

An infrastructure accountability story: Improving social and economic inclusion in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana

CoST – the Infrastructure Transparency Initiative (CoST) promotes transparency, participation and accountability in the delivery of infrastructure projects. It does this through multi-stakeholder working, disclosure of data, an independent review known as the CoST assurance process, and social accountability.

In 2019, the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly (STMA) in Ghana was the first sub-national government to join CoST as a member, together with partners from the private sector and civil society. The Assembly had earned a strong reputation for transparency, participation and accountability as one of the first subnational Open Government Partnership (OGP) members.

The CoST Sekondi-Takoradi multi-stakeholder group has since used this reputation to draw in eight other assemblies (local government authorities) in the Western Region of Ghana to improve transparency by publishing infrastructure data on a shared information platform¹. The local secretariat has then used this data to publish assurance reports in December 2019² and February 2021³, and subsequently engaged with disability rights campaigners and the media, to help improve social and economic inclusion in the Western Region of Ghana by improving the quality and accessibility of infrastructure. This is evidenced by the following examples.



CoST STMA MSG team

Improving access for disabled people

The first CoST Sekondi-Takoradi assurance report highlighted that the national Persons with Disability Act, 2016 (Act 715) was not being followed by most local government authorities in the Western Region of Ghana and disabled people were unable to access many public buildings.

- <https://costsekondi-takoradigh.org/project>
- Promoting *Transparency and Accountability in Public Infrastructure Delivery in Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly, Ghana*, CoST Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana – 1st Assurance Report, December 2019, <https://infrastructuretransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CoST-Sekondi-Takoradi-First-Assurance-Report.pdf>
- A New Dawn in Infrastructure Transparency, Citizen Participation and Accountability: CoST Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana – 2nd Assurance Report*, February 2021, <https://infrastructuretransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CoST-Sekondi-Takoradi-2nd-Assurance-Report.pdf>



New disability ramp at the Social Welfare Office

“ Nothing was done to enable persons with disability to access public buildings until CoST came to Takoradi”

Richard Asare, regional president, Ghana Federation of Disability (GFD)

According to Richard Asare, regional president, Ghana Federation of Disability (GFD), “Nothing was done to enable persons with disability to access public buildings until CoST came to Takoradi. We were complaining of no action. CoST listened and provided us space to voice our concerns regarding inclusion. CoST has done a lot, not only in Sekondi, but across the Western Region of Ghana.”

Civil society organisations and journalists trained by CoST Sekondi-Takoradi used the report to advocate for inclusion and compliance with the Disability Act. This led to the Assembly installing a ramp at its social welfare office⁴ in September 2022, fast-tracking construction of a school for deaf children and revising the designs of the Sekondi Youth Centre to ensure access for persons with disabilities. The Assembly also mandated implementation of the Disability Act on all public infrastructure projects.

Asare says, “We can now access the Sekondi Youth Centre and the social welfare office where access ramps have been constructed. We will send our monitoring reports to the multi-stakeholder group to help us advocate for action. I recommend that the CoST approach is established across all the districts and regions in Ghana, for the disability community to access public services.”



New disability ramp at the Atobiase Health Centre

Fast-tracking a community health centre

CoST Sekondi-Takoradi helped the delivery of an outpatient building at Atobiase in Wassa East district which had been delayed due to quality problems and funding challenges. It carried out an independent review and highlighted numerous issues in its second assurance report. These included lack of reliable water supply and sanitary facilities, inaccessibility for disabled people and critically ill patients, poor drainage and dilapidated staff accommodation.

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/embed/mWMgENSszgA>

“The new facility has given our community a name. Our community has become popular, and many people are visiting the health centre and receiving health care.”

Motorcycle rider who transports patients

CoST Sekondi-Takoradi held meetings with the district leadership to resolve the quality issues and delay. In response, the district fast-tracked completion of the project, which was opened in October 2023, complete with a new water reservoir, drainage system and access ramps. The facility was also upgraded to a health centre equipped with facilities for childbirth, minor surgery and other health support, and became eligible for annual upgrades.



A water reservoir constructed at the Atobiase Health Centre

A motorcycle rider who transports patients to the health centre said, “The new facility has given our community a name. Our community has become popular, and many people are visiting the health centre and receiving health care.” A local woman who lost one of her twin babies due to the distance required to travel to a maternity ward prior to the new centre opening said, “The health centre has helped us access services that are nearer. We used to travel for hours to access health care in the nearby communities. Now we can get services within our community. The new facility is good, and the health workers are friendly and caring.”

Improving usability of a new public library

CoST Sekondi-Takoradi’s first assurance report highlighted ongoing challenges in the construction of Takoradi’s main library. This included a dysfunctional lift suffering from an unstable electricity supply as well as outstanding stair balustrades, washroom partitioning and tiling, and wall copings. The project also lacked directional signage and the public thought it was private property.



Takoradi's main library

In June 2023, the contractor responded to CoST Sekondi-Takoradi’s recommendations by fitting a stabilizer to make the lift work properly and installing gender partitions in the washrooms and project signage. The library is now used by the public on a daily basis.

