

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

## Community Partipation in a Decentralization System: the Case of Afadzato South District in the Volta Region of Ghana

**Susie Afua Adoboe**

Public Relations Officer, Ghana National Association of Teachers, Head Office, Ghana

**Abdulai Jamatutu Seidu**

Management Consultant, RAFT Research and Business Consult Limited, Ghana

### **Abstract:**

*The decentralization system in Ghana seeks to transfer political, administrative and financial authority from the center to local communities through the establishment of Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies. The system is aimed at giving rural communities and their citizens the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the development of their societies. The Afadzato South District is one of the newly district created in June 2012 and before its creation, most communities within the Afadzato South District suffered some kind of stereotype from the Hohoe South District from which it has been separated as they lack certain basic social amenities such as schools, Health Posts, Toilets, market sheds, recreational grounds as well as good road networks. This has been attributed to the inability of community members to effectively participation in the governance of their own communities; participate in the development of infrastructure as well as sanitation and public health issues. The findings of the study show that the level of community participation in the Afadzato South District is significant to the infrastructural development, public health and sanitation. Also, the study revealed that high level of community participation indicates that the decentralization process is less centralized in the District; hence the higher the level of community participation in infrastructural development, sanitation and public health education, the less centralized the decentralization process.*

**Keywords:** Decentralization, devolution, community participation, Afadzato south district

### **1. Introduction**

A critical look through Ghana's political administration shows that the country's local governance system can be traced back to the colonial era where the citizens were indirectly governed through local gazetted chiefs (Kuusi, 2009; Ferrazi, 2006). The current decentralization system practiced by the state strives to transfer political, administrative and financial power from the central government to the local communities with the establishment of Assemblies. The Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana has made the process clearer through certain provisions. Under Article 34 Section 5 (d) of the 1992 Constitution, the state is mandated to "make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to enable them participate in decision making at every level in the national life and in government" (The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana cited by Mahama, 2013; P, 5).

Also, the Local Government Act 1993 (Act 462) authorizes the District Assemblies to carry out development at the local level by ensuring that they reduce poverty and improve the living standard of the people at the grass root. The decentralization process was adopted with the aim of giving rural communities and their citizens the opportunity to take part and contribute meaningfully to the development of their society. To achieve its objective, Chapter 20 of the 1992 Republican Constitution identifies five (5) important principles that the decentralization must work to ensure which are as follows; Transfer of functions, powers, responsibilities and resources from the centre to local government; Laws to provide measures that will build the capacity of local authorities to help plan, initiate, coordinate, manage and execute policies; Establish a sound local financial base with adequate and reliable sources of revenue; Vest with control of persons in the services of local governments in local authorities, as far as possible; and Create opportunities for people to participate effectively in governance to ensure the accountability of local authorities (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2010, p.2; Mahama, 2013, p.3).

The decentralization process of local governance provides a means to increase the level of community participation by engaging the local folks in development of various projects; infrastructure, sanitation, health education, revenue mobilization and monitoring and evaluation mechanism development. The Afadzato South District is one of the newly created districts in June 2012. Before its creation, communities under the catchment area of the district were part of the Hohoe South district. Communities suffered some sort of stereotype from their mother district from which they have been separated. They lack basic social amenities due to the social limitations they have been exposed to such as good road network, reliable telecommunications system and tertiary educational

facilities. This to a large extent has been attributed to the inability of community members to effectively participate in the governance of their own communities. It is an established fact that community members have the potential to contribute significantly to the development of various projects in their communities (ILGS, 2012; Ahwoi, 2010; Kuusi, 2009). They can provide direct labour force for the execution of major infrastructural projects such as hospitals, schools and other administrative buildings; provide the needed human resource for public health education, sanitation and disseminating government policies within their own communities, enhance revenue mobilization for self-help development and provide active monitoring and evaluation mechanism for effective implementation of the decentralization process. However, most Assemblies lack the commitment to engage the citizens on these developmental issues, especially the utilisation of financial resources (Kuusi, 2009). This has become a central point for academic and policy research, thus the major focus of this research. Even though, a lot of research and publication have been done on participatory approach to development, the focus has been limited to democratic decentralization which looks at the district level participation (participation of Assembly members in decision making at the Assembly) at the expense of mass grassroots participation in development issues, thus the need for an assessment of community participation in the decentralization process with regards to a deprived or newly created districts like the Afadzato South District.

The degree of the possible gains from any decentralization process depends upon the variation in the optimal levels of community participation across the various aspects of community or project developments. If the optimal level (desired level) of community participation remains the same for the various developmental projects, then the development losses from providing a uniform level of community participation to the various aspects of projects will tend to be relatively trivial. But if the optimal level varies from one project to the other, then the development losses from providing a uniform level of community participation to the various aspects of projects will be relatively great (Rosen, 1988). With regards to the above case, the assumption is that community members must provide much of the workforce for developmental activities within the district holding all other influencing factors (skills required etc.) constant. So the optimal level for a project is achieved when community members constitute majority of the labour or workforce for a particular project. Otherwise, community participation is considered to be worse. A scale of 'High level and Low level' is used to determine whether community participation has reached optimal or worse level. Once community participation in development activities is high, we safely conclude that optimal level is achieved. But if participation level is low, then we conclude that optimal level is not achieved. A high level of participation also signifies 'positive' outcome for the decentralization and a low level of participation indicates a negative outcome. The above reasoning forms the basis for the formulation of the following hypotheses given a clear focus of this research.

- Hypothesis 1: The higher the level of community participation in infrastructural development, the less centralized the decentralization process.
- Hypothesis 2: The higher the level of community participation in sanitation and public health education, the less centralized the decentralization process.

