The state of civil society in Ghana: an assessment

CIVICUS Civil Society Index- Rapid Assessment (CSI-RA)

Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC), in collaboration with West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), conducted an assessment of civil society in Ghana in 2013 using the CIVICUS Civil Society Index: Rapid Assessment (CSI-RA) approach. The CSI-RA is a participatory, action-oriented research project that aims to help civil society organisations (CSOs) assess their conditions in different contexts. The Ghana CSI-RA looked at five areas: CSOs' focus and areas of specialisation, CSO relations and networking, resource mobilisation and sustainability, impact, and citizens' participation and activism.

There are four levels of CSO in Ghana: communal groups, community-based organisations (CBOs), national CSOs, and networks and coalitions. Communal groups and CBOs are believed to be fast growing in Ghana. Most of these are communal associations, which tend to be easily formed by community members, informal, loosely organised, have membership accession criteria, and exist to enhance the socio-economic well-being of members.

The study found that most CSOs in Ghana are engaged in either public sensitisation and education, advocacy, or capacity building and professional development. Motivations identified behind decisions to specialise in a particular area included responding to identified social needs, funding and capacity.

Generally, Ghanaian CSOs are found to have indicators of organisational direction. They have a vision, a mission and a strategic or action plan. The deficit however lies in periodically updating their action plans to ensure that they make an impact.

There is also a high level of mistrust between CSOs and the state and its agencies in Ghana. Part of the reason for this is that the state perceives civil society as being an incoherent arena that does not speak with one voice and so does not articulate clear demands. Further, the state does not financially support CSOs, even though they are recognised in the government's medium term development framework. Thus CSOs in Ghana are heavily dependent upon monetary support from outside the country.

Some CSOs in Ghana are members of, or have established, coalitions and networks. Cooperation among CSOs is however fraught with challenges. The main barrier to harmonious cooperation is lack of funding and competition for funding. Other impediments to cooperation between CSOs include groups having different organisational structures, and a lack of effective means of communication.

The study also suggests that Ghanaian CSOs are mostly accountable upwards, to their donors. There is a lack of downward accountability to citizens.

Participation in CSOs and their activities is not strong. About half of respondents in the public survey not members of any civil society group, and the majority of Ghanaians who are members of civil society groups join at most two groups. An apparent appetite for politics does not translate into political participation in CSOs: most people participate only in political rallies or campaigns, which happen mostly in election years. Most participation can be defined as social, particularly through communal labour. People mostly join social groups or organisations out of communal spirit. About half of respondents volunteer, with stated motivations being mostly those of religious belief, humanitarian considerations or civic responsibility.

The main impacts of CSOs in Ghana are on influencing public policy, empowering citizens and responding to social interests. CSOs in Ghana have been known to influence public policy in three main ways: through being at the table during the early stages of policy formulation; advocacy; and indirectly, by influencing the choices made by political actors. CSOs in Ghana also empower people to better their lives physically and economically, and help them to engage better or participate in community and state issues, in two main ways: capacity-building and awareness creation. Another area of impact is in the ability of CSOs to respond to social interests. CSOs in Ghana undertake this function in three main ways: providing social amenities, undertaking voluntary work, and influencing social norms and attitudes. However, impact can be slow to see. For example, CSOs advocated for some years before family planning was added to the National Health Insurance Bill. CSOs' input is visible in governance and education issues.

There are, however, some impediments to greater impact. These include, but are not limited to, a tendency to focus on service provision more than other areas, the existence of non-genuine

CSOs, the lack of local ownership of decisions and actions, the short duration of programmes, and competition for visibility and funds among CSOs.

The media is also identified as not making much impact on development issues. The lack of collaboration between the media and other types of CSOs is identified as one reason why impact on policy and development is lower. Closer collaboration between CSOs and the media could achieve greater impact, for example by bringing the research results of CSOs to the public. However this does not mean the media has made no impact on policy: the challenge is that it hard to measure successes.

Four main weaknesses of CSOs were identified in the study: the lack of a common voice from CSOs, and CSOs seeing each other as competitors rather than partners; the lack of downward accountability by CSOs, which means that CSOs often undertake projects without input from constituents; the overdependence on funds from foreign donors, to the extent that Ghanaian CSOs have failed to seek other ways of sustaining themselves, calling into question their sustainability; and the lack of staff members with sufficient training to carry out their functions, whether in advocacy or service provision.

The following remedies are suggested to combat these weaknesses: CSOs should realise that they are partners and not competitors; CSOs need to find new ways of generating funds locally to fund their activities, pay their staff and sustain their organisations; CSOs should harmonise their activities; and CSOs should develop their human resource functions to redress the impact of high attrition levels, do more to build the capacity of staff members internally and make every effort to attract and retain experienced staff.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework
AGF	Ashaiman Governance Forum
ANC	Africa National Congress
CBO	Community based organisation
CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CDEO	Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
CODAC	Community Development and Advocacy Centre
CPP	Convention People Party
CS	Civil society
CSI	Civil Society Index
CSO	Civil society organisation
DACF	District Assemble Common Fund
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
FBO	Faith-based organisation
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GACC	Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition
GAEF	Ghana Aid Effectiveness Forum
GAPVOD	Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations in Development
GARI	Ghana Accountability and Rights Initiative
GBS	General budget support
GETFUND	Ghana Education Trust Fund
GIJ	Ghana Institute of Journalism
GLC	Ghana Livelihood Coalition
GMA	Ghana Medical Association
GNAT	Ghana National Association of Teachers
GNECC	Ghana National Education Coalition Campaign
GNUPS	Ghana National Union of Polytechnic Students
GOG	Government of Ghana
GOG-DPs	Government of Ghana Development Plan
GONGO	Government non-governmental organisations
GPRS	Ghana poverty reduction strategy
GSGDA	Ghana Shared Growth Development Agenda
GYA	Gonjaland Youth Association
GYEEDA	Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Agency
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation

MFWA	Media Foundation for West Africa
MIDA	Millennium Development Authority
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
MP	Member of Parliament
MSM	Men who have sex with men
NCA	National Communications Authority
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NEDEO	Network of Domestic Election Observers
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
NMC	National Media Commission
NNED	Northern Network for Education Development
NRC	National Reconciliation Commission
NUGS	National Union of Ghana Students
PET	Public Expenditure Tracking
QUANGO	Quasi non-governmental organisation
RUWA	Rural and Urban Women Association
SIRDA	Savannah Integrated Rural Development Aid
SLTF	Students Loan Trust Funds
STAR-Ghana	Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VSLS/A	Village savings and loan schemes / associations
WACSI	West Africa Civil Society Institute
WERENGO	Western Region Development Network of NGOs

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CSI-RA BACKGROUND

This section provides an overview of the evolution and origins of the CSI-RA, its main elements and its potential applications to measure civil society realities.

From CSI to CSI-RA: history, evolution and origin of CSI-RA

Origins

Since its inception in 1993, CIVICUS has strived to make a significant contribution to understanding the rise and evolution of civil society around the world and to build a knowledge base of civil society-related issues through research led and owned by civil society. The first step towards achieving this was the compilation of civil society profiles of 60 countries in the New Civic Atlas, published in 1997. This report provided concise and current information on the basic features of civil society in those countries, although it lacked consistency with regard to the issues covered.

In order to improve this exercise and move towards a more rigid comparative framework of analysis that would allow lessons to be drawn across countries, CIVICUS, with financial assistance from the UNDP, the Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation (NOVIB), and the Commonwealth Foundation, began to explore the development of the Civil Society Index (CSI).

After multiple consultations with members and partners, the pilot implementation phase began in 2000 in 13 countries, in partnership with national organisations. A first full phase of the CSI took place between 2003 and 2006, with the participation of more than 60 countries. However, it was acknowledged that there was need to better engage and reflect the views and priorities of informal citizens' associations.

A resulting revision of the CSI methodology led to a second phase of the project from 2008 to 2011. The CSI became a more locally owned, participatory action-research project. It intended

to create a knowledge base and momentum for civil society strengthening, by encouraging civil society self-reflection and analysis amongst a broad range of civil society stakeholders.

During this second phase, a total of 35 countries implemented the CSI. The 2011 CIVICUS report, *Bridging the Gaps: Citizens, organisations and dissociation*, summarises the findings of this second phase of the project.

Changing realities and pressing needs

Informed by its findings from the 2008-2011 CSI, CIVICUS sees that in many countries around the world, CSOs exist in a state of heightened volatility, flux and disconnect, with the paradigms that shaped definitions of and relations between state, market, media, civil society and other social actors in the late 20th century all coming into renewed questioning.

At the same time, CIVICUS' tracking of trends in legislation and policies towards CSOs suggests that there is a need for research and action to focus on the establishment and promotion of a more enabling environment for civil society. No matter the shape that civic action takes, there must be appropriate legal and policy provisions to allow the maximum possibility for people to express themselves freely, demand alternatives and organise and gather in collective spaces.

About the CSI-RA: key features and how it works

The CSI demonstrated during its two phases the limitations of a standardised methodology: it could not adequately capture local nuances due to a requirement for international comparability, and it could miss rapid civil society evolution due to long project lead times. To address these, CIVICUS developed the CSI-RA tool.

The purpose of the CSI-RA is to support civil society self-assessments in order to enhance the strength and sustainability of civil society for positive social change. It intends to help civil society to better assess its strengths, challenges, potentials and needs in a range of different situations and contexts. This will contribute to strengthening the evidence base for civil society

advocacy; provide a platform for civil society to identify shared needs; and assist the planning and strategising of civil society around common challenges and opportunities.

Some key features of the CSI-RA conceptual framework are:

Local ownership: The CSI-RA is a collaborative effort where CSOs lead the process of assessing their own context by involving a broad range of stakeholders. The CSI-RA seeks to be as empowering as possible towards national partners, while recognising a specific but limited role for CIVICUS in providing initial capacity building, international coordination, technical assistance and quality assurance. In the CSI-RA, local civil society actors take the lead as they design their own civil society assessments and action plans. The outputs produced from the assessment are determined by local partners according to what best adds value to civil society in the particular context. The process through which the research is conducted and the analysis carried out is important in its own right: implementing the CSI-RA is an opportunity for civil society actors to convene and form coalitions, raise awareness around critical issues, promote participation and reflection and build capacity for civil society.

Embracing complexity: It is impossible to capture the complex reality of civil societies across the globe with a small number of indicators, no matter how carefully chosen. Therefore, the CSI-RA promotes the use of multiple indicators and a mix of methods, and strives for an assessment that is able to identify civil society's key assets and challenges in a particular context, whether in general, or focused on a specific dimension as determined locally, and explore their causes.

Disaggregating data: As much as possible, the research methods that the CSI-RA provides are chosen to allow for optimal disaggregation of findings. In a number of indicators and variables, the disaggregation of research findings by crucial demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, socio-economic status, geographic location, CSO working area) is encouraged. Both quantitative and qualitative data can be generated.

Building on existing knowledge: In designing the project framework, and especially in defining dimensions and indicators, the CSI-RA encourages partners to draw as much as possible on existing concepts, scales, indicators and operational tools relevant to the context. This

increases local applicability and facilitates engagement with other civil society initiatives in the context.

Adaptability: The CSI-RA is designed to be highly adaptable to any context, including sub-national, sector-specific or thematic contexts. Depending on the context and objectives of an assessment, questions and indicators can be omitted, added or modified. A variety of processes and technologies can be used to address questions and indicators, according to what works and is appropriate, and tailored to resource and time constraints. As part of the adaptation process, the local partners, through intensive participatory techniques, identify the main goals and objectives, and expected outputs and outcomes of the project.

1.2 BUILDING ON THE 2006 GHANA CSI

In 2006, a previous version of the CSI was implemented in Ghana. The 2006 CSI looked at four dimensions of civil society in Ghana: its structure, environment, impact and values.

The study revealed that the structure of civil society in Ghana in 2006 was characterised by participation of citizens at the community level, and a concentration of CSOs in urban areas.

The environment within which CSOs operated was found to be limiting, particularly due to high poverty, illiteracy, corrupt and inefficient public institutions and limited decentralisation.

The study found that CSOs' practice of values was high: CSOs mostly promoted non-violence, good internal governance and gender equity. Greater challenges in the practice of values came with the exercise of transparency and accountability by CSOs.

Finally, high impact was recorded in the empowerment of community members, particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups such as women, children and people with disabilities. CSOs were also acknowledged to provide a range of services to people, particularly in rural areas, where government social services were limited. Modest impact on policy was recorded, with CSOs having influenced the introduction of a number of laws. However, CSOs had limited success in holding the private sector accountable, although there were instances where CSOs had held multinational corporations to account on the environment and its related issues.

The report recommended improvements in resource mobilisation, capacity building, policy advocacy and self-regulation, suggesting in this last respect that there should be a code of ethics for civil society in Ghana.

1.3 IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF GHANA CSI-RA

This section discusses some of the processes that led to the identification of the dimensions of focus of the study.

Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC), in collaboration with CIVICUS and WACSI, conducted the Ghana CSI-RA. The project began with the establishment of a National Advisory Group (NAG). NAG members were selected on the basis of their knowledge of civil society and to represent the diversity of civil society in Ghana. The NAG gave technical advice to the project team throughout the project; specifically, they were tasked to:

- Serve as a reference group for the National Implementation Team (NIT).
- Provide input in adapting the CSI-RA guidelines and methodology to Ghana's context.
- Assist the NIT in convening CSOs and other stakeholders.
- Support the development of action plans and other outputs of the CSI-RA.

The NAG met three times, to approve the areas selected at the adaptation workshop, and review research design and questionnaires. They also participated in the validation workshop and reviewed the final report.

Following the establishment of the NAG, a national adaptation workshop was organised in July 2013. The workshop sought to provide space for stakeholders to help adapt the CSI-RA tools and indicators to Ghana's context. The workshop was attended by 24 participants drawn from different civil society forms, including CBOs, media, trade unions, youth groups/associations, women's organisations, national and international CSOs, trade associations and faith-based organisations (FBOs), along with representatives of donors. Due to financial constraints, these participants were drawn mostly from Accra, the capital, but included some representation from

outside Accra, particularly from the Northern, Volta and Western regions. GAPVOD, the organisation that conducted the 2006 CSI, also participated.

At the adaptation workshop, two brainstorming sessions were held, to define and map civil society in Ghana, and set the objectives for the assessment. The workshop also selected the dimensions of the CSI-RA most appropriate to Ghana.

Table 1: CSI-RA options and areas selected for Ghana

CSI-RA areas	**Areas selected at the adaptation workshop[1]**
• The enabling environment for civil society • Power relations within civil society • The level of institutionalisation of civil society • Civil society's practice of values • Perceptions of civil society impact • Civil society resourcing • Participation and activism	• Civil society focus and areas of specialisation • Civil society resource mobilisation and sustainability • Civil society relations and networking • Civil society impact • Participation and activism

This was followed by group discussions where participants set indicators and data collection tools for the selected dimensions. One of the selected dimensions was new and did not have indicators, but it was felt it was nevertheless a priority. As a result, the research team was tasked to draft indicators and seek inputs by email from participants.

1.4 STUDY DESIGN

The study combined quantitative and qualitative methods, including participatory assessment, mapping, profiling and gap analysis. It modified the CSI-RA tools and process to fit Ghana's context and needs.

1.4.1 Sampling and sample size

[1] Some of these were subsequently dropped from the research.

The country was divided into three zones: coastal/southern, middle and northern. Each of these areas has unique characteristics and challenges for CSOs. The zoning of the country also offered good representation across different areas, as a way of dealing with time and resource constraints that made it impossible to cover all regions and districts. The regions forming the northern zone can be characterised as the poorest, with a high frequency of CSO interventions at the micro level. The middle is less poor, and CSOs predominantly play a service provision role. The coastal zone is more urbanised, which means that CSO are confronted with complex issues, while as it contains the capital, it also houses the headquarters of many national and international CSOs, working mostly on national issues, such as policy work.

Table 2: Zones of the study

Zones	Regions	Workshop centre
Coastal zone	Greater Accra, Central, Western and Eastern	Accra, Greater Accra
Middle zone	Ashanti, Brong Ahafo and Volta	Ho, Volta
Northern zone	Upper East, Upper West and Northern	Tamale, Northern

Given the complexity of civil society in Ghana and need for ownership, inclusiveness, and representation, effort was made to have a broad spectrum of civil society representation in the assessment. Civil society was clustered into groups, and given that some information already exists of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) part of civil society in Ghana, particular effort was made to bring on board other civil society forms.

1.4.2 Data collection

Secondary data and information

One of the CSI-RA principles is to build on existing knowledge. The assessment therefore extensively sought secondary information on civil society in Ghana, including books and internet materials. Also, the study made use of information collected by GACC for an assessment of

CSOs' capacity to engage with Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) on transparency and accountability.

Key informant interviews

Interviews were conducted with key persons with relevant knowledge about CSOs in Ghana. Interviewees were selected to reflect a diversity of thematic areas, operational areas and types of CSOs. In-depth interviews were conducted in the Northern and in the Greater Accra regions. Four focus group discussions (FGDs) and 12 interviews were held in the Greater Accra region and seven FGDs and five interviews in the Northern region. The interviews and FGDs provided more in-depth information on areas that needed more elaboration and where there was limited secondary information.

Table 3: Breakdown of interviews conducted

	Community FGD	**CSOs FGD**	**In-depth Interview**
Northern zone	4	3	5
Coastal zone	4	3	12
Total	8	6	17

Survey

Two questionnaires were also developed, one for CSOs and one for members of the community, based on the indicators selected at the adaptation meeting. A combination of approaches was used, including email and face-to-face administration of questionnaires. In addition, three teams of two people each were engaged in each region to follow up on questionnaires with CSOs.

A total of 1,400 questionnaires for community members and 300 for CSOs were sent out in each of the coastal, middle and northern zones. 473 questionnaires for community members and 33 questionnaires for CSOs were received from the northern zone; 401 community questionnaires and seven CSO questionnaires from the middle zone; and 145 community questionnaires and 20 CSO questionnaires were received from the coastal zone. Response rates were therefore low. The original plan was to distribute 400 community questionnaires to

each zone. However, as a mitigating measure against low returns from the middle and coastal zones, the number of questionnaires distributed in the northern zone was higher than those in distributed in the other two zones.

More than half of respondents were between the ages of 15 and 35, and more than half were male. Around 80% of the respondents had some level of education.

Table 4: Breakdown of questionnaires administered

	CSO questionnaires sent	**CSO questionnaires received**	**Community questionnaires sent**	**Community questionnaires received**
Northern zone	100	33	600	473
Middle zone	100	7	401	401
Coastal zone	100	20	400	145
Total	300	60	1,400	1,019

1.4.3 Validation and scoring workshops

A national workshop was held to discuss the draft findings of the assessment and obtain more information from participants. Participants drew an action plan to address the gaps identified by the assessment.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

The research encountered some problems. The first of such problems encountered was the reluctance of CSOs to answer the questionnaire, compared to the good response received from community members. Of 300 questionnaires sent to CSOs, only 60 were answered and returned. One of the reasons for this may be that the questionnaire was quite long; it sought more detailed information than that requested from community members.

Another limitation was that one focal person failed to administer questionnaires in the coastal zone. When questionnaires were supposedly administered, it was found that the focal person had filled them in himself. These were therefore removed from the total to be analysed, which helps account for the low numbers there.

Finally, the short time frame within which this study had to be conducted was a limitation. Six months proved to be inadequate, and the limited resources didn't allow the team to extend this period.

1.6 LESSONS LEARNT

Lessons learnt in the course of this assessment include:

- The use of face-to-face community interaction techniques, such as focus group discussions, is a far superior means of gaining first-hand information, and also helps to disseminate information. These techniques helped this study to gather first-hand and practical information that would otherwise have remained hidden, had the researcher depended on secondary sources.
- The design of the assessment, inclusive and extensive as it was, exposed the researchers to a lot of issues facing civil society in Ghana. If the assessment was repeated, more CSOs should play substantive roles in it, since the study would not only make use of their research abilities but also build their capacity in the research field, and in effective engagement. Having a broader coalition of CSOs implement projects such as the CSI-RA would facilitate the convening power and reach of the exercise, and promote collaboration and learning between peers.

2. CIVIL SOCIETY IN GHANA

2.1 INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTUALISING CIVIL SOCIETY IN GHANA

Civil society is difficult to define: a wide diversity of definitions exists, with varying ambiguities and contradictions. Many definitions of civil society distinguish it as a distinct sphere from the state and market. Many see civil society as producing a common good defined by groups and mobilised around social visions and values, in clear contrast with the state and market. In the same vein, some definitions see civil society as the sphere that complements and caters for failures of state and market provision.

Many definitions are institutional in focus, attempting to define a list of civil society forms that may include professional associations, religious groups, labour unions and citizen advocacy organisations, amongst others, that provide platforms for different parts of society and enrich public participation.

No definition can capture the complexity and fluid nature of civil society. The lines between state, market and civil society are not clear-cut. For example, the media is sometimes considered part of civil society, but most media houses are owned by private interests and operate according to the profit motive. Secondly, the assumption that civil society can be defined by its production of a social good is debatable, as the meaning of social good is subjectively defined. Different groups in civil society have different understandings of what a social good is, and a gain for one may be at the expense of another, in an environment of competition.

Taking account of these definitional challenges, this study employs CIVICUS' working definition of civil society. CIVICUS defines civil society as "the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests." This definition further acknowledges that the boundaries can be fluid and marked by points of intersection between different spheres, and that shared interests may not necessarily coincide with progressive values. It is posed as a working definition, to be tested in different contexts.

Civil society as defined here usually includes NGOs, community groups, FBOs, trade unions, professional associations, informal groups and other forms of associations. The spread of organisations is context-specific. CIVICUS goes beyond institution-centric definitions to add that civil society includes "…individual activists… when they act in the public sphere to advance or defend a viewpoint that others may share…"

At the adaptation workshop, participants and the NAG decided not to include Ghana's chieftaincy structures in the definition of civil society. Participants saw chieftaincy as being a part of the state, as its roles are enshrined in the constitution.

There was also a debate about whether political parties could be considered part of civil society. Many argued that political parties are formed to advance common interests, and therefore fall within the definition. Consensus formed around seeing political parties as part of civil society because they have a separate existence from the state, even though in practice the incumbent government's party is not distinct from the state.

It should also be noted that some groups in Ghana are marginalised even within civil society because of current social mores or taboos. In the adaptation workshop, many participants struggled to embrace broad notions of civil society, based on their existing understandings of what civil society is. For example, they resisted including tribal groups, or groups advocating for marginalised people such as gay people and sex workers as being part of the civil society to be addressed. However, civil society groups addressing these issues are active in Ghana and would fall within any definition of civil society. For example, according to the Ashiaman Governance Forum, its members include those from ethnic associations, and these groups were vital in pressuring government to address the developmental needs of their municipality.

2.2 HISTORY OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN GHANA

The earliest recorded civil society form can be found in pre-colonial times, when town or village defence groups, known in Twi as 'asafo', were mandated with the defence of the village or helping in the search for lost relatives. Participation was however not voluntary. Voluntary associations were seen in a system created to aid agriculture. This was the 'nnoboa' system, in

which people formed voluntary groups whose members helped each other on their farms. This was a voluntary association, not mandated by the chief of the village, and it continued well into colonial and postcolonial days.

The struggle for independence in Ghana, as in much of Africa, depended on voluntary associations. Darkwa et al (2006: 20) suggest that as of 1781, CBOs existed in Ghana in the form of the Fante Confederation and the Aborigines Rights Protection Society, with the core function of protecting the rights of the indigenous population. This was a first step in the drive to independence. The fight for independence saw the formation of the United Gold Coast Convention in 1947. This group was formed by professionals such as lawyers, academics and businessmen, who sought to gain wider appeal through association with other groups seeking change. They later joined with Kwame Nkrumah to form the Convention Peoples Party (CPP), which claimed power on independence.

In the immediate post-colonial period many other political parties were formed by people who were dissatisfied with Nkrumah and the CPP. Most voluntary associations formed in the immediate postcolonial period, such as the Trades Union Congress (TUC), various cooperatives and the United Ghana Farmers Council, later become absorbed into the state.

The period after the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in 1966 saw muted civil society activity in Ghana. Ghana experienced a series of military coup d'etats, which hampered the formation and free exercise of civil society. From 1987, however, the tide turned. The World Bank and other donors, at a donors conference that approved the Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD), attached to Ghana's Structural Adjustment Programme, called on CSOs to "…assist in service delivery" because the Government of Ghana did not have the institutional capacity to implement the programme (Darkwa et al, 2006: 23). This brought to the fore a renewed interest in civil society, and increased realisation of its importance.

Ghana witnessed the creation of two distinct kinds of CSOs in the run-up to democratisation in 1992. There were pro-democracy CSOs, which comprised groups such as the Ghana Bar Association, National Union of Ghana Students and the Christian Council; and then there were sham CSOs that sought to consolidate state power, comprised of what Drah terms "Governmental Non-Governmental Organisations" (GONGOs) (cited in Darkwa et al, 2006: 23).

Following the shift to democracy and legal reform in favour of freedoms of association, speech and media, the environment for CSOs became more enabling in Ghana. CSOs also grew in response to increasing socio-economic problems that came with structural adjustment, and limited state capacity to respond adequately to such problems. This saw an increase in resources by donor agencies to CSOs to provide social services to Ghanaians citizens.

