

# **IDEG'S ENGAGEMENT ON RECONSTRUCTING LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY IN THE 4TH REPUBLIC THE ROLE OF WOMEN TRADITIONAL LEADERS**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AA-BILL	- Affirmative Action Bill
CDD	- Centre for Democratic Centre
CLDG	- Council for Local Development and Development
CRIC	- Constitutional Review Implementation Committee
CRC	- Constitutional Review Commission
DLEs	- District Level Elections
IDEG	- Institute for Democratic Governance
MMDAs	- Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies
MMCEs	- Metropolitan Municipal and District Chief Executives
MMRP	- Mixed Member Representation Proportion
NDC	- National Democratic Congress
NPP	- New Patriotic Party
PWDs	- Persons with Disabilities
WTA	- Women Traditional Authorities

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The meeting on the topic, *"Reconstructing Local Governance and Multiparty Democracy in the 4th Republic: The Role of Women Traditional Leaders,"* was held as part of a series of discussions on Constitutional Amendment, local governance reforms and the need to reduce the levels of exclusion of certain marginalized groups in Ghana. Attended by renowned female traditional leaders from different parts of Ghana, this particular meeting targeted two main categories of marginalized groups, females and traditional leaders. Discussions focused on issues affecting both groups and how female traditional leaders straddled both spheres. Presenters discussed issues associated with marginalization in both categories, efforts made so far to ameliorate their non-representation and the role female traditional leaders can play in advocating for change in these categories. Proposed policies such as The Council for Local Development and Governance, Mixed Member Proportional Representation and the Affirmative Action Bill were discussed in detail regarding their potential to reduce levels of exclusion of traditional leaders, females, persons with disability and the youth.

Participants enriched the discussion with their wealth of experience and ability to relate the proposed policies to their real-life situations. Among the issues which emerged from the discussion were the marginalization of female traditional leaders, their lack of a united front due to the different modes of appointment, their low representation at the National House of Chiefs and government legislation which bars traditional areas from partisan politics. The discussions were so rich that it was agreed that a second meeting will be held to further deliberate on the way forward.

## 1 BACKGROUND

The program began with a welcome address by the Executive Director of the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), Dr. Emmanuel Obliteyio Akwetey. He started by thanking all present for making time for the program at such a short notice. He traced IDEG's involvement in the call for local governance reforms to the aftermath of the 2008 elections. Likening the existing situation at the time to the dominance of the two giant companies (such as Vodafone and MTN), he mentioned how Ghana's two leading political parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), have over the years relegated the other political parties to the background. He mentioned how regulatory bodies like the Ministry of Communications exist to ensure that the companies adhere to the rules of their operations. The current democratic dispensation which will be thirty years in April, excludes certain important categories of people or does not provide people in those categories as much recognition as they deserve. Among these are the youth, women and traditional leaders. This meeting was therefore held as part of a series of consultations with a number of groups including representatives of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and the Musicians Association of Ghana (MUSIGA) and the Ghana Actors Guild (GAD). He recounted the commitment the late President Atta Mills demonstrated in ensuring peace in the country and the increasing threat of violence in the current multi-party dispensation. According to him, the dominance of the two parties led to entrenched positions and polarization which has exacerbated the levels of violence in the county. In his view, foot soldiers and individuals associated with defeated political parties in Ghana often feel victimized and sidelined while in opposition and so when they return to power, they ensure that party faithful are appointed to key positions, while those serving are dismissed, thereby continuing the vicious cycle of party domination in public spheres. There is the need to avoid such divisions because most Ghanaians are inevitably related, and it is foreigners who benefit from such divisions in the country.

He mentioned recommendations made regarding the amendment of the 1992 Constitution, the work of the Constitution Review Commission (CRC), and subsequently, the Constitution Review Implementation Committee (CRIC). In their work, the exclusion of other parties was a major gap which had not been addressed. The devolution of executive power to the local level was a proposal IDEG believed would be a panacea to the incidence of electoral violence and the incidence of violence and evolving phenomenon of vigilantism in Ghana. In his view, there was the need for a regulatory body to oversee the activities of the country's political parties. The closest body which does so currently is the Electoral Commission but its role is limited to monitoring the financial activities of the parties during elections.

Again, the delay of almost eleven years (and counting) in implementing the recommendations of the CRC is worrying to say the least. He explained that the process associated with implementing all the proposed amendments of the CRIC was too burdensome and almost impossible to implement. Hence the Institute's preference for amending Articles 243 (1) and 55(3), with the hope that the knock-on effect will lead to further Constitutional Amendments in the near future.

