

TEERE Local Government Forum (TLGF) 2017

Overall Goal

To induce and facilitate the transformation and implementation of local government policy in Ghana through an integrated approach

Objectives

- a. To generate public debate on local government policy to accelerate the decentralisation reforms according to the principle of subsidiarity in order to extend the sovereignty of local governments
- b. To provide a platform for practitioners as well as of experts of local governance to share ideas on decentralisation and local governance policy
- c. To provide an arena for an interaction between local government leadership and citizens to enhance responsiveness to citizens
- d. To increase citizenship participation in governance at the local and national levels
- e. To promote activism among CSOs and the public to demand improved service delivery from public institutions
- f. To promote the idea of citizen participation and civic engagement in decision making
- g. To empower women and increase their participation in local and national governance
- h. To integrate the disadvantaged, disabled and other vulnerable individuals and groups into the local government decision making process
- i. To involve traditional structures and institutions in local government policy and practice
- j. To enable local governments make recommendations for strategies to strengthen local governments to play a developmental and transformative role in building strong and efficient communities in Ghana.
- k. To provide a platform for learning and the exchange of views and good practices from across the country, with a focus on practical models demonstrating local government's role in building stronger and more resilient communities;
- l. To provide opportunities to showcase new policies and activities which have resulted in more effective, sustained and tradition based local governance and greater empowerment of local communities

Justification

Governance at the local level has covered a lot of ground since it was introduced in 1988. There are now 216 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), in this context referred to as "districts", providing a wide range of development projects which hitherto were almost impossible. These achievements notwithstanding both the local government policy and its implementation process have serious challenges that need immediate redress. For instance, the Assemblies still heavily depend on central government (e.g. resource support, appointments to the district assembly by president). In real terms there is not much autonomy and sovereignty for Local Governments, which would enable them to meet the expectations of their respective communities. Neither the Citizens nor Civil Society Organisations are really involved in the decision making process. More over most women are not

involved in demanding good service delivery from Local Governments. Traditional structures and institutions have not been made a major part of local governance and decision-making process. Acknowledging their role will however, help to find a distinct Ghanaian way to Local Governance. It is also important to integrate the media into the Local Government System to enhance the visibility and importance of Local Government to the broader public. There is the need to involve all the stakeholders mentioned in order to enhance the autonomy of the MMDAs, to strengthen the commitment and accountability of the civil service and promote citizens pride as well as to pave the way for community engagement;

The amendment and consolidation of different local government acts into one single law is a major goal which has to be pursued intensely. It would require some level of advocacy at the local and national levels.

Proposed solution

Establish a politically neutral TEERE Local Government Forum (TLGF) to generate public discussions that will be a critical accompaniment to the performance of the respective Local Governments, emphasize the importance of Good Local Governance in general as well as induce the awareness for local policy improvement and acceleration of the decentralisation process.

Methodology

In order to achieve the above stated objectives the TLGF will be organised at three levels (district, regional and national level). TEERE facilitates the organisation of the forums. These forums are organised by stakeholders in local governance at the respective levels viz, district, regional and national

Sensitisation

To ensure that the concept is accepted and owned ultimately by communities in every district TEERE organizes community sensitisation activities among the citizenry prior to a district forum. Community sensitisation involves the promotion of community level meetings/forums through a sustained engagement of community leadership and social groups such as women, disabled, traditional political and religious authorities, political groupings, trade associations etc. Sensitisation approaches are in three fold. They could involve organising community forums with the active involvement of local political leadership eg chiefs and Assembly members. That is, a single community meeting is organised in which burning community issues are discussed. On the other hand, field officers could engage community members at already existing meetings such Village savings and loans association (VSLA) meetings, youth meetings, trade association meetings (hairdressers, smock weavers, market women, Pwds). Field officers could also visit and engage community members at known community meeting points such water collection points-boreholes, rivers; play grounds, drinking spots etc

Organisation

In order to organize the respective fora at the district level and to ensure that the local stakeholders are involved, each of the districts is mandated to appoint a desk officer for the project. The desk officer will work with TEERE or the organisation organising the forum to identify representatives to constitute the Local Organising Committee for a district forum. The proposed representatives must come from

stakeholders in local government at the district or regional level. A team is selected at the forum to follow up on the results of a forum at the respective levels.

Pilot Phase

The TLGF will start as pilots in selected districts beginning from the most deprived regions to the least deprived in the country. One district forum and a regional forum will be organised to pilot the TLGF in a region. Any organisation adopting the concept may pilot it in any region and district of its choice.

