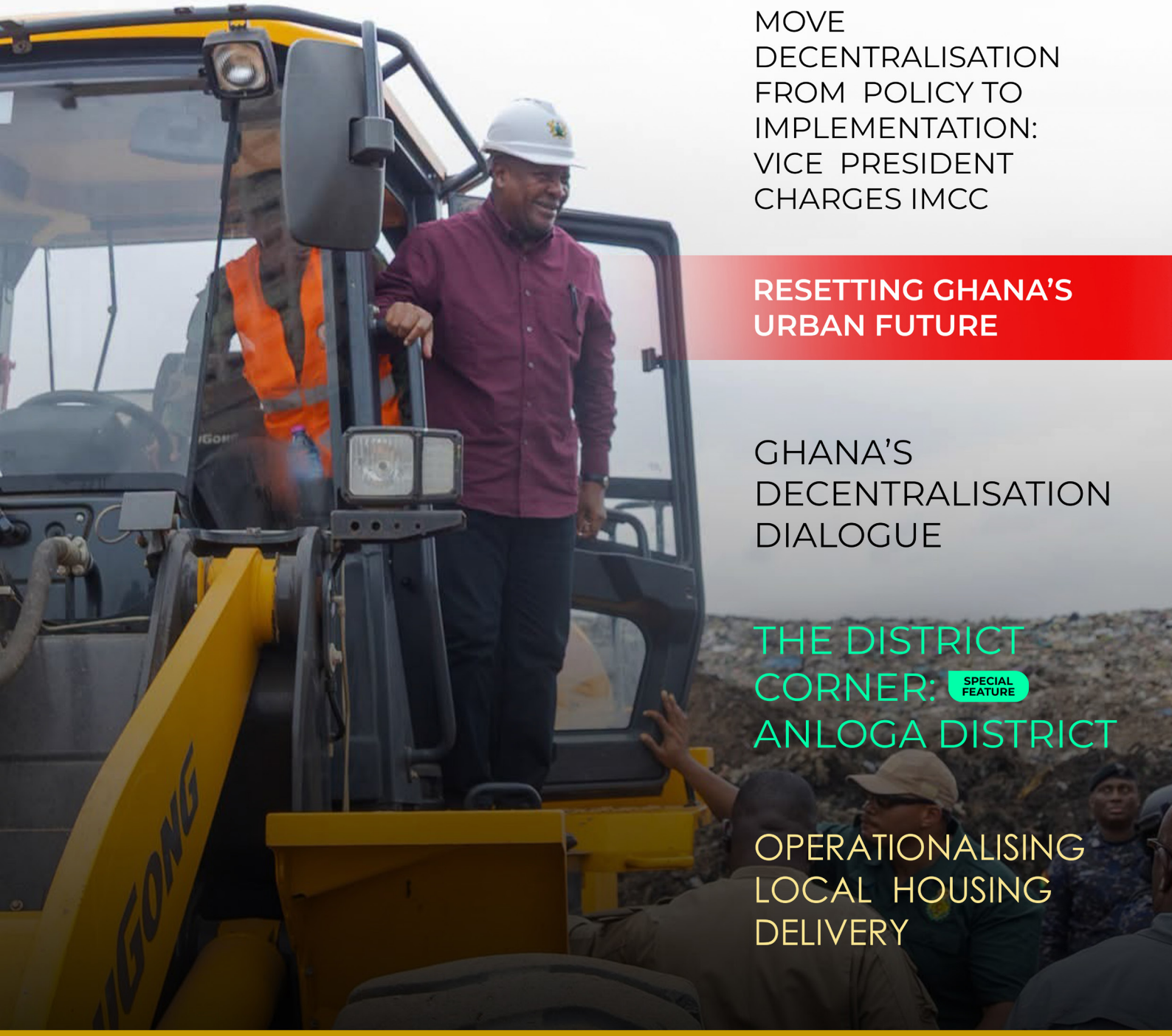
The Decentralist

IMCC SECRETARIAT

DEEPENING DECENTRALISATION IN GHANA

TQ 2026 EDITION



MOVE DECENTRALISATION FROM POLICY TO IMPLEMENTATION: VICE PRESIDENT CHARGES IMCC

RESETTING GHANA'S URBAN FUTURE

GHANA'S DECENTRALISATION DIALOGUE

THE DISTRICT CORNER: SPECIAL FEATURE ANLOGA DISTRICT

OPERATIONALISING LOCAL HOUSING DELIVERY

The Decentralist

DEEPENING DECENTRALISATION IN GHANA 2025



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IMCC SECRETARIAT

INTER-MINISTERIAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON DECENTRALISATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

VISION STATEMENT

A devolved local governance system through effective coordination of reforms.



MISSION STATEMENT

To provide coordination and oversight of inter-sectoral policy on decentralisation and for the decentralised local governance system through effective research, policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, technical back stopping, and multi-stakeholder engagements.



EDITORIAL:



MOVE DECENTRALISATION FROM POLICY TO IMPLEMENTATION: VICE PRESIDENT CHARGES IMCC

The Vice President of the Republic, H.E. Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, has called for renewed commitment, stronger inter-sectoral coordination and sustained accountability in implementing Ghana's decentralisation reforms, emphasising that their success must ultimately be reflected in improved public services and tangible development outcomes for citizens.

She made the call on 31 August 2026 when she chaired the 2026 meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee (IMCC) on Decentralisation at Peduase Lodge. The meeting brought together ministers, heads of public institutions and other key stakeholders to consider strategic priorities and implementation arrangements for the National Decentralisation Policy and Strategic Framework (NDPS) 2026–2030, following its approval by Cabinet in May 2026.

The deliberations provided an opportunity to assess progress, identify implementation constraints and chart a coordinated path towards advancing the decentralisation agenda. Key areas of focus included sustainable financing for decentralisation reforms, the devolution of education and health sectors, strengthening local government institutions, improving local revenue mobilisation, and integrating decentralisation priorities into the plans, budgets and performance management systems of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

The meeting underscored the need to move decisively from policy approval to coordinated implementation, supported by clear institutional responsibilities, adequate resources and effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms. The overarching priority was to ensure that decentralisation delivers more responsive local governance, improved public service delivery and inclusive development across the country.

Mainstreaming decentralisation across government

A priority identified at the meeting was the systematic integration of decentralisation into the operations of government institutions. Participants emphasised the need to incorporate the NDPS priorities into the Annual Action Plans of MDAs, the performance management arrangements of senior public officials, and the Guidelines issued by the National Development Planning Commission.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of strengthening institutional ownership of the reform agenda by ensuring that decentralisation is treated as a cross-government responsibility rather than the mandate of a single ministry or coordinating institution. Aligning decentralisation priorities with institutional plans, budgets and performance assessments would help establish clear lines of responsibility, improve inter-sectoral coordination and facilitate systematic tracking of implementation progress.

Going forward, the integration of decentralisation into existing government planning, budgeting and performance reporting systems will be critical to sustaining implementation and ensuring that sector institutions translate national policy commitments into practical interventions.

Securing sustainable financing for decentralisation

Sustainable financing emerged as a critical requirement for implementing the NDPS over the 2026–2030 period. Declining Development Partner support has underscored the need to establish a predictable domestic financing arrangement capable of supporting coordination, capacity development, implementation and monitoring of the reform programme. Options include establishing a dedicated budgetary allocation or alternative financing mechanism. Further engagement with the Ministry of Finance was identified as necessary to determine an appropriate and sustainable arrangement.

The deliberations reinforced the principle that the assignment of functions and responsibilities to local authorities must be matched by predictable financing, adequate administrative capacity and the resources required to deliver services effectively. Without this alignment, the devolution of responsibilities risks creating unfunded mandates and undermining the capacity of local governments to respond to the needs of their communities.

The importance of strengthening the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), improving the financial management capacity of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), and expanding internally generated revenue was highlighted. In this regard, the proposed Municipal Finance Bill was recognised as an important opportunity to establish a framework for responsible local government borrowing, subject to appropriate fiscal safeguards, transparency and accountability.

The way forward will require a financing framework that supports both the national

coordination of decentralisation reforms and the operational capacity of local governments, while promoting greater fiscal responsibility and sustainable local development.

Advancing the devolution of education and health services

The devolution of education and health services remained a major priority in the implementation of the National Decentralisation Policy and Strategy. Discussions focused on the legislative, institutional and operational reforms required to clarify responsibilities, strengthen local management and improve the delivery of essential public services.

In education, the ongoing review of the Pre-Tertiary Education Act, 2020, represents an important step towards clarifying institutional mandates and strengthening the management of education services at the local level. The meeting emphasised the need to align legislative reforms with appropriate decision-making authority, financial and human resources, infrastructure and institutional capacity.

The IMCC Secretariat and Ministry of Health are collaborating through a joint working committee to reform the legislative and institutional framework for local health delivery. Priorities include clarifying operational roles across central, sector, and local authorities, safeguarding national health standards, and embedding clear accountability. Broad stakeholder consultation and coordinated legal reform will be critical to establishing an effective devolved system.

The next phase will require sustained collaboration among the relevant ministries, agencies and local government institutions to translate the proposed reforms into clear implementation measures. The objective is to bring decision-making closer to citizens while ensuring that local institutions have the authority, resources and capacity to deliver services efficiently and equitably.

Strengthening local service delivery and accountability

Practical challenges affecting decentralised service delivery, particularly road maintenance, equipment management under the District Road Improvement Programme (DRIP), and environmental sanitation, were examined.

On road maintenance, discussions highlighted the need to review implementation arrangements, clarify institutional responsibilities, strengthen equipment maintenance systems, address outstanding contractor payments and improve the financial and technical capacity of assemblies to maintain local road infrastructure.

These priorities point to the need for a more coordinated approach to road maintenance, supported by clear operational arrangements, adequate funding and effective accountability for the use and maintenance of public assets. Strengthening the capacity of local authorities in these areas will be important to protecting public investments and improving access to communities and local economic centres.

Environmental sanitation was another key area of consideration where emphasis was on the need to strengthen waste management structures within assemblies, improve enforcement of sanitation bye-laws and expand public education on waste management and plastic pollution.

The discussions recognised that sustainable sanitation requires an integrated approach combining infrastructure, effective regulation, public education and behavioural change. Assemblies will need to work more closely with communities, schools, markets, traditional and religious authorities, women, young people and other local stakeholders to promote responsible waste management and sustain improvements in the local environment.

The discussions further highlighted the importance of expanding public sensitisation on decentralisation through regional and

district media, local radio, traditional and religious institutions, youth groups and Parliament. Greater public understanding of local governance arrangements is essential to strengthening citizen participation, improving accountability and enabling communities to engage more effectively with local authorities on development priorities and service delivery.

Translating policy commitments into measurable outcomes

The deliberations reaffirmed the need for a coordinated, adequately resourced and results-oriented approach to implementing the NDPS 2026–2030. It emphasised the importance of aligning national policy priorities with sector plans, budgetary allocations, clearly assigned institutional responsibilities and measurable performance indicators.

Effective implementation will require sustained collaboration among the IMCC Secretariat, MDAs, local government institutions and other stakeholders to translate agreed priorities into actionable programmes, resolve institutional and operational constraints, and monitor progress through established government planning and performance management systems.

The next phase of the reform agenda will therefore focus on strengthening cross-government coordination, advancing the financing arrangements required to sustain implementation, accelerating legislative and institutional reforms for service devolution, and building the capacity of local authorities to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Equally important will be the establishment of credible mechanisms for tracking implementation and assessing whether decentralisation reforms are producing the intended improvements in local governance and public service delivery.

The deliberations reinforced the broader objective of Ghana's decentralisation agenda: to build stronger, more responsive and accountable local government institutions capable of driving inclusive development and improving the everyday experiences of citizens.

Ultimately, the success of the NDPS 2026–2030 will be measured not only by the adoption of policies, enactment of legislation or transfer of functions, but by demonstrable improvements in the quality and accessibility of public services, the responsible use of public resources, meaningful citizen participation and the development opportunities available to communities across Ghana.











EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

Dr. Gameli Dominic Kewuribe Hoedoafia



Ghana's decentralisation journey has entered an important phase. After nearly forty years of implementation, our focus must now be on ensuring that decentralisation delivers tangible improvements in the lives of citizens and strengthens development at the local level.

The National Decentralisation Policy and Strategic Framework (NDPS) 2026–2030 provides a strong foundation for this next phase. It represents an important commitment to strengthening democratic decentralisation and creating a more coherent approach to local governance across the country. But policy approval is only the beginning. The real measure of success lies in effective implementation and the results it produces.

We must therefore move beyond measuring decentralisation by the number of functions transferred, institutions established or plans produced. Our attention must increasingly focus on the quality of public services delivered, the responsiveness of local institutions and the development outcomes experienced by citizens.

This requires a renewed commitment to democratic participation, accountability and effective local governance. District Assemblies must be empowered and adequately supported to respond to the priorities of their communities, while citizens must remain active participants in decisions that affect their lives and development.

The Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralisation remains committed to strengthening coordination and collaboration among national and local government institutions and all stakeholders in the decentralisation process. Government, local authorities, traditional leaders, development partners, civil society, academia, the private sector and citizens all have important roles to play in making decentralisation work better.

As we implement the NDPS 2026–2030, our guiding principle must remain clear:

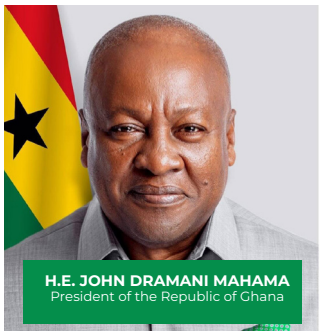
decentralisation must ultimately be judged by what citizens experience at the local level.

We must build a system of local governance that is democratic in practice, accountable in conduct, adequately empowered and resourced, responsive in service delivery and transformative in local development.

STRUCTURE

OF THE IMCCoD

The IMCCoD is the apex body for Decentralisation reforms and it is Chaired by the President or the Vice President. Its composition is as follows:







Hon. Haruna Iddrisu
Minister for Education



Hon. Mahama Ayariga
Minister for Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs



Hon. Dr. Cassiel Ato Baah Forson
Minister for Finance



Hon. Kwabena Mintah Akandoh
Minister for Health



Hon. Eric Opoku
Minister for Food and Agriculture



Hon. Dr. Agnes Naa Momo Lartey
Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection



Hon. Dr. Dominic Ayine Akuritinga
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice



Dr. Evans Aggrey-Darkoh
Head of Civil Service



Prof. Lord Mensah
Head of Local Government Service



Dr. Nii Moi Thompson
Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)

ADDRESSING ACCRA'S COMMUTER CHALLENGE USING THE CONTRA-FLOW

Traffic congestion remains one of the most persistent challenges confronting residents of Accra and commuters travelling into the capital from surrounding communities. Hours lost in traffic affect productivity, increase transportation costs and impose significant social and economic burdens on households and businesses. Addressing this challenge requires more than expanding road infrastructure; it demands a public transport system that moves people efficiently, reliably and safely.