The early 1990s to early 2000s saw many CSOs formed in Ghana, mostly concentrating on service delivery, with a few, mostly based in Accra, involved in policy and advocacy issues. CSOs provided water, education and health facilities among others. Funding opportunities for CSOs grew their work in areas such as education, gender, HIV/AIDS, human rights and poverty. For instance the UN Global Fund against AIDS and HIV in the 1990s encouraged the formation of CSOs to facilitate the delivery of its project to communities. The Ghana Aid Commission saw many CSOs applying for funds. Although mostly positive, the credibility of some of new CSOs was questionable, which could damage the standing of other CSOs.

The period from 2000 to 2010 saw a shift in CSO work from mostly service delivery initiatives to more of a focus by some CSOs on active public policy advocacy and engagement. This could be seen as linked to international thinking that citizen accountability can help improve the provision of public services such as education, health and water, and international initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals and debt cancellation.

Given greater pressure from donors, and increased credibility of CSOs through their contributions to development, the government opened up more to civil society engagement. This led to the formation of active and vocal thematic CSO coalitions/networks on decentralisation, education, governance, health and water. There also emerged strong research and policy analysis CSOs that produced credible research and analysis that were used by government, and CSOs concerned with public expenditure tracking.

Donors played a crucial role in pushing for the environment for CSOs to participate to be improved. The Ghana poverty reduction strategy (GPRS) process required the active participation of CSOs, and therefore the government's options were limited. In education and health, donors provided support to national and regional coalitions to provide support to secure

a place at the policy table. Donors, international CSOs, and CSO coalitions have enabled the Ministry of Education to gradually include CSO representatives in performance review processes, although more independent monitoring is needed. Policy space has also improved for CSOs in GPRS planning processes as a result of advocacy work by coalitions such as the Ghana Poverty Forum. However, the quality of participation was criticised by many in civil society by the mid 2000s as being tokenistic and mostly motivated by appeasing donors.

More recently, in the last decade, progress on agendas for improving human rights, democratic development and gender rights has encouraged greater visibility for CSOs.

The media, trade unions, church groups and student/youth associations are other civil society forms that have registered marked growth since 1992. For example, before 1992, media were mostly state-owned, and until 1995 there was no private FM station. The small number of media professionals was closely monitored by the Ministry of Information.

The 1992 Constitution opened the floodgates for media. At time of writing, there are around 240 authorised private FM stations, a dozen private television stations and around 1,500 registered newspapers and magazines, of which approximately 50 appear on at least a weekly basis. In addition, there are burgeoning social media. There are also people known as serial callers, believed to be sponsored by political groups, who frequently call talk radio programmes. These developments have vastly reduced the ability of government to control the media.

The Ghana TUC, which used to enjoy a monopoly position, now shares the field with other trade unions that have sprung to prominence. For example, the former teachers' union broke into three unions, one of several such splits in trade unions.

In the same vein, the 1992 constitution that restored multiparty democracy sparked the birth of many political parties. According to one news source (Daily Graphic, 8 October 2012) there were 23 registered parties as of October 2012, although only eight had registered to stand in that year's elections. A number of pressure groups with party or ideological alignments have also been established. Examples of such pressure groups include the Committee for Joint Action (CJA), Alliance for Accountable Governance (AFAG), Let My Votes Count, Let My Votes Stand, and Truth and Accountability Forum (TAF). These groups tend to prioritise mass protest and advocacy as methods.

2.3 MAPPING OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN GHANA

The adaptation workshop adopted the mapping of the 2006 CSI with few changes. They grouped CSOs in Ghana into trade unions, NGOs, media, political parties, professional associations, FBOs, consumer groups, youth/students associations, pressure groups, academia, tribal associations, communal groups, trade associations and business associations. They then assigned power rankings to each group, as follows:

Table 5: Power mapping

No.	**Civil society types**	**Power rating out of 10**	**Examples**
1	Media	**10**	TV and radio stations
2	Political parties	**10**	Convention People Party (CPP), National Democratic Congress (NDC)
3	Trade unions	**9**	TUC
4	Professional associations	**7**	Ghana Bar Association
5	Youth/students associations	**6**	
6	NGOs	**6**	
7	Business associations	**6**	
8	Academia	**5**	University lecturers
9	Pressure groups	**4**	Committee for Joint Action, Let My Vote Count
10	Ethnic based associations	**4**	Any tribal association
11	Trade associations	**4**	Dressmakers associations
12	Communal groups	**2**	Neighbourhood associations
13	Consumer groups	**1**	Consumer Protection Agency (CPA)

3. ANALYSIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

3.1 CIVIL SOCIETY FOCUS AND AREAS OF SPECIALISATION

Each of the above groupings of civil society forms has particular specialisations. They can also be clustered into four tiers, depending on their level of operations: communal, community-based, national level, and networks and coalitions.

Level 1: Communal groups/associations

This civil society form is loosely organised and mostly informal. They are organised within a limited geographic area with defined members and interests. This category includes women's community groups, community youth associations, self-help associations and traders' associations. They are mostly membership based and sometimes have defined exclusion and inclusion criteria. They tend to be denser and closer to members and constituency. They often provide a social cushion for members, such as in the form of money for funerals or weddings. They form a basis for community mobilisation for other CSO forms, including NGOs and political parties.

Level 2: CBOs

CBOs are mostly rurally-based. They represent a relatively large proportion of Ghanaian CSOs, and are focused mainly on socio-economic improvement and service delivery efforts within rural communities. This assessment found that this type often has low staffing levels, limited financial resources and low organisational capacity, often using informal and loose practices. Many lack the capacity to fully engage with local governments on public spending issues and demand accountability. Like community groups, they are dense and close to members, and help serve individual members' needs. They provide support for members' economic ventures, including in farming, agro processing and microfinance.

Level 3: National-level CSOs

This category has at least two main sub categories: well-established, mostly urban-based national CSOs, and rural-based national CSOs with capacity. Beyond the national level there are also international CSOs. A 2008 EU mapping study stated that rural CSOs have relatively low capacities and low levels of activity, but locate themselves in communities where the bulk of Ghana's poor live. In comparison urban-based CSOs are more visible and often have more capacity.

Well-established national CSOs have largely shifted their agendas to include citizen-based accountability work, and have attracted the bulk of bilateral donor funding for advocacy, policy and research work over the past five-to-10 years. Reports from and interviews with international CSOs and donors suggest that a relatively small group of larger CSOs based in Accra are able to attract several donors at once, and not always in a harmonised manner.

International CSOs based in Accra were found to have high influence in the national policy debate and easy access to government and donors.

Different types of CSOs

FBOs are significant in Ghana. Ghana is predominantly a Christian country: 60% of Ghanaians are said to be Christians and 16% Muslims, while many of the rest profess various traditional beliefs. FBOs are deeply rooted in Ghanaian society, and socially and economically independent of the state, often being able to tap into foreign funding sources. There are felt to be increasing numbers of FBOs engaged in charitable work, including some that receive funding from Middle East sources. Many FBOs are making a significant contribution in the health and education fields, with most churches having youth and women's fellowships and associations. In this respect they generally form part of the CBO level typology.

Trade unions: Ghana's TUC is an amalgamation of 18 national unions of various trades. Even though these national unions are autonomous to an extent, they still operate within the framework of the TUC. It was formed in 1945 with 14 member unions and registered under the Trade Unions Ordinance of 1941. It enjoyed a close association with the Nkrumah-led CPP government; after the coup it experienced more difficult conditions as a result. It is however the largest, and possibly the best known CSO among workers in Ghana. The TUC is also felt to wield political clout. Since it is made up of workers from all over Ghana, and has branches around the country, it falls within the national CSO category.

Media*:* As of the first quarter of 2013, the National Communications Authority (NCA) had authorised 328 FM stations, of which 266 were operational countrywide. As of the last quarter of 2011, the NCA had also granted licenses to 28 TV stations, out of which 18 were operational,

some nationwide. Others more local. The number of newspapers has also grown significantly since media liberalisation began in the 1990s. The media landscape is generally favourable, with decreasing use of gagging measures such as the criminal libel law. There are also such groups as the Ghana Journalists Association and Ghana Private Broadcasters Association, to which practitioners belong. The media falls within the national CSO domain.

Trade and professional associations: These are mainly voluntary associations of members of a particular trade or profession, with the aim of furthering a profession and the interests of its members, and sometimes of acting as an oversight body for that profession (Harvey 2004). Professional associations are mostly associations of people in white-collar jobs, such as doctors, engineers, lawyers and teachers. Trade associations mostly represent blue-collar jobs, such as dressmakers and hairdressers. They are formal organisations and membership is restricted to practitioners of that trade or profession, but regardless of sex. Entry requirements have to be met before one can be accepted as a member. In Ghana, the most popular and most politically relevant professional associations are felt to be the Ghana Bar Association, the Ghana Medical Association (GMA) and the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT). These associations also fall within the national CSO category since they have members nationwide.

Political parties and pressure groups: These are also national CSOs. Ghana has seen a growth in political parties and related pressure groups during the last two decades. Pressure groups are voluntary associations of citizens who advocate on a particular issue, usually seeking to affect a government policy. Sometimes when the issue has been dealt with, the group disband. They may or may not have formal names. Political parties on the other hand are voluntary associations formed not only to advocate issues, but also to seek political power positions, or use political power campaigns to advance issues.

Level 4: Networks/coalitions

Networks: networks include membership organisations, umbrella groups, and thematic networks at national, regional and district levels. A network of networks, the Coalition of NGO networks (CONnet) is developing. It includes representation from 11 networks across thematic lines, including education, health, local government and poverty reduction. Some of these thematic networks have been heavily engaged in policy dialogue and analysis of performance, engaging their membership where necessary. There have however been challenges in

sustaining many of these networks due to limiting funding specifically designated for networks, including lack of core funding, and donor fatigue.

Coalitions: coalitions can be understood as loose networks that come together to focus on a specific issue. The majority of coalitions operate at a national level, and sometimes they have regional branches and representation, such as the Rights of the Child Coalition;. Coalitions are playing a growing role in Ghana, particularly around issues of agriculture, trade decentralisation, education, gender equity and health.

Regional variations

In terms of regional spread, most CSOs are concentrated in the zones of highest poverty, or where donor programmes are most concentrated, with the largest number across the northern and eastern regions, where the incidence of HIV/AIDS is also high. CSO consultations revealed that CSOs' issues of primary focus vary in different regions: Accra-based CSOs have a high focus on good governance issues, and engaging with the state, while those in other areas pay greater attention to serving their rural constituencies and meeting local demands for service delivery.

3.2 MAIN AREAS OF OPERATIONS

This section considers both the operations and thematic areas of CSOs. Operations refers to the types of activities CSOs undertake, whilst thematic areas are the broad issues their work addresses.

3.2.1 Operational areas

For purposes of the research, eight key operational areas were identified. These are: research and policy analysis; advocacy; public sensitisation and education; capacity building and professional development; service provision; trade unionism; corporate-focused; and communal service. The study found that most CSOs in Ghana are engaged in public sensitisation and education (25%), advocacy (22%), and capacity building and professional development (18%).

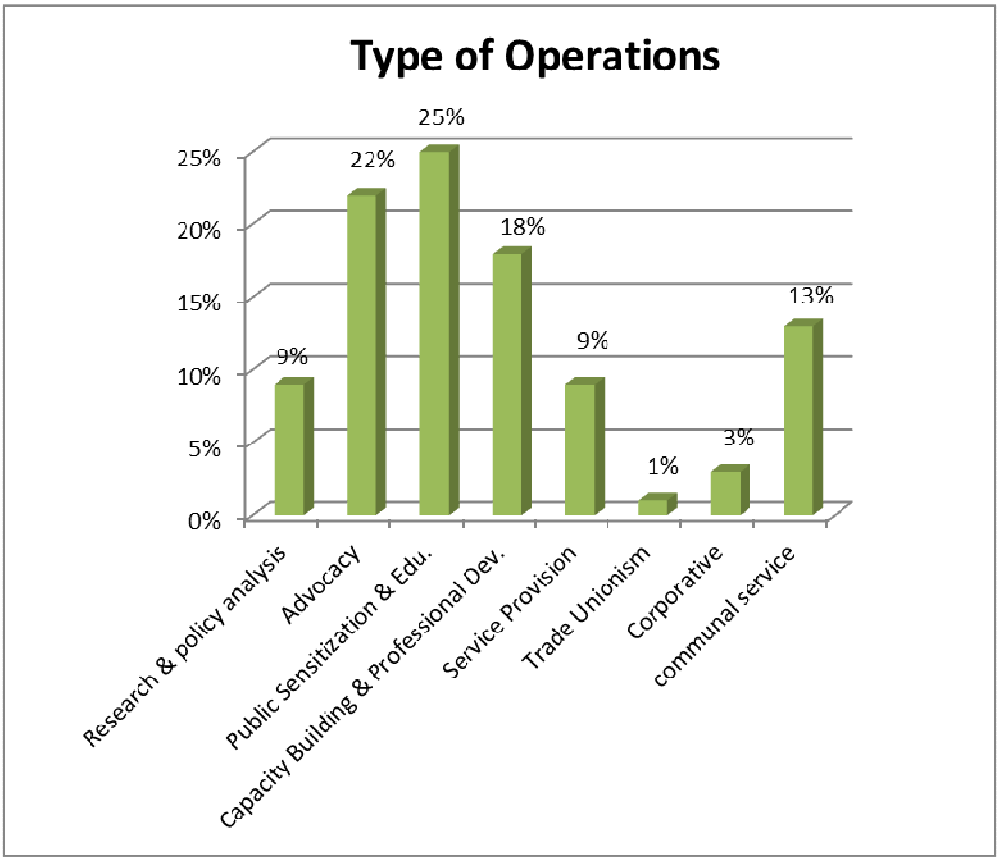

Figure 1: Type of operations undertaken by CSOs in Ghana

The areas of operation least focused on are trade unionism (1%) and corporative work (3%).

