

First draft report December 8th, 2020

**Civil Society, Philanthropy and the Promotion of Active Citizenship in
Ghana: A Political Economy Analysis**

Report prepared for the STAR Ghana Foundation

Table of Contents

1.0 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION	4
2.0 DATA AND METHODOLOGY	6
3.0 CONCEPTUALIZING CIVIL SOCIETY	6
3.1 EVOLUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN GHANA	9
3.2 INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR CSO ACTIVITIES IN GHANA	11
4.0 CHALLENGES OF CSOS	12
4.1 SHRINKING RESOURCES AND CSO SUSTAINABILITY	12
4.2 A SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE?	15
4.3 CSO LEGITIMACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	17
4.4 PERSISTENT MUTUAL SUSPICIONS BETWEEN CSOS AND THE STATE	17
5.0 CITIZENSHIP AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN GHANA	19
5.1 THE CONCEPT OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP	19
5.2 THE STATE OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN CONTEMPORARY GHANA	23
5.3 UNDERSTANDING THE STATE OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN GHANA: A POLITICAL ECONOMY EXPLANATION	31
5.3.1 AN INCREASINGLY TOXIC POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT	31
5.3.2 THE PERVASIVENESS OF CLIENTELISM	32
5.3.3 WEAK LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM	34
6.0 PHILANTHROPY AND CSO FINANCING IN GHANA	37
6.1 INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PHILANTHROPY IN GHANA	38
6.2 FINANCING CSO THROUGH PHILANTHROPY: SOME CHALLENGES	41
7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS	43
8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS	44
REFERENCES (TO BE CROSSCHECKED)	48

List of Figures

Figure 1: Citizens’ reaction to poor provisioning of public services	24
Figure 2: Membership of voluntary/civic associations	26
Figure 3: Citizens’ preparedness to attend demonstration or protest match: Ghana in comparative perspective	28
Figure 4: Citizens preparedness to join others to raise an issue.....	29
Figure 5: Citizens’ preparedness to attend a community meeting: Ghana in comparative perspective.....	30
Figure 6: Citizen involvement in community action/meetings with the state (nationally) (%)	35

List of Tables

Table 1: Popular Ratings of Citizens' Engagement with the State.....	25
Table 2: Citizens' Engagement in Community Meetings and Communal Action	27

1.0 Background and Introduction

Having successfully held seven general elections and changed governments thrice without slipping into nationwide violence, Ghana has been widely praised for its democratic credentials and political stability. Indeed, some observers have gone as far as to characterizing Ghana as a ‘durable democracy’¹ – thanks to the country’s relatively vibrant civil society. Ghanaian civil society organizations (CSOs), in their varied forms, have played important roles in the peaceful turnover of power between political parties, and have contributed significantly to improved service delivery. They have advocated successfully for major policy reforms in a wide range of sectors, and have increasingly held governments accountable.

At the centre of the growth, vibrancy and impact of Ghanaian CSOs has been the tremendous donor support received by these organizations during the last two decades. Since the 2000s, in particular, there has been substantial external donor support for CSOs in Ghana through various multi-donor initiatives, including the Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme (G-RAP) (2005-2011); and the Rights and Voice Initiative (RAVI) (2004-2010). The latest and biggest of these multi-donor support programmes has been the *Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness* (STAR-Ghana, 2010-2020) initiative. With support from the UK government’s Department for International Development (DFID), the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and the European Union (EU), the STAR Ghana programme was established in 2010 as a multi-donor pooled funding mechanism aimed at increasing the capacity of CSOs and the Ghanaian Parliament in contributing to more accountable and responsive forms of governance.

As part of the STAR Ghana programme, a political economy analysis of Ghana’s civil society landscape was conducted in 2013 (see Tsikata et al 2013) with the aim of informing or shaping the programme’s civil society support strategies. During the last decade (2010-2020), STAR Ghana provided financial and technical support to some 232 partner organisations at both the national and local levels, and managed funds worth over \$US70 million during the period.² In late 2018, the STAR Ghana programme began a two-year transition from a multi-donor funded programme to an independent Ghanaian-owned and led national entity, called the STAR Ghana Foundation.

¹ See Guillaume Arditti, ‘Ghana’s durable democracy: The roots of its success’, Foreign Affairs, 6 January 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ghana/2017-01-06/ghanasdurable-democracy> (25 October 2020).

² This support was provided in two broad phases: Phase I of the STAR Ghana programme was implemented during 2010-2015, while Phase II was implemented over the period 2015-2020.

The STAR Ghana Foundation aims to build on the gains of the STAR-Ghana Programme, but with a different vision, values, focus and strategic approach. It aims at increasing the effectiveness of citizens' engagement with duty bearers towards achieving inclusive development. Therefore, at the heart of the newly established Foundation's work is the promotion of active citizenship in Ghana. While the STAR Ghana Foundation emerged out of the lessons and experiences of the STAR-Ghana programme, it is important to recognize the contextual differences within which these initiatives are being implemented. The work of civil society activists is shaped profoundly by the context and policy environment within which these actors operate. Thus, a number of recent developments such as the declining donor support to civil society, the growing threats to the sustainability of CSOs in Ghana and elsewhere, the emergence of new forms of citizens' organizations, as well as growing concerns about the legitimacy and accountability of CSOs, are all likely to have profound impact on the STAR Ghana Foundation.

Against this background, the STAR Ghana Foundation commissioned this study to update the 2013 PEA study of the civil society landscape in Ghana, with a particular focus on **1)** the prospects and challenges of CSOs in promoting active citizenship in Ghana; **2)** the potential of funding CSO activities through philanthropic organizations and individuals within the context of the dwindling external donor support for the sector; and **3)** identify the key current constraints to the work of CSOs in contemporary Ghana. The aims of this study, therefore, are to provide a better understanding of the changing context within which Ghanaian CSOs operate; and recommend strategies for enabling the STAR Ghana Foundation to achieve its twin objectives of facilitating active citizenship and enhancing the impact and sustainability of Ghanaian CSOs.

The report is structured as follows. After this introduction, Section 2 presents the methodological approach of the report. Section 3 focuses on the concept and evolution of civil society in Ghana as well as the legal and institutional framework within which Ghanaian CSOs operate. Section 4 discusses the main challenges of CSOs in Ghana. Section 5 focuses on the concept of active citizenship. It discusses the meaning of the concept, examines the level of active citizenship in Ghana and offers a political economy explanation for the state of citizen activism in contemporary Ghana. A discussion of the prospects and challenges of funding CSOs through private philanthropy follows in Section 6, before turning to conclusions and recommendations.

2.0 Data and Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology, with data gathered through a combination of literature review and key informant interviews. The first stage involved an in-depth review of relevant literature in the area of civil society, philanthropy and active citizenship in Ghana and elsewhere. Specifically, the review focused on the historical evolution of CS in Ghana; the regulatory framework (including the key institutions and laws) that govern CSO operations; the drivers of change and incentives in CSO advocacy work; the major issues confronting CS in Ghana, and the options for enhancing CSO long term effectiveness in Ghana.

Second, data was drawn and analysed from various rounds of Ghana's Afrobarometer surveys in order to understand the current state of active citizenship in the country. Two main reasons make the Afrobarometer survey an appropriate data source for studies seeking to understand the exercise of citizenship rights.³ First, this dataset provides a rigorous measure of several variables relating to civic engagement, including citizens' voting behaviour, voluntary association membership, and contact with leaders on issues of public concern. Second, the Ghana sub-sample of the dataset has a representative sample size of about 2,400 respondents selected from across the country, and thereby making it an appropriate dataset for purposes of generalizability.

The third stage of the methodology involved the use of key informant interviews. Using a non-probability sampling technique, this study purposively selected participants to reflect the different types of CSOs that operate in Ghana (e.g. policy think tanks, faith-based and grassroots/community-based organizations). A structured interview guide was used for the interviews and the process was tape-recorded and later transcribed.

3.0 Conceptualizing Civil Society

Civil society as a concept appeared in the writings of ancient and medieval philosophers including Rousseau, Ferguson, Tocqueville and Gramsci, but only became prominent in the 18th century (Whitefield, 2002). The concept is immersed in deep ideological debate of the pioneering scholars that variously wrote about it centuries back but also of emerging scholars that have become

³ For other studies on active citizenship that have highlighted the usefulness of the afrobarometer surveys, see Sabates-Wheeler et al 2020; Asante 2021; Esaw, 2009.

innovative of the definition and applicability of civil society in contemporary times. At the centre of this ideological debate is Tocqueville's liberal democratic school of thought and Gramsci's post-Marxist position (UNECA, 2011, Alidu and Gyekye-Jandoh, 2016). From the liberal perspective, civil society is seen as playing an intermediary role between the state and the individual/family and characterized by high social capital, trust and cooperation to develop political and economic democracy and also protect the individual from the state's overwhelming power (Alidu and Gyekye-Jandoh, 2016). In contrast, the post-Marxist school sees civil society as an instrument of resistance and activism that seeks to promote the creation and sustenance of social movements to negotiate or challenge the hegemonic powers of the state (UNECA, 2011). Both perspectives are good for the objective of this study because overtime, and through repeated resistance, the exercise of active citizenship may generate high social capital and the trust required to fight for the collective good of societies.

The Civil Society Index (CSI) defines civil society as "the arena, outside of the family, the state and the market where people associate to advance common interests"(Darkwa et al., 2006; p.16). On his part, Drah (2003: p.118) defines civil society as "an ensemble of intermediary associations or organisations which operate between the primary units of society in general (i.e., individual, family or household) and the state and its agencies." Perkin and Court (2005) describe civil society organizations as entities that "negotiate matters of public concern" while operating outside the boundaries of the family or household unit and the state. The World Bank defines CSOs as "non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic consideration" (World Bank, 2010). According to the United Nations, civil society is the third sector along with government and business, and comprise Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (United Nations, 2020).

These definitions suggest that civil society is distinct from the state and the family but seeks to connect the two in a manner that the state becomes more responsive to societal needs. Within the African context, this foundational position is disputed by René Lemarchand (1992) who opined that "nowhere in Africa is there a clear line of demarcation between state and society" (p.177). At best, civil society can be seen as the intersection between state and society where a clear boundary

is only imaginary, soaked in academic discourse rather than for practical and policy purposes. Fowler (2013) conceptualizes civil society in five main forms: civil society as social capital where frequent association among citizens and organizations lead to the building of trust in order to solve collective action problems; civil society as active citizenship in public affairs for the common good; civil society as fostering public debate in public spheres in order to enhance better deliberation; civil society as counter-hegemony in which the interest of the marginalized and the underprivileged are brought to bear through the continuous design and dissemination of ideology; and finally, civil society as an entity that resist violence.

Fowler's thinking is not significantly different from that of Williams and Young (2012) who have identified three key features of civil society relevant to both academic discourse and policy/practice. First, they posit that civil society represents the liberal ideals of freedom and equality, a space within which individuals can pursue their own particular projects by freely associating with others. This way, civil society can be understood as a plural realm for the convergence of varied and sometimes competing interests freely expressed. Secondly, they see civil society as an arena of free debate and criticism, exercising constraints on the power of the state. The freedom of expression offered by civil society makes it possible to hold the state and its agents accountable, contribute to the policy making process and provide a bulwark against the 'tyranny of the majority' (Williams & Young, 2012: p.8). Thirdly, civil society is conceived as a space for the promotion of values and attitudes essential for sustaining liberal social and political life

For the purposes of this report, civil society organizations are defined as “non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that are independently established, and working outside the control of the state or the government of the day, negotiate matters of concern to its members and that of society.”⁴ This broad definition will provide enough space for the selection of the rather diverse and numerous civic groupings in Ghana who are outside the state or government control yet work for the good of its members, the community or both.

⁴ Reference CIDIN Report

3.1 Evolution of Civil Society in Ghana

Globally, the emergence of civil society was seen as antithesis to what many described as the state domination of public life (Bratton, 1994). Therefore, civil society then, represented a preference for reform over revolution, and a strategy for political change based on negotiations and elections. Citing the works of several scholars, Bratton (1994, p.1)) notes that “the emergence of a democratic opposition to authoritarian socialist party-states in Central and Eastern Europe provided the impetus to the contemporary revival of civil society”. The emergence of civil society as both a concept and practice in most parts of Africa was in response to the excesses of colonial rule and, most importantly, for the preservation of the dignity of the indigenes of the colonies (Bratton, 1994; Darkwa et al., 2006).

In the Ghanaian context, the history of civil society is closely linked and shaped by the country’s political developments from the pre-colonial era to the present (Alidu & Gyekye-Jandoh, 2016:3). Darkwa et al., (2006) note that the evolution of civil society in Ghana can be traced as far back as the 1780s, following the formation of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) for the advancement of the rights and freedoms of the people of the Gold Coast. CBOs such as the Fante Confederacy and the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS) provided the civic space for indigenes under colonial rule to fight for their rights and to set the pace for further growth of concept and practice of civil society well into modern day Ghana (Alidu & Gyekye-Jandoh, 2016; Darkwa et al., 2006; Drah, 2003). The membership of these CBOs included chiefs, elders, the intelligentsia, professional lawyers, the youth and ordinary people, who were committed to protecting the political and economic rights of the indigenous people against possible encroachment from the British colonial administration (Darkwa et al., 2006).

