Contents

1.0 Introduction .................................................................................................................................................................................. 3

Chapter 2: Literature Review ........................................................................................................................................................................ 6
  2.1 Civil society and Media’s role in Governance.............................................................................................................................. 8
  2.2 Framework for Evaluating Local Governance ............................................................................................................................ 9
  2.3 Structure of Local Governance in Ghana ...................................................................................................................................... 11

Chapter 3: Methodology ............................................................................................................................................................................... 12
  3.1 The Research Context ........................................................................................................................................................................... 12
  3.2 Data Gathering Method ......................................................................................................................................................................... 14
    3.2.1 Focus Group Activities .................................................................................................................................................................. 14
    3.2.2 Questionnaire .............................................................................................................................................................................. 15
    3.2.3 Interviews ..................................................................................................................................................................................... 16
  3.3 Data Analysis ...................................................................................................................................................................................... 17

Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Research Findings .............................................................................................................................. 18
  4.1 Baseline Focus Group Events ............................................................................................................................................................... 18
  4.2 Baseline Survey Data: Citizen Perceptions of Governance ............................................................................................................. 20
    4.2.1 Demographics ........................................................................................................................................................................... 21
  4.3 Key Messages from the Research: Community Perceptions of Information Sharing, Transparency and Accountability .................. 22
    4.4 Key Messages from the Research: District Assembly Official’s Perception of Information Sharing, Transparency and Accountability ...................................................................................................................... 31

Chapter 5: Outcomes and Recommendations ............................................................................................................................................. 41
  5.1 Participatory Planning, Budgeting and Expenditure Tracking ........................................................................................................ 41
  5.2 Citizen Access to Information Campaigns ........................................................................................................................................ 42
  5.3 Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation ........................................................................................................................................... 42
  5.4 Participatory Management of Investments/Projects ......................................................................................................................... 43
  5.5 Citizen Feedbacks for Services (Report Cards and Social Audits) ................................................................................................. 43

Chapter 6: Conclusions ....................................................................................................................................................................................... 44

References ................................................................................................................................................................................................. 45

Appendix A: Questionnaire .............................................................................................................................................................................. 46
1.0 Introduction

The “Enabling Governance and Economic Transparency in West Africa using New Media” project, was designed and developed by the International Institute of ICT Journalism with funding and support from the African Technology Transparency Initiative (ATTI) to address the basic issues of transparency and accountability of governance projects at the local government level using new technologies such as Short Messaging Service (SMS) and community radios.

Empirical and anecdotal concerns indicate that Government budget allocations towards specific sector development at the local Government level cannot be tracked, neither is it possible to link budget allocations to actual development programs on the ground. Similarly, Governments, during their election campaigns raise awareness of certain developmental issues most of which should be implemented across the three levels of government but which go to sleep almost immediately after elections.

However very little monitoring of such activities do take place. Citizens are often too anxious about their immediate familial situations and basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter to be overly concerned about how their votes determine what projects get implemented or not, and which priority areas Government allocations should target.

Other factors, such as a lack of interest to pursue the development of government projects and literacy concerns also contribute to why citizens at the local Government level are often not aware of development initiatives. Often times, citizens are neither informed nor aware of government development projects or the means through which information about projects are disseminated.

There are few means through which they could tie government promises to actual development happenings on the ground. Creating a platform or a shared space in which local government officials could interact with their citizens on issues of development, could improve communication about government projects. Technology could also play a role here if utilized efficiently.

Two concerns immediately stand out: The first is that of process – the means through which citizens can engage in dialogue with Government; and the second is that of policy content - the actual policy dialogue or development issues and

1 Respondents to focus group evaluations held in the two districts Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese (AAKD) and the Kassena-Nankana East Districts (KNED) in December 2011 indicated that they were uninformed of government projects and activities.
priorities that will engender development and growth at the local government level.

These are governance issues that are often election related. Broader challenges such as the disconnection between citizens and the elected in the election process, and the absent mindedness of citizens on election issues makes addressing these concerns a little more difficult.

Illiteracy also poses certain challenges as it relates to effectively holding Governments accountable in pursuing development objectives. A catch-22 situation arises: Governments are responsible for providing basic education to its citizens, yet education and a certain level of literacy is required to enable citizens effectively engage with government.

These concerns cannot be addressed through a single project application such as this one. However, the findings for such projects can shed light into what steps government and citizens should take in order to address development priorities.

For instance, new and modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) enhance the abilities of citizens to engage and communicate with Government. Here orality and tacit knowledge takes precedence over literary and explicit knowledge and other forms of communication. This seems particularly suited at local Government levels where such concerns are more visible.

The use of community radios is another example where citizens have been able to bring issues of communal concerns for broader debate. When these channels are explored in earnest, dialogue tends to “trickle up” through the levels of Governments, from the districts to the province and finally to the federal level. However, when such channels are not fully explored, the dialogues often remain at the levels at which they are (not even reaching the district level) and development takes a stunted approach.

It could be inferred therefore that in order to explore the subject of accountability and transparency at all levels, one level could be examined in more depth with the hopes that lessons learned could be applied to other levels.

The local Government level has been purposefully selected because it is here that Government policies directly affect citizens. It is also easier to examine the interrelationships between the lowest level of government represented by constituent district assemblies and the citizens they serve.

The project sets out to understand how effective communication could take place at this level and the possibility of effectively and purposefully using technology as a channel for enhanced communication and interaction between citizens and governments, especially in the area of development and developmental projects
The project was developed to:

a) explore the channels through which citizens could increase participation in the governance process; and

b) engage in the debate on issues of development that concern them in the education and health sectors.

The chosen districts were Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese (AAKD) and the Kassena-Nankana East Districts (KNED). The project examined the suitability of Short Message System (SMS) technology and community radio for the sharing of information and the facilitation of dialogue on development projects with the expectation that the findings would shed light on transparency and accountability in governance.

This report describes the findings and lessons learned from the research. Chapter two commences with a review of literature and of governance structure in Ghana, with a discussion on the complexities of the governance structure and the added complexity that civil society organizations add in the quest to improve transparency. It also presents a framework for evaluating local governance that will guide the research.

In Chapter three the research methodology is described. The findings from the research are presented in Chapter four while Chapter five explores the outcomes and recommendations to Government, development partners, community members and district assembly officials.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Abor, Abekah-Nkrumah and Abor (2008) perhaps present a very critical picture of the complexity of the governance structure in the support of the health sector by the Government of Ghana. Their report illustrated a four-level hierarchy of health service offerings to Ghanaian communities (p. 50). The structure is headed and directed primarily by the Ministry of Health at the top level, with influences reaching as far down as traditional medical practitioners and alternative medicine faith healers situated at the lower levels. Government hospitals such as community health centers fall in the middle of this complex structure. Somehow funding and administrative responsibility trickle from the top down to most Government-favored medical institutions within this structure.

The complexity of this structure perhaps explains why the authors were very critical of the governance structure of the health sector in their report. For instance, they suggested that certain elements of this system do not comply with the nine principles of “good governance” accepted worldwide.

They used a framework developed by Taylor in which one critical principal concern had to do with how medical institution’s administrative bodies must be structured. They argued that an independently appointed governing board in government hospitals could contribute to better administration. This is not the case in government hospitals neither is it the case at the district health centers in which this report is interested. The good governance framework slightly departs from the possible role that local government community members can play in good governance.

Similar concerns were expressed by Williams (2010) where his analysis was critical of development money channeled to institutions that have inefficient administration systems. In his description of development related projects implemented in Ghana, Williams (2010) showed the connection ‘between liberal theorizing and the policies and practices’ (p. 404) associated with World Bank funded initiatives, suggesting that developmental projects to which the bank supported intended to create a liberal state.

In this argument, Williams (2010) alluded to a liberal state as one that is conceived as both weak and strong (p. 404), “neutral but partial, accountable but not captured” (p. 406). Weak, because “it is purely an enabler, little more than a neutral mechanism providing security to allow free and equal individuals to pursue their life projects unhindered by others…Strong, because the state is a potential threat to free persons…[which] may attempt to impose some particular social order […] that constrains people’s freedoms” (p. 404-405).

