



**Integration of Ghana
Local Authorities in the European Cooperation
Programming Process
2021-2027**

ANALYTICAL REPORT



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SUMMARY

This analytical report provides the state of the art of the decentralization process in the perspective for the localization and territorializing of national and sectoral policies and programs in Ghana through the local governance system. Effective local governance is key to development that is inclusive and sustainable, at the local as well as the national levels. It is essential in improving the quality of life of the people both at the urban and rural settings, reducing inequality in all its forms across the society, and enhancing relations between people and public institutions. The report shows a strong political commitment to decentralisation and territorialization of national and sectoral policies in Ghana. This has been demonstrated through development planning policies, administrative, political and fiscal decentralisation. Despite some challenges the national association of local authorities Ghana (NALAG) has serve as the mouthpiece of local governments in Ghana. Local authorities should therefore not only be viewed as passive implementers of national policies but also as policy formulators. Hence, NALAG should be giving a voice to participate in the 2021-2027 EU cooperation programming process.

ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS

CPESDP	Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies
DACF	District Assemblies Common Fund
DPCUs	District Planning Coordinating Units
EU	European Union
LED	Local Economic Development
MMDA	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MMDCs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives
MTDF	Medium-Term Development Framework
NALAG	National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NPP	National Patriotic Party
PFJ	Planting for Food and Jobs
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
RCCs	Regional Coordinating Councils
RPCUs	Regional Planning Coordinating Units
SDGS	Sustainable Development Goals
1D1F	One District One Factory
1V1D	One Village One Dam
1R1DP	One region One Industrial Park

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980's many countries have carried out decentralization programs, devolving many central government responsibilities to regional and local governments. In most cases regional and local governments have played these devolved roles successfully especially when devolution is well planned, implemented efficiently, and managed competently. The role of local governments has been widely acknowledged and it is high time to urgently identify the policy directions needed to enable local governments perform their role effectively for their citizens. This analytical report argues that local governments are political actors and that they can and should influence policy directions and not only as implementing agencies.

The need for this discussion is timely at this crucial moment of global challenges as well as emerging need to re-strategize the way forward. As we prepare for in-country EU programming process, there is the need for local governments and their associations to strongly showcase how their role has led to improvement in economic and social development. This report maintains that local governments should not only be seen as mere implementers of central government policies but also as political actors and should be giving a voice in the EU programming process to influence strategic policy directions. Afterall, whatever central government decides ends up with local governments to implement, hence the need for local governments to be fully involved in the decision processes.

This report examines the critical role of decentralisation and local development in Ghana and provides a political economy analysis of the territorialization of national plans and sectoral policies as well as the developmental role of local authorities. The analytical report also discusses the added value of territorial approaches to local development and the impeccable role of district assemblies in the implementation and achievement of sustainable development goals. Finally, a SWOT analysis of the national association of local authorities (NALAG), the umbrella body of local authorities in Ghana. This analytical report is aimed at national and supranational governments, international development partners and local government associations, especially targeting at giving NALAG a voice in the EU programming process.

2. DECENTRALISATION IN GHANA AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The Ghanaian Government is committed to decentralisation in order to promote democratic development and the improvement of public services. Indeed, decentralisation in Ghana pre-dates independence as chiefs and community leaders managed various communities. However, decentralisation has been pretty slow during the British colonial era and post immediate independence. From the period 1988 Ghana rolled out a comprehensive decentralisation policy

and introduced local government system including both administrative, fiscal and political decentralisation. This led to the creation of a number of District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies (MMDAs) with powers and responsibilities to take charge of developing their local areas. The number of MMDAs has since increased and assumed greater responsibility in local development in terms of social, economic and other services.

After a successful transition to democracy in 1992, Ghana implemented an aggressive decentralisation which has since be largely successful. The 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic mandated that Parliament legislate to devolve power and resources to the grassroots. In response, Local Government Act 462 was passed, which formally shifted the responsibility for the performance of some public functions to local government bodies called District Assemblies. From 1993, the number of MMDAs have increased considerably motivated by not only political consideration but also for developmental purposes.

