



# CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA

RESEARCH COMMISSIONED BY

WEST AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTE (WACSI)

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AFFINITY GROUP OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS (AGNA)/CIVICUS



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## About WACSI

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) was established by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) in 2005 to reinforce the capacities of civil society in the sub-region. The institute became operational in July 2007. WACSI envisions a West Africa of efficient, effective, and influential civil society functioning as strategic partners for democracy, good governance, and sustainable national development. WACSI is a not-for-profit organisation that seeks to strengthen the institutional and operational capacities of civil society organisations through capacity strengthening programmes for increased and effective policy engagement, and the promotion of development, good governance, and democratic values in West Africa.

## About AGNA

The Affinity Group of National Association (AGNA) network brings together national associations and regional platforms from around the world to foster greater cooperation across national and regional boundaries, including innovating new ways for civil society organisations to collaborate.

By strengthening the power of people to organise, mobilise and take action, AGNA builds meaningful opportunities for networks to come together to participate in and influence global governance institutions and processes. AGNA's aims to build impact, sustainability, expertise and capacities of its members. AGNA's work methodology to achieve those practical objectives are particularly based on collection, consolidation and analysis of member data; formalization of a monitoring and evaluation systems with flexible feedback mechanisms.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AWDF</b>	African Women's Development Fund
<b>CBOs</b>	Community-Based Organisations
<b>CDD-Ghana</b>	Centre for Democratic Development
<b>CODEO</b>	Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease-19
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>DANIDA</b>	Danish International Development Agency
<b>IDEG</b>	Institute for Democratic Governance
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>PAMSCAD</b>	Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report analyses the role and contributions of civil society organisations (CSOs)<sup>1</sup> to Ghana's national development. In doing so, the report focuses on CSOs' engagements with and contributions to the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) responses and post-pandemic recovery. It also discusses the barriers facing CSOs in their attempt to contribute to national development and towards a desired future post COVID-19 in Ghana.

CSOs are important stakeholders who play significant roles towards the development of any country. Over the years, CSOs have been considered as 'development alternative' to the state mainly because of their perceived comparative advantages especially in the provision of social services, being closer to the grassroots, ability to innovate and experiment, flexibility in adopting new programmes and their ability to promote progressive

*...CSOs including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have become one of the major sources of information and expertise on development including poverty reduction and democratisation in Ghana.*

Informed by this, CSOs including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have become one of the major sources of information and expertise on development including poverty reduction and democratisation in Ghana<sup>3</sup>. In fact, in terms of democratisation and governance, CSOs have been engaged as strategic partners to government in the development of the country.

This is largely through their involvement in the development of policies and practices that focuses on social accountability and poverty reduction. Thus, civil society has become very instrumental in the consolidation of democratic principles through their ability to influence policy discussions<sup>4</sup>. In Ghana, CSOs have therefore played crucial roles in contributing to national development especially through the consolidation of democracy where they influence policymaking and implementation processes, monitor and ensure efficiency of the democratic processes and also act as advocates and watchdogs in demanding accountability and transparency from government and duty bearers.

CSOs have been key actors in the development process and following the outbreak of the novel COVID-19, they have played significant roles in responding to the pandemic by collaborating with the state, the private sector and also independently supporting the vulnerable and the marginalised in the society given the limitations of the current social protection systems in Ghana. For instance, following the announcement of partial lockdown, CSOs including religious organisations capitalised on their knowledge of communities and respected leadership to mobilise resources such as food items, handwashing equipment among many others to support the vulnerable in society<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>In this report, our understanding of civil society includes formal and informal groups and institutions such as membership-based groups (e.g., professional associations, political parties and community-based organisations (CBOs)). Our understanding of civil society is manifested in many forms including the media, occupational groups, student's unions, sector-specific groups, academia, think tanks and issue-based groups. We therefore CSOs as "a dense network of voluntary associations and citizens organizations that help to sustain community relations in a way that generates trust and cooperation between citizens and a high level of civic engagement and participation. Therefore, they create the conditions for social integration, public awareness and action, and democratic stability" (Newton, 2001:201).

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Bebbington, A., Hickey, S., & Mitlin, D. (2008). Can NGOs make a difference?: The challenge of development alternatives. London: Zed Books.

<sup>3</sup>Porter, G. (2003). NGOs and poverty reduction in a globalizing world: Perspectives from Ghana. *Progress in Development Studies*, 3(2), 131-145; Botchway, T. P. (2018). Civil society and the consolidation of democracy in Ghana's fourth republic. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 4(1), 1-18.

<sup>4</sup>Kew, D., & Oshikoya, M. (2014). Escape from tyranny: Civil society and democratic struggles in Africa. Obadare, E. (Ed). In *The handbook of civil society in Africa*. New York: Springer. Pp. 7-23.

<sup>5</sup>Patterson, A. S., & Balogun, E. (2021). African Responses to COVID-19: The Reckoning of Agency?. *African Studies Review*, 64(1), 144-167.

In doing so, they contributed positively towards the fight against the pandemic and overall national development.

While CSOs' contributions to the development of Ghana is well documented in the literature, they tend to focus primarily on their engagement in the democratization processes and poverty reduction<sup>6</sup>. Thus, existing analysis of civil society's contributions to national development tend to be sector-specific and therefore fail to present a comprehensive understanding of their roles and contributions to the development of the country. More importantly, given the recent COVID-19 pandemic, CSOs have been very instrumental in the fight against the pandemic through their engagements in advocacy, awareness creation, service provision and resource mobilisation. They have also taken a front role by collaborating with the government and private sector to curtail the spread of COVID-19 and have been instrumental in efforts towards post COVID-19 recovery<sup>7</sup>.



**A man willingly adheres to COVID-19 protocols**  
Photo: World Economic Forum

Voluntary participation by civil society actors has also increased immensely during the pandemic across continents of the world through mutual aid and other initiatives to try and put society back in line. CSOs have remained significant actors in responding to the needs of the vulnerable and hard-to-reach persons such as street children and people living with disability across the country and also providing useful information and education on critical COVID-19 preventive etiquettes.

Significantly also, they have played a role in monitoring government's COVID-19 resource pool and expenditure. The CSOs Platform on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have also coordinated response programmes by CSOs in their attempt to fight the pandemic. Despite these significant contributions by CSOs, the pandemic has created uncertainties and exposed entrenched inequalities, vulnerabilities, and the weak social protection systems in the country. This also requires the active engagement of civil society in addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic. For this reason, they have significant roles to play in post COVID-19 recovery efforts. However, at the moment, there is little empirical research that documents the contributions of CSOs in Ghana in terms of their overall potential roles and contributions to COVID-19 responses and post-pandemic. This represents an important gap in knowledge to which this study seeks to fill.

<sup>6</sup> See for example, Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2009). Another step forward for Ghana. *Journal of democracy*, 20(2), 138-152; Abdulai, A. G., & Crawford, G. (2010). Consolidating democracy in Ghana: progress and prospects?. *Democratization*, 17(1), 26-67; Forkuor, D., & Agyemang, S. (2018). Fighting urban poverty in Ghana: The role of non-governmental organizations. *Urban Forum*, 29 (2), 127-145.

<sup>7</sup> LINC. (2020). How Civil Society Organisations in the Global South are Impacted by COVID-19. Washington DC. Retrieved from [inclocal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Impact-on-CSOs\\_LINC-report.pdf](https://inclocal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Impact-on-CSOs_LINC-report.pdf); Amoah, S.K (2021). Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Civil Society Organisations in Ghana. West Africa Civil Society Institute. <https://wacsi.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/03/Impact-of-COVID-19-on-CSOs-in-Ghana.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Savage, J. (2020). How civil society is fighting back against coronavirus crackdowns. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/how-civil-society-fighting-back-against-coronavirus-crackdowns/>; Brechenmacher, S., & Carothers, T. (2020). How is COVID-19 affecting Civil Society worldwide? How is it Responding?-From Poverty to Power. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/how-is-covid-affecting-civil-society-worldwide-how-is-it-responding/>

<sup>9</sup> STAR-Ghana Foundation. (2020). The Impact of Covid-19 on African Civil Society Organisations: Challenges, Responses and Opportunities. Retrieved July 18, 2020, from <https://www.star-ghana.org/stories-of-change-2/438-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-african-civil-society-organisations-challenges-responses-and-opportunities>

Against this backdrop, this report analyses the contributions of CSOs to Ghana's development and their engagement in COVID-19 responses and post-pandemic recovery. It also explores the potential barriers that seek to hinder the CSOs' contributions to national development. The report is guided by the following questions: What has been the roles and contributions of CSOs Ghana's national development over the years? How has CSOs contributed to COVID-19 responses and what should be their roles in promoting a desired COVID-19 future in Ghana?



**Kayayei (Head porters) gather to protest government failure to provide relief packages amid COVID-19**  
*Photo: Francis Kokoroko*

What potential barriers hinder the ability of CSOs to contribute meaningfully towards Ghana national development?. We answer these questions by drawing on qualitative research methodology and secondary data collected in June 2021. The qualitative data were gathered through the use of a semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and a government official with expertise and experience in the Ghanaian civil society sector. The findings in this report also draws on a desk review of existing literature on civil society organisations in Ghana.

Following this introduction, the rest of the report is organised as follows. Section 2 discusses the research methodology. This is followed by a discussion of an overview of civil society in Ghana focusing particularly on their nature, organisational capacity and governance structure, funding landscape and relationship with stakeholder in Section 3. Next, the findings on CSOs' contributions to national development in presented in Section 4. An examination of CSOs' roles and engagement in COVID-19 responses is presented in Section 5 while Section 6 focuses on their roles in post-COVID recovery in Ghana. Section 7 discusses the limitations to CSOs' roles and contributions to national development in Ghana. The last section concludes with some recommendations.

## **2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The approach to this study was empirical using desk-based and virtual methods of data collection. The choice of this approach was informed by the need by the limited time frame and the need to adhere to the safety protocols associated with COVID-19. The study relied on two sources of information: a literature review of CSOs and their contributions to national development in Ghana. It also examined CSOs' engagement in COVID-19 responses and limitations or barriers that hinder their ability to contribute effectively to national development. The literature review was complemented with qualitative in-depth interviews with key informants in the Ghanaian civil society sector. Data collection for this study took place in June 2021.

The choice of qualitative method was informed by the need for an in-depth understanding into the perceptions of interviewees about the roles and contributions of CSOs to Ghana's development over the years. Interviewees were purposively selected based on their knowledge, experience and expertise in the civil society sector in Ghana over the years. More importantly, the interviewees were selected from a diverse range of CSOs such as philanthropic foundations, international NGOs and government agencies. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions and focused on issues such as CSOs' role in Ghana's development, their contributions and limitations in COVID-19 responses and their expected roles in post-COVID-19 recovery. The discussion also focused on CSOs' relationship with government prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

All interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom and were recorded with the informed consent of interviewees. These were later transcribed for analysis. The data was analysed using thematic analysis in identifying patterns and emergent themes. Discourse analysis was also employed in understanding how interviewees framed and made meanings of their experience of CSOs' contributions to national development. The use of discourse analysis also helped in understanding variations in interviewees' understanding and perceptions which provided nuanced perspectives.

### **3.0 AN OVERVIEW OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN GHANA**

The concept of civil society in Ghana remains a highly controversial topic given that it is elusive because its meaning is subjective and varies across different contexts<sup>10</sup>. Notwithstanding the differences in the conceptualisation of civil society, the emergence of CSOs in Ghana is linked to the country's political history during the pre-independence and post-independence periods<sup>11</sup>. Civil society organisations such as the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society played a significant role towards the attainment of Ghana's independence through the mobilisation of people to oppose colonial rules and policies. CSOs such as the Ghana Bar Association also played active role by countering the hegemonic forces of the state during the post-independence era by advocating for the abolition of the Supreme Military Council's Union Government (Unigov).