3.2.2 Thematic areas

CSO issue areas were clustered into the themes of: agriculture, consumer protection, education, environment, gender, governance, health, human rights, human security and vulnerable groups.

The top three thematic areas addressed by Ghanaian CSOs are education (17%), health (15%) and governance (13%), followed by environment and vulnerable groups, at 12% each. Consumer protection and human security were least addressed, at 2% each.

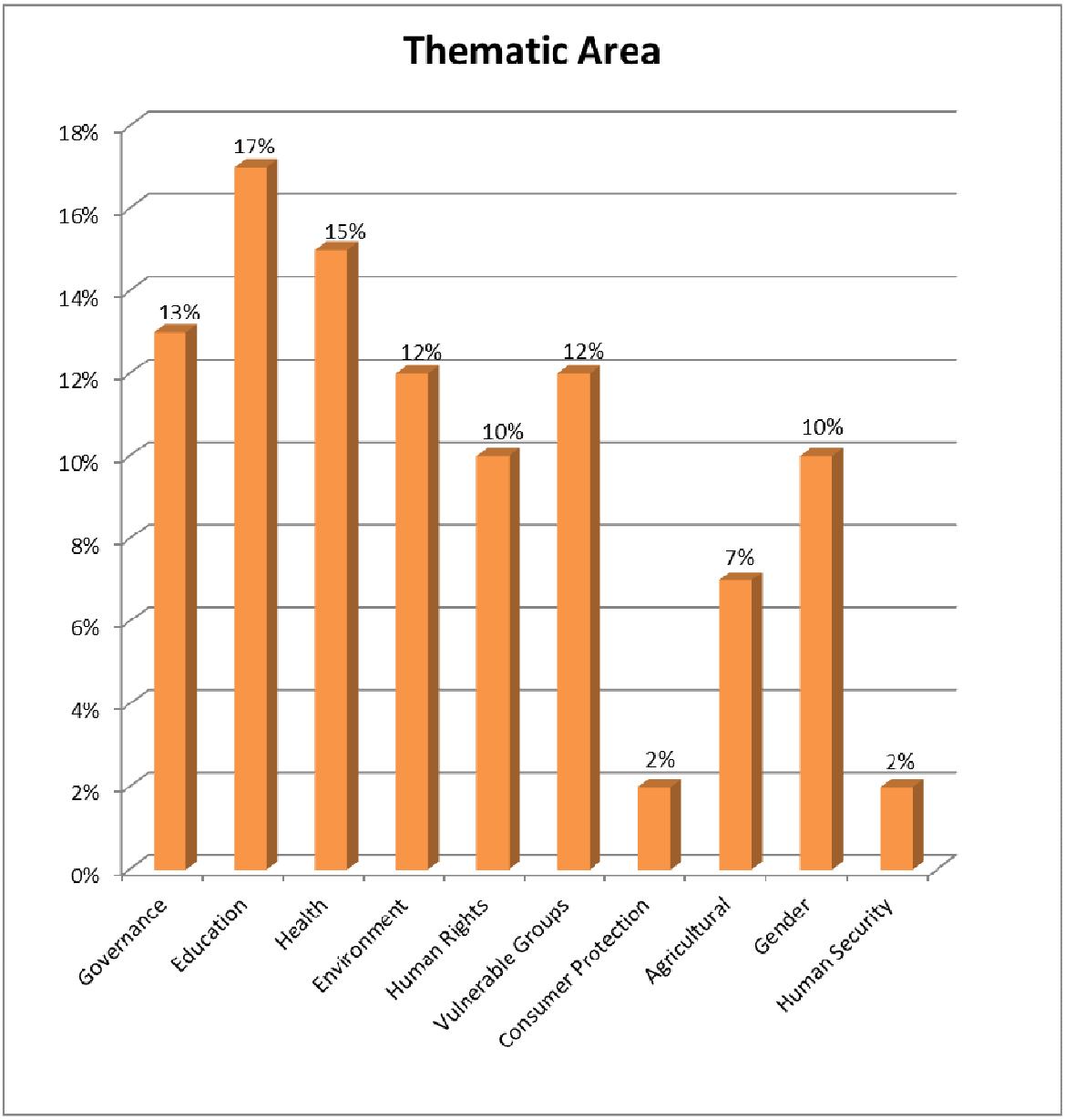

Figure 2: Thematic areas tackled by CSOs in Ghana

It should be noted that a number of CSOs focus on more than one thematic area.

3.2.3 Scope of Operation

Scope here refers to the geographical reach of a CSO's operations. Most CSOs in Ghana (around 72%) have a community, district or regional scope, 22% have a national scope and 6% an international scope. These results suggest that CBOs form a large part of the civil society landscape in Ghana.

Figure 3: Scope of CSO operations

3.3 DETERMINANTS OF ISSUES ADDRESSED OF OPERATION

The research sought to find out the reasons why CSOs decide to move into addressing a particular issue. Answers were garnered mainly from face-to-face interviews carried out with CSO representatives. Three motivations seem clear: meeting a need or closing a gap, funding availability and capacity or expertise. Most CSO representatives stated that they chose to address a particular issue because there is a demonstrable need or a gap to be filled. For example, most CSOs interviewed in the northern zone focus on programmes that promote education, empowerment, health, microfinance or poverty reduction, on the basis that these are identified as the key needs. Most CSOs in this region were formed to solve local level problems, meaning that there is a concentration of local level CSOs.

CSOs also suggest that they are more likely to work on an issue when funding becomes available. Most CSOs report that they depend on funds from foreign donors to undertake their activities. A donor organisation official interviewed for this study stated that:

> "The bulk of CSOs are mostly influenced by money when they are choosing the areas they want to operate in. They would like to operate in areas where donors are willing to give out lots of money. Sometimes they lose their direction because chasing money. You

really cannot always blame them because they will have to cover their cost of operation. Their work is dependent on donor funding…"

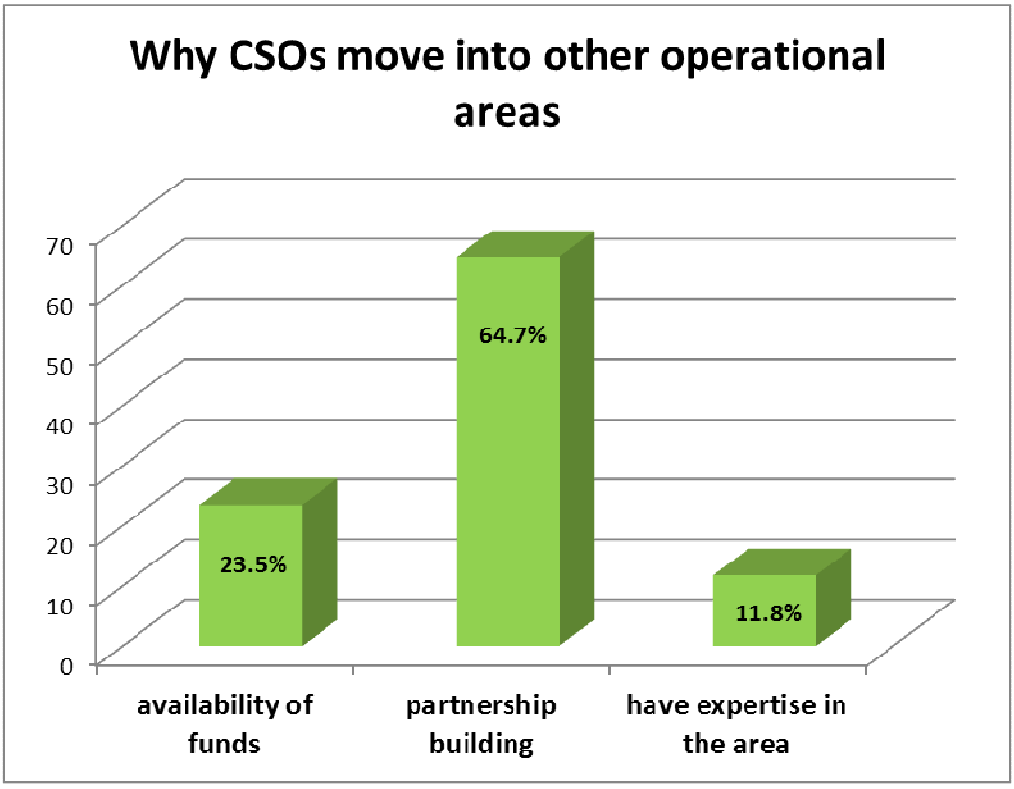

Figure 4: Why CSOs move into other operational areas

When asked what made them move into areas outside their strategic objectives, 23.5% of respondents answered that they were influenced by the availability of funds and 64.7% stated that they did so to develop partnerships, but for at least some of these, partnerships also imply obtaining access to some funds. Funding therefore seems to be a key determinant of CSO activity.

A further determinant of choice is CSOs' views about where they have expertise or capacity. This may help account for that fact that most CSOs are believed to work on non-technical areas where specialised skill sets are not required, such as service delivery. In interviews, officials of two donor organisations stated:

"…80% of NGOs are service providers. Public service efficiency, budget tracking and expenditure tracking have been left undone…"

"The capacity of CSOs is quite low. For example, in technical areas of health it becomes difficult for civil society to engage…"

More technical issues, such as policy analysis, policy monitoring and evaluation, and policy and budget tracking, tend to be left to the national, urban-based CSOs, which are perceived to have the expertise or capacity to do such work.

3.4 CSOS' DIRECTION

The study sought to establish the extent to which CSOs have a vision, mission and strategic plan to guide their organisational direction. Most state that they do. There does however seem to be a challenge when it comes to the updating of strategic plans. Only a few CSOs state that they regularly revise their plans.

3.4.1 Vision and mission

Almost all – 98% - of CSOs state that they have a vision, and 96% have organisational missions.

3.4.2 Strategic plan

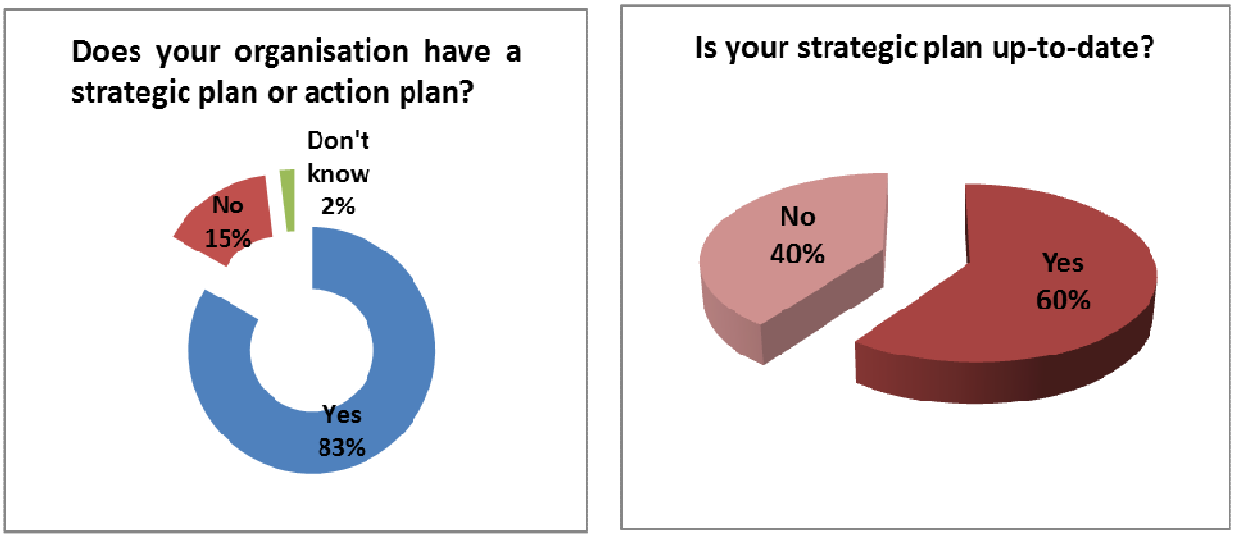

Figure 5a and 5b: Existence of CSO strategic plans and updates of these

83% of CSOs covered by the assessment stated they had strategic plans or action plans. Out of these, however, only 60% stated that their strategic plan or action plan was up to date. This calls into question the extent to which the plans are being used as a document to guide programme planning and implementation, and to monitor and offer accountability over activity.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This section considered Ghanaian CSOs' focuses and areas of specialisation. It was found that most CSOs can be characterised as CBOs, and they are mostly engaged in public sensitisation

and education. It was also determined that Ghanaian CSOs state that are a motivated to address a particular area by need, followed by funding availability or capacity. Generally, Ghanaian CSOs also believe they have core texts to guide their direction; a concern however centres on whether these are useful, if they are not kept up to date.

4. CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS AND NETWORKS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of this study, networks can be considered as characterised by lower formality and greater CSO autonomy than coalitions, while coalitions normally also have a specific issue focus. However, as both terms cover groupings that bring together CSOs, and there is no clarity in the minds of many CSOs about the difference, here the two are considered together, and the term network is used as a shorthand.

4.2 NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF NETWORKS IN GHANA

Brown and Kalegaonkar (1996: 11-13) outline the importance of networks based on the types of support that they give to individual CSOs. They categorise networks as potentially assisting with financial resources, human resources, research and information, and bridging between CSOs. Generally, they are of the view that networks provide a common forum for CSOs to interact, discuss issues of common concern and develop strategies. Networks can enable CSOs to have a collective voice and impact that they would lack individually.

Çakmak (2007: pp.5-7) identifies four main characteristics of CSO networks: diversity, flexibility, issue-orientation and high levels of ambiguity. Networks are as diverse as the groups that make them up, and diversity can have positive and negative sides. It can be a positive when diversity is accepted and well managed, when a network sets common principles and goals, and when diversity enables a wide range of knowledge to be brought into a network. However diversity can be a problem when it is poorly managed and lead to conflicts and poor decision-making (Ashman et al 2005: 9; Çakmak 2007: 5).

As well as the motivation of achieving something collectively that CSOs cannot achieve by themselves, further motivations in the formation of coalitions of networks, as outlined by Çakmak (2007:4), is to reduce costs, and to be able to have access to bodies such as the UN, which prefer consolidate approaches.

Ashman et al (2005: 10) identify financial resourcing as one of the challenges networks face. CSOs, especially in Africa, normally depend on funds from external sources, including donors, and there is a tendency for groups to compete for funds or to leave groupings when their funds dry up. Ashman et al state that, “Money is a zero-sum resource; it breeds competition unless very strong alternative social norms and bonds exist.”

There are some diverging CSO views on how networks should work. Many network members see networks as self-serving, with members deriving limited benefit from them. They sometimes see networks as competitors for resources with CSOs. They take the view that networks should mobilise resources for their members to implement projects and programmes, and should not themselves have an implementation role. Their roles should be to coordinate their members, provide training, conduct research and lead in advocacy and campaigning.

More sympathetic onlookers suggest that networks resort to project implementation as a survival strategy. Network members tend not to provide resources to fund the secretariat, and so direct fundraising for implementation is often the only way of mobilising resources to cover overheads. These differing views suggest the tensions that exist in networks.

In Ghana, networks can be broadly grouped into three categories: institutionalised, transactional and institution-led groupings. Institutionalised networks have a proper governance system and an independent office, usually staffed by a secretariat. They operate like an organisation, and usually compete for funding and implement projects. They tend to be visible and enduring. The apex of their management bodies usually includes members, but the level of participation by and influence of members varies. Example of this type of network in Ghana include the Ghana National Education Coalition Campaign (GNECC), the Northern Network for Education Development (NNED), GACC, Coalition of NGOS in Health, Ghana Livelihood Coalition (GLC) and the TUC.

In transactional types of networks, a number of CSOs decide to work together because there is an issue that can be identified as needing a network approach, or because funding becomes available. Sometimes donors want CSOs to form networks on thematic issues and provide funding for this. Several networks have been formed that subsequently faltered when funding dried up. This type of network is not necessarily sustainable but can be effective for issues that demand short-term, intensive action. Examples of such networks include the Coalition of NGOs

in Malaria, Coalition for NGOs in Tuberculosis and the Coalition of NGOs for Right to Information Bill.

The third type of network is the institution-led network . Here a number of CSOs are brought together to work on an issue, but the management and physical location of the network is attached to the lead organisation. The lead organisation may designate staff members to manage the network. The visibility of the network may be overshadowed by the lead institution, as it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the network and the lead organisation. Example of this type of network include the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), Ghana Aid Effectiveness Forum (GAEF) and Governance Forum.

Most networks formed voluntarily or in response to funding opportunities (44% each). Very few (12%) form around a government policy.

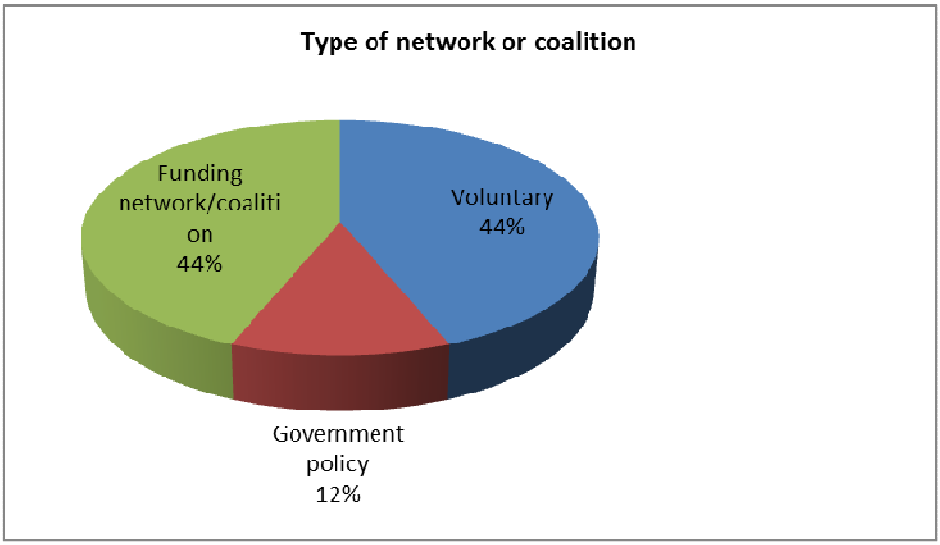

Figure 6: Reasons for forming a network

4.2.1 Rules on leadership in networks

65% of network leaders are elected, although Around 44% of leaders of networks are the founding leaders. Around 83% of networks have documented rules on their governance.

Governing instruments of networks

Almost all networks - 96% - have a constitution and 90% have a memorandum of understanding. Most (87%) also say they have some kind of an administrative framework.

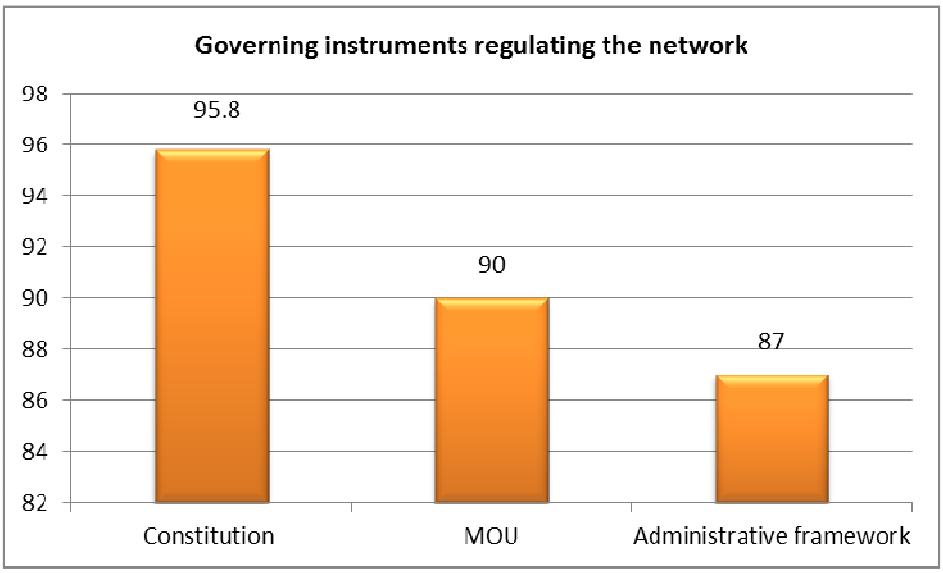

Figure 7: Governing instruments of networks

Engagement strategies of networks

Networks report various strategies of engaging stakeholders. Most (89.7%) have held community meetings to discuss advocacy issues during the last five years. Around 75% of networks have also used printed media for advocacy purposes in the same period. Just under half of networks have engaged their stakeholders through public demonstrations.

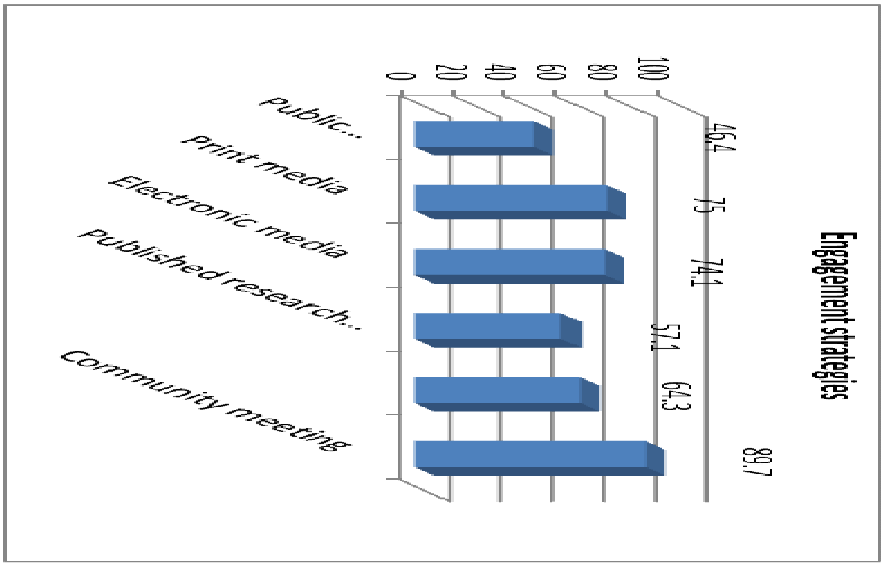

Figure 8: Network engagement strategies

Areas of work of networks

Most networks operate in the area of health, followed by governance, human rights, environment and advocacy. Few networks operate in the education, HIV/AIDs, agriculture and gender areas.

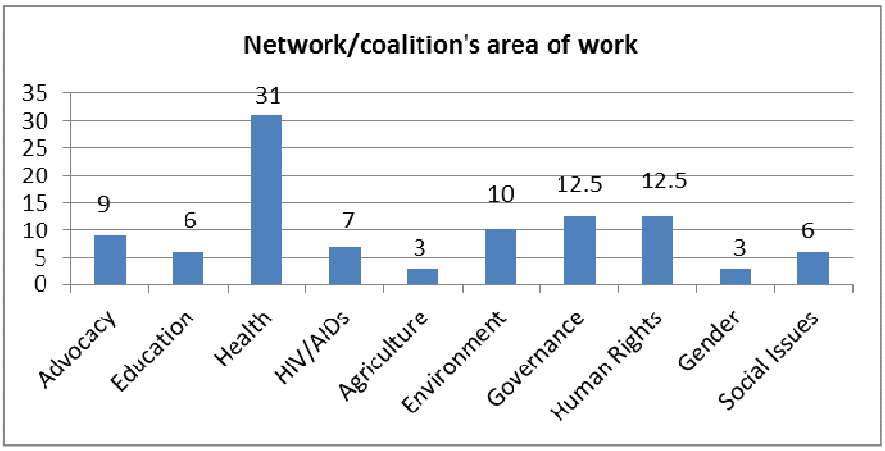

Figure 9: Areas of work of networks

Membership of networks

68% of CSOs indicate that they belong to a network. Many belong to more than two: 69% of CSOs that indicated they belong to a network belong at least to three.

