Ghana in 2010

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The year saw Ghana achieve the status of oil drilling nation, alongside discussions on whether crude oil reserves could be used to secure loans. Cutting down on public debt became a headache as the state could not live within its means, but the GDP target was achieved. A series of disbursements from the IMF and World Bank contributed to budget support and development. It was a tough but productive year. The new administration was firmly in the saddle, but had to handle one domestic crisis after another. The president introduced the Better Ghana Agenda during his 25 January state of the nation address, and later organised a two-day retreat for the cabinet to strategise on delivering it. There was a constitutional review and a census. Developmental interest from the international community increased.

Domestic Politics

On 15 December, Ghana began oil production from the Golden Jubilee Fields. National concern about what to do with oil revenues generated acute attention to the petroleum revenue management bill. Clause 5, which was intended to prevent the use of the petroleum account and proven oil reserves as collateral security for loans, was removed by a parliamentary amendment.

On 11 January, President John Atta Mills inaugurated the Constitutional Review Committee, which conducted a constitutional survey in June. A variety of issues tested the justice system across the board, and challenged both Chief Justice Georgina
Wood and Attorney General Betty Mould-Iddrisu personally. The failure of the latter’s office to prosecute certain individuals from previous administrations in matters of wilfully causing financial loss to the state generated political talk. The end-of-year government reshuffle moved the attorney general to head the ministry for education. She was replaced by Martin Amidu, who was minister for the interior and, incidentally, a deputy attorney general during the presidency of Jerry Rawlings. Notable in the new-year reshuffle was the appointment of Professor Kwesi Botchwey to the Economic Advisory Council, and his subsequent appointment on 6 October to chair the newly formed National Gas Development Task Force.

Despite the firm allocation of funding within the budget to implement the single spine salary structure for public sector workers, this policy faltered as a result of red tape and the inability of the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission to migrate teachers onto the new payment scheme. However, the wages commission announced on 28 May a 10% pay rise for all public sector workers, with effect from July 2010, even though a lot of teachers did not receive the remuneration due to them for the reasons already mentioned.

An extensive national debate ensued over the award of a major housing project to the engineering and construction consortium STX of South Korea, to deliver up to 300,000 housing units. Issues included lack of clarity about procurement of the funding. Stakeholders, such as the Institute of Architects, Institute of Planners, Institution of Engineers, Institution of Surveyors and the Real Estate Developers Association, argued that the houses might not be affordable to ordinary Ghanaians; that the contract should not benefit a foreign company but a national one in order to stimulate the Ghanaian economy; and that the terms of the contract were not in the national interest, as debt could