The political history of Ghana provides an interesting understanding of the emergence of CSOs. These CSOs have played key roles such as advocacy, service delivery as well as acting as watchdog over the government<sup>12</sup>. This has deepened their involvement in Ghana's good governance and democratic process making the country an example of Africa's 'iconic democratisers'. It is important to mention that a detailed analysis of the historical overview of the emergence of CSOs in Ghana is outside the scope of this report<sup>13</sup>.

#### **3.1 Number of CSOs and Scope**

In Ghana, the civil society sector is vibrant, dynamic and diverse in nature. As mentioned earlier, the origin of the sector dates back to the colonial period where CSOs through missionaries performed welfare and charity functions. However, their number increased and flourished during the post-independence era more especially between the 1980s and 1990s due to donor preference and internal changes in Ghana's political landscape (Gary, 1996).

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<sup>10</sup> Salamon, L. M., & Sokolowski, S. W. (2016). Beyond nonprofits: Re-conceptualizing the third sector. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27(4), 1515-1545.

<sup>11</sup> Amoako, K.Y. (2008). The future of civil society in democratic governance and development in Africa. The 4th Annual Kronti ne Akwamu (Democracy and Good Governance) Lecture. Centre for Democratic Development. Accra, Ghana.

<sup>12</sup> Debrah, E., & Graham, E. (2015). Preventing the Oil Curse Situation in Ghana: The Role of Civil Society Organisations. *Insight on Africa*, 7(1), 21-41.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed analysis of the historical overview of CSOs' emergence in Ghana, see for example, Kumi, 2017; Gary, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> Gary, I. (1996). Confrontation, co-operation or co-optation: NGOs and the Ghanaian state during structural adjustment. *Review of African Political Economy*, 23(68), 149-168.



Yarrow highlights the diversity of the NGO sector in terms of their size, operation, scope as well as their ideological differences. The ideological orientation of many NGOs in 1980s and 1990s were influenced by social and political activism<sup>15</sup>. At present, the sector is made up of diverse and different range of organisations performing different functions and programmes.

Comprehensive data on the exact number of CSOs operating in Ghana is lacking. However, according to USAID, in 2019, 9,251 CSOs were registered with the Department of Social Development (formally Department of Social Welfare)<sup>16</sup>. This represents an increase in the number of CSOs operating in the country. For example, the number of registered CSOs was 6,520 and 7950 in 2016 and 2018 respectively<sup>17</sup>. The data on the number of CSOs indicates the sheer number of CSOs operating in the country. Geographically, the distribution of CSOs is nationwide and are located at the district, regional and national level. However, national level CSOs tend to be urban and elite-based and focus on strategic issues at the national level where their regional and district counterparts focus on local issues by restricting their activities to specific regions or districts<sup>18</sup>. This is not to suggest that district and regional level CSOs do not focus on national issues.

### 3.2 Organisational Capacity, Structure and Governance

In terms of organisational capacity, many CSOs have the resources to respond to the specific needs of their beneficiaries. In doing so, CSOs involve their beneficiaries in their activities which promotes elements of downward accountability. However, concerns have also been raised about Ghanaian CSOs' upward accountability to their donors rather than their intended beneficiaries which in turn affects their legitimacy and credibility with the grassroots<sup>19</sup>. With regards to organisational capacity, a challenge faced by many CSOs relates to inadequate human resources which in turn affects the performance,

and resource mobilisation potential of CSOs. The human resource challenge of Ghanaian CSOs is partly attributed to the project-based nature of funding characterised by short-term funding and the absence of core funding which affect the ability of CSOs to retain their competent staff when project funds end. The resultant effect is high turnover among CSO employees<sup>20</sup>. For instance, recent studies have highlighted how some CSOs in Ghana are unable to give long-term contract to their employees which leads to high job insecurity and attrition in the CSO sector



**CSO response to COVID-19 and food insecurities in Ghana**  
Photo: CUT International

<sup>15</sup> Yarrow, T. (2011). *Development beyond politics: aid activism, and NGOs in Ghana*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

<sup>16</sup> USAID (2020). 2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index. USAID: Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-africa-2019-report.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Kumi, E. (2017). *Diversify or die? The response of Ghanaian Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) to a changing aid landscape*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath, UK; USAID (2020). 2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index. USAID: Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-africa-2019-report.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Kumi, E. (2017). *Diversify or die? The response of Ghanaian Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) to a changing aid landscape*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath, UK

<sup>19</sup> Bawole, J. N., & Langnel, Z. (2016). Downward accountability of NGOs in community project planning in Ghana. *Development in Practice*, 26(7), 920-932.

<sup>20</sup> Kumi, E. (2017). *Diversify or die? The response of Ghanaian Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) to a changing aid landscape*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath, UK

For instance, Gyambrah et al. observed that among their 30 sampled CSOs, 13 experienced staff turnovers where more than five employees left the organisations annually<sup>21</sup>.

Another aspect relates to CSOs' structure, governance and leadership. In Ghana, the organisational membership is framed in citizen participation. For this reason, on average, citizen participation and involvement in the activities of CSOs is relatively high because the actions and inactions of citizens directly or indirectly shape and influence the organisational direction and sustainability of CSOs<sup>22</sup>. Citizens' participation is often common with smaller CSOs compared to bigger and established CSOs. For most smaller CSOs, they tend to rely on the services of volunteers because of their inability to hire and retain well-paid professional staff<sup>23</sup>. In general, the level of volunteering for established and bigger CSOs in Ghana is very low and ad hoc in nature because they are often dominated by hired professionals with elite profiles who are able to 'speak and understand the language of donors'. This is influenced by the professionalisation of the CSO sector which also limits the space for volunteer engagement<sup>24</sup>.

Informed by the drive for professionalisation, CSOs in Ghana have high hierarchical governance structures mostly dominated by professionals. For this reason, many CSOs have defined leadership and governance structures usually headed by the board members. However, the challenge with CSOs' board has to do with their composition and tenure<sup>25</sup>.

For example, many board members are composed of 'family and friends' and therefore it becomes difficult distinguishing organisational governance roles and management functions and structures from family affairs especially for many small and medium-size CSOs. Additionally, many boards are ineffective because their establishment is meant for meeting registration requirements rather than providing leadership and governance to the organisations.

*Aside from external donor funding, the recent years are witnessing the establishment and increasing involvement of philanthropic foundation in the funding landscape of CSOs in Ghana. For example, STAR-Ghana Foundation is the largest domestic donor for many CSOs in Ghana<sup>36</sup>. The Foundation gave out a grant of over GH¢5,170,400 (US\$ 941,000)*

This has the potential of affecting the legitimacy, credibility and organisational sustainability of CSOs because of their inability to follow best corporate governance practices<sup>26</sup>.

Directly related to this, while leadership is an important determinant of CSOs' sustainability in Ghana, leadership transitioning and succession planning is a major challenge<sup>27</sup>. It is worth mentioning that many CSOs are established around charismatic leaders with established networks and connections for resource mobilisation. This often results in the phenomenon of founders' syndrome which creates difficulties for leadership transitions<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Gyambrah, M., Hanson, P., & Nottinson, H. Human Resource Development (HRD) Practices of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) in Ghana's Health Sector. International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, 7(9), 373-380.

<sup>22</sup> Arhin, A. A., Kumi, E., & Adam, M. A. S. (2018). Facing the bullet? Non-Governmental Organisations'(NGOs') responses to the changing aid landscape in Ghana. VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 29(2), 348-360.

<sup>23</sup> Kumi, E. (2019). Aid Reduction and NGOs' Quest for Sustainability in Ghana: Can Philanthropic Institutions Serve as Alternative Resource Mobilisation Routes?. VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 30(6), 1332-1347.

<sup>24</sup> Kamstra, J., & Schulpen, L. (2015). Worlds apart but much alike: Donor funding and the homogenization of NGOs in Ghana and Indonesia. Studies in comparative international development, 50(3), 331-357.

<sup>25</sup> Amoah, S.K. (2018). An Analysis of Leadership Transitions and Governance Within Civil Society Organisations in Ghana. Accra: WACSI.

<sup>26</sup> Amoah, S.K. (2018). An Analysis of Leadership Transitions and Governance Within Civil Society Organisations in Ghana. Accra: WACSI; Jakimow, T. (2011). Family involvement in small, local nongovernmental organizations. Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 22(1), 21-35.

<sup>27</sup> Amoah, S.K. (2018). An Analysis of Leadership Transitions and Governance Within Civil Society Organisations in Ghana. Accra: WACSI

<sup>28</sup> Block, S. R., & Rosenberg, S. (2002). Toward an understanding of founder's syndrome: An assessment of power and privilege among founders of nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 12(4), 353-368.

As highlighted by Amoah (2018), many Ghanaian CSOs are often not proactive in putting in place the requisite leadership transition structures like succession planning. This is largely because of the informal nature of their governance structures which often results in unplanned and spontaneous leadership succession<sup>29</sup>.

This negatively results in the founders' syndrome which makes it difficult for CSOs' leaders to 'let go' in order to see new changes happening in the organisation. Informed by this, many fail to put in place adequate structures for leaders' transition and succession<sup>30</sup>. Similarly, Amoah observed that in Ghana, while CSOs' leadership transition is of important concern to leaders, they are not proactive in putting in place mechanisms such as succession planning. For many CSOs, leadership transition and succession are often unplanned and spontaneous due to the informal nature of their governance structures<sup>31</sup>. In addition, although CSOs have strategic plans, its implementation is often hampered as donors are unwilling to provide them core funding for institutional development and overall organisational sustainability<sup>32</sup>.

Notwithstanding the above challenges, some CSOs have well-developed internal management and governance structures. This stems in part from government regulatory framework that requires CSOs to have board of directors in order to promote their effectiveness and sustainability. Of particular importance to the maintenance of well-developed internal management structures is that it gives CSOs access to donor funding. This is due partly to the assumption that CSOs with well-organised and developed structures are able to promote accountability and transparency in their dealings with donors. Having good governance structures in place helps CSOs to build trust and 'win the hearts of donors' since donor funding represents the lifeblood of NGOs.

### **3.3 Funding landscape for CSOs in Ghana**

CSOs in Ghana are highly dependent on external donor funding for their survival. In other words, the relationship between CSOs and donors is characterised by high resource dependence where donor funding constitute the major source of funding<sup>33</sup>. As highlighted by Kumi, donor funding accounts for about 80-90% of all funding for the majority of CSOs in Ghana. Only a small proportion (about 10%) are able to mobilise domestic resources although this is increasing in recent years<sup>34</sup>. While CSOs have a strong relationship with the central government, government funding or financial support is relatively limited as government does not allocate a portion of the national budget towards funding CSOs. This is also not to suggest that CSOs do not get any support at all from the government. Indeed, there are evidence in the literature that highlights the collaborative relationship between CSOs and some government agencies (e.g., Ghana Aids Commission and District Assemblies) especially in service delivery<sup>35</sup>.

Aside from external donor funding, the recent years are witnessing the establishment and increasing involvement of philanthropic foundation in the funding landscape of CSOs in Ghana.

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<sup>29</sup> Amoah, S.K. (2018). An Analysis of Leadership Transitions and Governance Within Civil Society Organisations in Ghana. Accra: WACSI

<sup>30</sup> Block, S. R., & Rosenberg, S. (2002). Toward an understanding of founder's syndrome: An assessment of power and privilege among founders of nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 12(4), 353-368.

<sup>31</sup> Amoah, S.K. (2018). An Analysis of Leadership Transitions and Governance Within Civil Society Organisations in Ghana. Accra: WACSI

<sup>32</sup> USAID (2020). 2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index. USAID: Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-africa-2019-report.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Arhin, A. A., Kumi, E., & Adam, M. A. S. (2018). Facing the bullet? Non-Governmental Organisations'(NGOs)' responses to the changing aid landscape in Ghana. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 29(2), 348-360.