A liberal state is therefore constrained so as not to “encroach on the legitimate expression of individual freedoms” (p. 405). Two key attributes underpin William’s argument for furthering a liberal state. Firstly, the role of civil society in this duo state in advancing liberal ends through providing the appropriate checks and balance to the state’s business; “providing an arena for diverse
interests and opinions to develop”; and through cultivating “virtues and moral dispositions ..important for sustaining liberal life” (p. 406). Secondly, and like Abor, Abekah-Nkrumah and Abor (2008), the importance of the principles of good governance to address the “crisis of governance” (p. 408) with which most African countries including Ghana was fraught.

The dyad of good governance and a thriving civil society would result in decentralization (or the creation of a weak state) in which government control is ceded to local communities; and in which civil society’s role is harnessed and encouraged (p. 408). Williams (2008) describes an earlier World Bank report in this vein:

On the other hand the state must be made weaker. It must learn to govern less, and it must be made accountable to certain social groups. The report emphasised the importance of decentralization in the process of building better governance: ‘local governments are best suited to meet the needs of local communities . . . developing competent and responsive local governments is central to capacity building’. The report also stressed the need to harness and encourage ‘civil society’ (p. 408).

Through this, power to participate and to deliver projects at the community level remains with the members of the community. In so far as they have been recognized and the necessary tools provided them, they should, in their interest, be able to see to locally constructed development projects that will benefit them.

Ghana has benefited from many World Bank projects to the extent that governance frameworks such as Williams mentioned in his report characterizes the present and potential future nature of administration of different sectors of society including those of the health sector.

Good governance practices are not limited to government owned institutions or enterprises only, but to private sectors or previously owned government institutions which have been “corporatized” (Asiedu, Onumah and Kuwornu, 2012, p. 1) in recent times following structural adjustment advice to countries like Ghana by institutions such as the World Bank.

Countries that must benefit from aid must comply with these principles of good governance that Asiedu, Onumah and Kuwornu (2012) describe using a framework anchored on “ownership, management style and the depth of its corporate governance” (p. 1). This position is very consistent with those of Abor, Abekah-Nkrumah and Abor (2008), all agreeing that “these systems and structures are critical to the functioning of modern private corporations and state owned enterprises [be they local government hospitals or health centers]” (p. 2).

One significant comment on the structural ownership model of government or private institutions as an important element for the success is their size (Abor, Abekah-Nkrumah and Abor, 2008), and a lesser degree of government ownership (Asiedu, Onumah and Kuwornu, 2012). Size and government
ownership is smaller at the community level. Unfortunately, it is at this level that the effect of governance is felt most – hence the need to pay particular attention to how it is administered.

In the absence of the general public playing a watchdog role in local government community business that concerns them, certain organizations, namely civil society take on these tasks, sometimes in partnership with government to mediate between communities and government officials. The media finds itself playing this role sometimes. Most importantly, they seek to provide accountability to government in the performance of its duties.

2.1 Civil society and Media’s role in governance

The three levels of government are paid different degrees of media attention as it concerns issues of accountability and transparency especially in the area of Government spending. Federal Government makes the annual budgetary allocations and decisions for sector spending in areas such as health and education. Regional and local governments, which depend on the federal allocation, implement federal government decisions on projects that are specific to development priorities and objectives.

At the local level, where development projects finally hit the ground, citizens should be consulted, and should have a say in how funds are allocated and projects that affect them are implemented. Civil society organizations and the media play this intermediary role.

However, observations of media institutions, especially those in close proximity to the seat of government often focus on budget allocation at the federal level. Minimal attention is paid to the disbursements of funds at the regional and local government or district levels. As a result, tracking government expenditure becomes challenging and less transparent.

Government is unwilling to track its own funds for a myriad number of reasons. Corrupt governments for example might be unwilling to do so as they would be required to address evident loopholes, which could result in internal strives among ruling members, and expose a perceptively disorganized house. For governments that do not have these problems, legitimate factors may influence their abilities to keep an eye on expenses.

Two factors attribute to governments inability to track its own expenses:

- A lack of resources required to track government expenditure
- A lack of requisite expertise needed to build the necessary checks and balances

Overcoming these challenges should gradually lead towards the establishment of a structure that is transparent and accountable. However, governments are faced with the dilemma of committing scarce resources to development projects or
fixing the loopholes in the resource delivery vehicle. Governments also have to deal with the public's perception of its own service delivery.

The Ghanaian Government recognized these challenges, and enacted the relevant legal documents; ACT 462 and ACT 480 mandating the District Assemblies as the planning authority, with overall development of the local areas. It also requires that districts assemblies actively involve local people in the formulation of the District Development Plan. These documents provide the legal basis for which citizens can demand information from their Governments.

Apart from their traditional roles, civil societies and the media make efforts to make sense of the goings of Government and to represent their understanding in languages that are better understood by the citizens. Civil society and the media also assume an implicit watch-dog role which they perceive is conferred on them by their audience and the broader society. From the government perspective, they could be represented as witch-hunters – seeking to find the loop holes and cracks in governments. Nevertheless, these institutions fill the gap between Government and citizens as advocates for transparency and accountability.

There is an opportunity here for Government, especially at the local/district level, to partner with civil society organizations or the media and community members to track the resources allocated to them for development projects. It is important to employ a conceptual framework that could guide the analysis of the research data from this project.

2.2 Framework for Evaluating Local Governance

Yilmaz, Beris and Serrano-Berthet (2008) argue that decentralization is an important element for improving accountability in local governance, but only to an extent as it does not deliver on the promises it was touted to provide (p. 1). Accountability – upward to a higher level of Government, and downward to citizens – should be considered for decentralization to be effective. Yilmaz, Beris and Serrano-Berthet provide a framework for local government discretion and accountability that can be used to better analyze the factors that improve local governance (Figure 1).
Figure 1: Framework for Local Government Discretion and Accountability

Source: World Bank

The framework contains three mutually reinforcing components:

1. Administrative Decentralization
2. Fiscal Decentralization
3. Political Decentralization

According to Yilmaz, Beris and Serrano-Berthet Administrative Decentralization consist of two sub components:

- Community Driven Development/Social Accountability Approaches
- Public Accountability Approaches

This report is more concerned with the first component, namely Community Driven Development/Social Accountability Approaches which will be used as a guide in the analysis in this report. This component includes:

- Participatory Planning, Budgeting and Expenditure Tracking
- Citizen access to Information Campaigns
- Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
- Participatory Management of Investments/projects

---


3 For the other components, which are equally important, but outside the scope of this document, readers can consult the document from which this framework emerged
• Citizen Feedbacks for services (report cards and social audits)

Chapter five will elaborate this framework in more detail.

2.3 Structure of Local Governance in Ghana

As the preceding framework describes, decentralization is key for empowering local governments to carry out development tasks within their jurisdiction. This is consistent with ACT 462 and 480 of the Government of Ghana, which devolves power to governments at their level. At the district level, the district assembly is responsible for the provision of basic infrastructure and services to support political, social and economic development (Figure 2). The district assemblies are one level lower than the regional coordinating councils but higher than the town and zonal councils.

![Figure 2: Local Government Structure](image)

This structure helps to understand the influence that the district assembly has in designing and developing community based projects.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 The Research Context

The research was conducted in two districts Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District (AAKD) and Kassena-Nankana East District (KNED).

Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District (AAKD) is one of the 17 districts located in the Central Region of Ghana where it shares borders with Cape Coast on the South-West, Twifo-Hemang Lower Denkyira District on the North-West, Assin South District in the North, Mfantseman District on the East and the Gulf of Guinea (the sea) in the South Abura Dunkwa is its capital and it has two hundred and sixty two (262) communities (Figure 1). It is made up of three (3) traditional areas namely, Asebu, Abura, and Kwamankese. Its 2010 population is estimated to be one hundred and fifteen thousand, one hundred and fifty nine (115,159).

![Figure 3: Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Source: Google maps

Health facilities in AAKD includes one district hospital, one community clinic, two health centers, eleven community health based planning and services (CHPS) Zones, four Sub-district health post, and ninety three (93) Outreach Points. The 262 communities have been merged into 120 communities so that the district could properly deliver healthcare services as some communities are smaller than others.