With these hypotheses, the research seeks among other things to; ascertain the contributions of community participation in infrastructural development, sanitation and public health in the Afadzato-South District as well as examine how significant these contributions are to infrastructural development, sanitation and public health education to the overall development of the district.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. *The Concept of Decentralization*

Decentralization is a dynamic concept. Some scholars view it as the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to the lower levels of government (e.g.; Schmidt, 2007 and Leroux, 2012). Decentralization is closely linked to the concept of subsidiarity (Macrory, 2008), which proposes that functions (or tasks) be devolved to the lowest level of social order that is capable of completing them (Walter, 2001). As the UNDP states: "Decentralizing governance is the restructuring of authority so that there is a system of co-responsibility between institutions of governance at the central, regional and local levels according to the principle of subsidiarity, thus increasing the overall quality and effectiveness of the system of governance, while increasing the authority and capabilities of sub-national levels (International Conference on Decentralization, 2010). Decentralization has undoubtedly gained popularity within the last two decades; it is not a new concept. The term attracted attention in the 1950s and 1960s when British and French colonial administrations prepared colonies for independence by devolving responsibilities for certain programmes to local authorities (Loomis, 2005).

In the 1980s decentralization came to the fore front of the development agenda alongside the renewed global emphasis on governance and human-centered approaches to human development (WDR, 2000). Today, both developed and developing countries are pursuing decentralization policies (Conyers, 1983). Robert Ebel (2001), points out in his overview of decentralization that: "The western world sees decentralization as an alternative to provide public services in a more cost-effective way. Developing countries are pursuing decentralization reforms to counter economic inefficiencies, macroeconomic instability, and ineffective governance (Johnson, 1999). Post-communist transition countries are embracing decentralization as a natural step in the shift to market economies and democracy. Latin America is decentralizing as a result of political pressure to democratize. African states view decentralization as a path to national unity (Ebel et al., 2001). There are many different reasons why governments pursue decentralization and there are numerous forms and degrees that decentralization can take on.

While there are numerous political and economic reasons why governments adopt decentralization policies, scholars and practitioners have theorized about the interdependence of decentralization and size variables such as population, land area and GDP (e.g.; Hogler, 2007). Are countries with certain demographic or economic characteristics more likely to attempt decentralization? Indeed high-

income countries are relatively more decentralized than low-income countries, and Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest levels of local expenditure and revenue shares compared to the world (Ribot, 2003). Additionally, countries with greater populations and land area are more decentralized as country size and population increases, sub-national governments are expected to play a larger role in service delivery (McCarty et al., 1993).

## *2.2. The Concept of Community Participation*

Generally, the definition of participation in recent times with regards to development has been found in development projects and programs. The concept has been defined to mean strengthening the relevance, quality and sustainability of planned projects and programs. The World Bank Learning Group on Participation in an influential statement, defined participation as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (World Bank, 1995). Participation could therefore be seen from this perspective as the level of consultation or decision making in all phases of a project cycle, from needs assessment, to appraisal, through to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation (MLGRD, 2010). While these participation projects could be funded by the state, participation within them was seen not as related to broader issues of politics or governance, but as a way of encouraging action outside the public sphere (Mahama, 2013). Moreover, the focus was often on direct participation of primary stakeholders, rather than indirect participation through elected representatives. The definition of participation in the new legislation is clearly of significance. Scholars share sentiments in the World Bank's definition as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (Otzen et al., 1999). Similarly, "Community/Public/Citizen participation is the act of allowing individual citizens within a community to take part in the formulation of policies and proposals on issues that affect the whole community" (Onibokun and Faniran, 1995, p. 9).

More radical definitions of participation, however, not only emphasizes community involvement in the processes of local development, but also demand that social development lead to the empowerment of community members. This involves social change to bring about improved living standards within the community and is especially significant to women (Liebenberg, 1999). As a result, the emphasis on participation is therefore crucial, and the formerly disadvantaged must be central targets for participation as key to social development. As Kehler (2000) argues that, participation is defined as: the organized efforts to increase the control over and access to resources and regulative institutions in society, on the part of individual citizens, groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control aimed at the socio-economic development of the whole community. Participation as argued from several perspectives can therefore be reconciled as the involvement of citizens in the ownership and control of resources aimed at developing the community.

### 2.2.1. Community Participation

Many scholars have offered various definitions to the concept of community participation. Brager, Specht, and Torczyner (1987) defined community participation as a means to educate citizens and to increase their competence. It is a vehicle for influencing decisions that affect the lives of citizens and an avenue for transferring political power within their community. However, community participation can also be a method to co-opt dissent, a mechanism for ensuring the receptivity, sensitivity, and even accountability of social services to the consumers (Pellizzoni, 2003). Armitage (1988) comprehends community participation as a process by which citizens act in response to public concerns, voice their opinions about decisions that affect them, and take responsibility for changes to their community. Westergaard (1986, p.14) view community participation as "collective efforts to increase and exercise control over resources and institutions on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from control of a community's resources or projects". This definition points toward a mechanism for ensuring community participation. A descriptive definition of community participation programs would imply the involvement of a significant number of persons of a community in situations or actions that enhance their well-being, for example, their income, security, or self-esteem (Chowdhury, 1996). In social work, community participation refers to "the active voluntary engagement of individuals and groups to change problematic conditions and to influence policies and programs that affect the quality of their lives or the lives of others" (Gamble and Weil, 1995). Oakley and Marsden (1987) defined community participation as the process by which individuals, families, or communities assume responsibility for their own welfare and develop a capacity to contribute to their own and the community's development.

### 2.2.2. Types/Forms of Community Participation

Community participation involves is an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits (Bamberger, 1986). Community participation is therefore an important component of community development and reflects a grassroots or bottom-up approach to problem solving.

Community participation is in different forms or concept and each of the concepts carries with it differing methods for strengthening or enhancing participation.

In the field of political participation, voter education, enhancing the awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizens, lobbying and advocacy provide the types of participation. These types are geared towards developing a more informed population who could hold elected representatives more responsible and answerable. This is often referred to as awareness participation.

In the social and community domains, participation is considered to be broader participatory and includes methods for appraisal, planning, monitoring large institutions, training and awareness building. As noted by Gaventa and Valderamma, (1999) greater importance within this context has been on the importance of participation not only to hold others accountable, but also as a self-development process, starting with the vocalization of grassroots needs and priorities, and building popular forms of organization.

With this, participation has to include the kingdom of knowledge and direct action, and not only the realm of representation and accountability. Ofei-Aboagye (2011) considered this type of participation as 'input making'.

Another type of participation widely recognize by scholars is the interaction or collaboration approach. This is form of participation provides citizen the opportunity to exchange information with other stakeholders and as such make joint decisions for effective development to take place.

