

Integrating Endogenous Principles into Ghana's Decentralised Planning: Pathways for Sustainable Local Development

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Abstract

Ghana's decentralised planning framework, established to promote participatory and context-responsive development, has evolved significantly over the past three decades. However, despite progressive legal and institutional reforms, district-level planning processes continue to be dominated by technocratic and externally driven approaches. A critical concern is the persistent neglect of local knowledge systems, traditional governance institutions, and indigenous development values in formal planning mechanisms. This article explores the prospects for integrating endogenous development (ED) principles into Ghana's decentralised planning architecture as a strategy for achieving sustainable and inclusive local development. Drawing on a qualitative case study approach, the research investigates three selected District/Municipal Assemblies: Savelugu, Atwima Nwabiagya North, and Nzema East. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of local policy documents. Thematic content analysis was employed to synthesise the findings. The study reveals that local communities conceptualise development in culturally grounded terms, emphasising wellbeing, communal resilience, and ecological harmony. Although sporadic efforts exist to incorporate indigenous knowledge into development strategies, systemic constraints such as technocratic bias, donor conditionalities, and weak institutional capacity hinder their integration. The article proposes pathways including institutional reforms, capacity building, and improved policy coherence to bridge the gap between formal planning and community realities. The findings highlight the need to rethink existing planning paradigms and advocate for a more inclusive, pluralistic approach that leverages local agency and knowledge for sustainable development in Ghana and comparable African contexts.

Keywords: Endogenous Development, Decentralised Planning, Ghana, Indigenous Knowledge, Local Governance, Sustainability

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background on Ghana's Decentralised Governance System

Since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1992, Ghana has pursued a decentralisation agenda aimed at transferring political, administrative, and fiscal authority from central government to local government units, particularly Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs). The Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), and the National Decentralisation Policy Framework (2010–2020) have reinforced the mandate of MMDAs to lead local development processes through bottom-up planning and participatory governance (Awortwi & Helmsing, 2019; Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development [MLGRD], 2020). Despite the institutionalisation of decentralisation, local development outcomes remain uneven, and many districts still struggle with inadequate capacity, weak citizen engagement, and over-dependence on centrally controlled resources (Adu-Gyamfi, 2020).

Decentralised governance offers a strategic opportunity for local development by aligning interventions with context-specific needs, cultural values, and indigenous knowledge systems. In Ghana, local development is increasingly recognised not merely as economic transformation at the sub-national level but as a comprehensive process of improving livelihoods, promoting social equity, and strengthening community resilience (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2021). However, existing planning systems are often overly technocratic and driven by donor frameworks, limiting the potential for culturally grounded, community-driven innovation (Mensah & Ohemeng, 2020).

1.2 Overview of Endogenous Development (ED) and its Relevance

Endogenous Development (ED) refers to a development paradigm that places emphasis on locally defined values, knowledge systems, and institutional structures, while selectively integrating external resources (Haverkort & Reijntjes, 2018; Abdallah, 2024a; 2024b, 2024c). The approach recognises the agency of local actors in shaping their own development pathways, guided by ecological balance, cultural identity, and social cohesion. Within the Ghanaian context, ED holds significant promise for revitalising traditional institutions, promoting sustainable resource use, and enhancing the legitimacy of development planning (Nkrumah et al.,

2021). Yet, the integration of ED principles into decentralised planning remains marginal due to a lack of policy coherence, limited documentation of indigenous knowledge, and institutional inertia.

1.3 Research Questions/Objectives

This article seeks to explore how endogenous development principles can be meaningfully integrated into Ghana's decentralised planning frameworks to advance sustainable local development. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent are endogenous knowledge systems currently reflected in Ghana's district-level planning processes?
2. What institutional and systemic barriers constrain the integration of ED principles?
3. What pathways can facilitate the mainstreaming of ED into decentralised governance?