Education facilities in AAKD include a total two hundred and sixty nine (269) schools in which two hundred and twenty two (222) are state owned and forty seven (47) are privately owned. The District Assembly is responsible for the provision of basic education to the district and it does so mostly through the public schools.
Three phone companies provide voice and data services (including SMS) to members of the AAKD communities who use these services to send and receive messages via voice or SMS within and outside the district. There are no local community radio stations in the district.

However, Local Information Centers provide information dissemination services for communal labor activities, funeral announcements, missing items, ads, product marketing, and entertainment. Information centers contribute GHC 20 as tax to the district assembly. Operators of these centers could potentially become conveyors of information when the need arises.

Kassena-Nankana East District is one of the nine (9) districts located in the Guinea Savannah woodlands in the Upper East Region of Ghana. It shares boundaries with Burkina Faso and Kassena-Nankana West District at the North, at the East with Bolgatanga District, Builsa District at the West and West Mamprusi District at the South, and it has ninety-seven (97) communities with Navrongo as the capital town (Figure 2).

![Map of the Kassena-Nankani District](http://mysite.verizon.net/vze827ph/images/KAS_NAN1.gif)

Health service delivery in Kassena-Nankanana East District is conveyed through the local CHPS zones. There are seventeen (17) completed CHPS zones out of the twenty-two (22) earmarked. A few nurses have been sponsored for further training funded through the district assembly.

KNED has five (5) Senior High Schools, thirty-eight (38) Junior High Schools, fifty-three (53) Primary, and fifty (50) Kindergartens. The district assembly provides infrastructural support to the various schools in the district.
Similar phone services exist in KNED as it is in AAKD. Evidence suggests that phones are used to transmit messages within and outside the district through voice and SMS, although limited use was observed. The Nabina community radio station owned by the Catholic Church in Navrongo provides information and entertainment services to the public. It is also used for governance purposes where district officials are required to provide policy explanations to its citizens, who explore them as a vehicle to engage with their government leaders. The radio provides a platform for which further governance related accountability projects can be explored. The station works from Monday to Thursday, from 6:00am to 9:00am, and from 5:00pm to 9:00pm; on Fridays, it runs from 6:00am to 9:00am and from 5:00pm to 10:00pm; and on Saturdays and Sunday, from 6:00am to 10:00pm.

3.2 Data Gathering Method

Data for the research was gathered through the following means:

1. Focus Group Activity: involving all stakeholders such as community members and district assembly officials.
2. Questionnaire: A public survey of citizens to elicit their perception of transparency and accountability in governance through inclusion in the decisions that concern them
3. Interview: of government district assembly officials

These data were triangulated and recurrent themes were retrieved and further analyzed. The focus group activities and the questionnaires were disseminated at the inception of the project. The data collected here formed the baseline of the research. The interviews were conducted with the district officials at least nine months later to understand if sufficient shifts have been made in government practices to meet the demands for transparency and accountability.

3.2.1 Focus Group Activities

Two Focus group workshops were separately held in AAKD and KNED at the inception phase of the research. Both events drew participation from all stakeholders including community persons and district assembly officials. Ownership and participation of such local research based activities can largely be attained when a respected member of the society is identified with it. As a result, it was important that respectable district assembly officials introduced these events to their communities.

An overview and project description was presented to all stakeholders so that they understand the objectives of the project and their role in the research. The overviews highlighted the challenges of governance across many countries, issues of transparency, accountability and citizen engagement in the governance process, the rights of citizens enshrined in national laws such as the Ghanaian
Act 462 which decentralized development to local government, and the role that citizens can play in such decentralization. The specific project objectives were:

- To provide easy and accessible information on allocated budgets and development plans for communities.
- To create citizens awareness on developmental issues in their community, and to question how public spending for the district is utilized.
- To engage public officials in ensuring health and education services are provided as budgeted for.
- To enhance the capacity of the media to play an effective watch dog role in the promotion of governance and accountability at the local level.
- To increase public awareness and encourage citizens’ participation in governance and economic accountability and transparency processes.
- To provide relevant information and ICT tools for key stakeholders in the governance and economic accountability field for effective advocacy.

The project methodology, particularly how data will be gathered was described to the stakeholders. These included surveys, interviews, and the use of technology such as SMS and feedback from community radio call-in shows.

Participants commented on other stakeholders that should be involved in the research project and provided feedback on what is required for the project to be successful. Some of these outcomes are captured in Chapter four.

### 3.2.2 Questionnaire

Four sets of questionnaires were broadly distributed to the citizens and government officials containing both qualitative and quantitative questions. Questionnaires for:

- District Assembly members
- District Education Department
- District Health Department
- Community members

Most of the questions were similar; however, some were tailored specifically to their target respondents. For instance, the questionnaire to the district assembly members required responses to questions of access to budget by community members; if the district invites communities to participate in designing development plans, and whether there were plans for sharing development projects with community members.

The questionnaire to the District Education and health Departments sought responses on satisfaction on education and health delivery to the communities, roles of the district assembly in the delivery of these services, funds available in the budget to provide health and education services, health and education facilities available in the district, and how information is disseminated to members of the community.
Community members who responded to the research were asked if they were aware of their districts medium term development plans, whether they had been invited to participate in development planning and the role they played; as it concerns transparency and accountability, whether they are aware of the development plans and the budget available to deliver the projects within, whether they were satisfied with the services provide so far, and if they would like more information from their district assembly about development projects that it undertook, and the preferred means of delivering such information. Sample questionnaires can be found in Appendix A to D.

3.2.3 Interviews

The interviews were conducted nine months after the surveys and focus group events. Three sets of interviews were held and structured as follows:

**District Assembly Questionnaire**

1. Medium Term Development Plan: Does the development plan currently address the development needs of the community?
   a. Is the budgetary allocation sufficient to address the development plan of the community?
2. How involved is the community in the development and implementation of the district development plan?
   a. If you have to improve community participation in the development and implementation of district development plans, what ways would you do this?
   b. Would the use of SMS for information delivery help in disseminating and receiving information to and from community members? What is required to implement this?
3. In what areas of healthcare and education is additional attention required? E.g. additional budgetary allocation? (e.g. To build better schools, or operating theaters, or equip ambulances, etc).

**District Education Directorate**

1. How involved is the directorate and the community (through its members) in the development and implementation of the district assembly’s development plan?
2. In what areas of education delivery does the district assembly need to pay more attention (eg. To build better schools, more libraries, school feeding programs, etc.)?
   a. How can these be achieved?
3. In what ways can information flow help in the development and delivery of education in the district?
a. For instance, in what ways can information sharing between the district assembly and the directorate foster better development objectives?

b. Can SMS be used to share information between the district assemble and the directorate, and between the directorate and the community? How?

District Health Directorate

1. How involved is the directorate and the community (through its members) in the development and implementation of the district assembly’s development plan?

2. In what areas of health delivery does the district assembly need to pay more attention (eg. To build better hospitals, provide more ambulances, build operating theaters, pay more doctors, etc.)?
   a. How can these be achieved?

3. In what ways can information flow help in the development and delivery of health in the district?
   a. For instance, in what ways can information sharing between the district assembly and the directorate foster better development objectives?
   b. Can SMS be used to share information between the district assemble and the directorate, and between the directorate and the community? How?

3.3 Data Analysis

Focus group responses were synthesized and suggestions about the factors required for the project to succeed were captured and presented. These findings are presented in Chapter 4.

Questionnaires were distributed widely and over 351 responses were generated in AAKD, and 421 in KNED. Participants ranged from community persons, health care workers, educators, students, artisans and trades people. Where necessary, the questionnaire was administered in the local language. Quantitative data are presented in graphs and charts in Chapter 4, while key emerging qualitative outcomes were presented as statements made by community members.

