



2021 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

GHANA
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For Ghana

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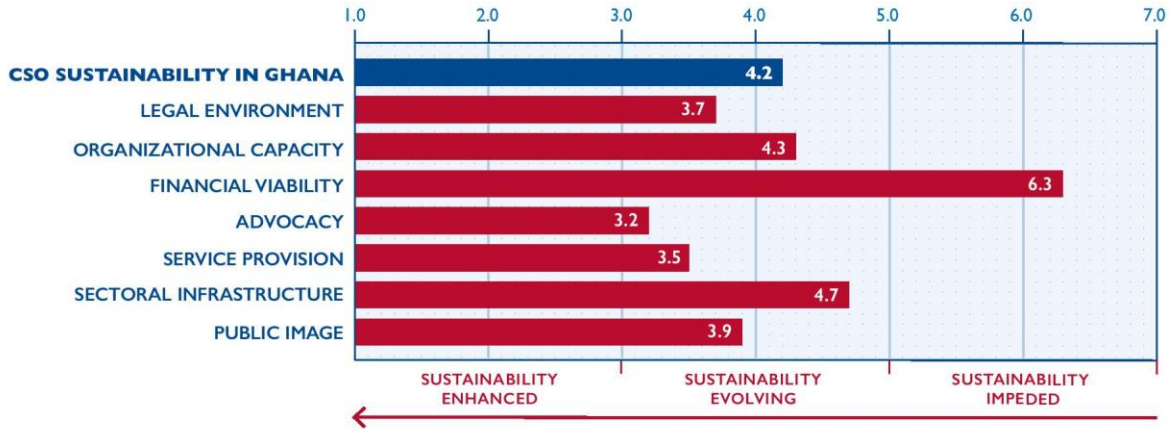
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OVERALL CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 4.2



On January 7, 2021, when Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo began his second term as president of Ghana, the country’s political environment was highly polarized. The National Democratic Congress (NDC), Ghana’s opposition party, was contesting the validity of the presidential and parliamentary election results as declared by the Electoral Commission of Ghana in December 2020. The NDC presidential candidate filed a case asking the Supreme Court to annul Akufo-Addo’s victory. Unlike in 2012, when a similar petition dragged on for nearly eight months, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously on March 4 that Akufo-Addo was rightfully elected. Meanwhile, a drawn-out and chaotic election of the speaker of the parliament took place in the hung parliament resulting from the parliamentary election. The polarized political environment continued throughout the year and was evident in the absence of consensus building in most of the parliament’s deliberations.

Threats to Ghana’s security increased in 2021. Internally, conflicts arose from lingering or unresolved issues involving chieftaincy and access to control of land and natural resources. Externally, violent extremism spilled over from the Sahel region. The government launched a national security strategy in 2021 to respond holistically to threats and risks, promote government-community led partnerships, and strengthen community resilience.

The COVID-19 pandemic shaped Ghana’s overall governance and social situation in 2021. Through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access, a pooled procurement mechanism for COVID-19 vaccines, Ghana received its first doses of vaccine in February. The government announced a free and voluntary vaccination campaign and conducted public education on the importance of receiving the vaccine. More than 3 million people were partially vaccinated and 768,000 people fully vaccinated by December 23, 2021. After a spike in cases early in the year, cases of COVID-19 began to decline, and the government gradually eased restrictions on public gatherings. The parliament set up a committee to investigate alleged breaches by the Ministry of Health in its attempts to procure the Sputnik vaccine through third parties without parliamentary approval.

In July, seven members of parliament introduced the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill. Gay sex was already punishable by up to three years in prison, but the bill went further in banning gender-reassignment surgery and making advocacy for the rights of sexual minorities a punishable offense. Proponents of the bill indicated that it would provide for the protection of and support for children and persons who are victims or accused of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) activities. The bill was the subject of tremendous public debate. Support for the bill was strong in Ghana, although it was opposed by most human rights organizations and lawyers. Internationally, the bill was criticized by numerous groups, including the United Nations (UN), which expressed its “grave concern” that the bill would establish “a state-sponsored system of discrimination and violence” against the LGBTQI+ community. At the end of the year, the bill was still with a parliamentary committee.