<sup>34</sup> Kumi, E. (2017). Diversify or die? The response of Ghanaian Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) to a changing aid landscape. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath, UK

<sup>35</sup> Bawole, J. N., & Hossain, F. (2015). Marriage of the unwilling? The paradox of local government and NGO relations in Ghana. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 26(5), 2061-2083.

For example, STAR-Ghana Foundation is the largest domestic donor for many CSOs in Ghana<sup>36</sup>. The Foundation gave out a grant of over GH¢5,170,400 (US\$ 941,000) to 26 CSOs towards their engagements in election-related issues in Ghana<sup>36</sup>. Additionally, the Foundation has been supporting CSOs' coordination and response to the issues such as social justice, governance and the promotion of human rights. Other local grant making organisations include the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF). The challenge with CSOs' funding landscape or environment in Ghana is that the recent years have witnessed the decline in the amount of external donor funding partly because of Ghana's status as a lower-middle income country and the increasing emphasis on Ghana Beyond Aid Agend<sup>37</sup>. For example, donor agency like DANIDA which used to be a major donor for CSOs in Ghana drastically reduced its aid from about US\$19.7 million to US\$3.7 million between 2018 and 2019<sup>38</sup>. Existing literature also highlights how the changing aid landscape of CSOs in Ghana affects their overall sustainability<sup>39</sup>.

Moreover, aid volatility also threatens the strategic planning of CSOs that are highly dependent on external donor funding which in turn affects their overall sustainability. This is largely due to changes in donor funding modalities and priorities. Many donors are now focusing on aid-for-trade as part of their funding priorities. In Ghana, many small and medium-size CSOs depend largely on one source of funding which is mostly external donor funding, hence when there is a change in donor priorities and modalities, it exposes them to financial vulnerability.



**Human impact of COVID-19 lockdown in Ghana markets**  
Photo: Azikia

Despite their dependence on external funding, the mobilisation of domestic resources as an alternative is also gaining much prominence. This includes income generating activities, social enterprises, corporate philanthropy (i.e., corporate foundations), private foundations and mobilisation of resources from community members in the form of financial and non-financial resources (e.g., volunteers etc.). The phenomenon of social enterprise and income generating activities among CSOs has received much attention in recent years. CSOs such as Afrikids, Social Enterprise Ghana, Ark Foundation have established social enterprises as part of their resource diversification strategies. Similar observations about CSOs working with corporate organisations have been reported in the literature<sup>40</sup>. However, many CSOs have challenges with the mobilisation of domestic resources such as social enterprises due in part to capacity issues (e.g., leadership and business skills)<sup>41</sup>. Other issues include negative perceptions that CSOs are charitable organisations with considerable amount of money, hence there is no need to support them financially and the lack of perceived accountability and transparency on the part of CSOs.

<sup>36</sup> Kumi, E. (2021). Barriers to Civil Society Organisations' Scaling and Capacity Building in Ghana. Johannesburg: Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment.8

<sup>37</sup> Kumi, E. (2020). From donor darling to beyond aid? Public perceptions of 'Ghana Beyond Aid'. Journal of Modern African Studies, 58, 67-90.

<sup>38</sup> USAID (2020). 2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index. USAID: Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-africa-2019-report.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Arhin, A. A., Kumi, E., & Adam, M. A. S. (2018). Facing the bullet? Non-Governmental Organisations'(NGOs)' responses to the changing aid landscape in Ghana. VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 29(2), 348-360.

<sup>40</sup> USAID (2020). 2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index. USAID: Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-africa-2019-report.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Darko, E., & Koranteng, K. (2015). Social Enterprise Landscape in Ghana. London: Overseas Development Institute.

In addition, many CSOs have failed in making a case for support from the public mainly because they have not packaged and presented their contributions to development very well especially in areas such as social justice and human rights. The implication of CSOs' inability to mobilise resources domestically or limited domestic funding is that it affects their ownership, legitimacy and credibility which in turn negatively impacts on their long-term sustainability.

### 3.4 Collaborations among CSOs and other Stakeholders

CSOs in Ghana tend to have weaker collaborations partly because of competition for funding, ideological differences, lack of perceived trust and accountability, leadership styles and mistrust<sup>42</sup>. In his analysis of the CSOs' landscape in Ghana, Kumi found that mistrust between bigger and smaller CSOs often results in the lack of collaborations and the building of stronger relationships. For this reason, CSOs have a weak relationship with some stakeholders in their operating environment<sup>43</sup>. Notwithstanding, the recent years have seen an increase in CSOs networks and coalitions at the national and regional levels, prominent among them are CSOs Platform on SDGs, Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health, Ghana National Education Coalition, Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation among many others. While these networks seek to create platforms for collaborations among CSOs operating within similar thematic field, the concern is that some coalition and network secretariats often use their members to seek funding and implement projects rather than disbursing the funds to support the programmes of their members. Thus, although the coalitions were not supposed to implement projects, some have turned themselves into 'quasi-NGOs'. Others also engage in competition for funding with their members which creates mistrust between the secretariats and their members<sup>44</sup>.

Notwithstanding, there is strong inter-organisational collaborations among some CSOs that operate at the national and local levels through the formation of consortia. These platforms are used in seeking funding and amplifying their voices on advocacy issues due to the strength in their numbers. More importantly, local CSOs have developed stronger relationships with international NGOs (INGOs) because of their dependence which makes their relationship more contract-based in nature where INGOs use local CSOs as project implementing partners. However, concerns have been raised about the asymmetrical nature of relationship between INGOs and local CSOs in Ghana<sup>45</sup>.

CSOs in Ghana enjoy a stronger relationship with stakeholders including the government and the private sector. CSOs-government relationship has improved significantly since the year 2000 mainly because of the non-confrontational approach used by CSOs, unlike years back where the relationship with government is mainly characterised by strong mistrust and suspicion<sup>46</sup>. In some instances, the relationship between CSOs and government is also tokenistic in nature. Thus, the relationship between CSOs and government ranges from superficial and suspicious cordiality, friendly-foe relations, tokenistic and cosmetic collaboration and convenient and cautious partnerships. Therefore, some CSOs collaborate with state agencies as sub-contractors for project implementation<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Kumi, E., Arhin, A.A., & Essel, V. (2020). Collaborating for effective social activism in West Africa: Experiences, enabling factors and challenges. Accra: WACSI.

<sup>43</sup> Kumi, E. (2021). Barriers to Civil Society Organisations' Scaling and Capacity Building in Ghana. Johannesburg: Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment.

<sup>44</sup> Kumi, E. (2017). Diversify or die? The response of Ghanaian Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) to a changing aid landscape. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath, UK

<sup>45</sup> Elbers, W., & Schulpen, L. (2013). Corridors of power: The institutional design of North-South NGO partnerships. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 24(1), 48-67.

<sup>46</sup> Kamstra, J., Knippenberg, L., & Schulpen, L. (2013). Cut from a different cloth? Comparing democracy-promoting NGOs in Ghana and Indonesia. *Journal of Civil Society*, 9(1), 1-20.

<sup>47</sup> Bawole, J. N., & Hossain, F. (2015). Marriage of the unwilling? The paradox of local government and NGO relations in Ghana. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 26(5), 2061-2083.

## 4.0 CONTRIBUTIONS OF CSOs TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA



A self-help group being presented with a Veronica bucket for handwashing during the peak of COVID-19 pandemic Photo: Ghana Somubi Dwumadie

Over the years, CSOs in Ghana have played significant roles towards the country's development. While the contributions of CSOs to national development is varied, the discussion in this report focuses particularly on three main areas: i) good governance and democratic processes; ii) complementary roles in service delivery; and iii) engagements in advocacy and policy influencing. These contributions of CSOs to national development are discussed in detail below.

### 4.1 Civil Society Role in Democracy and Governance Processes

Following the adoption of multi-party democracy in Ghana in 1993, CSOs have been active players that have contributed towards the consolidation of the country's democracy and governance processes. The interview data suggests that CSOs have played significant roles ranging from the fostering of individual and community knowledge through education on democracy, monitoring and ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in the democratization processes as well as advocating and demanding accountability from government and duty bearers.

With regards to CSOs' educational role in democracy, interviewees explained that CSOs have been very active in civic education on democratic processes such as elections where they educate citizens on their rights. For instance, many CSOs including the media in Ghana have played significant roles in providing and disseminating information to citizens on the need to contribute to free, fair and peaceful elections in the country.

Moreover, the media has also provided information on the governance processes in the country which has contributed to a better understanding by citizens on for example, the agenda and manifestoes of political parties<sup>48</sup>. Aside from information sharing, community-based radio stations in the media for example, have also helped in increasing political participation and awareness in the country especially in many rural areas. In doing so, they have supplemented the efforts of political parties by encouraging citizens to be actively involved in the election and voting processes in the country which in turn contributes to national development<sup>49</sup>.

CSOs in Ghana have also contributed immensely towards information sharing on the governance processes in the country. This is particularly the case with regards to their involvement in pushing for the Right to Information Law in the country. Speaking about CSOs' role in the passage of the Right to Information Law, a key informant explained as follows:

*“The Right to Information Bill has been something that civil society pushed for and fought for before it was passed into law. So here you see the significance of civil society and they have not left it off, but are still continuing to push for the right things to be done. So, although we have the law in place, we still need to put in place the right mechanisms so that it will work. So, you will see quite consistently CSOs' engagement with the state and the Ministry of Information to make sure that the right institutional set up is put in place” (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June 2021)”.*

Another added:

*“CSOs in Ghana have been very active right from when legislations are being developed. Civil society are able to come on board to provide alternatives informed by research to certain legislations that are being drafted. So RTI for instance, that was passed recently, civil society had a great hand in it [.....] At the moment with regards to the RTI, the lackadaisical approach with which the government is implementing it, civil society is holding their foot to the fire to hold government to account to provide information to citizens (Interview, Key Informant, 10th June 2021)”.*

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<sup>48</sup> See for example, Demuyakor, J. (2021). Achieving Active Political Pluralism and Participation through Development Communication: The Role of Local and Community Radio Media Outlets in Northern Ghana. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, 1-22.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid



**CODEO GHANA**  
Coalition of Domestic Election Observers

**COVID-19 protocols to be observed at the polling stations**



It is compulsory to wear face mask before entering the polling station on December 7

**Election 2020  
countdown**



**days more**

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 +233 244 350 266 / +233 277 744



CODEO voter education flyer on COVID-19 protocols at polling stations ahead of Ghana 2020 Elections

Source: CODEO GHANA

Another important role played by CSOs in consolidating Ghana's democracy relates to their 'watchdog' functions around elections, anti-corruption and policy implementation. By doing so, they ensure accountability and transparency on the part of government officials. Specifically in the area of elections, CSOs such as Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) have been consistent in monitoring elections in Ghana over the years. For instance, during the voter registration exercise and the 2020 general elections, CODEO deployed election observers to monitor elections across the country. CSOs have also been particularly active in election reforms and processes in the country. This was explained by an interviewee as follows:

*"If you look at civil society's engagements in our electoral reform processes, you take for example the contributions of CODEO working with IDEG and CDD-Ghana and others. The sort of contributions they have made towards our election processes cannot be underestimated" (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June, 2021)".*

The above statement corroborates existing studies that highlight CSOs' involvement and the significant roles they play in electioneering processes in Ghana<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> Botchway, T. P. (2018). Civil society and the consolidation of democracy in Ghana's fourth republic. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 4(1), 1-18; Arthur, P. (2010). Democratic consolidation in Ghana: The role and contribution of the media, civil society and state institutions. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 48(2), 203-226.





