ineffective if the wrong language is being used or citizens are not given adequate information or understanding about the issues being discussed because this limits their ability to ask questions or make contributions.

To eschew or address these barriers, the perspective of the citizens and local government officials in the Tolon District who took part in the study is that local government authorities must act on some, if not all, commitments agreed with citizens. Meetings should be held as planned. Citizens should be given adequate information and understanding about issues relating to the infrastructural projects being implemented and adequate opportunity to express their views. The appropriate languages should be used in establishing dialogue between citizens and local government authorities to ensure that no one is disadvantaged.

### **The Parameters for Effective Dialogue**

In the perspective of the citizens and local government officials in the Tolon District who took part in the study, the following should be the basis for which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDA's infrastructural projects.

### **Content of Dialogue**

In the planning and implementation of MMDAs' infrastructural projects, dialogue between citizens and local government authorities should be focused on the developmental priorities or needs of the citizens; information about the projects being implemented, such as the names of the contractors, project costs and project durations; resources available for the execution of the project and the support needed from citizens, the monitoring role of citizens, progress of work and challenges; status of payments to the contractors; the concerns of citizens;

## **Timing and Frequency of Dialogue**

In the planning and implementation of MMDAs' infrastructural projects, dialogue between citizens and local government authorities should take place:

- i. During the planning stages to enable the authorities and the citizens prioritize the developmental needs of the communities and identify which projects should be initiated.
- ii. When funds are available to commence project implementation so as to confirm if the projects are still relevant.
- iii. When construction is ongoing, so that any challenges can be discussed and addressed.
- iv. When construction works are completed and the project is into the defects liability stage, during which the project is being observed for any defects.
- v. When citizens have concerns.

The number of times that local government authorities and citizens can meet to have dialogue in relation to the planning and implementation of a project depends on the duration of the project. There may be fewer meetings when a project is implemented as planned. There should be more dialogue if a project takes longer to finish because the citizens need to be regularly informed of why the delays.

## **Measures Required for Effective Citizen-Local Government Dialogue**

In the perspective of the citizens and local government officials in the Tolon District who took part in the study, the following measures are required to ensure that there is effective dialogue between citizens and local government authorities in the planning and implementation of infrastructural projects:

- Local government authorities must be made to implement commitments made during the dialogue with citizens.
- Every community should be allowed to select people from amongst themselves to be part of the monitoring of a project in the community.
- Local government authorities should be made to plan and execute infrastructural projects in line with the law.

- MMDAs should provide logistical support to their assembly members to enable them go round to share information and to mobilize citizens for meetings to discuss capital projects.
- The Government should ensure that existing laws that require local government authorities to consult with citizens on their developmental needs are enforced.
- There should be timely and adequate release of funds to MMDAs so that they can do what is expected of them in terms of planning and implementing infrastructural development projects.
- Development partners should support MMDAs to perform their roles.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the perspectives shared by the citizens and local government officials, the study has arrived at a number of conclusions.

First and foremost, a mixture of different communication mechanisms can be employed for citizens and local government authorities to have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDAs' infrastructural projects. Meetings are most suitable for seeking consensus on citizens' needs and the development projects to be implemented. They are ideal for discussing citizens' concerns relating to a project and can serve as a platform for both citizens and local government officials to negotiate improvements in the implementation of the projects.

For meetings to be ineffective, however, some consultations need to be made with key opinion leaders and groups to arrive at dates suitable for many citizens. In farming communities, for instance, meetings need to be fixed at periods that many farmers can be available to attend.

Radio is suitable for disseminating information on infrastructural projects to citizens. For instance, local government authorities can effectively employ radio to inform the broader citizenry of their approved MTDPs and AAPs, funds available for implementing these plans and the status of implementation of these development plans. Local authorities can also share information regarding commissioned projects, such as the project descriptions, the contractors, the costs, the funding source and the timelines. In addition, they can use the radio platform to update citizens on the status of implementation. The dissemination of information using radio

could take the form of announcements, news, interviews or discussion programmes involving local officials, community representatives and other key stakeholders.

Although a number of citizens can participate in discussions on radio through social media, SMS and call-ins, radio may still be described as less participatory as compared with meetings. Apart from the fact that many citizens in rural communities may not have the capacity to contribute to radio discussions using those mechanisms, the number of citizens who can contribute may also be limited. Thus, radio may not be appropriate for reaching consensus on issues bordering on project planning and implementation. At best, radio will be helpful in getting a sense of public opinion regarding

For radio to be effective in reaching out to citizens, it is important ...

