

Administrative Decentralisation Thematic Working Group

**A Report Commissioned by the Inter-Ministerial Co-ordinating
Committee on Decentralisation**

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Acronyms

AAP	Annual Action Plan
AMs	Assembly Member(s)
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DA	District Assembly
DACF	District Assemblies' Common Fund
DACF-RFG	District Assemblies' Common Fund Responsiveness Factor Grant
DCD	District Coordinating Director
DPAT	District Assembly Performance Assessment Tool
DPCU	District Planning Coordinating Unit
ILGS	Institute of Local Government Studies
IMCCoD	Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralisation
KKMA	Kpone-Katamanso Municipal Assembly
LG	Local Government
LGS	Local Government Service
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MLGCRA	Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MMDCDs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Coordinating Director(s)
MMDCEs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executive(s)
NALAG	National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NiPDA	Ningo-Prampram District Assembly
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
ODA	Office of the District Assembly
OHLGS	Office of the Head of the Local Government Service
OoP	Office of the President
RCC	Regional Coordinating Council
RCD	Regional Coordinating Director
RFG	Responsiveness Factor Grant
SoS	Scheme of Service
SoST	Scheme of Service Training
TMA	Tema Metropolitan Assembly

Executive Summary

This report, produced by the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Administrative Decentralisation, forms part of the broader effort led by the Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralisation (IMCCoD) to formulate Ghana's National Decentralisation Policy and Strategy (NDPS) for the period 2025–2029. The TWG's objective was to conduct a critical review of the nature, implementation status, and challenges of administrative decentralisation in Ghana, with a focus on proposing actionable reforms aligned with legal mandates, governance imperatives, and best practices.

The assessment revealed that administrative decentralisation in Ghana has achieved only modest gains since its inception over three decades ago. While decentralisation is constitutionally mandated and widely acknowledged as essential to effective local governance, its implementation remains uneven and incomplete. Key legislative instruments such as the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), provide a foundation, but critical operational gaps persist. Notably, many decentralised departments remain either partially functional or non-operational, largely due to the absence of enabling Legislative Instruments (LIs), limited authority over personnel management, and institutional inertia.

Four core challenges emerged prominently in the assessment: first, the inadequate transfer and clarification of functions from central government to local authorities, which has led to fragmentation, overlaps, and confusion in service delivery responsibilities. Second, the lack of a Legislative Instrument (LI) to operationalise key provisions of Act 936 has left several departments, including the Legal, Housing, Finance, and Transport Departments, non-functional across many MMDAs. Third, weak human resource capacity—including limited staff, mismatched skill sets, and inadequate training opportunities—has constrained the performance of MMDAs. Finally, current performance management systems and accountability frameworks are fragmented, underutilised, or misaligned with the realities of service delivery at the local level.

The field engagements conducted in Tema Metropolitan Assembly, Kpone-Katamanso Municipal Assembly, and Ningo-Prampram District Assembly confirmed these systemic issues and revealed additional concerns such as dual reporting lines between MMDAs and sector ministries, non-alignment of fiscal policies, and the persistent dominance of central government agencies in decentralised functions. These problems reinforce the need for reforms that not only address structural inefficiencies but also promote organisational coherence and enhance the responsiveness of decentralised service delivery.

The TWG proposes a comprehensive policy framework with the overarching objective of realigning functions and responsibilities while strengthening institutional and human resource capacity at the sub-national level. Seven strategic directions

have been identified: (1) reclassifying the functions of decentralised departments, (2) accelerating the establishment and integration of MMDAs departments, (3) enhancing collaboration among MDAs and MMDAs, (4) developing frameworks to improve local control over personnel, (5) introducing performance standards for infrastructure and service delivery, (6) instituting a structured Scheme of Service Training (SoST) system for local government staff, and (7) improving staff performance management and accountability mechanisms.

Ultimately, this report concludes that administrative decentralisation must transition from an aspirational goal to a practical reality. For the 2025–2029 NDPS to succeed, the government must enact the necessary legal instruments, institutionalise human resource reforms, and commit to the full operationalisation of decentralised departments. Such reforms will not only improve public service delivery but also deepen democratic governance, local participation, and institutional accountability across all levels of government.

1.0 Introduction

Administrative decentralisation remains a critical pillar of Ghana's broader decentralisation agenda, envisioned in the 1992 Constitution and legislated under successive local governance laws. It reflects a deliberate effort by the state to transfer authority, functions, and administrative responsibilities from central government institutions to sub-national entities, particularly Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). Over the past three decades, various reforms have sought to strengthen the capacity of MMDAs to manage public service delivery effectively and bring governance closer to the people. Yet, despite these reforms, there remains a significant gap between policy intentions and operational realities. Many decentralised departments are either not fully functional or lack the legal instruments and resources necessary for effective delivery of services at the local level. This underscores the importance of revisiting and revitalising the administrative decentralisation agenda within the framework of the forthcoming National Decentralisation Policy and Strategy (NDPS) for 2025–2029.

The formulation of this NDPS is being spearheaded by the Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralisation (IMCCoD), which has established Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) to provide technical insights into key policy domains. This report presents the findings and proposals of the TWG on Administrative Decentralisation. The TWG's work is anchored in a comprehensive review of existing laws, policies, and institutional practices, including engagements with key stakeholders and field visits to selected MMDAs. The group assessed the current status of departmental establishment, staffing capacity, performance management systems, and intergovernmental coordination in administrative decentralisation. The emerging issues point to persistent structural, legal, and institutional bottlenecks that continue to limit the realisation of full administrative autonomy at the district level.

The report proposes a set of strategies and activities to align functions and responsibilities, enhance the operationalisation of decentralised departments, and build human resource capacity for efficient service delivery. It highlights the need for a revised legislative framework, particularly a new Legislative Instrument to support Act 936, and for institutional reforms to clarify reporting lines, eliminate duplication of roles, and ensure better coordination between national and sub-national actors. Additionally, it underscores the importance of adopting a coherent performance management regime that tracks the effectiveness of decentralised service delivery.

Ultimately, the recommendations of this report aim to deepen administrative decentralisation as a mechanism for improving the responsiveness, transparency, and accountability of local governance in Ghana. The NDPS 2025–2029 must therefore prioritise the systemic challenges identified herein and commit to a reform path that ensures local government institutions are fully empowered to fulfil their constitutional and developmental mandates.