The interview responses were analyzed for themes. Emerging themes were further analyzed for subthemes and key findings are presented in chapter four. All data gather were analyzed using the framework described in Chapter 2 and presented in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Research Findings

4.1 Baseline Focus Group Events

At the project inception, initial focus groups were held in both districts to present the project to various stakeholders such as the community members and district officials, in order to gather their support for the project. Stakeholders that were suggested in order for the project to be successful include:

- National commission for civic education
- Assembly members
- District directors of health
- District directors of education
- Environmental health
- Community
- Local announcement stations
- Traditional authorities
- Public servants
- Women
- Churches
- Teachers
- Opinion leaders
- Unit committees
- Local journalist
- NGO's
- SMC's/PTA's
- Major political parties
- Environmental officers
- Social welfare officers
- Agricultural officers
- District planning coordinating unit

Transparency and accountability were mainstreamed into the discussions in order that stakeholders are aware of the common framework for the dialogue. District Local Government officials who participated in the event gave their personal and official support because the project “will go a long way to improve governance at the local level in the pilot districts” (See Chapter three on Focus group methodology).

Evaluation outcomes from this focus group activity undertaken in the two regions indicate that a majority of the stakeholders felt that the project objectives were clear enough, were appropriate, and that the outcomes were achievable. Over 80 percent of those interviewed in both districts believe that the project will be helpful to them.

Stakeholders in AAKD felt that more work needed to be done to ensure that similar pilot initiatives produce replicable results. For instance, they felt the project should be taken seriously by all concerned. In addition, they noted that:

- Pilot initiative should be expanded to cover more districts than the initial two selected
• Public awareness about the project should be created through seminars
• Meeting the objectives should remain its focus
• Stakeholders should be empowered to monitor project delivery and to provide feedback to clearly marked out feedback centers; project beneficiaries should truthfully provide feedback
• Language and technology issues should be addressed through specific ICT education and the use of local dialect to communicate information.

Nearly 75 percent of community members asked about access to information on development projects in the district assembly felt unsure or had no access. The reasons range from a lack of knowledge about the need to monitor ongoing projects, what to monitor and how it can be done. Others were unaware of their rights to demand information that concern them. Yet a few felt that their assembly members exude a complex too superior for community members to require information of them. They do however feel that their district assembly members, local chiefs, opinion leaders and other stakeholders should take a more active role in providing them with development information.

Outcomes from the focus group event indicated that community members are in need of information. They suggested that appropriate dissemination mechanisms should consider:

• Awareness raising of where information can be sought
• Empower community members to demand information from their district assemblies
• Train district assembly officials to willing provide information
• Provide strategic and frequent ways in which information can be disseminated to community people
• Address inherent gaps in project delivery through immediately implementing approved projects

Government officials in KNED expressed similar support for the project. They would however caution that a fair assessment should be generated from the outcomes of the research, and that an understanding that certain constraints could impede project development in the district.

Emerging outcomes from the focus group indicated that stakeholders, especially community people were concerned about:

• Available resources to increase awareness of the development plan, through, for instance, printing and distribution to community and district officials.
• Illiteracy, where existing assembly members are themselves unable to read in the language of communication being English. Alternative local languages could be used for communication
• Assembly members should be more forthcoming, in areas where information on government projects are sought; for instance through community radio call in programs in which community sometimes
require comments from district assembly officials and none are forthcoming

- Politics and bureaucracy should be sidelined in the implementation of projects that concern accountability and transparency such as this one.

Similar to stakeholders in AAKD over 76 percent of respondents felt the project objectives were clear, appropriate, and adequate, and the objectives are achievable. Most respondents were of the opinion that a well executed project will be helpful to their district. Participants that must be included for the project to succeed are:

- Chiefs
- Assembly members
- Religious leaders
- Teachers
- CBOs
- Heads of Departments
- Opinion leaders
- District Chief Executive
- Department of community development
- Disability groups
- Media
- Health workers
- Youth groups
- Women’s groups

In order for a project to succeed, certain essential elements are needed. All stakeholders should be:

- Sensitized about the project and sensitization should include its key objectives and deliverables.
- Stakeholders should be motivated and their commitment sought.
- District development plans should be shared to all stakeholders and members should be frequently sensitized about development projects in their communities.
- Where necessary, Internet and other forms of access to data networks should be available.

All stakeholders who responded to the question of access to information on development by community members said they have not received any information. Reasons are because the information is simply not shared to community members. In addition,

- Information does not flow from the top to the bottom
- Assembly members remain unreachable to their constituents
- Since community members do not directly benefit from community projects, they have themselves paid less attention to them
- Lack of knowledge of what to ask and how to go about it
- Political difference.

4.2 Baseline Survey Data: Citizen Perceptions of Governance
4.2.1 Demographics

The questionnaire was distributed widely and a total of 772 residents responded from both districts. Overall, 63 percent from Kassena-Nankana East District (KNED) and 59 percent of the respondents from Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District (AAKD) were male; 37 percent for Kassena-Nankana East District and 41% for Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District were females (Figure 5). Male respondents in KNED were approximately twice the number of females.

Figure 5: Gender Distribution

Figure 6: Age Distribution
The survey was distributed and completed by research assistants using responses for randomly selected members of the districts. A greater number of 21 to 30 year olds were interviewed than members of other age groups (Figure 6). While the sampling method makes it impossible to suggest that people in this age group are more interested in participatory governance than others, it does indicate the readiness of this group to try new methods and tools. Overall, there was interest from all age groups in participatory governance using new media tools.

![Figure 7: Occupation of Participants](image)

Eighty five percent (85 %) in AAKD and eighty (80 %) percent of participants in KNED worked in Education, Agriculture, Commerce and Artisanship industries, which were more dominant than health, public service or communications (Figure 3). A few participants were unemployed and those in the agriculture sector were mostly peasant and commercial farmers and fishermen. There were more participants in Education than in the other sectors that were more inclined to participate in the research project, suggesting a keen interest in developing the education sector at the district level.

**4.3 Key Messages from the Research: Community Perceptions of Information Sharing, Transparency and Accountability**
• There should be clear steps taken and strategies implemented to make government development plans more available to district community members.

Government’s intentions for development are usually enshrined in District Assembly’s development plans that fulfill many purposes, inter alia: mandate District Assemblies as the district (or local government) level planning authority, invite community members to participate in the planning process, and guide district assemblies to identify specific sectors and industries for development.

Depending on the natural resources available to most Districts, plans are developed around the local mining, agricultural, tourism or construction industries. They also indicate the status of education and health sectors and the strategic steps required to further develop them.

The current plans are for the period 2010 to 2013. Revenue required to develop various sectors are included in them and are funded mostly through budgetary allocations from government or donations and grants from development agencies and partners. Education and health are key priority focus areas. The Kassena-Nankana East District (KNED) key focus areas in education are (KNED, 2011, p. 24):

1. Provision of infrastructure for Basic schools
2. Sponsorship of teacher trainees, nurses and needy but brilliant students
3. Provision of School Uniforms
4. Expansion of School Feeding Programme
5. Motivation of students and teachers

Its health related focus areas include:

1. Provision of infrastructure for improved health care delivery
2. Increase coverage of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)
3. Address risk factors to health and vitality, and strengthen inter-sectoral advocacy and actions
4. Rapidly scale up high impact health reproduction and nutrition interventions and services targeting the poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and bridge the gap between interventions that are known to be effective and the current relatively low level of effective population coverage
5. Strengthen health systems capacity to expand, manage and sustain high coverage of health services
6. Promote good governance partnerships and sustainable financing.
Community members could collaborate with government officials at the District Assemblies to achieve these objectives through partnering with governments towards their implementation, and networking with institutions and persons outside the district assembly that could provide financial or technical support, among other things.

However, only ten percent (10%) percent in AAKD and seventeen percent (17.5) percent in KNED were aware of the existence of a District Medium Term Development Plan that concerns them (Figure 8). It must be noted here that most of those who were aware work at the District Assembly. Community members who should benefit from development projects are not aware of the plans or any implementation intentions. Neither do/can they monitor project implementations or request transparency on the execution of these projects.

- **A suitable, all-inclusive platform is required for effective public participation in development projects to take place**

The concerns that community members had for not participating in District Assembly public hearings range from a lack of awareness on the existence of the platform (“Not aware of any such gathering”), to a lack of confidence that decisions taken at the hearings will be implemented (“It does not really change or make any inputs into any official plan or document”).