Ongoing Ghana 2020 polls with CODEO official observing  
 Photo: ©CODEO GHANA

*Another important role played by CSOs in consolidating Ghana's democracy relates to their 'watchdog' functions around elections, anti-corruption and policy implementation. By doing so, they ensure accountability and transparency on the part of government officials. Specifically in the area of elections, CSOs such as Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)...have been consistent in monitoring elections in Ghana over the years*

CSOs have also been at the fore front in the fight against corruption in Ghana. In doing so, they tend to put pressure on the government to demand transparency and accountability on the part of government officials and duty bearers. For instance, many interviewees explained that civil society has contributed to Ghana's development through their engagements in for example exposing political corruption. In particular, it was mentioned that in recent years, the media and some civil society activists in Ghana have been very active in exposing political corruption as part of their watchdog roles. According to an interviewee, civil society actors have adopted strategies such as naming and shaming to make corruption unattractive in the country albeit it still persists. This is aptly captured as follows:

*"On the critical issue of corruption, we have the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition of civil society, and we are tackling corruption from different angles such as asset and the declaration and passage of laws to ensure that corruption becomes unattractive. We do naming and shaming of corrupt officials and in that sense account we hold government to account [.....] We also go down at the district assembly level; we look at procurement of the assemblies how they manage the various funds under the District Assembly Common Fund just to ensure that funds are properly accounted for" (Interview, Key informant, 10th June 2021)".*

Interviewees further explained that as part of their roles in ensuring accountability and transparency in the governance processes, CSOs are active stakeholders who provide technical expertise to government and this helps in influencing policies that promote national development. For instance, the consensus among interviewees was that civil society has been very active in the drafting of legislations such as the Office of the Special Prosecutor Act, the 2020 Non-For-Profit Policy and Guidelines among others. They also mentioned CSOs such as CDD-Ghana among many others that have been very vocal in demanding accountability from government. Interviewees further explained as part of their brokering roles in promoting development, CSOs have contributed to creating platforms where citizens engage with government officials in order to hold them accountable for their actions and inactions.

Specifically, CSOs are able to mobilise the public to participate in discussions, conferences and fora on national development issues. In doing so, they use such platforms to create awareness on the need for accountability and transparency from government officials and duty bearers. This is how one interviewee puts it:

*“We [civil society] also create spaces and avenues through our work for citizens to directly engage with duty bearers and hold them to account. So, a lot of CSOs hold public forum and conferences where we always bring duty bearers and citizens together so that the citizens are able to hold the duty bearers to account. CSOs create awareness on what our monies are being used for. So, for example, we do Citizens Budget so that citizens know how their taxes are being used” (Interview, Key Informant, 10th June 2021)”.*

Interviewees further explained that CSOs help in monitoring government’s programmes in order to ensure accountability. For instance, they mentioned examples such as SEND-Ghana’s participatory Monitoring and Evaluation which involves the use of District Citizens’ Monitoring Committees that monitor the progress or otherwise of government policies and programmes. In addition, SEND-Ghana engages in policy advocacy through policy dialogues or meetings with stakeholders to hold government officials to account (Interview, Key Informant, 15th June 2020). Similar findings on how CSOs in Ghana demand accountability and transparency from government officials at the district levels in Ghana have been highlighted in the literature<sup>51</sup>.



<sup>51</sup> Gildemyn, M. (2014). Understanding the influence of independent civil society monitoring and evaluation at the district level: A case study of Ghana. American Journal of Evaluation, 35(4), 507-524.

With regards to accountability and transparency, another important contribution of CSOs is in the area of the fight against corruption. In particular, some CSOs such as the media have become the conduits for anti-corruption education and awareness raising in the country. It was further explained that some CSOs set the agenda for the fight against corruption in Ghana. In explaining the contributions of CSOs in the fight against corruption in Ghana, an interviewee had this to say:

*“Civil society had a good hand in the drafting of the Office of the Special Prosecutor Act and other anti-corruption laws such as the declaration of assets. They have also been key in holding government accountable for the implementation of policies that have been designed or provisions of the constitutions particularly around fighting of corruption (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June 2021)”*

Another added:

*“In recent years, there have been much interest in the economic management of the country. So, for example, the fight against corruption in the country has been led by civil society by providing very credible evidence and solutions on especially how to deal with corruption in the economic sphere” (Interview, Key Informant, 17th June 2021).*

The above statement highlights the increasing involvement of civil society in promoting good governance in Ghana especially through the fight against corruption. Indeed, existing studies have documented how civil society including the media expose corrupt practices in Ghana<sup>52</sup>.

## **4.2 CSOs’ engagement in Policy Advocacy and Influencing**

Aside from their contributions to the democratic and governance processes in the Ghana, civil society has also been very active in policy influencing which in turn contributes to national development. Our interview data suggests that civil society in Ghana are making significant contributions to the policy terrain in Ghana at the national and local levels. In particular, at the national level, interviewees explained that CSOs in Ghana have been very active in the generation of evidence through research that have been used in influencing government policies. In doing so, government tend to dwell on the technical expertise of CSOs for advice on specific policies and legislations. Thus, given CSOs’ expertise, government consult them on national development issues. For instance, interviewees emphasised that the Government of Ghana relied heavily on CSOs for the drafting and implementation of citizen national policies and legislations. The involvement of CSOs on national development policies ranges from policy formulation, implementation and monitoring as highlighted by an interviewee who argued that:

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<sup>52</sup> Asomah, J. Y. (2020). Can private media contribute to fighting political corruption in sub-Saharan Africa? Lessons from Ghana. *Third World Quarterly*, 41(12), 2011-2029; Asomah, J. Y. (2021). What Motivates Some Ghanaian Private Media To Expose Political Corruption?. *International Journal of Sociology*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2021.1881871>

*“I think that in the area of policy planning, government sees that civil society has a number of contributions to make through the research work and data that we generate to inform the policy making processes. This is evident in a number of state-based committees where CSOs have representatives. So, you see parliament and other actors of government getting CSOs to do a number of things in terms of policy making. With regards to policy implementation at the national level, you see the value that CSOs bring to that process. So, you see government’s heavy reliance on CSOs in the implementation of policies (Interview, Key Informant, 9th June 2021)”.*

It was further explained that in terms of policy making, CSOs in Ghana have over the years acted as a brokers and translators between government and citizens who are able to translate the needs of their intended beneficiaries into policy formulation and research dissemination. As highlighted in the above statement, CSOs are able to use their research and the data they generate from their programmes to help in the formulation of policies aimed at addressing the needs of their intended beneficiaries. More importantly, through their engagements in advocacy and policy dialogue, CSOs are able to influence government policies. For example, many interviewees mentioned the role played by CSOs such as think tanks in influencing national policies on the economy, energy, social inclusion among many others. In the energy sector, interviewees described how CSOs’ used their advocacy in influencing the suspension of the Agyapa deal<sup>53</sup>. In fact, CSOs within the Ghanaian policy space are often considered as policy entrepreneurs who advocate for changes by drawing attention to policy problems and presenting solutions or alternatives to such policies<sup>54</sup>. Speaking about the policy advocacy and influencing roles of CSOs and how it contributes to national development, interviewees explained that CSOs’ also had influence on international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. This is how one interviewee described the advocacy and influencing role of CSOs in relation to macroeconomic policies:

*“Recently CSOs like Think Tanks are actually engaging in policy issues surrounding the macroeconomic space in terms of taxation and pushing for a good public financial management. They also engage with international actors such as the World Bank and IMF and over the past few years, we have seen a significant civil society engagement with such actors to ensure that whatever policy recommendations these institutions provide to our government, they are supporting the development of the country [...] For example, civil society actors came together on a platform (i.e., the Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme) to engage the IMF to make sure that we do not make the mistake of the past when we went for the Extended Credit Facility (2015-2018) (Interview, Key Informant, 17th June 2021)”.*

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<sup>53</sup> For details on the Agyapa deal, see

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/business/What-you-need-to-know-about-Agyapa-Royalties-deal-and-the-controversies-1045648>

<sup>54</sup> Ohemeng, F. L., & Kamga, O. (2020). Administrative leaders as institutional entrepreneurs in developing countries: A study of the development and institutionalization of performance management in Ghana's public service. *Public Administration and Development*, 40(1), 87-100.

Through their engagement in the Ghanaian policy arena, some commentators have described for example, Think Tanks as ‘northern lights’ in policy development. Aside from macroeconomic policies, CSOs have also contributed to influencing policies on issues such as social inclusion and women’s empowerment. Anyidoho et al. document the involvement of the Domestic Violence Coalition in the implementation of domestic violence laws in Ghana<sup>55</sup>. In the area of social justice and inclusion, CSOs have played significant roles in raising awareness and advocating for the rights of the marginalised and less privileged in society<sup>56</sup>. In the area of political participation, CSOs have been very active by contributing to the inclusion of people with disability<sup>57</sup>. Other aspects of civil society’s advocacy relate to ensuring women’s participation in politics and decision-making processes<sup>58</sup>. During interview, an interviewee summarised CSOs’ policy influencing contributions to national development as follows:

*“At the national level, CSOs have generated evidence that have been used in influencing policies and practices. We can talk about CDD-Ghana’s, IDEG’s, IMANI’s etc. who have generated evidence that they have used in influencing specific government policies and legislations. We have seen CSOs providing technical assistance to government in the crafting of legislations and technical papers as the Affirmative Action, Private Members Act, Domestic Violence, Non-profit Organisations Policy etc. In that sense, they have provided technical expertise to support government and they also advocate for the passage and implementation of laws and policies” (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June 2021)”.*



**Civil society advocates travel throughout districts to conduct community mobilisation and awareness on COVID-19**  
Photo: ©Melissa Wanda, PATH

<sup>55</sup> Anyidoho, N. A., Crawford, G., & Medie, P. A. (2020). The Role of Women's Movements in the Implementation of Gender-Based Violence Laws. *Politics & Gender*, 1-27.

<sup>56</sup> Sackey, E. (2015). Disability and political participation in Ghana: an alternative perspective. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 17(4), 366-381.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> Bawa, S., & Sanyare, F. (2013). Women's participation and representation in politics: Perspectives from Ghana. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 36(4), 282-291; Appiah, E. M. (2015). Affirmative action, gender equality, and increased participation for women, which way for Ghana?. *Statute Law Review*, 36(3), 270-279.

### 4.3 CSOs' Contributions to Poverty Reduction and Service Delivery

Over the years, CSOs in Ghana in their varied forms have contributed to national development through their engagements in efforts to reduce poverty and promote growth. In particular, the involvement of CSOs in poverty reduction across Ghana is well documented in the literature . CSOs especially NGOs provide social interventions and livelihood empowerment programmes to their intended beneficiaries as part of their service delivery roles. In fact, the emergence of NGOs in Ghana is related to their 'gap filling roles' during the Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) . Informed by this, CSOs have continued to support the service delivery efforts of government such as the building of educational and health facilities, provision of trainings and skills development for the youth and women, emergency response among many others. More importantly, NGOs as civil society actors have over the past three decades or so contributed towards improving the living standards of the poor and marginalised in society<sup>61</sup>. The poverty-reduction potentials of civil society are often associated with their role as advocates of the poor and service providers<sup>62</sup>. This is partly due to their perceived comparative advantage in service delivery which has made some commentators to perceive them as 'development alternatives or alternative source of ideas and practices to the state. As suggested by Alikhan et al., CSOs' role especially in service delivery complements government's efforts to promote national development<sup>63</sup>.



COVID-19 relief items distributed to vulnerable children  
Source: Global March 2021

Our interview data suggests that despite the challenges associated civil society's involvement in development such as limited extent of the impact of their development interventions on the lives of intended beneficiaries, they contribute significantly towards Ghana's development in terms of service delivery by supporting the needy and vulnerable in society. Speaking about the contributions of civil society to Ghana's social development, an interviewee had this to say:

*“There are a significant number of civil society actors both directly or indirectly in shaping our social development landscape. By social development, we are looking at education, health, sanitations etc. CSOs including NGOs have been providing these services to groups and communities across the country as part of their contributions to national development. So, we have all types of CSOs who are working in service delivery to provide the basic necessities of life for communities and different groups in the country” (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June 2021)”*

<sup>61</sup> Alikhan, F., Kyei, P., Mawdsley, E., Porter, G., Raju, S., Townsend, J., & Varma, R. (2007). NGOs and the State in the Twenty-first Century: Ghana and India. Oxford: INTRAC.