1.1 Structure of the Report

This report has been organised into five parts. Part I is the introductory chapter which provides the background and contextual issues including the purpose, approach and methods adopted for the assignment. Part II provides an account of the document review and Part III deals with the findings and results emerging from the conduct of field exercises. It adequately captures feedback from both participants and resource persons. Part IV proceeds with a proposed policy framework including the overarching policy objective for administrative decentralisation, the key development issues, sub-objectives, strategies and broad activities. Finally, Part V provides a matrix of proposals for the 2025-2029 NDPS, with focus on administrative decentralisation and a summary of the issues, sub-objectives, strategies, broad activities, as well as indications of the lead implementing agencies and other key agencies. The annexes to the report include the inception report of the TWG, analysis of the 2024 NDC Manifesto and imperatives for administrative decentralisation and other relevant working documents and reports.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The literature on decentralization is beset with conceptual confusions or what Ahwoi (2017: 10) characterizes as “lack of consensual conceptualism”. Rondinelli (1981: 136) observed that “Some of the problems that have arisen in developing nations with implementing decentralization have been conceptual.” Ahwoi (2017: 10) correctly commented that “The absence of conceptual clarity and the absence of consensus on the nature of Ghana’s decentralization programme has had a telling effect on the programme.” By 2024, the Local Public Sector Alliance (LPSA) noted that “Unfortunately, there is currently no set of decentralization definitions that is universally recognized as authoritative across the different disciplines that contribute to the literature on decentralization and multilevel governance, including—but not limited to—law, public administration, political science, and economics” (LPSA 2024: i). The lack of consensual conceptualism in the practice of decentralization does not mean that any conceptual definition or conceptual framework can be accepted without consequences for reform success.

Most definitions of decentralization adopted by scholars and international aid agencies (World Bank, 2021) are based on the influential definitions authored by Rondinelli (1981; 1983). Rondinelli (1981) defined decentralization as “the transfer or delegation of legal and political authority to plan, make decisions and manage public functions from the central government and its agencies to field organizations of those agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, areawide or regional development authorities; functional authorities, autonomous local governments, or nongovernmental organizations.” One of the conceptual confusions in this definition is the use of the terms ‘transfer’ and ‘delegation’ as synonymous concepts. Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema (1983) produced a World Bank Staff Working Paper in which they dropped the concept of ‘delegation’ from

Rondinelli's (1981) definition to pave way for their proposition that decentralization "can be categorized into four types: deconcentration, delegation, devolution, and privatization" (p.14). The definitions, typologies, and conceptual confusions surrounding decentralization produced by Rondinelli has largely remained in the publications of many international development agencies. Our effort to provide some clarity on the concept of administrative decentralization is not an exercise of intellectual pomposity, but an exercise that has practical consequences for reform directions. It should be noted that the concept and practice of decentralization is not the monopoly of the field of local government. It is an instrument for public sector reform.

For the purpose of our work we use the definition of decentralization proposed by the LPSA (2024: 2): "Decentralization is a public sector reform that involves the transfer of authority and responsibility for planning, management, service provision, resource-raising, resource allocation and/or other aspects of one or more public sector functions from a central (or higher-level) government and its agencies to (a) field units of central government ministries or agencies, (b) subordinate units or levels of government, and/or (c) semi-autonomous public authorities, public corporations, or nongovernmental organizations." (LPSA 2024: 2). Our focus is on the transfer of responsibilities and authority from the central government to local government.

It is generally accepted that decentralization involves the transfer of authority. There are three main types of authority that could be transferred from central government to lower-level organizations; namely, devolution, deconcentration, and delegation. We agree with Ahwoi (2017: 10) that the concepts of devolution, deconcentration, and delegation "are not forms of decentralization". Rather, they are types of public authority transferred from central government to lower-level organizations. *Deconcentration* refers to the transfer of public authority from the central government ministries, departments, or agencies to lower-level field offices that are under the direct control of the central agency. Deconcentrated offices or organizations at the local level only implement policies and directives of the central agency. Deconcentrated agencies lack autonomy to make and implement their own final decisions. *Delegation* refers to the transfer of public authority from the central government to public organizations (usually with a separate legal existence) and non-government organizations to make and implement policies on behalf of the central government or central agency. The central agency reserves the power to revoke the authority delegated to another person or agency. Final decision-making authority ultimately "remains in the person or body in whom the authority was originally vested" (Ahwoi 2017: 6). Devolution is the transfer of public authority from the central government to autonomous public organizations to make and implement final decisions independent of the central government. Devolved agencies "take legal responsibility for the consequences of the exercise of those powers and the performance of those functions" (Ahwoi 2017: 5). Rondinelli et al (1983: 12) pointed

out that “decentralization is an ideological principle, associated with objectives of self-reliance, democratic decision-making, popular participation in government, and accountability of public officials to citizens” (Rondinelli, et al. 1983: 12). In other words, many international development agencies advocate for the transfer of devolution rather than the other types of public authority. It is important for reformers to pay attention to the type of authority transferred from central government to accompany the transfer of responsibilities to lower-level organizations. Smoke (2015: 250) cautioned that “The decentralization ‘gold standard’ in recent years has been devolution, encompassing broad administrative, fiscal and political reforms in the belief that empowered, autonomous, and downwardly account-able local governments produce better outcomes. This approach, however, will not always be desirable or feasible”. Especially, in developing countries, devolved agencies may not have the administrative and financial resources to implement their own policies. Therefore, devolution should be pursued with caution.

Now, what are the types of decentralization? There are three broad types (or dimensions) of decentralization; namely, political decentralization, fiscal decentralization, and administrative decentralization. *Political decentralization* refers to the transfer from the central government to lower-level organizations the responsibility and authority for political leadership in public policy-making and implementation. *Fiscal decentralization* refers to the transfer from the central government to lower-level organizations the responsibility and authority for public financial management (including revenue mobilization and expenditure) concerning public services delivery. *Administrative decentralization* refers to the transfer from the central government to lower-level organizations the responsibility and authority for the recruitment and management of administrative staff to perform decentralized functions. Administrative decentralization, according to Ahwoi (2010: 134), “often means the transfer or the recruitment of professionals and bureaucrats, who then form part of the administrative organizations receiving them”. Arguably, the concept of administrative decentralization is the most misunderstood concept in the literature on decentralization. According to the LPSA (2024: 10), “It should be noted that ‘administrative decentralization’ is sometimes erroneously used as a synonym for the term ‘deconcentration.’” Our focus is on administrative decentralization reforms. The 2020-2024 National Decentralisation Policy and Strategy achieved the least results in the domain of administrative decentralization achieved the least progress in Ghana. This was partly because the proposed reforms lacked clear analytical framework and reform directions.