Extending emergency healthcare cover

CoST Sekondi-Takoradi's second assurance report identified a problem for healthcare staff in Ahanta West, the Municipal Assembly's new community health centre in Yarbiw. Despite successful completion of the facility, accommodation for on duty health workers was not included. Most workers commuted 4–5 km so the facility closed at 4 pm to allow them to be home by 6 pm. However, they were often working beyond these hours to provide emergency healthcare.

CoST Sekondi-Takoradi persuaded the Assembly to provide accommodation for nurses and to incorporate staff quarters in the design and budget for future community health centres, improving their ability to provide emergency healthcare.

Supporting car-repair businesses

In 2021, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development commissioned construction of 25 car-repair garages in the Kokompe light industrial enclave along with a two-storey skills training centre, internal roads and drains, a toilet and shower rooms. Construction of a health centre was also planned to ensure the workers had access to healthcare during emergency situations.

CoST Sekondi-Takoradi assessed the newly constructed garages as part of its first assurance report. The report highlighted weak stakeholder engagement in the design of the garages which affected the quality and ownership of the completed structures. Service pits were being filled with underground water and there were wet patches appearing on the walls. The garages also lacked vehicle access ramps, had poorly constructed drainage systems and lacked individual washrooms, contrary to contract provisions.

In response to the report, the Ministry, through STMA, fitted the required ramps. Lights were also installed across the garages and the correct spacing was ensured between the garages to reduce fire risk. Lessons from this project were used to construct 10 further garages in Kansaworodo-Mampong, where all the necessary facilities such as ramps and sanitary facilities were installed before commissioning.



Improving school sanitation

CoST Sekondi-Takoradi's second assurance report assessed the construction of a classroom block at Adum Dominase school by Mpohor District Assembly. The report highlighted a lack of toilets, with pupils using nearby bushes or distant community facilities. The report recommended construction of toilets and washrooms in the school, which the Assembly is now following.

Better car park construction

Tarkwa-Nsuaem Municipal Assembly resolved to combat traffic congestion and improve road safety by constructing two car parks for residents visiting the Tarkwa central business district. The congestion caused by on-street parking was making it increasingly difficult for local mine workers to drive to work, making what should be a six-minute journey take over an hour.

The CoST Sekondi-Takoradi second assurance report highlighted that the contractor was not meeting health and safety standards, was not using warning signs for the public and lacked equipment for testing materials. The report recommended using a small laboratory to perform basic quality tests and engaging a well-resourced third party to assist in ensuring quality compliance.



New car park

In response the Assembly partnered with the University of Mines and Natural Resources to conduct quality tests on the construction materials. In February 2022, the contractor started to install warning signs on the project, provided personal protective equipment for workers, enhanced site management and fast-tracked completion.

Enhancing productivity of farmers

CoST Sekondi-Takoradi's first assurance report independently reviewed the stalled construction of a cassava processing factory at Bokro by the Nzema East Assembly. The project, which was 23 months late by December 2020, had effectively been abandoned following delays in paying the contractor's claims and ill-health. There were also logistical challenges as the project was 35 km from the Assembly's offices, which had reduced visits by the supervising engineer. Furthermore, no site inspector had been assigned. The unfinished building was also discovered to have a leaking roof and the payment certificates were found to be based on quantity not quality.



Cassava Processing Factory, Bokro

The CoST Sekondi-Takoradi multi-stakeholder group recommended getting the defects repaired and exploring alternative measures to get the works completed. A site inspector was assigned and, in 2022, a year after the assurance report was published, the project was completed with all highlighted concerns fixed. Local women, who previously washed and dried their cassava crops on the roadside, can now do so in a clean and safe environment, improving the quality and value of their produce and increasing their sales.

Reducing flood risk

CoST Sekondi-Takoradi’s second assurance report led to changes in rehabilitation of 1.6 km of the WAMCO-Effiakuma road being undertaken by Effia-Kwesimintsim Municipal Assembly. The report highlighted concerns regarding the functional integrity of a new box culvert under the road that had not been de-silted, putting the road at risk of flooding. The old and new culverts were also not linked, leading to rain water flowing between them and undermining the road sub-base.



New box culvert to reduce flood risk

CoST Sekondi-Takoradi recommended that the Assembly undertake regular de-silting to ensure the culverts operated at full capacity. The report also recommended installing retaining walls either side of the road to link the old and new culverts. By early 2022, the Assembly had instituted regular de-silting of the culverts and installed retaining walls to link them. The road is no longer being flooded or eroded.

Conclusions

These examples show how the CoST assurance process uses publicly available information on infrastructure projects to highlight issues of concern that are important to the public and can be a catalyst for accountability. It also highlights the important role a multi-stakeholder group can play in giving a voice to disability rights campaigners and other marginalised groups.

Ultimately, it requires sub-national governments like the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly and the other assemblies in Western Ghana: that are open to criticism and respond positively by implementing the recommendations in CoST assurance reports, thereby improving social and economic inclusion. The CoST Sekondi-Takoradi multi-stakeholder group continues to follow up on the recommendations that have yet to be addressed and will continue to share the outcomes of their work with their stakeholders.



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