Although one in every two participants in the research had indicated their participation in public hearings (Figure 9), effort is required to involve more community members because of the importance of participation in increasing transparency and accountability of community development projects.

Likewise, public hearings allow non-literate participants to engage fully in the decisions that they otherwise would be excluded from but which will have
impact on them. Even though a higher percentage of youths aged between 21 to 30 were interviewed, most of them felt that their comments would not be considered in the decision making process ("the youth are not allowed in decision making"). As a result, they “do not have time or interest in the issues being discussed.”

These outcomes raise questions on the appropriateness and suitability of the existing forum to foster multi-stakeholder participation in an egalitarian manner. The absence of a forum in which community members can express themselves will often leave government officials alone to conduct business as usual on behalf of the communities they are supposed to represent – thus heightening obscurity of the governance process. An all-inclusive platform is required that will encourage participation with the hopes that the outcomes lead to priority projects that will gather the support of both community members and the district assembly.

- **Substantive items such as budgetary allocations and priority projects in health and education should be included as Agenda items in the District Assembly meetings.**

Only one out of every ten persons was aware of discussion issues that concern budgetary expenses for development project. Those who were aware were mostly staff of the District Assembly (Figure 10).
Members of the community who would have liked more information about the budget said they were most likely not informed because:

“Probably they don’t want the public to hear more of the financial aspect of the budget”

“We don’t know how much the district receives as common fund and how it is shared”

Even though there were avenues for collaboration and interaction with any member of the local assembly, a traditional leader, staff of the district assembly, Member of Parliament or the media (See Table 1); very few utilized the opportunities that were available to them. This indicates that the channels for communication and interaction may not have been suitably defined to adequately capture the interests of the broader community members. Because community members are interested in the development of projects that affects them – with the hopes that they will produce tangible results – better approaches are required to make the agenda items more interesting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with AM</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Authorities</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Assembly</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Media</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Opportunities for Interactions

One key area of interest for public discussion is education as stipulated in the District Medium Term Development Plan. Two thirds of participants asked about their perception on the performance of formal education delivery in their districts in the past five years were unsatisfied (Figure 7), an opinion largely indicated by students’ inability to pass the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Those who were satisfied said so because of the perception that enrolment numbers had increased due to the availability of uniforms, textbooks and school feeding programs.

![Figure 11: Satisfaction to Formal Education Delivery](image)

Table 2 indicates priority educational projects that community members would like to see their District Assemblies deploy. More than 60 percent (60%) in both districts thought the provision of textbooks and school buildings were more important. Thirty percent participants in AAKD and 15 percent in KNED felt that supervision of school performance was important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DA’s Role</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>AAKD (in Percentage)</th>
<th>KNED (in Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building of Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment of Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of textbooks and teaching materials</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of student scholarships</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of teacher motivation packages</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of schools’ performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the Above</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: DA’s Role in Formal Education

Two important outcomes emerge from this finding. Firstly, that the basis for judging progress in education is different among the members of the community as depicted by the variation in both groups of respondents (yes and no). Those satisfied with current delivery base their perception on physical infrastructure and tangible outcomes, while the unsatisfied could be said to base theirs on academic success rates which are not as tangible as, say, a school building. While both issues are important, a public forum that sets an agenda in which the polar gaps can be narrowed will result in a common understanding and priority projects, and towards mutually agreed objectives.

Secondly, that priority areas need to be collaboratively defined in order that scarce resources could be applied efficiently and effectively. These outcomes indicate that the existing ways of identifying concerns may not have achieved the required impact of priority agenda setting in government spending on education. While avenues such as access to various policy makers and administrators like the District Assembly members, the Education Directorate, and the Headmasters of Schools may be effective in the past (Figure 12), decisions that concern broader development objectives may require more systematic and publicly discussed approaches which may involve identifying agenda items that align with Development Plans and broad community consensus.

Figure 12: Reporting of Concerns for Education Delivery

The job of education should not be left to the school alone but could involve the District Assembly officials concerned with education, the school administration and teachers, parents and members of the community who are beneficiaries of government education projects. A broad based understanding will lead to
collaboration that allows community members to not only monitor the progress of development objectives, but to contribute in achieving them.

Perceptions of satisfaction levels in the delivery of health care services were evenly spread (Figure 13). Government programs such as the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and the Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) have improved perception of health care delivery. While these programs were laudable, satisfaction levels were low because of their implementation. For instance, participants could not access drugs. Further, the poor attitude of health services workers negatively impacted the delivery of these programs.

![Figure 13: Satisfaction to Health Service Delivery](image)

More than 70 percent of the participants would like to see more health centers and health care materials available to them (Table 3). In addition, supervision and support to health care staff including salary and motivation packages, and support for student education in the forms of scholarships were important priority items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DA’s Role</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AAKD (in Percentage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building of health centres</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment of health staff</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of healthcare materials</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of student scholarships</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of health staff motivation packages</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of health staff performance</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Confidence in conveying health related concerns is majorly low as more than 43 percent do not do so (Figure 14). Only 27 percent think that an assembly member would positively respond to their concerns as well as a myriad of other communication channels. Similar to the education sector, these platforms remain disjointed, informal and largely unstructured; which results in a less effective method that can engender effective community participation.

- The use of emerging technologies such as mobile phones and community radios could narrow the communication gap between community members and the government.

Two out of every three persons in each of the communities have access to a mobile communication device (Figure 15) yet less than 5 percent of participants have received government information through them. There remains a visible gap in technology use for information dissemination. Community based technologies such as community radios could enhance community participation in government projects. However, until they are recognized and put to good use, they would remain simply tools for social communication.

Access to mobile phones alone can hardly be said to translate to usage. Phones also perform different functions; ranging from communication through voice and SMS, to the use of its peripheral capabilities such as photography and for news reception. Community members may receive broadcast messages with various degrees of implications such as literacy – the ability to read messages received; incentives – sufficient enough for community members to respond to and participate in an SMS based discussion. Cost is also a factor – who will
implement the bulk messaging services to be sent out, and what technical expertise is required for infrastructural set up at the district level? The outcomes of interviews with the District Assembly officials are consistent with these concerns (see next section).

Figure 15: Mobile Phone Ownership

4.4 Key Messages from the Research: District Assembly Official’s Perception of Information Sharing, Transparency and Accountability

This section describes the key messages resulting from personal interviews (see methodology section) of District Assembly officials at both districts. The identity of the officials is undisclosed for ethical reasons.

- **Existing structures of information gathering and sharing, collaboration should be strengthened if transparency and accountability in health and education is required.**

Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and School Management Committee (SMC) meetings are the two most important forums for public engagement between the school, communities, and District Assembly officials concerned with education. District Education Oversight Committee officials or the District Education Supervisors gather education needs from the various communities through trips made to schools or by contacting the heads of parents/teachers meetings. These needs are fed into the directorate’s education action work plan and subsequently to the overall district’s plan.

Community members may be involved during project implementation through contributing their private lands, labor and tools, and through directly supervising the construction of schools. They also evaluate the delivery of education services through observing the quality of food in feeding programs,
the distribution of education materials, availability of personnel and uniforms for students.

This level of oversight is useful in evaluating short term outputs of projects. However, long-term outcomes such as those that respond to the overall district plan would require a much more systematic monitoring and evaluation process. For instance, one important systematic aspect worth considering is with regard to information supply and demand. Whose responsibility is it to demand for information concerning a government activity in relation to a school project? What rights do they have to make such demands? How readily is information supplied to the communities and what processes are employed to make this frequent? Answers to these questions require further thought than might be currently possible within the structures of the PTA and SMC. It remains to be seen if community members would have the requisite capacity to accomplish this task.

The Local Government Act, Act 462 of 1993 stipulates the roles and responsibilities of the district assembly to include the participation of citizens in local government decision making that concern them. More work needs to be done to translate this law into practice. District officials agree that there is room for improvement through for instance, organizing community based durbars, encouraging more community initiated projects in which citizens take the leadership role in their implementation, and rotating area council meetings around the various communities rather than in a fixed location. One area where they could be more involved is through empowering the Public Relations Complaints Committee to conduct fully its functions of opening up direct communication channels between community members and the district assembly, and inviting them to use these avenues. ICTs, through SMS can be used to provide complaints or encouragement on projects from the communities to the district assembly, and for the district assembly to broadcast responses to complaints back to citizens.