The objectives embedded in the decentralization policy included improvement in the local production and delivery of public goods and services, responsiveness of service providers to popular demands, and the empowerment of officials familiar with local-level problems to tailor development plans to specific needs (Republic of Ghana 2003). It was intended to reduce overload and congestion at the center and speed up operational decision-making and implementation of programs by minimizing the decision-making hierarchies and other bottlenecks associated with the over-centralization of power and functions at the national capital (Aye 2008; Ahwoi 2010). It was also promoted as a pro-poor policy, designed to reduce poverty through wealth creation and the efficient use of scarce resources.

Ghana's local governance system is strongly supported by a number of legal and legislative instruments. Among them are: (1) The 1992 constitution of Ghana; (2) Local Government Act, 1993, Act 462; (3) National Development Planning (System) Act, 1994, Act 480; (4) District Assemblies' Common Fund Act, 1993, Act 455; (5) Local Government Service Act, 2003, Act 656; (6) Institute of Local Government Studies Act, 2003, Act 647; (7) Subsidiary legislation including the individual Establishment Instruments of the respective Assemblies and the Local Government (Urban, Town, Zonal Councils and Unit Committees) (Establishment) Instrument, 1994 (Li1589); and Legislative Instrument 1961. Indeed, District Assemblies' Common Fund Act, 1993, Act 455 was promulgated to ensure financial support to MMDAs for local development.

In 2016 the local governance Act was reviewed culminating into the Local Governance Act 2016 (Act 936). The Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) recognises MMDAs as the highest political authority and confers on them to be in charge of the overall development of their area of jurisdictions. Article 12 (1 to 5) of the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) specifies copiously

and comprehensively the functions of the local governments in Ghana. A critical look at these functions gives an impression that most of the responsibilities for the development of Ghana rest with the local government authorities. Local governments are therefore considered as critical in the development architecture of Ghana.

Since the promulgation of decentralisation in 1988, MMDAs in Ghana have helped improved planning and implementation of national development programmes at the local levels. MMDAs have also helped to promote greater flexibility in the implementation of local programmes and provide a means of co-ordinating the various agencies involved at the local levels in the process of development. With their mandate developing their areas of jurisdiction, MMDAs have undertaken development projects such as the construction and maintenance of classroom blocks, feeder roads, clinics, public toilets, markets and provision of street-lights in previously neglected rural areas that were denied access to these services (Ayee, 1992). The improved infrastructure development has improved health and sanitation infrastructure and thereby removed some of the barriers to social and economic development.

Indeed, MMDAs in Ghana are on the front line of the challenges faced by the local people and are leaders in identifying and implementing solutions to those challenges. Elected and appointed staff of MMDAs work where people live, meet them face-to-face every day, and know their capacities, needs, and aspirations. For many people in Ghana, MMDAs is that part of government that most directly impacts on their lives, particularly via the provision of services like water, sanitation, primary education and healthcare. MMDAs can provide the leadership needed to generate inclusive, sustainable economic development and can complement national and supranational policies, plans, and programs.

Even though MMDAs are considered relevant to development and are responsible for providing public services, government funding to MMDAs is insufficient and sometimes unreliable. For instance, the constitutionally mandated DACF – 5% of the total revenue of Ghana to be transferred to MMDAs, has not been only insufficient but highly unreliable and erratic. The potential for mobilising locally raised revenue is not being harnessed. Indeed, decentralisation may contribute to development, but this depends on the developmental nature of the decentralising state, the national policy commitment to territorial development, and the role local authorities may play in promoting it: their autonomy and their accountability.

2. AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

2.1 Territorialization of national plans and sectoral policies

Ghana has been implementing a decentralisation process of devolving political, administrative and fiscal authority to local governments called MMDAs since 1988. Drawing on the lessons of reforms over the years, MMDAs were designed to be the highest political, decision-making, planning, budgeting and executing body at the local level. Over the years, the MMDA system has evolved through the implementation of incremental reforms designed to strengthen administration and management; deliver local economic development and poverty reduction; and enhance local capacity for social development and accountability.

Article 240 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana stated that Parliament shall enact appropriate laws to ensure that functions, powers, responsibilities and resources are at all times transferred from central government to local government units in a coordinated manner and shall take such measures as are necessary to enhance the capacity of local government authorities to plan, initiate, co-ordinate, manage and execute policy in respect of all matters affecting the people within their areas with a view to ultimately localizing those activities. Finally, it also stated in that as far as practicable, persons in the service of local government shall be subject to the effective control of local authorities (Ayee 2004).

Ghana operates a decentralized system of national planning. The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) was established under Articles 86 and 87 of the 1992 Constitution to advise the President on development planning policy and strategy. Since its formation, the NDPC has worked to ensure the preparation of MTDPs in Ghana. At the national level, the NDPC collaborates with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to develop sector policies and plans that will feed into the general consolidated national policy. At the regional level, the NDPC coordinates with Regional Planning Coordinating Units (RPCUs) whose responsibility is to directly supervise District Planning Coordinating Units (DPCUs).

At the local level, the NDPC coordinates with MMDAs primarily through the RPCUs. The mandate of the MMDAs is to develop local MTDPs that will be fed into the broader national policy frame. The MDAs and MMDAs also serve as the direct points of plan implementation. Indeed, since the 1992 development planning in Ghana has been a bottom-up approach and MMDAs are at the forefront of providing the necessary information and plans that eventually culminates in national development plan. Similarly, implementation of national plans is carried out at the local level by MMDAs who are closet to the people. MMDAs therefore play key role in both development policy making and implementation in Ghana. MMDAs have been assigned with the responsibility for policy adoption within the context of national sectoral policies, local level

integrated development planning through sectoral coordination, and implementation of development policies and programs.

In general central government retains control over policy for service delivery, while the provision of facilities and implementation of policies are shared. For example, MMDAs are responsible for the provision of basic education, but national government retains control over education policy. MMDAs are also responsible for public health, environmental protection and sanitation. Social welfare is a shared responsibility with national government, and planning a shared responsibility with RCCs.

In recent years, National Decentralisation Policies and Action Plans (2004, 2010, 2015) were formulated which anticipated further improvements in decentralized service delivery, local economic growth and social development. It was anticipated that through administrative strengthening, inclusiveness, better coordination and greater collaboration with civil society and local government stakeholders there would be rapid change. The establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee in 2016 has added further momentum to the implementation and expansion of decentralisation.

Several government policies have anchored their implementation on the shoulders of MMDAs. First, the development of the medium term development framework (2018-2021) took a bottom-up approach where MMDAs mandated by the 1992 constitution and the local governance act, 2016 (Act 936) as the highest political authority at the local level and responsible for the overall development of their area provided the needed information for the development of the MTDF (2018-2021). The implementation of the MTDF (2018-2021) will be done by MMDAs.

Second, government special initiatives programmes of one district one factory (1D1F), Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ), One Village One Dam (1V1D), One region One Industrial Park (1R1DP), among others whereas designed by the central government, their implementation is largely carried out MMDAs. For instance, in the implementation of the 1D1F initiative, MMDAs are to form district implementation team (DIT) to ensure that right environment is provided for the private sector to established agro-based processing factories.

Third, national sectoral plans policies and strategies such as national health policy (2020), Education Strategic Plan (2010 – 2020), National Gender Policy (2015), Ghana Industrial Policy, Ghana National Climate Change Policy, National Employment Policy (2014), among others have acknowledged the critical role of MMDAs in their implementation. For instance, the National Employment Policy (2014) indicated that MMDAs will take appropriate measures to implement policy interventions that are relevant to the achievement of the NEP. The NEDP further states

that MMDAs should ensure that their development activities and investments take account of productive employment and income generation.