A) District Level

A 1

The intention is to bring together citizens, representatives of the District Assemblies, local CSOs/CBSs dealing with women empowerment and local governance, women in governance, the respective traditional leaders, physically challenged, other local stakeholders in local governance and the media in order to jointly discuss all matters regarding the community in public.

A 2

District Forums are usually organised quarterly a Districts on a regular basis. They may however be reduced or increased depending on the needs of a given district.

A 3

Further on TEERE facilitates the implementation of outcomes of those meetings (follow-ups) together with stakeholders and the districts, who report to all stakeholders at the next forum

B) Regional Level

c) B1

The fora are organised at the Regional level twice a year in order to allow the exchange of experiences, best practices and expectations amongst representatives of the same target groups as (A1) and representatives of the Region.

B2

The concept entails quarterly organisation of round table discussion on topical but relevant issues on local governments in Ghana. Local government professionals and experts are invited to lead and facilitate the discussions. These discussions target national level attention and policy reforms.

B3

The forums also involve working with civil society organisations at the regional levels. The intention is to discuss TLGF, seek their input and to encourage them to adopt or adapt the concept for their programmes.

D) National Local Government Policy Level

C 1

Since the decentralisation reform as well as the performance of the District Assemblies lay far behind expectations and its potential, there is an urgent need for fundamental changes and amendments.

C 2

In order to discuss and demand progress and improvement the forum usually include high ranking National Politicians, MPs, ministers especially Regional Ministers, Local Government Service (LGS), National Association of Local Government Authorities, representatives of Local Governments, Civil Society, Traditional Leaders, representatives of foreign countries (e.g. Ambassadors), national level CSOs especially those in governance, donors and the media etc. Additionally, national and international institutions dealing with local government issues will be invited. This is in order to discuss what is possible, needed and what should be done. The goal is to publicly bring the things on the table and to advocate and lobby for change.

C4

The meetings should regularly take place twice a year in Accra or any place agreed to by the organising committee.

Forums at all levels could become fixed permanent events in the diaries of all potential stakeholders.

Expected outcomes/deliverables of TLGF fora

- a. Citizens, citizens groups and many stakeholder groups are more involved in decision making and the development of their communities and districts.
- b. The number of citizens and CSOs demanding improved service delivery from public institutions have increased.
- c. Extensive consultations held at the community level leading to the commitment of all stakeholders in local governance.
- d. Traditional structures and institutions are more involved in local governments and community mobilization
- e. Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as women and the physically challenged fully participate in forums.
- f. MMDAs increasingly recognise the need for greater independence and autonomy for their institutions and work consciously to achieve these statuses.
- g. Players in the local government policy formulation process make positive moves to improve the local government policy development and community mobilisation
- h. Citizens are committed to voluntary community engagement
- i. Commitment, accountability and service delivery of local governments increased
- j. Districts are committed to implementing the results of the respective TLGF
- k. More independence and autonomies of local governments achieved
- l. More Local governments are empowered to make recommendations for strategies to strengthen local governments to play a developmental and transformative role in building strong and efficient communities in Ghana
- m. The Local Government Policy change in Ghana is gaining momentum

Sustainability

A major concern is to ensure that TLGF becomes a sustainable programme. In order to achieve this TLGF will cooperate with relevant statutory institutions like MMDA's, LGSS, Regional Co-ordinating Councils (RCC), National Association of Local Government Authorities (NALAG), House of Chiefs Individual and umbrella CSOs are encouraged to adopt/adapt the TLGF concept for their programmes. Ultimately, the TLGF would be institutionalised and become an indispensable part of the Ghanaian Local Government Policy and reflect in the cultures of communities.

Prospective Partners

Partners of TLGF are Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional affairs, National Commission on Culture, Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection, European Union (EU), Local Government Service (LGS), Inter-Ministerial Co-ordination Committee (IMCC), Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), Regional Co-ordinating Councils (RCC), Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS), NALAG, LOGNet

Funding sources

Locally generated funds, consultancies, donor funds, donations, others

Monitoring & Evaluation

The progress and outcomes TLGF is monitored and assessed regularly.

Tools

Monitoring and evaluation tools include baseline and end of project studies/impact studies; regular reviews-monthly, quarterly and end of project reviews; partner evaluation, forum day evaluation forms; post-event interviews; data collection sheets; issues analysis.

Auditing

An annual independent auditing to be carried out by a reputable auditing firm or organisation.