Although some economic indicators rebounded from the negative growth rate in 2020, Ghana’s macroeconomy was generally weak in 2021. According to the Ghana Statistical Services, Ghana’s real gross domestic product

recorded a provisional growth rate of 5.4 percent, far higher than the revised growth rate of 0.5 percent in 2020. However, the Bank of Ghana reported a 5 percent increase in public debt, and Moody's Investors Service downgraded of the country's credit rating from B3 to Caa1. The government initiated an economic recovery program in the 2021 budget to recover losses due to the pandemic.

Overall CSO sustainability was stable in 2021. The legal environment was slightly more enabling with the work of the newly established NPO Secretariat. Advocacy was slightly stronger as CSOs engaged more effectively in a range of policy issues. Organizational capacity deteriorated slightly as pandemic-related restrictions and cutbacks in donor funding undermined CSOs' activities. All other dimensions of sustainability were unchanged.

According to data from the Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) Secretariat, which compiled an updated register of CSOs operating in Ghana in 2021, 10,474 CSOs were registered at the end of December 2021 compared to 10,030 in 2020. The number of CSOs that had renewed their operating permits was 4,840 in 2021 compared to 4,242 in 2020.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 3.7



CSOs' legal environment improved slightly in 2021 thanks to the work of the newly established NPO Secretariat.

Ghana's laws are favorable for the establishment of CSOs. Under the NPO Policy, which was approved in October 2020, organizations register with the Registrar General's Department (RGD) as companies limited by guarantee. After the RGD issues a certificate of incorporation, new organizations register with the NPO Secretariat, which began operations in December 2020. After conducting background checks, the NPO Secretariat awards permits to commence operations. The waiting period for permits is usually longer in rural areas because of local administrative structures and screening processes. CSOs must renew their permits

annually. Registered CSOs must submit records of annual audits, while community-based organizations (CBOs) are required to submit financial statements about their activities but may renew their permits without audited accounts.

The establishment of the NPO Secretariat significantly eased the registration process in 2021. For instance, the secretariat maintains a functioning website where CSOs may access forms required for registration (although not register online). NPO officers across the country help CSOs with registration procedures. In general, the NPO Secretariat serves as a useful bridge between CSOs and the government. For example, in 2021, the secretariat consulted with CSOs about a proposed NPO bill and called on registered organizations to submit details about their designated compliance officers in accordance with Sections 49 and 50 of the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2020.

Although the new NPO Policy increased regulation of the sector, it did not introduce significant restrictions on CSOs' operations. Organizations are free to operate in any sector and have the right to participate in public protests. Ghana's constitution guarantees freedom of speech, and CSOs can participate in public debates. There are no restrictions on advocacy activities, and CSOs can resort to the courts to contest government policies. The government does not generally harass CSOs or interfere with their work, although social movements and political activists sometimes encounter obstacles. For instance, in 2021, the police secured a High Court order under the pandemic restriction on mass gatherings to prevent the #FixTheCountry movement from staging a street protest. Later, the Supreme Court quashed the order and allowed the group to go on with their planned demonstration under police protection. CSOs that expose graft and the irregular use of public funds can be attacked by supporters of the ruling party.

CSOs are legally eligible for tax exemptions, which they obtain by filing for tax certificates that confirm their NPO status and compliance with anti-money-laundering regulations. CSOs can find it challenging to obtain the certificates, mainly because of their inadequate understanding of the application process. In addition, personnel with the Ghana Revenue Authority sometimes have minimal understanding of project-based funding, the disbursement of funds by donors, and the effect of these structures on requirements for statutory payments such as pay-as-you-earn tax. In 2021, the NPO Secretariat engaged the Ghana Revenue Authority to address CSOs' concerns about obtaining tax certificates to support their filing of annual returns.

CSOs in Ghana may obtain funding from multiple sources, including foreign organizations. To comply with regulations to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing, CSOs must state the source and purpose of funds received. In 2021, the Bank of Ghana issued a crowdfunding policy that seeks to ensure compliance with good governance and anti-money laundering requirements and introduces licensing regimes.

CSOs may compete for government contracts, although few organizations obtain them. CSOs may engage in income-earning activities or register as social enterprises to support their operations.

General legal practitioners provide services to CSOs on both a paid and pro bono basis. CSOs rarely engage the services of lawyers.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 4.3

CSOs' organizational capacity deteriorated slightly in 2021 as cutbacks in donor funding and pandemic-related restrictions for part of the year undermined their activities.