Within the domain of administrative decentralization, the reform stakeholders must decide on the type of public authority that should be transferred to lower-level organization concerning the recruitment and management of administrative staff to perform public functions. Depending on contextual variables (such as availability of financial resources and qualified labour), reform stakeholders may pursue administrative devolution, administrative delegation, or administrative

deconcentration. We agree with Smoke (2015) that the gold standard of administrative devolution (where lower-level organizations have final decision-making authority concerning the recruitment and management of their personnel) will not always be desirable or feasible in every local context. For instance, in local contexts where there is the absence of qualified labour and adequate financial resources to pay salaries, it would not be practically feasible to deploy administrative devolution to lower-level organizations. Administrative deconcentration is more likely to be the best option in such context. However, we accept that administrative devolution should be the ultimate goal for every country that aspires to achieve higher levels of social, economic, and political development.

The scope of Ghana's administrative decentralisation is set out by the 1992 Constitution. The directive principles of state policy envisage that "The State shall take appropriate measures to make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life and in government" (Article 35 (6)(d)). Article 240(1) of the constitution also states that "Ghana shall have a system of local government and administration which shall, as far as practicable, be decentralised. Further, the constitution enjoins Parliament to "enact laws to ensure that functions, powers, responsibilities and resources are at all times transferred from the central government to local government units in a coordinated manner" (Articles 240(2)(a)). The constitution state that "Persons in the service of local government shall be subject to the effective control of local authorities" (Articles 240(2)(d)). The constitution further states in Article 254 that "Parliament shall enact laws and take steps necessary to further decentralization of the administrative functions and projects of the Central Government but shall not exercise any control over the District Assemblies that is incompatible with their decentralized status, or otherwise contrary to law". The spirit of the Constitution leans towards administrative devolution as the ultimate goal for local authorities.

Currently, no Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assembly (MMDA) has been given the authority to make final decisions concerning the recruitment and management of all their administrative personnel. A mix of administrative devolution (staff recruited by MMDAs through the use of IGF) and administrative deconcentration (staff recruited and managed by the Office of the Head of the Local Government Service on behalf of MMDAs) have been administered across the local government system, pursuant to section 77 of the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936). Policy-makers and reformers have the responsibility of identifying the local authorities (particularly Metropolitan Assemblies) that are ripe to practice administrative devolution in appropriate sectors or domains of functionality. Where it is not feasible for the local authorities to practice administrative devolution, at least, the Local Government

Service Secretariat should be given the final decision-making authority to recruit and manage the personnel for MMDAs.

1.3 Methodology

In terms of approach to the assignment, the identification and review of relevant documents was deemed critical to harmonize existing knowledge and best practices on the subject of administrative decentralisation. These included review of relevant sector legislations, policy documents, reports, political party manifestos and manuals as well as journals, articles, online publications, books and other commitments contained in international and regional conventions or agreements. The processes also included meetings with key stakeholders such as senior management staff of the Office of the Head of the Local Government Service (OHLGS) and field visits to three distinct local government (LG) authorities, namely the Tema Metropolitan Assembly (TMA), Kpone-Katamanso Municipal Assembly (KKMA) and the Ningo-Prampram District Assembly (NiPDA). The emerging issues from these engagements were accordingly identified and constituted the basis for drafting this report.

2.0 Emerging issues from document review

This section of the report highlights the progress made, existing challenges, and the way forward in promoting effective administrative decentralisation in Ghana. The analysis focuses on literature on the four key areas of administrative decentralisation: (a) the transfer of functions to the sub-national governments, (b) the establishment and strengthening of departments and other local governance structures, (c) the development of human resource capacity and availability of resources for the performance of work, and (d) the improvement of performance management systems to improve public service delivery.

2.1 Transfer of functions to sub-national governments

Table 1 below, highlights how administrative decentralisation have been practiced in Ghana and thereby providing the legal basis for the transfer of functions of central government to local government units.

Table 1: Administrative decentralisation at the various levels of government

Levels of government/ administration	Description
Central government	Pursuant to Article 4(1) of the 1992 Constitution, Ghana is a unitary state. It is also a democratic state, whose central government exercises executive authority but required to make democracy a reality by decentralising the state administration to regions and districts in consonance with Article 35(6)(d) of the Constitution. Therefore, at the national level, administrative decentralisation entails ministerial restructuring for which designated Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) whose functions has been decentralized are to cede these functions and be restricted to policy making, planning, evaluation and monitoring of government intervention at the national level.
Regional administrations	The system of state administration at the regional level is one which is intended to redistribute government decision-making authority and management responsibilities to regional administrations, referred to as Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs), pursuant to Article 5 and 255 of the 1992 Constitution. While accountability of some of the staff is upwards to the central government, others are employed, hired, motivated and dismissed by the Local Government Service.
District Assemblies	The District Assemblies (DAs) are corporate bodies; perform public functions within their territorial jurisdictions; have their own (mostly elected) political leadership; and prepare and approve their own plans and budgets. The relationship between central government and local governments in Ghana, is a mixture of political devolution (Section 6 of Act 936) and political deconcentration (Sections 5 of Act 936). The DA when constituted, is the highest political authority in the district, municipality or metropolis. It exercises deliberative, legislative and executive powers [article 241(3) of the 1992 Constitution; and sections

Levels of government/ administration	Description
	3(2) and 12(2) of Act 936]. The Offices of the District Assembly and for that matter, the staff, including the administrative head (District Coordinating Director), are responsible to the DA in the performance of its functions [sections 74 and 75(1) of Act 936]. The staff of the DAs are answerable to the MMDCE, who is responsible for the day-to-day performance of the executive and administrative functions of the DA [section 75(5)(6) and 20(2) of Act 936]. In the performance of its executive functions, the DAs are also supported by an effective committee system [sections 19, 20(2), 21, 23, 26-27 of Act 936]. These provisions create space for the DAs to make their own decisions and take responsibilities for the consequences of those decisions.
Sub-district structures	The sub-district structures (Sub-Metropolitan District Councils (SMDCs); Urban/Zonal/Town/Area Councils (UZTACs) and Unit Committees (UCs) perform delegated functions [sections 19, 20(2), 21, 23, 26 and 27 of Act 936].