Besides the protection and preservation of the rights, several other factors necessitated the rise of CBOs including the outcomes of the First and Second World Wars, the domestic political environment, protest and mass movements, lobbying, political reforms and sometimes deliberate legislation by colonial government. The Ghanaian culture of self-help is said to be an important factor in the evolution of CSOs in Ghana (Alidu & Gyekye-Jandoh, 2016). For instance Darkwa et al., (2006) point out that the CSO space predating 1957 was occupied by large numbers of self-help associations that championed the interests of their members. Urbanization and expansion in

economic activities during the interwar period led to an increase in the number and vibrancy of civic organizations in the then Gold Coast. This gave impetus to associations of indigenous cocoa producers who organised successful protests against the monopoly of the commodity market by the expatriate-controlled Association of West African Merchants (AWAM) (Gyimah-Boadi, 2000).

In terms of legislation, constitutional reforms initiated by the British Colonial government to facilitate the process towards self-government provided the enabling political environment for the expansion of civil society activities in the then Gold Coast. For example, the elite and intelligentsia took the opportunity to establish a number of political movements including the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) in 1947. While independence promised swift take-off of CSOs in Ghana, post-independence politics became very turbulent and thus watered down the pre-independence euphoria. Essentially the evolution of CSOs suffered its share of the rough political history of the early post-independence period. Remarkably however, the 1980s saw the revival of CSOs especially with Structural Adjustment Programs in gear. One notable invention that saw a positive surge in CSO activities was the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI). The SAPRI was launched in 1997 as a tripartite process between the World Bank, governments and civil society to review structural adjustment programmes. To be more effective, the CSOs formed Civil Society Coordinating Council (CIVISOC) with leadership reflecting geographical distribution and organizational typology. The CIVISOC did not only represent civil society in the SAPRI exercise but also resulted in key milestone in the evolution and growth of civil society in Ghana. Darkwa et al. (2006) noted some additional new qualities in the history of CSOs during this period, including unprecedented levels of cooperation among them; the emergence of institutionalized policy dialogue platforms with government; and their united challenge to SAPs as a development strategy.

These developments were not without challenges. Attempts have been made in the past by governments to sabotage the growing influence of CSOs within the Ghanaian landscape. Governments co-opted some CSOs and there were also legal attempts to stifle CSOs activities. An example is the draft 'NGO Bill' that was circulated by government in 1995 ostensibly to perpetuate the hegemonic ambitions of the state to control NGO activity (Darkwa et al., 2006). CSOs have

also faced sustained campaign of official intimidation, severe material and organizational deficiencies and inadequate funds to sustain their programs (Alidu and Gyekye-Jandoh, 2016). The decline in donor funding for the activities of heavily donor-reliant CSOs in the country has further undermined the energies of CSOs (Mamattah, 2014). Finally, fragmentation and the pursuit of individual goals have collectively restricted CSOs activities from the collective interest objective (Brown and Kalegaonkar, 1999).

3.2 Institutional and legal frameworks for CSO activities in Ghana

CSOs in Ghana operate under a relatively peaceful, friendly, and politically serene atmosphere. Specifically, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the Companies Code, Act 179 of 1963, the Trustees Act 1962 (Act 106), the Professional Bodies Registration Decree (NRCD 143) of 1976, the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2008 Act 749 and a host of others constitute the body of laws that regulate the activities of CSOs while structuring the relationship between them and the State.

For an organization to operate as a CSO in Ghana, the entity or group must be registered under the laws of the land. The institution charged with this responsibility is the Registrar General Department (RGD). Registration of CSOs is governed by the Companies Code/Act 179 (1963), the Trustees Incorporation/Amendment Law (1962/1963), the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (1992) and cabinet directives. One recent study reported that only eight percent of organizations sampled believed that the statutory requirements for (re)registration under this legal arrangement are easy to comply with (Ghana Philanthropy Forum, 2018: 15) . For 44% of respondents the processes were “quite difficult and demanding whilst 36% found it “impossible” to comply “without help” (ibid). The Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) oversees tax related activities of CSOs such as tax exemption for registered not-for-profit organizations and NGOs classified as such. For a CSO to benefit from tax exemption they must first of all register with the RGD as such and then sign up as a not-for-profit organization with the Department of Social Welfare (DSW).

The National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communication Authority (NCA) regulate the activities and licensing requirements of CSOs that operate in the media space. The NMC is expected to uphold the freedom and independence of the media as guaranteed under the 1992 Constitution. It is also responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the highest

journalistic standards in the media arena/landscape, including investigation and settlement of complaints made by or against the media and its practitioners (Darkwa et al., 2006). However, the ability of the body to uphold its own tenets especially in handling complaints against the media is hampered by resource constraints. In the next section we discuss the key challenges that confront civil society in Ghana.

4.0 General Challenges of CSOs in Ghana

The discussion in this section is structured around four main themes namely, the diminishing access to resources and growing threat to survival, shrinking civic space, questions around the legitimacy and accountability of CSOs, and growing suspicion between CSOs and the state.

4.1 Shrinking resources and CSO sustainability

Existing reports as well as the initial insights from the analysis of the data gathered for this report identify funding constraints as the most significant challenge faced by civil society in Ghana. Ghana does not have a culture of formal philanthropic giving to civic organizations (Krawczyk, 2019), nor do Ghanaian civil society organizations receive financial support from government. As a result, Ghanaian CSOs have historically been heavily dependent on external donor funding (EU Report, 2013). While donor financing has been central to the vibrancy of civil society in Ghana, the donor-dependent nature of CSOs has also had some adverse implications. In particular, there has been the tendency of donors to favour bigger organizations based in the national capital at the expense of smaller rural-based CSOs which are often more representative of the poor than the national-level organizations that have been the main focus of donor support. Krawczyk (2019) notes that this problem has been the result of donors' narrow conception of civil society, which focuses mainly on professional, urban CSOs that have the capacity to engage directly with national governments. In some cases, this over-emphasis on professionalized urban-based CSOs has resulted in situations where civil society is merely acting as a kind of technical consultant for the government, offering policy and practical recommendations to help the government achieve its stated goals, as against engaging in the kinds of citizens mobilization that are necessary for addressing the needs of marginalized groups and communities.

Moreover, some recent changes in donor-government relations in Ghana have resulted in a further reduction in the financial resources available to Ghanaian CSOs. Following the World Bank's reclassification of Ghana as a lower-middle-income country in 2010, foreign donors began to shift much of their financial to so-called 'priority countries'. Many donors have decreased their overall support to Ghana, creating sustainability challenges for civil society, especially for organizations that have been heavily reliant on foreign funding. As a result, 'CSOs find themselves scrambling to find enough local financial resources to continue operating' (Krawczyk, 2019).

Importantly, donor funding for civil society is not only on the decline, but also there has been a shift away from 'core funding' to project-based financing by donors. This means that the limited available funds tend to be provided on the basis of short-term projects in program areas that are more aligned with the goals of donors as opposed to the long-term goals of local organizations and the needs of citizens. One respondent explained the adverse impact of this changing financing architecture as follows:

The donors have faded them out [i.e. core funding]. So now what we have as a way of support to CSOs is projectized funding. So for instance, a donor announces a call for proposals in the area of education, and we all run in that direction and we abandon water because no donor has called for proposal to do anything in water provision. Even though citizens may have pressing needs or demands for water, nobody will find time and resources to address those concerns; we all run in the direction of the announced call. So it has led to a situation where national advocacy priorities are now being determined by donors.

Under the core funding regime, CSOs had some flexibility in challenging resources in response to emerging development challenges that were broadly in line with their strategic goals. With the shift towards projectized funding, resources are tied to specific donor-defined priorities in ways that make it difficult for CSOs to respond to emerging challenges. During interviews, for example, one civil society leader noted how the lack of core funding undermined the ability of CSOs to undertake rigorous research and engage in sustained advocacy around the recent controversial Agyapa Royalty deal.

In addition, the lack of core funding makes it difficult for CSOs to attract and retain high calibre staff. Organizations' inability to keep qualified staff well remunerated is resulting in high staff turnover. As one leading civil society activist explained:

You find many of the brightest and best within the CSOs sphere now beginning to shift to the private sector. So there is a certain level of attrition of the CSO capacity that is being lost and I'm pretty sure that if nothing happens to salvage the situation in the next three years or four years, there will be very little CSO capacity... Without support to sustain CSOs capacity, their ability to participate in policy making and governance will wither over time.

With shrinking financial resources, CSOs have increasingly entered into competition for funds in ways that have undermined prospects for networking and coalition building among them.

There is broad consensus that 'Ghanaian civil society is quite fragmented and works with poor coordination' due largely to their financial insecurity. A key challenge therefore revolves around the question of how best to keep civil society coalitions that are able to work together in the long term. In the present environment, thematic platforms seem to work better than permanent coordination mechanisms, because the former do not require stable inflows of funding to ensure that their structures are in place. However, these initiatives are often short-lived as they are (donor-) project-driven. As Gyimah-Boadi and Prempeh (2012) aptly put it, 'Ghanaian civil society has a notoriously short attention span, marked by a tendency to hop from one issue to another, often driven the goal of securing external-donor funding' (p.101).

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has further deepened the financial constraints of civil society in Ghana and elsewhere. During a recent policy dialogue, leadership of both the Africa Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP) and Imani Africa noted how the loss of some donor funds during the pandemic resulted in the outright cancellation of some projects that were being implemented. Findings from a recent study on the impact of COVID-19 on CSOs in some 44 African countries suggests that the negative impact of the pandemic on the operations and sustainability of civil society is not limited to the Ghanaian context. Of the over 1,000 respondents who participated in the survey, an overwhelming 98% reported that COVID-19 impacted and disrupted their

operations. 55.69% had already experienced a loss of funding due to the pandemic, while 66.46% expected to lose further funding in the next 3-6 months. About 78% of respondents noted that the pandemic would have a devastating impact on the sustainability of many CSOs in the region. 63.34% had to reduce or cancel their projects, while 54.94% expect this to continue over the next 3-6 months (EPIC Africa and @AfricanNGOs, 2020).

Amidst the pandemic, there is some evidence to suggest that donor agencies are recalibrating their priorities in terms of funding. The Alliance for Philanthropy and Social Investment Worldwide recent survey on global philanthropy indicates a radical shift in philanthropic funding towards health as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵ In a survey involving 250 philanthropy professionals and practitioners across 59 countries, respondents were asked whether they will change their funding priorities and what those priorities might be. The issue of health, including mental health, came top with 39%; followed by gender equality (28%); racial justice (19%); climate change (12%); and democracy education (9%).⁶

4.2 A shrinking civic space?

The second recent development with potential adverse implications for civil society is what appears to be a subtle closure of the civic space within which CSOs operate. This point is supported by the growing harassments of journalists, the closure of media houses perceived to be associated with opposition parties, and the increasingly harsh responses to the advocacy efforts of CSOs.

In Ghana, there have been some subtle attempts to close civic space in multiplicity of ways. First, is the repeated harassment of journalists who are performing their democratic responsibilities. The CIVICUS Monitor of global civic space refers to the work of the Media Foundation for West Africa which documented 31 violations affecting 40 victims in the 18 months to July 2019 in the country.⁷ It notes that the majority of the violations have been physical attacks and severe threats, and the killing of an investigative journalist, Ahmed Hussein-Suale, in January 2019. Commenting on the incident, the President of the Ghana Journalist Association, Mr. Affail Monney, observes that

⁵ <https://www.alliancemagazine.org/analysis/alliance-survey-reveals-mental-health-issues-rising-in-global-philanthropy-sector/>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ <https://monitor.civicus.org/updates/2019/12/11/further-deterioration-press-freedom-ghana/>

“attacks on journalists have been rampant and severe” and that “there is a growing sense of intimidation of the media, and a growing culture of intolerance for dissenting views”⁸. He notes further that “there has been arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement of laws to shut down mainly pro-opposition media outlets. The independent broadcast media industry has been battling government over industry-crippling policy proposals.”⁹ Radio stations such as Radio Gold and Radio XYZ are the latest victims of pro-opposition media houses closed down by the government. The consequence of these arbitrary actions of government is the dent in the global image of the country when it comes to issues of press freedom. Ghana dropped four places in the 2019 World Press Freedom Index prepared by Reporters without Borders. Indeed, the country’s press freedom index score has consistently declined during the past three consecutive years: out of the 180 countries assessed in 2018, 2019 and 2020, Ghana was ranked 23rd, 27th and 30th respectively.¹⁰

A related issue has been the increasingly harsh criticisms of vocal civil society activists by influential members of ruling coalitions. Although the President himself has asked Ghanaians to eschew spectatorship and become active citizens in demanding transparency and accountability from government, civil society activists have continuously been tainted with various negative tags, ranging from “loudmouthed CSOs” to “naysaying Jeremiahs”.¹¹ The most obvious recent example of this can be found in an article published in the state-owned Daily Graphic in September 2020. Published by Elizabeth Ohene, a former Minister of State and a loyalist of the ruling NPP, the article not only called the legitimacy of CSOs into question, but also went on to tag civil society activists’ who at the time were criticising the NPP government’s controversial Agyapa mineral royalties agreement, as “so-called ‘politically neutral’ person[s]” who are not only corrupt, but also tend to account to foreign donors rather than to ordinary Ghanaians.¹² On the one hand, one could interpret such criticisms as part of the contestation of ideas rather than as an attempt to close the civic space. On the other hand, however, such criticisms, especially those that border on

⁸ See “All is not well with the Media in Ghana – GJA President” <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/All-is-not-well-with-the-media-in-Ghana-GJA-president-780240>

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ <https://rsf.org/en/ghana>

¹¹ *Imani Africa*, ‘Elizabeth Ohene and Her Long-Suffering “Neutrals” – Kofi Benti’. Available at: - <https://newsghana.com.gh/elizabeth-ohene-and-her-long-suffering-neutrals-kofi-benti/>

¹² Elizabeth Ohene, ‘Elizabeth Ohene writes: All-knowing neutrals’, Daily Graphic, September 2, 2020.

questions of legitimacy (see further below), can be exploited by opportunistic politicians to target and crack down the activities of groups perceived to be ardent critics of government policies.