### 2.2.3. Modes and Tools for Community Participation

It is established in literature that community participation does not happen for nothing. The basic idea is that community members must know what they need to participate in development activities and how they are going to get involve and contribute their quota in the development process. Community members do participate in development activities for different reasons. As noted by Ofei-Aboagye, (2011), most of participatory tools used are basic and simple to apply by community members. Most of them are also available to the ordinary community one and in most cases do not required the individual to pay or spend much money before having access to the tool. Participatory tools such as public notice boards or newspapers, mass media communications: television and radio are used to communicate, educate or publicize important events, or policies in the community. Tools such as community meetings, workshops, seminars, conferences and public hearings provide the opportunity for community members to interact collaborate and make inputs in the development process. These tools are important to the decentralization process and beneficial to the development of rural communities as they;

1. Make local information available to all stakeholders in the development channel. This enhances effective policy formulation and implementation.
2. Promote equitable and efficient distribution of local resources and delivery of public services in our communities
3. Reduces the tension between development practitioners and community members.
4. Empower the local people to take up the responsibility of developing their own communities.
5. Help build the indigenous knowledge and skills of rural folks at the grass-root level.

### *2.3. Decentralization as a tool for Community Participation*

Decentralization is a complex process that reaches beyond structural reforms proposed in institutional frameworks. Decentralization can address poverty, gender and inequality issues, environmental concerns, improvement of healthcare, education and access to technology (Holger, 2007). Decentralization does not only affect local government and civil service, but is conditional on the involvement of community organizations, stakeholders in the private sector, international aid organizations and citizens. The decentralization process brings decision-making closer to the people and therefore yields programs and services that better address local needs. The challenge is to ensure that all stakeholders can and will voice their opinions (Alam et al., 2011). As part of the decentralization process, policy makers and politicians are integrating programs to address citizen participation, promote advocacy groups, incorporate women and the poor in policy decisions, aid in poverty reduction and environmental initiatives at the local level, and encourage sub-national autonomy and creativity in addressing local needs.

While it is empirically difficult to prove the effects of decentralization on human development, there is a multitude of individuals that help illustrate successful steps forward. Community participation and boosting grass roots development plays a key role in the sustainability of programs and quality of life. Bringing stakeholders together to define priorities for projects and programs increases interest and sense of ownership, thus promotes sustainability in development (UNDP, 2010). Encouraging a culture of participatory democracy, assists in ensuring the accountability of elected local government officials, in turn increased responsiveness of local authorities and improved service provision assists in better revenue and local tax collection.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in its quest to encourage rural participation in development has and is sponsoring programs in Africa that aims at promoting more effective participation in the democratization process (UNDP, 2010). As a result of this project, more grassroots organizations are helping women to learn about their rights, identify special concerns, and generate support for their issues.

Due to this, women are gaining greater decision-making abilities in the household, community and political arenas. Not only does this program bolster the democratic processes, women have also gained more control over their destinies, which ultimately increases their contribution to the country's development (Jay, 2001). Empowering and supporting women and the under-privileged helps to improve their economic conditions and make progress in alleviating widespread poverty. Simply by increasing representation for these groups by mandating that a certain proportion of representatives belonging to certain group, help to achieve the goals of local governance and development.

### *2.4. The Importance of Community Participation in the Decentralization Process*

The obvious breach between the potentials of enhanced community participation through democratic decentralization and the common realities of participatory politics indicates the need to understand more the conditions that lead to effective participation, the barriers and dynamics to community participation in local governance. It also requires the identification of the enabling factors and methods that can be used to enhance the effectiveness and overcome the barriers as well. For those concerned with effective participation at the community level, the use of the various tools has given rise to the rapid improvement in the participatory approaches that have adopted. The mass media allows community members communicate back their grievances to those in authority. Community meetings, seminars and public hearings provide the opportunity for them to interact and collaborate with other stakeholders. Also, frequently responding to public and donor pressure, governments have been urged to adopt participatory approaches in their ministries as a

means of influencing policy, and as a form of planning at multiple levels (Holland et al., 1998). However, without effective participation of community members, the adopted approaches would not yield the desired results. Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) noted that “as progress is made from lower to higher levels of participation (information, consultation, decision making, and management) participatory processes become more complex and demand different types of skills, knowledge, experience, leadership and managerial capabilities”.