District officials perceived that the development of education is intrinsically linked to the flow of information which could lead to: “behavioral change” because the information emanates from a higher authority. Communities tend to “respect and take advice from officialdom than from the people they see everyday”. They also perceive that efficient execution of programs can result when “waste [is] cut from expenditures” and the directorate “focus[es] on areas where there are shortfalls”. Proper information flows about incomplete projects could help to “reduce the anxiety amongst the citizens”.

It was observed that the flow of information between government officials and the citizens they serve is more useful than merely to hold them accountable for their actions.

Officials were of the opinion that information shared between the district assembly and the education directorate will produce efficient and appropriate teaching and learning methods, improve transparency and increase trust
between education workers and them, and simplify development objectives with the result that urgent project objectives are attained.

Dialogue forums to share information between communities and the districts are not as robust in the health sector as they are in education. The district health directorate interacts with the community through various structured but more informal ways. For instance, comments from the communities are invited during infrequent health education meetings held at the Community Based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) compounds. Sometimes, community members lay their concerns directly at the district offices. The district assembly's quarterly held sessional meetings provide another avenue for community members to present projects for incorporation into the directorate's action plan. In certain instances, information is gathered through home visits by community health nurses, volunteer reports, disease surveillance officers and these official's interactions with local chiefs and elders. These are not very structured and are mostly haphazard, making it difficult to say if comments received from the communities ever make it into the district development plans as there are no formal ways to check.

However, the channels that the districts health directorate uses for influencing the national health ministry are much more robust, well defined and are utilized to provide community level concerns to the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Services, and to access funds for community related ailments. One percent (1%) of funds received in the common fund is used for the treatment and prevention of Malaria and HIV/AIDS.

- **A more transparent process would release scarce funds to meet other important and major concerns such as the provision of electricity, technical training, and teacher motivation.**

Resources to build more schools and accommodation for teachers, provide infrastructure to existing ones, extend electricity or provide solar energy, and to offer teachers more opportunities for training are the priority requirements that schools require in order to effectively run.

A process that is all-inclusive could result in prioritization of areas where resources are mostly needed. For instance, one official suggested that “the supervision of teachers and pupils [should be] intensified and more should be done to promote girl child education.” In realization of the importance of community participation in the administration of education, and to achieve positive results, another official suggested that the “education directorate should employ more qualified community members to be part of the DEOC.” Identifying and prioritizing the needs through collaboration could help here. Because the development of opportunities in natural resources is tied to community development projects, there is an opportunity here to align education priorities to the needs of the local natural resources industry. Perhaps natural resources professionals running those institutions could participate in defining education priorities.
In relation to health, existing information service department vans have been used to disseminate information. More needs to be done. Community announcement centers should be used more effectively, and information to change citizens’ perceptions about the difference between government-provided health facilities and social services provided by religions groups should be clearly articulated. One official said:

“most members of the community will be sensitized about the dos and don’ts of their health, they will for instance know they have to report to a health facility when they are ill rather than visit a pastor or a prayer camp. They will be educated about the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and its benefits. The information flow will also tell the community about the effects of living in unsanitary conditions among others. All this will save the DA money and most diseases will be prevented and the money saved can go into other developmental projects in the district”

- Technology use such as SMS and community radios can have a positive effect but more effort is required to change perceptions of its applicability and relevance.

All of the government officials interviewed agree that the use of SMS technology to broadcast messages to community members holds great promise, but only to a certain extent. For instance, unofficial use of SMS for information sharing could be effective among colleagues but a more formal implementation would fail because those from whom a specific action is required might feign ignorance or claim not to have received the message. The extent to which technology can be used and through which far reaching benefits can be achieved at the local level is largely dependent on the perception that users have that such technology can indeed improve their lot, and increase transparency and accountability.

The use of community or district level website for information sharing and collaboration has not been effective. Certain district officials are unaware of the existence of their own website’s address, suggesting that they have been infrequently used for the purposes of disseminating information. Further, literacy levels may pose challenges of access to information on websites. There seem to be presently no incentive at this level for the information that could be provided on the website.

District health officials interviewed were more positive about the role that ICTs such as SMS could play than their Educational counterparts. Even though the degree of skepticism about the potential volatility of wrongly misconstrued SMS’ exists, officials believe information shared in this way could contribute to efficient delivery of services. Some think that information appropriately shared could reduce anxiety levels about government programs.

SMS’ can be used between two categories of persons: community people – for the sharing of information about government programs; and health officials and staff such as community based nurses – for the sharing of government health related concerns. Community based health workers could also act as intermediaries.
between the communities and the district. For instance, the health officials could translate information sent to illiterate individuals; “illiterate mothers [who] could not read were asked to pass the phone to someone who could, whenever they hear the SMS alert beep on their phone”.

Lessons could be learned from a pilot deployment of a community based SMS health system called MoTeCH (Mobile Technology for Community Health) which “was used to send information to pregnant lactating mothers about drugs and foods they needed to take, reminders about their health appointment schedule and what to do in times of emergency”.

More work is required to change community perceptions on SMS use in the communities:

“SMS can be used by between the district assembly and the directorate to share information on project updates. However, with the community not all of them have access to mobile phones and even those that have access are not used to sending and receiving messages therefore it will not be that good a channel for sending and receiving messages. Also health issues usually require explanations and convincing the client and SMS will not serve this purpose well.”

Community radios on the other hand could potentially be used to generate communal responses to a common development problem. Districts do not have their own community radios. Expensive airtime in private radios may be unsustainable. Existing partnerships with private radio stations with reach into the communities may be required; funding models that allow social good projects such as community participation in development projects would need to be created. Ultimately, communities may have to invest in their own radios that allow them to function in a way that would provide them better value.

There is an opportunity to converge technologies such as SMS and community radios. For instance, listeners could be invited to send comments to live radio shows, or suggest development areas to which they would like their district assembly officials to provide status. Likewise, radio stations could invite comments for future community development areas. Budget allocations and the performance of development projects can be discussed over the radio, thus enhancing the transparency and accountability of local government officials in development projects.

- **Effectively communicated development plans can lead to substantial gains in community projects, and ultimately improve accountability and transparency**

District Assembly officials interviewed all agreed that the development plan have resulted in substantial gains and tangible benefits. The construction of schools and Community Health Planning Compound Service (CHPS), roads, water and sanitation are the major developmental objectives in the current plan. Since its inception, some gains in education have included:
a. 38.6 percent pass rate improvements from the previous perennial 25 percent in the basic education certificate examination results
b. available desk and chairs in schools where kids previously brought their own
c. classes constructed so kids no longer sit under trees to take lessons
d. At least four Community Health Planning Compound Services constructed, and an addition of five more schools added to the Ghana School Feeding Program
e. Availability of free text books and uniforms
f. Teacher’s residence facilities constructed

Gains made in the health sector consists of:

a. Construction of at least four CHPS compounds including a waiting area for visitors
b. Reduction of maternal mortality from 24 in 2011 to 7 in 2012 in one of the districts
c. Better provision of nutrition to patients and inclusion of nutrition requirements in health education
d. Capacity building for health personnel in the area of mid-wifery, and an additional two planned to take courses annually
e. Assertion and compliance of the district health directors to deliver on the health work plan
f. Planned construction of a children’s ward at a district hospital.

While there has been progress in the education sector, some challenges remain. For instance, teachers have not received any sponsorship to upgrade their qualifications. In addition, teaching and study materials remain largely unavailable. As it concerns education, district officials feel more work is required to:

a. Intensify monitoring and supervision of education delivery to leverage the existing momentum that has led to improvements in the BECE examination results
b. Teachers should be incentivized with more attractive packages to retain them in the districts; motivation could come in the form of better training packages for teachers
c. Additional schools, and consequently additional resources including teachers, school materials, uniforms, books and feeding programs may be required in close proximity to communities to reduce the great distance most students walk to attend schools in others.