Recognising the importance of MMDAs in Ghana's development, the central government has consistently created MMDA as part of attempts to localised development and ensure that local people participate in the governance process. Therefore, in addition to the existing 65 local councils in 1987, the central government created 45 new LG territories under the jurisdiction of district assemblies (DAs) and currently 260 MMDAs. Below the DAs the central establish sub-district authorities, town, area and zonal councils, and unit committees as the lowest structures to provide focal points for discussion of local problems and take remedial action. Again, the central introduced PNDC Law 207, which made LGs the highest political and administrative authority at the local level and responsible for the overall development of local areas.

Indeed, the implementation National Decentralization Action Plan (2010-2015) has seen re-structuring and re-tooling of systems and processes. Some critical steps have included the implementation of LI 1961 (Departments of District Assemblies) Commencement Instrument 2009, which provides for the conversion of departments into departments of assemblies; transfer of functions to relevant departments of assemblies, and further operationalization of the Local Government Service with the transfer of the staff of the Departments of the Assemblies from the Civil Service; postings and recruitment to fill established gaps. In the running up to the 2016 elections, the ruling government made a promise to create six new regions to accelerate local governance and improve local development and these six new regions were created in 2018, making a total of sixteen regions in Ghana.

Whereas decentralisation is intended to ensure political devolution and effective local participation, this has really been constrained in Ghana. For instance, the most influential personality in the MMDA is the Chief Executive who is appointed by the President instead of by popular election. As a result, the Chief Executive who performs the day-to-day executive and administrative functions of the MMDA and chairs the powerful Executive Committee is a presidential appointee. Similarly, 30% of Assembly members are appointed by the president while 70% are elected based on universal adult suffrage. Several attempts to implement political decentralisation were either abandoned or not successful. For instance, the PNDC feeling insured, considered political decentralization premature and so it also abandoned political decentralization.

Similarly, the ruling NPP government promised to ensure that MMDCEs are elected by the local people through universal adult suffrage. However, attempt to change the law through a referendum so that MMDCEs will be elected by the electorates was unsuccessful. The opposition was not merely on the basis that MMDCs should be elected but the politicisation of the elections

where candidates will contest on the basis of their political parties. It is imperative to note that this issue of getting MMDCEs elected is still high on the political agenda.

2.2 Local Government financing mechanisms

Territorialization of national plans and sectoral policies is not complete without sustainable financing mechanism through fiscal decentralisation. Performance of district level functions requires adequate funds and appropriate financing arrangements for MMDAs to make them responsive to the service delivery needs of the local population. Decentralization by devolution entails financial autonomy where MMDAs become initiators and implementers of development within their jurisdictions. This requires a regular allocation of adequate funds to meet their development needs and the legal mandate to raise funds.

Until 1994, fiscal decentralisation was very minimal in Ghana's decentralisation system and financial allocations to local governments were based on the discretion of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Before then and especially in 1980s the central government allowed district assemblies to collect some taxes which was previously collected by the internal revenue service and shared to all the districts based on a formula set by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. This was replaced in 1994 by a mandate in the constitution for central government to transfer not less than 5 percent (called District Assemblies Common Fund) of the total national revenue to district assemblies for local development.

Following the implementation of this constitutional requirement, an independent common fund administrator was appointed to develop a formula for sharing out the fund. It is important to note that 10% of the DACF is held centrally as a reserve fund while 90% is shared out. Moreover, not only are these disbursements delayed, central government directives determine 75% of expenditure while only 25% of disbursements are fully discretionary to MMDAs. This limits the financial autonomy and capacity of MMDAs to initiate and implement development programmes and projects for the benefit of the local population. Having realized that the initial allocation of the 5% of the total revenue of Ghana as District Assemblies Common Fund was too meagre to meet the developmental needs of MMDAs, the figure was increased to 7.5% in 2004.