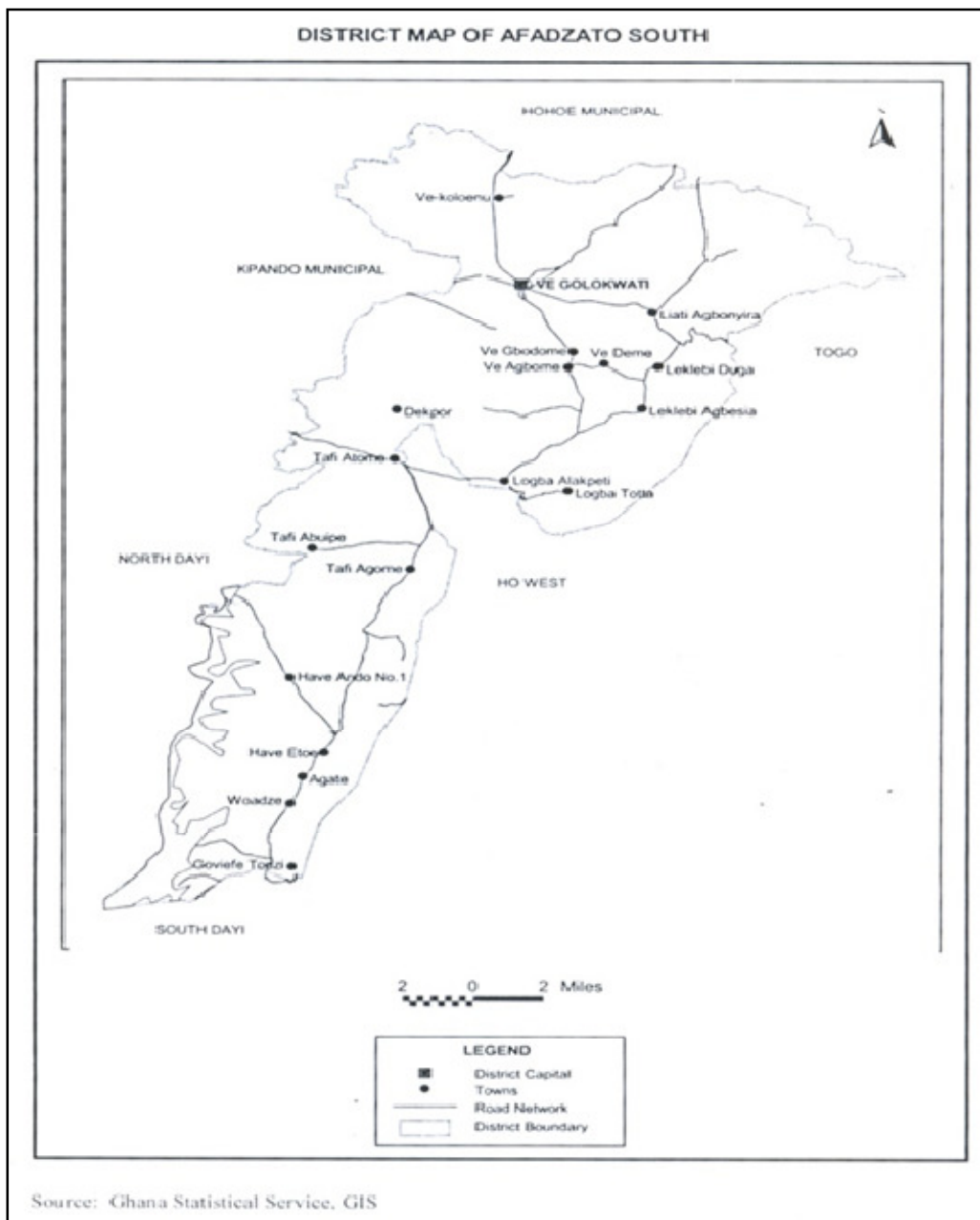
It is widely recognized that effective community participation leads those involved in development projects and programmes to engage with the state and with broader issues of governance, representation, transparency and accountability. It can be recalled that a World Bank workshop held in 1998 on Mainstreaming and Upscaling Participation of Primary Stakeholders, a key theme was around the need to engage with government to insure success and sustainability. Rather than focus only on the participation of primary stakeholders, there was a high degree of consensus on the need to link participation to secondary and tertiary stakeholders as well. This was to link community members, donors and governments in the development process. In this sense, understanding effective community participation, the dynamics of partnership as well as the engagement between community members, civil society, governments and donors becomes a critical concern as total development demands the contributions of every single stakeholder. From the above perspectives and argument, it's obvious that effective community participation is worth encouraging and practicing as democracy would be deepened. Also through effective community participation, people at the grass-root would ensure that their communities are well developed and protected. Local resources would be harnessed, equitably distributed and efficiently utilized for the benefit of every citizen.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. The Study Area

The Afadzato District is one of the twenty five municipalities and districts in the Volta Region of the Republic of Ghana. The District was carved out from Hohoe Municipal in the year 2012 and legally backed and governed by two main Acts namely; Local Government Act, Act 462 of 1993 and PNDCL 327. The District has been established by legislative instrument 2079 and was inaugurated on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, 2012. The administrative capital of the District is Ve Golokwati. The District is located in the middle belt of Volta Region of Ghana and lies within longitude 00 20'E and 00 35' E and Latitude 70 5'N and 60 40'N. The District shares boundaries with Hohoe Municipal to the North, Kpando Municipal to the west, to the east with the Republic of Togo and to the south with Ho West District and South Dayi Districts respectively. The total land area of the District is 553.0 square Kilometers which is about 3.06% of the total land size of Volta Region. The District lies in the wet semi-equatorial climate zone. Annual rainfall is between 1,016mm to 1,210mm with an average of four to five months dry season experienced between November and April. The usual rainfall pattern of double maxim regime has gradually changed giving a long stretch of rainy season starting from late April and ends in October.

The District is located in the forest savannah transitional ecological zone of Ghana. The eastern highlands are clothed in high forest where the trees are in three storeys with very little undergrowth. Most of the western plains are occupied by woodland savannah and tall grasses. Communities within the district includes Ve-koloenu, Ve Golokwati, Liati Agbonyira, Ve Gbodome, Ve Deme, Ve Agbome, Leklebi Duga, Leklebi Agbesia, Dekpor, Tafi Atome, Logba Alakpeti, Logba Totta, Tafi Abuipe, Tafi Agome, Have Ando No. 1, Have Etoe, Agate, Woadze and Goviefe Toezi.



*Figure 1: Map of Afadzato South District*

### 3.2. Research Design

A survey methodology is chosen as the research recognizes the importance of the context of the study. This is to help development practitioners understand and explain decentralization process in a local government system. This design is appropriate because the research aims at understanding the processes of social change in a detailed manner with the view of making inferences about the population. The study includes both qualitative and quantitative materials gathered from interviews, literature review and direct observation.

Both primary and secondary data are integrated. The rationale for this, is to enable the research provide adequate discussion for the readers that will help them understand more about the issues. The primary data is represented by the survey results that were gathered from the respondents on the field. On the other hand, the literature review presented in the second chapter represents the secondary data. The secondary sources of data came from published articles, books, journals and thesis of related studies.

The findings are based on the data obtained from the mix of instruments been employed. The objective for this mixed approach is to collect qualitative data as much as possible with quantitative data from key stakeholders such as the community members. The survey for this research used questionnaires and direct interviews with the community members to collect data.

#### 3.2.1. Sample Units and Sample Size

The study applied a sample size determination formula which allows for a geographically dispersed sample to be used, with participants simultaneously responding to the study from the study area, hence taking advantage of existing social groups to achieve

the research objectives. The population for the study comprised of community members, Assembly members and other stakeholders in public sector leadership in selected communities in the Afadzato South District. The research used a sample size of 120 people. Out of the total sample, thirty (30) respondents were considered as key informants, notably among them were chiefs, leaders of various youth and women groups in the district and the district community development officer as noted earlier.