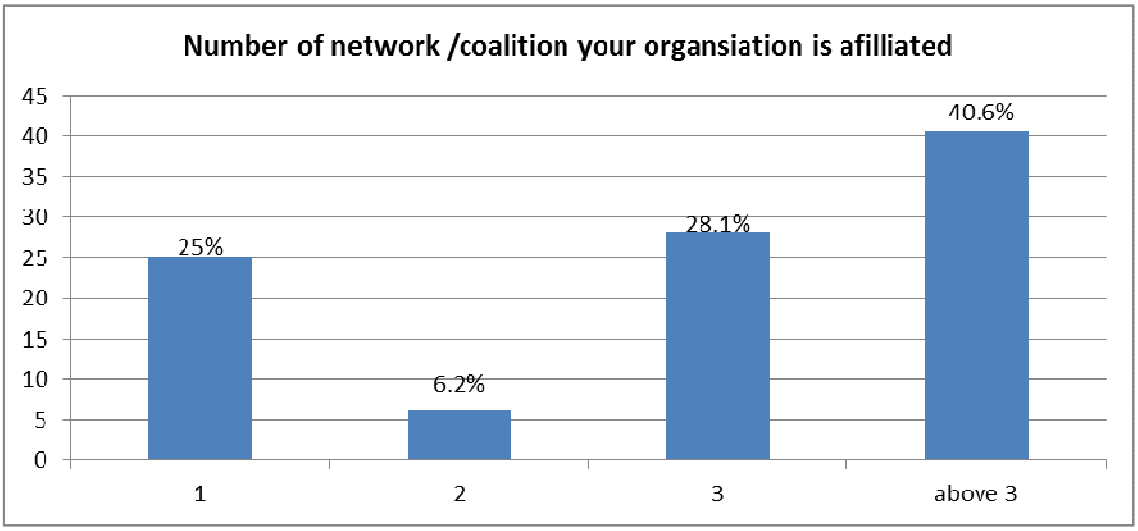

Figure 10: Number of networks to which CSOs belong

This finding is consistent with other recent studies by GACC and Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana (STAR-Ghana) that found that 76% of CSOs belong to at least one network. 62% of national or regional CSOs are members of a local network, while 74% of CBOs participate in at least one network formed around either policy or operational issues.

4.3 CSO INTERACTIONS

The nature of civil society work implies that CSOs will need to interact with other actors, particularly those in the government. However, often in societies, relationships between the state and CSOs are often antagonistic and characterised by suspicion. Governments may be suspicious of CSOs because they may see them as rivals in service delivery, competitors for funds, unwelcome scrutinisers of the government or even outright challengers to their authority (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 1999:6).

In many contexts in Africa, CSOs played major roles in the fight for independence, but following independence, most states attempted to close the spaces for civil society in introducing one-party systems. Democratic transitions reopened some spaces and saw a mushrooming of CSOs, but in many contexts it also brought a corresponding increase in state scrutiny of CSOs. Three types of relationships can be characterised: collegial and collaborative, particularly where states work closely with service-delivery CSOs; adversarial, where states fiercely clamp down

on CSOs, particularly human rights groups; and scenarios where CSOs do not develop any type of relations with the state (Moyo 2010: 10-11).

In Ghana, CSOs have always interacted with the state, including in helping to fight for independence and opposing one party or military government. Drah identified two main categories of CSO in Ghana: the 'corporatists', comprising GONGOs and QUANGOs (quasi non-governmental organisations) which were sustained by, and subservient to, the state, and the 'voluntary-pluralists', which comprised strictly independent CSOs that sought to work for interests independent of state influence (cited in Darkwa et al 2006: 25). In Ghana's current civil society landscape, a positive feature is that the 'corporatists' are virtually non-existent.

There is however still much mistrust between the state and CSOs in Ghana. Many CSOs see state agencies as overly politicised, opaque, unable to help poor people, and unable to implement policies consistently. The state and its agencies similarly tend to be suspicious of CSOs, partly because, "CSOs are a large diverse body of stakeholders contributing to… development, but who do not speak with one voice" (Addae-Boahene 2007: 26).

The government does not fund any CSOs, even though they are recognised in the medium-term development framework (Meja 2011: 18). This means that many are heavily dependent upon external financial support.

Although in Ghana the state has often seen CSOs as "competitor[s] rather than collaborator[s]", this has always not been the case (Alidu and Ame 2012: 112). Alidu and Ame (2012: 124) describe the examples of the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD) and the Civil Society Coalition on National Reconciliation, CSOs which successfully cooperated with the state. The CDD-led Civil Society Coalition on National Reconciliation played three key roles in facilitating national reconciliation in Ghana. It first helped in the conceptualisation of national reconciliation where, after surveys, conferences and focus group discussions, the coalition authored a twelve-point declaration that eventually found its way into the legislation that created the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC). The coalition also played a law-making and advocacy role, when it carried out a technical review of the NRC Bill before its second reading in Parliament, and later widely publicised the new act. Finally, the coalition provided expertise and training for other CSOs, and particularly the media. This was conducted in collaboration with the Ghana

Journalists Association, with the aim of training journalists in accurate and responsible reportage of NRC proceedings.

Sharing information within networks

There a variety of methods by which CSOs share information within networks. Most popular are quarterly meetings (85%), followed by sharing of annual reports (74%). Other methods include email lists (70%), monthly meetings (58%), newsletters (55%) and, less commonly, weekly meetings (11%).

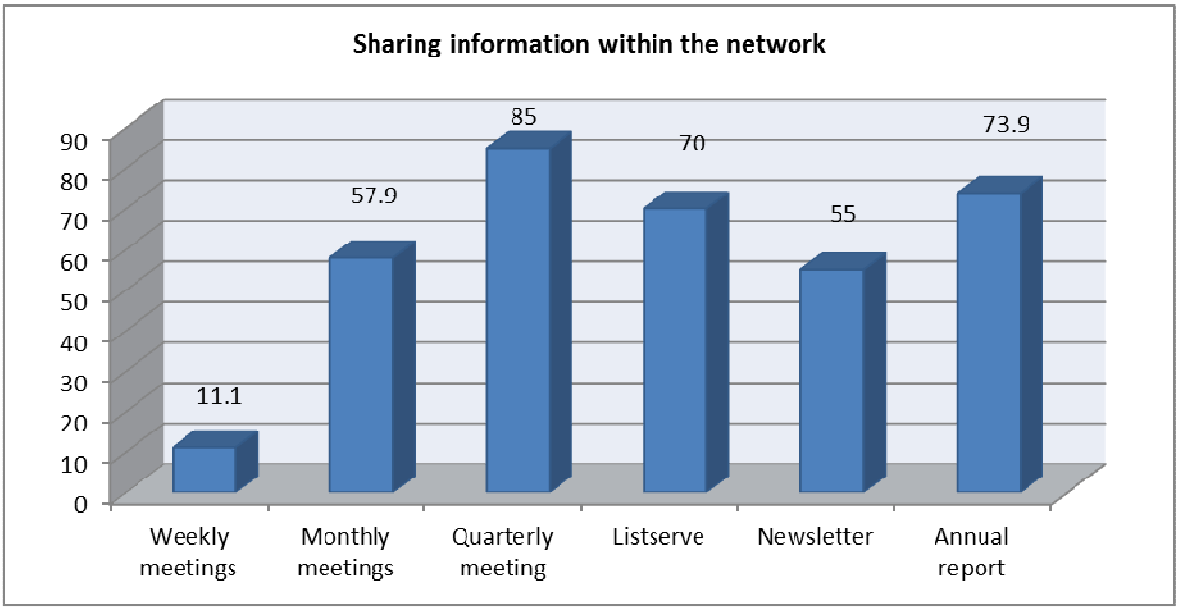

Figure 11: Information sharing methods in networks

Around 35% of CSOs exchange documents with other CSOs. Of these, around 54% have exchanged documents with more than two CSOs.

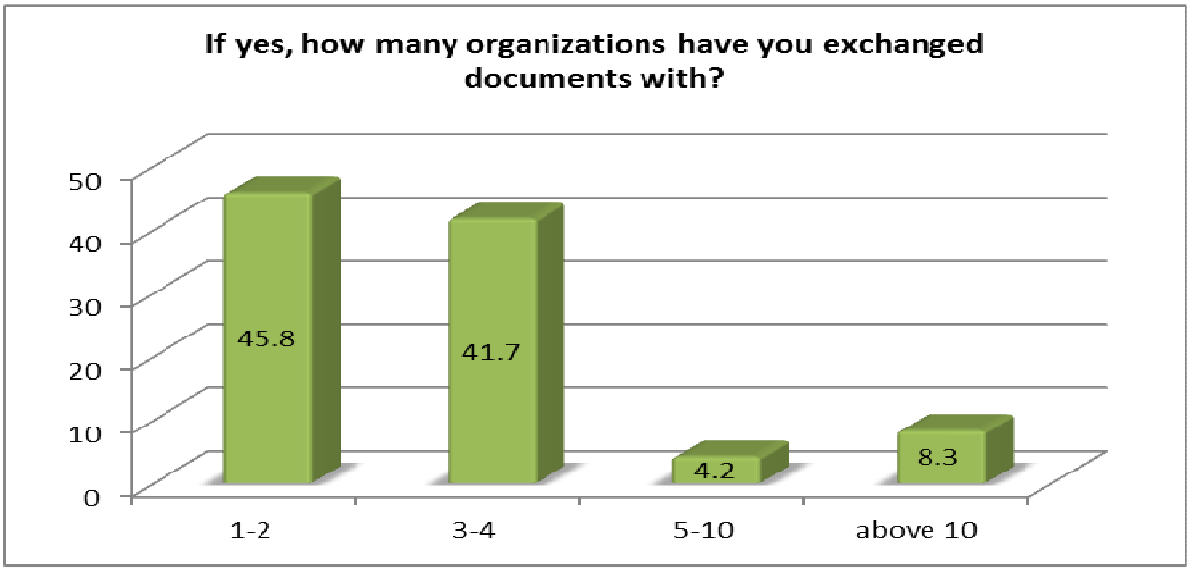

Figure 12: Number of other CSOs with which CSOs exchange information

4.3.1 Cooperation within civil society

The main obstacle to harmonious cooperation is assessed to be competition over funding. Another issue that hampers cooperation among CSOs is their organisational structures. CSOs are "…autonomous organizations, each with its own mission, governance body and set of stakeholders to which it must respond…" and the autonomy can hinder cooperation both within networks and with actors outside them (Ashman et al 2005: 10). CSOs may seek to undertake their mandate regardless of its impact on other CSOs.

The 2006 CSI found that communication among CSOs was poor, and that this arose not from a lack of willingness to communicate, but from a lack of effective means of communication, particularly between urban CSOs and peri-urban and rural CSOs (Darkwa et al 2006: 38). CSOs however scored high marks for cooperation, with notable examples being the coalition of CSOs that formed to resist the unilateral introduction of an NGO Bill by government in 1995, and which later engaged with the state to work out an NGO Policy, and the creation of two domestic election monitoring groups, Ghana Alert and the Network of Domestic Election Observers (NEDEO) to observe the 2000 election (Darkwa et al 2006: 39).

Three types of cooperation were examined by the present study: cooperation between CSOs, cooperation between CSOs and district assemblies, and cooperation between CSOs and private institutions.

Interviewees believe that there is a good level of cooperation between CSOs. More than 50% of CSOs see the level of cooperation among CSOs as either very high or high.

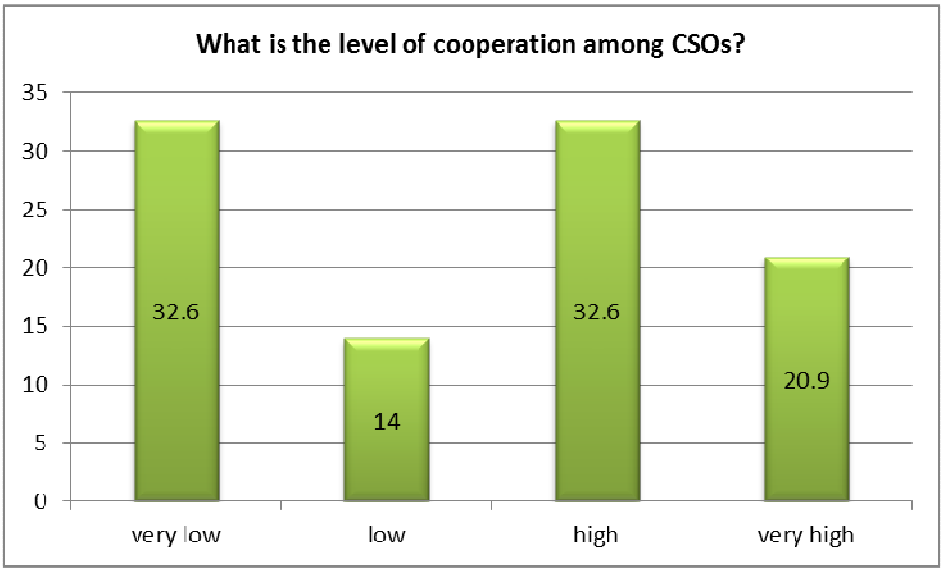

Figure 13: Level of cooperation among CSOs

Even though there is cooperation and collaboration, there are still gaps. Many CSOs seek individual recognition, which can fuel competition. The notion is that recognition will encourage donors to give them funds for projects, without having to recruit additional partners and share budgets. There is also little connection between grassroots and national CSOs here. The danger is that limited cooperation could inhibit impact. For example, a media practitioner interviewed expressed the view that closer cooperation between CSOs and the media would achieve more impact, as CSOs could use research to gather evidence and the media could then explain evidence to the public.