4.3 CSO legitimacy and accountability

Ghana's 1992 Constitution provides a solid framework within which civil society organizations (CSOs) can operate, with Article 37 granting citizens the right 'to form their own associations free from state interference'. Yet, a long-standing challenge to Ghanaian CSOs has been the regular challenges to their political legitimacy and credibility (see Gyimah-Boadi, 2004). Some citizens perceive CSOs, particularly NGOs, as corrupt, and important questions remain around the transparency and accountability of a significant number of CSOs in Ghana. In the initial PEA study of the civil society landscape in Ghana, the great majority of CSOs (69.8%) interviewed noted that they experienced difficulties in maintaining their legitimacy (Tsikata et al 2013, p.42). This problem has persisted in recent years. In the Daily Graphic article cited above, Elizabeth Ohene referred to CSOs' criticisms of government as a 'self-appointed role', and wondered why '[m]any of these organisations [which] cannot count a dozen people as their members' often project themselves 'as repositories of all wisdom'.¹³ These concerns have remained in large part because of the limited and dwindling collaborations between national-level and district/community-based civil society organizations. While grassroots organizations face more challenges in terms of both technical capacity and financial resources, such organizations benefit from local legitimacy and are strongly linked with their constituents. This means that forging stronger linkages between the well-established urban-based CSOs/think tanks and grassroots' organizations can go a long way to addressing the legitimacy question around CSOs by providing opportunities for these organizations to sustain and complement each other.

4.4 Persistent mutual suspicions between CSOs and the state

Although the majority of civil society strives to be non-partisan, Ghanaian CSOs, particularly those organizations working in anti-corruption and governance, suffer high levels of suspicion from political leaders and their followers on grounds of their (perceived) lack of political neutrality.

¹³ Elizabeth Ohene, 'Elizabeth Ohene writes: All-knowing neutrals', Daily Graphic, September 2, 2020.

Political elites are not sufficiently receptive to CSO criticisms, and have often labelled those that criticize them as belonging to an opposing political camp. There is often the tendency for political parties to try to ascertain the political leanings of CSOs before engaging with them. This political context has the potential of intimidating some potentially vocal civic organizations. This problem perhaps explains (at least partly) why only a very limited number of CSOs have become more willing to directly challenging the State and holding governments to account (Oppong et al 2013). In an environment rife with partisan political polarization, even the slightest suspicion of political bias can be catastrophic for CSOs whose goal is to engage all political sides.

Others have criticized civil society for projecting perceived wrongdoings of governments and viewing every government action with suspicious. As Elizabeth Ohene wrote in her recent criticisms of CSOs:

‘They say they are not party political, and they are openly disdainful towards those in politics, especially those in government. It is sometimes difficult to discern that they believe anyone apart from them serves Ghana or has good intentions towards Ghana. They seem to operate on the general principle that governments are corrupt and ineffective and NGOs and CSOs are clean and effective. For what it is worth, I disagree. Then there is the continuing determination to see all politics as corrupt and evil. Thus, people will go to great lengths to disclaim any connection with politics or political parties’.¹⁴

Such persistent mutual suspicions tend to undermine opportunities for effective state-society cooperation and engagements. A related problem beyond the issue of suspicion has been what one observer refers to as the proliferation of truly partisan CSOs in Ghana (Krawczyk, 2019). Ghana’s civil society landscape is becoming “increasingly politicized” (Gyimah-Boadi and Brobbey 2012, p.4), not least as government’s inability to properly regulate the sector has fostered the proliferation of partisan and unregistered organizations (Ibid). Increasingly, both pro-government and pro-opposition political actors have founded CSOs that engage in stridently partisan public commentary.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Ohene, ‘Elizabeth Ohene writes: All-knowing neutrals’, Daily Graphic, September 2, 2020.

5.0 Citizenship and Active Citizenship in Ghana

This section addresses several interrelated questions that are fundamental to the work of STAR-Ghana Foundation. What is active citizenship? Under what conditions is active citizenship fostered or facilitated in any given society, and to what extent do such conditions prevail in contemporary Ghana? What is the state of active citizenship in Ghana today? In what ways do political economy dynamics shape citizens capacity and commitment in engaging with state institutions in Ghana? How can strong active citizenship be built or fostered in Ghana?

5.1 The Concept of Active Citizenship

Traditional understandings of citizenship focus on individuals' official or legal belonging to a national identity. This belonging then results in particular rights and obligations which regulate the relationship between individuals or social groups and the State. In effect, the notion of 'citizenship' is concerned primarily with questions of what it means to be a member of society, how identities and loyalties are constructed, how individuals and groups are supported and resourced as members of a particular political community (rights) and how they in turn contribute to the communities (obligations and duties) to which they belong (Onyx et al 2011, p.55). Under citizenship ideal, public officials must treat citizens as legal rights-bearing agents who are entitled to information on public decisions related to their interests, to petition public officials, and to appeal decisions made by those officials (Houtzager and Acharya, 2011, p.6). However, unless citizens are themselves willing and are able to play active roles in claiming their socio-economic, political and civil rights, they are likely to be ignored by power holders and thereby experience only diminished forms of citizenship. This is where the idea of active citizenship becomes important.

The concept of active citizenship places agency at the centre of societal development (Onyx et al 2011). It involves people shaping rights and obligations through their participation as active rather than passive members of society. 'Active' citizenship includes the idea that from the level of an individual to the level of a community, citizens will play an active role in shaping their own rights and responsibilities. For Houtzager & Acharya (2011), active citizenship occurs when citizens "negotiate the terms of their access to mandated public goods and services in ways that are publicly

sanctioned and protected” (p.3). From this perspective, the path of analysis begins with humans as autonomous self-determining beings, and as agents who shape and change society in a way that is in line with their needs. This path is based on the emergence of actors who want to be recognized as subjects in their own right, not just ‘subject’ to the state. Based on decades-long experience of Oxfam International in promoting participatory development, Duncan Green conceptualized active citizenship as follows:

At an individual level, active citizenship means developing self-confidence and overcoming the insidious way in which the condition of being relatively powerless can become internalised. In relation to other people, it means developing the ability to negotiate and influence decisions. And when empowered individuals work together, it means involvement in collective action, be it at the village or neighbourhood level, or more broadly. Ultimately, active citizenship means engaging with the political system to build an effective state, and to assume some degree of responsibility for the public domain, leaving behind simple notions of ‘them’ and ‘us’ (Green, 2008).

Clarke and Missingham (2009) suggest the need to understand the concept of active citizenship in terms of at least two main domains of development theory and practice, namely ‘bottom-up’ participation in the domain of civil society; and rights-based approaches to development. Regarding the first, there is a significant degree of consensus that for community-development interventions to be successful and have sustained impact, a meaningful involvement of beneficiary communities in decision-making processes is necessary. The intrinsic benefits of citizen participation have their origins in Rousseau’s social contract concept, which argues that participation allows citizens to develop a civic consciousness, build civil society coalitions and political capabilities in engaging duty bearers. To allow poor citizens to claim their rights, and assert their citizenship, public policies and programmes need to be strategically designed with ‘inclusive spaces’ for citizen participation at the design phase, and to allow duty bearers to receive feedback at the delivery phases (Sabates-Wheeler et al 2020). As articulated by the International Institute of Social Sciences,

Civic activism is essential in ensuring that public institutions function in an accountable and transparent manner, with participation and representation for all. Achieving accountable governance requires not only responsive elites, but also

*active citizens - and active citizens, in turn, require participation in civic associations, local and international, access to the media, and the means to engage in activities such as nonviolent demonstration or petition. Where there is a strong civic culture of political engagement and participation, countries are more likely to have effective service delivery, reduced corruption, and faster and more equitable economic growth.*¹⁵

However, as observers have emphasised, participatory development is not simply a technocratic exercise that entails bringing citizens together, but is an inherently political undertaking. Cooke and Kothari (2001) have gone as far as to conceptualizing participation as ‘tyranny’ in an attempt to highlight the fact that participatory development is severely constrained by the relations of power in which it is enabled and its goals and terms of references defined. The concept of active citizenship also explicitly acknowledges unequal relations of power, especially in terms of the power of the state and state agencies on the one hand, and that of civil society organization on the other. The key point is that compared with state agencies, CSOs, particularly community-based organizations have very limited access to economic and other material resources. Local development efforts cannot therefore be effective and sustained without mobilizing the support and resources of state, multilateral agencies, and private individuals or philanthropic institutions.

Rights-based development is the second important influence on concepts and practices of active citizenship. ‘Citizenship’ explicitly invokes the idea that individuals and groups are members of national political communities with legally and morally enforceable rights in relation to the state. States, in this view, have a moral responsibility to improve the well-being of their citizens, especially those who are poor and marginalized. ‘Active’ citizens are agents in such a process, enacting and claiming their legal and human rights as precursor to social change and development. Thus, active citizenship draws together ideas of participation, rights-based development, and recognition of the importance of state responsiveness to the needs of citizens. It emphasizes and seeks ways for citizens, especially poor and marginalized groups, to exercise their rights and engage with state and other agencies in doing development. Participation leads to active citizenship when communities begin to organize themselves and look to influence local, national or

¹⁵ Available at: <https://www.indsocdev.org/civic-activism.html>

international policies or decision making. Active citizenship may be more effective at the local level where citizens make claims on ‘duty bearers’ as ‘rights holders’ (Clarke and Missingham, 2009, p.956).

Given that poor and vulnerable citizens often lack the organisational capabilities and resources needed to effectively engage with the state, there is strong recognition of the fundamental role of civil associations in promoting active citizenship by empowering individuals to engage with public officials, hold them to account, and claim public services (Houtzager & Acharya, 2011). Indeed for Mark Turner (2001), the voluntary, or third, sector is where we should first look to find new ways of practicing and promoting active citizenship:

The third sector, and more specifically voluntary associations, can provide opportunities for social participation, for democratic involvement at the local level, and thus for active citizenship. They are essential to the survival of the public sphere, and in terms of service delivery, they can provide welfare programmes that are sensitive to local client needs (quoted in Onyx, et al 2011).

However, whether CSOs succeed in building active citizenship is itself dependent on several contextual factors. First, institutions must be inclusive and have interfaces and spaces created (or claimed) to facilitate state-society collaborations. The extension of citizenship from a right to a role of responsibility, also shifts the ground for public policy: if citizens have a responsibility to hold the State accountable, the State also has a responsibility to be transparent and facilitate this engagement through the creation of inclusive political institutions (Sabates-Wheeler et al 2020).

Secondly, citizens must want to establish relations with others, either through a) membership of community based or other formal organizations or b) informal networks and relations of sociability. In Mexico and Brazil, Houtzager and Achrya (2011) found participation in voluntary associations to have led to higher levels of active citizenship in two urban centres. To an extent, this is not surprising because when citizens join associations, “their individual and... quite voices multiply and are amplified” (Putnam, 2000: 338). Thirdly, individuals must have trust in others and in public institutions (Esau, 2009, p.383). Fourthly, citizens must have a common understanding of their rights and duties of citizenship (Ibid). We now turn to explore some of these issues within the specific Ghanaian context.