The main objective is to provide evidence-based insights and practical recommendations for policymakers, local planners, and community actors committed to achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

1.4 Structure of the Article

The article is organised into six sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 presents a review of relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, including endogenous development and participatory planning. Section 3 outlines the research methodology, while Section 4 discusses the key findings from selected Ghanaian districts. Section 5 explores strategic pathways for integrating ED principles into decentralised planning, and Section 6 concludes with implications for policy and further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Underpinnings

2.1.1 Endogenous Development Theory

Endogenous development (ED) is a people-centred, culturally grounded paradigm that promotes self-reliant, locally driven development initiatives, rooted in indigenous knowledge systems, values, and institutions (Haverkort & Reijntjes, 2018; Abdallah, 2024b; 2024b). It shifts the emphasis from externally imposed models to the mobilisation of internal capacities, enabling communities to define their development goals in line with their ecological, social, and cultural realities. ED theory is inherently pluralistic, advocating for a dialogue between local and external knowledge systems while prioritising sustainability and identity (Van der Ploeg et al., 2019). In Africa, the relevance of ED is increasingly acknowledged in contexts where Western development models have failed to address systemic poverty, social exclusion, and environmental degradation (Chiweshe et al., 2022).

2.1.2 Participatory Development and Localisation of Planning

Participatory development emphasises the inclusion of local voices in decision-making processes, drawing on the premise that development is most effective when it reflects the aspirations of the people it intends to serve (Adusei-Asante & Hancock, 2020). In the Ghanaian context, participatory planning is formalised through processes such as the Community Needs Assessment (CNA), District Medium-Term Development Plans (DMTDPs), and stakeholder consultations. However, the practical implementation of these mechanisms often remains superficial, with local contributions either under-utilised or overridden by technocratic agendas (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2021). The localisation of planning is intended to enhance ownership and relevance, yet it is frequently undermined by centralised control over resources and priorities.

2.1.3 Post-Development Critique of Mainstream Development

The post-development school of thought critiques the universalist assumptions and power dynamics embedded in mainstream development discourse, which tend to marginalise alternative knowledge systems and development pathways (Escobar, 2018). In African settings, this critique is particularly pertinent, given the enduring dominance of neo-colonial development models and donor-driven agendas. Scholars such as Ziai (2020) argue for a radical rethinking of development that centres on diversity, pluralism, and community-defined progress. In Ghana, post-development perspectives provide the intellectual space to challenge the hegemony of state-centric, market-led planning models and to legitimise the inclusion of customary governance, cultural identity, and spiritual dimensions in development practice (Mensah, 2023).

2.2 Decentralised Planning in Ghana

Ghana's decentralised planning system has evolved through various policy reforms aimed at devolving power and enhancing local governance. The landmark Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462), now repealed and replaced by Act 936 (2016), provided the legal basis for District Assemblies to plan, budget, and implement development initiatives. The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) coordinates planning at all levels, issuing guidelines that direct MMDAs in preparing their medium-term development plans (NDPC, 2020). The planning process is also guided by the Local Governance Act, 2016 and the National Decentralisation Policy Framework (2020–2024), both of which promote participatory development as a core principle (MLGRD, 2021).

Despite these frameworks, implementation challenges persist, including politicisation, resource inadequacy, and weak vertical and horizontal coordination (Ohemeng & Ayee, 2021). Furthermore, district planning processes often reflect national priorities rather than community needs, suggesting a tension between decentralisation in theory and centralisation in practice.

The decentralised planning structure in Ghana involves multiple actors, including District Planning Coordinating Units (DPCUs), elected Assembly Members, Unit Committees, traditional authorities, and civil society organisations. While the legal framework encourages collaboration among these stakeholders, institutional fragmentation and capacity gaps limit their effective participation (Awortwi & Helmsing, 2019). The role of traditional authorities, though acknowledged, is largely informal and often symbolic, with limited influence over the actual planning and budgeting processes (Boamah, 2022).

2.3. Gaps in Integrating Local Knowledge and Cultural Assets

Despite the presence of rich indigenous knowledge and governance systems, there is limited systematic integration of these resources into district-level planning. Traditional ecological knowledge, conflict resolution mechanisms, and local innovations in health, agriculture, and resource management are rarely reflected in formal plans (Yiridomoh & Antwi-Boasiako, 2021). This marginalisation stems from a policy environment that privileges Western scientific rationality over culturally embedded knowledge systems, thereby diminishing the legitimacy of non-formal contributions to development.

