

## **DO ELECTIONS IN EVOLVING DEMOCRACIES NECESSARILY GUARANTEE ACCOUNTABILITY IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE? EVIDENCE FROM GHANA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

It is often asserted that popular election of local government political officeholders guarantees good governance practices since elections ensure effective participation of the citizenry in local governance processes as well as effective accountability of the officers to the electorate. The failure of decentralization in developing countries to achieve rapid desired results is therefore seen as a result of the failure of governments to fully democratize local governance through direct or popular elections of its political officeholders. It is against this background that in Ghana, the outcry for the election of District Chief Executives (equivalent of Mayors) and Assembly members (councillors) has gathered momentum over the past decade. Using three Metropolitan Assemblies as a case study, the extent to which popular elections of Assembly members guarantee accountability of such officers and the participation of the electorates in local governance is examined. The study established that popular elections of Assembly members per se are incapable of guaranteeing accountability in local governance as accountability of officers for effective governance is dependent on a gamut of factors of which elections may be considered as only one of them. Effective accountability will require well-informed and discerning electorate, strong accountable independent institutions and non-ethnically divisive and polarized society.

Keywords:

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