

REPORT ON IDEG-MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

THEME: ENGAGING THE MEDIA ON GHANA'S TRANSFORMATIONAL LOCAL GOVERNANCE REFORMS

VENUE: IDEG AUDITORIUM

DATE: THURSDAY, 2ND AUGUST, 2018

INTRODUCTION

The President of the Republic of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's decision to reform Ghana's local governance system by amending article 55 of the 1992 constitution to enable political parties participate in district level elections, affords Ghanaians an opportunity for transformational development which should be capitalized on. In the past 8 years since the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) began its advocacy for the reform of Ghana's local governance system, it has relentlessly engaged various stakeholders towards the realization of this transformational agenda.

In line with this, the Institute convened a meeting with twenty-one (21) media practitioners comprising Editors, Directors, Host/Anchors and Producers from diverse key media houses on Thursday, August 2, 2018 at the IDEG Auditorium. The meeting was to update them on efforts made towards the local governance reforms thus far, what more needed to be done and solicit their views on how the media can increase citizen's awareness and mobilize strong national support for the constitutional amendment process.

The engagement started with a documentary on Democratic Devolution and was followed with presentations, questions and answers, the way forward and closing remarks.

The presenters, Dr. Emmanuel Akwetey, Executive Director – IDEG and Prof. Atsu Ayee, Senior Research Fellow – IDEG, were introduced by Ms. Patience Quaye, Advocacy and Communications Officer– IDEG. The presentations covered: (i) The Imperative of Amending Article 55 of the 1992 constitution by September 2019; and (ii) Review of Constitutional Amendment Activities since the State of the Nation Address (SONA) in February, 2018 respectively.

Presentations

THE IMPERATIVE FOR AMENDING ARTICLE 55 of the 1992 CONSTITUTION BY SEPTEMBER 2019

Dr. Emmanuel Akwetey, Executive Director, IDEG gave the first presentation which explored the urgent need for structural governance reforms as a pre-requisite for Ghana's transformational development in the next thirty-five to forty (35-40) years. He stated that, the reform of Ghana's current system of local governance is expected to strengthen the developmental governance capacities of political parties and state institutions. After three decades of practising decentralization without the involvement of parties, there are still unsatisfactory issues as far as national development is concerned. A question that needs addressing is the inability of the country to transform without the involvement of political parties. In China, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and India, political parties have been behind the transformational changes that occurred. Parties and their contribution to development is historically a strong case, except in Ghana and other African countries where the role of political parties in development is questioned. To spur to an era of transformational development, it is imperative to amend article 55 (3) which bars political parties' participation in local governance.

The Executive Director further pointed out evidence from recent assessments showing that the constitutional framework for political parties operating in Ghana is already not being adhered to despite being in the constitution. Parties have already infiltrated the existing system informally contrary to article 55(3). Further to this, he stated that the political parties have not complied with the three (3) important clauses of article 55. That is, the clause requiring all parties to have offices in 2/3 districts has not been met by most minority parties and neither has the clause for political parties to declare the assets and liabilities and sources of income being complied with by the two (2) main political parties. During the 2016 elections, some of the small parties were barred from contesting as a result of not meeting these requirements. The failure with compliance and enforcement is a glaring proof of the difficulty in enforcing the laid down framework. In addition, the duopoly created by the two dominating political parties affect the character of Ghana's multiparty system. The argument

that political parties have the potential to lead development should make room for their empowerment through capacity building.

A 2015 assessment by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) survey findings, point out the growing support for political parties. The Afro-barometer findings have proven positive interest of people towards political parties' participation. Statistics show the country has recorded an average of over seventy (70) % high turnout in national elections as against that of district level election of an average of 35% for the past 26 years. All these are substantial proof that the support for political parties is strong.

Further to this, a development vision is clearly pointed out in the constitution towards a transformational economy that will be just free and prosperous. A case for scrutiny of the current system is evident by the growing support for political parties, that have been blocked from going into local development which serves as the laboratory for development practice universally. Citing the example of Netherlands, Dr. Akwetey said that local government serves as the preparation and testing ground for future national leaders before they participate in national politics.

The exclusion of parties has to be looked at critically. If Ghana wants democratic development, then it needs multi-parties' participation in local governance. Political parties play developmental roles in other economies such as in China where the communist party is embedded in local governance.