Against this backdrop, the Government, through the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, has introduced a contra-flow arrangement to improve commuter movement during peak hours. Led by the Minister, Hon. Mahama Ayariga, the initiative seeks to give Aayalolo buses (a bus rapid transit system introduced in 2016) priority on selected congested corridors by making more effective use of existing road space. It represents a practical response to an everyday problem and an opportunity to strengthen the role of public transport in Accra's mobility system.

Commencing in September 2026, the arrangement covers selected corridors, including Adenta–Accra, Kasoa–Accra and Amasaman–Accra, during morning and evening peak periods. Early reports from the Adenta–Accra corridor have been encouraging. According to the Greater Accra Passenger Transport Executive (GAPTE), a journey that previously took approximately two and a half hours during peak periods was completed in about 23 minutes on the first morning of the initiative. GAPTE also reported that approximately 8,000 passengers travelled from Adenta towards Accra between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m.



These initial figures suggest that prioritising high-capacity public transport can substantially improve passenger movement. However, first-day results must be treated as preliminary evidence, not proof of sustained success. The real test will be whether the intervention consistently reduces journey times, attracts and retains passengers, improves service reliability and delivers these benefits safely over time.

The significance of the initiative extends beyond the immediate relief it may offer commuters.

Hon. Mahama Ayariga



Minister for Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs

It reflects a fundamental principle of urban transport planning: the objective should be to move people efficiently rather than simply maximise the movement of vehicles. A bus carrying dozens of passengers can use road space more efficiently than the same space occupied by individual vehicles. Giving buses priority during periods of peak demand is therefore a rational response to congestion, particularly where expanding road infrastructure is costly or constrained by limited urban space.

The intervention also brings renewed attention to Ghana's experience with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The concept was introduced to improve public transport through dedicated bus lanes, organised terminals, integrated routes and faster, more reliable services. However, the expected transformation has not been fully realised. Incomplete dedicated-lane infrastructure, financial and operational constraints, weak institutional coordination and inadequate integration of existing transport operators have limited the effectiveness of the original initiative.

This experience offers an important lesson: procuring buses alone does not establish an effective mass-transit system. BRT depends on a coordinated package of infrastructure, dependable operations, sustainable financing, effective traffic enforcement and clear institutional responsibility. Where buses compete with ordinary traffic for road space, their ability to deliver faster and more predictable journeys is undermined. The contra-flow arrangement addresses part of this problem, but it cannot independently resolve the wider structural weaknesses in Accra's public transport system.

International experience reinforces this point. Lagos, Nigeria, has demonstrated the potential of prioritising buses on congested urban corridors, while also highlighting the importance of lane enforcement, operational capacity and institutional support. Jakarta, Indonesia, illustrates the value of coordinating different public transport services and improving connections across the network. Dakar, Senegal, offers lessons on linking major bus corridors with feeder services and incorporating existing transport operators into a more structured system. Although these cities differ from Accra in their infrastructure and institutional arrangements, their experiences underscore a common principle: bus priority delivers lasting value when it forms part of a wider, integrated transport strategy.

For Accra, the immediate priority should be to consolidate the gains from the contra-flow pilot and establish a credible basis for its continuation or expansion. This requires a formal implementation framework with clearly assigned institutional responsibilities, approved operating procedures and measurable performance targets. GAPTE and the relevant transport, roads and security agencies must coordinate closely to ensure that the designated corridors operate as intended and that the intervention is supported by effective traffic management.

Safety must remain central to the operating model. Because contra-flow temporarily directs buses against the normal direction of traffic, each corridor requires a carefully assessed traffic-management plan. Appropriate signage, trained traffic personnel, clear junction controls, pedestrian protection and emergency procedures are essential. The arrangement should be adjusted wherever road geometry, traffic conditions or safety risks make its operation unsuitable. Public education must also ensure that motorists, pedestrians and other transport operators understand the rules governing the designated routes.

Sustaining the initiative will equally require predictable financing and disciplined bus operations. Fuel, vehicle maintenance, staffing, fleet renewal and other recurrent costs must be adequately funded. Service schedules should be dependable, vehicles maintained to appropriate standards, and passenger information made readily available. Clear performance expectations and accountability arrangements are necessary to ensure that public resources

translate into reliable services. Without these measures, initial improvements in journey times could prove temporary.

The Government should also establish a transparent monitoring and evaluation framework. Performance should be assessed against conditions before the intervention, using indicators such as passenger numbers, journey times, service reliability, road safety, operating costs and commuter satisfaction. Periodic reporting would help identify operational weaknesses, demonstrate whether the intervention is delivering value for money and guide decisions on extending the arrangement to other corridors. Expansion should be based on evidence of effectiveness, safety and financial viability rather than the enthusiasm generated by early results.

Beyond the pilot, the larger ambition should be to integrate the contra-flow arrangement into a coherent urban public transport network. This requires better coordination between Aayalolo and other bus services, convenient connections to feeder routes and constructive engagement with existing transport operators. Over time, where passenger demand and technical assessments justify the investment, Government should consider permanent bus-priority infrastructure and other elements of a more comprehensive BRT system. Such a phased approach would allow immediate operational improvements to complement longer-term infrastructure and institutional reforms.

If Aayalolo can consistently offer faster, safer and more predictable journeys, it may encourage more commuters to choose public transport over private vehicles. Greater use of high-capacity buses could improve the efficiency of existing roads, help moderate congestion and contribute to lower transport-related emissions. These benefits, however, will depend on service quality, adequate capacity, convenient connections and the ability to sustain operations financially.

Ultimately, the success of the contra-flow initiative should not be measured solely by the results recorded during its first days. It should be judged by whether commuters continue to experience meaningful improvements in their daily journeys, whether public transport becomes more dependable and whether the intervention delivers lasting value for public expenditure.

The initiative provides a promising starting point, but its long-term significance will depend on the Government's willingness to move from a temporary traffic-management measure to a sustained programme of public transport reform. Institutional accountability, sustainable financing, rigorous monitoring, safe operations and network integration must become integral to its implementation.

For Accra's commuters, the ultimate measure of responsive governance is not the announcement of an intervention, but the lasting improvement it makes to everyday life. Converting the early promise of contra-flow into a dependable public transport service would be a meaningful step towards a more productive, accessible and liveable capital.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

OF THE INTER-MINISTERIAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE



Mrs. Lydia Essuah
Member - MoE



Mr. Amin Abdul-Rahaman
Member - MLGCRA



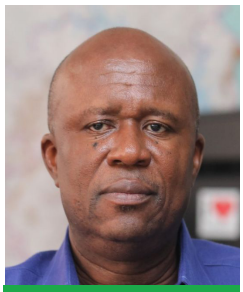
Dr. Patrick Nomo
Member - MoF



Prof. Kwamina Ahwoi
Chairman



Mr. Desmond Boateng
Member - MoH



Mr. Paul Siameh
Member - MoFA



Dr. Marian W. A. Kpakpah
Member - MGCSP



Miss Frederica Sala Illiasu
Member - AGD-MoJ



Mr. Sylvanus Adzornu
Member - OHCS



Mr Sampson Amoako Kwarteng
Member - OHLGS



Dr. Audrey Smock Amoah
Member - NDPC



Dr. Esther Ofei Aboagye
Technical Expert



Hon. Dr. Samuel Ofosu Ampofo
Technical Expert

The Technical Committee comprises the following members:

a) A Chairperson appointed by the Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee (IMCC);

b) The Chief Director, Ministry of Education;

c) The Chief Director, Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs;

d) The Chief Director, Ministry of Finance;

e) The Chief Director, Ministry of Health;

f) The Chief Director, Ministry of Food and Agriculture;

g) The Chief Director, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection;

h) The Director of Legislative Drafting, Attorney General's Department of the Ministry of Justice;

i) The Chief Director, Office of the Head of the Civil Service;

j) The Chief Director, Office of the Head of Local Government Service; and

k) The Director-General, National Development Planning Commission.

l) Where a Chairperson is appointed, the Chairperson is permitted to appoint other members to the committee.

VICE PRESIDENT LEADS NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON DECENTRALISATION AS ALL 16 REGIONS SHOWCASE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Ghana's decentralisation agenda took centre stage in Accra on 10–11 August 2026 as the Vice President of the Republic, H.E. Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, joined national and local governance stakeholders at the 2026 National Dialogue on Decentralisation and Responsive Governance. The event brought all 16 regions into a common national forum to showcase development initiatives and chart a renewed course for more responsive local governance.

Held at the Accra City Hotel as part of Ghana's commemoration of the African Union Decentralisation Day, the Dialogue was organised by the Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralisation (IMCCoD). It brought together government institutions, Regional Coordinating Councils, local government practitioners, traditional authorities, civil society organisations, academia, development partners, private-sector representatives and the media to assess progress and identify priorities for the next phase of decentralisation.

The Vice President's participation underscored the national importance of a governance reform whose success must ultimately be reflected in better public services, stronger local economies and greater citizen influence over decisions affecting their communities.





Bringing local development into the national conversation

A defining feature of the 2026 Dialogue was the introduction of regional exhibitions, providing a dedicated platform for all 16 regions, through their respective Regional Coordinating Councils, to showcase development initiatives within their jurisdictions.

For the first time, the Dialogue brought presentations from every region into a single national forum. The exhibitions gave participants an opportunity to appreciate the range of local development interventions underway, exchange experiences and consider how regional initiatives could inform wider policy and practice. Presentations by Regional Ministers complemented the exhibitions, highlighting development priorities, opportunities and persistent challenges in their respective regions.

The showcases also offered a broader perspective on Ghana's uneven development landscape. While initiatives across the regions demonstrated local efforts to address development needs, infrastructure deficits, capacity constraints and unmet service-delivery demands underscored the need for sustained investment and stronger institutional coordination.

Beyond celebrating achievements, the exhibitions created opportunities for regional learning and the exchange of practical approaches to local development. Their lasting value will depend on whether the experiences shared inform policy decisions, encourage replication of effective initiatives and strengthen collaboration among local authorities.

From policy commitments to measurable results

Beyond the exhibitions, the Dialogue examined the institutional and financial conditions required to make decentralisation more effective. Discussions covered political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation, local government financing, institutional capacity, citizen participation, digital accountability and local economic development.

A central concern was how to move from decentralised structures and policies to a system capable of delivering measurable improvements in citizens' lives. This requires more than assigning responsibilities to local authorities. It demands the corresponding transfer of functions, adequate and predictable financing, appropriately skilled personnel, effective coordination and clear accountability for results.

The discussions highlighted the importance of strengthening local governments' capacity to mobilise their own-source revenue, manage public resources efficiently and stimulate local economic activity. Stronger revenue systems and a more responsive grant architecture would enable Assemblies to plan with greater certainty and sustain priority services and development investments.

Completing administrative, political and fiscal devolution, strengthening the professionalism of the Local Government Service, and adequately resourcing Regional Coordinating Councils and sub-district structures were also identified as priorities. These reforms are interconnected: local authorities cannot deliver effectively when their responsibilities exceed their resources, institutional mandates overlap or community-level structures lack the capacity to perform their functions.

Addressing these constraints is fundamental to translating decentralisation into tangible development outcomes.

Putting citizens at the centre of local governance

Citizen participation emerged as a central concern of the Dialogue. Effective decentralisation must create meaningful opportunities for residents to influence decisions about local priorities, public expenditure, infrastructure projects and service delivery.

The Communiqué calls for stronger mechanisms through which citizens can participate in planning, budgeting, project selection, implementation and monitoring. It also stresses timely access to public information so that communities can understand government decisions, assess performance and hold public institutions accountable.

These measures can help close the distance between local authorities and the people they serve. When citizens can influence development priorities and scrutinise public spending, local governance becomes better positioned to respond to community needs and build public confidence.

The Dialogue also recognised the media as a strategic partner in this process. Sustained engagement with media organisations, community radio stations and digital platforms can make decentralisation policies, budgets, projects and performance information more accessible. Effective communication enables citizens to understand what local authorities intend to achieve, what has been accomplished and where further action is required.

Digital accountability and public communication can reinforce one another, strengthening the flow of information between local institutions and communities.

From dialogue to delivery

The 2026 National Dialogue on Decentralisation and Responsive Governance reinforced a fundamental principle: the value of decentralisation lies in what it enables government to achieve for citizens.

The regional exhibitions brought local development experience into the national conversation, while the policy discussions and Communiqué identified the institutional, financial and accountability reforms needed to strengthen local governance. The Dialogue thus connected the realities of development across Ghana with a practical agenda for advancing decentralisation.

The immediate task is to turn the 12 priorities into action. This will require sustained engagement among the relevant institutions, clear implementation responsibilities, adequate resources and systematic monitoring of progress.

Ultimately, Ghana needs local governments that are democratically responsive, administratively capable, adequately resourced and accountable to the people they serve. Achieving this requires sustained political commitment, effective inter-institutional coordination and active citizen participation.

By bringing national leadership, regional development experience and local governance reform priorities into one forum, the 2026 Dialogue strengthened the platform for advancing that ambition. Its lasting significance will be measured by whether the commitments made in Accra translate into stronger local institutions, more effective public services and tangible improvements in the lives of citizens across Ghana.

A 12-point agenda for the next phase of decentralisation

The two-day Dialogue concluded with a Communiqué outlining 12 priority areas for reform and action, providing a framework for moving the discussions into implementation.

The priorities include translating decentralisation policy into measurable action; building national consensus on the election of District Chief Executives; completing administrative, political and fiscal devolution; strengthening local own-source revenue mobilisation; reforming the grant architecture; and adequately resourcing

Regional Coordinating Councils and sub-district structures.

The Communiqué also emphasises strengthening the professionalism of the Local Government Service, expanding digital accountability, positioning local governments as drivers of local economic development, deepening citizen participation, enhancing strategic media engagement and building the capacity of political actors on decentralisation and local governance reforms.

Together, these priorities address the foundations of an effective decentralised system: political legitimacy, administrative competence, fiscal empowerment, institutional coordination and public accountability.

Their significance lies in establishing a common direction for reform. Realising that ambition will require the relevant institutions to translate the recommendations into clearly assigned responsibilities, implementation timelines, adequate financing and mechanisms for tracking progress.



OPERATIONALISING THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING: MMDAS TO LEAD HOUSING DELIVERY



As Ghana continues to urbanise, the demand for adequate, affordable and well-planned housing is placing increasing pressure on city authorities. Rising housing needs, the expansion of informal settlements, inadequate housing infrastructure and weaknesses in development control underscore the importance of strengthening local government institutions to respond more effectively to the housing conditions of their communities.