5.2 The state of active citizenship in contemporary Ghana

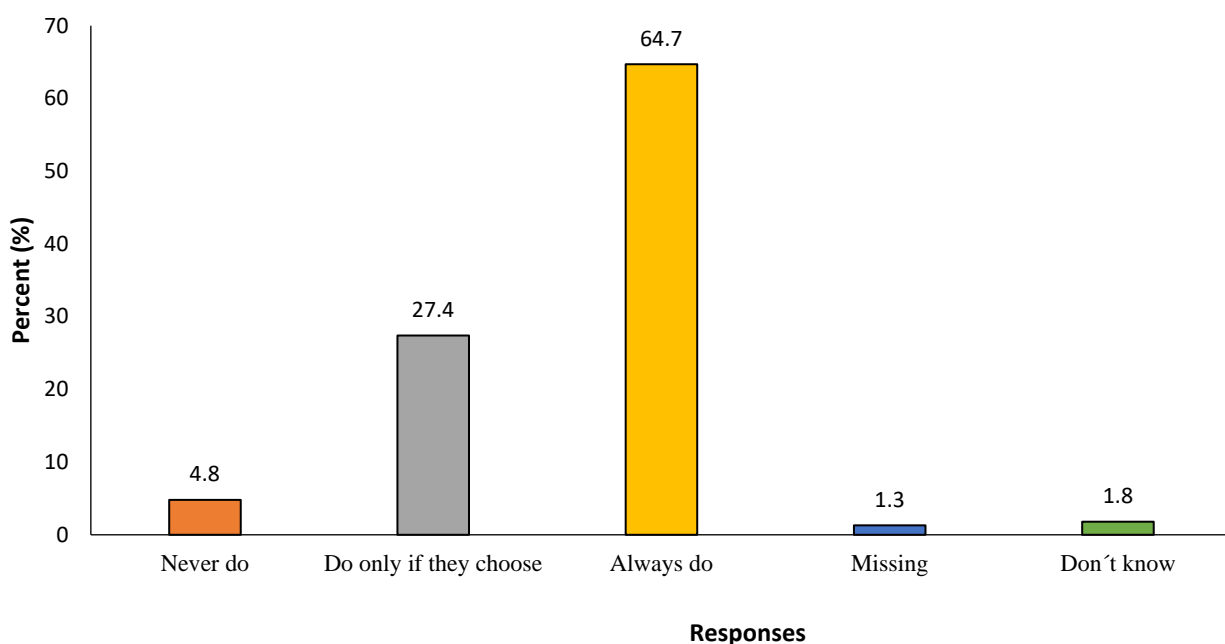
In this section, we draw mainly from various rounds of the Afrobarometer surveys to assess the state of ‘active citizenship’ in Ghana, focusing specifically on aspects of the survey that assess citizens’ level of civic engagement. These indicators include questions on whether respondents had voted in the last general elections, whether they had attended a community meeting, whether they had participated in demonstration or protest march, and whether they had contacted various public officials, including District Assembly Authorities.

Ghana’s 1992 Constitution underscores citizens’ freedom to mobilize, partake in demonstrations and to form or join any association (e.g. trade unions or other national or local groups) for the protection of their rights and interests. Based on data from Round 6 of Afrobarometer survey (2014/2015), Figure 3 reports on respondents’ views regarding how citizens should react to *poor quality service provisioning* on the part of service providers. Of the 2400 respondents in this survey, 1,552 (64.7%) reported that citizens must always complain to government officials when public services are of poor quality. On the face value, one can interpret this data to mean that in general, Ghanaians do have a good sense of what is expected of an *active citizenry* in order to enhance the delivery of quality basic services to the poor

However, a closer look at other aspects of the Afrobarometer surveys leads to one clear conclusion, namely that the level of active citizenship among Ghanaians is very weak.

As noted in the previous section, the level of trust in public institutions has implications on the exercise of active citizenship: citizens are likely to engage in deliberations with public institutions/officials only when they believe that such institutions are committed to advancing their interests. Yet in Ghana, majority of citizens have little or no trust in most public institutions, including District Assembly Officials, the Ghana Revenue Authority, police, Parliament, ruling and opposition parties, among others. Data from various rounds of afrobarometer surveys shows that the only public institution that enjoys a good amount of trust, alongside religious and traditional leaders, is the military.

Figure 1: Citizens' reaction to poor provisioning of public services¹⁶



Source: Afrobarometer Round 6, 2014/2015

Moreover, over time, the number of Ghanaians who trust public institutions or officials has declined significantly. Between 2002 and 2014, the proportion of afrobarometer respondents who said they had little or no trust for Parliament increased from 43% to 61%. Similarly, whereas less than half (49%) of respondents expressed little or no trust at all for their local government authority in 2002, this figure increased to 62% in 2014 (Armah-Attoh, 2014, p.4). Not surprisingly, there has been consistently high levels of disconnect between citizens and the state, as most Ghanaians rarely engage with state institutions or authorities. In the most recent round of Afrobarometer survey (2016/2018), the vast majority of respondents indicated that they had never contacted an official at a government agency (87%), their Member of Parliament (84%), a political party official (79%) and their local government councillor (71%) about important problems or to give them their views (Table 2). Since 2002, the majority of Ghanaians (from 72 % to 89 %) never interfaced with

¹⁶ The specific question posed to respondents was: 'For each of the following actions, please tell me whether you think it is something a good -citizen in a democracy should always do, never do, or do only if they choose. Complain to government officials when public services are of poor quality'

their elected national and local representatives, an official at any government ministry/agency or an official of a political party (Table 2).

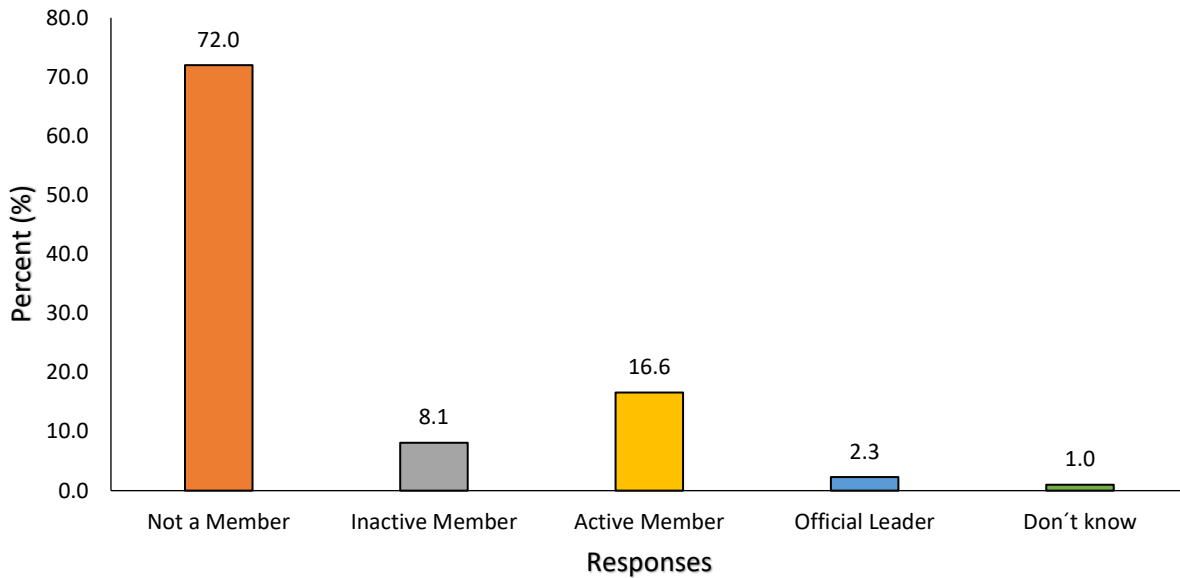
Table 1: Popular Ratings of Citizens' Engagement with the State

		2002	2005	2008	2011	2014/2015	2016/2018
Contacted Member of Parliament	Never	87	83	85	86	87	84
	Once/A few times/often	12	16	14	13	10	16
Contacted Local Gov't Councillor	Never	83	85	63	68	72	71
	Once/A few times/often	15	14	36	31	17	28
Contacted Political Party Official	Never	84	78		85	86	79
	Once/A few times/often	15	21		14	10	21
Contacted Gov't Official at a Ministry	Never	90	86	86	89	89	87
	Once/A few times/often	9	13	13	10	8	11

Source: Compiled from *Ghana Afrobarometer Surveys 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011 2014/2015, and 2016/2018*

Another important indicator of active citizenship is the extent to which citizens express interest in, and have the capacity to, hold their leaders accountable through associational activities and collaborative community action. Existing research suggests that ‘Being a member of a local community-based organization provides an ideal avenue for active citizenship’ (Onyx et al 2011, p.65). Yet, the available evidence suggests that a vast majority of Ghanaians are not a member of any civic association or community group. In the most recent Afrobarometer survey data gathered in 2018, just about 17% reported being active members of a voluntary/civic association. In contrast, 72% reported that they were not members of any voluntary association while another 8% reported being inactive members of one association or the other. This means that, together, about 80% of Ghanaians are either not a member of any civic association at all or are best only passive members of such associations (Figure 4). In such contexts, it is very likely that individuals will be more interested in seeking personal gains over community benefits through various forms of collective action.

Figure 2: Membership of voluntary/civic associations



Moreover despite the constitutional guarantees regarding citizens' rights to mobilize and demonstrate in the interest of community and national development, most Ghanaians are not ready to exercise the right to embark on demonstration or protest marches. Since 2002, an overwhelming majority of Afrobarometer respondents have consistently noted that they would never attend a protest march or demonstration during the 12 months preceding the survey. In the most recent Afrobarometer survey conducted in 2016/2018 (Round 7), an overwhelming majority of respondents (92%) indicated that they never participated in protest marches in the past 12 months, and 67% indicated that they will never engage in this kind of collective action. Only 4 percent indicated that they did this about once or twice, while a mere 0.6% said that they have 'often' participated in this type of activity.

Table 2: Citizens' Engagement in Community Meetings and Communal Action

		(%)					
		2002	2005	2008	2012	2015	2018
Attend community meetings	No (Would never do this)	22	6	8	16	16	14
	No (But would do if had the chance)	20	37	33	42	39	35
	Yes (Once/twice, several times/often)	57	56	58	42	31	12
Joining others to raise an issue	No (Would never do this)	37	11	13	26	22	23
	No (But would do if had the chance)	22	37	33	37	43	43
	Yes (Once/twice, several times/often)	39	51	53	37	24	10
Attend demonstrations /protest	No (Would never do this)	83	67	69	84	59	67
	No (But would do if had the chance)	8	22	20	11	32	25
	Yes (Once/twice, several times/often)	8	8	9	4	6	4

Source: Compiled *Ghana Afrobarometer Surveys 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012 and /2015*

One important observation in the afrobarometer surveys relates to the sharp contrast between citizens' activism in participating in general elections on the one hand, and their rather passive attitude in engaging with state authorities and holding them to account on the other.¹⁷ In the 2018 afrobarometer survey, one of the questions posed to respondents read: 'In the last national election held in 2016, did you vote, or not, or were you too young to vote?' A significant majority (76%) of respondents reported that they voted in the 2016 elections. In contrast, only 12% had attended a community meeting; 10% reported engaging in collective action by joining others to raise an issue concerning the development of their community; and a mere 4% had participated in a demonstration or protest march (see Table 3).

This trend has been a long-term trajectory, evidenced in previous nationally representative surveys and in official statistics on voter turnout during much of Ghana's Fourth Republic. In 1996, voter turnout was 77.9% in the Presidential elections, and was even slightly above 80% in both 2004 and 2012. Although turnout in the 2008 Presidential elections dropped from the impressive 85.1% recorded in 2004, the turnout rate (69%) was still high by international standards and considerably

¹⁷ See also presentations by Charles Abugre, Prof Amin Alhassan.

higher than the rate of 61.7% in the November 2008 Presidential elections in the United States (Abdulai and Naaborle Sackeyfio, 2020). Similarly, in Round 5 of the Afrobarometer survey (2012), as much as three-quarters of Ghanaians (75% of respondents) reported that they had voted in the 2008 general elections.¹⁸ Yet, in this same survey, the overwhelming majority of respondents (95%) reported not participating in any protest marches in the past 12 months. This figure included some 84% who noted that they would never do such a thing. Only 4% of respondents reported engaging in this kind of collective action “once/twice”, “several times” or “often” in the past year (see Armah-Attoh and Robertson, 2014). In effect, the evidence is clear that the practice of democracy in Ghana is yet to progress far beyond the political ritual of voting in periodic elections.

This poor culture of civic activism is even more evident when compared to the experiences of countries which are broadly at the same level of democratic consolidation and socio-economic development with Ghana. In 2018, a significant majority (67%) of Ghanaian respondents in the afrobarometer survey indicated that they would *never attend a demonstration or protest march*, compared to 38% in South Africa and about 48% in both Benin and Botswana who expressed such views (Figure 5).

Figure 3: Citizens’ preparedness to attend demonstration or protest match: Ghana in comparative perspective

¹⁸ 16% did not vote because they were either not registered voters or too young at that time to vote, while just a 8% of qualified voters did not vote either because they simply decided not to, did not have time to or did so for other reasons.