CSOs in Ghana seek to meet the perceived needs of their constituents. Their efforts to do so were impeded during the first quarter of 2021, when some pandemic restrictions such as a ban on mass gatherings were reinstated as infection levels rose. But after most pandemic restrictions were relaxed in the second quarter of 2021, CSOs were able to engage more directly with their constituents, including through in-person activities such as training workshops, conferences, and seminars. Thereafter the year was generally a recovery period for CSOs as they had the opportunity to resume full-scale operations and reach out to their constituents. Some organizations sought new projects after pandemic-induced cutbacks in projects in 2020.

The registration requirements for CSO in Ghana include clearly defined mission statements to guide their operations. Most small and rural organizations do not have strategic plans and develop their activities in response to constituents' concerns. Urban and large CSOs often use strategic plans to guide their operations and decision making, especially if such plans are an expectation of funders. The disruptions caused by COVID-19 and the changing funding landscape in 2021 prompted most CSOs to review their strategic plans or, if they did not have them, to change their activities. For example, with support from the U.S. Embassy, the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) initiated a project to monitor the use of COVID-19 funds by district assemblies. Resource Link Foundation lacked donor funding and revised its activity plan to include domestic fundraising to support its annual reading festival. CSO projects usually have a monitoring and evaluation component, with most organizations measuring the success of their interventions through feedback from funders and beneficiaries. For example, in 2021, the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) organized an assessment of the effectiveness of its interventions with small political parties during the 2020 elections.

CSOs typically have boards with clearly defined responsibilities. However, some boards do not play active roles in their organizations, especially if they are rural or small CSOs. Organizations that receive donor funding usually have written policies and procedures to guide management in dealing with various situations, including conflict of interest. For instance, the Center for Livelihood Development and Resistance, a STAR-Ghana grantee in the

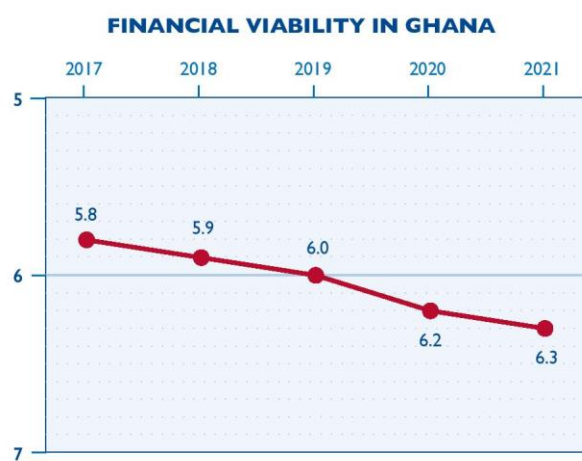


eastern region of Ghana, has clear operating manuals for its interventions with vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Staffing remained a significant problem in 2021 as core funding shrank and project-based funding dwindled. The funding crunch has dramatically undercut the attractiveness of CSOs as a career path for well-qualified employees. Unless an organization has received funds for new projects, its ability to pay staff salaries can be compromised, especially in rural organizations. Staff retention is a significant problem for all CSOs. Some organizations sought to resolve the lack of staff by relying on interns and volunteers in 2021. For example, the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD–Ghana) deployed eighty-five trained local volunteers to forty-four border districts across the country to report on issues related to border security.

Only a handful of donor-supported projects include allocations for new equipment. Most CSOs use old or refurbished computers, and smaller organizations in particular are unable to afford sophisticated equipment and software. Internet services are reasonably priced. While the use of online platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Zoom, and WhatsApp, increased during the first year of the pandemic, many of these platforms, especially Zoom and Microsoft Teams, lost popularity in 2021.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 6.2



CSOs' financial viability was unchanged in 2021.

CSOs in Ghana are supported mostly by bilateral and multilateral donors, such as UKAid, USAID, German Agency for International Cooperation, Danish International Development Agency, World Bank, and UN agencies. Ghana's middle-income status, coupled with most donors' shift in focus from aid to trade in recent years, has led to steep declines in donor funding for CSOs. In 2021, donors continued to divert funding from CSOs' normal activities to the pandemic response. A few rural and smaller CSOs received funding that allowed them to expand the scope of their activities to post-pandemic recovery projects or new sectors. But many organizations were unable to obtain new funds for their activities in 2021. For instance, IDEG had no major

project funding and participated mainly in collaborative activities with other CSOs.