Yet, despite the statutory recognition of housing as a decentralised function, the Department of Housing has not been fully operationalised across the local government system. This presents an important institutional gap between Ghana's decentralisation policy objectives and the capacity of MMDAs to address housing needs within their jurisdictions.

The Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), provides the legal foundation for addressing this gap. Section 78(3) requires District Assemblies to establish the departments specified in the Fourth Schedule, which includes the Department of Housing, replacing the former Department of Rural Housing. The operationalisation of this department is therefore an important step towards giving practical effect to the decentralisation of housing functions and strengthening the capacity of local government to support national housing objectives.

Against this background, the Secretariat of the Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralisation (IMCCoD) engaged the

Ministry of Works and Housing to deliberate on the institutional, technical and policy arrangements required to operationalise the Department of Housing at the subnational level. The engagement sought to advance a common understanding of the department's role, clarify the institutional arrangements for its establishment and identify practical measures for integrating housing functions into the local government system.

The central objective is to move housing administration closer to the communities it serves, enabling local governments to better understand housing needs, coordinate interventions and translate national housing policies into practical responses to local conditions.

A functional Department of Housing would provide MMDAs with dedicated capacity to assess local housing conditions and deficits, maintain relevant information, support national housing policies, and coordinate rural, affordable and other housing initiatives. It could also strengthen collaboration among institutions responsible for housing, land use planning, building regulation, infrastructure provision and environmental management.

This capacity is essential because housing challenges differ across localities. Rapidly urbanising municipalities may face rising demand, overcrowding, informal settlements and inadequate infrastructure, while rural districts may contend with poor housing conditions, limited access to affordable building materials and inadequate technical support. A dedicated department would enable MMDAs to understand these differences and support locally responsive interventions.

Stronger local housing planning and coordination could also support orderly settlement development, identify underserved communities, integrate housing with basic infrastructure and services, and improve evidence for investment decisions. It could further strengthen development control, compliance with applicable building standards and coordination of interventions to improve housing conditions.

For residents, the ultimate value lies in the potential for more responsive local institutions. Better identification of housing needs, more coordinated programme implementation and clearer institutional responsibilities can help reduce administrative delays, improve access to relevant housing support and promote safer, more adequate and affordable living environments. Over time, these improvements can contribute to more inclusive communities, stronger social stability and better living conditions, particularly for low-income households and other groups facing housing disadvantages.

Establishing the department on an organisational chart will not, on its own, deliver these outcomes. Effective operationalisation requires a clearly defined mandate, appropriate staffing and technical expertise, adequate resources, and unambiguous reporting relationships. It also requires clarity on the division of responsibilities between MMDAs and the Ministry of Works and Housing, together with coordination involving regional and other national institutions engaged in housing delivery.

Act 936 provides a basis for these arrangements. It makes Heads of Departments within District Assemblies accountable for the effective performance of their functions, implementation of Assembly decisions and reporting on implementation. It also provides for reporting through the District Chief Executive and District Co-ordinating Director, authorises the Head of the Local Government Service to issue administrative instructions on reporting relationships, and requires departments to have the personnel necessary to perform their functions effectively.

Accordingly, the proposed Department of Housing must be aligned with the administrative and professional structures of the Local Government Service so that it operates as an integral part of the Assembly rather than as a parallel structure. Clear responsibilities, suitable personnel and effective performance management will be critical.

The engagement also recognised the need for stronger coordination between housing and works functions. Housing delivery relies on infrastructure development, engineering services, building supervision and basic amenities; fragmented responsibilities or unclear technical oversight can hinder implementation. Stronger working relationships among District Works Departments, Regional Public Works Departments and the National Public Works Department would support technical consistency and effective delivery.

Act 936 also provides for collaboration between District Assembly departments and non-decentralised departments, state-owned enterprises and public corporations operating within the district. This enables the Department of Housing to align programmes, minimise duplication, use available expertise and support cost-effective implementation, particularly where housing intersects with land administration, spatial planning, roads, water and sanitation, environmental management and national housing initiatives.

The operationalisation agenda is also consistent with the National Decentralisation Policy and Strategic Framework (NDPS) 2026–2030, which prioritises the full operationalisation of decentralised departments under administrative decentralisation. The Framework calls for stronger coordination between MMDAs and deconcentrated departments of Ministries, Departments and Agencies, alongside clearer departmental structures, improved staffing arrangements and measures to address dual reporting lines. Operationalising the Department of Housing would therefore contribute to the broader reform objective of ensuring that decentralised functions are supported by the institutions, personnel and administrative arrangements required for effective delivery.

To achieve the intended results, these discussions must produce an actionable implementation pathway that establishes the department's mandate and institutional relationships; determines staffing, technical support and resource requirements; and clarifies reporting and accountability. A phased approach, supported by guidance, capacity development and performance monitoring, could help MMDAs progressively build the required capability.

For the IMCCoD Secretariat, the engagement advances its wider mandate to strengthen intersectoral coordination and Ghana's decentralisation reforms by bringing relevant institutions together to ensure that devolved housing functions are matched by effective local capacity.

Operationalising the Department of Housing is therefore more than establishing another administrative unit. It is an investment in local government's ability to understand housing conditions, coordinate public interventions and connect national policy with district-level evidence, planning and implementation. A functional department can thereby support more responsive housing governance, better-coordinated development and more inclusive communities.

The intended outcome is a local government system in which housing is not only recognised in law as a decentralised responsibility, but is supported by institutions capable of translating that responsibility into tangible benefits for communities across Ghana.



VICE PRESIDENT CHAMPIONS SISTER CITIES PARTNERSHIPS FOR MMDAS



Ghana renewed its commitment to international cooperation through local governance, as Vice President Prof. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang delivered the keynote address at Sister Cities International's (SCI) 70th Anniversary Homecoming in Washington, D.C., United States, from 22 to 25 July 2026.

Held under the theme, "Forging Stronger Partnerships in Africa for Sustainable Economic Development through Sister Cities Global Partnership Agenda," the event brought together city leaders, diplomats and representatives of local authorities to explore how international partnerships can promote sustainable development.

The Vice President's participation highlighted Ghana's commitment to leveraging city diplomacy to strengthen local governance, expand economic opportunities and advance the implementation of the National Decentralisation Policy and Strategic Framework (NDPS) 2026–2030.

In her keynote address, she underscored the importance of partnerships between the Ghana's Metropolitan, Municipal, District Assemblies and their international counterparts. She highlighted Ghana's decentralisation efforts, including the direct allocation of resources to the District Assemblies Common Fund.

She also emphasised the strategic importance of hosting the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in Accra, noting the opportunities the continental trade initiative presents for economic cooperation and market access.

Building on Ghana's international partnerships

Sister Cities International, since its establishment in 1956, promotes citizen diplomacy through cultural, educational, informational and trade exchanges. Over seven decades, the organisation has built a global network connecting communities



and local authorities to share knowledge, develop relationships and pursue common development objectives.

Ghana has developed numerous sister-city relationships with other states in the United States, creating opportunities for cooperation in governance, agriculture, technology, investment promotion and local economic development.

Notable among these is the partnership between the Arkansas Municipal League and the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG), formalised through a memorandum of understanding in 2015. The agreement sought to facilitate exchanges between Ghanaian municipalities and the State of Arkansas, focusing on governance, diplomacy, economic development and knowledge transfer.

The collaboration also explored technological solutions to support Ghanaian assemblies in developing smart-city districts, including proposed internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure.

In 2018, further engagements involving Ghanaian and Arkansas representatives resulted in agreements to establish a sister-state relationship and regional economic development partnership, alongside agricultural cooperation between the Arkansas State Agriculture Department and Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

These initiatives demonstrate how local government partnerships can extend beyond cultural exchanges to support agricultural development, technology transfer, investment and commercial cooperation.

Advancing Ghana's decentralisation agenda

The outcomes and opportunities associated with sister-city partnerships are particularly relevant to the NDPS 2026–2030, which seeks to strengthen local governance institutions and improve service delivery across the country.

Through structured international cooperation, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) can access technical expertise, exchange best practices, explore investment opportunities and develop innovative responses to local development challenges.

Such partnerships can support infrastructure development, improve institutional capacity, promote local enterprises and strengthen the ability of assemblies to deliver services to their communities.

The Vice President's engagement in Washington, D.C., therefore provided an important platform for positioning Ghana's decentralisation reforms within a broader international development framework.

However, the long-term value of these relationships will depend on translating diplomatic connections into practical projects that address local priorities. This requires clear implementation plans, effective coordination and measurable development outcomes.

The Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralisation (IMCCoD), working with relevant ministries and local government institutions, can help strengthen coordination and integrate sister-city arrangements into the implementation of the national decentralisation framework.

MMDCEs also have an important role in identifying suitable international partners whose expertise and resources align with the development needs of their respective assemblies.

Turning partnerships into tangible results

The 70th Anniversary Homecoming also featured discussions among mayors on international cooperation, followed by a sports diplomacy session exploring the role of sport in strengthening relationships and community development.

For Ghana, the engagements offered opportunities to strengthen existing relationships and explore new avenues for collaboration.

As implementation of the NDPS 2026–2030 progresses, sister-city partnerships can serve as an additional mechanism for mobilising resources, sharing knowledge and connecting local communities to international opportunities.

The ultimate measure of success will be the extent to which these partnerships improve local governance, create economic opportunities, strengthen public services and deliver tangible benefits to citizens.

Ghana's participation in the anniversary programme reaffirms the importance of city diplomacy as a development tool and highlights the potential of international cooperation to bring decentralisation closer to the people.









BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENT COMMUNITIES THROUGH LOCAL INVESTMENT IN GHANA

Background

For farmers in Ghana, a single delayed rainy season can trigger a devastating chain reaction: ruined harvests, lost incomes, and deepening food insecurity. As climate change makes weather patterns increasingly erratic,
rural communities face growing pressure to protect both their crops and their families.

This vulnerability threatens the very backbone of Ghana's economy, where agriculture employs nearly 40 percent of the workforce. Yet, instead of steady growth, millions of farmers now confront a cycle of prolonged droughts, sudden flooding, and severe post-harvest losses.

Adapting to this new reality requires urgent investment in irrigation, reliable storage, and processing infrastructure. However, local governments, despite being closest to these risks, often lack the financial and technical resources needed to act at the scale required.

Development finance solution

This is exactly where the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) plays a catalytic role. Through the Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility (LoCAL), with financial support from Norway, UNCDF channels climate finance through national systems to district authorities. The approach links funding to performance while supporting locally identified climate adaptation priorities.

The mechanism deploys Performance-Based Climate Resilience Grants (PBCRGs) and technical support, allowing districts to fund locally identified climate priorities. The UNCDF-LoCAL approach uses and strengthens national fiscal transfer systems by derisking public investment in adaptation that is led by local government authorities.

By combining performance-based grants with technical assistance, the mechanism helps de-risk local climate adaptation investments. This gives local governments the resources and support needed to invest
in projects that address climate risks while advancing local development priorities.

In Ghana, this targeted capital has already come to life through solar-powered irrigation, modern storage facilities, and cassava processing hubs. By embedding this model within existing government structures, districts are strengthening their ability to manage climate risks and plan for a more resilient future.

LoCAL has delivered results for communities in Ghana since 2019. In 2022, Norway began contributing to these activities to fund over 30 climate resilient investments across six districts, prioritising climate-smart agriculture and strengthening circular economy approaches.

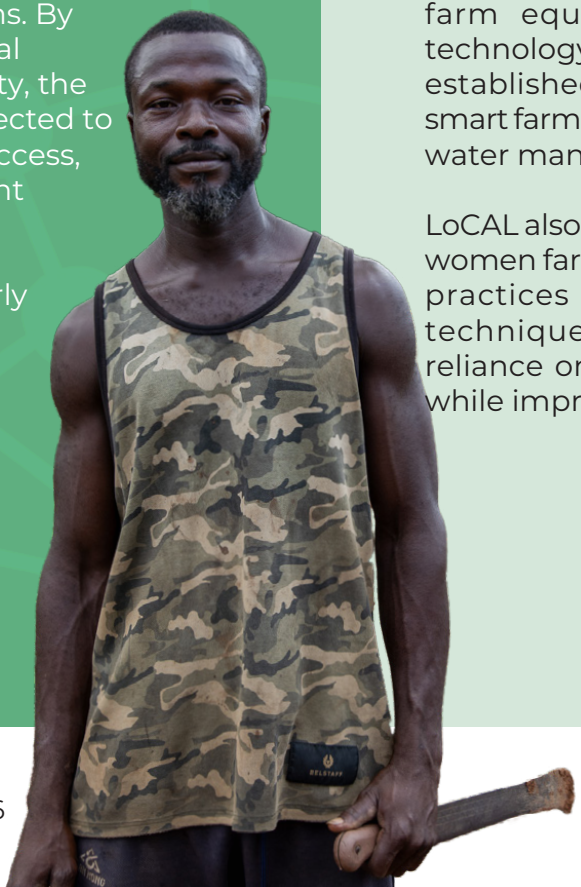


CASSAVA PROCESSING IN FANTEAKWA NORTH DISTRICT

In Nteso No. 1, in Ghana's Eastern Region, cassava is the main livelihood crop. However, farmers face short post harvest windows and annual losses of up to 22 per cent, limiting incomes and reducing the value they can derive from their harvests.

To address this challenge, LoCAL supported the construction of a modern cassava processing plant and processing shed, complemented by a solar-powered borehole and a 4,000-litre overhead water tank to provide a reliable supply of water for processing activities.

The facility enables more efficient and hygienic production of cassava flour, known locally asgari, reducing losses and improving product quality. It also promotes circular economy practices by converting cassava peels into compost and reusing wastewater as a natural weedicide on farms. By strengthening local processing capacity, the investment is expected to improve market access, create employment opportunities an increase income security, particularly for women involved in the cassava value chain.



ENHANCED VEGETABLE PRODUCTION IN ADA EAST

Erratic rainfall and seasonal droughts continue to threaten vegetable production in Ada East, a district in the Greater Accra Region that is home to nearly 7,000 smallholder farmers.

To strengthen agricultural resilience, LoCAL supported the rehabilitation of ventilated polyhouses and micro irrigation systems in Dzitrokwe, enabling the production of high-quality tomato, pepper and cucumber seedlings while promoting the reuse of plastic waste in nursery operations.

Additional investments supported vegetable production across the district. In Angorsikope, a submersible pump was installed as part of a solar-powered mini irrigation system, restoring year-round vegetable cultivation for 67 farmers.

In Asigbekope, a demonstration farm equipped with shade-net technology and drip irrigation was established to introduce climate-smart farming practices and improve water management.

LoCAL also supported training for 115 women farmers in circular economy practices and organic farming techniques, helping to reduce reliance on costly chemical inputs while improving productivity.