He decried the marginalization of chiefs, the neglected roles of the female traditional leaders and the limited understanding of the different roles and positions of female traditional leaders. Given the high educational levels of some of them and their understanding of governance processes, it is unfortunate that the deteriorating situation has led to their open endorsement of some political candidates in election years. In his view, keeping such knowledgeable people idle is a recipe for disaster. The situation is even worse for female chiefs who are not even a formal part of the National House of Chiefs (NHC). He was hopeful about the proposed Affirmative Action Bill (AA-B) and its prospects for ensuring female representation at all levels of governance in the country.

He explained why the Institute prefers to use the term "*democratization*" to explain the process of devolving local governance (bring government to the people). In his opinion, this process, if implemented as suggested in our proposals, will go a long way in reducing exclusion. The proposed system will increase representation and promote participation at all levels. He mentioned the aborted referendum and the President's call for increased consensus-building after it had been cancelled. He also briefly discussed the increased youth population and their advantage of having advanced technology in their generation. These are benefits which could inure to the country's benefit if well harnessed. On the contrary, it could also lead to adverse consequences if these are not solved, especially given their suggestions of possible coups. He encouraged the participants to be interactive and honest during deliberations in order to make the day's proceedings productive.

While giving the welcome address, a participant interjected by bemoaning the lack of recognition of female traditional leaders at the NHC. She explained how she complained till the then Chairman of the House yielded by offering a limited number of female traditional leaders' representation during regional and national House meetings. She explained that the lack of representation was a cultural issue which emerged because female traditional leaders are supposed to be a step lower than the males. They therefore have no space (logistically) to accommodate the extra number of females who have been permitted to attend meetings. She emphasized how unfortunate this was because females nominated the male chiefs. She said it was just an example of the several forms of exclusion they faced as female leaders. She believed that amending the Constitution to prevent exclusion was therefore a step in the right direction.

**Figure 1 A Cross-section of Participants during the Meeting**



Source: IDEG, 2022

## **2. PRESENTATIONS**

### **2.1 The Role of the AA-B Coalition**

Dr. Charity Binka of the AA-B Coalition represented the Convener, Mrs. Sheila Minkah-Premoh at the meeting. In her presentation, she pointed out global trends in female representation in governance at various levels. Based on case studies from other African countries in promoting female representation in governance. Highlighting Ghana's poor performance at all levels (regional and global), she traced the historical trends associated with female representation and the role played by various governments and women's groups to promote women's representation. Using current statistics, she depicted that it is only at the bench that the representation of women seems impressive. In Parliament, the current figure of 14.5% is worrying. In her presentation, she spoke about the long arduous journey Ghanaian women advocates had undertaken since Ghana became a republic to date. She explained why the AA-B will tremendously increase the fortunes of Ghanaian females in governance when implemented. She said although she was

not optimistic about ensuring gender parity by 2030 due to the current rate of policy reforms, she was hopeful that the work of gender advocates regarding ensuring gender parity will yield results by 2063. She also explained how the Bill when enacted will ensure that a committee is set up to scrutinize appointments at all levels in order to ensure that at least 30% of women get appointed.

**Figure 2** *Presentation on the Affirmative Action Bill (AA-B)*



Source: IDEG, 2022

## **2.2** Proposed Role of Chiefs

This presentation was delivered by the Director of Advocacy and Institutional Relations of IDEG, Mr. Kwesi Jonah. He reiterated the important role of chiefs and female traditional leaders in Ghanaian culture. It was explained that IDEG proposed Constitutional Reform long before any other political party did. In his view, the amended Constitution will lessen the marginalization of certain groups such as chiefs, females, PWDs and the youth. His presentation centred on the exclusion of females and traditional leaders. In his view, the august audience straddled both spheres and so made a very special audience. Tracing the role of traditional leaders from colonial times till the present day, he noted that the role of the chieftaincy institution had changed over the years. He deplored the low representation at the Regional House of Chiefs (two members from the RHCs), Lands and Judicial Commissions (one representative each from the NHC). There is no representation in Parliament. He explained the role of the proposed Council for Local Development and Governance, its structure and how it could effectively solve the problem associated with the exclusion of traditional leaders. He also stated that it will be backed by law and fully funded.

According to Mr. Jonah, Chiefs played a very pivotal role in our society before colonial rule. The entire society was constructed around our chiefs that is why the colonial government recognized them and used them more effectively in running the country. The narrative has changed after independence. The current situation as far as the position and role of chiefs is concerned, is not the same. Chiefs have been excluded and marginalized in governance in so many ways. The chiefs have not been quiet about this marginalization and exclusion. They have on many occasions called upon government with a number of proposals all to no avail. In the Constitutional Review Commission report, the chiefs proposed that, an upper house of Parliament can be created for them or a percentage of the representation in Parliament could be given to them.