A key limitation of Ghana's decentralised planning architecture is the lack of synergy between formal state institutions and informal community structures. While District Assemblies operate within bureaucratic frameworks, traditional leaders and customary institutions continue to wield significant social influence, especially in rural areas. However, the absence of institutionalised mechanisms for interface often leads to duplication, misunderstanding, or conflict (Adjibolosoo & Agyemang, 2023). This disconnect weakens collective ownership of development initiatives and undermines the sustainability of externally designed interventions.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore the integration of endogenous development (ED) principles into Ghana's decentralised planning system. A qualitative approach was chosen due to its strength in capturing nuanced, context-specific insights from local stakeholders, especially in understanding social phenomena embedded in cultural, institutional, and governance settings (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2021). The case study method is particularly suitable for unpacking complex realities, allowing an in-depth investigation of planning practices, traditional knowledge systems, and institutional dynamics at the district level (Adusei-Asante & Hancock, 2020).

Three District/Municipal Assemblies were purposively selected based on geographic diversity, socio-cultural variation, and the presence of active traditional leadership in local governance. These were:

- Savelugu Municipal Assembly (Northern Region): Representing a predominantly rural context with strong indigenous governance systems.
- Atwima Nwabiagya North District Assembly (Ashanti Region): An area with mixed urban-rural characteristics and active community-based development.
- Nzema East Municipal Assembly (Western Region): A resource-rich district facing tensions between modern governance and traditional institutions.

These districts were chosen to reflect the diversity of planning contexts in Ghana and to ensure that insights drawn from the study would have broader applicability across other MMDAs with similar characteristics (Boamah, 2022; Ohemeng & Ayee, 2021).

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) involving key stakeholders, including:

- District Planning Officers
- Traditional leaders (chiefs, queen mothers, and elders)
- Civil society actors (youth groups, women's associations, and development NGOs)
- Local Assembly Members and Unit Committee representatives

A total of 30 interviews and 6 FGDs were conducted across the selected districts between April and October 2024. Secondary data sources included district development plans, budget reports, and decentralisation policy documents such as the National Medium-Term Development Policy Framework and District Medium-Term Development Plans (NDPC, 2020). These documents were analysed to identify how and whether endogenous knowledge systems and cultural values were reflected in official planning outputs.

The data were analysed using thematic content analysis, which involved coding interview transcripts and policy texts to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the integration (or absence) of ED principles. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: familiarisation with data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. NVivo software (version 12) was used to support data organisation and coding.

Emerging themes were grouped under three overarching domains:

1. Local knowledge and planning
2. Institutional coordination and participation
3. Cultural relevance and sustainability

The analysis was interpretive, aiming to draw connections between lived experiences, planning practices, and theoretical insights on endogenous development (Chiweshe et al., 2022).

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was sought from all respondents prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, with participants assigned pseudonyms. Special attention was paid to cultural sensitivity, especially when engaging with traditional authorities, in order to respect local customs and protocols (Adjibolosoo & Agyemang, 2023). Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Local Perceptions of Development and Sustainability

Fieldwork revealed that local communities perceive development not merely in economic terms but as the ability to live dignified lives, sustain their livelihoods, and uphold communal harmony. Respondents in Savelugu and Nzema East emphasised access to fertile land, healthy family life, security, and respect for cultural traditions as core elements of wellbeing. In contrast to the dominant growth-oriented development indicators, local actors prioritised food sovereignty, collective farming, and customary land tenure as critical to sustainable living (Adjibolosoo & Agyemang, 2023; Yiridomoh & Antwi-Boasiako, 2021). Resilience, from the community perspective, is rooted in traditional mutual support systems such as *nnoboa* (labour exchange groups) and communal festivals, which serve as social safety nets during environmental and economic shocks.

Cultural expressions, rituals, and indigenous practices were consistently identified as integral components of development. In Atwima Nwabiagya North, traditional festivals and rites of passage were considered markers of socio-cultural progress and identity preservation. Development was also linked to the continuity of ancestral values, land custodianship, and harmony with nature, elements not typically reflected in formal planning documents (Chiweshe et al., 2022). These findings highlight a critical gap between externally defined development metrics and locally valued indicators rooted in cultural experience.