The 1992 constitution and the local governance Act 2016 (Act 936) outlined the powers of MMDAs to charge fees, engage in joint ventures, rate, license, provide services and acquire property. The central government through the Controller and Accountants General Department pays the salaries of MMDA staffs. Salaries of some staff working under the DA are still being paid by the sector Ministries. Amongst others, it made provision for financial management and internal auditing as well as the privileges and immunities of assembly members.

Clearly there is strong political commitment to integrate the spatial dimension in development management of the country. This has been demonstrated through development planning policies, administrative, political and fiscal decentralisation. Specifically, Ghana's decentralization is aimed at empowering communities to be able to effectively participate in the decision-making process that relate to the overall management and development of rural areas. In furtherance of ensuring local participation in development management of the country, MMDAs were given an unprecedented 86 functions, that included planning, finance, budgeting, infrastructural development and security, by their legislative instrument

2.3. Local Authorities as a development actor in Ghana

Decentralization is a means of empowering local institutions and authorities for responsive and downwardly accountable local governance and development. In view of its association with the concept of subsidiarity, decentralization is assumed to promote local participation, democratic governance, responsiveness to local needs, empowerment of local actors, equity in power sharing and resource distribution, downward accountability and poverty reduction. Ghana's local governments are arenas for autonomous policy decisions following its 1988 decentralization program.

The MMDAs implement development plans and programmes coordinated by central government's planning commission, while also working alongside 'district-level' policy, planning, and programme implementation by deconcentrated line ministries (health, education, and agriculture) which continue to receive funding and directives from their national and regional offices. Officially, the responsibilities for the actions of line ministries and departments are placed under the MMDAs, but this coordination is incomplete.

Similarly, while the Office of the Head of Local Government Service (OHLGS) nominally contains all staff of the decentralized departments, this too competes with sector-specific rules on staffing that complicate MMDA control over local civil servants. The acknowledgement of the role of MMDAs in local development through their active involvement in the design and implementation of urban development and rural development policies.

3. TERRITORIAL APPROACHES TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Territorial approach to local development is a national policy that promotes endogenous, integrated, multi-scalar and incremental local development by empowering autonomous and accountable local authorities. A territorial approach to development puts the territory at the heart of local development and governance efforts. This ambitious approach, which can be seen as one

of the possible expressions of the multi-stakeholder approach at local level, has the potential to enhance the ownership of local development strategies and strengthen coordination of development efforts. The approach puts the emphasis on the cooperation among all relevant actors. They are mobilised on the basis of their distinct mandates and in line with the principle of “different visions and expertise but shared interests”, around a local development strategy.

Territorial approach to local development is designed to give local authorities the autonomy and resources to design their development in collaboration with local actors, including business and CSOs, and integrate with regional and national agendas. Clearly, territorial approach to local development is an important developmental policy that national governments in decentralizing states may want to adopt, and international development partners may want to support, in order to (a) unleash the full potential of local development for national economic growth and social cohesion and ultimately (b) bring to fruition the developmental promises of decentralization reforms (Romeo, 2014).

In Ghana a number of national policies exist that supports territorial development including the existence decentralisation stipulated in the national constitution, legislative instruments and decentralisation policies as well as well institutions (MLGRD, IMCC, OHLGS and ILGS); national urban policy (2012); national LED policy (2013 and 2020); national rural development policy (2018) and national decentralisation policy strategy (2020). As mandated by law to be in charge of overall local development, MMDAs as part of territorial approach to development are well placed at the centre of development to work with a variety of partners: the different levels of local government, civil society organisations, business and the community to promote development.