IDEG, has been able to engage a number of chiefs in various regions in some of our outreach programs, the decision we have arrived at is that, chiefs are just too important to be marginalized. Also, putting chiefs together in an elected assembly with ordinary people, may create problems, especially when the body is partisan. He therefore suggested in order to empower Chiefs, a very special structure called the Council for Local Development and Governance be created at the district assembly level for chiefs, throughout all the 261 districts of this country. Their composition will comprise of not just male chiefs but female queen mothers and traditional rulers as well. As the body will need a lot of technical advisors and so on, he recommended that, the body in its own right, co-opt professional people like lawyers, doctors who reside in the district to advise the assembly in all areas.

This Council will play a very active role in development. For instance, since our chiefs are the custodians of our lands, if the assembly needs land for the development, the

council will advise the assembly on how to get access to land for development. The Council will advise the assembly on the developmental needs of the people. CLDG will also play the role of conflict resolution mechanisms in situations where there are conflicts between the Member of Parliament, Presiding member and the Chief Executive, etc. Subsequently, he discussed IDEG's proposed Mixed Member Proportional Representation and how it augurs to the benefit of women when implemented alongside the AA-B. He explained how it would be implemented and the fact that it was flexible but always ensured that at least 30% of women were in power.

***Figure 3 Presentation on Role of Chiefs***



Source: IDEG, 2022

### **2.3 Issues Emerging from Discussion Segment**

Due to the fact that this is a Report, the issues which emerged from the discussion will briefly be mentioned. Further details on the topics will be provided in the full report which will be made available shortly. The following were the main issues which were discussed:

1. The Institute's gratitude for the enlightening discussion and the opportunity to meet. This provided the opportunity for them to understand the proposed local governance reforms and to be acknowledged by a leading Civil Society Organization in the country. The Institute is open to participate in all issues regarding the promotion of women in governance because of its interest in the MMPR. Women Traditional Leaders who are therefore part of any groups

campaigning for female participation in governance can invite the Institute to provide technical capacity building in this regard.

2. Discontent of the women regarding the current position of women in governance in Ghana. Given all the global publicity on affirmative action, they believed Ghanaian women should have done much better by now. Part of what they attributed as being the cause of the abysmal performance of women in elected positions was the fact that there were divisions along party lines, ethnicity and social strata.
3. The need to conduct some introspection as female traditional authorities to determine the extent to which they have contributed to the status quo and what can be done to ameliorate the existing situation. There was the view that there is a lack of unity of purpose among women leaders (not just the traditional leaders). The women reflected on how as a group they had not collectively done anything to demonstrate that they were actively ending the marginalization of women in Ghanaian politics.
4. The need for female traditional leaders to have a united front. This can be done by establishing the equivalent of a female version of the National House of Chiefs which will comprise all female traditional leaders regardless of their categories within the chieftaincy institution. There are divisions regarding categories of women traditional leaders and who should be permitted to represent at which levels. There are also covert divisions based on years on the throne and educational background. These divisions reinforce stereotypes people have about women not supporting each other and agreeing on the way forward. Among the barriers the Women Traditional Leaders alluded to are limited representation at the National House of Chiefs and recognition by Paramount Leaders. Sub-chiefs who are sometimes more influential and educated feel ostracized and the hostility present when the gazetted Chiefs/Women Traditional Leaders meet, is very tangible.
5. Disgruntlement with the status of traditional leaders in governance in Ghana. The traditional leaders indeed feel marginalized and there is the need to reduce their exclusion within the shortest possible time. The role of traditional leaders under the Fourth Republican Constitution is an issue of concern and the leaders at the meeting were excited to know that the Institute had local governance proposals which included looking at including traditional leaders in governance. The current duopolistic nature of governance has not augured well for chieftaincy because each of the two leading parties seeks to concentrate on vote winning for the next elections

and therefore easily sideline chiefs. The youth who have not experienced the repercussions of a coup d'état, call for coups without resorting to ways in which traditional leaders can hold governments accountable and ensure peaceful democratic governance in Ghana. There is the need for advocates of change to involve traditional leaders in the recommendations.

6. There is also the need for the general public (particularly CSOs and female advocates), to encourage those appointed to various positions by ruling by making comments/providing feedback which will be relevant to their new positions. This is part of a needed support system. According to some of the participants, sometimes the hostility and silence of female counterparts can be very discouraging. Women in leading positions should be encouraged to advocate for all other women, regardless of their partisan affiliations.
7. Women should be encouraged to be assertive and proactive without requiring the support of society. This is especially so for those who want to break social barriers regarding gender discrimination. Regarding this point, it was discussed that women should be able to hold governments, organizations and Institutions liable if they fail to adhere to established laws and policies regarding women's representation. This could be done through active media campaigns, nationwide peaceful demonstrations and other sensitization programs.
8. The need for female traditional leaders to seek court redress regarding aspects of the Constitution which make them feel disempowered. The Supreme Court is the highest court of the land and so far, not many women traditional leaders have been there to complain about issues of their marginalization in the current Constitution. There is the need for women traditional leaders to mobilize resources and approach the Court on grey areas in the Constitution regarding women traditional leaders.
9. It is expedient for the general public to be educated on the various categories of women traditional leaders and their roles. From the day's discussions, it was obvious there were several categories. There are the female chiefs, queen mothers, paramount queenmothers, divisional queenmothers and the development queenmothers. Some of these have nothing to do with the biological status of the women traditional leaders. Such positions cannot be inherited to passed on to one's preferred next-of-kin. There is therefor the need for all the various categories to meet and

confer, deliberate on the advancement of women in Ghana, and to discuss and understand how they complement each other's roles.

