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# Ghana Strengthening Accountability Mechanisms (GSAM)

## Background

Since decentralization in 1988, Ghana has been trying to improve accountability in local government service provision. Accountability could be obtained from the bottom-up, through interventions focused on citizen participation and oversight, or from the top-down, through interventions focused on improving central government oversight mechanisms. This evaluation asks whether bottom-up or top-down approaches leads to greater accountability and improved service delivery.

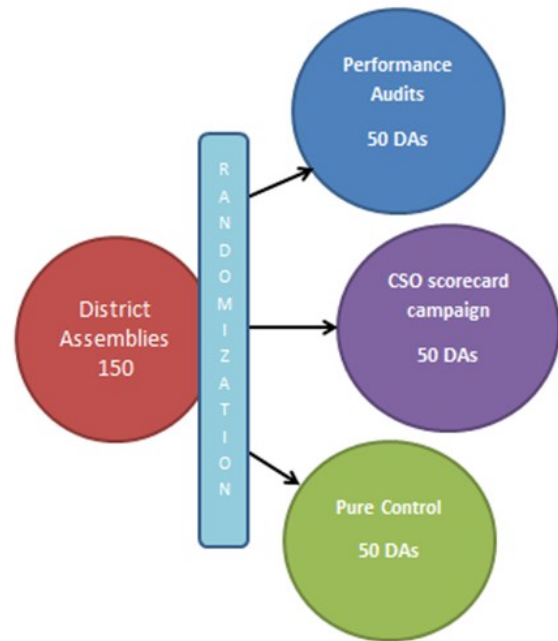
## The Interventions

This USAID supported intervention focuses on the district level of governance in Ghana, the Metropolitan, Municipal, or District Assemblies (MMDAs) democratically elected by residents. Two separate interventions are planned focused on capital development projects:

- Performance audits:** Currently, the Ghana Audit Service (GAS) conducts a financial audit of MMDA governments to ensure that money is properly spent. The intervention will transition Ghana’s audit system from a simple *financial* audit to a more involved *performance* audit. In short, auditors will not just check for receipts for purchases, but will also assess the quality of capital development projects and service delivery outcomes.
- Civil society led information campaign:** Citizens struggle to hold their MMDA officials accountable, partially because they have very limited information about MMDA level government budgets and activities. As such, an effort led by CARE will mobilize civil society organizations and citizens to collect similar information to the GAS. This information will be used to develop citizen scorecards that will be presented and discussed in public forums.

## Design

The research design involves random assignment of 150 of Ghana’s districts into one of three groups: a treatment group that is receiving central government performance audits; a second treatment group that is receiving civil-society led scorecard campaigns; or a control group that is not receiving either intervention.



## Hypothesized Impacts

It is hypothesized that treatment group 1 and 2 will differ from the control districts in the following ways:

- Increased responsiveness of politicians and bureaucracies to public pressure
- Improved public financial management
- Improved service delivery outcomes in the development of capital project, health and education
- Greater citizen satisfaction and engagement with local level democratic procedures

## Data Collection

Quality and perceptions of public services are measured by the evaluation through five key sources of data:

- Household surveys at the baseline and year three of the project
- Local elected official and MMDA administrator surveys at the baseline and year three of the project
- Focus groups with citizens at the baseline and year three of the project
- Administrative data on district financial management and public service indicators.

## Baseline Findings

Baseline data was collected with the support of the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana (ISSER) and occurred between August-October, 2014. The household survey revealed a number of areas for improvement:

- Citizens are dissatisfied with the performance of the District Assembly (DA) in delivering and improving on local services. This ranges from over 70% dissatisfaction with roads and public sanitation to 30% dissatisfaction with schools and health facilities.
- 73% of household respondents reported that corruption is a big problem among public officials and approximately half of all respondents are 'very or somewhat dissatisfied' with governance by their elected district and national officials.
- Approximately 70% of households state that their elected district officials and Members of Parliament (MPs) do not follow through on their promises of community development.

Administrators, by contrast, are quite optimistic about district governance. They reported that district planning of district capital projects is open and participatory, that projects are developed with an eye toward citizen needs, and that public administration is professionalized and fairly apolitical.

While 91% of elected officials report that the process of developing Annual Action Plans, including capital works projects, functions well, elected officials did recognize some challenges. 56% of development projects are reported by elected officials to be completed late, and 47% of politicians said that corruption in the district public sector is very or quite serious.

## Survey experiments

Recognizing the challenges of asking respondents directly about sensitive questions, the surveys included several list, endorsement and priming experiments that found:

- On average, household respondents believe that 45% of district budgets for district capital projects are wasted, whereas politicians on average believe that only 15% of funds are misspent or wasted. Both types of respondents believe that waste is less in foreign donor-funded projects than in tax funded projects.
- Survey experiments suggest that 26% of household respondents vote on the basis of personal favors delivered by politicians to them or their family.
- List experiments suggest that 40% of public administrators and nearly 50% of political officials see their colleagues providing members of their ethnic group or political party with privileged access to public resources.

## Testing the Hypotheses

Once endline data is collected in late 2016, the evaluation team will be able to test whether the USAID supported interventions have influenced the above mentioned factors and whether the top-down or bottom-up interventions were more effective.



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