In relation to health, they feel the following areas should be improved:

a. Clinics in certain townships should be and upgraded to hospitals and better equipment should be made available in existing district hospitals. Existing abandoned and incomplete clinic structures should be rehabilitated and completed. A children’s ward should be constructed.
The remaining 6 Community Health Planning Services Compound of the total of 24 required should be constructed and more security provided for them.

b. Construct more bungalows to provide accommodation for health personnel and provide incentives such as motorcycles for existing health workers in the different communities.

c. Capacity of health officials should be developed

d. Better sanitary facilities such as good toilets, refuse collection bins, good drainage systems, better management of refuse disposal, intensify environmental inspection, a computer to store sanitation records, and clean portable water should be provided

e. Assistance provided to reduce presently high maternal mortality rates, and to continue existing work on malaria and HIV/AIDS prevention

f. Ambulance facilities provided to reach out to remote rural areas in the districts

g. Supplementary school feeding programs could be extended to cover women and little children.

Further, district health officials agree that appropriately shared information can “help [officials] work in a more structured manner to meet the targets and deadlines of the assembly” and to enhance efficiencies in delivering government programs. Information flows can also help in clarifying technicalities inherent in the medical professions, and “promote the easy understanding and better implementations of programs”. District officials recognize that appropriately and effectively shared information could help to “establish the channel for the provision of feedback to the assembly on the performance of personnel and the best way to optimize resources” and through this improve on accountability and transparency. One official said:

“It will definitely cut down on corruption and waste as community members will be aware of what is due them through the directorate and therefore have the knowledge to demand for developmental projects outlined for the various communities. This will ensure developmental projects are embarked upon and completed as officials are kept on their feet.”

Program operational information such as district development plans, annual budgets, cash inflows, monthly reports, government’s own research data and results, information on health and education, project expenses, collected taxes and tools; as well as program/content specific information such as the consumption and handling of iodated salt, and regenerative health and nutrition should be included in this information. Information flows should occur between government offices and departments; and between the district assembly and the citizens. ICTs such as SMS and community radios could help here through facilitating information flows between both stakeholders.

As much as progress has been achieved, a lot more needs to be done to maintain them. Efficiencies in the application of resources to community projects, prioritization of projects so that more important ones are achieved earlier,
transparencies and accountabilities to the communities which government serve can mostly be achieved if the communities to which services will be delivered are involved. Goodwill inputs provided by communities in the form of land and labor can only be invited and maximized when a common platform exists for inviting their participating and for aligning community visions with those of the government.

- **Communities are far less involved at stages where development projects matter. They should be included here too.**

Community budget development and approval is an intensive process. As it concerns Education, communities are invited to be involved at the initial budget planning meeting. The level of involvement decreases as the budget process tends towards approval. Budgets are approved by the Ministry of Finance, and communities are less involved at this stage. The level of community participation drastically reduces. Communities are even less involved at the implementation stages of projects when budgeted funds are finally made available to the Common Fund of the local government districts.

Rightly so, the intense administrative steps required for budget approval is the preserve of government officials and bureaucrats. One official commented about the education budget process:

“A budget committee made up of personnel from the district assembly, some departmental heads ... gather inputs from the various departments under the district assembly. The inputs are assessed [and] various departmental heads are [required to] defend their requests... [Draft budget] is presented to the Executive Committee (ExeCo) made up of the District Chief Executive (DCE), District Coordinating Director (DCD), District Planning Officer (DPO), Presiding Member and the District Finance Officer (DFO) then [forwarded to] the General Assembly [consisting of] various assembly members in order to capture citizen’s budgetary concerns. The GA approves and final version is sent to the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) and a committee made up of the Regional Budget Analyst (RBA), Regional Budget Officer (RGO) and Regional Planning Officer (RPO). Approved budget are sent to the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Local Government, the Common Fund Administrator and a copy is kept at the district assembly as a working document.”

Community members should not be involved during this administrative process. Their participation is recognized at the point when they are invited to verify the budget’s alignment with their own concerns. Far less is required from them afterwards, especially when the budget has been approved and projects can be initiated.

While messages about approved budgets in the Common Fund are not conveyed to the communities, it is worth making a point here that information about shortfalls are passed on, and steps taken to generate resources to meet them
from the same communities who were not involved at the beginning of the process.

Internally generated funds are required to meet budgetary shortfalls and usually community goodwill is tapped to meet those needs. In such cases, they are involved in the deployment of personal resources, including land and labor which are generated through an internal community based funding drive. Even though Internally Generated Funds are small in comparison to the Common Fund approved by the government, the same transparency and accountability processes that are employed for one should apply to the other.

In relation to health, communities are rarely involved from planning to the funding stage. Most dialogue around budgeting is done at the district. The district assembly sends request for projects to all departments including environmental health in order to present their work plans for the New Year. Forms are distributed at the beginning of the year by the district planning officer in which health related activities must be completed. The District health management team comprising of the heads of disease control, human resource, estates, public health and accounting complete these forms with current health needs. Incomplete projects in previous year’s plans are also included. Environmental related plans tackle issues such as sanitation, drainage systems, management of stray animals, and waste control. Very little community participation is requested in the development of these plans; it is not clear if this is because of the professional nature of health related services. Existing processes between directorates and districts officials also experience their own hiccups. One official mentioned:

“Implementing the plan is always a problem since the district always overlooks the department and the community when deciding on programmes or selecting final project sites. They usually adopt whatever decision is made by the district works engineer or the contractor undertaking the project. The directorate is only consulted when the harm has already been caused or there is an outbreak of a disease.”

Another official feels that departments can “do very little when their plans are not added to the overall developmental plan of the district”. When such situations occur, the departments “resort to communal labor and cleanup exercises to make sure that the communities are clean [and] to prevent outbreaks of diseases.”

Such perceptions do not foster efficiency, transparency and accountability. A mechanism in which grievances or complaints could be addressed before they get out of hand should be created. The most minimum level of inclusion of community members in the health related projects that concern them is to involve some key members of the community as witnesses that ensures that community health projects exchanged between the directorate and assembly members are eventually what are implemented. Room should be made available for emergencies such as epidemics, for when they occur.
In all of these processes, sharing information to the communities is quite important and might be beneficial to the communities if ICTs can be used. For instance, SMS can be implemented to send information to communities about budget approvals or specific areas where funds are incomplete or in health related areas where there is likelihood of a spread of an epidemic. Process or project information about the need to internally generate additional funds for projects could also be sent using this means. Likewise, information about the use of these funds – internally generated or budgets from common funds – should be shared with them.

The gaps observed between the communities and the district health offices, and the assembly members concerns with health at the district level could be shaped similar to those that exist between them and the Ministry of health.

It has been asserted in this report that the levels where transparency and accountability matter most is at the local level. For this reason, more effort is required in order that more robust communication channels can be established where it is most needed. ICTs would play a key role here.

Like the education sector, communities are rarely involved during project implementation except when such projects are outside the core budgetary allocations, or common funds provided by the national government. Common Funded (nationally allocated) projects and those that are funded through internally generated funds are not very different in that they are primarily development focused. As a result, the mechanism for monitoring their implementations should be similar.
Chapter 5: Outcomes and Recommendations

In Chapter two, the Framework for Local Government Discretion and Accountability was presented as a useful guide to analyzing the outcome of the research. While the framework contains three major components, only the Administrative Decentralization component is relevant to the analysis of this research at this time. The subcomponents for Administrative Decentralization include:

- Participatory Planning, Budgeting and Expenditure Tracking
- Citizen access to Information Campaigns
- Participatory Monitoring and evaluation
- Participatory Management of Investments/projects
- Citizen Feedbacks for Services (report cards and social audits)

The following sections elaborate how these components respond to the major findings of the research, and the role that ICTs such as SMS and community radios can play to improve accountability and transparency.