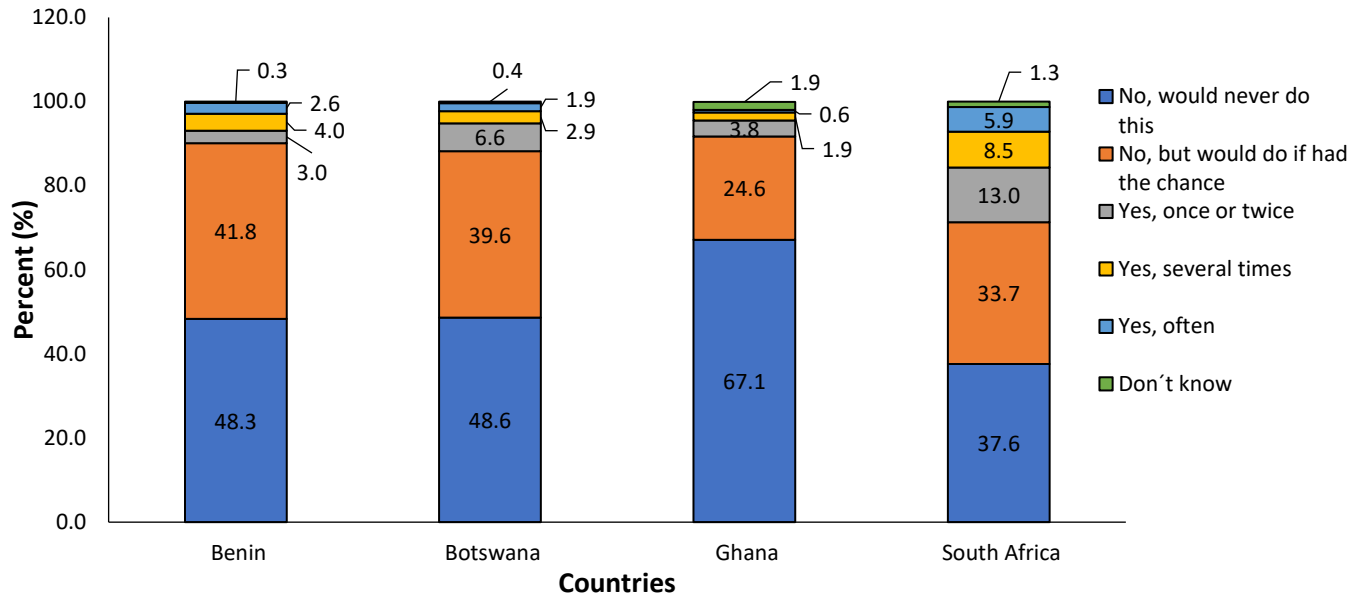
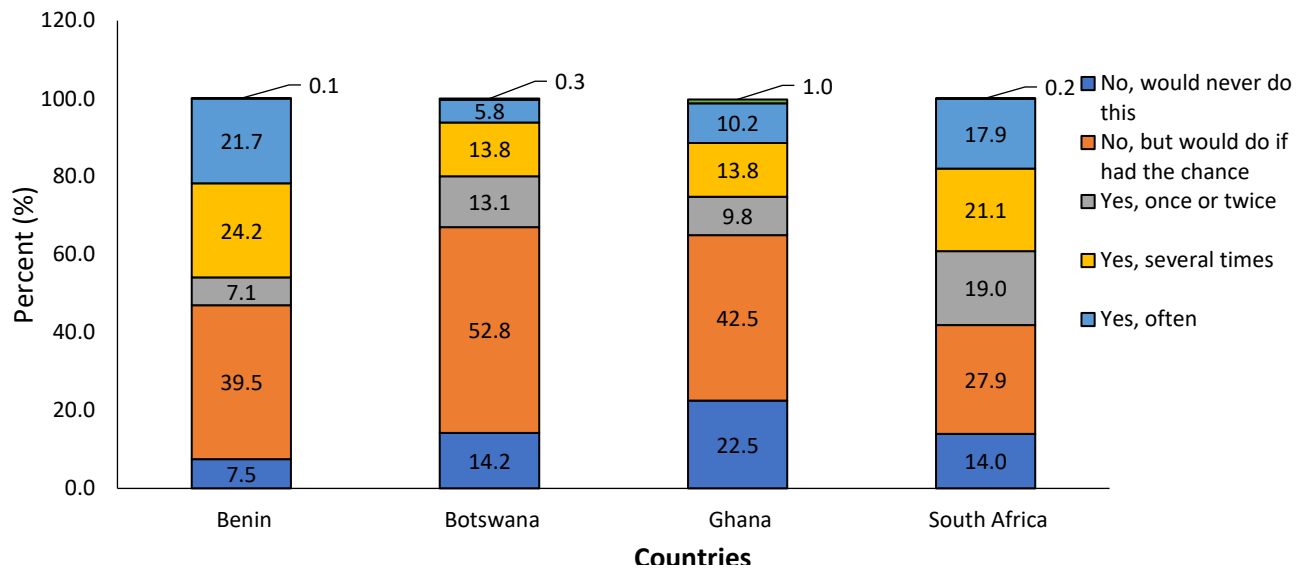


Figure 4: Citizens preparedness to join others to raise an issue

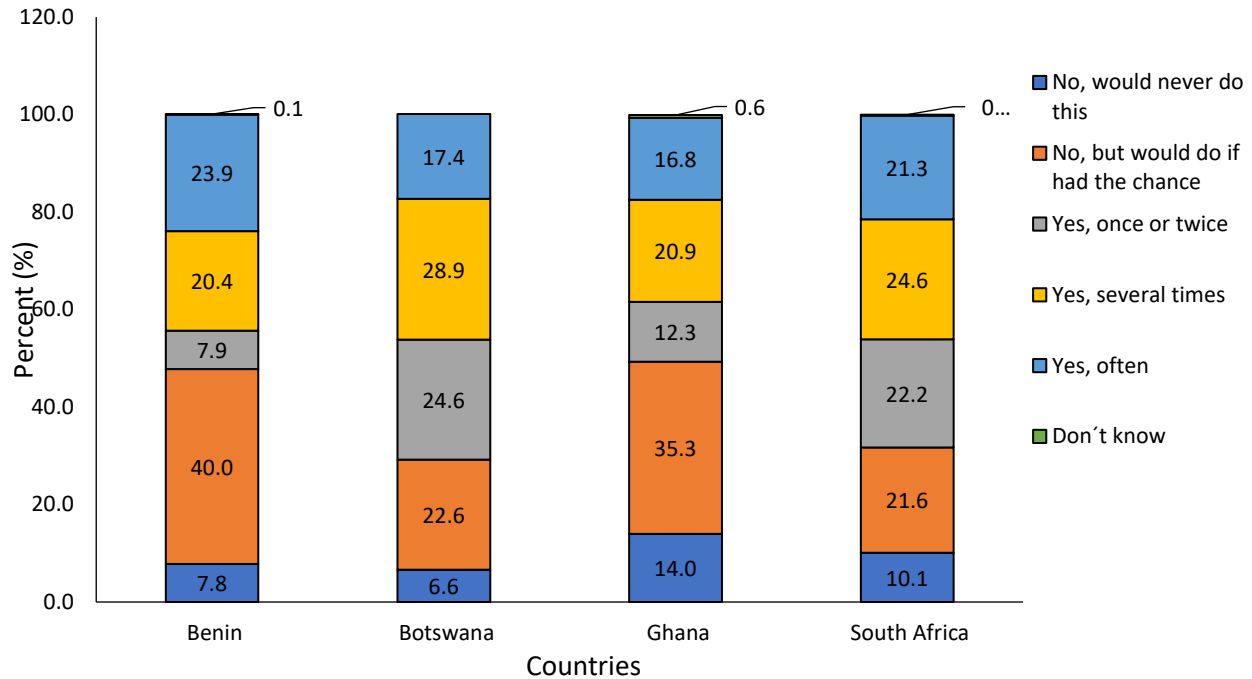


Source: Afrobarometer, 2016/2018

A similar picture emerges with regards to citizens' preparedness to join hands with others in raising issues concerning the development of local communities. While some 23% of Ghanaians said that they would never do this, only about 8% of respondents in Benin indicated their unwillingness to participate in community development issues. The corresponding figures for both Botswana and South Africa was 14% (Figure 6). Similarly (see Figure 7), among these countries, the proportion

of respondents who indicated that they would never attend a community meeting was highest in Ghana (14%), especially when compared to Botswana (7%) and Benin (8%).

Figure 5: Citizens’ preparedness to attend a community meeting: Ghana in comparative perspective



Source: Afrobarometer, 2016/2018

In effect, Ghanaians are much less likely to attend community meetings, participate in a demonstration or protest march, or join hands with other community members to raise issues concerning the development of their communities than their counterparts in Benin, Botswana, and South Africa. These findings provide strong support for Jones et al. (2009) observation that ‘notions of citizenship and rights are not well embedded within Ghanaian political culture’ (p.72). The important question, therefore, is why?

5.3 Understanding the state of active citizenship in Ghana: a political economy explanation

This section tries to offer a political economy explanation regarding the generally weak state of active citizenship among Ghanaians. The discussion points to three key explanatory factors: an increasingly toxic political environment that undermines prospects for collective action; the prevalence and deepening of patron-client relations associated with increased electoral competition; and a weak decentralized system of governance.

5.3.1 An increasingly toxic political environment

A first important factor for understanding the relatively weak state of active citizenship is the increasingly toxic and zero-sum character of electoral politics in Ghana. Active citizenship thrives in societies where citizens are prepared to engage in collective action for the pursuit of the common good. Green (2008: 12) notes that active citizenship entails ‘involvement in collective action’, while for Clarke & Missingham (2009), ‘active citizenship ... is a collective process, implying citizens acting as part of a political community with human rights and political rights in relation to the state’ (pp.956-7). In the Ghanaian context, overcoming collective action problems has become more challenging at all levels due partly to the ‘factional’, ‘acrimonious’, ‘highly divisive, vitriolic, intolerant and uncivil’ nature of political contestation between the two main parties, namely the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NPP) (see Abugre, 2019; Gyimah-Boadi and Prempeh, 2012).

Debates on most national development issues often take a partisan character, such that every matter of significant public interest is exploited by the two rival parties as part of their vote mobilization efforts.¹⁹ In this highly partisan political environment, citizens’ loyalty appears to be directed more towards their political party. Zealous party supporters blindly defend the policy decisions of their political patrons, and ‘the national interest has become fragmented along party lines’ (Gyimah-Boadi and Prempeh, 2012, p.102). Far from their socio-economic impoverishment uniting them as a social class to organise collective action to pressurise public officials to respond to their needs, even the poor and vulnerable in society identify themselves more by sharp partisan political affiliations. Ghana has thus increasingly become a ‘country of

¹⁹ One example is the fight against illegal mining

more partisans and less citizens' (Abugre, 2019) due in large part to the increasingly polarized political environment which undermines prospects for collective action.

5.3.2 The pervasiveness of clientelism

Closely related to the increasingly toxic nature of politics is the pervasive nature of clientelism. Despite the deepening of electoral democracy in Ghana, political clientelism is widely noted to have increased (Lindberg, 2010; MacLean, 2014), with patron–client relationships playing a domineering role in shaping citizens' access to various public services (Briggs, 2012; Paller, 2014). Scholars have characterized Ghana's democratic environment as one of 'competitive clientelism' whereby the two main political parties compete in the use of elections as a mechanism for the selective distribution of State resources and public sector jobs to their followers (see Abdulai, 2020; Abdulai & Hickey, 2016; Hirvi and Whitfield, 2015). This problem is acknowledged by both the NDC and NPP, with the latter accusing the former of turning State welfare initiatives like the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme into 'a blatant source of political patronage' (NPP, 2016: 126). Interestingly, in its 2020 manifesto, the NDC also accused the NPP for its "politicised targeting [of] beneficiaries of social protection interventions", citing what it refers to as the party's 'chaotic, partisan and selective distribution of food and other relief items during the COVID-19 lockdown' (NDC 2020: 77).

The growing prominence of party "foot soldiers" within the two main parties has added a new dimension to the politics of patronage in Ghana. The foot soldier phenomenon, which has resulted in the irresponsible exercise of citizenship in various ways, is part of the patronage logic that drives Ghana's electoral politics: foot soldiers are prepared to be recruited into vigilante squads as a means to obtaining patronage, and political elites are prepared to pay them for their services because of their importance in winning elections and maintaining ruling coalitions (see Bob-Milliar, 2014; Ayelazuno, 2018).

Thus, throughout the Fourth Republic, but particularly since the 2000s, party foot soldiers have demanded openly to be rewarded by their respective parties for their activism, and politicians have generally accepted such demands as legitimate. It would seem that a good number of Ghanaians have come to accept this clientelistic relationship between party elites and low-level party activists like foot soldiers as legitimate. In a nationally representative survey of 2,400 Ghanaians, 58% of respondents agreed that the 'demands of political party (activists) who toiled to get their parties

elected are legitimate and should be satisfied by government'. Yet, this form of exchange threatens the very foundation of accountable and responsive governance because the criteria for defining 'deservingness' in the distribution of state resources is based not on citizenship rights, but rather on support for political party operations. Moreover, party activists' demands are rarely (if ever) about societal benefits but are usually geared towards the provision of private/club goods that benefit only a narrow segment of society.

The important question, therefore, is: Why does the pervasive nature of clientelism and political patronage matter for the exercise of active citizenship in Ghana? First, in societies where access to basic services is less dependent upon citizenship rights than on peoples' relationships with political patrons, it is difficult for a political culture of active citizenship to emerge and flourish. This is because, as Cox (2009) has argued, the system of clientelism is in direct conflict with the notion of citizenship. In contrast to citizenship which entails the use of legitimate means in challenging state authorities and holding them accountable, clientelism requires 'deference and submissiveness' on the part of clients to those who have power and authority (Cox, 2009, p.958).