RECYCLING AND PRODUCE STORAGE FACILITIES IN EFFUTU

In the Nsuekyi community of Effutu District in Ghana's Central Region, post-harvest losses were widespread due to a lack of storage facilities. To address this challenge, LoCAL financed the construction of a storage and recycling hub to protect maize, rice, cassava and groundnuts from spoilage, helping stabilise household incomes and improve food security.

Alongside the infrastructure investment, awareness-raising campaigns in five communities promoted climate-smart agriculture and circular economy practices Vocational training for women and youth also helped diversify income-generating activities beyond farming, including through soap-making and other small-scale enterprises.

Together, these interventions are strengthening community resilience, improve food security and reduce dependence on increasingly unpredictable rainfall.

OUTCOME

Across the Fanteakwa North, Ada East and Effutu districts, residents say LoCAL investments have helped reduce post-harvest losses for cassava, vegetables and grains while strengthening climate-resilient infrastructure, including processing facilities, irrigation systems, water infrastructure, polyhouses and storage facilities.

UNCDF is working with women in the communities to increase their participation in agricultural value chains through processing activities, vegetable production and skills development initiatives. At the same time, circular economy practices such as composting, wastewater reuse and plastic recycling, together with alternative livelihood opportunities, have been integrated into local agricultural systems.

Beyond the direct benefits to communities, LoCAL grants and technical assistance have strengthened the capacity of local governments to plan, finance and implement climate adaptation investments.

Since 2019, funding from the Governments of Norway and Denmark, the European Union and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, channelled through LoCAL, has contributed to the implementation of more than 70 climate resilient infrastructure projects across 13 districts in Ghana.



NDPC AND YOUTH MINISTRY COLLABORATES TO MAINSTREAM YOUTH IN GHANA'S DEVELOPMENT PLANNING



Ghana's youthful population presents both a significant development opportunity and a responsibility for national planners to ensure that young people have a meaningful place in the country's development process. The National Decentralisation Policy and Strategic Framework (NDPS) 2026–2030 recognises investments in young people as an opportunity to generate demographic dividends, while calling for their meaningful participation in local democracies, economies and development.

The Framework further provides for the integration of youth development into District

Medium-Term Development Plans (DMTDPs), while supporting youth entrepreneurship and innovation hubs in collaboration with the National Youth Authority. It also calls for youth representation to be mainstreamed into public participation processes.

Against this policy direction, the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) has engaged the Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment to strengthen collaboration and ensure that the needs, aspirations and potential of young people are reflected in Ghana's Consolidated National Development Plan.

The engagement formed part of the NDPC's ongoing stakeholder consultations on the development of the plan, with discussions focusing on youth development, skills, employment, values, institutional coordination and resource optimisation.

The Director-General of the NDPC, Dr Audrey Smock Amoah, underscored the importance of broad-based stakeholder engagement in shaping a development plan that reflects the realities and aspirations of Ghanaians while providing continuity beyond electoral cycles. "We should plan beyond electoral cycles to our generations," she emphasised, highlighting the need for long-term thinking in national development.

Dr Amoah noted the significant proportion of Ghana's population made up by young people and stressed that their needs, aspirations and potential must remain central to national planning.

She also highlighted the importance of values, discipline, law and order, road safety, maintenance culture, integrity and professionalism in shaping the contribution of young people to national development.

To strengthen institutional collaboration, she proposed the establishment of a Joint Technical Working Group between the NDPC and the Ministry to provide technical input into the Consolidated National Development Plan and improve coordination.

The Minister for Youth Development and Empowerment, Hon. George Opare Addo, stressed the need to move beyond viewing young people simply as beneficiaries of development programmes and recognise them as active participants in the development process.

"The youth are not just the future; we have already said that they are the now," he stated. He noted that young people constitute about 40 per cent of the population and called for youth development to be mainstreamed across national policy areas rather than treated as an additional component.

Hon. Opare Addo outlined the Ministry's five strategic areas as health and well-being; skills training and education; economic empowerment; civic participation and community engagement; and personal development and growth.

He also called for stronger institutional coordination to reduce duplication, optimise resources and ensure that programmes targeting young people complement one another.

The Chief Director of the Ministry, Mrs Emma Ofori Agyemang, welcomed the proposed Joint Technical Working Group, noting that values cut across many of the issues raised during the engagement. "The crux of what you have said is the issue of values," she observed. She drew attention to concerns surrounding youth substance abuse, employability, volunteerism and work attitudes, stressing the need for stronger coordination and evidence-based responses to emerging challenges affecting young people.

The engagement also resonates with the decentralisation framework's emphasis on bringing development planning closer to communities. The NDPSF calls for participatory local planning and specifically provides for the integration of LED, youth development and climate adaptation into District Medium-Term Development Plans. It also provides for support to youth entrepreneurship and innovation hubs through collaboration with the National Youth Authority.

This approach creates a connection between national development priorities and the realities of young people at the local level, where skills, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, civic participation and access to services directly affect their ability to contribute to development.

The NDPC-Ministry engagement therefore provides an opportunity to strengthen the policy and institutional linkages required to ensure that youth development is reflected across Ghana's development planning architecture.

As Ghana looks towards its next phase of national development, the discussions underscore the importance of ensuring that young people are meaningfully considered in the planning, implementation and coordination of policies that shape the country's development.





DISTRICT HOUSING PROGRAMME:

BRINGING AFFORDABLE HOMES CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES

Owning a decent and affordable home remains a challenge due to rising construction costs, limited access to housing finance and the concentration of housing opportunities in major urban centres. The Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Works, Housing and Water Resources, is prioritising a decentralised approach to housing delivery that brings affordable homes closer to communities across the country.

The Ministry, whose mandate includes the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes for the provision of affordable housing, is leveraging innovative construction methods, technical expertise and local materials to expand access to decent housing. A key initiative supporting this objective is the District Housing Programme (DHP).

A DECENTRALISED APPROACH TO HOUSING

The DHP is designed to extend housing development beyond major cities to rural and peri-urban communities where the demand for decent accommodation remains significant. The programme adopts a cluster housing model, with between 20 and 41 housing units planned per district, comprising one-, two- and three-bedroom homes.

The pilot phase is focusing on 20 two-bedroom units per district, supported by essential infrastructure including access roads and utility services. The homes are designed to meet modern standards, incorporating water supply, sanitation, solar energy and internet connectivity.

A notable feature of the programme is the use of Compressed Earth Bricks (CEBs) and other locally sourced materials. This approach promotes environmentally sustainable construction while creating opportunities for local producers and supporting employment within beneficiary communities.

Eight Districts in the Pilot Phase

The pilot programme is being implemented across eight locations:

- South Dayi – Volta Region
- Asuogyaman and Akyemansa – Eastern Region
- Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam – Central Region
- Atwima Kwanwoma – Ashanti Region
- Dormaa West – Bono Region
- Bole – Savannah Region
- Tamale Metropolitan Area – Northern Region

The sites were selected based on factors including land availability, access to infrastructure and support from local stakeholders.

Implementation involves the National Homeownership Fund, Architectural and Engineering Services Limited, the Department of Rural Housing, the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), utility providers and other relevant institutions. Their collaboration covers project administration, technical support, land acquisition, infrastructure and regulatory processes.

CONSTRUCTION GATHERING MOMENTUM

Progress varies across the eight pilot sites. South Dayi leads at 40 per cent, progressing

from substructure to superstructure, followed by Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam at 35 per cent. Akyemansa and Dormaa West are each at approximately 16 per cent.

Tamale is at 12.5 per cent, with site preparation complete and foundation works underway. Bole is at 10 per cent, with contractors mobilised and foundation works ongoing.

At Asuogyaman, land-related challenges prompted three site changes and delayed mobilisation, but site clearance is now partially complete. Work at Atwima Kwanwoma has also advanced after initial site-access challenges were resolved.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The District Housing Programme is intended to deliver more than houses. By promoting local building materials and environmentally sustainable construction, the initiative is expected to generate employment, stimulate local economic activity and improve living conditions in beneficiary communities.

Following the pilot phase, the programme is expected to expand to include one- and three-bedroom units, providing a wider range of housing options for public sector workers, organised labour, diaspora communities and the general public.



Kpeve – South Dayi

ADDRESSING IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The programme has encountered challenges relating to access to suitable land, delays in land documentation and ownership transfers, changes in project sites and difficult terrain, particularly at the Asuogyaman site.

These challenges have the potential to affect implementation timelines and project costs. However, continued coordination among contractors, consultants, MMDAs and other stakeholders is helping to address site-specific constraints and keep the programme broadly on course.

A STEP TOWARDS CLOSING THE HOUSING GAP

The District Housing Programme represents an important step towards making decent and affordable housing more accessible beyond Ghana's major urban centres. By combining decentralised housing delivery, sustainable construction technologies, local materials and strong institutional collaboration, the programme offers a practical pathway towards building not only homes, but more inclusive and sustainable communities across Ghana.



PMI-WILL CLOSES WITH CALL TO SUSTAIN GAINS IN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE



Sustainable local governance is not achieved only through the implementation of projects, but through the ability of institutions and communities to retain, adapt and build on the knowledge, systems and partnerships such interventions create. This principle was at the centre of reflections as the Partnership for Municipal Innovation – Women in Local Leadership (PMI-WILL) Project concluded its implementation in Ghana.

The project's closure has sparked a call for its gains in women's leadership, institutional strengthening, inclusive governance and community-level development to be integrated into the regular work of local government institutions, ensuring that the impact of the initiative continues beyond its formal implementation period.

The call was made at the PMI-WILL Closing Knowledge Exchange Event held at the Fiesta Royale Hotel in Dzorwulu, Accra, bringing together the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), participating Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), the NALAG Women's Caucus, Canadian municipal partners and other stakeholders.

Rather than treating the conclusion of the project as an endpoint, participants used the gathering to examine the changes it had contributed to, the lessons generated and, importantly, how these gains could be sustained and replicated within Ghana's local governance system.



President of NALAG, Hon. Alfred Asiedu Adjei, urged stakeholders to view the closing event as a learning opportunity and stressed that the end of the project should not mean the end of the development work generated through the partnership.

"The close of the project should not be interpreted as the end of the development work generated through the partnership," he said, calling for successful approaches and knowledge generated through PMI-WILL to be retained within NALAG and participating assemblies.

He further emphasised that while projects may have administrative end dates, their development outcomes should continue to influence institutions and communities.

NALAG General Secretary, Mr. Sheriff Amarh, said the gathering was intended not simply to celebrate achievements but to examine the evidence of change generated through PMI-WILL, identify what worked and what did not, and determine how the gains could be sustained.

He noted that the knowledge, partnerships and institutional systems developed through the initiative should remain useful to NALAG, participating assemblies and communities, with greater attention given to institutionalisation, replication and continued learning.

At the institutional level, PMI-WILL contributed to efforts to strengthen gender-responsive practices within local governance. Project Director at FCM, Mary Heather White, described the initiative as a capacity-building partnership involving NALAG, MMDAs, the Office of the Head of the Local Government Service, Global Affairs Canada and Canadian municipal partners.

She highlighted efforts to strengthen internal policies, promote gender equality and address workplace concerns, including sexual exploitation and abuse. She said the project had built not only technical capacity but also relationships and partnerships capable of supporting future collaboration and continuous learning.

The importance of meaningful participation of women in local governance was also underscored by the representative of the Canadian High Commission, Francoise Nduwimana.

She stressed that progress in women's participation should not be measured solely by numerical representation, noting that the objective must also be to ensure that women's voices are heard in decision-making.

The project's impact was reflected in experiences shared by participants, including Madam Esther Abaching, whose involvement with PMI-WILL contributed to her professional and leadership development. Her experience demonstrated how investment in capacity building, advocacy and leadership can continue to influence individuals and institutions beyond the lifespan of a particular intervention.

The project also illustrated how inclusive local governance can translate into practical improvements in communities.

At the Kwahu West Municipal Assembly, an intervention addressing barriers affecting children and women resulted in the construction of additional classroom infrastructure in a community where

enrolment, particularly at kindergarten level, had been low. The location of the school had made it difficult for mothers to leave young children while pursuing economic activities.

The intervention therefore extended beyond the provision of physical infrastructure. It improved access to education while supporting mothers' participation in economic activities and contributing to the wellbeing of vulnerable households.

Another significant area of impact was the response to sexual harassment within the local government system. A PMI-WILL-supported study conducted across 13 MMDAs in 2022 identified sexual harassment as a significant concern. Its findings subsequently informed advocacy for a broader study covering the Local Government Service.

The wider study, conducted in 2023, identified barriers to reporting, including fear of victimisation, job insecurity and possible transfers. The process contributed to the development of a sexual harassment policy and communication strategy, demonstrating how evidence generated from local-level concerns can contribute to wider institutional responses.

With the project now concluded, sustainability has emerged as the defining question.

During a participatory session led by Madam Suzan Yemidi, Consultant at Radix Consult, participants examined whether inclusive governance practices would continue beyond PMI-WILL, the extent to which project approaches had been institutionalised and what resources would be required to sustain them.

Participants stressed the importance of integrating successful practices into regular institutional planning and budgeting rather than allowing them to remain identified solely as PMI-WILL activities.

Mr. Amarh identified the mainstreaming of PMI-WILL-inspired practices into NALAG and MMDA annual work plans and budgets as one measure for preserving the gains. He also called for the continuation of the NALAG Women's Caucus and regional women's platforms, gender-responsive planning, staff capacity development and the continued use of strategies, manuals and guides developed under the project.

"NALAG will continue telling the PMI-WILL story to development partners and other potential supporters so that the gains achieved can be sustained and expanded," he said.

The Ghana-Canada partnership also featured prominently in the reflections, with representatives of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Town of Collingwood and the Regional Municipality of Halton highlighting the value of peer learning and municipal cooperation.

The exchange included a visit by 14 Ghanaian delegates to Canada in February 2026, where they observed municipal programmes covering areas including fire and policing services, climate action, community initiatives, domestic violence and the protection of women. The engagement also provided opportunities for officials from both countries to learn from one another.











BRINGING PORTABLE WATER CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES

Access to safe and reliable water is essential to healthy communities, productive livelihoods and sustainable local development. Through the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), targeted investments are being made to rehabilitate, expand and modernise water systems in underserved communities, using sustainable technologies such as solar-powered pumping, water treatment facilities and smart metering.

The **Anyako-Seva, Adum Banso and Wassa Dunkwa water systems** demonstrate this commitment, delivering or expanding access to potable water for thousands of residents while improving public health, reducing the burden of water collection and supporting socio-economic development.



1. ANYAKO-SEVA WATER SYSTEM

Anyako-Seva is a fishing and trading community located in the Keta Municipal District of the Volta Region. The communities play an important role in the local economy through fishing and other small-scale commercial activities. Despite their economic potential, residents had endured serious challenges in accessing potable water for nearly two decades due to the deterioration of the existing water supply system.

In response, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) commenced the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Anyako Water System in October 2025 at a total cost of GHS 9.96 million. The project, which was commissioned March 2026, has restored reliable water supply to more than 6,500 people in Anyako, Seva, and the surrounding communities.