Only a handful of organizations have funding from multiple sources. Under normal conditions, the government and business sector occasionally offer service contracts to CSOs, and local assemblies may contract with CSOs for capacity-building services. However, in 2021, no government contracts were made available to CSOs.

Local fundraising continues to be difficult because of the widespread perception that the sector receives generous funding from international donors. Although local giving increased significantly at the start of the pandemic in 2020, it reduced drastically in 2021. CSOs sometimes receive voluntary labor and non-monetary support from communities for projects in areas such as education or the construction of infrastructure for sanitation. But in general, local philanthropy is not strong. Few CSOs, other than those with experience in online technologies and qualified personnel, raise funds using crowdfunding platforms such as Global Giving. Some organizations, such as the northern-based CSO Songtaba, have links for donations on their websites. Some smaller CSOs have short statements on their website asking for donations.

STAR–Ghana, the major local grantmaking organization, regrants international donor funding to local CSOs. Despite its general funding constraints, STAR–Ghana earmarked \$2 million for grants to local CSOs, of which \$1.89 million was disbursed (compared to \$1.5 million disbursed in 2020). In 2021, STAR–Ghana and the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) initiated the Giving for Change initiative to promote domestic philanthropy by experimenting with different models of fundraising at both community and national levels. As part of the project, community members in Ave-Dakpa in the Volta region, for example, made commitments to support the activities of the Power of Voices program of the Dutch government for people with disabilities.

Only a few CSOs engage in income-generating activities or have social enterprises. The Northern Sector Action and Awareness Center operates three innovative revenue models—a revolving fund, a village savings and loans associations scheme, and a subsidiary profit-making enterprise. Members of Social Enterprise Ghana, a network of social entrepreneurs, use business strategies, training, and mentorship to achieve their social or environmental missions. Membership-based CSOs usually collect dues. In 2021, organizations such as the Local Governance Network and Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition found it challenging to collect dues because most of their member organizations were struggling financially.

Urban CSOs and those that regularly receive funds from donors usually have well-structured financial management systems and perform regular audits. Most of these CSOs are required by donors to share their financial reports. Smaller organizations and CBOs in rural areas do not have the capacity to conduct external audits or publish financial statements.

ADVOCACY: 3.2

Advocacy improved slightly in 2021 as CSOs engaged more effectively on a range of important policy issues.

Ghana’s laws allow for public participation in decision making. CSOs and policymakers interact at the national and local levels through both formal and ad hoc mechanisms. For example, in 2021, after the Ministry of Finance invited public input during the preparation of the national budget, the Social Enterprise Development Foundation (SEND) Ghana collected and submitted CSOs’ views. CSO representatives served on the board of the Office of the Special Prosecutor, where they helped formulate policies for the office’s operations. The new speaker of the parliament met with CSO leaders to seek their collaboration in enhancing the legislature’s ability to monitor and hold the administration to account. At the local level, CSOs partner with government officials and metropolitan, municipal, and district assemblies on local development matters. In 2021, these issues included public sensitization to COVID-19 prevention measures and the rollout of the vaccination campaign.



Because of funding limitations, CSO advocacy was relatively limited in 2021. CSO coalitions and other groups continued to promote their positions on issues such as corruption, health care, education, human rights, the government’s budget and expenditures, and the extractive sectors. For example, twelve CSOs, including the Citizens’ Movement Against Corruption, Africa Center for International Law and Accountability, Media Foundation for West Africa, and Africa Center for Energy Policy, called on the government to provide the Office of the Special Prosecutor with adequate funding so that it could function effectively.

Individual organizations also engaged in advocacy to hold the government accountable in 2021. For instance, the Publish What You Pay Africa steering committee called on Ghana’s government to categorically condemn attacks on members of civil society appearing in national media after they criticized an agreement between the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation and Aker Energy concerning oil rights. Pursuing strategic advocacy, three anti-corruption organizations filed a suit against the government of Ghana at the court of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) after the government proposed to sell its gold royalties to an offshore company.