IDEG REVIEW OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACTIVITIES SINCE SONA 2018

Following the Executive Director's presentation, Prof. Atsu Ayee provided a review of the constitutional amendment process by focusing on IDEG's advocacy on democratic devolution, the President's directive on Article 55 of the 1992 Constitution in his February 2018 Message on the State of the Nation; progress made since February 2018, challenges with shepherding the constitutional process and concluded with the way forward to ensure constitutional amendment activities stay on course.

In an explanation of democratic devolution, Prof. Ayee indicated that it refers to the legalization of the participation of political parties in local governance through democratic

and structural reforms. The advocacy of the Institute since 2010, its outcomes and proposals on Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR) directed at addressing exclusion, to include women, youth and people living with disabilities to form 30% of MMDAs membership, and the creation of a Local Development Advisory Council (LDAC) to make room for traditional authorities, specifically queen mothers and chiefs in local governance were explained. Additionally, deepening fiscal decentralization and strengthening of the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) for improved monitoring and evaluation was put forward as forming part of the democratic devolution agenda. The necessary pre-conditions to ensure the full impact of devolution were spelt out as being: the empowerment of political parties to drive development through capacity building, building a meritocratic and professional public service and the inclusion of disadvantaged or minority groups in local governance.

After enlightening participants on democratic devolution, Prof. Ayee gave an account of the specific directives of the President in amending article 55 from the manifesto commitment on the election of MMDCEs, removal of the entrenched clause in Article 55 barring political parties' participation in local governance, holding a referendum with District Assembly elections in 2019, to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development's (MLGRD) charge to shepherd the amendment process. To implement the directive of the President, the MLGRD had produced a consolidated road map (2017-2021), power point presentation on its consultative meetings and other activities, embarked on regional sensitization forums in the 10 regions and obtained media coverage of its regional consultative activities.

Notwithstanding the efforts made, there are clear indications that the shepherding process is being challenged by the absence of a draft Constitutional Amendment (CA) Bill, coupled with Parliament's 12-week long recess, which makes it a high probability of the CA Bill not featuring on Parliament's Order of Business for the period October-December 2018 and the seemingly unrealistic timelines provided by the Ministry in its published roadmap. An alternative timeline which would have ensured a successful amendment of Article 55 by 2019 was presented to inform participants of how much time had been lost in the process and the need to expedite action if the reform is to be realized. Prof. Ayee concluded his presentation by pointing out the need for the MLGRD to scale-up its shepherding role and mobilizing

strong parliamentary bi-partisan and public support towards the amendment process while recommending the putting in place of an independent body to shepherd the constitutional amendment.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The interactive aspect of the meeting, facilitated by Mr. Kwesi Jonah, Senior Research Fellow – IDEG, afforded the participants the opportunity to ask diverse and crucial questions, make suggestions and express their concerns in relation to the constitutional amendment process. In addition, clarifications were sought which were sufficiently addressed by the IDEG's resource persons, along the lines of: delinking the 2019 referendum and election 2020; establishing a link between the creation of regions and the local governance reforms; resource allocation; sabotage; polarization; quality of human resource at the district level; public education; and consequential reforms.

- **Delinking the 2019 Referendum and Election 2020**

The importance and idealness of holding referenda together, separated from all kinds of elections, be it district, presidential or parliamentary was put forward as a catalyst for the promotion of development. The fatigue and cost associated with combining the district level elections (DLEs) and referendum must be considered. The mobilization for election disrupts the implementation of programs as little or no space is provided to focus on and solve problems. The Electoral Commission reserves the right to advise on holding the DLEs and referendum together or holding them separately. There should be an advocacy to delink the referendum and DLEs.

- **Establishing a link between the creation of regions and the local governance reforms**

The creation of new regions forms part of the decentralization structure. Regions that had hitherto been very weak, in the decentralization structure would have more powers delegated to them to engage. With the local governance reforms being sought, more resources will be devolved the districts which implies that the Regional Coordinating

Councils (RCCs) should be strengthened to effectively coordinate and monitor the performance of the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) and create an avenue for the President to engage the districts. The new regions with very few districts are likely going to agitate for the creation of more districts which translates into allocation for more money to promote local development. There is, therefore, a connection between the creation of regions and local governance reforms as well as electoral politics.