Indeed, the 1992 Constitution, pursuant to Article 240(2)(a) envisages that Parliament, shall enact laws to ensure that functions, powers, responsibilities and resources are at all times transferred from the central government (CG) to local government (LG) units in a coordinated manner. Sections 12 and 13 of Act 936 also provide for the broad functions of DAs and section 77 as well as the First Schedule of the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936).

Again, Section 3 of Act 936 envisages that the sector Minister shall, by legislative instrument (LI), establish a DA and such LI shall among others specify (a) the area of authority of the DA; (b) the number of persons to be elected to the DA as well as the maximum number of persons to be appointed to the DA; (c) the functions, powers and responsibilities of the DA; and (d) the place where the principal office of the District Assembly is to be situated; and (e) the Sub-Metropolitan District Councils, Urban Councils, Town or Area Councils, and Unit Committees in respect of the areas of authority of the sub-district structures within the area of authority of the DA as may be considered necessary.

2.2 Operationalization of decentralised departments

While the First Schedule of Act 936 details the service sectors decentralized to the MMDAs, the Legislative Instruments (LIs) that establishes each of the DA further horns the provisions of Sections 12 and 13 of Act 936. However, in the absence of an LI for Act 936 to operationalise the envisaged departments for the respective public service sectors, much remain in law without any effective implementation.

There is, therefore, an urgent need to enact an LI to operationalize among others, departments named in the Fourth Schedule of Act 936—namely, the Housing, Statistics, Human Resource, and Births and Deaths Departments.

Operationally, some departments of MMDAs maintain a dual reporting structure to the Assembly on one hand, and their sector ministries and agencies, on the other hand. Departments in this category include the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development. This dual authority undermines the ability of MMDAs to manage these departments as unified structures under their full control. To ensure coherence and efficiency of departments of MMDAs, national-level Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) whose functions have been decentralized should focus solely on their core responsibilities of policy formulation, sector coordination and sector-level monitoring and evaluation.

Evidence suggests that the establishment of departments of MMDAs has progressed slowly over the past thirty years of local government practice under the Fourth Republic. Initially, the repealed Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462), provided for the establishment of sixteen, thirteen and eleven departments for Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, respectively. The Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), further increased the number of departments of the MMDAs to twenty (20), seventeen (17), and fifteen (15) respectively. The full list of departments is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Departments of MMDAs

	Metropolitan Assembly	Municipal Assembly	District Assembly
Departments listed under Second Schedule of Act 936			
1	Central Administration	Central Administration	Central Administration
2	Finance Department	Finance Department	Finance Department
3	Education, Youth and Sports Department	Education, Youth and Sports Department	Education, Youth and Sports Department
4	Metropolitan Health Department	Municipal Health Department	District Health Department
5	Agriculture Department	Agriculture Department	Agriculture Department
6	Physical Planning Department	Physical Planning Department	Physical Planning Department
7	Social Welfare and Community Development Department	Social Welfare and Community Development Department	Social Welfare and Community Development Department
8	Works Department	Works Department	Works Department
9	Trade and Industry Department	Trade and Industry Department	Trade and Industry Department
10	Natural Resources Conservation, Forestry and Game and Wildlife Department	Natural Resources Conservation, Forestry and Game and Wildlife Department	Natural Resources Conservation, Forestry and Game and Wildlife Department
11	Disaster Prevention Department	Disaster Prevention Department	Disaster Prevention Department
12	Roads Department	Roads Department	
13	Transport Department	Transport Department	
14	Waste Management Department		
15	Budget and Rating Department		
16	Legal Department		
Departments listed under Fourth Schedule of Act 936			
17	Housing Department	Housing Department	Housing Department
18	Statistics Department	Statistics Department	Statistics Department
19	Human Resource Department	Human Resource Department	Human Resource Department
20	Births and Deaths Department	Births and Deaths Department	Births and Deaths Department

Source: Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936)

It is however worth noting that the full complement of the prescribed departments is yet to be operationalized. Notably, the Central Administration Department lacks an organogram and no heads appointed; instead Coordinating Directors of some MMDAs act as de facto heads of the Central Administration Department. Similarly, the Finance Department of the MMDA is yet to be operationalized. Furthermore, none of the Metropolitan Assemblies has established or operationalized a Legal Department, despite the numerous legal cases to deal with in terms of court proceedings and advocacy. The delayed operationalization of these departments requires urgent attention to strengthen the overall performance of the MMDAs.

The status of operationalization of the departments of the MMDAs can broadly be categorized into (a) fully operationalized departments, (b) partially operationalized departments, and (c) yet to be operationalized departments as shown in Table 3-1 below.

Table 3-1: Operationalisation of the Department of MMDAs

Fully Operationalized Departments	Partially Operationalized	Yet to be operationalized
Social Welfare & Community Development Department	Central Administration Department	Natural Resources Conservation, Forestry, Game & Wildlife Department
Physical Planning Department	Budget and Rating Department	Education, Youth & Sports Department
Agriculture Department	Births and Deaths Department	Health Department
Works Department	Roads Department	Trade & Industry Department
Human Resource Department	Transport Department	Legal Department
Statistics Department		Disaster Prevention Department
Waste Management Department		Housing Department
		Finance Department

Source: OHLGS as at April 2025

The category of fully functional and operational departments refers to those under the complete control of the MMDAs. Apart from the Human Resource and Statistics Departments, these departments conform to the prescribed form and structure outlined in Legislative Instrument (LI 1961) with established and operational organograms. Although the Department of Agriculture is classified as one of the fully operational departments of the MMDAs, there is the need to decentralize the Veterinary Services and Plant Protection Services Departments (currently under the Ministry of Food and Agriculture) to ensure that all components of the Department of Agriculture are fully operational. This is in furtherance of the provision of LI 1961, where the functions of the Agriculture Department include: “encourage improvement in livestock breeds; assist in developing early warning systems on animal diseases; [and] facilitate and encourage vaccination and immunization of livestock and control

of animal diseases.” These responsibilities are currently performed by the Veterinary Services Department of MoFA, which remains outside the structure of MMDAs.