The scope of works included:

- Mechanization of one borehole with a photovoltaic submersible pump and solar farm
- Construction of 3.6 km transmission pipeline
- Construction of 12.6 km distribution pipeline
- Installation of 15 standpipes fitted with smart-tap technology
- Rehabilitation of 60m^3 and 100m^3 elevated steel tanks on reinforced concrete platforms

The Anyako Water System project is expected to improve access to clean and safe water, enhance sanitation and public health, and contribute to the socio-economic development of the beneficiary communities.






PLAN VIEW



2. ADUM BANSO WATER SYSTEM IN WESTERN REGION

Adum Banso is a community located in the Mpohor Fiase District of the Western Region of Ghana. The community has over the years faced significant challenges with access to reliable and safe water supply, which has adversely affected domestic activities and socio-economic development.

In response to these challenges, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), with funding support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, commenced a project in July 2024 to rehabilitate and expand the Adum Banso Water Supply System.

The intervention became necessary as the existing water system was performing below optimal levels, plagued by a myriad of challenges including poor water quality, frequent pump breakdowns, low borehole yield, and a limited distribution network that could not adequately meet the needs of the growing population.

The project is designed to serve a population of 5,543 people, significantly improving access to potable water within the community. Currently, the project is approximately 90% complete.

The scope of works includes:

- Drilling and mechanization of one (1) borehole fitted with a photovoltaic submersible pump complete with a solar farm
- Laying of approximately 17 km of transmission pipelines
- Installation of about 8.9 km of distribution pipelines
- Installation of a packaged water treatment plant
- Construction of a 100m^3 Reinforced Concrete High-Level Tank
- Construction of ten (10) standpipes fitted with smart water meter dispensers
- Rehabilitation of an existing borehole
- Rehabilitation of a 100m^3 ground steel tank
- Rehabilitation of an Aqualite water treatment plant

This comprehensive intervention integrates modern water supply technologies, including solar-powered systems and smart metering, to ensure sustainability, improved efficiency, and enhanced service delivery.

Upon completion, the project is expected to provide clean, safe, and reliable water to the people of Adum Banso, thereby improving public health, reducing the burden of water collection, and supporting economic activities within the community. Ultimately, it will bring significant relief and contribute to improved living conditions and long-term development.





3. WASSA DUNKWA WATER SYSTEM IN WESTERN REGION

For many years, Wassa Dunkwa experienced challenges with access to reliable and safe water supply. The absence of a dependable water system placed considerable strain on households and hindered socio-economic activities within the community.

In response to this situation, the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), with funding support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, undertook a comprehensive intervention to develop a sustainable water supply system for Wassa Dunkwa. The system is designed to serve a population of 12,386 people, significantly improving access to potable water in the area.

The scope of works included:

- Drilling and mechanization of five (5) boreholes, each fitted with photovoltaic submersible pumps complete with solar farms
- Installation of two (2) packaged water treatment plants
- Construction of a 200m^3 RC High-Level Tank
- Laying of approximately 900m of transmission pipelines
- Installation of about 14 km of distribution pipelines
- Construction of seven (7) standpipes fitted with smart water meter dispensers Construction and furnishing of a water system management office.

The total project cost also covered consultancy services for water source establishment, detailed design, and construction supervision, ensuring that the system meets the required technical and operational standards.

This intervention incorporates modern, energy-efficient technologies such as solar-powered pumping systems and treated water distribution, ensuring sustainability and reliability of service delivery.

The completion of the Wassa Dunkwa Water Supply System has significantly improved access to clean, safe, and reliable water for residents. It is expected to enhance public health, reduce the burden of water collection, and stimulate economic activities within the community. Overall, the project marks a major step forward in improving the living conditions and long-term development prospects of Wassa Dunkwa.











WHEN SOCIAL PROTECTION MEETS PEOPLE



For many people, government programmes are not experienced through policy documents or official announcements. They are experienced through practical questions such as: Who qualifies for support? How can I access LEAP? Where can I seek help for a child at risk?

These questions were at the heart of a Community Dialogue Series organised by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection across selected communities in Greater Accra in September 2026.

From Tema Manhean and Bankuman to Chorkor, Mamprobi, Teshie and Osu, the engagements gave residents opportunities to learn about social protection interventions, seek clarification and raise concerns about issues affecting their communities. The approach was straightforward: take the conversation to the people, listen to their concerns and connect them with available services.

At community level, social protection becomes more than a discussion about programmes, policies and budgets. It is about whether a family understands an

intervention intended to support it, whether a resident knows where to seek assistance and whether young people understand risks such as teenage pregnancy, child marriage and drug abuse.

In Tema Manhean and Bankuman, residents engaged officials on social protection and related concerns, including the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS).

The discussions broadened in Chorkor and Mamprobi to include domestic violence, child protection, child marriage, teenage pregnancy and human trafficking. The range of issues highlighted the interconnected nature of vulnerability. Economic hardship, limited access to healthcare, child neglect and inadequate information can reinforce one another, requiring coordinated responses from different institutions.

Importantly, the dialogues were not one-way information sessions. Residents had the opportunity to raise questions and share experiences that can help public institutions identify information gaps, misconceptions about eligibility and practical barriers to accessing services.

This two-way engagement also reflects an important principle of Ghana's decentralisation agenda: effective local governance requires citizens to participate in discussions about the issues affecting their lives.

At Teshie, the dialogue provided an opportunity for broader public education, including information on the expansion of LEAP and social protection law. The discussion therefore extended beyond programme awareness to issues of rights, responsibilities, eligibility and access to public services.

At Osu, residents, local authorities and other stakeholders continued discussions on social protection and related social issues. The Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, Dr Agnes Naa Momo Lartey, emphasised the importance of ensuring that social protection interventions respond effectively to community needs. The participation of local leadership further demonstrated the importance of collaboration across institutions and levels of governance.

The engagements highlight a fundamental reality of public policy: national programmes ultimately succeed or fail through their implementation at the local level. A policy developed at the national level must be understood and accessible in communities, while local experiences must inform how institutions improve delivery.

MAKING GOVERNANCE MEANINGFUL

The Community Dialogue Series demonstrates that decentralisation is not only about administrative structures and the distribution of responsibilities. It is also about how citizens experience government.

For a mother seeking social assistance, a young person needing information, a survivor seeking protection or a family trying to access healthcare, government becomes tangible through the services and institutions available in their community.

Creating spaces for citizens to ask questions, express concerns and understand available interventions therefore strengthens the connection between public institutions and the people they serve.

The Greater Accra dialogues offer a simple but important lesson: bringing government closer to the people must also mean creating opportunities for government to listen to them.



BUILDING A CLIMATE-RESILIENT GHANA

Ghana is strengthening the institutions, partnerships and resources needed to translate climate ambitions into practical development outcomes and improve community resilience.



Hon. Seidu Issifu
Minister of State for Climate Change and Sustainability

Climate change is increasingly affecting agriculture, livelihoods, infrastructure and natural resources, placing additional pressure on Ghana's development prospects. Responding to these challenges requires more than policy commitments. It demands strong institutions, coordinated action, sustainable financing and the involvement of stakeholders at every level of development.
In response to these challenges, the Office of the Minister of State for Climate Change and Sustainability (OMSCCS), established under the Presidency, is leading national efforts to embed climate priorities in development planning and implementation.

During the first half of 2026, the Office focused on strengthening climate governance, building strategic partnerships, supporting policy development, mobilising climate finance and deepening Ghana's participation in regional and international climate processes.

A major part of this work involved bringing together Ministries, Departments and Agencies, development partners, academia, civil society and private-sector actors to exchange knowledge, identify emerging challenges and strengthen coordination.

Among the key initiatives was the High-Level Dialogue on Global Just Transition and the Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative, which examined the implications and opportunities associated with the global transition away from fossil fuels. The Office also convened Ghana's first structured national dialogue on Solar Radiation Modification (SRM), leading to recommendations for an engagement roadmap, an inter-ministerial technical working group and stronger national research capacity.

Recognising that climate change cuts across multiple sectors, the Office expanded collaboration with the Ghana National Fire Service, Ghana Police Service, National Accreditation Council, BOST Energies, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana Education Service and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. These engagements opened opportunities for cooperation in climate security, disaster risk reduction, sustainability, education and institutional resilience.

The Office also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Global Centre for

Climate Mobility to promote cooperation in climate mobility, policy development, research, technical support, capacity building and knowledge exchange.
Beyond Ghana, the Office participated in international engagements, including the UNIDO Climate Adaptation and Industrial Resilience Forum in Vienna, the Special African Leaders' Virtual Meeting on Climate Adaptation, the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies meeting in Bonn, the First International Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in Santa Marta and the Berlin Climate Mobility Forum.

These engagements provided opportunities for Ghana to share experiences, strengthen technical cooperation and connect national priorities with global discussions on adaptation, resilience, climate mobility, just transition and sustainable development.

Financing remains central to translating these commitments into tangible outcomes. During the reporting period, the Office engaged financial institutions, development partners and investors on opportunities to finance adaptation, resilience and sustainable development. Participation in the OPEC Fund Development Forum in Vienna and Ghana's membership in the Vulnerability to Viability Compact formed part of these efforts.

Despite operating without a dedicated Government programme budget during the first half of the year, the Office received US$183,000 in support from development and institutional partners. The funding supported four initiatives: US$45,000 from Root Alliance for food system resilience, US$75,000 from the Degrees Initiative/SRM Partners for the SRM Technical Committee, US$40,000 from the Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative for the Just Transition Dialogue, and US$23,000 from the Bank of Ghana for participation in SB64.

These resources enabled the Office to sustain stakeholder dialogues, international engagements and policy development. However, inadequate funding, limited staffing and institutional capacity, and the complexity of cross-sectoral coordination continued to constrain implementation.

As Ghana moves into the second half of 2026, attention is shifting increasingly towards implementation and the connection between national climate policy and local development priorities. A key priority is the establishment and operationalisation of Climate Change and Sustainability Units across Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs).

These structures are intended to strengthen the integration of climate considerations into local planning, investment and service delivery, bringing climate action closer to the communities most affected by its consequences. The approach reflects the importance of empowering local institutions to identify and respond to the specific environmental and development challenges within their jurisdictions.

The Office will also prioritise climate emergency response, resource mobilisation, the implementation of strategic partnerships, continued policy development and international engagement, as well as stronger research, knowledge management and evidence-based policymaking.

The first half of 2026 has strengthened the institutional and partnership foundations for Ghana's climate response. The next phase will require sustained financing, stronger institutional capacity and closer coordination between national and sub-national institutions.

Ultimately, the success of Ghana's climate ambitions will be measured not only by policies and international commitments, but also by the resilience of communities, the sustainability of livelihoods and the ability of local institutions to respond effectively to a changing climate.



ON THE GROUND

TAKING STATISTICS BEYOND ACCRA: A REGIONAL TOUR BUILT AROUND LISTENING



Stakeholder Consultative Sessions at AMA

National statistics do not begin in Accra. They begin in markets, households, farms, offices and communities where regional and district teams collect the information that eventually becomes the evidence used in national decisions.

That was the central message of the Government Statistician's tour of GSS regional offices in the northern part of the country. The tour included engagements with the Northern, North East, Upper East and Savannah Regional Offices, alongside courtesy calls on Regional Ministers, Regional Coordinating Councils and traditional leadership.

A thought from the visits

When our regions are strong, our data is strong. When our data is strong, Ghana can make better decisions.

In each region, discussions focused on strengthening collaboration between GSS and the Regional Coordinating Councils, particularly in the production and timely flow of administrative data. The engagements also highlighted the role of District Statistical Officers in collecting the local-level information required for planning and targeted interventions.

The tour was equally an opportunity to listen to staff. Regional teams spoke about staffing, tools, systems, welfare and other practical challenges affecting their work. Their feedback provided management with a clearer understanding of what headquarters needs to address if regional offices are to operate effectively.

The visit to the Northern Region included a courtesy call on the Northern Regional Minister and a visit to the Northern Regional Office. In the North East Region, the team engaged the Regional Minister and the Regional Coordinating Council before visiting the regional office. The tour continued to the Upper East Region and concluded on this leg in Savannah, where the team met the Regional Coordinating Council and the regional statistical team.

The tour also included a courtesy visit to the Regent of Dagbon at the Gbewaa Palace in Yendi, following the passing of the late Yaa-Naa Abukari II. The visit acknowledged the importance of traditional institutions and their role in the history, culture and stability of northern Ghana.

Across the regions, one message remained consistent: stronger local data produces more focused development. The tour served both as an appreciation of the work being done and as a practical exercise in identifying the support needed to place regional offices at the centre of Ghana's statistical system.



The Government Statistician and members of the GSS team with traditional leaders during a courtesy visit at the Gbewaa Palace in Yendi

TRANSFORMING THE CIVIL SERVICE:

DECENTRALISED REGULATORY AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

The Ghana Civil Service continues to play a strategic role in strengthening public administration and positioning the state machinery to respond effectively to Ghana's evolving development needs. The Service advanced several significant regulatory, institutional and organisational decentralized reforms aimed at improving efficiency, clarifying mandates, strengthening human resource management and ensuring continuity in public service delivery.

Strengthening the Legal and Regulatory Foundation of the Civil Service

Another significant achievement was progress towards the review of the Civil Service Law, 1993 (PNDCL 327), and the Civil Service Interim Regulations, 1960.



A cross-section of participants at the stakeholders' engagement

The review sought to ensure that the legal and regulatory framework governing the Service remains relevant to contemporary public administration.

The initiative responds to the changing nature of governance, evolving institutional arrangements, technological developments and the increasing demand for accountable, efficient and citizen-centred public services. Updating the legal and regulatory framework will provide greater clarity on the roles, responsibilities and operational arrangements of the Civil Service and strengthen the institutional basis for ongoing reforms.

The review also provides an opportunity to address emerging issues in public administration and ensure greater coherence between the legal framework and current institutional and organisational practices.

Standardising Organisational and Human Resource Management Systems

The Civil Service also advanced efforts to complete and adopt organisational and

Human Resource (HR) manuals for Ministries with decentralised functions.

The manuals provided clear and consistent framework for the management of organisational structures, functions, reporting relationships, staffing and human resource processes within Ministries. Their adoption helped reduce inconsistencies in institutional arrangements and provide officers and management with clear guidance on roles, responsibilities and procedures.

This intervention is particularly important for Ministries with decentralised functions, where effective coordination between headquarters and operational structures, focusing on standard setting, development of guidelines, monitoring and evaluation etc is essential for efficient service delivery.

By strengthening organisational and HR systems, the Civil Service is laying the foundation for more predictable, transparent and effective management of human resources across the Service for a Decentralised Public Administration System.