<sup>62</sup> Banks, N., & Hulme, D. (2012). The role of NGOs and civil society in development and poverty reduction. Brooks World Poverty Institute Working Paper171. University of Manchester.

<sup>63</sup> Alikhan, F., Kyei, P., Mawdsley, E., Porter, G., Raju, S., Townsend, J., & Varma, R. (2007). NGOs and the State in the Twenty-first Century: Ghana and India. Oxford: INTRAC

Notwithstanding their potential contributions to national development, interviewees also raised concerns about their ability to bring about transformative development. They attributed this to a number of factors such as lack of access to information, limited funding, low level of citizen's participation and apathy in the work of CSOs and the increasing closure of the operating environment or civic space within which CSOs operated. These factors will be discussed in detail in Section 6 of this report.

## 5.0 CSOs' ROLES AND ENGAGEMENT IN COVID-19 RESPONSES IN GHANA

The first two (2) cases of the COVID-19 were detected and confirmed in Ghana on March 12, 2020. This kicked in a sustained effort to deal with the situation which had been declared a global emergency. The Government of Ghana (GOG) in its response put out five important policy objectives in dealing the pandemic and its ravaging effect. The objectives were to limit and stop the importation of the virus to Ghana, contain the spread, provide adequate care for the sick, limit the impact of the virus on socio-economic life of the people, and see to the expansion of domestic capability and deepen self-reliance. To achieve these objectives in earnest, the government instituted several other policy measures under emergency certificates.

These measures included social (physical) distancing, the wearing of facemasks, restriction on movements in the form of partial and full lockdowns and ban on many social events and gatherings in the country. These according to reports distorted the activities of many organisations and CSOs particularly at the programme implementation stages<sup>64</sup>. That notwithstanding, they ensured that they played their traditional roles with added value.



A simple improvised hand washing tool in Bongo (Upper East Region), Ghana  
Photo: ©IRC Ghana

The history of the world is awash with strong indications of civil society's active participation in development. Indeed, CSOs' response to pandemics including COVID-19 is well documented<sup>65</sup>. Civil society's response to the Ebola health crisis in Liberia proves their enormous contributions to development. Jarwolo and Cummeh documented CSOs' contribution to the National response of Liberia to Ebola through their National CSOs Ebola Response Taskforce. The taskforce among other things actively campaigned for international response to the Ebola crisis when the government of Liberia appeared to be losing the fight<sup>66</sup>. There are similar accounts of these during this COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the mistrust of the citizenry towards government officials, many believed that the disease and its presence in the country was not real until CSOs took up the awareness creation role. The media therefore played a significant role through the sharing of information as part of efforts to contain the spread of the disease.

<sup>64</sup> Amoah, S.K (2021). Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Civil Society Organisations in Ghana. West Africa Civil Society Institute. <https://wacsi.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/03/Impact-of-COVID-19-on-CSOs-in-Ghana.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> Jarwolo, E. & Cummeh, J. (2015). Strengthening effective stakeholder engagement to promote durable development in Liberia. In WACSI. Civil Society and Regional Integration in West Africa: Practioners' Perspective. Accra, Ghana: WACSI.



CSOs respond to COVID-19 with relief items for the vulnerable in society

Photo: ©Ghana CSOs Platform on SDGs

Aside from the advocacy, CSOs focused on issues of accountability and engaged in community mobilisation and policy dialogues as was the case in Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 2014 Ebola Health crisis. Despite their challenges in Liberia, CSOs according to Jarwolo and Cummeh were very instrumental in post-conflict, Ebola, and post-Ebola Liberia<sup>67</sup>. Similar reports were found in Sierra Leone where many CSOs provided material resources for the sick and Ebola survivors, cared for the children

orphaned by the disease, and provided educational materials and services for school children as part of the rebuilding efforts.

One lesson appeared to have been learnt in both Liberia and Sierra Leone about how effective CSOs' response to situations could be when they work together<sup>68</sup>. CSOs were quick to realise that the larger and stronger their membership, the more seriously the government took them and the less the burden placed on individual organisations in their contribution to national development. This realisation resulted in the creation and usage of CSO coalitions in the response to the crisis in both countries. The experience in Liberia and Sierra Leone therefore became a learning for Ghana during the COVID-19 pandemic. The collaborative efforts of CSOs during the pandemic was reported by Amoah who found that despite their initial neglect in the National COVID-19 Response Strategy, CSOs, through the SDG Platform, mobilised resources and responded collectively to the pandemic and its attendant challenges in Ghana<sup>69</sup>. As individual organisations also, CSOs' response to the pandemic was loud and significant. For this reason, during the pandemic, CSOs have and continue to prove their instrumental role in national development and rebuilding through advocacy, training, documentation and service provision.

*The first two (2) cases of the COVID-19 were detected and confirmed in Ghana on March 12, 2020...*

*...The Government of Ghana (GOG) in its response put out five important policy objectives in dealing the pandemic and its ravaging effect. The objectives were to limit and stop the importation of the virus to Ghana, contain the spread, provide adequate care for the sick...*

Despite the admission that CSOs in Ghana still have monumental shortfalls when it comes to strategic thinking and action, policy analyses, monitoring and sustaining advocacy, the sector's contribution to development cannot be overemphasized. In fact, while the civil society is known to face the challenge of collaboration which negatively affects their ability to achieve effective outcomes, the pandemic provided opportunities for increased collaboration at the national level, local level and among sector-specific organisations like the Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS) and the Coalition of NGOs in Health among many others.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Amoah, S.K (2021). Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Civil Society Organisations in Ghana. West Africa Civil Society Institute. <https://wacsi.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/03/Impact-of-COVID-19-on-CSOs-in-Ghana.pdf>



As Amoah notes, CSOs in Ghana engaged in a lot of collaborative work among themselves and private sector organisations as part of their strategic response to the pandemic<sup>70</sup>. However, it was observed that the collaboration between the government and CSOs was limited.

Notwithstanding, CSOs ensured that they remained relevant to key stakeholders including mainly their intended beneficiaries and donors. They continued to engage in advocacy and community education during the pandemic, collected data and engaged in information sharing, coordination of donations for the vulnerable and the provision of capacity building services to stakeholders and beneficiary communities. Moreover, they continued strongly in their advocacy and awareness creation in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were also keen in collecting data and sharing information to effectively deal with the virus and its devastating effects. Some CSOs also coordinated financial resources to support the vulnerable and build the capacity of their stakeholder community. In what follows, we discuss the contributions of CSOs to COVID-19 responses in Ghana. In doing so, we focus on their role in awareness raising and education, promoting advocacy and rights of citizens as well as capacity building and training.

## 5.1 Awareness Raising and Education

One of the key awareness and sensitisation programmes implemented by CSOs was the campaign against misinformation or fake news. Particularly, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MfWA) with funding from STAR- Ghana, was at the forefront of the war against misinformation. The MfWA partnered with several other CSOs and radio stations across the country to embark on its fact-checking programme to combat misinformation about the disease and related communication. Speaking about CSOs' contributions in awareness raising on the COVID-19 pandemic, a key informant explained:

*“One of our awareness raising programmes also focused on fighting fake news. During the pandemic, there was an upsurge of information that had no basis or facts, so we worked with the MfWA to undertake a programme to counter fake news that was likely to affect negatively efforts to fight the pandemic (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June 2021)”.*

In addition, CSOs such as Oxfam International-Ghana provided flexible funding or grant to the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) at the national and district levels to identify their education and awareness raising on COVID-19 and its preventive measures (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June 2021).

*In doing so, they also raised awareness on the plight of the vulnerable and marginalised in society so that the right support was given by government and other stakeholders.*

Aside from combating fake news, several other CSOs went into partnerships to ensure that there was a sustained war against discrimination and stigmatisation of people who had survived COVID-19. More importantly, individual CSOs such as Concern Health were equally active in raising awareness about the COVID-19 and the preventive measures in place.

The CSO mobilised resources locally to engage in many educational campaigns at the local community level (Interview, Key Informant 18th June 2021). The coalition of CSOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS) was particularly effective in ensuring sustained education on WASH and WASH service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ghanaian communities and among school children.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid

The coalition collaborated with the Ministries of Health, Education and the Ghana Health Service at the local and national level to push the agenda of sustainable WASH services in the height of the pandemic.

## 5.2 Capacity Building for Organisations and Communities



Vegetable vendors at Madina Market in Accra, Ghana observe COVID-19 safety practices and social distancing  
Source: Utrecht University

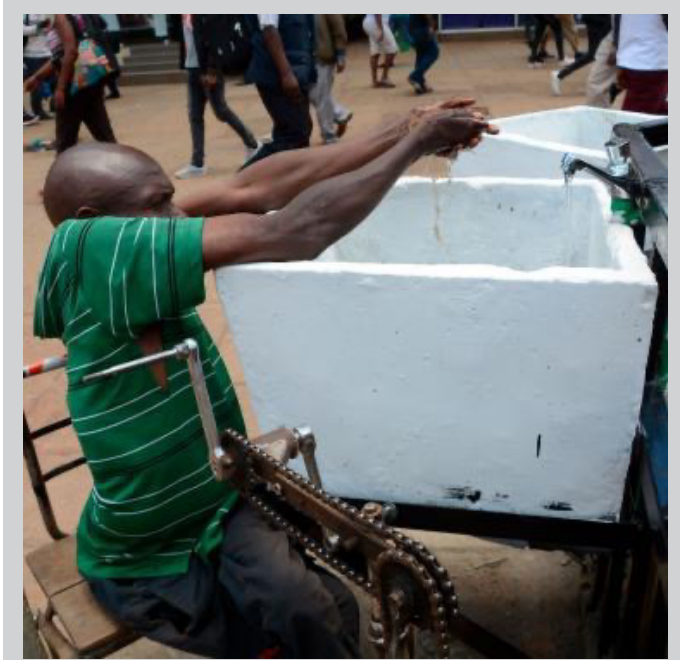
*Another important role played by CSOs relates to creating awareness on the COVID-19 responses by the government. Interviewees explained that given the politicised nature of government interventions in Ghana, CSOs provided objective and alternative source of information on programmes such as the COVID-19 Alleviation Programme to their intended beneficiaries.*

Organisations like the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), CDD-Ghana, STAR-Ghana Foundation and others were strongly involved in building local capacity of CSOs themselves and community actors to effectively respond to the ravaging effects of the pandemic on the operations of CSOs and their intended beneficiaries. For example, the organisation has been implementing programmes that have been training and developing the capacity of CSOs in Ghana and beyond to be better placed when it comes to running sustainable and resilient organisations. Some of these trainings and workshops have sought to build capacity of actors in the area of policy research and analysis and local resource mobilisation among others.

Beyond the organisations themselves, many CSOs have engaged their communities and developed the capacity of their intended beneficiaries to be able to survive the pandemic. For instance, NGOs such as Oxfam International-Ghana repurposed about US\$600,000 of its grant to support partners to engage in training, awareness raising and supporting the needs of communities. More importantly, some CSOs such as the Global Women Development Promoters (GLOWDEP) also instituted village savings and loans associations (VSLA) to develop and sustain the economic capacities of their intended beneficiaries. The VSLAs became rallying points for many people in beneficiary communities where the people were kept together and sustainably supported.

## 5.3 Promoting advocacy and rights of citizens

CSOs' significant contribution to Ghana's democratic consolidation is well documented 2015. CSOs have always fought to uphold the rights of citizens and immensely to government policies right from policy formulation through its implementation. CSOs have on their own been the originators of some policies and legislations in Ghana some of which have been passed into law. This according to Atuguba is perhaps one area that CSOs' influence has been most impactful. Mention can be made of the National Health Insurance Act, the Domestic Violence Act, the Persons with Disability Act, the Whistleblowers Act, Freedom of Information Law etc.



