



Snap Report

IDEG ROUNDTABLE ON “STRENGTHENING, REPRESENTATION, PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY: THE ELECTION 2020”

1. Background

Ghana is lagging behind in addressing issues of inclusion and representation for active participation of chiefs, women, youth and people with disabilities (PWDs) in politics and development. During the campaign for the amendment of Article 55 (3) that seeks to legalize multiparty local government election, a key concern that emerged was the marginalization and extreme partisanship displayed by the duopolies, NPP and NDC, which have emerged in the Fourth Republic. Groups such as chiefs, women, youth and PWDs feared that the proposed amendment could further entrench their marginalization in politics.

Against this background, the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) held a roundtable on Thursday, 12th November, 2020, on the theme, “Strengthening Representation, Participation and Accountability: The Election 2020 Manifestos?”. The program was sponsored by the Danish Embassy in Ghana, the Danish Institute for Parties Democracy and Oxfam in Ghana.

2. Program

The purpose of the roundtable was to provide a platform for political parties to engage with women, traditional authorities, PWDs, and the youth, on their manifesto pledges, and on how they intend to promote inclusion and accountability in local government through Constitutional Reform. Speakers were selected from the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the Convention People’s Party (CPP) as follows:

- Hon. Osei Bonsu Amoah; Member of Parliament for Akwapim South Constituency, New Patriotic Party and Deputy Minister of Local Government and Rural Development.

- Hon. Alhaji Mohammed Kwaku Doku, Spokesperson on Local Government, National Democratic Congress and Former President of NALAG.
- Nana Oduro Kwarteng, Chairman of the Manifesto Committee, Convention People's Party.

Discussants who represented women, youth, chiefs, and PWDs were the following:

- Nana Kwasi Gyan Appenteng, Apagyahene of Akyem Ati, Akyem Abuakwa Traditional area;
- Dr Nicholas Awortwi, Director, Institute for Local Government Studies (ILGS);
- Ms. Lois A. Addo , Programs Officer, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF);
- Ms. Joyce Nyame, Programme Coordinator, Youth Bridge Foundation;
- Mr. Christopher Dapaah, National Coordinator, Local Governance Network (LogNet).

Speakers were offered 10 minutes, within which they were to share highlights from their manifestos and outline the ways in which their political party would ensure inclusion of marginalized groups, if they should be voted into office. Their submissions are summarised below:

NPP

The Hon. Member of Parliament for Akwapim South Constituency, and Deputy Minister of Local Government and Rural Development Mr. Osei Bonsu Amoah, indicated that the NPP planned to ensure that MMDCEs would be elected. They also intended to amend article 55(3) to pave the way for the participation of political parties in local government. Consequently, local government would be opened up for more people to participate and be represented. He observed that the failed attempt at Constitutional Amendment in 2019 demonstrated that further consultations needed to be carried out to build consensus on the way forward on local governance reforms. He listed efforts by the NPP government at strengthening local government as follows:

- Enactment of a Municipal Finance Bill to support the local level
- Undertaken efforts to strengthen role of traditional authorities in the local government system
- Decentralising and equipping Lands Evaluation Board to provide technical support on property evaluation
- Implemented a 3% increment in District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) disbursement to persons with disabilities.

- Developed a National Decentralisation Policy 2020 – 2024, which outlines all the goals to be implemented in local governance, including representation, inclusion and local economic development for equal opportunities and prosperity.

NDC

The Spokesperson on Local Government and Former President of NALAG, Alhaji Mohammed Kwaku Doku made the following submissions. He indicated that for the NDC, three components of local government were uppermost; namely participation, inclusiveness and accountability. He listed ways in which these three components would be achieved under an NDC-led government.

- Women would be empowered to participate in the local government system through the passage of the Affirmative Action Bill into law.
- Support would be provided to women who wanted to enter politics through the district assemblies or local government system.
- A Royal Institute of Chieftaincy would be established to build chiefs' capacities to become involved in the local government system.
- A disability fund for PWDs would be created to enhance their participation in local governance.
- MMDCEs would be strengthened and resourced since the core development of the country hinged on their shoulders.

CPP

Nana Oduro Kwarteng, Chairman of the Manifesto Committee of the CPP offered the following submissions:

- To strengthen the decentralisation system, CPP would continue with the Constitutional Review Process (CRC) process which had been stalled.
- Consultations would be undertaken to find out from citizens, particularly marginalised groups, which entrenched clauses of the 1992 Constitution were not in their favour, and which they wished could be taken out.
- CPP supported the election of MMDCEs but did not believe in a party-based local government system;

- CPP would develop a medium-term development plan and a Monitoring and Evaluation system to assess the extent to which the local government system remained participatory and effective.
- The CPP would conduct a massive review of the 1992 Constitution clauses on local government in consultations with the local people, particularly traditional authorities to ensure their involvement.
- CPP would move the DACF to 12% of the Consolidated Fund to enable the Assemblies to do their work and ensure a fairer distribution of resources.
- The party would build the capacities of MMDCEs and public servants to ensure that they perform their duties efficiently and effectively.
- CPP would build capacities for domestic revenue mobilisation to support the DACF.

A roundtable discussion followed the above submissions. The discussion was moderated by the Senior Research Fellow of IDEG, Mr Kwesi Jonah. Questions raised by the discussants included the following:

1. How will the three political parties enhance the involvement of the youth in governance?
2. How do the political parties plan to work with the youth in the policies they outlined?
3. How will political parties conceptualize the role of chiefs?
4. Do the political parties intend to pass the Affirmative Action bill? If so, within what time frame?
5. How will the political parties address issues related to reforming the local government system?
6. How will non-state actors be better consulted by the political parties when in government?

3. Emerging Issues

Through the discussion, the following key messages were directed to political parties:

- Strengthen participation and accountability in local government through the election of MMDCEs
 - The election of MMDCEs will be the key to promoting accountability at the local level.
 - Elections at the local government level on partisan politics basis is important and should be done by proportional representation.
- Define the role of chiefs in governance
 - Conceptualisation and involvement of chiefs is important and going forward, we should discuss how to make their role in governance more effective.

- Pass the Affirmative Action Bill into law
 - All political parties should make it a priority to pass the Affirmative Action Bill. Year after year, commitments have been made by the parties on passing the Affirmative Action Bill however, there have been no concrete actions backing this commitment. It should therefore become a first and foremost priority.

- Ensure inclusion of the marginalized in governance
 - CSOs are non-state actors that complement the efforts of government at all levels. Participation of non-state actors particularly Traditional Authorities, Persons with Disabilities, youth, women and CSOs political processes has been low.
 - For our democracy to thrive, women, men and youth should be involved in decision making.
 - The youth, and other marginalized groups should not be treated as a homogenous group. Policymakers need to understand the different issues that they face.