As per the findings of the study, it is best to share information with citizens through radio during the early mornings and evenings. It is also important to do so in the appropriate local languages.

Social media, though may be useful for promoting dialogue, may not be as effective in districts where there is low internet penetration and low literacy. The use of social media can be explored in more urbanized areas, where there are high levels of literacy and access to the internet.

It is best for citizens and local government authorities to have bi-monthly or quarterly meetings when a project is ongoing in a community, whether project is moving on smoothly or not. These meetings will be used to update the community on the progress of work; provide explanations in case the project is not progressing as expected; and listen to and address concerns related to project implementation.

In between these meetings, however, the Assembly can share any important information with the citizens through the Assembly Member and traditional leaders and through radio and other communication means possible. Again, a meeting could be convened when there is an urgent issue to discuss.

## **Other**

There are a number of communication mechanisms through which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDAs' infrastructural projects. These include: meetings, radio, assembly and unit committee members,

Meetings are the most preferred because they make it possible for both sides to have face to face interaction, get instant feedback and reach consensus on issues related to projects. Radio is also preferred due to its advantage of enabling many more citizens to be part of the dialogue from wherever they are. However, radio is more effective for making information available to citizens and less effective for ensuring two-way communication. Social media, though may be useful for promoting dialogue, may not be as effective in districts where there is low internet penetration and literacy in the use of technology. It may be explored as literacy levels increase and access to the internet improves.

Secondly,

Identify, from the perspectives of citizens and local government officials in the Tolon District, the parameters based on which citizens and local government authorities can have effective dialogue in the planning and implementation of MMDAs' infrastructural projects.

It is best for citizens and local government authorities to have bi-monthly or quarterly meetings when a project is ongoing in a community, whether project is moving on smoothly or not. These meetings will be used to update the community on the progress of work; provide explanations in case the project is not progressing as expected; and listen to and address concerns related to project implementation.

In between these meetings, however, the Assembly can share any important information with the citizens through the Assembly Member and traditional leaders and through radio and other communication means possible. Again, a meeting could be convened when there is an urgent issue to discuss.

Recommendations

For further research

Projects that are mostly executed in good time and with appreciable quality are those with secured funding, i.e. those funded through the DDF and other donor funds. Projects funded through the DACF

- The assemblies should emphasize the fact that the projects are for the people and so they should own it and show interest.
- They should discuss any concerns that the citizens may have about the projects. “The Assembly should ask the people whether they have any concerns so that they can address it.”
- The authorities should give information on the progress of work and the status of payments to the contractors for project execution. “The Assembly should tell the people how much money has been paid the contractor and whether money is available to continue the project so that the citizens can understand why the project is progressing or not. For instance, when two three-unit classroom blocks were being constructed in Warivi and Nyankpala, we were told that one of them was progressing because it was being funded by the DDF and the other was delaying because it was being funded by from the Common Fund, which was not being released to the Assembly by the Government.”

How citizens can support in capital project implementation. “As citizens, we can support contractors to execute projects, when they have problems” – Abdulai

We can share our concerns on the projects

- This first dialogue should be about identifying and prioritizing the needs of the communities. The outcome of such dialogue should be a community action plan which identifies the developmental challenges of the community and what projects are required to address them. This plan should feed into the District's development plan.
- The second dialogue should take place when the project is approved and about taking off. During this time, the assembly has to inform the communities of what projects are to be implemented in their communities.
- Again, dialogue should take place when the project is ongoing so that they can discuss the progress of work and the citizens can share their concerns. The
- As to the number of times such dialogue will take place depends on the project. Projects, with secured funding, mostly progress pretty well and there is usually no need for several meetings to discuss these projects.

implementation of infrastructural projects and how often such dialogue should take place..

When projects are going on well, perspectives of citizens and local government officials on when it is appropriate

If the project is going on well, the assembly can meet with the citizens may be once in about three months to update the citizens on the progress of work. Some projects, especially those funded by DDF and other available funds, go on well and no meetings are held to discuss the projects. For projects that are not going on well, several meetings might be held to discuss the challenges and try to find solutions.”

- Some citizens believe that the number of meetings

- Depending on the project length, we can meet several times to discuss the project. For instance, if it is a project that will be constructed over a year period, we can meet at least four times.

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