4.2. Existing Practices of Integrating Endogenous Knowledge

There is limited but growing evidence of attempts to integrate endogenous knowledge systems into district-level planning. In Nzema East, for instance, the District Assembly collaborated with herbal practitioners to promote traditional medicine as a complementary health strategy. Similarly, in Savelugu, agricultural extension officers are increasingly incorporating traditional drought-resistant seed varieties and farmer innovations into local food security strategies (NDPC, 2020). However, these practices remain fragmented and often undocumented, lacking formal recognition in Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) (Boamah, 2022).

Traditional leaders were found to play an influential, though unofficial, role in shaping development discourse at the community level. Chiefs often mediate land access, mobilise collective labour for infrastructure projects, and arbitrate conflicts. In Atwima Nwabiagya North, the *Nkosuohene* (Development Chief) was instrumental in coordinating sanitation campaigns and heritage conservation projects (Awortwi & Helmsing, 2019). Civil society organisations, particularly women's cooperatives and local NGOs, also facilitate the transmission of indigenous skills and knowledge, acting as bridges between formal institutions and community-based knowledge systems (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2021).

4.3. Constraints to Integration

One of the dominant barriers to the integration of endogenous knowledge is the persistence of technocratic planning approaches. District Planning Coordinating Units (DPCUs) often prioritise quantitative data, engineering models, and donor indicators over culturally grounded or experiential knowledge. As a result, local voices are undervalued, and participatory mechanisms such as community needs assessments are treated as routine formalities (Ohemeng & Ayee, 2021). This epistemological bias excludes non-Western knowledge systems and undermines the legitimacy of community-driven solutions.

Many planning decisions are significantly shaped by donor priorities and central government guidelines. The annual composite budgeting process, for example, must align with national goals articulated in the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda, thereby limiting district-level autonomy (NDPC, 2020). Donor-funded interventions often arrive with predefined indicators, leaving little room for incorporating culturally relevant solutions. This centralised framework disincentivises planners from experimenting with or adopting locally tailored strategies (Mensah, 2023).

Another key constraint is the limited capacity of local planning authorities to identify, document, and apply endogenous knowledge in development processes. Field interviews revealed a lack of training on how to integrate cultural heritage, oral histories, and local innovations into formal planning formats. District Assemblies also lack dedicated desks or personnel for traditional knowledge integration, making the inclusion of such knowledge ad hoc and unsystematic (Adjibolosoo & Agyemang, 2023).

4.4. Comparative Insights from Other African Countries

In Uganda, participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methods have been institutionalised in district planning, enabling local communities to contribute their traditional farming techniques and water conservation practices (Otiso & Ongwen, 2021). Similarly, in Kenya's Baringo County, traditional leaders are embedded within planning teams, offering insights on customary land use and conflict resolution (Chiweshe & Dalu, 2019). Burkina Faso's regional development strategies have successfully integrated endogenous spiritual practices in environmental protection, especially through sacred groves and taboo zones.

These cases demonstrate that the institutionalisation of indigenous knowledge is feasible when governments prioritise epistemic pluralism and align decentralisation frameworks with community governance structures. Ghana's experience, while progressive in rhetoric, lags behind in practical application due to institutional inertia and weak policy coherence.

5. Pathways for Integration

The integration of endogenous development (ED) principles into Ghana's decentralised planning systems requires strategic, multi-level interventions. Drawing from the findings and comparative African experiences, three interrelated pathways are proposed: institutional reforms, capacity strengthening, and policy alignment. These pathways seek to bridge the divide between formal governance structures and informal knowledge systems, thereby fostering a more inclusive and sustainable development process.

5.1. Institutional Reforms

To effectively integrate endogenous knowledge, traditional authorities must be repositioned from peripheral consultative actors to central partners in planning. Chiefs, queen mothers, clan heads, and other custodians of culture possess deep knowledge of land management, conflict resolution, and community organisation of resources that are currently underutilised (Boamah, 2022; Adjibolosoo & Agyemang, 2023). Institutional reforms should guarantee structured representation of traditional councils on District Planning Coordinating Units (DPCUs), where they can provide culturally grounded insights and shape planning priorities. Moreover, leveraging the legitimacy and convening power of traditional authorities can enhance community buy-in and project sustainability (Awortwi & Helmsing, 2019).