CSOs’ use of online platforms to promote civic engagement decreased in 2021, mainly because the easing of restrictions on large gatherings allowed meetings held online in 2020 to return to face-to-face events. However, social media was important to the efforts of a notable new social movement that emerged in 2021 under the hashtag #FixTheCountry. The movement was led by young social media influencers frustrated by unemployment and the failure of Ghana’s leaders to address myriad social and economic problems. Within a short period, #FixTheCountry became the leading voice in public discourse, and its campaign was joined by other groups, such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) League. Unlike the EFF League, which engages in organized political activism, #FixTheCountry aroused organic support and gained widespread popularity on social media.

Although their lobbying abilities remain weak, CSOs engaged with lawmakers to press for recommended content and the passage of certain bills in 2021. For instance, CSO coalitions and individual organizations participated in public hearings on the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill. Civil society expressed both support for and opposition to the controversial bill. For example, a group of fifteen CSO representatives, lawyers, and academics signed a memorandum expressing opposition to the bill. The Tax Justice Coalition, whose members include the Parliamentary Network Africa, GACC, and Public Services International, with support from Oxfam, called on the government to prioritize the tax exemption bill. The bill is designed to prevent revenue leakage associated with unregulated tax exemptions but was not passed in 2021.

Work on a NPO bill based on the NPO Policy was ongoing in 2021. In collaboration with WACSI, the NPO Secretariat consulted about the bill with civil society throughout the country. The consultations were widely supported by CSOs, and many organizations called for further sensitization once the bill is passed.

SERVICE PROVISION: 3.5



CSO service provision did not change in 2021.

CSOs identify needed services through community observation, media reports, referrals by other organizations, and specific requests from communities. For instance, following complaints from chiefs and others in the Ayensuano District, the Ark Development Organization, a CSO in the eastern region of Ghana, initiated a project to work with traditional religious leaders and public officials to fight a rise in teenage pregnancy and the poor academic performance of district students. CSOs typically measure the effectiveness of their work through feedback from beneficiaries, donors, and government agencies.

CSOs in Ghana deliver services without discrimination, although societal norms also shape the services that

CSOs offer. For instance, because of strong public pushback, CSOs often do not support sexual minorities or people engaged in *galamsey*, or illegal mining.

Cost recovery remains an exception rather than the norm. Ghanaian CSOs other than social enterprises do not charge fees for their products and services. The government occasionally contracts with CSOs for service delivery but did not do so in 2021.

The government recognizes the role of CSOs in monitoring basic services delivery. For instance, after SEND Ghana issued a report on primary health-care delivery during the pandemic, which highlighted the need for the government to increase its investment in infrastructure for e-health and telehealth service, the president expressed the government's intention to expand the country's health infrastructure.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE: 4.7

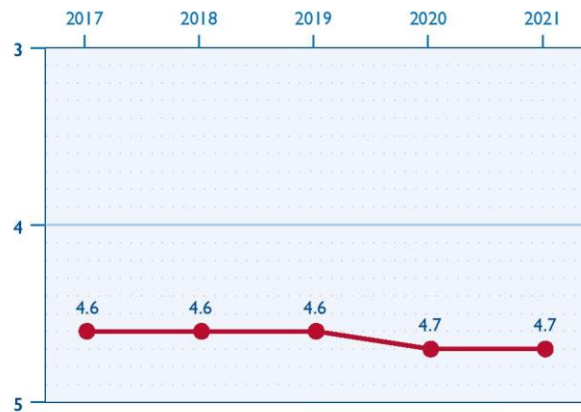
The sectoral infrastructure did not change in 2021.

Most CSO resource centers are based in Accra. They include those operated by the STAR-Ghana Foundation, which provides technical and financial resources to CSOs, and WACSI, which offers capacity-strengthening services to partners in the West African region. Resource centers outside of Accra are limited. During periods that pandemic safety measures were in place in 2021, most resource centers were partially closed.

The STAR-Ghana Foundation remains the most important local funding organization. The foundation did not issue major calls for proposals in 2021 because of cutbacks in support from its main funders.

During the financial crunch in 2021, most CSOs operated on tight budgets and some were unable to carry out activities. Yet there were issues that needed CSOs' interventions. This situation led to a deepening of collaboration between CSOs and an increased number of coalitions and networks. CSOs came together to foster cooperation, share information, promote their common interests, and pool resources. For instance, Transparency International, Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), and GACC worked on anti-corruption issues, including filing a case at the ECOWAS court after the government proposed to sell its gold royalties to an offshore company. Following wrangling among parliamentarians over the 2022 national budget, seven CSOs came together as the Ghana Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations Network to urge members of parliament to put the interests of the nation over those of political parties. CSOs focused on gender and anti-corruption also implemented several joint activities.

SECTORAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN GHANA



CSO staff have access to public and private training in organizational development, usually in major cities. All public universities in Ghana have programs on project management and CSO operations. WACSI continued to offer paid training to CSOs, although most organizations did not prioritize capacity building as part of their post-pandemic recovery. With funding from the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, WACSI organized a training on data and financial management and compliance for the newly established NPO Secretariat. There are no national training standards or manuals in local languages.

CSOs partner with the government at both the national and local levels. In 2021, GII held three media engagements in collaboration with RGD and the Ghana Revenue Authority to create awareness about business laws and beneficial ownership among private-sector actors. At the local level, CSOs work with district assemblies to monitor service delivery. For instance, through the Open Government Partnership, the Shama district assembly developed a three-year action plan that includes monitoring service delivery in collaboration with Friends of the Nation.

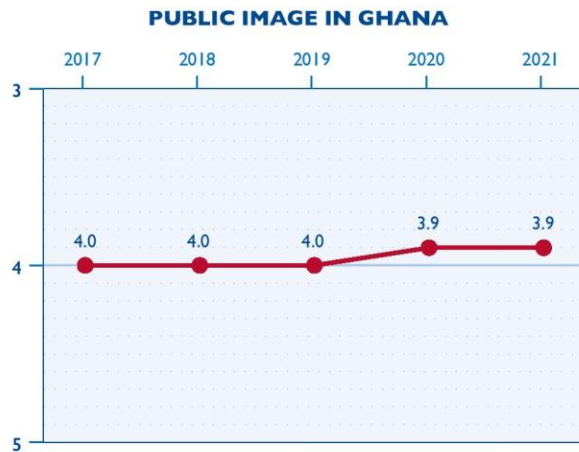
Partnerships between the media and CSOs remained strong in 2021, as media houses regularly consulted CSO staff for independent assessments of government policies. CSOs found working with the private sector still a challenge in 2021. A few companies partner with CSOs for services and public education, especially related to gender and water, sanitation, and hygiene. But the lack of a clearly defined incentive or mechanism for private-sector support of CSOs constrains the potential for partnerships.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 3.9

CSOs' public image was stable in 2021.

CSOs remained visible in both traditional and new media, and coverage of their activities was usually positive. At the national level, CSOs were present in traditional and social media commenting on government policies or demanding accountability from the authorities. For instance, in 2021, a virtual press briefing by the African Center on Energy Policy about illegal meters on the national electricity grid received wide radio, television, and print coverage. The panelists on a popular news analysis program hosted by Joy FM, a major media house, included CSO representatives. The activities of CSOs both for and against the #FixTheCountry movement and LGBTQI+ rights received attention. In contrast, the activities of CSOs in rural communities received little coverage.

The public perceives CSOs as exerting a strong influence on the government by monitoring its work. For instance, a report on the government's fertilizer policy by the Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana generated wide public discussion and compelled the minister of agriculture to speak on the subject. However, most of the public does not understand the concept of CSOs and offers little logistical support for their activities.



Local and central governments usually have positive perceptions of CSOs. At the local level, district assembly officials rely on reputable CSOs for information and expertise. However, the government can be skeptical of CSOs' collaboration with the media to conduct investigative journalism that could undermine its policies. For instance, in 2021, the president accused some CSOs of working with the opposition to make his government unpopular. Political party activists, particularly those of the ruling government, view advocacy-based CSOs as anti-government.

The business sector has a positive image of the CSO sector but does not translate that perception into significant partnerships.

Most CSOs in Ghana seek to improve their public image and promote their work, especially through social media. For instance, in addition to traditional media reports about their events, organizations such as IDEG and CDD-Ghana use their Facebook pages to broadcast news of their major achievements to the public.

Some CSOs have adopted accountability measures such as codes of ethics in their internal operating manuals. CSOs are generally transparent in their activities, especially with their funders, but only a few organizations make their annual reports public. The new NPO bill includes proposals to improve accountability standards in the sector.

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