**Person living with disability using an inaccessible hygiene facility**  
Photo: ©Human Rights Watch

It is refreshing and indeed inspiring to note that despite the damaging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operations of the CSOs (Amoah, 2021), they continued to contribute to the promotion of the country's democratic ideals and upheld the rights of the citizenry during the pandemic<sup>71</sup>. In particular, they have been advocating for the rights of citizens and equitable policies and actions all through the pandemic (Graphic Online, 2020a).

The CSOs worked to create for themselves a space in the COVID response. Notably, CSOs organised different webinars and engaged other activities to ensure that their representative roles were upheld as they get interests of their constituents to the state.

The West Africa Civil Society Institute was for example key in organising regional COVID-19 Series of conversations through its renowned

convening platform, the West Africa Policy Dialogue Series (WAC-PODIS)<sup>72</sup>. These policy conversations dealt with key issues like the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CSOs and how the sector's organisations were responding. Also, the closing civic space in the region under "emergency and illegal laws" and elections in a pandemic were some of the hot issues<sup>73</sup>. At some of these dialogues, the threat the COVID-19 pandemic posed to health, people's rights, civic space, and the democratic process were discussed. Such programmes also offered key solutions for stakeholder consideration for sustainable post-pandemic recovery. Particularly significant also was CSOs sustained work in ensuring that Ghana had a free, fair, and peaceful democratic election in 2020 amidst the pandemic. For instance, organisations including IMANI Africa was dedicated to ensuring that attempts at creating a new voter's register were justified and the procurement processes were not breached. They were quick to analyse the actions of the Electoral Commission and its decisions regarding the procurement of equipment for the registration exercise and the 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections. The civil society sector also provided great support to the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) in its work in educating the public on the 2020 elections. In some instances, CSOs such as Oxfam International provided resources including finances and vehicles to facilitate the work of the NCCE. The active involvement of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) in the 2020 elections also greatly contributed to the success of the election. The CDD-Ghana in partnership with the US Embassy in Ghana, collaborated with CODEO to open a National Information Centre for the 2020 election purposes. In addition, CSOs such as CODEO advocated for adherence to the COVID-19 safety protocols and had observers who monitored the level of adherence for the voter registration and 2020 elections exercises.

<sup>71</sup> Amoah, S.K (2021). Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Civil Society Organisations in Ghana. West Africa Civil Society Institute. <https://wacsi.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/03/Impact-of-COVID-19-on-CSOs-in-Ghana.pdf>

<sup>72</sup> See <https://wacsi.org/category/reports/programme-reports/>

<sup>73</sup> WACSI. (2020). COVID-19 & Closing Civic Space in West Africa: A threat to Health, Rights, or Space. Policy Brief-WACPODIS -COVID 19 Series 2, 1-7.

## 5.4 Ensuring government's accountability and transparency through monitoring of COVID-19 resources

When it comes to the use of public resources, CSOs have held office holders to account. CSOs all through this pandemic have been active in “following the money” as stated by an interviewee. This perhaps was one of the roles of CSOs that earned them public commendation and government's dissatisfaction at the same time. During the pandemic, CSOs have ensured that government's COVID-19 expenditure all of which were being done under emergency certificates were monitored. Some CSOs held conferences and other fora to discuss government spending during the COVID-19. At such fora, calls were made, and press releases were issued to force the government to stay within means during its spending and to also demand for accountability and transparency in the decisions that were being taken. This recognition was affirmed by a government official when asked about CSOs accountability and monitoring role during the COVID-19 pandemic who explained that:

*“CSOs are really putting the government on its toes and ensuring that the right thing is done and then the impact is also felt. So, in terms of the support that they are giving government, yes, it's very strong” (Interview, Key Informant, 3rd June 2021)”*

Recognising the importance of data in effectively responding to the pandemic, some CSOs worked to provide evidence on government's projects and programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide feedback for the government and the citizenry. The work of CSOs such as CDD-Ghana was key in this respect as highlighted by an interviewee who argued that:

*“We are also very keen on the role that evidence would play in government's decision making relative to how we address the COVID-19 challenges. We have done some publications that seem to evaluate government decision making processes both for the national, regional and local level and what to extent those decision processes are informed by evidence and what kinds of outcomes we have seen and how to strengthen the role of evidence in decision-making in a pandemic (Interview, Key Informant, 9th June 2021)”*

At the national level, CSOs have been very key to holding government accountable for the implementation of either policies that have been designed or provisions of the Constitution, particularly around inclusive development and fighting corruption. Also, at the lower levels of governance, CSOs have mostly acted as brokers between the citizens and the government, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This brokering role played by CSOs at the local governance level was explained by an interviewee as follows:

*“NGOs working at the lower levels; whether we are talking about district or community levels, have helped in monitoring government's implementation of policy and programmes but also in shaping, how projects and programmes are implemented at lower level. So, a striking example has been the SEND Foundation and they have worked around the Common Fund and even the HIPC Fund in the past (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June 2021)”*

However, a challenge with CSOs' role in monitoring government's programmes and expenditure related to COVID-19 is that some CSOs have often faced backlash from government officials and sympathisers as stated below by an interviewee:

*“It is quite interesting that when government set up the board to oversee the COVID-19 Trust Fund, there was no single CSO representative despite our protestations to government. Since then, government has taken it personal anytime their actions are criticised by CSOs. So, for example, if you look at what happened to Community Development Alliance (CDA) who did a review of government's spending on COVID and the ways in which government communicators and officials have attacked them (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June 2021)”.*

Other interviewees also expressed concerns that some government officials accused CSOs of giving misinformation about the COVID-19 Trust Fund mainly because they had demanded accountability and transparency on the use of the Trust Fund. This they suggest affects the ability to CSOs to meaningfully engage in efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **5.5 Humanitarian assistance and supporting the vulnerable in society**

CSOs in Ghana have been active over the years when it comes to service delivery. CSOs play critical roles in mobilising social capital for development activities. They have not only advocated for the poor and vulnerable and for equitable distribution of resources, they have also directly provided and continue to provide goods and services to mostly unreached segments of the society. Due to their comparative advantage framed around their 'grass rootedness', they are perceived as effective in reaching the most vulnerable population who are mostly unreached by the government and its agencies. This fact was perhaps responsible for the outrage expressed within the CSO sector when the sector's organisations were jettisoned in the Government's COVID-19 response strategy. It is important to note CSOs did not despair. They rose above their own challenges to give several humanitarians supports to the society, particularly, the poor and vulnerable at all levels.

At the National level, the coordinated efforts by CSOs ensured that relief items such as bags of rice gallons of oil, vitamin C and other consumables were provided for street children, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), the aged and widows, and some mental health patients in Greater Accra and the Ashanti Regions of Ghana. In phase I of its COVID Response (specifically between 27th April 2020 and 1st May 2020), CSOs reached about 1,437 people during the distribution in Greater Accra and Greater Kumasi alone. It is particularly worth noting that, the CSO COVID-19 Response fund spent about 40% of its resources on street children alone. At the level of individual organisations also, CSOs played very significant roles as noted by an interviewee who explained that:

*“During the COVID time, we engaged community members and pregnant mothers in their households. We also donated to these households Veronica buckets and offered donations of hand sanitizers and face masks” (Interview, Key Informant, 18th June 2021).*

Other organisations such as Oxfam International Ghana also provided humanitarian assistance to the needy and the vulnerable in society through their programme that focused specifically on providing support to such as food supplies and shelter to urban slum dwellers.

Other CSOs responded to the needs of the vulnerable in society by providing them with hand washing equipment such as bucket and sanitizers and personal protective equipment.

Having discussed CSOs' contributions to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the next section examines the role of CSOs in post COVID-19 recovery.



**A group of gospel musicians delivering on their initiative dubbed “Sharing food to the needy amid COVID-19”**  
*Photo: ©Amanuel Salashi*

## 6.0 REIMAGINING CSOS AND POST-COVID-19 RECOVERY IN GHANA

There are efforts by CSOs in Ghana to contribute to Ghana's COVID-19 recovery efforts. According to interviewees, this will require strengthening their own organisational capacities through innovative strategies. In doing so, CSOs in Ghana are currently positioning themselves to be more purposeful in their contribution to the nation's COVID-19 recovery efforts.

One of such actions has been made possible through an IMANI Africa and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) partnership to carry out six (6) reform dialogues in the country. The first of the policy dialogue which was held in November 2020 explored challenges and opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic for Ghanaian businesses and the second (in March 2021) focused on what the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) meant for COVID-stricken Ghanaian businesses. The dialogues which started in November 2020, saw its third session on 12th May 2021 in Accra on the theme "Business Taxation and the Road to Ghana's Post-COVID Economic Recovery." IMANI Africa managed to assemble some of Ghana's finest economic minds from academia, politics, private sector organisations and civil society to discuss the role and effects of taxation in Ghana's post-COVID-19 economic recovery strategy. The discussions focused on ways of exploring business registration and regulation concerns, electricity supply, and the effects of corruption the business climate all in a bit to having a resilient economic climate post-COVID-19.



Weinglo Family International donate 1000 nose masks to Kayayei (Head Potters) in Accra  
Source: [myjoyonline.com](http://myjoyonline.com)

During interviews, the consensus was that CSOs' continuous advocacy will ensure the promotion of a just and equitable society that provides opportunities for all than it has been in the past. This was explained as follows:

*“We [CSOs] will continue to advocate for inclusion of all people in the decision-making processes and policy implementation. Persons with disabilities should not be left out. People in hard-to-reach areas should not be left out in the sharing of the national cake. There should be economic Justice for all, especially in health and education (Interview, Key Informant, 10th June 2021)”.*

As part of CSOs' role, many interviewees expressed the view belief that their continuous advocacy for the passage of laws and policies that promote good governance and the participation of all citizens in the governance processes would be particularly useful in their efforts to ensure a post-COVID-19 recovery for Ghana. Moreover, they emphasised that as part of CSOs' advocacy efforts, they need to reinforce the need for government to invest more resources into health system infrastructure given that the pandemic has exposed the inefficiencies in health care delivery. Directly related to this, concerns were also raised about the need for the implementation of effective social protection mechanisms that addresses the interrelation between poverty, inequality and vulnerability. Thus, social protection should be given priority by the government by working together with other stakeholders including CSOs and private sector organisations to expand and build on existing social assistance programmes and social insurance systems.

## **6.1 CSOs-Government Relationships: Will COVID-19 alter the relationship in a post COVID-19 Ghana?**

Across the world, governments have partnered and collaborated with CSOs in developing strategies to respond to COVID-19<sup>74</sup>. In countries such as India and South Korea, the collaboration between government and CSOs was well organised and multileveled and involved the provision of financial and non-financial resources. Informed by this, CSOs were considered as active partners who were given full permission to partake in the design and implementation of policies and plans to address the pandemic. However, in the case of Ghana, collaboration between government and CSOs in COVID-19 responses during the initial stages of the pandemic was described by interviewees as non-existent or at best very weak especially at the national level. This is attributed to the swift and emergency nature of the measures put in place to address the pandemic.

Notwithstanding, Ghana originally has a mechanism for the inclusion of CSOs in its planning and decision making. Within the District Assembly Act, Act 936, civil societies are part of the Municipal Planning Coordinating Unit. As a result, some organisations are given the opportunity to represent CSOs at the district and municipal levels. This and other institutional arrangements resulted in a number of engagements at the district level towards mitigating the impact of COVID-19. Members of the Coalition of NGOs in Health for example, worked closely with District Health Directorates in the implementation of many of the response measures.

Despite the existence of a relatively cordial relationship with the government of Ghana, CSO practitioners interviewed express the view that their relationship could be better. They bemoaned particularly the actions of some individual political actors towards CSOs and practitioners who choose to evaluate or reveal the activities or performance of the state and its agencies.