Creating platforms for structured, iterative engagement between planners, traditional leaders, and local knowledge holders is essential. These “knowledge dialogues” can be formalised through participatory learning forums, district-level planning retreats, and cross-sectoral working groups (Chiweshe et al., 2022). Such platforms should facilitate mutual recognition of knowledge systems, enabling co-creation of development interventions. Lessons can be drawn from Uganda’s participatory rural appraisal forums and Burkina Faso’s integration of sacred ecological knowledge into environmental planning (Otiso & Ongwen, 2021). Institutionalising these practices would build trust and foster collaborative governance that values epistemic diversity.

5.2. Capacity Building and Local Knowledge Systems

The limited appreciation of ED among district technocrats stems largely from a lack of training and exposure. Incorporating ED concepts into the curricula of public administration, planning, and development studies is critical (Mensah, 2023). In-service training for planning officers and Assembly members should focus on culturally sensitive planning, pluralistic knowledge validation, and community facilitation skills. Partnerships between the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), academia, and traditional knowledge networks can support such training programmes (NDPC, 2020).

Systematic documentation of indigenous knowledge is needed to preserve and validate local innovations for planning purposes. Field evidence shows that valuable practices in herbal medicine, soil conservation, rainwater harvesting, and conflict mediation often remain undocumented and risk being lost with generational change (Yiridomoh & Antwi-Boasiako, 2021). District Assemblies, in collaboration with research institutions and CSOs, should establish community knowledge repositories, both physical and digital, to capture oral histories, cultural practices, and technical skills. Mobile-based applications and GIS can be used to geo-tag heritage sites and local resource management strategies, enhancing their visibility and integration into district plans (Chiweshe & Dalu, 2019).

5.3. Policy Coherence and Multi-level Governance

A major hindrance to endogenous integration is the disconnect between national policy prescriptions and grassroots development aspirations. Policy coherence is needed to harmonise macro-level frameworks, such as the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda and National Medium-Term Development Framework, with indigenous perspectives and district-specific needs (Ohemeng & Ayee, 2021). This calls for greater flexibility in planning guidelines issued by NDPC, allowing districts to innovate within the context of cultural norms, ecological realities, and local assets.

A robust decentralisation system must empower districts to initiate and lead development planning from the bottom up. This requires devolution of financial resources, decision-making authority, and planning tools to local governments. Bottom-up planning models that originate from community-level needs assessments and traditional governance structures can ensure development interventions are contextually relevant and owned by the beneficiaries (Yeboah-Assiamah et al., 2021). Encouraging pilot districts to adopt ED-based planning frameworks and evaluating their outcomes could serve as a model for national scale-up.

6. Conclusion

This study has illuminated the significant yet underutilised potential of endogenous development (ED) principles in strengthening Ghana’s decentralised planning system. Through qualitative inquiry across diverse districts, the findings demonstrate that local perceptions of development are rooted in cultural values, communal resilience, and ecological harmony, dimensions often absent from formal planning metrics. While some isolated efforts exist to integrate indigenous knowledge into local development strategies, they remain ad hoc, undocumented, and poorly institutionalised. Constraints such as technocratic planning bias, donor-driven priorities, centralised

resource control, and weak institutional capacity continue to marginalise local voices and undermine sustainable development outcomes.

At the same time, comparative experiences from other African countries, including Uganda, Kenya, and Burkina Faso, show that meaningful integration of endogenous knowledge is both possible and beneficial, especially when supported by inclusive governance structures, participatory methods, and flexible policy frameworks.

The persistence of externally imposed development models, often based on Western epistemologies, limits the relevance and effectiveness of decentralised planning in Ghana. As such, there is an urgent need to rethink dominant planning paradigms to accommodate epistemic pluralism, valuing indigenous, experiential, and cultural knowledge systems alongside scientific and technocratic approaches. This reimagining is essential not only for enhancing the legitimacy of local governance but also for advancing more holistic and context-sensitive development trajectories.

Endogenous development, by virtue of its emphasis on local agency, cultural identity, and ecological balance, provides a compelling alternative framework. It calls for a reorientation of planning processes, from mere compliance with centralised guidelines to genuine co-creation with communities rooted in their own definitions of progress.

6.1 Recommendations for Policy, Practice, and Further Research

Policy

- Revise national planning frameworks to allow greater flexibility and space for the incorporation of local knowledge and cultural values at the district level.
- Institutionalise the role of traditional authorities within the formal planning architecture, ensuring their structured participation in District Planning Coordinating Units (DPCUs).
- Align fiscal decentralisation efforts with the principles of local autonomy, enabling districts to fund and implement culturally relevant development priorities.