### 3.2.2. Sampling Techniques

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed because of the differences in the characteristics of the target population. The research adopted a non-probability sampling technique (purposive sampling) in order to approach the problem with a specific plan of selecting predefined groups of people in the District. The Afadzato South District is purposively selected since it is a newly created District undergoing the decentralization process. The inhabitants of the District possess knowledge on local government systems and decentralization processes. With a purposive sample, opinions of the target groups were obtained but sub groups were over weighted in the population that are more readily accessible hence the research employed the accidental sampling technique where each respondent is chosen by chance and on the relative ease of their access at any stage during the sampling process. This enabled the research to draw externally valid conclusions about the entire population based on the sample.

The research also made use of probability sampling procedure (Accidental sampling) which is quick in data collection and requires minimum advance knowledge of the population different from the frame. Its straight forwardness also makes it comparatively easy to interpret data collected in this manner. It is for this reason that the District was purposively selected through the use of accidental sampling which best suits the situation. It is also suitable for this research because there is not much information available about the population and data collection was efficiently conducted on easiness of access and the availability of respondents hence the cost of sampling was small enough to make efficiency important. The sample area was selected purposively on the basis of the level of participation of the inhabitants in developmental activities, its essentials and the rationale of the study which is more suitable for in-depth qualitative research in which the focus is often to understand complex social phenomena by drawing the most appropriate sample based on the purpose of the research (Creighton, 2005).

## **4. Data Collection Methods**

The research utilized primary sources of data collection methods. These are the various sources through which the study gathered primary information from community members.

Primary data in this regard refers to data that is collected from the field for the first time. Various tools and techniques were employed. Questionnaires were utilized as a framework of questions that are designed and administered to respondents. These Questionnaires were developed based on certain indicators that help assess the level of community participation in the decentralization process. It contained both close and open-ended questions. These questionnaires were administered to the sampled population by the researcher and/or the respondents themselves. A total of 120 questionnaires were administered for analysis. They were administered accidentally to community members who were above the age of 18 years and were of sound mind. The questionnaires administration lasted for three weeks as respondents who opted to personally administer their questionnaires were reluctant to return them.

Key Informant Interviews were used to interview key relevant persons in the community. Individuals considered to be key informants appeared to be vested with issues concerning the area and the topic under study. Ten (10) Assembly members, five (5) chiefs and eight (8) Assembly staffs were contacted on individual basis. These individuals are considered to be Key persons since they appeared to have relevant information concerning local governance; decentralization and the general activities of the district Assembly. The Key Informant Guide designed guided the interview and each interview lasted for about 15 minutes. As respondents, Assembly staff and members contacted were purposively selected for the interview. The researcher personally moderated the interviews though accompanied by two other field officers.

Focus group discussions were also utilized which Twumasi (2003), describes as a method of data collection and information gathering in which a group of 6 to 10 people who are knowledgeable about a topic are brought together to engage them in a guided discussion. The focus group discussion usually has a moderator or a facilitator to guide, lead and direct the tempo and pace of the discussion. As a relevant tool, it was employed by this study. Some individuals with relevant knowledge within the district were organized to form groups in the communities under study. Eight (8) community members including chiefs, women groups, youth groups' Assembly members and unit committee members formed a focus group during the research. The group size was limited to 10 participants to ensure effective participation and discussion on the issue under consideration. The FGD guide designed was used for the discussion and each lasting for 20 minutes. The chiefs and Assembly members for the discussion were purposively selected whereas the ordinary community members were accidentally selected. Three field officers observed and moderated the discussions.

Data was also collected from the works of scholars who have delved into topics in relation to community participation and decentralization systems. Information was obtained from books, reports, Journals, newspapers and research works relating to the subject matter. Relevant information and data was gathered from various documentary sources in the country including websites. These sources include; the Afadzato South District medium term development plan from the District assembly, the district population and housing census reports, the district electoral commission reports on the district level elections and websites of international organizations like the United Nations among others. The data provided from these sources gives a framework to guide the study.

## **5. Discussion**

Every member of the Afadzato South District is provided with the opportunity to participate in the activities of the district. Data gathered indicate that the creation of the Afadzato South District has opened the opportunity for them to get involved in

developmental activities such as infrastructural development, sanitation and public health issues. The various developmental activities participated in by members of Afadzato South are shown in Table 1 below and the level of participation is indicated in Table 2.

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Infrastructural Projects            | Sanitation and Public Health Activities     |
| School Buildings                    | National Cleaning Exercises                 |
| Market Sheds                        | Campaign against Cholera and other diseases |
| Building of Health post             | Vaccination and Immunization Exercise       |
| Building of housing units/Bungalows | Health Walk and Campaigns                   |
| Road Construction                   | Campaign against open defecation            |
|                                     | Education on Malaria control                |

*Table 1: Identified developmental Projects*

*Source: Field Survey, May, 2016*

| Project Aspects                      | No Participation | Low Participation | High Participation | Total      |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Infrastructural Development          | 5                | 40                | 75                 | <b>120</b> |
| Sanitation & Public Health Education | 8                | 24                | 88                 | <b>120</b> |

*Table 2: Level of Participation in Projects of the District*

*Source: Field Survey, May, 2016*

The level of Community Participation in the identified projects within the district through the decentralization process has been obtained. From the analysis, it is clear that due to the carving away of the Afadzato South District from the Hohoe South District, community members have been able to participate in some decentralized activities such as infrastructural development, Sanitation and Public Health Education that have taken place within the district. However, the level of participation varies.

While some community members' level of participation is on the higher side, others have low level of participation in the development of their communities. Few people seem not to be participating in infrastructural development, Sanitation and Public Health Education activities within the district. It is true from the above analysis that community participation in Infrastructural Development, Sanitation and Public Health Education is generally high as 75 respondents out of the 120 indicates their participation in infrastructural development and 88 respondents out of the 120 participated in sanitation and public health activities. According to Chowdhury, (1996), community participation programs would imply the involvement of a significant number of persons of a community in situations or actions that enhance their well-being, for example, their income, security, or self-esteem. This affirms the findings of the study.