The category of partially operationalized departments includes those that either lack operational manuals with organograms to guide the full execution of their functions (e.g. Central Administration Department); or are not allowed to perform functions in line with the prescribed form and structure outlined in the LI 1961 (e.g. Budget and Rating Department). Others in this category are those whose budgets are not transferred for effective operations and others who are inhibited by their mother legislations. There is a need for a new LI to operationalise the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) and give effect to its provisions.

The Budget and Rating Department is one of the exclusive departments of the Metropolitan Assemblies. Although it has been operationalized, in five out of the six Metropolitan Assemblies, the department is unable to effectively carry out its assigned functions due to structural and administrative challenges. These challenges include the alignment of the Revenue Mobilization Unit to the Finance Department and the performance of some rating functions by the same Finance Department. This limits the autonomy of the Budget and Rating Department. Similarly, the Department of Births and Deaths has been decentralized to the MMDA level, however, the key management function of salary validation by national and regional offices of the Department of Births and Deaths and not the Local Government Service (LGS).

The category of departments that are yet to be operationalized includes those that have been named in legislations but yet to be operationalized. Within this category are departments whose enabling legislations must be amended to facilitate their integration into the decentralized (devolved) system. These include the Education Service; Health Service; Natural Resources Conservation, Forestry, Game & Wildlife Department; Housing Department; and Finance Department. It is also important to note that although the Pre-Tertiary Education Act decentralizes the basic education to the District Assemblies in a deconcentrated fashion, the legislative bill for the creation of the Health Department and the Education, Youth and Sports Department remains stalled. Progress in operationalizing these departments is urgently needed, especially given that MMDAs allocate substantial financial resources to the education and health sectors.

The decentralization of the Controller and Accountant-General's Department (CAGD) was provided for in the repealed Act 462 and Act 656 as well as LI 1961. This provision was intended to enable the transfer of CAGD staff to the LGS for the establishment of the Finance Departments of the MMDAs. However, Act 936 omitted the CAGD from the list of departments designated to be decentralized. As a result, none of the MMDAs currently has an operational Finance Department staffed and managed by the Local Government Service (LGS). Instead, Finance staff serving in

the MMDAs continue to be recruited and managed by the CAGD. This arrangement undermines the accountability of these officers to the MMDAs and weakens local financial management and autonomy. There is a need to revisit the composition of such sectors decentralized to the MMDAs.

The Legal Department is also exclusive to the Metropolitan Assemblies, although all MMDAs are required to pass bye-laws and handle legal matters. Notwithstanding the non-operationalization of the legal department in the Metropolitan Assemblies, engagement with selected MMDAs revealed that Municipal and District Assemblies are equally saddled with legal issues which necessitates the establishment of the legal department to handle such matters. Similarly, while all MMDAs face serious challenges related to sanitation and waste management, only the Metropolitan Assemblies have been provided with a full Waste Management Department. Given the widespread nature of these challenges, there is a strong case for establishing waste management departments with the requisite staffing in all MMDAs as distinct from the Environmental Health, Sanitation and Hygiene. However, roads as classified for Urban and Feeder Roads were deemed appropriate and fit for purpose.

The above analysis indicates that after more than 30 years of implementing administrative decentralization in Ghana, only about 35% of the departments legally established for the Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies Develop public services delivery performance standards for improved employee performance, transparency, and accountability of MMDAs to local communities have been fully operationalized. For the District Assemblies, the figure is slightly higher—approximately 40% (*OHLGS Annual Report, 2024*). The incomplete operationalization of all the departments of the MMDAs has significantly undermined service delivery.

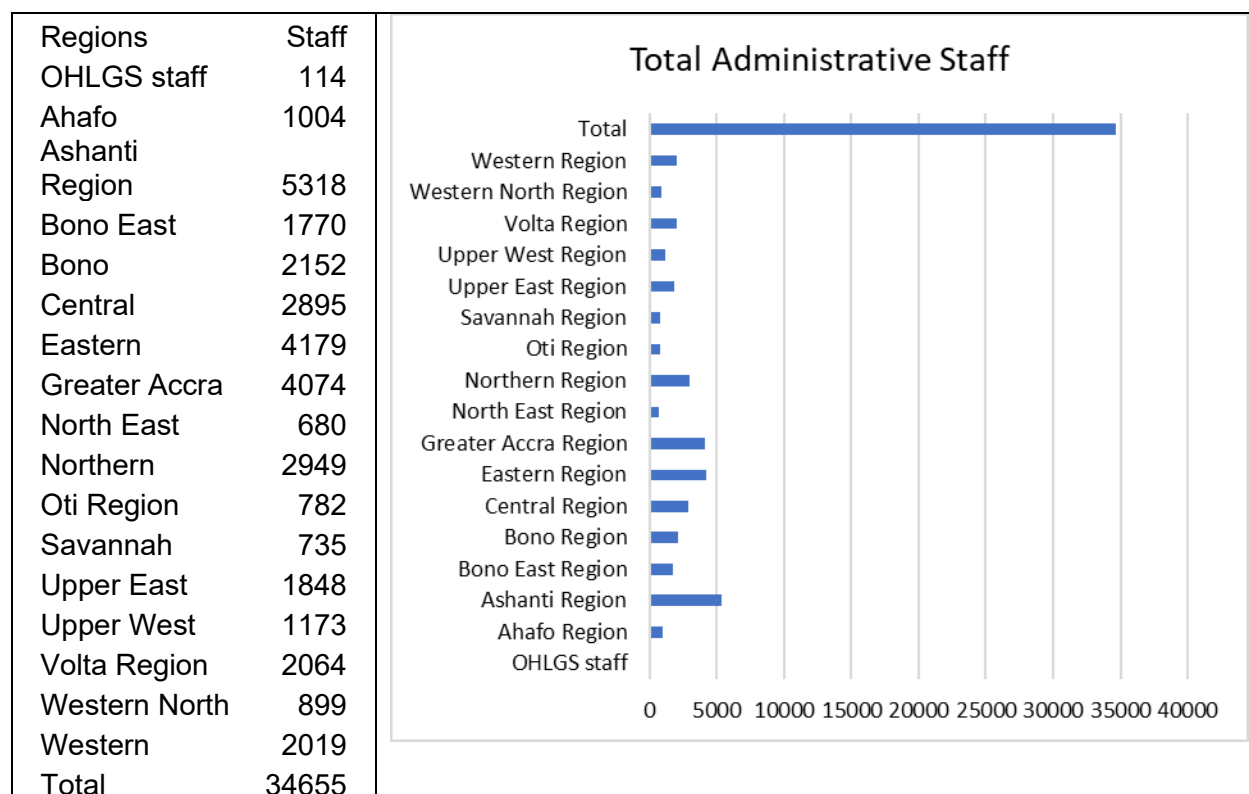
2.3 Human resource management and capacity development