5.1 Participatory Planning, Budgeting and Expenditure Tracking

The research findings indicate that an all-inclusive and robust platform is required in which citizens could participate in the governance process. While there are established communication avenues, most citizens were not informed or aware of how they can be used to effectively communicate with their government officials. The education sector seems to have a more all-encompassing approach to citizen engagement for decision-making, but the health sector in both regions is slightly more distant. Both sectors have less structured means for planning, budgeting and expenditure tracking. A number of clear recommendations emerge from this exercise. The district assembly should:

- Create an all-inclusive platform where it can interface with the communities and all the relevant stakeholders identified in Sections 4.1. Such platform should meet at a frequently pre-scheduled and mutually agreed time, monthly, bi-monthly or twice annually as the need arises.
- Ensure that substantive items are included in the agenda for discussions that include: information shared to community members on the priority plans of the district, common (government budgetary) and internally generated funds available for projects, progress of projects, and feedbacks of committee members of their perceptions to government projects.
- Dialogue should explore avenues where expenditures could be minimized and where gains can be targeted at other more important development areas such as the provisions of electricity, the provisions of technical support for teacher and medical personnel (nurses, midwives) training.
• Explore avenues where ICTs could be used to share information among stakeholders. For instance, advancements in projects and information about funds received could be forwarded by SMS or shared through a community radio service to the various stakeholders prior to meetings.

5.2 Citizen Access to Information Campaigns

Apart from the public platform mentioned in the previous Paragraph, another means of sharing information to the stakeholders include the use of SMS and community radios. For instance, sections of the plan and how they link to specific projects on the ground could feature as a segment in a community radio programming. Stakeholders should be invited to participate in this process. The research also indicated that existing structure for information gathering and sharing needs to be strengthened in order for transparency and accountability to thrive. The following provide recommendations to community members, stakeholders, media and civil society.

Community Persons and Stakeholders should:

• Explore avenues for demanding district development plan from their district assembly officials.
• Actively participate in community radio initiated or SMS related activities that require their input.

Media and Civil Society Organizations:

• Facilitate citizen-centric information sessions with local radio programs.
• Partner with the district assembly to disseminate information through SMS.
• Identify ways of collaborating with communities to continually conduct transparency and accountability research and to evaluate the value of the information received from government.

5.3 Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the governance process can be effective if done collaboratively. Existing communication gaps could be narrowed through the use of mobile technologies and community radios. The district assembly should:

• Initiate, in partnership with the media, and other civil society organizations, radio programs the helps the communities monitor and evaluate projects. Use the same tools to send out invitations to community members for briefing sessions on the plans and strategies for monitoring and evaluating their implementation.
• Clearly articulated goals and development objectives and the means of tracking them should be mutually developed by the communities and their stakeholders.
• Platforms for collaboration and agenda items for community meetings described in the previous points should include mechanism for monitoring and evaluating projects.

5.4 Participatory Management of Investments/Projects

The research outcomes indicated development plans that are well communicated could lead to substantial gains that could improve accountability and transparency. While plans may have been shared at the beginning of the project, community members are rarely informed during and after project implementation – the stages where the projects matter more to them. More effort is required to include them. To this end, district assemblies should:

• Include specific stages in the lifespan of the project where it informs the communities and all relevant stakeholders of the status of the project. The information provided here should include financials, such as the amount of funds available to the project and amount expended at the time of reporting. Progress reports on status of the project would also be useful.
• Explore avenues in which it could use SMS and community radio services to provide such information to its communities. Ultimately, it should involve and inform the stakeholders at all stages of the project’s development.

5.5 Citizen Feedbacks for Services (Report Cards and Social Audits)

Feedback from citizens is important to ensure transparency and accountability at the local level. Equally important is how the feedback is integrated into future plans. Specific report cards and social audit mechanisms should be developed such as citizen satisfaction surveys. Civil society has a role to play here:

• In collaboration with the district assembly, civil society should develop report cards to assess project implementation from start to finish. Outcomes of completed report cards should be synthesized and formally sent to the relevant district assembly department.
• Civil society should identify ways to ensure that feedbacks are incorporated into district assembly plans.
• Community radio and SMS can also be used to gather citizen perception from the various communities about specific government projects.
• Collaboratively, all stakeholders have to devise mechanism to change their perceptions of the use of technology such as SMS and community radios for monitoring and evaluating development projects, informing and inviting citizens to participate in government surveys and information sessions, and for communicating critical development information.
Chapter 6: Conclusions

Development projects that provide insight into the workings of local governments are few in most developing countries, and Ghana is no exception. This project has shed light into how accountability and transparency can be enhanced at the local government or district assembly level. As a pilot initiative, in two districts in Ghana the outcomes may not necessarily be generalised across other districts. However, the elements identified may be similar. In other words, similar actions may be taken with intentions to achieve results that improve district assembly accountability and transparency beyond the health and education sectors explored in this research.

There may be opportunities to investigate other sectors such as natural resources where most peasant communities generate their livelihoods. Another interesting area for further research includes the role that education research can play in supporting other sectors. For instance, how can local government development planning provide a longer-term education strategy that produces local health practitioners for district health sectors? This sort of interrelationships can help communities to become more sustainable and to keep their funds local. More work is required in this regard.

Finally, it is important that the outcome of this research is taken back to the local communities where it was conducted. Additional funding may be required to set up information sessions for the dissemination of findings to them. Further, the use of SMS and community radios has been explored in this research. They are avenues in which the research’s outcome could be shared with the various stakeholders. The research did indicate that more education is required for technology to become more effective and for mindsets to be aligned with their use. These are avenues where further support may be targeted. It is important to also explore how a community radio can be set up in communities that do not have them with minimal cost.
References


Appendix A: Questionnaire

INSTITUTE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDIES (ILGS)

AND

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ICT JOURNALISM COLLABORATION (PENPLUSBYTES)

“ENABLING GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC TRANSPARENCY IN WEST AFRICA

USING NEW MEDIA (GHANA) PROJECT”

DISTRICT ASSEMBLY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BASELINE SURVEY

Dear respondent, this survey is being undertaken to solicit your opinion and views on enabling governance and economic transparency using new media. We will be grateful if you could spend some little time to complete this questionnaire. All information given will be treated with the strictest of confidentiality. THANK YOU.

Background information

1. Questionnaire

Number........................................................................................................................................

2. Name of District Assembly..............................................................................................................

3. Position of Respondent:...................................................................................................................

4. How long have you been working in this District Assembly?..............................................................

Issues of Medium Term Development Plan

5. Do community members have access to the District Development Plan and Budget Yes [ ] No [ ]

a. If yes, how
6. Does the District Assembly involve the community in the designing of the development plan?
   If yes, how?
   If no, why?

7. How often does the District Assembly share the progress of development projects/programmes with the community members?

**Contribution to Education and Healthcare Delivery**
8. Are you satisfied with the delivery of education in the district in the past five years?
   Yes [  ] No [  ]
   a. If yes, why?
      ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
      ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
      ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
      ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
      ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
      ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   b. If no, why not?
      …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
      …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
      …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
      …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
      …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
      …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

9. What are the roles of the District Assembly in education delivery in the district?
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

10. How much funds are allocated to health in the district budget
    …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

48
11. How much money does the District Assembly spend on education annually?

12. How many schools do you have in the district?

13. What are the ownerships?

14. What are the challenges affecting education delivery in the district?

15. Are you satisfied with the delivery of healthcare in the district in the past five years?
   Yes [ ]          No [ ]
   a. If yes, why?
b. If no, why not?

16. What are the roles of the District Assembly in healthcare delivery in the district?

17. How much funds are allocated to health in the district budget

18. How much money does the District Assembly spend on healthcare annually?
19. How many healthcare facilities do you have in the district?
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................

20. What are the ownerships?
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................

21. What are the challenges affecting healthcare delivery in the district?
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

Information Dissemination and Access
22. What means do you use in disseminating information to community members?
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

23. Do you send information to people through their mobile phones? Yes [ ]
No [ ]
If yes, why

........................................
24. How often do you update the information on your website?

25. What mechanisms are in place to monitor progress of development projects?

26. Does the DA have a system to determine the number of projects or programmes completed?

Yes [ ]  No [ ]

If yes, what are the systems?
If no, why not?

27. What can be done to improve information dissemination and access in the district?

28. Please provide suggestions to improve governance at the local level?