Professional groups such as GMA and GNAT do collaborate with other CSOs, but representatives of both groups suggested that there is room for improvement in collaboration. In a focus group discussion, an FGD representative stated that they have tried to collaborate, but it has so far proved difficult.

CSOs are also able to collaborate with district assemblies, but there are gaps, and overall this cooperation was assessed as disappointing. There is little collaboration over implementing community projects.

Ghanaian CSOs were assessed to have a low level of collaboration with the private sector. The Executive Secretary of GACC suggested that CSOs need to improve collaboration with private sector institutions to achieve greater impact and win financial support.

Dialogue among CSOs

Almost all CSOs, 94%, report that they dialogue with other CSOs, and over 50% of CSOs rate the level of dialogue as high or very high. However, opinions are mixed: just under half believe it is low. Over a six month period, 70% of CSOs report having been able to dialogue with other CSOs working on the similar issues. However, a high proportion of CSOs, 75%, state that conflict also exists among CSOs.

4.4 GOVERNANCE OF CSOS

Questions were also asked about the extent to which CSOs have and apply instruments of good governance.

4.4.1 Code of conduct

Currently there is no legal framework that guides the activities of CSOs in Ghana. The only framework was offered by the NGO Bill of 2007, which was discontinued by the government as a result of CSO campaigning. Professional bodies, trade associations and student unions, among others, do however often have internal constitutions that govern the way they operate. Further, there are some codes of conducts that guide how CSOs interact with the state. However, in the discussions, not only was it acknowledged that there are no overarching laws governing the operation of CSOs, but it was also suggested that if there were codes of conduct, they would not be applied. Interviewees also stated that it was a tedious process to obtain certification from the Department of Social Welfare, especially in Tamale.

There is also a challenge of perceptions of corruption of CSOs, particularly NGOs, which are often accused of lacking transparency and accountability and not being able to deliver on their objectives. There is a sense that trust for NGOs has decreased because of perceptions that they are not implementing projects that donors provide funding for, although actual evidence is

elusive. One interviewee was clear that NGO staff members misbehave. Others said that some members of civil society groups have defrauded them.

Funding was identified as a key distorting factor: most CSOs are highly influenced by the availability of funding.

Interviewees also suggested that institutions that are supposed to ensure CSOs behave properly are not working satisfactorily. For example, a media practitioner suggested that the National Media Commission is a talk shop rather than an effective regulator. Such institutions lack punitive powers.

4.4.2 Accountability

CSOs are expected to be both upwardly and downwardly accountable. Upward accountability means accountability to donors and the state; downward accountability refers to accountability to citizens and the beneficiaries of CSO activity.

The study suggests that Ghanaian CSOs are mainly upwardly accountable to donors and their superiors, but not to the government. They lack downward accountability.

Accountability to donors results from this being a condition of funding. As the government does not provide funding, there is not the same level of accountability. The challenge this poses was indicated by media practitioner who stated in an interview that CSOs, including the media, often accuse state institutions of not being accountable but are vulnerable to the counter-criticism that they are not accountable either.

Most participants, particularly from CBOs, FBOs, the media and some professional and trade associations, note difficulties in accounting to communities. Documents on activities and finances of CSOs are generally not shared with citizens, or indeed staff of CSOs. CSOs are sometimes wary of letting communities know they have resources, for fear of stoking unsustainable demand. In rural areas, staff members of CBOs and other CSOs may not have the skills to document and share their financial accounts. The danger that lack of accountability can lead to misuse of resources was also raised.

Student unions were found to be more accountable to their members, since most of the leadership has one-year mandate, and it is their responsibility to make sure that accounts are

audited before handover. The Ghana National Union of Polytechnic Students, for example, has an external auditor, and its report is circulated in advance of meetings, with an internal mechanism to check expenditure.

5. CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION AND ACTIVISM

5.1 DEFINING PARTICIPATION

Participation, otherwise referred to civic engagement, is a broad subject. The UNDP's 1993 Human Development Report defined participation as "…a process, not an event, that closely involves people in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives" Participation "…involves the range of formal and informal ways in which members of a political community make their values, interests, and policy preferences known" (Banyan, ME in Bevir 2007: 659). Participation methods can range from writing letters to officials to holding community meetings to holding demonstrations.

5.2 NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In this study, participation encompasses the various means by which citizens engage in civic space, including membership in groups, charity, volunteerism and community actions.

5.2.1 Extent and depth of engagement

The 2006 Ghana CSI found that community action was the most common form of participation in civil society, non-partisan political action the least common, with charitable giving, CSO membership and voluntary work somewhere in between. It also assessed that just over half of Ghanaians were members of CSOs, and this was connected to a sharp growth in the number of CSOs in Ghana. Most of the CSOs that Ghanaians belonged to were faith groups, indicating the significant influence of religion in Ghana (Darkwa et al 2006: 29-30).

Further, the 2006 CSI found that the most frequent and extensive participation was in volunteering and CSO membership, with charitable giving much less extensive. Amounts donated were meagre, at an average of 0.05% of annual salary. The study also found that Ghanaians spent on average 11 hours a month volunteering, with most of this coming in religious-oriented activities (Darkwa et al 2006: 32).

Membership of a civil society or community group

Ghanaians are evenly split between membership and non-membership of a civil society or community group: 49.5% of respondents are and 50.5% are not.

Multiple memberships

Of those that are members, most (66%) are members of one or two groups. The trend is that as the number of groups rises, the number of people who are members falls. Only around 1% of respondents belong to more than five groups.

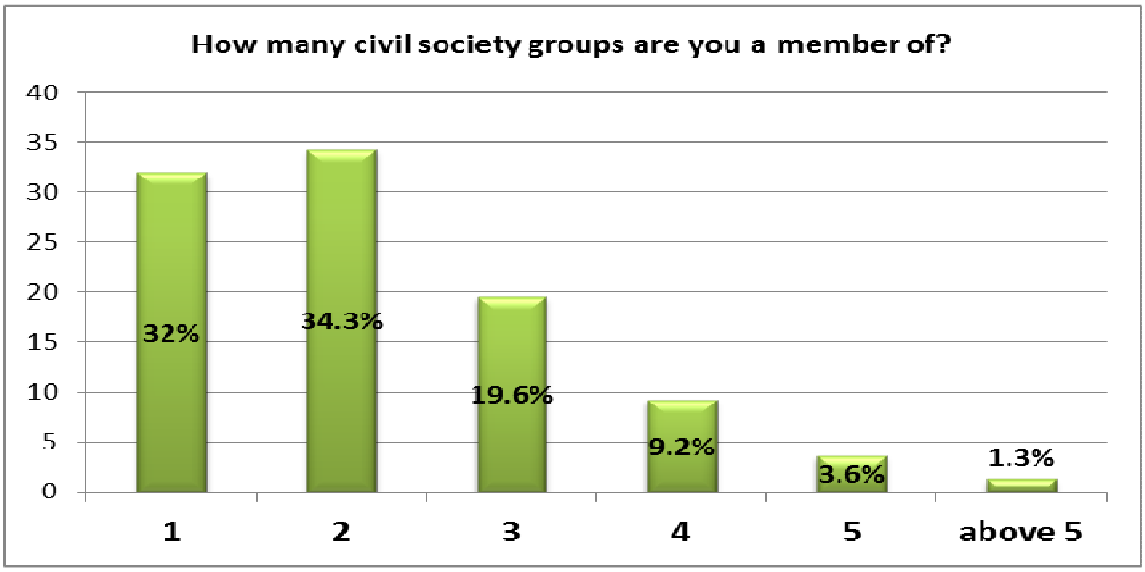

Figure 14: Membership of civil society groups

Recent joining of groups

Respondents were asked if they had joined any groups in the last six months, and most (52%) had joined one group in that period, with a further 27% having joined two. This suggests a healthy interest in becoming involved in civil society groups, but it may also indicate high turnover of membership, if people move from one group to another. Further research on membership retention by civil society groups is needed here.

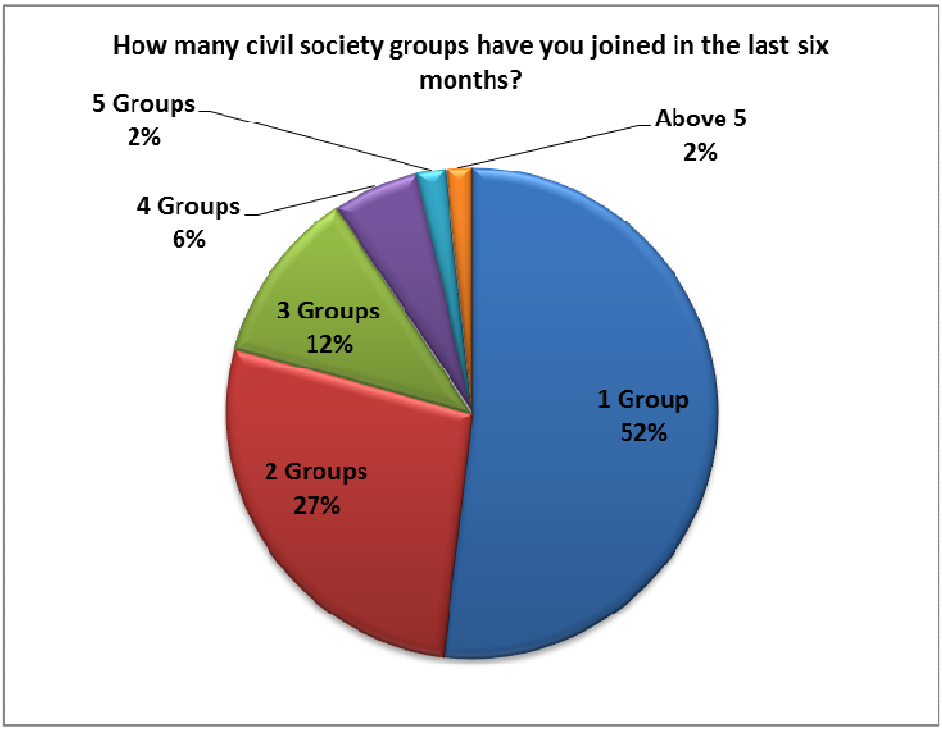

Figure 15: Civil society groups joined in the last six months

Participation in political action

Only around 35% of respondents report ever having engaged in some sort of political action. Those respondents who reported that they had were asked what kinds of action they had taken. Around 79% had taken part in political party rallies or campaigns, and 17% had taken part in demonstrations. Very few had signed petitions, or acted as polling station chairmen or polling agents. The emphasis on party political rallies supports the notion that Ghanaians are most strongly politically active around elections. Most respondents (around 68%) had not been observers in the last elections. This may be due to a lack of information available to citizens regarding who can become an observer and how.

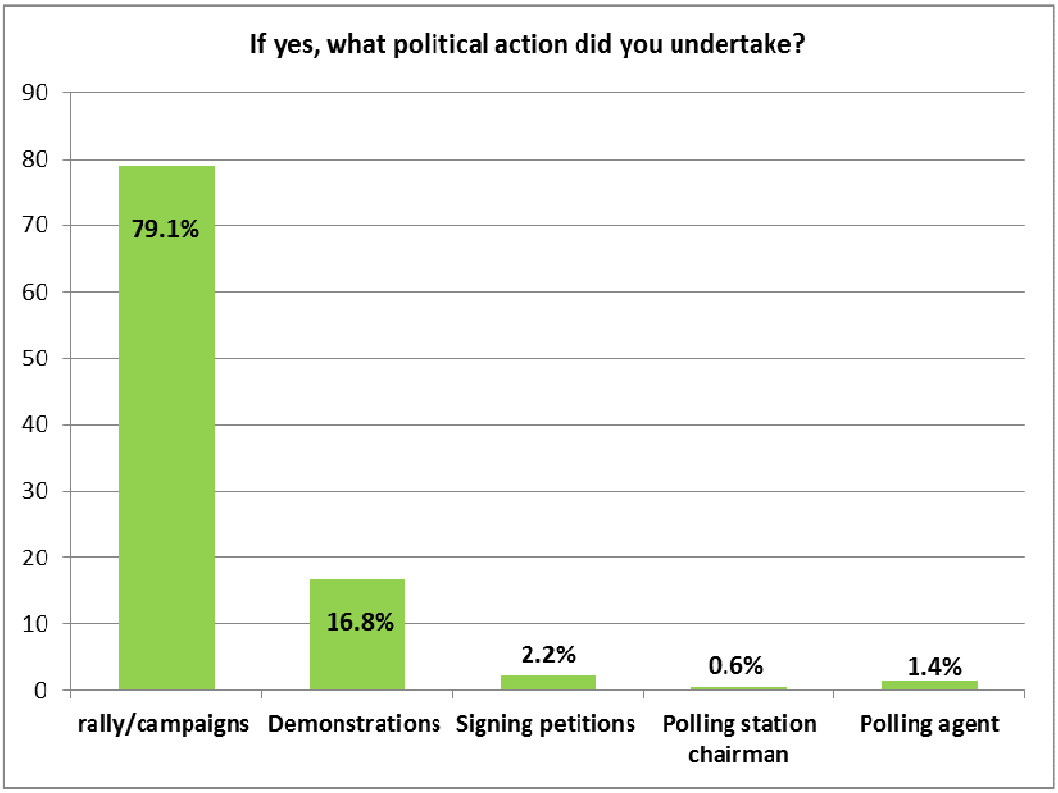

Figure 16: Political action undertaken

Volunteering in organisations

Responses suggest that very few people (around 16%) volunteer for politically-oriented organisations. There is much more volunteering (around 47% of respondents) for social organisations. Almost half (45%) of those who volunteer for social organisations volunteer for more than one.