- **Resource allocation**

As a means of promoting effective decentralization, it is important for the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) not to be politicized. Moreover, all district activities will be coordinated by the RCC. Irrespective of the election of MMDCEs, there will be central control of resource allocation if the right mechanisms are not put in place. Power to determine resource allocation should be transferred to the districts. The recruitment process of MMDAs staff should be strengthened and the legal framework tightened to ensure the judicious use of resources at the district level. In Kenya, for example, the law shields revenue allocation grants of Counties from presidential influence. Mechanisms can, therefore, be put in place in the DACF Act to avoid sabotage with resource allocation. The amendment of Article 55 opens the door for consequential constitutional, legal, institutional and financial reforms to move forward the country.

- **Fear of Sabotage**

Ghana is a unitary country and therefore requires all citizens to abide by national policies. An opposition party, in spite of being entitled to its own programmes, would also have to work within the national policies set by the central government. The National Development Planning Commission exists to ensure that all MMDAs work in conformity with the national agenda. The argument therefore that the reform of local governance will bring division and promote decentralization of corruption and sabotage is therefore unfounded.

- **Polarization**

The fear of polarization justifies the urgent need to allow political parties in local governance. Data clearly shows that political parties' involvement in elections leads to high turn-out. A reformed local governance system is expected to create a scenario of political parties going to court for settlement of some of the issues with the central government as a result of infractions. The issue of polarization can be resolved if all political parties are allowed access to executive power and resources at the local level.

- **Quality of human resource at the district level**

Amending article 55(3) will reform the current system of local governance. The next four (4) years after the constitutional amendment require putting in place laws to guide the system. The quality of people at the district level will be improved if political parties are transformed into development-oriented institutions. The political parties will oversee and coordinate district programs and pay attention to public service institutions. There is already evidence of the political parties shifting to focus on development agenda beyond elections. For instance, former President John Kufuor in his speech to delegates of the New Patriotic Party at the Annual National Delegates Conference at Cape Coast in August 2017 entreated them to bring in technocrats to chart a new path for the party to follow.

- **Public education**

Public education requires joint efforts. All stakeholders must be involved in educating people about the benefits of the local governance reforms. The citizenry at the district level should be engaged and made to understand the reform process in preparation towards the referendum in 2019. It is through a coordinated and effective public education programme that the local tension and polarization which are more intense at the district level can be reduced.

Info-graphics could also be designed and used to ease the understanding of this agenda by all as part of IDEG's public education strategy.

- **Consequential reforms**

Amending article 55(3) will pave the way for consequential constitutional, legal, institutional and financial reforms. Amending the article is one reform with multiple effects that affect all, including the political parties. Political parties going into decentralized local governance calls for changes to party system and structures to enable them work with the new system. The constitutional amendment to allow political parties participate in local governance will usher in a regime of thinking and reasoning to advance Ghana's democracy. In reforming the system, proposals such as legalizing the MMPR system, LDAC, increasing the percentage of DACF and strengthening the RCCs are key.

- **Youth participation**

In an effort to get the political parties into local governance it was suggested that IDEG's advocacy should also be targeted at the youth since they form a greater representation of Ghanaian voters.

THE WAY FORWARD

The way forward centres on the specific ways in which the media can specifically strengthen citizens' awareness and mobilize strong national support for amending the Constitution by September 2019. Some of the recommendations made include the following:

- A schedule on the reform agenda should be prepared and circulated for debate and engagements at the grass root level to enable the citizenry to buy into the reforms

and identify with them as a national agenda. Direct and door-to-door public engagement can be facilitated by state establishments such as the Information Services Department (ISD).

- Media programs should be set aside for institutions such as IDEG to explain the reforms and properly sensitize the public to avoid politicization of the agenda.
- The media should be aided to identify and engage citizens in support of the reforms through interviews and discussions with the various media outlets. Supporters of the reforms should also be encouraged to avail themselves to the media for engagement.
- The campaign for the reforms should be sustained and be concise to keep it in the minds of the public.
- The media have to be sufficiently prepared to respond to questions that might be generated from interactions with the public on the reforms.
- Online conversation can be created to educate people about the reforms. Blogging influencers can campaign meaningfully on the agenda, get people online to react and in the process get them educated.

CONCLUSION

Ghana is confronted with a historical and transformational opportunity for structural governance reforms backed by the commitment of the incumbent President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. The devolution of executive power transfers power to local structures to govern effectively and pursue development. It behooves on all stakeholders to demand accountability from duty bearers to see to the successful implementation of an issue of national significance such as the constitutional amendment process to remove article 55(3) of the 1992 Constitution, which is seen as the key to ushering in a new regime of local governance in the country. The media remains a critical stakeholder in the implementation of these reforms and should own the reforms as a developmental agenda. Pursuance of the reforms, calls for a vibrant and sustained engagement with the MLGRD which has been tasked with shepherding the successful implementation of the reforms. The strength of

media in setting agendas and using its tools and technology to do things instantaneously, if applied, can spur a lively national conversation around this important reform agenda.