The staff strength of the Local Government Service currently stands at about 34,655 comprising 31,881 staff of the MMDAs and 2,774 staff of the Regional Coordinating Councils. The staff of the MDAs is made up of 14,104 professional classes of staff, 12,595 sub-professional classes of staff, 1,174 technical classes of staff and 3,947 auxiliary and other classes of staff. The regional distribution of staff of the MMDAs is presented in Figure 1 (*OHLGS, April 2025*).

In 2014, the LGS developed staffing norms for MMDAs based on estimated workload and services to be delivered (*OHLGS, 2014*). Given that fewer than half of MMDA departments have been fully operationalized, it is reasonable to conclude that MMDAs are generally understaffed. For instance, none of the Metropolitan Assemblies have fully operationalized departments of health, education, and legal. This means MMDAs lack the staff necessary to perform the functions assigned to departments that are yet to be operationalized. There is the need to ensure that all departments of the MMDAs are operationalized and equipped with the right staff-mix

having the requisite skills and qualifications to support the service delivery mandates of the MMDAs. **There is also the need to update the decade-old staffing norms to reflect current service delivery workloads and development of the MMDAs.**

Figure 1. Regional-level Staff strength of the MMDAs



Data Source: OHLGS, April 2025 (*The data excludes staff at the decentralized levels who are either not at all/fully managed by the LGS – Births & Death/Roads/Finance*).

In terms of capacity development, Article 240(2)(b) envisages that Parliament would provide by law, such measures that were necessary to enhance the capacity of LG authorities to plan, initiate, co-ordinate, manage and execute policies in respect of all matters affecting the people within their areas.

2.4 Service delivery responsibilities and performance management

The drive for improved public service delivery lies at the core of Ghana's decentralisation programme. The First Schedule of the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) explicitly designates eighteen (18) public service sectors as decentralized to the MMDAs. The annual performance of MMDAs should therefore be managed and evaluated for the delivery of each of these services. However, as previously noted, the non-operationalization of some of the departments of the MMDAs such as Education, Health, Housing, etc has affected ownership and leadership in the delivery of public services across several areas which may explain the persistent complaints about poor service delivery by MMDAs.

Several stakeholders have developed performance management tools to evaluate the performance of MMDAs. These include the Local Government Service, the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs (MLGCRA), and other partners. The key performance evaluation schemes are: the annual performance contracts at all levels of the Local Government Service; the District Performance Assessment Tool (DPAT), developed and managed by the MLGCRA; the District League Table (DLT), managed by the NDPC in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (e.g. CDD-Ghana).

There is a need to develop relevant and rigorous indicators to assess the performance of MMDAs in building their administrative capacity for effective service delivery. The LGS and MLGCRA should review and strengthen their performance indicators for evaluating the progress of MMDAs in service delivery. This will allow for better appreciation of the impact of administrative decentralization. As part of efforts to improve service delivery, there is an urgent need for performance indicators specifically focused on the operationalization and effectiveness of the decentralized departments, human resource capacity, and performance management systems.

3.0 Findings from field work and issues identification

The matrix below captures briefs of engagement at each of the Assemblies visited.

MMDA	Observations/Comments
Ningo Prampram District Assembly	1. Establish and operationalise Roads Departments at all MMDAs and legislate to prevent Regional Roads Departments from the implementation of roads projects in MMDAs. 2. Include the staff of the Finance Departments to Local Government Service 3. Decentralise waste management services 4. Abolish project implementation units at MDAs 5. Legislate to avoid Central Government fiscal decisions or policies which are binding on Local Government. 6. Establish Legal Departments at all MMDAs 7. Create Regional Departments of Works and Procurement
Kpone Katamanso Municipal Assembly	1. Dual Reporting by deconcentrated Departments 2. Education and Health Departments prioritise their Ministries over the Assembly 3. Conflict of roles between Municipal Urban Roads Departments and Regional Urban Roads Departments 4. Make waste management a core responsibility of Environmental Health Unit and provide capacity to do so. 5. Empower Education and Health Departments to procure and recruit 6. The release of funds from MDAs to their decentralised bodies at the MMDAs 7. The release of MPs Common Funds for Education and Health through MMDAs accounts and not that of the respective departments 8. Operationalisation of Trade and Industry Department to help coordinate LED activities in MMDAs 9. A large Central Administration Department (create other departments from the Central Administration) 10. Creation of Development Planning Department 11. Promotion of staff should be clearly defined
Tema Metropolitan Assembly	1. Creation of Housing Department at all MMDAs 2. Increase staff of Physical Planning Department 3. Overlapping roles in the scheme of service for the Budget and Finance officers 4. Separation of Waste Management from Environmental Health Unit 5. Creation of Development Planning Department 6. Recruitment of Public Health Engineers for waste management Departments 7. Establishment of Legal Departments at all MMDAs.

4.0 Proposed policy framework

4.1 Overarching policy objective

The core policy objective of administrative decentralization is to streamline the functions and responsibilities of MMDAs; operationalize the departments; build and strengthen the human resource capacity of these departments; and establish an effective performance management system to evaluate the performance of staff in delivering local public services.