In most developing countries, people at the grass root often lack information regarding government policies and programs, hence their inability to get involved during implementation. All the 120 respondents contacted are aware of the decentralization process adopted by government. Also, every respondent attests to the fact that they have ever heard of the concept of decentralization through various ways such as television news, radio discussions and interaction with Assembly members. However from the responses, 69% of the respondents view decentralization as Local governance whereby power is only divulged to the local people or MMDAs whereas the remaining 31% of respondents viewed decentralization as grass-root participation. The perception of respondents about the concept of decentralization affirms the view of Schmidt (2007) and Leroux (2012) that decentralization is the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to the lower levels of government. Again, the perception of respondents to the study also falls in line with Macrory (2008) assertion that decentralization is closely linked to the concept of subsidiarity which proposes that functions or tasks be devolved to the lowest levels of social order capable of completing these functions and tasks.

Through the focus group discussions and the key informant interviews conducted, the decentralization process is also recognized to be less centralized considering the high level of community participation in various developmental activities within the Afadzato South District. About 72% of the participants indicated that they have ever participated in infrastructural development of the district which they believe shows that the decentralization process is less centralized. The remaining 28% have never participated in any infrastructural project but are willing to participate if only they are given the necessary guidance on the assembly's activities. According to the respondents, they participated in infrastructural development, sanitation and public health activities implementation of water projects, construction of the district market, police station and several toilet facilities in various communities across the district. Those who did not or could not participate in any of these activities were not involved because they did not have the required skills or education. Others were also busy with their businesses and gave little attention to the activities of the district even though they were invited to participate. With this, respondents acknowledged that the decentralization process is less centralized as compared to the time the district was part of the Hohoe South District.

Majority of the participants from the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) constituting about 82% claim that the lack of effective community participation in infrastructural development in the Afadzato South District does not affect the decentralization process and the overall performance of the district assembly in any way. 18% of respondents however argue that lack of community participation in infrastructural development of the Afadzato South District has affected the decentralization process and the overall performance of the district assembly. The respondents also perceived infrastructural development as the Provision of felt needs of the people which includes the construction of schools, market sheds, roads, clinics etc. by the Local Assembly and the central Government.



Respondents however believe that infrastructural development is not supposed to be centered in the developed parts of the country but are to be spread across.

On a similar vein, about 58% of respondents indicated that there is no effective community participation in the decentralization process of the district. They attribute this to the fact that the Afadzato South District is new and is still in the process of unveiling all the components of the decentralization system. The remaining 41.7% of the respondents however believed that there is effective community participation in the decentralization process considering the involvement of community members in some developmental activities such as building of schools market sheds, CHIP Compounds and housing units that are ongoing in the District. These respondents also claim that every community of the district has representatives in the District Assembly who help in one way, the formulation and/or implementation of policies which affirms their effective participation.

### *5.1. Community Involvement and the Contributions of the People of Afadzato in the Decentralization Process*

In reality, the decentralization process is supposed to provide every individual the opportunity to participate in the governance and development of his/her rural community. Consequently, the study sought to obtain the level of involvement of the people of Afadzato South in the decentralized activities at the local level. The findings show that 12.5% (15 respondents) of the respondents indicated that they have been involved in the preparation of Assembly Budget because they are staff members of the District Assembly. 25% respondents participated in the planning and designing of infrastructural as well as mobilizing communities and resources that enable the Assembly execute the designed project. Most of the respondents who attested to this fact were Assembly members and as such often have the opportunity to participate in infrastructural development. Again, 29.2%, respondents were involved in Sanitation and Public Health issues, 25% respondents involved in making of by-laws and 8.5% of respondents also indicated their involvement in issuance of building permits and the supervision of projects initiated by the District Assembly respectively.

Furthermore, about 58% of the respondents strongly agreed that the community participation has significant influence on the decentralization process with respect to infrastructural Development, Sanitation and Public Health Education. These respondents indicated that they have power to resist any policy or development project coming from the central government which they think would not be beneficial to their communities. But as a new district, they have not had the opportunity to resist government proposed projects as all presented to them are needed by the district. They therefore recognize their influence as significant to the success of the decentralization process especially when it comes to execution of projects.

Twenty-five percent (25%) of respondents agreed to the assertion that community participation has significant influence on the decentralization process with regards to Infrastructural development, Sanitation and Public Health in the Afadzato South District. However, 16.7% respondents strongly disagreed with the assertion that, community participation in infrastructural development, sanitation and Public Health is influence by the decentralization process. Various reasons were advanced by this number of respondents as to why they strongly disagree to the assertion. Opinions expressed indicate that community members are not consulted in the early part of decision making. Respondents believe that most developmental projects are forced down their throat. Generally, these respondents consider the community members to be decision-takers instead of decision makers, hence strongly disagree to the assertion that community participation has significant influence on the decentralization process with regards to Infrastructural development, Sanitation and Public Health in the Afadzato South District

### *5.2. Stakeholders and the Significance of Their Roles in Decentralization*

The various stakeholders and the role they play in the decentralization process were assessed and analyzed. This was done to unveil the significance of their roles in the process of achieving the objectives of decentralization and local governance. The findings revealed that about 35% of the respondents view the role of Technocrats and Assembly staff in the decentralization process as exceptionally important whereas 30% and 17% argue that the role Technocrats and Assembly staff play as stakeholders in the decentralization process is important and very important respectively. These respondents are of the opinion that Technocrats and Assembly staff act as mediators between the central government and the community members hence play significant role in the decentralization process. Also 4% of respondents are of the opinion that, the role played by Assembly Members is very important and 8% view the role played by Assembly Members as exceptionally important to the decentralization process.

An insignificant percentage of 1% believe that the role of chiefs and traditional authorities in the decentralization process is somehow important and important, 6% viewed their role as very important and 10% are of the opinion that their role is exceptionally important to the decentralization process. On the significant role played by ordinary community members in the decentralization process, 7% of the respondents believe the role played by ordinary community members is very important whereas only 1% believe their role is exceptionally important to the decentralization process. On a whole, the significant role played by Technocrats and Assembly staff, Assembly Members, chiefs and traditional authorities as well as ordinary community members is viewed by 54% respondents to be exceptionally important to the decentralization process, 34% are of the view that their collective role is very important to the process whereas 31% believe their collect role is just important. Only 1% of respondents view the collective role of Technocrats and Assembly staff, Assembly Members, chiefs and traditional authorities and ordinary community members as somehow important to the decentralization. No respondents think that the role played by these individuals as stakeholders is not important to the decentralization process. This is because members of the community have the power to resist any policy or development project coming from the central government which they think would not be beneficial to their communities. But as a new district, they have not had the opportunity to resist government proposed projects as all presented to them are needed by the district. They therefore recognize their influence as significant to the success of the decentralization process especially when it comes to execution of projects as well as sanitation and public health activities.