Ministerial Realignment: Positioning the Civil Service for Results

One of the major achievements was the successful technical implementation of the 2025 ministerial realignment, following the issuance of the Civil Service (Ministries) Instrument, 2025 (E.I. 1). The Instrument provided the legal basis for the restructuring and reconfiguration of Ministries in line with the Government's policy priorities.

The realignment presented an important opportunity to build a more coherent, responsive and efficient administrative structure by clarifying ministerial mandates, reducing overlaps and duplication of functions, and facilitating the optimal deployment of public resources.

The Management Services Department (MSD), drawing on its institutional expertise in organisational development and management consultancy, provided technical leadership for the process. MSD undertook reviews of the mandates, visions, functions and organisational structures of affected Ministries and worked closely with political, administrative and technical leadership to develop structures that were aligned with the Government's development priorities.

The process was informed by the Resetting Ghana Agenda, relevant legal and policy frameworks, institutional mandates and lessons from public administration practice. This participatory approach enabled the Civil Service to translate the Government's policy direction into workable administrative structures.

An equally important achievement was the management of the human resource implications of the realignment. The OHCS facilitated staff mapping, deployment, redeployment and integration to ensure that officers were appropriately positioned within the restructured ministerial architecture. Directors and staff of affected Ministries were integrated into the new and reconfigured structures based on their competencies, experience and functional relevance.

Through this coordinated approach, the Civil Service safeguarded institutional knowledge, promoted continuity of operations and minimised disruption to public service delivery. The exercise demonstrated the Service's capacity to manage large-scale institutional change while maintaining professionalism, stability and staff confidence.

The ministerial realignment therefore represented more than a change in administrative structures. It demonstrated the Civil Service's ability to convert government policy decisions into functional institutions capable of delivering results. It also reinforced the Service's role as a strategic partner in national development and public sector transformation.

Strengthening Asset Management and Transfer

Another important decentralized reform achievement was the operationalization of the Asset Management and Transfer

Framework as part of the Ministerial Realighment exercise.

The framework was designed to strengthen accountability for public assets during institutional restructuring, transfers and changes in organisational arrangements. It provides a structured approach to identifying, documenting, transferring and accounting for assets when functions, offices or institutions are reorganised.

A robust asset management and transfer system helped minimise the loss or misallocation of public assets, strengthen accountability and ensure that institutions have the resources required to perform their mandates effectively during the transition process.

Reviewing Schemes of Service for Decentralised Departmental Classes

The Civil Service further advanced the review of Schemes of Service for departmental classes with decentralised functions. Schemes of Service provide an important framework for defining career progression, qualifications, competencies, responsibilities and professional development requirements for officers within the Service.

The review is intended to ensure that the career structures for decentralised departmental classes remain responsive to contemporary organisational needs and provide officers with clear and equitable career pathways.

By aligning Schemes of Service with current institutional mandates and workforce requirements, the reform will support effective talent management, professional development, succession planning and the deployment of appropriately skilled personnel for policy formulation.

Building a More Responsive and Future-Ready Civil Service

Taken together, these initiatives demonstrate the Civil Service's continuing commitment to institutional strengthening and public sector transformation. The ministerial realignment provided the organisational foundation for a more coherent and responsive machinery of government, while the review of the legal and regulatory framework seeks to strengthen the rules supporting the Service.

The organisational and HR manuals, Asset Management and Transfer Framework, and revised Schemes of Service complemented these reforms by strengthening the systems through which institutions, people and public resources are managed.

These achievements reflect a Civil Service that is increasingly focused not only on maintaining administrative continuity but also on anticipating change, managing institutional transformation and creating the conditions for improved results.

As Ghana continues to pursue public sector reforms, the Civil Service remains committed to building institutions that are efficient, accountable, professional and responsive to the needs of citizens. Through sustained organisational reform, strengthened human resource systems and improved institutional coordination, the Service is positioning itself as a future-ready institution capable of supporting sustainable national development and delivering on the priorities of government.

PRESIDENT MAHAMA TOURS

UPPER WEST REGION'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS



The Upper West Region has showcased a range of development interventions being implemented across its eleven Municipal and District Assemblies, as President John Dramani Mahama visited the University for Business and Integrated Development Studies (UBIDS) in Wa.

The presentation, led by the Upper West Regional Minister, Hon. Charles Lwanga Puozuing Esq., highlighted progress in local infrastructure, education, road development, economic empowerment and service delivery across the Region.

A key highlight was the significant increase in decentralised transfers to the Region's eleven MMDAs since 2025. According to the Regional presentation, transfers have increased by more than 400 per cent, thereby supporting the implementation of development projects at the local level.

These investments include the construction of CHPS compounds, classroom blocks, boreholes and market facilities, aimed at improving access to basic services and supporting local economic activity.

Investments in Education and Human Development

Education remains a major component of the Region's development programme, with nearly 110 projects being implemented under the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund). Among the projects are a new Senior High School at Issa and expanded infrastructure at UBIDS, which is expected to strengthen opportunities for tertiary education and human capital development in the Region.

Road Infrastructure and Regional Connectivity

Road development also featured prominently in the Region's presentation. Under the Big Push Programme, more than 300 kilometres of roads are being constructed at a reported investment of GH¢4.79 billion.

The projects are expected to improve connectivity between communities and facilitate access to markets, schools, health facilities and other essential services.

Supporting Local Enterprise and Women's Economic Participation

The Region is also benefiting from initiatives aimed at strengthening local economic development. Eleven new markets are being established under the 24-Hour Economy Programme, while Farmer Service Centres are being introduced to improve access to agricultural support services.

Another major intervention is the Sheapark Resource Hub, which is expected to support more than 7,000 women engaged in the

shea value chain and related economic activities.

The Regional Minister also acknowledged challenges in the implementation of some road projects, particularly delays in meeting projected timelines, while reaffirming the Region's commitment to addressing its development priorities.

The presentation at UBIDS provided an overview of how national development programmes and increased decentralised resources are translating into projects and services at the regional and local levels.

For the Upper West Region, the focus remains on strengthening local infrastructure, improving service delivery, expanding economic opportunities and ensuring that development reaches communities across the Region.







RESETTING GHANA'S URBAN FUTURE

Ghana has taken another step towards managing its rapidly growing urban population with the launch of the National Urban Policy and Implementation Plan (2026–2035) and the National Slum Upgrading and Prevention Strategy (2026–2035).

The two frameworks are intended to guide urban development over the next decade, strengthen coordination among public institutions and promote more inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities and towns.

The frameworks were launched on Tuesday, 28 July 2026, at the opening of the 9th Ghana Urban Forum at the Alisa Hotel in Accra, under the theme, "Resetting Ghana's Urban Future: Thinking Nationally and Taking Local Actions for Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Cities." The Forum brought together Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs), government institutions, professional bodies, Civil Society Organisations and Development Partners to discuss the future of urban development in Ghana.





The launch marks an important stage in the evolution of Ghana's urban development policy. The new National Urban Policy succeeds the 2012 Policy Framework and Action Plan, which provided a foundation for addressing the opportunities and challenges associated with urbanisation. However, a review of the previous policy found that approximately 50 per cent of its targets had been achieved. Weak coordination among institutions, inadequate financing and the limited integration of urban development priorities into district-level budgets were identified as major implementation challenges.

These findings highlight a central issue for decentralised governance: national policies can establish a clear vision for development, but their success depends largely on effective coordination, adequate resources and implementation at the local level.

Urbanisation and the Need for Coordinated Action

Urbanisation has been an important feature of Ghana's development since the colonial period, when rural populations moved to urban centres in search of employment and other economic opportunities. Over time, cities and towns have expanded, creating new opportunities for economic growth, employment and service delivery, while placing increasing pressure on housing, land, infrastructure, sanitation and other public services.

The scale of this transformation makes urban development a national priority. At the launch, Dr Nii Moi Thompson, Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and Senior Advisor to the President on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighted the significant growth of Ghana's urban population. He noted that the urban population had increased from approximately four million in the 1980s to nearly 14 million in 2020, with an estimated 20.4 million people living in urban areas in 2026. By 2030, approximately 65 per cent of Ghana's population is expected to live in urban centres.

Dr Thompson emphasised the need to manage this growth in ways that promote inclusion, resilience, sustainability and shared prosperity. He also stressed that the policies must translate into practical results rather than remain documents, requiring the commitment of all stakeholders to implementation.

The Government's commitments include digitising land administration, introducing electronic permitting, expanding the use of spatial information systems, operationalising the Ghana Urban Observatory and extending municipal infrastructure under national economic programmes.

Putting Local Governments at the Centre of Implementation

The success of the new frameworks will depend significantly on the capacity of MMDAs to incorporate urban development priorities into their medium-term development plans, annual action plans and budgets, and to coordinate their implementation with relevant national institutions and other stakeholders.

The Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs reaffirmed its leadership role in coordinating and monitoring implementation across the 261 MMDAs. The National Slum Upgrading and Prevention Strategy is also expected to support improvements in informal settlements through participatory upgrading and the integration of local



revenue considerations.

These commitments reinforce the importance of decentralised planning and local government financing in addressing urban challenges. Assemblies must be able to identify local priorities, mobilise resources, coordinate development interventions and engage communities in decisions that affect their living conditions. Without this connection between national policy and district-level planning and budgeting, the intended improvements in urban infrastructure, housing and service delivery may be difficult to achieve.

The Ministry of Works, Housing and Water Resources also announced that it had commenced a review of the National Housing Policy to align it with the new National Urban Policy. The Ministry further pledged to prioritise resilient infrastructure and drainage systems to address recurrent flooding and explore innovative financing arrangements to help reduce Ghana's estimated housing deficit of 1.8 million units.

Development Partners Support the Urban Development Agenda

Development Partners, including the United Nations, World Bank, Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), Agence Française de Développement (AFD), European Union Delegation and Commonwealth Local Government Forum, commended Ghana for aligning its urban development agenda with the United Nations New Urban Agenda, Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

They expressed their commitment to supporting implementation through technical and financial assistance, capacity building and systems development. Their proposed areas of support include strengthening the capacity of municipal planners, supporting the establishment and operation of an urban observatory for data collection, and improving local revenue mobilisation.

The 2026–2035 framework is anchored on four operational priorities: spatial planning and digital governance; slum prevention and housing renewal; climate resilience and infrastructure; and sustainable municipal financing. These priorities seek to improve development planning and permitting, upgrade informal settlements, strengthen climate-resilient infrastructure and expand the capacity of local governments to finance urban development through property rates, Internally Generated Funds and private-sector participation.

The launch of the two frameworks provides an opportunity to address longstanding challenges in urban governance and improve coordination between national institutions and local governments. However, the real measure of success will be the extent to which the policies influence development decisions, attract the necessary resources and produce tangible improvements in the lives of citizens.

For decentralisation, the task is clear: national urban development priorities must be translated into coordinated local action. Effective implementation will require clearly defined institutional responsibilities, stronger integration of urban priorities into MMDA plans and budgets, sustainable financing, reliable data and meaningful citizen participation. These are essential to ensuring that Ghana's growing cities and towns become more inclusive, productive, resilient and responsive to the needs of their residents.



CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS TO TRANSFORM ACCRA'S STREETS THROUGH GREENING, BEAUTIFICATION AND SUSTAINABLE MAINTENANCE



The Minister for Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, Hon. Mahama Ayariga, has proposed a corporate partnership model under which organisations would adopt selected streets in Accra and support their cleaning, greening, lighting, beautification and routine maintenance.

Announcing the proposal on 3 October 2026 at Rawlings Park during the national flagship clean-up exercise commemorating World Cleanup Day 2026, the Minister said it would enable businesses to improve the city's environment as part of their corporate social responsibility while complementing the work of government institutions and districts.

Participating companies could receive recognition through an agreed naming arrangement that preserves the original names of streets and the identities they commemorate.

Companies would support designated streets, particularly near their operations, through measures such as regular cleaning, tree planting, landscaping, improved lighting, pedestrian-area enhancements and maintenance of public spaces.

To advance the initiative, Hon. Ayariga directed the Director of Urban Roads and the Chief Executive Officer of the Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority (LUSPA) to submit a list of roads and streets in Accra to the Ministry for consideration.

Citing the Obasanjo Highway, the Minister explained that the arrangement could give companies visible recognition while

preserving established street identities and delivering practical improvements to the urban environment.

By linking recognition to clearly defined responsibilities and measurable results, the model could shift corporate social responsibility from occasional donations and one-off clean-up exercises towards sustained investment in public spaces.

Turning corporate investment into environmental improvement

For a rapidly expanding city such as Accra, the proposal offers a structured way to strengthen environmental management through public-private collaboration.

Cleaner streets, healthy trees, attractive public spaces and functional pedestrian infrastructure can improve residents' and visitors' experiences, support commercial activity and foster civic pride.

A well-designed street-adoption programme could extend these benefits through tree planting and care, green verges, rehabilitation of neglected spaces, and approved lighting. Where technically appropriate, these interventions could provide shade, reduce heat exposure and improve the streetscape.

The programme should prioritise suitable indigenous tree species and long-term care, because planting without watering, protection and maintenance will not deliver lasting benefits. Lighting and streetscape works must also meet engineering, accessibility and road-safety standards.

Requirements for sound waste management, durable materials and responsible landscape maintenance would help ensure lasting environmental gains rather than temporary cosmetic improvements.

Creating jobs and strengthening local enterprise

The proposal could also create jobs for young people in cleaning, landscaping, tree care, horticulture and public-space maintenance. Hon. Ayariga highlighted the Department of Parks and Gardens as a potential partner in providing practical skills development and community-based employment, working with local authorities and participating businesses.

Local small businesses and service providers could also undertake landscaping, waste collection, horticultural services and routine maintenance under arrangements approved by the relevant authorities.

If designed to favour local participation, the scheme could turn corporate investment into both environmental improvements and sustainable livelihoods.

Strengthening public-private collaboration
The proposal reflects a central principle of urban governance: clean, attractive and functional cities require sustained cooperation among government institutions, businesses, traditional authorities, residents and other stakeholders.

For the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), corporate participation could provide additional funding, expertise, equipment and maintenance capacity for designated streets, extending the reach of municipal programmes.

Success, however, would depend on a clear institutional framework defining the roles of participating companies, districts, the Ministry and relevant technical agencies. Standards would be needed for street design, tree planting, lighting, signage, maintenance and public access.

Transparent guidelines should preserve established street identities, protect the public character of roads and ensure that corporate recognition complies with planning requirements. Participation criteria, maintenance obligations, monitoring and remedies for non-performance would be essential.

Such safeguards would help distribute benefits fairly, align interventions with municipal plans and keep public spaces accessible to all.

From clean-up exercises to a culture of continuous maintenance

At the World Cleanup Day exercise, which brought together residents, traders, traditional authorities, public institutions and other stakeholders, Hon. Ayariga noted that organised clean-ups can raise awareness but cannot ensure lasting cleanliness on their own.