<sup>74</sup> Tandon, R., & Aravind, R. Source of Life or Kiss of Death: Revisiting State-Civil Society Dynamics in India during COVID-19 Pandemic. Nonprofit Policy Forum, 12(1): 147-163; Jeong, B. G., & Kim, S. J. (2021, January). The Government and Civil Society Collaboration against COVID-19 in South Korea: A Single or Multiple Actor Play?. Nonprofit Policy Forum, 12(1), 165-187.





**Regular testing as key government response to COVID-19**  
Photo: ©Danquah Institute

During interviews, it became clear that CSO representatives were not satisfied with the present nature of relationship between the government and the civil society in general. For many of these key informants, the government appears to collaborate with civil society only to tick its 'governance boxes'. In fact, an interviewee explained that government is superficially engaging with CSOs to meet donor

conditionalities. Thus, the existing government relationship with CSOs is rather superficial and tokenistic in nature (Interview, Key informant 10th June 2021). The superficial nature of government's relationship with CSOs is evident in the seeming neglect of the CSO sector in the national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, some interviewees raised concern about the lack of CSOs' representation on the board for the COVID-19 Trust Fund set up by the government to mobilise resources for the fight against the pandemic.

In addition, references were made in particular to the sector's advocacy work on the Agyapa Royalties deal in parliament and the backlash and antagonism the organisations and individual CSO actors suffered mainly from government officials and functionaries. CSOs had insisted that the "\$1 billion valuation of these massive resource entitlements is unconscionable and amounts to undervaluing Ghana's resources by over 65%". This position was not taken lightly by some state and political actors. They "went after" some institutions and individuals for their roles in this advocacy. This according to interviewees was attributed to the nature of Ghanaian partisan politics that demonises and have little room for opposing views especially from CSOs.

It is significant for instance to note that according to some interviewees, in the past some CSO leaders were holding quarterly consultative sessions with the President. The meetings with the President, for many CSO actors, were gleams of hope on the not-so-good relationship between the government and the sector until their advocacy work on some national issues brought an end to those engagements at the instance of the President. The common phrase during the interviews was that the President stopped inviting the CSOs for those engagements because they went to "touch on certain subjects" as explained by an interviewee (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June 2021).

The CSO representative acknowledge that there were efforts to build relationships, which is why the President held these quarterly meetings with them to discuss what their issues and concerns were for him to respond. Even though these engagements did not directly lead to policy changes, it provided a very useful platform for engagement, but as was indicated above, it soon fell off the way. Enquiring into what might have led to the breakdown of that relationship with the presidency, one thing stood out – 'CSOs' advocacy work' and civil society's criticism of some government actions like the Kelni GVG, the way in which the COVID response measures were designed and implemented and other issues

<sup>75</sup> See [https://imaniafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/IMANI\\_Alert\\_Agyapa\\_Royalties\\_Aug\\_2020\\_final.pdf](https://imaniafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/IMANI_Alert_Agyapa_Royalties_Aug_2020_final.pdf)

such as the rising perception of corruption in the country were cited as possible reasons for which engagements within the presidency stopped. On the basis of these and other considerations, nearly all participants in this study expressed doubt about hopes of any renewed relationship between the government and CSOs post-COVID-19. For some, they believe the government will continue to use CSOs to tick the good governance boxes without any practical recognition for their value and impact (Interview, Key Informant, 10th June 2021).

However, when asked about the nature of relationship between government and CSOs in Ghana, a government official disagreed with the view expressed by CSOs by vehemently arguing that the government acknowledges the critical roles played by CSOs Ghana. The official noted that most of the advice or policy alternatives that come for government programmes and policies always come from the CSO sector as explained below:

*“For the COVID area, I think there was a little mishap there I will say; because then, we should have involved a lot more of the CSOs especially in terms of the food sharing and others because a lot of them are on the ground within the communities and know where the vulnerable are, the excluded. So, it would have been very much effective if that collaboration was actually there (Interview, Government Official, 3rd June 2021)”.*

The point was advanced that in terms of the amount that is being spent on the COVID-19 response, some could have been turned towards the CSO sector to help with effective implementation as that would have made more impact than the government alone. It was further explained the COVID-19 response, and the relationship it spurred could be seen on the positive side as a learning curve. Hopefully, the lessons learnt in the failings would serve to guide future engagements for the better.

## **6.2 CSOs’ Role in Representation, Watchdog and Building Trust in Post COVID-19 Recovery**

Our interview data suggests that CSOs have a crucial representation role to play in post-COVID-19 recovery in Ghana. In particular, interviewees expressed the view that that in building back better, CSOs would be required to continue their representation and watchdog roles they have been performing over the years and even do it better. This is how an interviewee puts it:

*“For a sustainable recovery, we should still play our oversight role of making sure that when laws are passed, they are implemented without infringing on the rights of people, which is simple oversight role of making sure that our national resources go to where it is supposed to go and not individual pockets (Interview, Key Informant, 10th June 2021)”.*

The above statement suggests that in their post COVID-19 recovery efforts, CSOs would be required to continue their engagement in governance issues by being the anti-corruption crusaders in the work that they do and always remain neutral so that they remain trusted sources when citizens’ trust for their governments is dwindling. Again, as some interviewees made clear in this study, legitimacy of CSOs remains an important ingredient in ensuring that they build the trust needed to play their mediating role between the people and the government effectively.



CSO key actors discuss COVID-19 and recovery efforts during WACSI's 'Rebuilding for Good' convening  
 Photo: @WACSI

## 7.0 LIMITATIONS TO CSOs' ROLE AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Despite the significant contributions of CSOs to national development such as their engagement in democratic consolidation, policy advocacy and influencing, service delivery and more recently their responses to COVID-19, concerns were raised by interviewees about potential barriers or limitations that hinder the ability of CSOs to meaningfully undertake their activities as key development stakeholders. While the potential limitations are varied, in this report, we categorized them into access to information, funding challenges, shrinking civic space and apathy of the citizenry towards the work of CSOs. These are discussed below:



CSO representatives at WACSI's 'Rebuilding for Good' convening contribute to discussion on COVID-19 recovery efforts and the role of civil society  
 Photo: @WACSI

## 7.1 Access to Information and lack of coordination

Access to information was mentioned by all the interviewees as one of the key limitations to CSOs' effective contribution to development post COVID-19. Most of the interviewees bemoaned the fact that despite the passing of the Right to Information (RTI) Bill into Law, accessing information from key government institutions to aid or help CSOs' work in research, policy analysis, and advocacy remained a very challenging enterprise. For instance, it was explained that CSOs were unable to access critical information that will help them to monitor the actions of government and hold officials to account. This is mainly because there are attempts by government officials to prevent CSOs from directly influencing government policies. The sentiment of CSOs was shared by an interviewee who argued that:

*“Government sees us almost as some people who are not doing their bidding and, in that sense, we may not have access to information. I think that is key. So, for instance, some partners of ours have asked information about how the decision to close some of the radio stations down was reached. Up to now, we have not got that information even though we have the right to information law passed. So, I think one of the key things that governments can use to limit our work going forward is to access information (Interview, Key Informant, 10th June 2021).”*

The CSOs anticipate that limited access to information will have a negative moderating effect on their roles and contributions looking into the future. More importantly, the lack of information is also linked to the weak nature of connections or collaborations between national and local level. Interviewees explained that many local level CSOs do not have the operational capacities to absorb and make sense of national level policies. For this reason, their influence at the national level is often limited, hence they tend to focus on local level issues such as service provision for their intended beneficiaries. Therefore, due to the lack of information and their inability to uptake national level policies, engaging in advocacy and political mobilisation remains a challenge for them. The increasing weak nature of collaboration between CSOs is also attributed to limited funding opportunities which in turn breeds competition among CSOs. The resultant effect is that CSOs often work in silos rather than working together which also affects their ability to make impact at the local and national levels.

## 7.2 Limited Funding

It is worth noting that the challenge of funding was emphasised by all the interviewees in this study as a potential limitation to CSOs' role and contributions to national development post-COVID-19. It is safe to say that their fears are justified as an earlier study by Amoah had revealed that the funding landscape of the CSOs was being heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>76</sup>. In that study, 81% of the participating CSOs cited delayed or reduced funding and funding restrictions from donors as one of the key impacts of the pandemic on their operations. The cuts in funding to the sector therefore promises to continue to limit organisations in their effort to contribute significantly to national development. Many of the sector's organisations have been unable to sustain their projects since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, given the effects of the pandemic, there are possibilities of donors changing their funding priorities to focus more on COVID-19 recovery issues such as economic stabilisation. This has the potential to affect the work of CSOs. In addition, the nature of donor funding characterised by short-term funding and the absence of core funding for institutional strengthening also affects the sustainability of CSOs' projects in the absence of donor funding.

<sup>76</sup> Amoah, S.K (2021). Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Civil Society Organisations in Ghana. West Africa Civil Society Institute. <https://wacsi.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/03/Impact-of-COVID-19-on-CSOs-in-Ghana.pdf>

For instance, speaking about the potential effects of limited funding on the contributions of CSOs, an interviewee said:

*“Funding in Ghana is drying up and many CSOs are finding it difficult to retain their staff to write for example, policy briefs to influence policies” (Interview, Key Informant, 17th June 2021).*

### 7.3 Shrinking civic space

Our interview data suggests that there was a consensus among interviewees that the operating space (i.e. civic space) of CSOs in Ghana is shrinking. They explained that while CSOs are free to operate in Ghana, their advocacy work aimed at critiquing government policies and programmes are often met with disdain by government officials and sympathisers. In particular, they emphasised they shared examples of how government has sought to silence dissenting perspectives or voices from civic society. Typical examples include how government functionaries including the President criticised Prof. Gyimah-Boadi for his comment on anti-corruption in Ghana who argued that the statement was “loose and thoughtless” and therefore not based on facts but driven by emotions. In fact, some key informants were of the view that civic space has particularly shrunk over the past 24 months. They expressed the view that the environment within which CSOs operate had become “very toxic in recent years”. This is how an interviewee puts it:



**Journalist protest against proposed media Bill**  
Source: Oxford Analytica Daily Brief

*“Increasingly, you know, CSOs that criticise government policy are demonised, they are hounded, they are described as being either in the pockets of the government or packet of the opposition and therefore you are increasingly finding that a lot of CSOs prefer to talk about very safe topics and then leave the very contentious ones which are also quite fundamental to our development, and they prefer not to touch those ones. So, you look at what happened recently with the Agyapa deal and the coming backlash this year. So sad (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June 2021)”.*

In the discussion of the concern over the shrinking civic space, mention was made of one CSO in the Upper West Region:

*“Community Development Alliance (CDA) did an assessment of the implementation of government COVID-19 Relief Programmes and it has not been very easy for them since their report came out (Interview, Key Informant, 16th June, 2021)”.*

Another issue that has led to the toxic environment relates to partisan politics and political interference in the work of CSOs. Interviewees explained that out of partisanship, political parties' reaction to CSOs' criticism of state actions or projects during the pandemic have been largely negative and frightening. Similar concerns were also raised by interviewees about the invitation of Dr. Dominic Ayenneh (a former Deputy Attorney General and Opposition Member of Parliament) by the General Legal Counsel over comments he made during a CDD-Ghana legal review forum. This development according to an interviewee has affected to some extent the organisation's programmes as the organisation was struggling to get panelists or experts for its subsequent planned engagements. This in turn negatively affects their ability to influence government policies. While it must be emphasized that no legislation or legal framework threatens civic space in Ghana, it will be naïve according to most of the interviewees to think that Ghana's civic space was not being negatively impacted by the actions and inactions of government.