4.2 Key development issues

- Incomplete devolution of some decentralised sectors
- Absence of an LI to operationalize Act 936
- Incomplete operationalization of MMDAs departments
- 4 additional MMDA departments not captured in an LI
- Dual reporting relationship of some MMDA departments
- Weak staff capacities
- Nonparticipation of some staff in capacity development programs
- No sustained funding for continuous professional development of staff
- Outdated Staffing Norms
- Poor service delivery
- Non transfer of funds for the performance of functions
- Weak performance management system
- Partial operationalization of the sub-district structures for service delivery
- Weak collaboration among sector players
- Duplication of roles and efforts
- Interference of national level agencies in the operations of MMDAs
- Disjointed implementation of functions
- Poor attitude to work

4.3 Sub-objectives

- To streamline the functions of all decentralised departments of the MMDAs
- To ensure the operationalization of the departments of the MMDAs
- To ensure a coherent and structured approach to capacity development and logistics provision for effective performance
- To improve the delivery of public services at the MMDAs
- To facilitate effective coordination and platforms and governance system to enhance decentralization implementation

4.4 Strategies

1. Streamline functions and responsibilities for the decentralised departments

2. Accelerate the establishment and integration of Departments of the DAs
3. Strengthen collaboration and cooperation among departments and agencies at all levels for responsive and improved public service delivery
4. Design and implement framework to ensure effective control of persons in the service of local government authorities
5. Develop service delivery and performance standard for improved infrastructure and service provision
6. Improve professionalism of local government staff through structured scheme of service training
7. Strengthen staff performance management systems to promote efficiency, accountability and integrity of local government staff

5.0 Matrix of proposals

Overall Objective: To streamline the functions and responsibilities of MMDAs and strengthen organisational and human resource capacity for improved and accountable public service delivery.

ISSUE	SUB-OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	BROAD ACTIVITIES	IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES	
				LEAD	COLLABORATING
Incomplete decentralisation of functions and departments to MMDAs	To streamline the functions of all decentralised departments of the MMDAs	Define or realign the functions and responsibilities for the departments of the MMDA	Review the Civil Service Law 1993 (PNDC Law 327); Civil Service (Interim) Regulations 47, 1960	OHCS	IMCC, MoJAG, MLGCRA, PSC, OHLGS, CLOGSAG, Labour Unions, etc
			Develop a new LI for Act 936	IMCC	OHLGS, OHCS, MoJAG, PSC
			Trigger engagement with MDAs with decentralised functions	IMCC	OHCS, MDAs, PSC, OHLGS
			Undertake ministerial realignment and restructuring	OHCS	PSRS, PSC, IMCC, OHLGS
			Conduct studies on relevant MDAs whose functions need to be devolved to local governments	IMCC	OHCS, OHLGS, ILGS, UG, GIMPA KNUST, etc
			Reactivate the bilateral agreement between MMDAs in Ghana, NALAG, and the cities of developed countries to facilitate good governance practices and infrastructural development	MLGCRA	NALAG, MMDAs, RCCs, OHLGS
			Provide policy coherence and alignment for ministerial oversight and functions in relation to sanitation and solid waste functions of the MLGCRA	MLGCRA	IMCC, OHLGS, RCCs, MMDAs
			Establish a Waste Management Department for all Municipal and District Assemblies to improve sanitation	MLGCRA	IMCC, OHLGS, RCCs, MMDAs
			Re-align the Business Advisory Centers and Youth Enterprises Agencies at the District level into the Trade and Industry Department to focus on functions related	MLGCRA	IMCC, OHLGS, RCCs, MMDAs, 24-Hour Economy Secretariat.

ISSUE	SUB-OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	BROAD ACTIVITIES	IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES	
				LEAD	COLLABORATING
			to the 24-Hour Economy programmes.		
			Recategorize decentralised functions into: a. Exclusive; b. Shared; and c. Collaborative	IMCC	MLGCRA, OHLGS, OHCS, PSRS, PSC
			Harmonise policy incoherence in: - DPCU composition - LI 2232 vs Act 936 - Environmental Impact Assessment report vs Environmental Report – EPA Act vs Act 936 - Exclusion of Environmental Health Officers on the Spatial Planning Committee (LUSPA Act) - The request for fuel in the matter of free maternal care - GHS/ NHIA/ Ambulance service	IMCC	MoJAG, MLGCRA, GHS, Ambulance Service, EPA, LUSPA, OHLGS, MMDAs
Incomplete operationalization of the departments of the MMDAs and the need for new departments	To ensure the full operationalization of the departments of the MMDAs	Accelerate the establishment and integration of Departments of the DAs	Conduct study on the level of functionality of integrated and established departments and delivery of decentralized services	OHLGS	IMCC, MLGCRA, OHCS, ILGS, UG, GIMPA KNUST. etc
			Revise and fully implement the staffing norms; and build the capacity of officers on HR protocols (Scheme of Service, HR Operational Manual, etc) of the LGS	OHLGS	MMDAs, RCCs, PSC, FWSC
			Fully operationalize and integrate the departments of Central Admin, Budget and Rating, Births & Deaths, Housing and Transport	OHLGS	MMDAs, RCCs, B&DR, DRH, MoT
			Develop operational manuals for the Departments to be fully operationalised	OHLGS	RCCs, MMDAs
			Develop operational manuals for all Regional Coordinating Councils	OHLGS	RCCs

ISSUE	SUB-OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	BROAD ACTIVITIES	IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES	
				LEAD	COLLABORATING
			Fully Integrate Department for Feeder Roads and Urban Roads at the regional levels into the LGS	OHLGS	IMCC, OHCS, DFR, DUR
			Conduct a study on setting up a Road Department at the district level for feeder and urban roads management	OHLGS	IMCC, DFR, DUR, OHCS
			Restructure the Ghana Roads Fund to ensure transfer of funds to MMDAs	IMCC	MoF, GHA, DUR, DFR, MoR&H,
			Realign the role of Gender and Women issues into functions of the Department of SWCD at MMDAs	OHLGS	MoGCSP, RCCs, MMDAs
			Accelerate engagement with relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies for the operationalization of the Natural Resources Conservation, Forestry, Game and Wildlife; Education Youth & Sports; Health; Trade & Industry; Legal; Disaster Prevention and Finance Depts	IMCC	OHLGS, MLGCRA, GHS, GES, FC, G&W, T&I, CAGD, FS
			Engage relevant stakeholders on the upgrade of some units of District Assemblies into Departments including the upgrade of the Environmental Health Units of all Municipal and District Assemblies into Environmental Health, Sanitation and Hygiene Department	OHLGS	MLGCRA, RCCs, MMDAs, Schools of Hygiene, GHS
			Undertake an organizational review of the MMDAs' departmental landscape in the face of requests and demands for additional departments	OHLGS	IMCC, RCCs, MMDAs, etc
Inadequate human	To ensure a coherent and	Build and strengthen the	Undertake manpower audits and redeployment of staff	OHLGS	RCCs, MMDAs