Sustainable sanitation requires reliable waste collection, appropriate disposal facilities, effective enforcement, public education and active participation by businesses and residents.

The proposed model could reinforce these systems through regular maintenance schedules and coordination with local authorities, allowing emerging problems to be addressed before they become more difficult and costly.

Over time, this approach could shift Accra from reactive clean-ups to preventive environmental management supported by clear commitments and sustained investment.

The goal is a cleaner, greener and more liveable Accra in which businesses help maintain public spaces and residents experience the practical benefits of corporate investment.







AGBOGBLOSHIE

CLEAN-UP

GOVERNMENT RECLAIMS URBAN LAND



Agbogbloshie has long exemplified Accra's persistent sanitation challenge. Years of waste accumulation, open dumping, and environmental degradation have transformed valuable urban space into a major public health and environmental concern, with consequences extending to surrounding communities, drainage systems, and waterways.

The Government of Ghana is now undertaking a major exercise to remove the accumulated waste from Agbogbloshie and transport it to an engineered landfill facility at Adepa in the Eastern Region. The exercise is expected to evacuate approximately one million tonnes of waste from the area.

Launching the exercise, President John Dramani Mahama described the situation as one that could no longer be allowed to continue, stressing that government was taking decisive action to restore the area.



AGBOGBLOSHIE REFUSE

> “WE CANNOT BUILD A CLEAN, SAFE AND RESILIENT CAPITAL THAT WE DESIRE WHILE WE ALLOW SUCH A SITUATION TO CONTINUE.”

The exercise forms part of government’s wider response to Ghana’s sanitation challenges and involves collaboration among national institutions, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly, the Ghana Armed Forces, the District Road Improvement Programme (DRIP) and other partners. Heavy-duty equipment, including excavators, bulldozers, wheel loaders and tipper trucks, has been mobilised to accelerate the evacuation.

Beyond the immediate removal of waste, however, the intervention is focused on the future of the reclaimed land. Government intends to integrate the site into a broader urban renewal programme, with plans for productive economic activity, including an industrial park and other facilities capable of creating employment and supporting economic transformation.

President Mahama said the intervention was therefore not simply about removing waste but about giving the land a new economic purpose.

“When we have cleared this garbage, the land that will be reclaimed and recovered is going to be an Industrial Park.”

This vision gives the exercise a broader development significance. A space that has for years been associated with waste and environmental degradation could ultimately become an area for industry, employment and productive economic activity.

The intervention also underscores the importance of coordination between central and local government. National institutions provide policy direction, resources and technical support, while the Accra Metropolitan Assembly and other local structures have a critical responsibility to maintain sanitation standards, enforce local regulations and prevent renewed indiscriminate dumping.

The deployment of equipment acquired through the District Road Improvement Programme further demonstrates how decentralised public assets can be mobilised to address urgent community needs. Machinery intended primarily to support local infrastructure development is being deployed

alongside other resources for a major sanitation intervention, illustrating the value of coordination across levels of government.

For residents and businesses around Agbogbloshie, the potential benefits extend beyond a cleaner environment. Successful implementation could improve public health, reduce pressure on drainage systems and waterways, improve the urban landscape and unlock valuable land for more productive use.

But waste removal is only the beginning. The long-term success of the intervention will depend on effective land-use planning, regular waste collection, enforcement of sanitation regulations and sustained participation by communities and businesses.

This responsibility extends beyond government. Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, traditional authorities, businesses, community leaders and citizens all have roles to play in protecting public spaces and ensuring that reclaimed areas are not returned to their former condition.

Agbogbloshie therefore offers an important lesson in decentralised governance. The exercise demonstrates that addressing complex urban challenges requires national leadership and resources, but its sustainability ultimately depends on effective local action and responsible citizenship.

If successfully sustained, the intervention could transform a longstanding environmental challenge into an opportunity for urban renewal, economic activity and improved quality of life. It reinforces a fundamental principle of decentralisation: development is most sustainable when national policy, local action and citizen responsibility work together.











THE DISTRICT CORNER

ANLOGA DISTRICT: WHERE AGRICULTURE, CULTURE AND NATURE CONVERGE FOR A PROMISING FUTURE

Along Ghana's southeastern coastline, where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Keta Lagoon, lies a district with a distinctive combination of agricultural strength, cultural heritage, coastal ecosystems and emerging economic opportunities.

Established in 2019 under Legislative Instrument 2372, Anloga District is one of Ghana's youngest districts, with Anloga as its capital. Covering approximately 322 square kilometres, the district recorded a population of 94,895 in the 2021 Population and Housing Census, comprising 50,186 females and 44,709 males.

But beyond these statistics is a district with assets that position it for significant local economic development.

From its vegetable farms and fishing communities to its mangrove ecosystems, historic sites and the internationally recognised Hogbetsotso Festival, Anloga presents a compelling story of a district seeking to transform its natural and cultural resources into opportunities for its people.



A DISTRICT WITH A CLEAR DEVELOPMENT AMBITION

The Anloga District Assembly has positioned the district as a destination for investment, business growth, tourism and sustainable urban development.

Its vision is to become one of the leading-performing District Assemblies in local governance while promoting socio-economic development and a healthy environment. Its mission is centred on harnessing human and material resources to improve living conditions through effective local governance, socio-economic infrastructure and quality service delivery.

That ambition is reflected in the district's development priorities, which include improving roads, education and skills development, healthcare and sanitation, while responding to challenges such as coastal erosion and flooding.

AGRICULTURE: ANLOGA'S ECONOMIC BACKBONE



Agriculture remains one of the strongest pillars of the district economy.

Across its fertile low-lying lands, farmers cultivate a wide range of crops, including shallots, tomatoes, okra, pepper, onions, spring onions, cabbage, beetroot, cassava,

maize and sugar cane. Fishing and fish processing also provide important livelihoods for communities along the coast and lagoon.

The district's vegetable production tradition offers considerable opportunities beyond the farm gate. The Assembly is promoting agro-processing, aquaculture and improved cold-storage facilities to support value addition, reduce post-harvest losses and create employment, particularly for women and young people.

The agricultural potential of Anloga received significant national attention when the district hosted the launch of the Ghana Tomatoes Self-Sufficiency Initiative (GHATSI).

Implemented through a partnership between the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and FarmMate Limited under the theme "Produce at Home. Feed the Nation. Export the Surplus," the initiative seeks to increase domestic tomato production and strengthen the tomato value chain, with the initial 2026/2027 production cycle targeting approximately 100,000 tonnes.

The launch provided an opportunity to showcase what Anloga already has: an established vegetable-producing base with the potential to contribute significantly to Ghana's food security and agricultural transformation agenda.

For the district, the next opportunity lies in connecting production to aggregation, storage, transportation, processing, finance, technology and markets, allowing more value to be retained within the local economy.

PROTECTING THE NATURAL WEALTH OF ANLO

Anloga's economic story is inseparable from its environment.

The district is endowed with extensive mangrove ecosystems, lagoons, wetlands and coastal resources. These ecosystems support fish breeding and nursery grounds, biodiversity conservation, shoreline protection, water-quality regulation and carbon storage, while sustaining communities whose livelihoods depend on fishing and other coastal resources.

Yet these resources face pressure from fuelwood harvesting, land-use changes, saltwater intrusion, changing water levels and climate variability.

In response, restoration and conservation efforts are being undertaken through collaboration involving the Anloga District Assembly, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Division, development partners and local communities.

Under the Regenerative Development of Anlo Wetlands (ReDAW) and Improved Resilience of Coastal Communities in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire (IRCC) initiatives, significant areas of native mangroves are being restored across identified sites in the district, alongside other climate-adaptation interventions supporting community-led restoration and ecosystem protection.

The work is more than environmental conservation. For Anloga, protecting the mangroves means protecting livelihoods, biodiversity, coastal communities and the district's long-term resilience.

HOGBETSOTSO: A HERITAGE THAT DEFINES ANLOGA



If agriculture represents an important economic strength of Anloga, culture represents its soul.

Anloga occupies a distinctive place in Ghana's cultural landscape as the traditional homeland and spiritual centre of the Anlo people. Its identity is expressed through

traditional institutions, language, music, dance, customs, indigenous knowledge, historical narratives and festivals.

At the heart of this heritage is the Hogbetsotso Festival, meaning "the festival of the exodus." The annual celebration commemorates the migration of the Anlo people from Notsie to their present homeland and serves as an important platform for preserving and transmitting Anlo history, values, resilience, unity and identity across generations.

Each year, chiefs and traditional authorities, residents, visitors and members of the Anlo diaspora converge in Anloga for traditional ceremonies, durbars, drumming, dancing, music, storytelling and colourful cultural displays.

But Hogbetsotso is not only a celebration of history. It is also an economic opportunity.
The festival creates opportunities for traders, food vendors, transport operators, accommodation providers, artisans and players in the creative sector. It also provides a platform for promoting the district's wider tourism attractions.

A TOURISM DESTINATION WAITING TO BE FULLY EXPLORED

Anloga's cultural appeal is complemented by a remarkable collection of natural and historical attractions.

Its proximity to the Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site, together with attractions including the Atorkor Slave Market, Cape St. Paul Lighthouse at Woe, bird sanctuaries, mangroves and coastal beaches, provides opportunities for both eco-tourism and cultural tourism.

The district also has emerging potential in **artisanal and large-scale salt production.**

With improved visitor facilities, stronger heritage documentation, cultural exhibitions and complementary tourism experiences, Anloga has opportunities to increase the benefits generated from its cultural and natural attractions and encourage visitors to spend more time within the district.

BUILDING ON WHAT ANLOGA ALREADY HAS

Anloga's development story is ultimately about connecting its assets.
Its farms can feed industries. Its lagoon and coast can support livelihoods. Its mangroves can strengthen climate resilience. Its heritage can attract visitors. Its culture can create economic opportunities.
Realising these opportunities will require continued investment in infrastructure, climate resilience, local enterprise, agricultural finance, technology, value addition, tourism and skills development.
The district's development agenda therefore presents a compelling proposition: a young district with established strengths and emerging opportunities, working to transform its resources into sustainable development for its people.
As Anloga looks ahead, its greatest asset may be the combination of what it already possesses; productive communities, fertile agricultural lands, a rich cultural identity, valuable ecosystems and an ambitious local development agenda.



BRIDGING THE GAP

225 TRAINED IN LIVELIHOOD SKILLS UNDER CDD-GHANA RESILIENCE PROJECT

A total of 225 young people, women and persons with disabilities in northern Ghana have received livelihood training and start-up support under a CDD-Ghana project aimed at reducing economic vulnerability and strengthening community resilience.
The initiative, funded by the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), has trained 150 beneficiaries in goat and guinea fowl production and 75 others in bar and liquid soap production. Participants also received start-up capital to establish small businesses.

Project targets 15 districts

The training is part of the Bridging the Gap project, which promotes socio-economic inclusion, social cohesion and peacebuilding in 15 districts across the Upper East, Upper West and North-East regions. Running from 1 December 2024 to 30 June 2027, the project is being implemented by CDD-Ghana in partnership with the Centre for Advancing Rural Opportunity (CARO), African Students for Interfaith Tolerance (ASFIT) and Rural Initiatives for Self-Empowerment (RISE).

The intervention comes amid concern that extremist violence in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger could spread towards coastal West Africa. On 5 September 2024, attacks in northern Burkina Faso killed 17 soldiers and 36 volunteer fighters; a subsequent attack killed 29 soldiers in western Niger. Although Ghana has not experienced a direct attack by violent extremist groups, regional instability, socio-economic inequality, online extremist propaganda and high youth unemployment remain sources of vulnerability.

Unemployment adds to vulnerability

Youth unemployment stands at 39% in the Upper East Region, 38.2% in the Savannah Region and 34.7% in the North East Region, compared with a national average of 32.8%. The project seeks to address such pressures by expanding access to skills, employment and finance, strengthening trust through inter-group dialogue and improving local capacity for conflict prevention and mediation.

Its target groups include young men and women aged 15–35, traditional and religious leaders, queen mothers, refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, journalists, public institutions and people pushed into poverty by job loss.

Training produces early results

The livestock programme reached 60 beneficiaries in the Upper East Region, 50 in the North East Region and 40 in the Upper West Region. Participants were trained in breed selection, housing, feed rationing, disease prevention, biosecurity, financial literacy and digital marketing.

The soap and detergent programme trained 30 people in the Upper East, 25 in the North East and 20 in the Upper West in chemical safety, quality control, packaging, branding and basic bookkeeping. Trainees produced liquid and bar soaps, prepared local business plans and identified untapped markets.

Livestock participants also adopted semi-intensive management practices, began keeping financial records and joined local savings groups. In the Upper West Region, improved husbandry and marketing were

linked to higher prices: goats rose from about GHS 500 to GHS 750, while sheep sold for between GHS 1,200 and GHS 1,500 during Eid, up from about GHS 800.

Beneficiaries look to the future

For Safia of Bawku Municipal, the training opened a path to self-employment. “When I was coming here, I did not know how to produce soap, but now I can produce my own soap. When I go back home, I will be happy to start my own soap business so I can help myself and my family,” she said.

Agana Mary of Zuarungu-Kantia in the Bolgatanga East District said she had learned to produce liquid soap, shower gel and bar soap, as well as market products and calculate production costs. “When I return home, I will start my own business and use the knowledge to support my community,” she said.

Abugbire Ida Alahire of Dubila in the Upper East Region also plans to fill a gap in her community. “In my community, there is no one producing liquid soap and detergent. When I go back home, I will start my own shop. I will also train some of my colleagues who don’t have their own business, so that we can help our families and the community,” she said.

Certification caps the programme

CDD-Ghana said the two interventions combine technical instruction with financial literacy and market engagement to strengthen livelihoods and economic inclusion. The livestock component has already encouraged improved husbandry, record-keeping, knowledge-sharing and stronger market participation, while the soap-making component has built practical production skills and business readiness.

All 225 trainees successfully completed the programme and received official certification from the National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI), marking an important step towards sustainable livelihoods and stronger community resilience in northern Ghana.