#### **7.4 Challenges with CSOs' Legitimacy and Apathy from citizens**

Another potentially significant barrier to CSOs' ability to contribute meaningfully to national development relates to the lack of perceived legitimacy of some CSOs. This according to interviewees could be attributed to CSOs' lack of downward accountability to their intended beneficiaries. It is therefore not surprising that some interviewees expressed the view that some political elites often accuse CSOs of working for their donors rather than the interest of their intended beneficiaries (Interview, Key Informant, 10th June 2021). Similar observations have been made in the literature about CSOs' upward accountability and its effects on their legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders at the grassroots<sup>77</sup>. Thus, CSOs' dependence on external donor funding affects their relationships with intended beneficiaries. The upward accountability of CSOs to donors rather than intended beneficiaries has resulted in apathy on the part of citizens towards the work of CSOs where they do not see the need to support and participate engaging with them. The increased apathy of citizens is also due to the inability of CSOs to mobilise their intended beneficiaries at the grassroots level. This is directly linked to the lack of resources (financial, human and technical) on the part of CSOs. The inability to mobilise is also attributed to CSOs' own organisational bureaucracy that does not create opportunities for citizen's engagement because of professionalisation. The increasingly professionalisation of CSOs therefore has the potential of affecting their relationship with their intended beneficiaries and their overall legitimacy.

## **8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study analysed the roles and contributions of CSOs to national development in Ghana. It also examines the involvement of CSOs in COVID-19 responses and their potential contributions in COVID-19 recovery and the limitations. The study highlights that CSOs have been instrumental actors in Ghana's development over the last decades and have played unique roles in consolidating democratic governance, policy advocacy and influencing as well as poverty reduction and service delivery. Specifically in terms of democracy and governance processes, the study found that CSOs play information sharing and educational roles through their engagement in civic education on democratic issues such as elections. In addition, the involvement of the media has also enhanced political participation of the citizenry in the governance processes of the country. Directly related to this is the watchdog role played by CSOs in monitoring the actions and inactions of government with the view to promoting accountability and transparency.

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<sup>77</sup> Bawole, J. N., & Langnel, Z. (2016). Downward accountability of NGOs in community project planning in Ghana. *Development in Practice*, 26(7), 920-932;

In this regard, fighting corruption has become a major preoccupation of CSOs in Ghana which also contributes towards the development of Ghana.

Aside from their involvement in democratic and governance processes, the study highlights that CSOs have used their technical expertise in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring to influence government policies. For instance, CSOs such as think tanks have become influential policy entrepreneurs in the sphere of socio-economic and political policies in the country. More importantly, this study has found that CSOs have also contributed to national development through their roles as brokers and translators of policies at the national and local levels. In addition, the study highlights the perceived comparative advantages of CSOs has helped them to make significant contributions towards poverty reduction and service delivery in Ghana.

*...while the COVID-19 pandemic presents opportunities for CSOs to contribute towards national development in a post COVID-19 world, much attention needs to be given to how to address these potential challenges by all stakeholders of development in Ghana*

As the findings from this study further show, CSOs in Ghana have been active stakeholders in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic through their involvement in awareness raising and education, building the capacity of organisations and communities to be resilient, advocating for the rights of individuals, ensuring government's accountability and transparency as well as the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Notwithstanding their contributions, their involvement in government policies to address the pandemic was found to be very limited because government did not consider them as stakeholders with added value to help in the fight against the pandemic. This also stems largely from the contentious nature of relationship between government and CSOs in Ghana in recent years. A key issue which emerged from this study was the increasing shrinking of the civic space within which CSOs operate in Ghana as government have often used tactics to silent and repress dissenting voices. For this reason, the study found that the COVID-19 pandemic will not significantly alter the existing relationship between CSOs and the government in a post COVID-19 Ghana. This also has the potential to negatively affect CSOs' role as watchdogs, advocates and trust builders in promoting COVID-19 recovery in Ghana.

The study further found a number of barriers that hinder the potential of CSOs to contribute meaningfully towards Ghana's national development. Prominent among them include the increasing shrinking of civic space, access to information and lack of coordination, limited funding and lack of perceived legitimacy and credibility of CSOs at the grassroots. In particular, while some level of collaborations was found in the work of CSOs during the pandemic, the low levels of collaborative work within the civil society sector was identified as one of the key limitations to be looked out for in the sector's effort to contribute effectively to development. Due to how funding is sourced through competitive bidding, there appears to be no incentives for collaborative engagements among CSOs which affects the effectiveness of their interventions.

As the findings have demonstrated, while the COVID-19 pandemic presents opportunities for CSOs to contribute towards national development in a post COVID-19 world, much attention needs to be given to how to address these potential challenges by all stakeholders of development in Ghana. For the civil society sector, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the resilience of the sector itself and this has been compounded by the seemingly attempts by the government to side line CSOs in the initial COVID-19 response strategies. This however, did not limit the ability of CSOs in helping to combat the virus and its negative consequences. The findings of this study therefore have important significant implications for policy and practice.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

### **a. Recognition of CSOs as complementary development partners rather than competitors**

Given the significant roles played by CSOs to Ghana's national development, government needs to recognise their contributions as complementary to government efforts to promote development in the country. For this reason, government should be willing to accept work with CSOs in good faith especially in their efforts to ensure accountability and transparency rather than promoting a culture of growing intolerance for dissenting voices. In fact, institutionalising the tendency to silence civil society's perspectives on national development issues does not in any way help in efforts to promote post COVID-19 recovery in Ghana. This therefore calls for the need to build a relationship of trust between civil society and the state. At the moment, while CSOs have contributed immensely to addressing the pandemic, the lack of effective government collaboration and coordination means that not all the potentials of CSOs in Ghana have been utilised effectively for national development.

### **b. COVID-19 responses require effective multistakeholder collaboration**

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, effective containment and prevention measures requires a strong collaboration between government and stakeholders including CSOs, private sector and citizens. In ensuring effective coordination of efforts, governments should play the role of coordinator of multiple actors and co-directors in the fight against the pandemic and also in post COVID-19 recovery efforts. In fact, there is the need for government to maximise opportunities and open channels for different stakeholders to contribute their potentials in promoting COVID-19 recovery. This also requires government's commitment and the show of leadership that ensures the effective participation of all stakeholders in national development irrespective of their ideological and political differences. For this to happen, there is also the need to develop trustworthy relationships where government recognises and appreciates the value and contributions of CSOs to the nation's development and include them more purposefully in its development planning and programme implementation.

### **c. Creating enabling environment or open civic space for CSOs**

For CSOs to effectively contribute towards national development, it requires the creation of an enabling environment where government and officials are more open to constructive criticisms or critiques by civil society actors. At the moment, the civic space in Ghana is perceived to be closing which negatively have implications on the governance processes of the country. As the research findings have shown, many CSOs and civil society actors are unwilling to participate in discussions on national issues because of the repercussions it will have on their organisations or themselves. Therefore, the creation of an enabling environment or open civic space requires the calibration of the relationship characterised by mistrust and suspicion between CSOs and the government in recent years.

### **d. Provision of government funding and support for CSOs**

In many countries, government funding constitutes the largest proportion of CSOs' annual budget. However, in the case of Ghana, direct government funding for CSOs can be best described as non-existent. For this reason, there is the need for the government through relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (i.e., the Non-Profit Organisations Secretariat) to provide funding to support the work of CSOs across the country.

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<sup>78</sup> See for example, Schmid, H. (2021, January). Reflections on the Relationship between the Government and Civil Society Organizations during the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Israeli Case. *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 12(1), 189-197; Beaton, E., MacIndoe, H., &



The provision of direct government funding has the potential to help in reducing CSOs' dependency on external donor funding. However, for government funding to be effective in supporting the work of CSOs, it requires that measures are put in place to address challenges associated with government funding such as mission drift, co-optation and alternative dependencies which negatively affects CSOs' legitimacy and credibility. Aside from funding, there is need for government to support the work of CSOs by creating the enabling environment for the mobilisation of domestic resources such as philanthropy to thrive. It also requires the provision of incentives such as duty waivers and tax allowances for CSOs.

#### **e. Strengthening government's engagement with CSOs**

For CSOs to contribute effectively to national development, it requires the strengthening of their cooperative relationship with the government. There is therefore the need for government to re-activate the CSOs' engagement platform with the president for onward discussions on national development issues. In addition, government should make deliberate efforts to include CSOs' in its national post-COVID recovery plans including Ghana's COVID-19 Vaccination programme. Thus, the government needs to perceive CSOs as important partners in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic given CSOs' ability to provide immediate responses on the ground to those affected by the pandemic.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CSOS**

#### **a. Demonstrate value addition of CSOs to national development**

The apparent neglect of civil society in government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic calls into question the value addition that CSOs bring on board. There is therefore no doubt that CSOs themselves played a role in the alienating behaviour of the Government of Ghana in responding to the pandemic. Over the years, concerns have been raised about the value that CSOs bring on board because they have provided ample evidence that to some extent demonstrates their inefficiency and lack of innovation. For example, the impact of CSOs' programmes on the lives of their beneficiaries have been questioned mainly because of their upward accountability to their donors rather than beneficiaries. This negatively affects their legitimacy and ability to mobilise the grassroots for support.

#### **b. Building local legitimacy with stakeholders particularly intended beneficiaries**

In dealing with the citizen's apathy and funding challenges, there is the urgent need for CSOs to work on their relationship with their intended beneficiaries by becoming more accountable to them. Especially for CSOs that have been reliant on external donors for funding, they have not taken steps to build or strengthen their legitimacy at the grassroots and therefore their accountability is quite limited and, in that case, also affects their effectiveness as organisations. It is therefore not surprising that many are accused of working for their 'pay masters' rather than promoting the interests of their intended beneficiaries. This narrative needs to be significantly altered if CSOs would be able to mobilise local support for their activities. It also requires striking a balance between their accountability to donors and their intended beneficiaries.

#### **c. Building the capacity of CSOs in research, knowledge management and digital technology**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed some inefficiencies in the capacities of CSOs as many of them have not made deliberate investments in strengthening their organisational capacities.

For instance, while many CSOs engage advocacy work aimed at influencing policies, these are mainly not influenced by research which also limits the extent of their influence. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for CSOs to reinforce their advocacy with government on the need for investment in health system infrastructure and social protection measures. But for such advocacy to be effective, it requires investments in research and knowledge management. More so, the ability of CSOs to re-strategise and position themselves technologically has become a challenge given that many do not have the technological infrastructure. This stands to affect their ability to contribute meaningfully in post COVID-19 era. There is therefore the need for deliberate efforts aimed at promoting investment in digital technology.

#### **d. Promoting Cross-Sector Collaboration**

To ensure CSOs' effective contribution to national development, it requires them to recognise the need for cross-sector collaboration with other stakeholders including peer CSOs. Working collaboratively in the form of coalitions and consortia rather than in silos has the potential to promote organisational learning and therefore there is the need for cross-sectoral partnerships that provide maximum benefits for intended beneficiaries and national development in general.

#### **e. Diversification of resource mobilization strategies**

This study has highlighted limited funding as a major challenge affecting the ability of Ghanaian CSOs to contribute effectively towards national development. This is partly because of their high dependency on external donor funding. Informed by concerns of limited funding, there is the need for deliberate efforts by CSOs to diversify their resource mobilisation strategies including funding by seeking alternative sources such as domestic resource mobilisation (e.g., local philanthropy, income generating activities such as social enterprises etc.). For CSOs to be effective in mobilising domestic resources, it requires deliberate efforts by their leaders to invest and build their organisational capacity. The mobilisation of domestic resources has the potential of ensuring their sustainability.

#### **f. Intensifying advocacy on COVID-19 response programmes**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for CSOs' active engagements in enhancing the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response programmes by the government and other stakeholders. As this study highlights, CSOs have enhanced roles in the design, implementation and monitoring of COVID-19 response and recovery programmes in Ghana. For this reason, CSOs need to intensify and extend their advocacy for a robust national COVID-19 vaccination programme. In doing so, they should play a leading role by advocating for equitable access to and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines. This also requires CSOs to serve as watchdogs in demanding transparency and accountability from duty bearers on COVID-19 response programmes including vaccination.



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