## 6. Conclusion

It is widely recognized that devolving governmental activities involves the reorganization of power in such a manner that method of co-responsibility between government institutions at the central, regional and local levels functions according to the principle of subsidiarity. The ultimate aim to achieve in this case is to increase the overall quality and effectiveness of the system of governance as well as increase the authority and capabilities of sub-national level organizations. A critical examination of the views follows the definition advanced by the World Bank Learning Group on Participation which recognizes decentralization as participatory process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (World Bank, 1995). The District Assembly and the environmental health department are mandated to ensure an improved sanitation and health in the district as well as streamline issues about sanitation and public health to people within the district. Before the introduction of the National Sanitation Day (NSD), people of the Afadzato South District used to do their individual cleaning exercises. Health Education on Reproductive Health and Family Planning, Cholera, Ebola and general health issues are done by workers of the Ghana Health Service and Zoomlion.

In addition, the NSD has come to widen the involvement of community people in sanitation and health issues as noted by respondents. Health campaigns are now championed by ordinary community members with support from the Ghana Health Service which has improved the health status of the people. This clearly indicates that community members of the Afadzato South District have higher participatory level in Sanitation and Public Health issues within the district which is an indication that decentralization is less centralized as far as sanitation and public health are concerned. It is an undeniable fact that community participation in developmental activities is crucial to the practice of decentralization. This also shows that effective community participation would better enhance the whole decentralization process. However, the findings of the study indicates that though significant, the effectiveness of community participation in the decentralization process at the district is not so encouraging and is attributed to the fact that the district is still new and scale of developmental projects undertaken is low.

The research found out that some community members do not participate in the process because they have less information with regards to what is required of them. They are not informed about the significance of their contributions to the process. With this, the research recommends that the Assembly develop sensitization programmes as well as organize training sessions for community members to educate them on the need for their full involvement in the entire process.

Effective community participation is crucial to the success of the decentralization system. Therefore, the research recommends that policy makers both at the national and local level should widen the decentralization process to increase the involvement of community members in the process as technocrats seem to be having more control over the system than community members.

Lastly, it is recommended that, future research should consider the adoption of different methods of data collection and analysis. The research also recommends that methods that are more interactive and would provide more opportunity for participants to freely express their views, opinions and perceptions about the decentralization process, its challenges as well as suggestions can help improve the system.

## 7. References

- i. Ahwoi, K., (2010). *Local Government and Decentralization in Ghana*, Accra, Ghana: Unimax Macmillan. 2010.
- ii. Alam, M. & Koranteng, R., (2011), *Decentralization in Ghana*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London
- iii. Armitage, D., Marschke, M., Plummer, R., (2008), *Adaptive co-management and the paradox of learning*, *Global Environmental Change* 18, 86-98
- iv. Arnstein, S. (1969), *A ladder of citizen participation*, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, vol., 35, Pp. 216-224
- v. Beer, C., (2004), *Electoral competition and fiscal decentralization*, University of Notre Dame Pres. Notre Dame
- vi. Bessette, J. (1980). *Deliberative democracy: The majority principle in republican government*. In R. Goldwin & W. Shambra (Eds.), *How democrats the constitution?* (pp. 102-116). Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute Press.
- vii. Bulkeley, H. and Mol, A.P., (2003). *Participation and Environmental Governance: Concensus, Ambivalence and Debate*. *Environmental Values*, 12 (2), 143-54
- viii. Byrne, T., (1990), *Local Government in Britain*, London: Penguin Books
- ix. Center for Democracy and Development, (2009), *Summary of Results: Round 4 Afrobarometer Survey in Ghana*. Accra, Ghana: Center for Democracy and Development.
- x. Clarke, J., (2008), *Local Government of the United Kingdom*, London.
- xi. Cole, M., and Boyne, G., (1995), *So You Think You Know What Local Government is? Local Government Studies*, Vol., 21, No., 2, Pp. 197-200
- xii. *Constitution of the Republic of Ghana*, (1992), Article 243; *Local Government Act No. 462 of 1993*, Sections 19-20.
- xiii. Conyers, D., (1983). *Decentralization: The latest fashion in development administration*. *Public Administration and Development*, Vol., 3, No., 2, Pp., 97-109
- xiv. Crawford, G., (2004). *Democratic Decentralization in Ghana: Issues and Prospects*. Working Paper No. 9, School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds
- xv. Creswell, J.W. (1994). *Research design; Qualitative and Quantitative approaches*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- xvi. Da Rocha, B.J., (2002). *Decentralization as an Aspect of Governance*, A Publication of the Institute of Economic Affairs, Ghana State University Press
- xvii. Donald I. Ray and P.S. Reddy, (2003), *Grassroots Governance: Chiefs in Africa and the Afro Caribbean*, University of Calgary Press, ISBN 978-1-55238-565-4, www.uofcpress.com