### 3.0 WAY FORWARD

From the meeting it is obvious that certain issues need to be tackled by both the Institute and Women Traditional Leaders in the long-run in order to ensure the active participation of females (and especially female traditional leaders) in Ghanaian politics. Among these are:

1. Actively working to ensure the quick passage of the AA-B before the term of office of this government expires
2. Educating more people on the AA-B so that various constituents can start getting lists of potential females ready for appointment to various positions
3. Sensitization on MMPR and enabling female leaders understand its linkage to the AA-B, as well as benefits to the representation of Ghanaian women and other marginalized categories
4. Actively providing all the possible support for the establishment of an umbrella Women Traditional Authorities Council which will comprise all categories of female traditional leaders. This group can leverage for change at all levels of governance in the country.
5. The need to specifically state which categories of Women Traditional Leaders will be represented at the Council for Local Development.

The meeting ended with an understanding that since the agenda for the day had not been fully covered, there was the need for participants to reconvene to discuss the section on IDEGs proposals for the reforms and how to solve the issues raised in their discussions. The next meeting will also deliberate on IDEG's proposed local governance reforms, how to obtain government recognition for the umbrella group of female traditional leaders, the speedy enactment of the AA-B.

#### 4.0 REFERENCES

1. Constitutional Review Commission (2011). *From a Political to a Development Constitution*, Accra-Ghana.
2. Institute for Democratic Governance (2022). *Concept Note on IDEGs Engagement on Restructuring local governance and multiparty democracy in the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, The Role of Women Traditional Leaders*, East Legon- Accra.
3. Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992 (Accra, Ghana Government Printer)

#### APPENDICES

##### *Appendix 1 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS*

NO	NAME	TITLE/DESIGNATION
1	Mamaga Amega Kofi Bra I	Paramount Queen mother, Peki Traditional Area
2	Nana Awo Kosi Otinor I	Swapo Manye Yilo Krobo, Somanya
3	Nkilgiwurche Boresah Iddisah Jeduah I	Yagbon Kingdom, Savannah Region

4	Nana Amponsah Dokua III	Paramont Queenmother of Osudoku Traditional Area, Osudoku
5	Nana Otubea II	Paramount Queenmother, Nkonya
6	Naana K.D. Dunmaaley I	Paramount Queenmother, Ada
7	Nana Abena Gyamfua II	Paramount Queenmother, Assin Atandansu
8	Oheneyere Gifty Anti	Gender Advocate and wife of a Traditional Leader
9	Rev Francisca Busumtwi-Sam	Methodist Church, Circuit Minister
10	Dr. Charity Binka	Steering Committee Member, Affirmative Action Bill Coalition
11	Nana Kow Ackon V	Twafohen Oguaa, Cape-Coast
12	Hon. Mamavi Abla Dzifa Gomashie	Member of Parliament and Queen of Aflao
13	Nana Amba Eyiaba I	Queen mother of Efutu & Krontihemaa Oguaa Traditional Area, Cape-Coast
14	Naa Adoley Ablade I	Queen of Shukura and Sempah, New Town. Organizing President for Greater Accra Regional Queens Association

**Total Number of Participants: 14**

**Gender Disaggregation**

**Male: 0**

**Female: 14**



## Appendix 2 Photos of Participants

Plate 1: **Group Photo of all Participants and some staff of IDEG**



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 2: **Hon Abba Dzifa Gomashie (Member of Parliament and Women Traditional Leader)**



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 3: ***Oheneyere Awo Dansoa aka Madam Gifty Anti (Journalist and Wife of a Traditional Leader)***



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 4: ***Nana Adwoa Awindor (Journalist and Traditional Leader)***



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 5: ***Two Leaders interacting after the program***



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 6: ***Female Traditional Leader from Oti Region***



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 7: ***Nkilgiwurche Boresah Iddisah Jeduah I (Savannah Region)***



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 8: ***Female Traditional Leader***



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 9: **Female Traditional Leader**



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 10: **The only female Chief in attendance**



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 11: ***Female Traditional Leaders conferring***



Source: IDEG, 2022

Plate 12: ***Nana Amba Eyiaba I (Female Traditional leader for forty years)***



Source: IDEG, 2022