Practice

- Train district planners and Assembly members on endogenous development principles, participatory facilitation, and indigenous knowledge systems.
- Establish community knowledge repositories to document, preserve, and apply indigenous practices in sectors such as agriculture, health, environmental management, and conflict resolution.
- Foster multi-stakeholder platforms for knowledge exchange between formal institutions and local actors to encourage inclusive and iterative planning.

Further Research

- Investigate sector-specific applications of ED principles (e.g., in education, agriculture, and health) across various districts to identify scalable models.
- Assess the long-term impacts of integrating indigenous knowledge into district plans on development outcomes such as community resilience, environmental sustainability, and social cohesion.
- Explore the interface between endogenous knowledge systems and emerging digital technologies, including how digital tools can support the preservation and dissemination of traditional knowledge.

In sum, the future of sustainable local development in Ghana lies in bridging the epistemic gap between formal planning and local realities. Integrating endogenous principles into decentralised governance is not merely an academic proposition but a practical imperative for achieving inclusive, resilient, and community-driven development.

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Author's Biography

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The following questions guided interviews with District Assembly officials, traditional leaders, CSOs, and community members. The guide was flexible, allowing for probing and adaptation based on respondent background.

Section I: Background and Role

1. Can you briefly describe your role in local development planning in this district?
2. How long have you been involved in this role?

Section II: Understanding of Development

3. What does development mean to you and your community?
4. How do cultural practices and traditions influence how your community understands development?

Section III: Planning Processes

5. How are local needs and priorities identified in the planning process?
6. Are traditional leaders or community elders involved in development planning? If so, how?
7. Can you share examples where local knowledge or customs have influenced planning decisions?

Section IV: Challenges and Opportunities

8. What challenges exist in incorporating indigenous knowledge into district development plans?
9. What kind of support or reforms would help improve the inclusion of local knowledge in planning?

Section V: Final Reflections

10. How can Ghana's planning system better reflect the values and priorities of local communities?
11. What would a truly community-led development process look like in your opinion?

Appendix B: Comparative Table of Decentralised Structures in Ghana

Institution	Mandate	Level	Role in Planning
National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)	Coordinates national and sub-national planning processes	National	Issues guidelines, approves District Medium-Term Development Plans (DMTDPs)
Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs)	Monitors district planning and development	Regional	Provides technical backstopping and oversight
Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs)	Implements decentralised development and planning	District	Prepares DMTDPs, coordinates local implementation, engages stakeholders
District Planning Coordinating Units (DPCUs)	Technical team supporting planning and budgeting processes	District	Leads planning processes, consolidates departmental inputs
Traditional Councils	Customary governance and custodians of land and culture	Community/ Area	Provides cultural leadership, mobilises community, informal advisory role
Unit Committees and Area Councils	Grassroots governance and community mobilisation	Sub-district	Identifies community needs and priorities, represents citizens in local governance

Source: Inferred from the Local Governance Act (Act 936 of 2016)

Appendix C: Proposed Framework for Integrating Endogenous Development (ED) into the Planning Cycle

Phase 1: Pre-Planning (Community Engagement and Knowledge Mapping)

- Identify community elders, traditional leaders, and indigenous knowledge holders
- Conduct cultural asset mapping and oral history documentation
- Facilitate community forums to define local visions of development

Phase 2: Planning (Co-Creation of District Development Plans)

- Ensure traditional councils are formally represented on the DPCU
- Incorporate local indicators of wellbeing into district planning templates
- Harmonise national guidelines with culturally grounded goals and strategies

Phase 3: Implementation

- Engage local artisans, herbalists, farmers, and community groups in project delivery
- Use traditional festivals and community gatherings for information dissemination
- Strengthen customary institutions in managing communal resources

Phase 4: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

- Develop culturally relevant indicators of success (e.g., social harmony, ecological balance)
- Use storytelling, community feedback sessions, and participatory video to track outcomes
- Feed lessons into policy learning platforms at district, regional, and national levels

This framework is designed to operationalise endogenous development within Ghana's existing decentralised planning cycle, ensuring the process is both inclusive and contextually responsive.