Second, partly as a result of the clientelist orientation of politics, the poor and vulnerable in society often perceive the distribution of development largess as a favour from government and not as part of their citizenship rights and entitlements. One clear example is the LEAP, which is widely viewed by beneficiaries as a product of government's discretion or charity, such that some LEAP beneficiaries do not bother to check the accuracy of the amount they receive, fearing that questioning the sufficiency/accuracy of the cash grant may attract the anger of payment officers and potentially lead to their exclusion from the list of beneficiaries (Abdulai et al 2019; Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2020; Oduro, 2015). These observations have been reinforced by findings of a recent UNICEF-commissioned study which sought to assess citizens' knowledge about their rights to social protection. For example, when various social protection programme beneficiaries were asked about why they thought they were benefiting from such programmes, 52% saw it as "a favour from government" whilst another 18.2% considered themselves "lucky" to have been selected by government. Only 26.6% contended that the benefits were their "right as a Ghanaian." (UNICEF, 2020). In context where service provision is perceived by the poor as the product of government's discretion or charity, it becomes difficult for citizens to meaningfully

engage in monitoring activities and utilize existing complaints and grievance mechanisms in exacting public accountability.

The Ghanaian political context therefore suggests that attempts by CSOs to support civic activism will not easily flourish until steps are taken to: 1) directly challenge the dominance of clientelism in Ghanaian politics; and 2) reorient citizens' understanding of public goods provisioning from a rights-based perspective.

5.3.3 Weak local government system

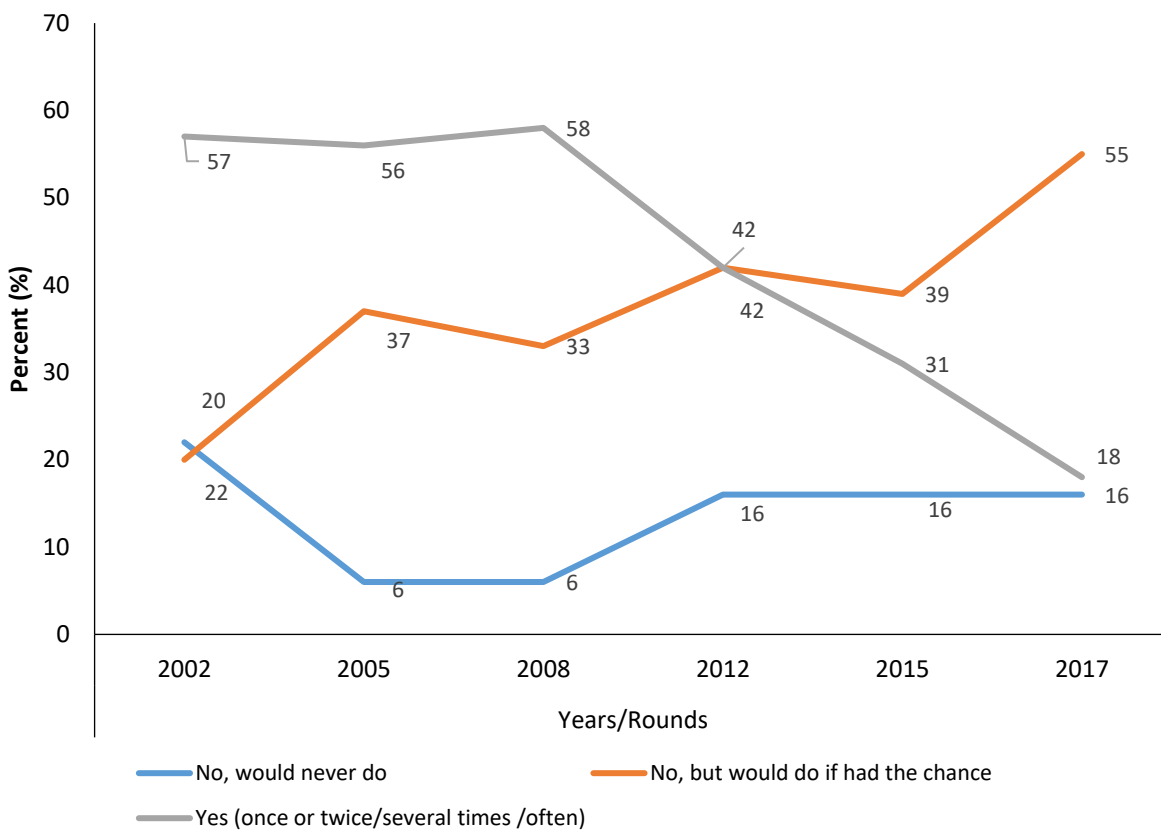
In delivering his inaugural speech on 7th January 2017, President Nana Akufo-Addo challenged Ghanaians to get actively involved in the task of nation-building, declaring that the time had come for Ghanaians to be 'citizens not spectators.'²⁰ Contrasting *citizenship* with *spectatorship* assumes that participation is the defining element of citizenship, and that individuals are responsible for their own inclusion or exclusion from citizenship (Asante, 2020). These sentiments were re-echoed in the Charter of the President's flagship *Ghana Beyond Aid agenda* which emphasised the centrality of active and responsible citizenship, stating that 'every Ghanaian has a role to play in building the Ghana that past generations envisioned, present generation aspire and posterity will be proud to inherit' (Government of Ghana, 2019: 7). The Charter went further to call on Ghanaians to 'pledge to embrace *attitudinal change* and be more committed' to a number of fundamental values, including 'responsibility and civic engagement', as well as 'Volunteerism and working with others to address basic challenges within our communities' (Government of Ghana, 2019: 7, emphasis ours). Here again, by emphasizing *attitudinal change* on the part of citizens, there is an explicit assumption that spaces for active citizenship abound in Ghana, and that subjugation can only result from indifference or a lack of individual initiative in national life (Asante, 2020).

Yet, it is not entirely accurate to place the blame on citizens, given the largely dysfunctional nature of sub-national governmental structures that have been created to provide mechanisms for grassroots political participation, and the inherent weaknesses in Ghana's local government system more broadly. This is especially the case with regards to Unit Committees – the lowest level of the Ghanaian state. At its creation in the mid-1990s, it was envisioned that the operation of up to

²⁰ <http://www.myjoyonline.com/politics/2017/january-7th/be-good-citizens-not-spectators-akufo-addo-urges-ghanaians.php>

16,000 of the 15- member Committees would effectively provide a platform for between 500–1000 people for engaging with state authorities. This expectation has failed to materialize, with those involved in the creation of the UCs acknowledging that “the structures are at best dysfunctional and at worst non-functional” (Ahwoi, 2011; see also Ayee and Amponsah, 2003, p. 70). Unit committees and other sub district structures lack the requisite human and material resources to operate effectively.

Figure 6: Citizen involvement in community action/meetings with the state (nationally) (%)



Source: Afrobarometer data computed by Ibrahim, 2020

A close look at the Afrobarometer survey data suggests that these weaknesses account, at least in part, for the limited civic engagement among Ghanaians at the local level. Indeed, the data suggests that whereas Ghanaians are generally willing to attend community meetings and join others to raise issues affecting the welfare of their communities, the spaces or opportunities for such engagements are limited. As the evidence in Table 5 also shows, in the last five consecutive

Afrobarometer surveys since 2005, the number of respondents who indicated that they would never attend community meeting or join others in raising an issue that affects community development has consistently been lower than those who indicate their preparedness to engage in such activities if they have the opportunity to do so. In 2014/2015, for example, although over half of respondents noted that they had never attended a community meeting or joined others to raise issues in the past year, 42% and 37% of those same respondents, respectively, noted that they would engage in these activities if they had the opportunity to do so.

Unfortunately, rather than focus on resourcing these dysfunctional local government substructures as a way of stimulating citizen participation in local governance, various governments have demonstrated greater commitment toward the creation of more sub-national administrative units, mostly around election years for electoral purposes (see Ayee 2013; Mohammed, 2015; Abdulai 2017). Not surprisingly, the proliferation of the number of districts has not necessarily contributed to greater citizen engagement at the grassroots level.

Weaknesses in fiscal decentralization and politicisation have also played a part in accounting for citizens' growing disengagement with District Assembly Authorities. The central government issues annual directives and/or 'guidelines' as to how MMDAs should utilize their District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) releases. In some years, central government directives to the MMDAs determine up to 75% of DACF expenditure via "earmarks". These practices have effectively turned subnational government institutions into deconcentrated agencies, rather than fiscally autonomous authorities capable of implementing their own locally-designed medium-term development plans.

In addition, local assembly representatives are formally apolitical, but have close ties to political parties – and party priorities often direct resources into patronage spending rather than investing in the provision of public goods. Rather than professional competency, party political affiliation is the main basis of appointing local Assembly officials and District Chief Executives. In this respect, whatever development policy that gets approved is what the ruling party supports and not necessarily what the majority of the people want. Key local government officials such as MMDCEs have therefore become little more than extensions of the executive branch at the local level, and as such, remain largely unaccountable to local populations (Abdulai, 2017).

In this context, merely admonishing local populations to eschew being ‘spectators’ and become more responsible citizens in holding duty bearers accountable can potentially detract attention from the very significant structural impediments to active citizenship at the local level in Ghana.

6.0 Philanthropy and CSO financing in Ghana

Since its attainment of lower middle income status (LMIC) in 2010 Ghana’s receipt of official development assistance (ODA) has dropped significantly. In 2018, the country announced, through its President, an ambitious aspiration towards a *Ghana Beyond Aid*. Coupled with recent financial stress on and refocussing of ODA by some countries, ODA to Ghana is projected to drop further (Engen and Prizzon, 2019). These developments have implications for the operations and survival of CSOs which have traditionally relied on foreign assistance. In this section, we explore whether and how CSOs in Ghana could be financed through philanthropic organizations and individuals in the face of declining support from donors. The section begins by highlighting the growing role of philanthropy in governance and development globally before turning to the opportunities, prospects and challenges of funding CSOs.

Global development stakeholders and researchers have highlighted the importance of philanthropy in achieving past and current development goals and by implication its potential in filling the funding gaps created by dwindling ODAs. Some accounts suggest that philanthropic contributions to the Millennium Development Goals were around USD31 billion whilst the sector was projected to contribute USD97.3 billion to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the first four years of implementation (Smith, 2016). It is estimated that by 2030 total contributions of the philanthropic sector to the SDGs will be about USD 364 billion (Smith, 2016). Research in the last half decade has further noted the significant role played by the philanthropic sector in promoting the work of civil society organizations, with some noting that there is room for “more constructive collaborative relationships” particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hayman, 2015: 158).

In Ghana, there is some recent recognition of the link between philanthropy and capacitation of civil society for citizenship building and national development more broadly. In its 2016 Manifesto, the NPP for instance promised to create a conducive environment for “philanthropy to blossom and promote a new era of giving” in a way that “makes it easier for individuals and

organisations to support civil society” (NPP, 2016: 176)²¹. Earlier in 2015, Ghana joined the SDG Platform for Philanthropy (SDGPP) as part of processes towards its “full embrace” of the sector as “a major development player both in funding and policy terms” (Debrah, August 13, 2013). Despite the global and national recognition of the philanthropic sector in providing “beneficial set of new actors, approaches, and types of funding” (Grady, 2014:2), two interrelated questions need to be answered regarding the potential link between the philanthropic sector and CSO financing Ghana: First, what is the nature of Ghana’s philanthropic sector? Second, what challenges exist in financing CSOs through philanthropy?

6.1 Individual and institutional philanthropy in Ghana

Ghana has a long history of philanthropic giving predicated on the African sense of communalism. Philanthropic acts are often informal in nature and serve various purposes with the ultimate aim of ensuring societal cohesion. For some (see e.g. Kpessah-Whyte, 2018), the commonest form of philanthropy is the provision of social protection by well-to-do members of society to their primary group members, including family or clan members, who are deemed to be in need. Whilst these forms of assistance are usually altruistic in nature, they implicitly serve as a form of social insurance in that they thrive on expectations of reciprocity. Put differently, there is a tacit code that members of society who withhold support for the needy should not expect others to come to their aid in times of need. Aside from “the principles of collectivism, solidarity, and risk pooling” (Kpessah-Whyte, 2018:8) that undergird much of informal giving in Ghana, philanthropy is also common among Ghanaians as a form of religious expression. For instance, among Muslims, there is an injunction or recommendation to devote part of their wealth to the needy or to advance the welfare of society through contributions to extending social services. These cultural and religious acts of giving are undoubtedly a significant source of resource generation to the philanthropic sector and a potential boost to efforts to explore alternative financing for CSOs. Quite notably, Ghana is ranked highly, placing 28th globally and 8th in Africa, among countries where citizens are likely to engage in altruistic assistance to strangers in need of help, donation of money to charity

²¹ Although the party did not repeat this promise in its 2020 Manifesto it is debatable whether it managed to create the enabling environment within its first term upon assumption of power (January, 2017 to January, 2021).

and time for voluntary causes. Relating this to the sustainability of CSO financing, one recent study was quite optimistic that:

“Ghana has a vibrant culture of personal giving and charitable contributions which offers hope for increased domestic resourcing and more effective and sustainable civil society organisations (CSOs in this time of declining global support” (Ghana Philanthropy Forum, 2018: 6).