- xviii. Eaton, K., (2002), Political and Economic Reform in New Democracies: Argentina and Philippines in the 1990s. Pennsylvania: Penn
- xix. Ebel, R. D., and Serdar Y., (2001), Concept of Fiscal Decentralisation and Worldwide Overview, International Symposium Quebec Commission of Fiscal Imbalance
- xx. Federation of Canadian Municipalities, (2007), Joint Government of Ghana and Development Partner Decentralisation Policy Review, Vol., 28 No., 4
- xxi. Ferrazzi, G., (2006): Ghana Local Government Act 1993: A Comparative Analysis in the Context of the Review of the Act, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment of Ghana and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
- xxii. Golding, L., (1975). Local Government, London: Cox Wayman Ltd.
- xxiii. Government of Ghana (GOG), (2010), Decentralization Policy Framework, Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Decentralization, University Printing Press, Kumasi
- xxiv. Guri, B., (2006), Traditional Authorities, Decentralization and Development: Strengthening the Capacity of Traditional Authorities for Good Governance and Development at the Local Level. Center for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development (CIKOD), Madina, Accra
- xxv. Harris, G. M., (1998). Comparative Local Government, London.
- xxvi. Holger, D., (2007), School Decentralization in the Context of Globalizing Governance: International Comparison of Grassroots Response, Springer, p. 28-29.
- xxvii. Humes, S and Martin, E., (2006). The Structure of Local Government, The Hague
- xxviii. Jay, S., (2001), Voices of the Poor, World Development Report. UNDP website: <www.undp.org>
- xxix. Jha, C., (1953). Indian Local Self-Government, Patna: Novelty.
- xxx. Johnson, N. L., (1999). Diversity in Decentralized Systems: Enabling Self-Organizing Solutions. Theoretical Division, Los Alamos National Laboratory for University of California, Los Angeles.
- xxxi. Kehler, J., (2000). Community participation in the process of Integrated Planning Development (IDP), Evaluating realities and community perceptions in areas on the Western and Eastern Cape, Nadel Research Report no 15, Nadel/Austrian Development Cooperation, Cape Town.
- xxxii. Kuusi, S., (2009): Aspects of Local Self-Government: Ghana North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme, The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities
- xxxiii. Leftwich, A., (2007). Drivers of Change: Refining the Analytical Framework: A Framework for Political Analysis. Department of Politics, University of York
- xxxiv. Leroux, R. (2012). French Liberalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Anthology: Maurice Block on Decentralization, Routledge, p. 255.
- xxxv. Liebenberg, L., (1999). The Integrated Development Planning Experience: An Analysis of Two Western Cape Processes, Foundation for Contemporary Research, Cape Town
- xxxvi. Local Government Act No. 462 of 1993.
- xxxvii. Loomis, M. J., (2005). Decentralism: Where it came from- Where is it going? Black Rose Books,
- xxxviii. Macrory, R., (2008). Regulation, Enforcement and Governance in Environmental Law, Cameron May, London, p. 657
- xxxix. Mahama, C., (2013). Politics of Decentralization Reforms in Ghana: The Experience of Northern Ghana, UPK Printing Press, KNUST, Kumasi, Pp. 11
- xl. Manor, J. (1999), The political economy of democratic decentralization, Washington, DC: The World Bank
- xli. McCarty, T., Kyklos, A., (1993), Demographic Diversity and the Size of the Public Sector, Wiley Online Library
- xl.ii. Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), (2012), National Urban Policy, Ghana, Accra
- xl.iii. MLGRD, (2010), Ghana National Decentralization Action Plan, Inter-Ministerial Committee on Decentralization Secretariat Accra
- xliv. National Council for Applied Research, (2012), Elite Capture and Corruption: Concepts and Definitions
- xl. v. Nkrumah, S. A., (2000): Decentralisation for Good Governance and Development: The Ghanaian Experience, Regional Development Dialogue, 21(1).
- xlvi. Ohene-Konadu, G., (2001): Gender Analysis and Interpretation of Barriers to Women's Participation in Ghana's Decentralised Local Government System, A Paper Presented at African Gender Institute, University of Cape Town, South Africa.
- xl. vii. Olowu Dele James S. Wunsch and Joseph R. A. Ayee (2004) Local Governance in Africa: The
- xl. viii. Onibokun, A.G., Faniran, A., (1995). Community Based Organizations in Nigerian Urban Cities. Centre for African Settlement Studies and Development, Nigeria.
- xl. ix. Otzen, U. et al., (1999). Integrated Development Planning: A New Task for Local Government in South Africa, Participatory planning for socio-economic development in two municipalities in Mpumalanga, GTZ, Braamfontein
- l. Pellizzoni, L., (2003). Uncertainty and Participatory Democracy, Environmental Values, 12 (2), 195-224.
- li. Peltola O., Selvitys. S., (2008): North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme, The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities
- lii. Pran Manga and Wendy Muckle (Chappel, 1997)
- lii.iii. Prud'homme, Remy (1995), "The Dangers of Decentralization", The World Bank Research Observer, Vol., 10, No., 2, Pp. 201-20.

- liv. Rao, V., and Hazarika, N., (1980), Local Self-Government in India, New Delhi: S. Chand &Co., 10
- lv. Ribot, J., (2003). Democratic Decentralization of Natural Resources: Institutional Choice and Discretionary Power Transfers in Sub-Saharan Africa, *Public Administration and Development* 23: 53-65.
- lvi. Rowe, G. and Frewer, L.J., (2005). A Typology of Public Engagement Mechanisms, *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 30 (20), 251-290.
- lvii. Saunders. A., Werner, J., Andrulis, E. D., Nakayama, T., Hirose, S., Reinberg, D., List, J. T., (2003). *Research Methods for Business Students*, Science 301(5636), 1094-1096
- lviii. Schmidt, V. A., (2007). *Democratizing France: The Political and Administrative History of Decentralization* Cambridge University Press P.22, ISBN 9780415166195
- lix. Singh, H., (1997). *Local Government*, Allahabad: Kitab Mahal
- lx. Stones, P., (1996), *Local Government*, London: Cox Wayman Ltd.
- lxi. UNDP, (1997), *Ghana: national human development report*. Accra: United Nations Development Programme.
- lxii. Walter, S. B., (2001). *Subsidiarity: A Key Concept for Regional Development Policy*, *New Regional Development Paradigm*, Volume 3, UNCRD
- lxiii. World Bank (1995), *World Bank Participation Sourcebook*, Environment Department Papers Participation Series Washington D.C. World Bank
- lxiv. World Bank (1995), *World Bank Participation Sourcebook*, Environment Department Papers Participation Series Washington D.C. World Bank
- lxv. World Bank (1995), *World Bank Participation Sourcebook*, Environment Department Papers Participation Series Washington
- lxvi. World Bank, (2009), *Food and Agriculture Organization; International Fund for Agricultural Development Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*, World Bank Publication, P. 32
- lxvii. Wunsch, J. S., & Olowu, D. (1997) *Regime transformation from below: Decentralization, local governance, and democratic reform in Nigeria*. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 31(4), Pp. 66–82