ISSUE	SUB-OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	BROAD ACTIVITIES	IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES	
				LEAD	COLLABORATING
capital, training opportunities and logistics for the conduct of work	structured approach to HR deployment, capacity development and logistics provision for effective performance	human resource capacity of the decentralized departments	Revise and implement the LGS Capacity Building Framework (including HRM Framework/modalities for training technical departments)	OHLGS	RCCs, MMDAs, MoCD
			Build the capacities of Key staff of the Trade and Industry Department of the MMDAs to undertake Local Economic Development initiatives/programmes.	OHLGS	IMCC, MLGCRA, RCCs, MMDAs, 24-Hour Economy Secretariat.
			Ensure gender equality and/or equity in opportunities for staff recruitment, capacity building, and career promotions.	OHLGS	MMDAs, RCCs
			Develop and deploy HRMIS for the LGS	OHLGS	IMCC, RCCs, MMDAs, PSC
			Build capacity of staff of newly operationalized departments	OHLGS	ILGS, GIMPA, UG, CSTS, KNUST, KTC, etc
			Undertake training on the developed operational manuals	OHLGS	RCCs, MMDAs
			Improve the capacities of MMDAs to identify relevant and appropriate technologies for waste collection and management	OHLGS	MLGCRA, MESTI, RCCs, MMDAs, Private Sector
			Operationalise the LGS HR Center	OHLGS	
			Implement scheme of service training (SoST)	OHLGS	ILGS
			Commence engagement to implement a graduated strategy that allows selected MMDAs to hire some of their staff	OHLGS	RCCs, MMDAs, PSC, FWSC
Inadequate and poor delivery of	To improve the delivery of public	Develop public services delivery performance	Revise & implement the ISCCS framework across the LGS (guideline or operational manual)	IMCC	OHLGS, MLGCRA, RCCs, MMDAs

ISSUE	SUB-OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	BROAD ACTIVITIES	IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES	
				LEAD	COLLABORATING
decentralised public services	services at the MMDAs	standards for improved employee performance, transparency, and accountability of MMDAs to local communities	Revise, review and implement the LGS Performance Management System in line with public sector and international best practices with emphasis on deepening local level accountability	OHLGS	RCCs, MMDAs, IMCC,
			Review the existing Environmental, Sanitation and waste management policies and implementation systems to empower MMDAs	MLGCRA	MESTI, RCCs, MMDAs, Private Sector
			Promote networking among MMDAs to facilitate intra-district development (roads, markets, electricity, and water).	RCCs	MMDAs, OHLGS, DUR, DFR, MLGCRA, MoW&H, ECG, GWCL
			Build administrative capacities of newly created regions to enable them discharge their mandates	MLGCRA	MoF, RCCs, DACF
			Build administrative capacities of RCCs to ensure effective coordination of MMDAs	MLGCRA	OHLGS, RCCs, MMDAs, IMCC
Low professional and service standards	To improve the professional and ethical standards of local government bureaucrats	Promote a professionalism in the Local Government Service	Review the LGS service Delivery, professional and ethical standards	OHLGS	RCCs, MMDAs
			Train managers and staff of the LGS on the professional, ethical and behavioural standard of the LGS	OHLGS	RCCs, MMDAs
			Train managers and staff of the LGS on changing mindsets about gender equality, equity, and inclusiveness in governance	OHLGS	RCCs, MMDAs, IMCC
			Institute and promote service delivery and professional standards week	OHLGS	RCCs, MMDAs
Weak collaboration among sector players	To facilitate effective coordination and platforms and	Strengthen collaboration and cooperation among departments and agencies at all	Promulgate and implement an LI on the Inter-sectoral collaboration and cooperation (ISCCS) to strengthen partnership and cooperation at all levels.	IMCC	MoJAG, MMDAs, RCCs

ISSUE	SUB-OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	BROAD ACTIVITIES	IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES	
				LEAD	COLLABORATING
	governance system to enhance decentralization implementation	levels for responsive and improved public service delivery			

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Sub-Thematic Group Meetings

1. First Meeting - April 15, 2025
2. Second Meeting – April 24, 2025
3. Third Meeting – April 30, 2025
4. Fourth Meeting – May 3, 2025
5. First Zoom Meeting – May 6, 2025
6. Second Zoom Meeting – May 8, 2025
7. Fifth Meeting – May 12, 2025
8. Sixth Meeting – May 14, 2025
9. Seventh Meeting – May 15, 2025

Field Visits

1. Field Visits – May 7, 2025
 - a. Tema Metropolitan Assembly
 - b. Kpone-Katamanso Municipal Assembly
 - c. Ningo-Prampram District Assembly

Zonal Stakeholder Consultations

- a. Western Zone (WR, CR, GAR), Cape Coast, 25-26th May, 2025
- b. Eastern Zone (ER, VR, OR), Ho, 27-28th May, 2025
- c. Northern Zone (NR, UW, UE, SR, NE), Tamale, 29-30th May, 2025
- d. Middle Zone (AshR, BER, BR, AR, WNR), Kumasi, 2nd – 3rd June, 2025

MDAs Consultations, Accra, 25th June 2025, OHLGS Conference Room

1. Ministry of Roads and Highways
2. Ministry of Health
3. Ministry of Education
4. Ministry of Food and Agriculture
5. Ministry of Trade, Agribusiness and Industry
6. Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
7. Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources
8. Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs
9. Office of the Head of the Local Government Service
10. Office of The Head of the Civil Service
11. Ghana Enterprise Agency
12. Institute of Local Government Studies
13. Greater Accra Regional Coordinating Council
14. Department of Urban Roads
15. Department of Feeder Roads
16. Public Works Department
17. Ambulance Service
18. Ghana Education Service
19. Ghana Health Service
20. Development Partners
21. PRAAD
22. Trade Unions
23. Greater Accra Regional Coordinating Council
24. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
25. Experts Team
26. IMCC Staff