Whilst recent economic hardships have sometimes had a strain on the capacity and incentive to engage in philanthropism, two recent developments have served as potential enablers for deepening the contributions of the sector to national development. First, the advent of new media and crowdfunding platforms, notably Facebook, Twitter and GoFundme, has provided further impetus for informal philanthropic giving in Ghana. Spearheaded by various so-called influencers whose popularity and integrity guarantee some form of accountability for guarantors, social media campaigns have provided avenues for Ghanaians from varied backgrounds to make voluntary contributions towards medical care of friends, acquaintances, and strangers diagnosed with chronic diseases, payment of tuition fees of underprivileged students, provision of education infrastructure, among other interventions. For example, in 2020 a social media campaign saw Ghanaians raising more than \$55,000 within 18hrs of appeals in support of Ray Styles, an artiste who needed financial assistance to undergo surgery. In 2018, several volunteers responded to a similar call by an influencer and popular broadcast journalist, Afia Pokua, to provide a classroom block to pupils of Amenam in the Eastern Region. Another notable example relates to an appeal for funds launched on Facebook and other platforms by Ben Dotse Malor, a Communications Specialist with the United Nations and former Presidential Staffer. This effort generated funds to cater for the postgraduate studies of a brilliant but needy female student who had gained admissions at the University of Oxford.

Second, there are also indications that the incentive and capacity for philanthropy could potentially rise in recent years given the steady increase in the number of high net worth individuals (HNWIs) and middle class. In 2016 the number of HNWIs worth \$1million was 2900, an increase of 200 from the previous year (Knight Frank Wealth Report, 2017). This number is expected to increase

to 5200 by 2026 (ibid). The potential for such NHWIs to contribute to philanthropic causes is based on expectations that high earnings might increase the levels of disposal income. For instance, as part of his contributions to reducing the growing unemployment in the country, the Executive Chairman of the McDan Group established an Equity Fund in 2019 to provide financial support to young entrepreneurs. This initiative saw the award of \$100,000 to a young shea butter entrepreneur. A recent UNICEF-sponsored study on poverty and vulnerability found that the majority of middle class respondents sampled were willing to support the needy from their personal resources (UNICEF, 2020). Closely related to HNWIs and middle class are the remittances from abroad. According to the World Bank (2019), the volume of remittances to developing countries far exceeded the overall receipt of ODAs to those countries.

Remittances from Africans in the diaspora were projected to hit about USD 40billion by close of 2019. Ghana is among the top five countries in Africa with high inflows of remittances from developed countries (Business Wire, 2020). In 2019 the value of remittances as a percentage of Ghana's GDP was 5.26, which was higher than the global average of 4.65. Whilst these transfers may be intended to finance personal projects of the senders, in other cases, they are in respect of support to family members or social causes. For instance, in recent years, Crime Check Foundation, a Ghanaian philanthropic organization has benefited from various donations of Ghanaians in the diaspora and part of these donations have been used to free prisoners, provide decent accommodation for the homeless or business capital to the needy.

Aside from informal philanthropic giving there is also evidence of growing formalization of philanthropy in the country either motivated by self-interested or social cause objectives. Mostly registered as foundations, these organizations are into providing financial support for health care access, education, crime prevention, social services, promotion of women empowerment, among others. Notable examples are the Otumfuo Charity Foundation, Ark Foundation and Rebecca Foundation. Corporate organizations have also set up foundations through which their corporate social responsibility initiatives are implemented. Examples include the Vodafone Ghana Foundation, MTN Foundation and Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation. More recently, celebrity participation in philanthropic acts have gained traction through the establishment of foundations by musicians, movie actors and footballers. These include the Okyeame Kwame Foundation, Yvonne Nelson Foundation and Michael Essien Foundation. It is important to note

that these (semi)formalised modes of philanthropy are often Ghanaian led and financed, although others draw support from external sources such as the Westminster Foundation, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

6.2 Financing CSO through philanthropy: some challenges

The discussion thus far suggests that given its instrumental role in providing complementary financial support for the development, the philanthropic sector may plausibly serve as a promising route to CSO financing. However, some challenges ought to be addressed before this might be possible. One, there is little evidence to date about whether individuals and local philanthropic organizations might be willing to assist organizations beyond their well-trodden tendency to channel the support to needy members of society or tying their interventions to specification causes especially in social services provisioning. It may be suggested that whilst extending support to the needy and communities may reinforce the sense of communalism or a fulfilment of traditional social obligations it may well be that Ghanaians may not regard investments in CSOs as a social good or responsibility. This position may further be strengthened by the fact that because CSOs have been mostly donor-financed in the past and are often less accountable to local stakeholders, Ghanaians may feel alienated from their operations in ways that disincentivise them from making voluntary donations to such organizations. Indeed, some studies have cautioned that the motivation of donors' to support philanthropic initiatives may not be based on the desire to achieve the overt objectives of such undertakings per se; rather, this might be a covert route to perpetuating philanthrocapitalist or neoliberal ideologies (Mediavilla and Garci-Arias, 2019).

Two, local sources of philanthropy rely mostly on funds flowing from the goodwill of individuals or volunteers, with the result that financial flows may be less predictable than expected (Kumi, 2019). A related point is that given the largely individualised nature of donations, there is little coordination whilst those that operate as institutionalised entities e.g. foundations largely operate in silos. This detracts for the opportunity networking and resource pooling in ways that can achieve significant impacts (Ghana Philanthropy Forum, 2018: 6). Equally important is the fact that the lack of coordination and networking often leads to overlaps in interventions and consequently less optimal use of resources. Although these organizations could complement their internal resource base by drawing support from external sources, they often lack the technical expertise to do so, including the capacity to develop proposals for assistance (Kumi, 2019). Nor are CSOs innovative

in diversifying their sources of fundraising, including investments beyond traditional donations from their benefactors.

Three, despite official recognition of the significant role of philanthropic organizations and individuals, there is no strong legal and regulatory framework to date that guides the philanthropic sector. What exist are omnibus provisions in various laws, policies and institutional mandates that are expected to guide the operations of NGOs more broadly. Although the Companies Code 1963 (Act 179) provides for the registration of non-profit organizations as companies limited by guarantee, the law only provides amorphous provisions which fail to delineate the lines between the different types of non-profit organizations. This gap makes it difficult to regulate the operations of philanthropic organizations with the result that actors within that space have to operate with little semblance of predictability. Whilst the Department of Social Welfare is clothed with the institutional authority to oversee the activities of the sector, that Department itself lacks the requisite human, logistical and other resources to deliver on its mandate (Ibrahim, 2020; Laird, 2008).

A further disadvantage of the absence of a functional and institutionalised regulatory oversight is the tendency for various actors with different incentives to encroach on the philanthropic space. One notable example often cited in recent research and commentaries on the sector is the growing dominance of foundations headed by or affiliated to both current and past partisan political personalities. The development begs the question whether these organizations are formed with the sole purpose of advancing the cause of society or as conduits for furthering political ends. In an increasingly polarised political environment where political parties are often on the lookout for both real and perceived threats to their electoral fortunes, the absence of a clearly defined legal and institutional regime might provide avenues for the state to frustrate organizations regarded as antagonistic to the government, a case in point being in situations where philanthropic organizations are known to be financiers of CSOs that are critical of government actions.

Four, successive governments have not made conscious efforts to mainstream philanthropy in development frameworks and other relevant policy documents. For example, the Government's 2019 Ghana Beyond Aid Strategy and Charter does not even mention philanthropy as one of the internal sources of financing the country's development goals. This lack of proactive action to make philanthropy integral to the development process may foreclose opportunities for harnessing

the potential of the sector in ways that might disadvantage both the state and CSOs. For example, more than five years after joining the SDG platform on philanthropy, Ghana is yet to conduct a census on existing philanthropic organizations in the country, meaning that CSOs requiring collaborations with such organisations for the purposes of generating resources for their operations may find it almost impossible to get the relevant data for decision making.

7.0 Conclusions and policy implications

This report broadly set out to explore the prospects and challenges of promoting active citizenship in Ghana; examine the potential of funding civil society organizations through philanthropic organizations and individuals; and identify the key factors that undermine the effective operation of Ghanaian CSOs more broadly. The analysis shows that Ghana has a weak culture of active citizenship even by the standards of African countries which are broadly at the same level of socio-economic development and democratic consolidation. Despite Ghana's enviable reputation as one of Africa's most consolidated democracies, it is evident that the practice of democracy in Ghana is yet to progress beyond the political ritual of voting in periodic elections. A comparative analysis of afrobarometer survey data reveals that compared to citizens in Benin, South Africa and Botswana, Ghanaians are much less likely to attend community meetings, participate in a demonstration or protest march, or join hands with other community members to raise issues concerning the development of their communities. Partly as a result of limited trust in most public institutions, Ghanaians are less likely to interact with formal institutions of the state than with informal institutions like traditional leaders and religious leaders.

To an extent, this political culture of weak active citizenship in contemporary Ghana has its roots in the country's political and economic history, most notably the decades-long experience of military dictatorship and the 'culture of silence' during much of the early postcolonial period. In particular, the political and economic decline in the 1970s significantly weakened citizens' attachment to the state, resulting in a state of disengagement which found expression in extreme cynicism towards state institutions, routine embezzlement by public officials, and abuse of public property. The enduring nature of these historical legacies suggest that only long-term strategies are likely to succeed

Beyond elections, the return to multiparty democracy has not significantly altered Ghana's political culture with regards to citizens' engagement with State institutions in part because of the peculiar character of democratic politics in Ghana. This relates in particular to the *de-facto* two-party system where electoral competition between the NDC and NPP takes place in a highly polarized political environment. Citizens have become so partisan that their loyalty appears to be directed more towards their political parties, making it challenging to overcome collective action problems that confront their communities. This problem is compounded by the prevalence of patron-client relations where party affiliations (rather than citizenship rights) appear to play a prominent role in defining access to state resources and thus making it difficult for a political culture of active citizenship to flourish. Moreover, at both the national and local levels, structures for citizens' engagement are either non-existent or are best weak, as with sub-national governmental structures like Unit Committees which lack the needed material and human resources to operate. Thus whereas Ghanaians are generally willing to attend community meetings and join others in raising issues that affect them, the opportunities for doing so are limited.

While CSOs identified limited financial resources as the most significant threat to their sustainability, addressing problems of organizational sustainability within the civil society space will require tackling other challenges, including the growing concerns around their legitimacy and accountability.

8.0 Recommendations

On the basis of the above findings, this section present the study's recommendations aimed at guiding both CSOs and the STAR Ghana Foundation as to how best to achieve its objectives of facilitating active citizenship and enhancing the impact and sustainability of Ghanaian CSOs.

General Recommendations

- CSOs' support for civic activism will not easily flourish until steps are taken to directly challenge the dominance of clientelism in Ghanaian politics. An important step in this regard is to reorient citizens' understanding of public goods provisioning from a rights-based perspective. However, in the long run, the reduction in patron-client relations may require the emergence of a third force in Ghanaian elections. So civil society should

consider working in nurturing smaller political parties as part of their long-term goals in promoting active citizenship.

- In an environment rife with suspicions of the political neutrality of civil society, avoiding situations that cast doubts on the credibility, accountability and legitimacy of CSOs should be of utmost concern to organizations that want to remain effective.
- It is imperative for CSOs to place greater emphasis on networking and coalition building, not only among themselves, but also between them on the one hand and private sector actors and local government authorities on the other. While CSO networks and coalitions are certainly not new in Ghana, the nature of the current challenges facing the civil society landscape necessitates greater cooperation and partnerships than ever before. For example, working in coalitions not only allows less institutionalized CSOs who may have a passion for change to enhance their image in the eyes of both potential financiers and citizens at large through the goodwill of others in the coalition, but also organizations facing capacity challenges can enhance their effectiveness through working in coalitions.

Exploring alternative funding sources in support of civil society

- In the context of dwindling external donor support, CSOs must explore innovative resource mobilization approaches to help sustain their operations. Alternative funding sources that could be explored include engaging in various income generation activities, diaspora giving, crowd funding mechanisms, creating and building an endowment fund, social entrepreneurship, identifying and soliciting funding from high net worth individuals, philanthropists, the private sector, and government funding while taking steps to address the potential dangers of co-optation.
- State funding for civil society could take two forms. The first could take the form of direct budgetary support for CSOs that could be managed by an independent entity like the STAR

Ghana Foundation. Second, state support could take the form of tax reliefs to corporate entities that provide cash and in-kind support for CSOs. However, in a context where calls for state funding of political parties are yet to yield positive results and where many state institutions remain chronically underfunded, the chances of direct government budgetary support for non-state watch dog bodies like CSOs would appear very slim in the short to medium-term.