Closing

The meeting ended at 3:20pm with Ms. Pearl Buxton giving a vote of thanks.

List of Participants

BUSINESS LUNCH
ENGAGING THE MEDIA ON GHANA'S TRANSFORMATIONAL LOCAL
GOVERNANCE REFORMS

Date: 2nd August, 2018

Venue: IDEG Auditorium

REGISTRATION SHEET

NO	NAME OF PARTICIPANT	ORGANISATION	DESIGNATION	GENDER	CONTACT NO.	E-MAIL
				M/F		
1.	Bernard Avle	Citi FM	Director of News	M	0264391333	research@omnimedia.gh.com
2.	Eric Ahianyoy	Radio xyz	Head of News	M	0244854752	ericahianyoy@yahoo.com
3.	A C Ohene	Adom TV	Senior Editor	M	0208115327	obk.press@yahoo.com
4.	Salifu Abdul-Rahaman	New Times Corporation/Ghanaian Times	Snr. Assistant Editor	M	0243950003	ayongo1966@gmail.com

5.	Yaw Owusu	Daily Guide	Deputy Editor	M	0244801429	yawowusu74@gmail.com
6.	Teye Kitcher	GBC Radio	Head of Radio News	M	0242551617	teyekitcher@gmail.com
7.	Kofi Appiah Adjei	GTV Govern	Producer/Director	M	0249146089	kofiappiah7@gmail.com
8.	Christopher Asiedu	Behind the News (GBC Radio)	Producer	M	0243230908	chrisaseidu@gmail.com
9.	Nana Yaw Kesse	Peace FM	Show Host/News caster	M	0244388285	fredynaky@yahoo.co.uk
10.	Francis Abban	Starr FM	Show Host	M	0245823734	thefrancisabban@gmail.com
11.	Regina Borley Bortey	Starr FM	Show Host/News caster	F		
12.	Napo Ali	Class FM	Editor	M	0243873088	napo.ali29@gmail.com
13.	Edward Kwabi	TV3	Editor	M	0246308969	eddykwabi@gmail.com
14.	Emmanuel Bensah Jnr.	Africa In Focus/ECOWAS Business News	Editor	M	0268687653	ekbensah@gmail.com

15.	Eva Abugabe	Social Media	-	F	0209339719	evabugabe@gmail.com
16.	Bernard Avle	Citi FM	Director of News	M	0264391333	research@omnimediaigh.com
17.	Kojo Akoto Boateng	Citi FM/TV	Head of Research	M		research@omnimediaigh.com
18.	Benjamin Adadevoh	Blogging Ghana	Communication Director	M	0503511874	addonghana@gmail.com
19.	Simon Dadzie	GBC Radio	Producer	M	0246836140	
20.	David Ampofo	Channel 2	CEO	M	0244310305	david@davidampofo.com
21.	Karen Shormeh Sai	TRMC	Founder/Director	F	0509030516	shomsai@gmail.com
IDEG						
22.	Dr. Emmanuel Akwetey		IDEG	M		
23.	Prof. Atsu Ayee		IDEG	M		

24.	Mr. Kwesi Jonah		IDEG	M		
25.	Mr. Kofi Awity		IDEG	M		
26.	Ms. Joycelyn Aryeetey		IDEG	F		
27.	Maj. Gen. Nii Carl Coleman		IDEG	M		
28.	Prof. S.N. Woode		IDEG	M		
29.	Mr. Ewald Garr		IDEG	M		
30.	Pearl Buxton		IDEG	F		
31.	Patience Quaye		IDEG	F		
32.	Nadege Djonou		IDEG	F		
33.	Patricia Kwakye		IDEG	F		
34.	Eileen Gans-Lartey		IDEG	F		

35.	Edwina Afful-Packson		IDEG	F		
36.	Alice Mensah		IDEG	F		
37.	Isaac Nartey		IDEG	M		
38.	Anthony Mensah		IDEG	M		
39.	Walter Adamah		IDEG	M		

- **Total Number of Participants: 39**
 - **Number of Media Personnel: 21 (18 Males, 3 Females)**
 - **Number of IDEG Staff: 18 (10 Males, 8 Females)**

- **Total Number of Females: 11**

- **Total Number of Males: 28**