It is however imperative to note that promoting territorial development requires that local authorities empowered with meaningful autonomy and embedded in effective accountability networks. Without autonomy, there may be no efficiency gains in public expenditure and no additional local resources mobilisation. Without accountability, special interests and related inefficiencies might be common. The fact is that developmental local authorities will emerge only if decentralisation reforms themselves are re-conceptualised as “empowerment of people through the empowerment of their local governments” (Bahl, 2005) and not just as a transfer of functions and resources across levels of the governance and public administration system.

Local authorities would then be recognised as self-government mechanisms of a local political constituency (not just managerial entities to deliver some services), which are not only responsible for specific functions devolved or delegated to them, but are also empowered with a

general mandate for the welfare of their communities and may therefore develop, finance and implement their own local policies (in addition to localising national policies).

4. TERRITORIALIZING OF GLOBAL AGENDAS: THE SDGs

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs and their 169 SDG targets in 2015 was marked by the realisation that to be effective, SDG implementation has to be bottom-up. This means deploying a multi-stakeholder approach at the heart of which is the concept of localising the SDGs, in particular through local governments. Thus, most SDG targets are closely related to the daily mandate of local governments. Their achievement will largely depend on credible national policies, notably on decentralization, as well as on the existence of empowered local government that can “own” the SDGs and translate them in local public policies and outcomes that are relevant for their local populations. Since 2015, substantial efforts have been devoted to developing and sharing policy and best practices on localising SDGs, accompanied by a plethora of guides and roadmaps.

As part of its effort to demonstrate commitment towards the achievement of the SDGs, the government of Ghana in August 2017 inaugurated a technical committee for the execution of the SDGs and the Africa Agenda 2063. The formation of the committee was the first move in the localization of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. It is therefore expected that the competent authorities’ activities towards localization the SDGs will be reflected in the various Annual Progress Reports (APRs) of the Districts Medium Term Development Plans (DMTDPs) in all MMDAs. Ghana’s strategy for incorporating the SDGs, involved the Alignment, Adaptation and Adoption of the goals in the existing development plan and monitoring.

In Ghana, national SDG coordination is done through the NDPC and the SDG Implementation Coordinating Committee; the latter brings together key ministries/agencies (including MLGRD and the Ghana Statistical Service) and other stakeholders including CSOs. The SDGs are incorporated in the Medium-Term Development Framework (2018-2021) and Coordinated Programme of Economic & Social Development Policies (2017-2024) alongside the AU Agenda 2063. The decentralised planning system in Ghana requires that the NDPC outlines the guidelines for the preparation of the MTDP and in this outline there is a formal requirement for the MMDAs to align SDGs to their development plans. This affords MMDAs the opportunity to integrate SDGs and targets into the MTDP, annual work plan and programmes.

According to the UNDP (2017) the successful implementation of the SDGs will depend on the ability of MMDAs in Ghana to integrate them into their MTDPs. The UNDP (2017)

indicated that there are a number of reasons for mainstreaming the SDGs into the MTDPs of MMDAs:

- MMDAs are positioned to effectively transform the goals and targets in a pragmatic way, fit them into their own particular context and help the local communities to understand how local action contributes to their achievement.
- Mainstreaming SDGs into existing policies, practices and plans at the MMDAs will ensure a more efficient use of scarce resources, help local authorities find synergies between the SDGs and local development plans.
- Their localization therefore presents a fresh opportunity to strengthen the decentralization agenda.
- The implementation of the SDGs will require active involvement of relevant stakeholders, especially sectoral and MMDAs in order to build solid institutional structures and to ensure local ownership and also set out a long-term objective to help MMDAs to contribute to national level implementation and realization of the SDGs by 2030.
- The integration of the SDGs into existing development frameworks offers local MMDAs the opportunity to review existing plans and strategies, to examine how they could be augmented or adapted to achieve more ambitious outcomes; and to mobilize innovative financing and partnership mechanisms to accelerate local development.