- Private sector financing is a feasible option, especially through pooled funding arrangements that make reporting requirements less cumbersome for potential financiers. However, as in the case of state support, a lot of work would be required to convince many private sector actors to consider providing financial support to civil society. In the present context, there is a weak collaboration between CSOs on the one hand, and businesses and private sector associations on the other. To enhance prospects for attracting private sector financing, CSOs need to improve their collaboration with private sector institutions.
- The most difficult hurdle to overcome relates to the politicised nature of state-business relations in Ghana whereby deliberate efforts are often made to weaken (real or perceived) opposition-aligned entrepreneurs, while strengthening businesses associated with the party in power. For fear of such political victimizations, most private sector operators are weary of being viewed with partisan political lenses. The implication is that whereas business entities may be well prepared to provide funding in support of CSOS' service delivery activities, they will most likely feel uncomfortable participating in funding mechanisms that aim at keeping governments on their toes. The challenge, therefore is to bridge the gap between the service delivery focus of private sector philanthropy and the advocacy focus in CSO work. Perhaps an important entry point in addressing these inherent challenges is to map out some common areas of interests between CSOs and selected private sector organizations.
- Crowd funding approaches should also be vigorously pursued. Ghana is a country of about 31 million. If just 3% of the country's population (about 1 million people) contribute just GHC10 from their monthly salaries to a pool fund, this alone could yield up to GHC120

million annually. There are two main challenges that need to overcome to make this work. First, so long as perceptions about CSOs as corrupt and ‘money-making organizations’ persist, civil society will find it hard to mobilize domestic resources from private individuals. Second, it will be important to undertake vigorous civic education (in collaboration with state entities like the NCCE) to be able to change the prevailing civic culture, whereby citizens appeared more prepared to donate to their religious groups, to charitable agencies and their former schools, rather than to CSOs.

- Finally, it is important to emphasise that CSO funding from international agencies is certainly not foreclosed. If CSOs are able to develop their fund-raising strategies around long-term global development agendas like the SDGs, this could significantly enhance their chances of attracting substantial funding from external sources in the medium to long-term.

References (to be crosschecked)

- Abdulai, A. G., & Hulme, D. (2015). The politics of regional inequality in Ghana: State elites, donors and PRSPs. *Development Policy Review*, 33(5), 529-553.
- Abdulai, A.-G., & Hickey, S. (2016). The politics of development under competitive clientelism: Insights from Ghana's education sector. *African Affairs*, 115(458), 44-72.
- Abdulai, A-G., and Sackeyfio, N. (2020), 'The uncertainties of Ghana's 2020 elections, *African Affairs*, adaa028, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adaa028>
- Abdulai, A.-G., & Quantson, R. (2008). *The Changing Role of CSOs in Public Policy Making in Ghana*. Ghana Social Journal, 5 & 6(1 & 2), 114–151.
- Abdulai, A-G (2017), 'The Political Economy of Decentralisation and the Challenge of Improved Service Delivery in Urban Ghana'. Ghana Journal of Development Studies, 14 (2): 83-104.
- Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 136 Political Accountability in Ghana: Evidence from Afrobarometer Round 5 Survey By Daniel Armah-Attoh, Edward Ampratwum and Jeffrey Paller March 2014
- Alidu, S., & Gyekye-jandoh, M. A. A. (2016). *Civil Society and Democratic Governance in Ghana : Emerging Roles and Challenges* 4(1), 1–26.
- Anti-Money Laundering Act. (2008). *Anti-Money Laundering Act* , 2008. 2008(Act 749). Retrieved from <https://www.mint.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/AML-Act-2008-Act-749.pdf>
- Arhin, A. (2016). Advancing post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals in a changing development landscape: Challenges of NGOs in Ghana. *Development in Practice*, 26(5), 555–568. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2016.1189513>
- CIVICUS (2014), Snapshot of Civil Society in Ghana: Questionnaire to members of the Affinity Group of National Associations (AGNA)'.
EPIC Africa and @AfricanNGOs, 2020, 'The Impact of VOVID-19 on African Civil Society Organizations: Challenges, Responses and Opportunities'. Available at: <https://includeplatform.net/publications/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-african-civil-society-organisations-challenges-responses-and-opportunities/>

- EU Heads of Mission (2014), *EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society: 2014-2017*, Accra.
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. and Brobbey, V. (2012), 'Countries at the Crossroads 2012: Ghana'. Washington DC.: Freedom House.
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. ed. (2004) *Democratic Reform in Africa: The Quality of Progress*. Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Opong, F. K., Awal, M., and Debrah, E. (2013), 'Civil society engagement with political parties during elections: lessons from Ghana and Sierra Leone', Accra: Oxfam.
- Tsikata, D., Gyekye-Jandoh, M. and Hushie, M. (2013), 'Political Economy Analysis (PEA) of Civil Society in Ghana'. Accra: STAR Ghana.
- Asante, K. (forthcoming, 2021), 'Citizens not spectators'? Civic Engagement and Informality of Citizenship in Ghana'. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*
- Ayee, J. R. A. (2013). The political economy of the creation of districts in Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 48(5), pp. 623-645.
- Ayee, J. R. A., and Amponsah, N. (2003). The district assemblies and local governance: Reflections on the 2002 local elections. In *Local government in Ghana: grassroots participation in the 2002 local government elections*, J. R. A. Ayee, N. Amponsah (Eds.). Accra: Livog Limited.
- Ayelazuno, J. A. (2018), *Neoliberal Globalisation and Resistance from Below: Why the Subalterns Resist in Bolivia and not in Ghana*. London: Routledge.
- Bob-Milliar, G. M. (2014). 'Party Youth Activists and Low-Intensity Electoral Violence in Ghana: A Qualitative Study of Party Foot Soldiers' Activism'. *African Studies Quarterly* 15(1).
- Clarke, M., and Missingham, B. (2009), 'Guest editors' introduction: Active citizenship and social accountability'. *Development in Practice*, 19(8): 955-963. DOI: 10.1080/09614520903233571
- Cox, J. (2009), Active citizenship or Passive Clientelism? Accountability and Development in Solomon Islands'. *Development in Practice*, 19(8): 964-980.
- Esau, M. V. (2009), 'Assessing the Impact of Social Capital and Trust on Active Citizenship in Bonteheuwe', Cape Town, *Politikon*, 36: 3, 381-402
- Government of Ghana (2019). *Ghana Beyond Aid Charter and Strategy Document*. Accra.

Green, D. (2008) *From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States can Change the World*, Oxford: Oxfam International.

Gyimah-Boadi, E., and Prepeh, H.K. (2012), 'Oil, Politics, and Ghana's Democracy'. *Journal of Democracy* 23(3): 94-108.

Mohammed, A. K. (2015). The politics of municipal fragmentation in Ghana. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance Issue* 16/17, pp. 168-189.

Onyx, J., Kenny, S., and Brown, K. (2011) 'Active Citizenship: An Empirical Investigation'. *Social Policy and Society* 11:1, 55-66.

Paller, J. (2014). Informal institutions and personal rule in urban Ghana. *African Studies Review* 57(3), pp. 123-142.

Paller, J. (2015). Informal networks and access to power to obtain housing in urban slums in Ghana. *Africa Today* 62(1), pp. 30-55.

Abdulai et al 2019; see also Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2020; Oduro, 2015; UNCEF, 2020

Cobb, R.W. and Ross, M.H. (1997) "Agenda Setting and the Denial of Agenda Access: Key Concepts" in R.W. and M.H. Ross (eds.) *Cultural Strategies of Agenda Denial*: Lawrence, K.S. University of Kansas Press

Dery, D. (2000) "Agenda Setting and Problem Definition" in *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol.21, No. 1, pp. 37 - 47

Drah, F. K. (2003) "Civil Society Organizations and Grassroot Participation in Ghana" In *Local Government in Ghana: Grassroot participation in the 2002 Local Government Elections*. Edited by Nicholas Amponsah and K. Boafo-Arthur, Accra: Uniflow Publishing Limited

Drah, F. K. and Ocquaye, M. (eds.) (1996) *Civil Society in Ghana*. Accra: Friedrich Ebert Foundation

Fioramonti, L. and Heinrich, V. F., (2007) "How Civil Society Influences Policy: A Comparative Analysis of the Civicus Civil Society Index in Post-Communist Europe" CIVICUS/ODI Research Report

- Gill, W. (1994) “How far does research influence policy?” in *European Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 3, pp. 233 - 235
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (1994) “Associational life, civil society and the democratization in Ghana” in *Civil Society and the State in Africa*, Edited by J. Harbeson, N. Chazan and D. Rothchild, London: Lynner Rienner, pp. 125 – 148
- Gyimah-Boadi, E. (1996) “Civil Society in Africa” *Journal of Democracy*, 7:118 – 132
- Kornsweigh, J. et al (2006) “CSOs, Policy Influence and Evidence Use: A Short Survey” *Research and Policy in Development*, Overseas Development Institute, London, February
- Ninsin, K. A. (1998) “Civic Associations and the Transition to Democracy” in *Ghana: Transition to Democracy*, Edited by K.A. Ninsin, Dakar: Codesria, pp.48 – 81
- UNECA(2011a) “Assessing the Impact and Effectiveness of Civil Society Network Organizations in Development and Governance of Africa Countries” An ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting Draft Report, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 7 – 8 March, 2011
- UNECA (2011b) “Assessment of the Impact and Effectiveness of CSOs and NGOs in Promoting Governance in Africa”, A Parliamentary Document, Addis Ababa, 9 – 10 March
- Perkin, E. and Court, J. (2005) “Networks and Policy Processes in International Development: A Literature Review” Overseas Development Institute Working Paper 252, London, August
- Pallas, C.L. and Sidel, M. (2020) “ Foreign Aid Reduction and Local Civil Society: Recent Research and Policy Guidance for Donors and International NGOs” *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 11(1) <https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2019-0045>
- Pallas, C., Q. Anderson, and M. Sidel. (2018). “Defining the Scope of Aid Reduction and Its Challenges for Civil Society Organizations: Laying the Foundation for New Theory.” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 29(2): 256–70.
- Kwakye, J.K. (2012) “Ghana’s Middle Income Reality Check Part II: Social and Infrastructural Dimensions” IEA Monograph 30, <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/monograph-30.pdf>

- Bratton, M. (1994). Civil Society and Political Transition. In *Institute for Development Research* (Vol. 11). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429462955-7>
- Cantele, N. T. and S. (2019). Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprises in Slovenia: Strengths and Weaknesses From an Analysis of the Institutional Framework. In *Handbook of Research on Value Creation for Small and Micro Social Enterprises* (p. 22). <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-6298-6.ch01>
- CIVICUS. (2015). *Snapshot of civil society in Jordan: Questionnaire to AGNA members*. (June), 2–6. Retrieved from <http://www.partners-jordan.org/>
- Clews, R. J. (2016). Political and Environmental Risks, Tax and Insurance. In *Project Finance for the International Petroleum Industry* (pp. 225–247). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-800158-5.00013-X>
- Darkwa, A., Amponsah, N., & Gyampoh, E. (2006). Civil Society in a Changing Ghana. An assessment of the current state of civil society in Ghana. *Society*, (June), 111.
- DFID. (2009). *Political Economy Analysis: How To Note*. Retrieved from <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/events-documents/3797.pdf>
- Donor Approaches to Governance Assessments 2009*. (2009).
- Drah, K. (2003). "Civil Society Organisations and Grassroots Participation in Ghana," in *Local Government In Ghana: Grassroots Participation in the 2002 Local Government Elections* (N. A. and K. Bofo-Arthur, Ed.). Accra, Ghana: Uniflow Publishing Ltd.
- Gyimah-Boadi, E, M. O. and K. D. (2000). *Civil Society Organisations and Ghanaian Democratization* (No. 6). Accra, Ghana.
- Hailey, J., & Salway, M. (2016). New routes to CSO sustainability: the strategic shift to social enterprise and social investment. *Development in Practice*, 26(5), 580–591. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2016.1188886>
- Harrison, T. (2018). *Political economy analysis of the relationship between civil society organisations and local government in Tanzania*. (July). Retrieved from

www.ids.ac.uk/publications

Kumi, E. (2017). *Diversify or Die? The response of Ghanaian Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) to a changing aid landscape*. University of Bath, UK.

Kumi, E. (2019). Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals: An Analysis of the Potential Role of Philanthropy in Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 54(7), 1084–1104. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909619862591>

Lemarchand, R. (1992). Uncivil States and Civil Societies: How Illusion Became Reality. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30(2), 177–191. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00010673>

Mohan, G. (2001). “The Disappointment of Civil Society: the politics of NGO intervention in Northern Ghana. In *Development Policy and Planning*. The Open University.

Ohemeng, Frank (2005). Getting the state right: think tanks and the dissemination of New Public Management ideas in Ghana. *Journal of Modern African Studies*. 43(3): 443-465.

Perkin, E. and Court, J. (2005). *Networks and Policy Processes in International Development: A Literature Review* (No. 252). London.

United Nations. (2020). Civil Society. Retrieved September 23, 2020, from United Nations website: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/resources-different-audiences/civil-society/index.html>

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2015). Ghana Post-2015 Partnership Platform for Philanthropy. Retrieved September 25, 2020, from UNDP website: https://www.gh.undp.org/content/ghana/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/philanthropy_platform_ghana.html

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2017). *Enabling Environment for Philanthropy in Ghana*. Retrieved from https://www.gh.undp.org/content/ghana/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/philanthropy_platform_ghana.html

United States Institute of Peace. (2020). Just Legal Frameworks. Retrieved September 24, 2020,

from <https://www.usip.org/guiding-principles-stabilization-and-reconstruction-the-web-version/rule-law/just-legal-frameworks>

Williams, D., & Young, T. (2012). Civil Society and the Liberal Project in Ghana and Sierra Leone. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 6(1), 7–22.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2012.655565>