PHOTO GALLERY FROM THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Beneficiaries trying their hands at liquid soap production



Presentation of Certificates post-training



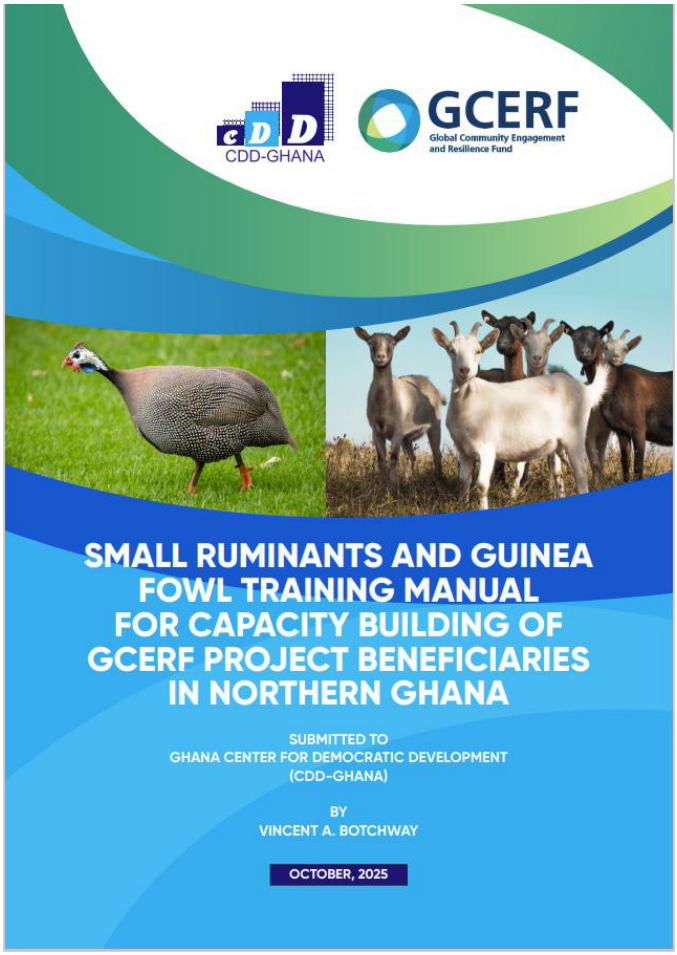
Trainees sharing their marketing strategies in groups during the marketing skills training

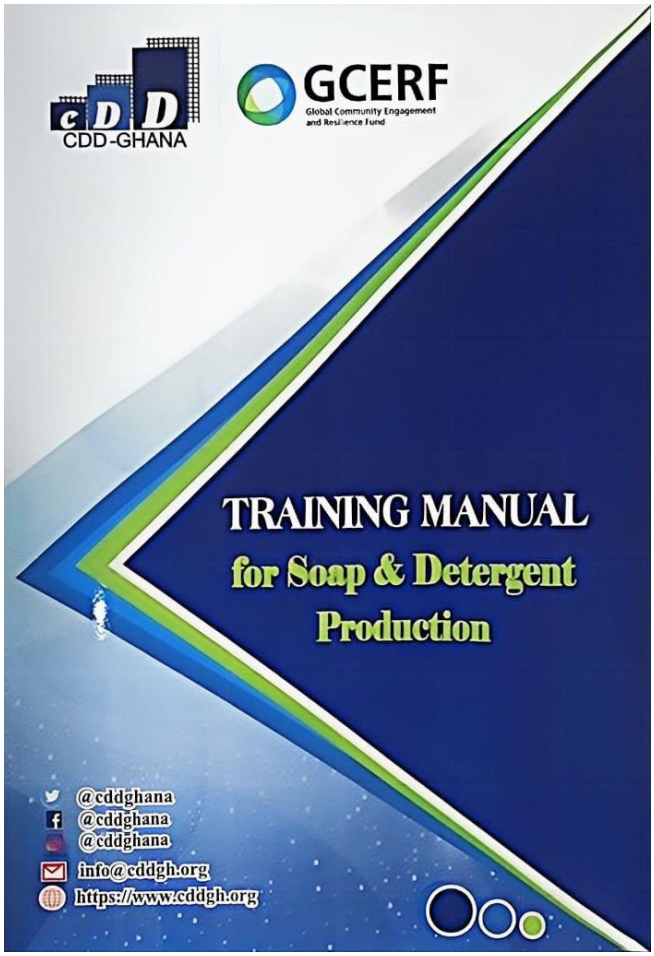


Participants learning the uses and parts of a defeathering machine during the small ruminants training



Participants being taken through poultry feed-mixing processes





Training Manuals Developed for both Trainings

EMPOWERING CITIES THROUGH DATA:

How Ghana's Smart SDG Cities Programme is Transforming Urban Planning at the Local Level



Across Ghana, cities and towns are growing at an unprecedented pace. Whiles rapid urbanization brings economic opportunities, innovation, and improved livelihoods, it also presents significant challenges, including pressure on infrastructure, housing shortages, environmental degradation, and increasing vulnerability to climate change. To effectively address these challenges, local governments need more than good intentions—they need reliable, timely, and actionable data. With the Ghana Smart SDG Cities Programme, local governments now have the ability to see and address urban problems through a systematic process of data collection and analysis. At its core, the programme demonstrates how data can become a powerful tool for deepening decentralisation and transforming urban planning at the local level. Implementation is led by the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Finance with the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) as the technical lead and being implemented in ten (10) cities, namely: Accra, Kumasi, Tamale, Sekondi-Takoradi, Elmina, Kyebi, Wenchi, Obuasi, Techiman and Dzode, The Programme is part of the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Cities initiative led by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) with funding from the Government of Norway.

Strengthening Local Capacity on Frameworks and Tools for SDG Localization

The Ghana Smart SDG Cities Programme is strengthening local governments' capacity in four key areas: inclusive governance, urban planning, municipal finance, and service delivery. The ten participating cities are undertaking structured "localisation journeys" that involve assessing their performance against SDG indicators, identifying development gaps, and designing targeted interventions. A key component of this process is the application of the Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF), which provides a harmonized system for tracking urban development indicators and measuring progress towards sustainability objectives.

The Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy, and Religious Affairs (MLGCRA) and partners in collaboration with UN-Habitat organized training and capacity building workshops in all ten cities targeted at planning officers, statisticians, Management and Information System (MIS) officers, assembly members, traditional authorities, and community stakeholders. The capacity building training topics included Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF), Voluntary Local Review (VLR) data tool, spatial indicators of the SDGs, application of Degree of Urbanization (DEGURBA) methodology to delineate city boundaries for spatial data collection and analysis, and hands-on use of KoboToolbox for digital spatial data collection. The overall goal was to align local data collection and planning with national and global SDG reporting standards, enabling Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies (MMAs) to make informed planning decisions based on measurable outcomes rather than assumptions.



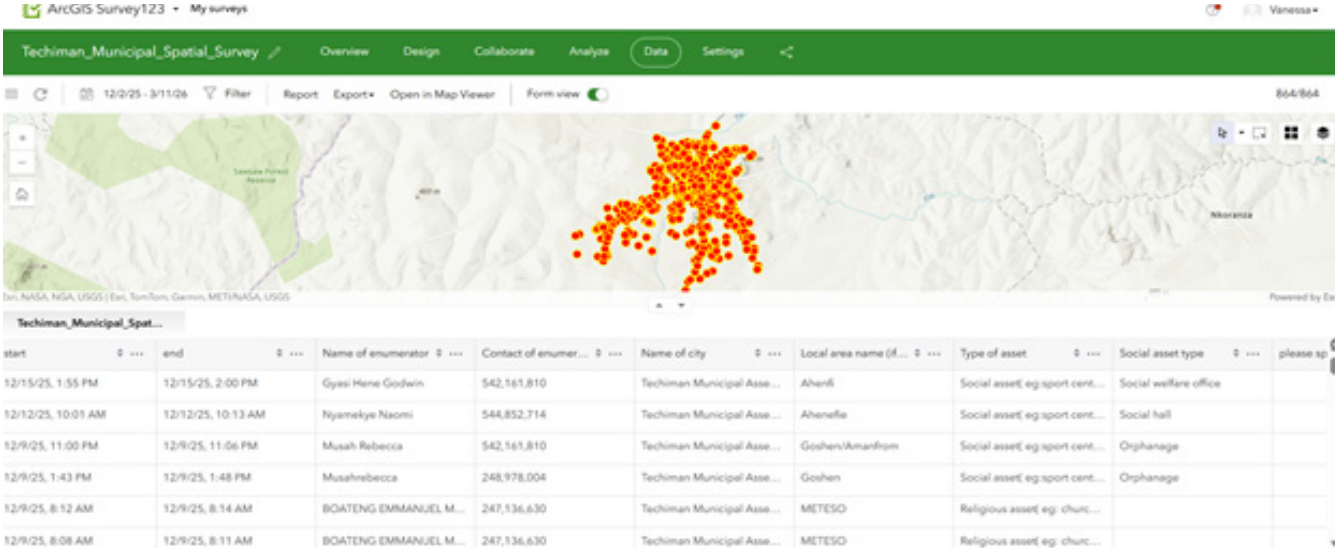
Two days capacity building workshop in Accra Metropolitan Assembly



Two days capacity building workshop in Sekondi Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly

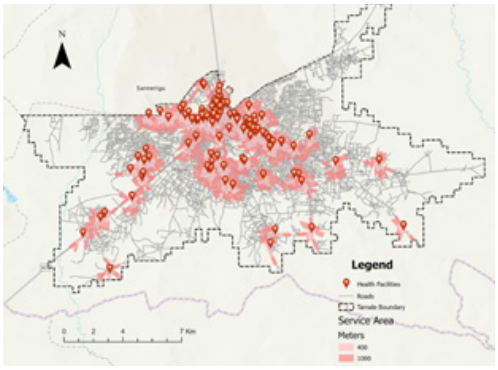
From Selection and Validation of Indicators to Baseline Assessment: Harnessing Digital Tools for Better Planning

Under the Ghana Smart SDG Cities Programme, participating cities were supported through a coordinated process to identify, prioritize and localize the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators as a critical step towards the preparation of their Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). Guided by the Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF) and the VLR Data Tool, participants reviewed national and metropolitan/municipal development plans, identified relevant SDG targets, and selected indicators that best reflected their local contexts. The process covered key thematic areas including economic development, social development, governance and public safety, infrastructure, environment and human settlements, ensuring that the selected indicators captured the multidimensional nature of sustainable urban development. In several instances, breakout technical sessions and collaborative discussions enabled participants to validate indicators and refine local data collection templates that guided subsequent socio-economic and spatial surveys.

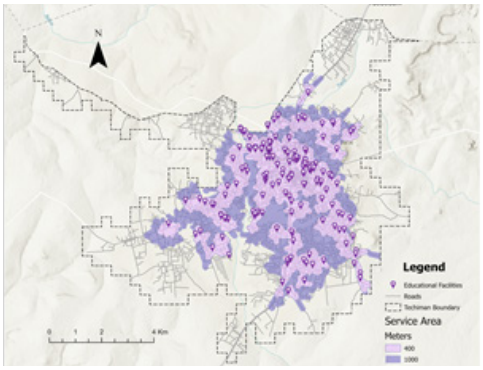


Interface of Techiman municipal's data collection backend

Perhaps, one of the most transformative aspects of the programme is its adoption of digital technologies. Cities are using platforms such as Kobo Toolbox, ArcGIS Survey123, and other geospatial tools to collect, manage, and visualize urban data. These technologies allow assemblies to digitally map infrastructure, services, environmental assets, and areas of vulnerability. For example, participating cities have undertaken exercises to assess access to basic services, public transportation, and green spaces. Others have generated neighborhood-level analyses of land surface temperature and urban heat risks, providing valuable insights into the impacts of climate change on residents. These datasets support more targeted investments in public services and help local authorities prioritize interventions where they are needed most.



Access to health facilities in Tamale



Access to educational facilities in Techiman

Citizen Participation and Inclusive Governance

The programme recognizes that data alone is not enough. Effective urban planning requires active citizen engagement and inclusive governance. Through participatory data collection and stakeholder consultations, community members contribute directly to the generation of local knowledge. Residents provide information on service delivery challenges, infrastructure gaps, environmental concerns, and development priorities. All the ten participating cities organised stakeholder engagement sessions to create awareness of the Ghana Smart SDG Cities Programme, discuss the 17 SDGs along with their targets and indicators, solicit stakeholder contributions towards localising and implementing the SDGs, and promote inclusivity, participation, and ownership in sustainable urban development. This citizen-generated priorities enriches planning processes and ensures that local development strategies reflect community needs and aspirations. Particular emphasis is placed on engaging young people, women, and traditionally underrepresented groups. This aligns strongly with Ghana's decentralization agenda, which seeks to bring governance closer to the people and strengthen local ownership of development outcomes.



Stakeholder Consultative Sessions at AMA

Accelerating Achievement of the SDGs through VLRs

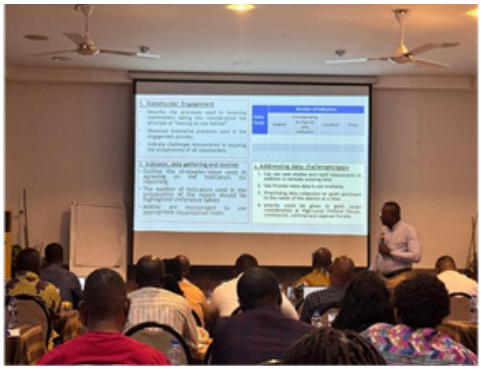
In addition to advancing digitalized data collection and capacity building, the programme is supporting acceleration of the SDGs across the ten participating cities through the preparation of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). Consequently, the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), UN-Habitat, and Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), held a two-day Capacity Building Workshop on SDG Budgeting and

Voluntary Local Review (VLR) Preparation in Kumasi, Ghana. The workshop brought together four (4) representatives each from all ten cities participating cities, including Development Planning Officers, Physical Planning Officers, Ghana Statistical Service Officers, and Education or Health Officers.

The training was designed to strengthen the institutional capacity of Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies (MMAs) to analyze data and report on SDG implementation progress at the local level, in alignment with national and global reporting frameworks. Over the two days, participants gained technical grounding in the preparation of credible and high-quality VLR reports: covering methodology, stakeholder engagement, policy alignment, SDG financing and evidence-based planning as well as hands-on training in GIS and spatial analysis using ArcGIS Pro. In the end, the city teams also presented progress updates, enabling peer learning and targeted technical feedback from programme partners.



Group photograph for the workshop for preparation of reports



Presentation on preparation of SDG reports

Looking Ahead

As Ghana continues to urbanize, the importance of data-informed planning will only grow. The Smart SDG Cities Programme provides a compelling model for how digital innovation, participatory governance, and decentralized decision-making can work together to accelerate sustainable urban development.

The experience of participating cities demonstrates that data is not merely a technical resource—it is a strategic asset that can transform governance, improve public service delivery, strengthen climate resilience, and empower local communities.

Building on these gains, UN-Habitat will continue working with government partners and the MMAs to sustain the momentum towards inclusive and sustainable urban development. The second phase of implementation is focused on finalizing baseline data analysis, preparation of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) reports, and identification of high impact/priority projects for implementation.

For Ghana's decentralisation agenda, the lesson is clear: when cities are equipped with the right data, tools, and institutional capacity, they are better positioned to plan effectively, respond to emerging challenges, and deliver sustainable development outcomes for all.

In the journey towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, empowered cities are built on effective data systems—and Ghana's Smart SDG Cities Programme is showing the way forward.


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DEEPENING DECENTRALISATION IN GHANA

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