In Ghana, climate change is mainstreamed in the MTDPs of MMDAs. The mainstreaming of climate change is the integration of climate change issues the development planning, budgeting, monitoring, monitoring and evaluation processes of the MTDP. Mainstreaming of climate change into MTDP should not just be adding climate change issues to local development planning and budgeting processes, but rather making climate change issues a “normal thing” and dealing with the trade-offs and maximizing synergies across targets in a complete planning cycle of MMDAs. In other words, making climate change issues a normal thing in the MMDA development planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes (UNDP, 2017).

5. SWOT ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The evolution of the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG) can be traced to 2nd April 1962, where two separate associations (the National Association of Local Councils and the Association of City/Municipal Councils) existed to serve the interest of rural and urban councils in Ghana. On 18th November 1977 the two Associations realizing that there was a similarity in their objectives and that they were performing similar and duplicating roles, merged

to form the National Association of Local Councils (NALCO) as an apolitical organization without religious or philosophical pre-occupation or orientation.

Following the restructuring of the system of local government in Ghana in 1988 by the government of Ghana, and in tune with an international designation of Local Governments, NALCO became the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG). NALAG continued to receive government subvention until 1998 when the Association voluntarily decided to opt out of it to give it the independence and autonomy to play its roles more effectively.

Today, NALAG is the umbrella organisation and the mouthpiece of all MMDAs in Ghana. The membership of NALAG is compulsory for all the MMDAs established by Law. In this way Article 1(1) of NALAG’s constitution states that “the Association aims to promote the development of Local government and decentralization in Ghana” through advocacy and lobbying. Based on the constitution of NALAG, it works to achieve its objectives through

- Advocacy and Lobbying
- Training and Capacity Building Activities
- Organization of fora/platforms for good governance, leadership and best practices
- Research and Development
- Networking and Collaboration work
- Public Education
- Direct Support to District Assemblies
- Facilitating City to City Links

An overview of the SWOT analysis of NALAG is shown in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: SWOT Analysis of NALAG

Strengthens	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leadership • Capacity to engage central government • Good collaboration with many national institutions • Good collaboration with international organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate financial resources • Low human resources capacity • Poor Visibility and Presence • Lack strong advocacy role
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional and legal support for decentralisation • Strong decentralisation environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political interference • Membership apathy

6. CONCLUSION

Since gaining independence in 1957, successive governments in Ghana have looked to a vibrant local government system to aid the country's development. Ghana's current decentralization programme was initiated in 1988. The process of decentralization continued and was endorsed by Ghana's 1992 constitution and a number of legislative instruments. As a result, there has been the creation of MMDAs in Ghana over the years and currently stands at 260.

Territorialisation of national plans and sectoral policies in Ghana resides with MMDAs in Ghana. Formulation of MTDPs in Ghana takes a bottom-up approach where MMDAs are mandated to develop local MTDPs on the basis of guidelines issued by the NDPC which eventually feeds into the broader national development plan. Similarly, implementation of national and sectoral plans is carried out at the local level by MMDAs who are closest to the people. MMDAs therefore play a key role in both development policy making and implementation in Ghana. Because of this important role, the constitution of Ghana has made financial provisions to support MMDAs in both policy formulation and implementation through the DACF as well as the autonomy to collect local revenue to finance local development.

Again, all SDGs are mainstreamed into the MTDPs of MMDAs as they are better achieved at the local level and helps leave no one behind. As a result, MMDAs have played a key role in the territorialisation of policy national and international policy agendas. Clearly, as political actors, MMDAs not only implement policies and plans within their jurisdiction, but they also can and should be involved in the definition and influence of policies required to further enhance local development and territorialisation of the development process. This is because MMDAs provide the direct link to citizens and provide the voice and leadership in the development of communities. MMDAs in Ghana are involved in the provision of health, education, social and cultural services that are essential to peoples' livelihood security. Having performed their functions very well over the years, it is time for MMDAs and their national association – NALAG to be giving NALAG a voice in the EU programming process.

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