

GROWTH FOR GHANA

Following the publication of the firms' results on pages 16 and 17 of this magazine, *Joe Pickard*, speaks to some of the country's industry professionals.



Ghana's accountancy profession has seen growth over the past year with the total fee income of networks displaying 13% growth and associations' having 20% growth within the last year. This is higher than the Africa region as a whole which had 9% growth for networks and 8% for associations.

Speaking to Mazars Ghana senior partner Ernest Akonor, there seems to be a good level of optimism for the profession in Ghana; both in terms of growth and also for the regulatory systems.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants (Ghana) is Ghana's regulatory body for the profession, and has also been responsible for implementing IFRS in the country. Akonor says: "The institute has been very upbeat about keeping us all on our toes. They come out yearly with a programme of activities which is supposed to provide us with continuous professional development so there are a couple of topics that have to be attended to by practitioners [...] so we are very upbeat about what they are doing."

Mazars Ghana saw its fee income grow by 8% compared to the previous year. Akonor says that their audit service line has grown due to the addition of a few banks to its client portfolio. It has also seen its staff figures grow.

Integra International member firm Abstracus' managing partner Suganthan Allotey says that the current political and economic situation in Ghana has created opportunities for his firm. He comments that while the government's approach to reducing the country's fiscal debt by trying to increase domestic revenue mobilisation from taxes has put some strain on business activity, his firm's growth has "been driven by the need for companies to take advantage of the current tax regime". Allotey comments that because of this, the firm's audit, accounting and taxation services in particular had grown significantly.

The firms which spoke to the *International Accounting Bulletin* have a mostly positive outlook on the profession in Ghana, though

some noted that the future would not be without its challenges.

Allotey says that the challenge for his firm is to grow its capacity while still leveraging technology to help improve efficiency.

RSM member firm SCG Audits managing partner George Katako notes that one challenge for Ghanaian firms is the competition in the market: "We (SMPs) are all struggling; the big four dominate this market, they have for a very long time. The way I see it, the firms (SMPs) that develop a reputation for consistent quality, can position between the Big Four and the rest of the SMPS. I think that is a good opportunity for these firms in the market."

Akonor comments that there are rumours circulating amongst members of the profession that BDO and Grant Thornton are planning to move into Ghana.

As these two firms came 5th and 6th in the *International Accounting Bulletin* most recent world survey and are 7th and 6th respectively in the Africa region, it is likely that it would cause disruption for some of the smaller firms in Ghana if this does happen.

At the time of going to print, BDO was unable to provide a comment on this matter. Grant Thornton was also contacted but did not provide a comment before this magazine went to print.

SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING

Sustainability reporting is one of the areas which Ghana could strive to improve on. Speaking to this magazine, some member firms noted that it is not a top priority for the profession in Ghana.

Katako comments: "In Ghana as a whole, the whole sustainability movement has not quite caught on in the way it has elsewhere."

Allotey notes that while the country has not adopted non-financial and sustainability reporting, his firm is taking measures to approach the issue by "developing communication material for key clients



Ernest Akonor, Mazars Ghana

to help them understand the need for this sustainability reporting".

He adds that one aspect of non-financial reporting that his firm is looking at is digital risk and ways they can help their clients report on digital risk management.

CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE?

While optimism and growth have moved in the right direction over the past year in Ghana, disruption could be on the horizon. If the rumours are true about BDO and Grant Thornton moving into the jurisdiction, it could make it harder for the smaller firms to retain clients. IT adoption also seems to present a challenge to some of the smaller firms. Katako comments that some firms are just beginning to adopt the use of IT in the running of their businesses whereas Allotey mentions that his firm is struggling with the challenge of scaling up their current systems as the firm continue to grow.

However, while there is potential disruption on the horizon, optimism remains high for the profession and the support it receives from the Institute of Chartered Accountants (Ghana) which offers continuous support for its members, whilst acting as a regulatory body. ■