Social activities

Information was sought on the kinds of social activities that citizens undertake and the frequency of interactions. Almost 58% of respondents stated that they engage in social activities with other citizens at least once a month. The most common activities were communal labour (48%), sports (24%), volunteering (16%) and philanthropy (11%).

Of people who have taken part in social activities in the last year, most had done this three or fewer times. An encouraging 31% of respondents, however, had done this more than five times.

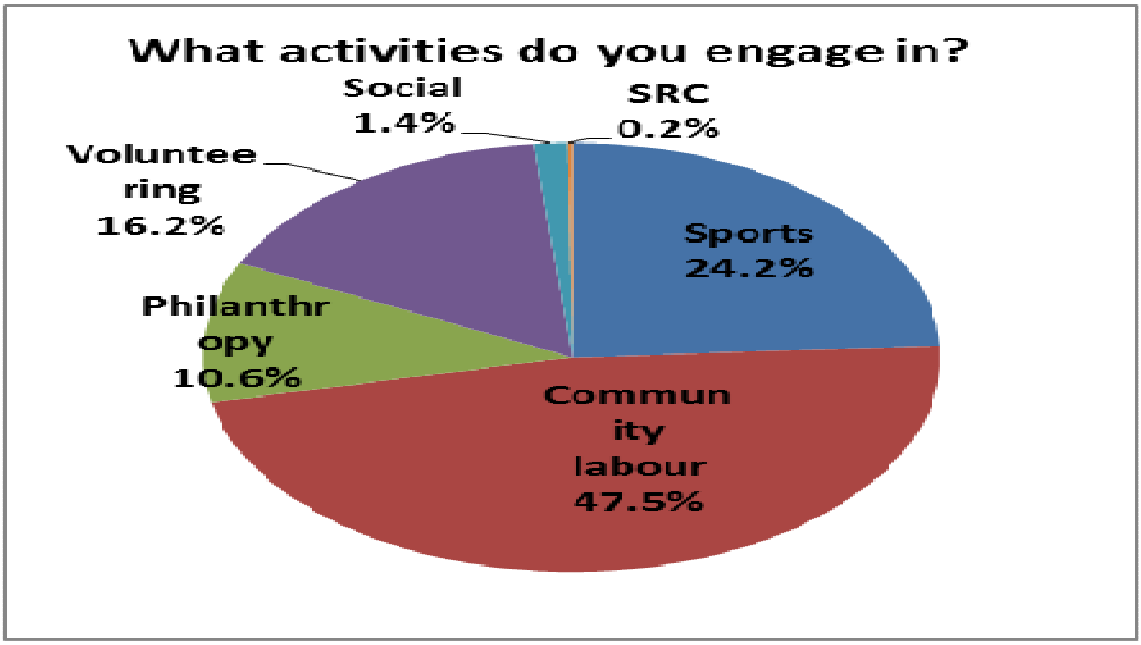

Figure 17: Types of social activities engaged in

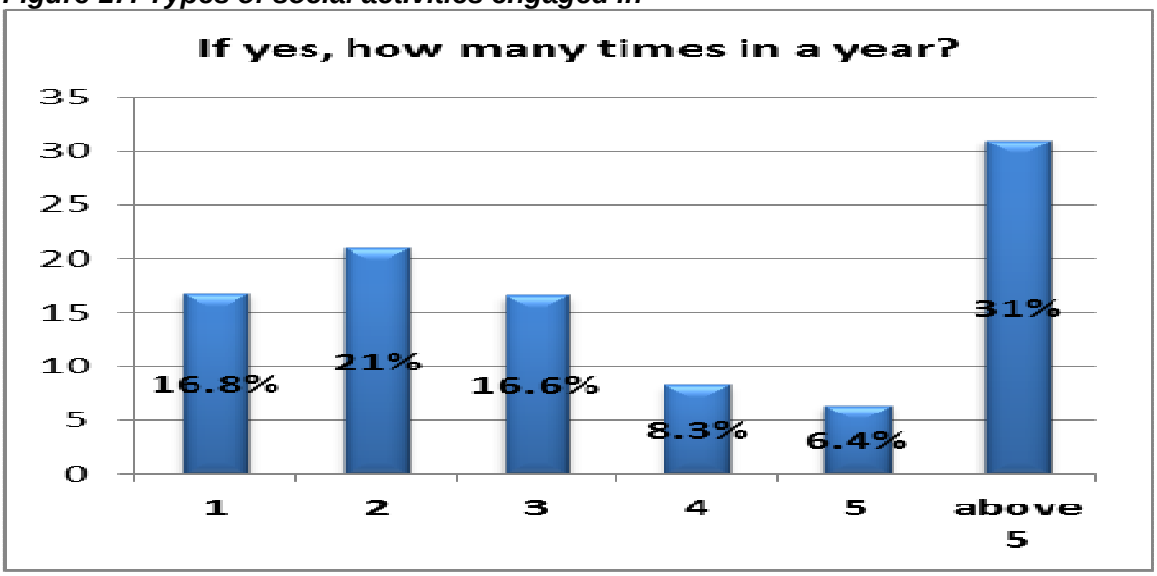

Figure 18: Number of times respondents engaged in social activities

5.2.2 Motivations for engagement

There are various reasons why people choose to engage voluntarily, which can include developing personal capital, fulfilling a desire to help others and developing marketable experience. Factors that influence peoples' decisions to engage may include gender, age, educational attainment, life satisfaction and religious participation. The 2006 Ghana CSI suggested that religious motivations were strong in Ghana. This study also sought to bring to examine the motivations for participation.

Motivations for membership

Around 28% of respondents who are members of community groups stated that they were motivated to join by feelings of communal spirit. This was closely followed by motivations of religious belief, civic responsibility and self-interest.

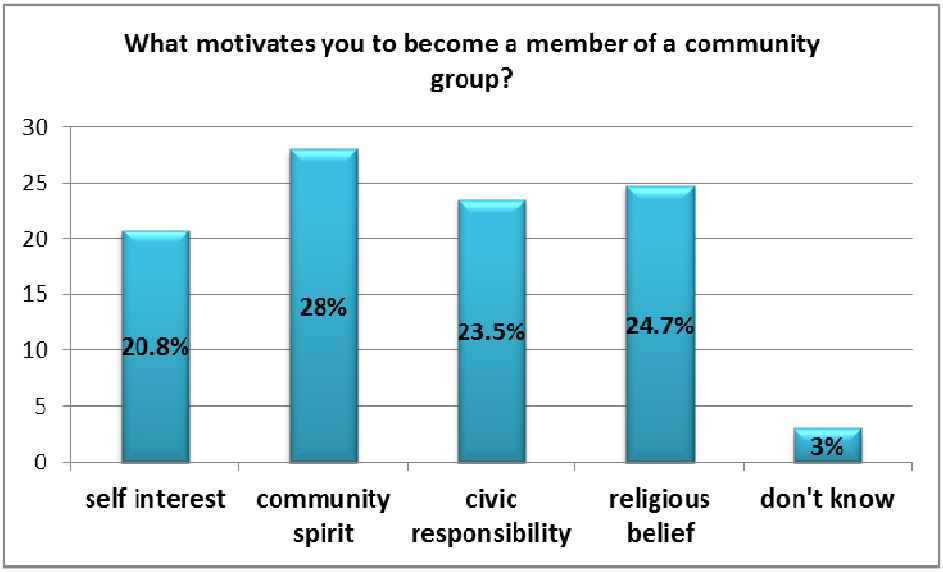

Figure 19: Motivations to become a member of a community group

Motivation to engage in community or organisational activities

As a follow-up to the above question, respondents were asked what type of problem motivated them to engage in community or organisational activities. Most respondents (33%) were motivated to respond to social problems that affect their people and family. About 25% of respondents were motivated to respond to religious problems. If responses to political and economic problems are combined, most respondents (almost 36%) say they are responding to these.

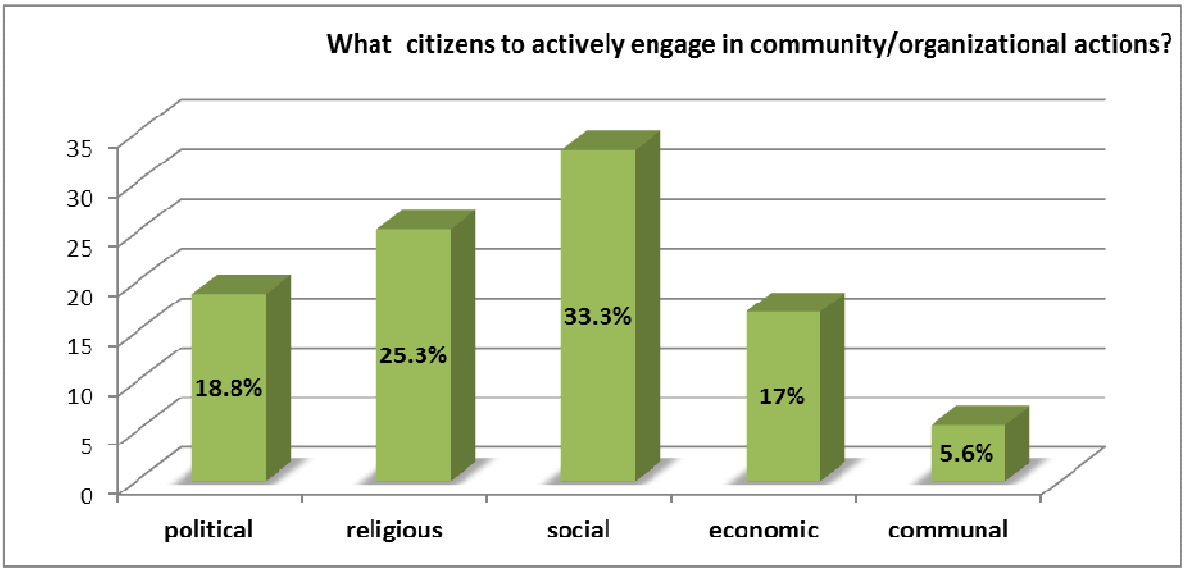

Figure 20: Motivations to engage in community actions

Community volunteering

Respondents were asked if they had volunteered for any community activity in the last six months, and if so, what had motivated them to do so. Almost half, 49%, had volunteered. Of these, 46% had been motivated by religious belief, 27% by civic responsibility and 26% by humanitarian reasons.

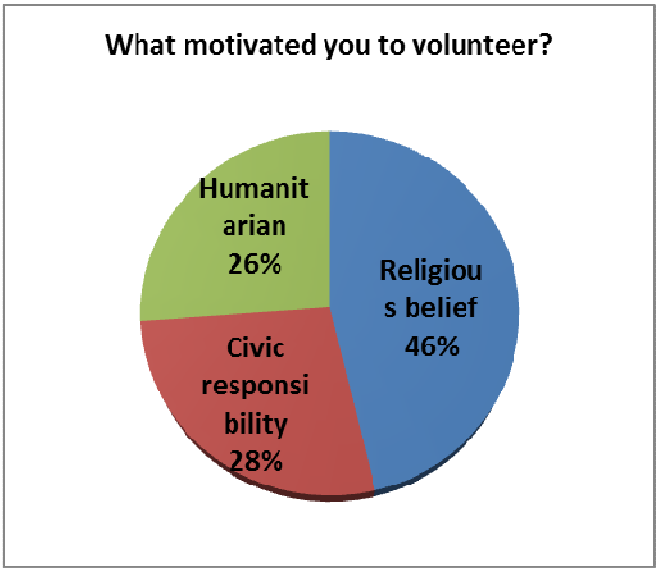

Figure 21: Volunteering motivations

Responses from interviews and discussions suggest that voluntary labour is an important aspect of volunteering, mostly being undertaken by community-based groups within their own communities. For example, in the Kpalyorgu community in Savelugu, women undertake clean-up exercises at refuse dumps and the cemetery, while men fill potholes in the roads with sand and stones, and contribute money to buy cables to aid in electrification, and to obtain pipe-borne water.

Charity

Respondents were asked if they had donated money or goods to charity in the last six months, and the motivations for doing so. Almost 55% of respondents had donated, and around 47% of these had done so because of religious belief, 40% for humanitarian reasons, and the remainder because of civic responsibility.

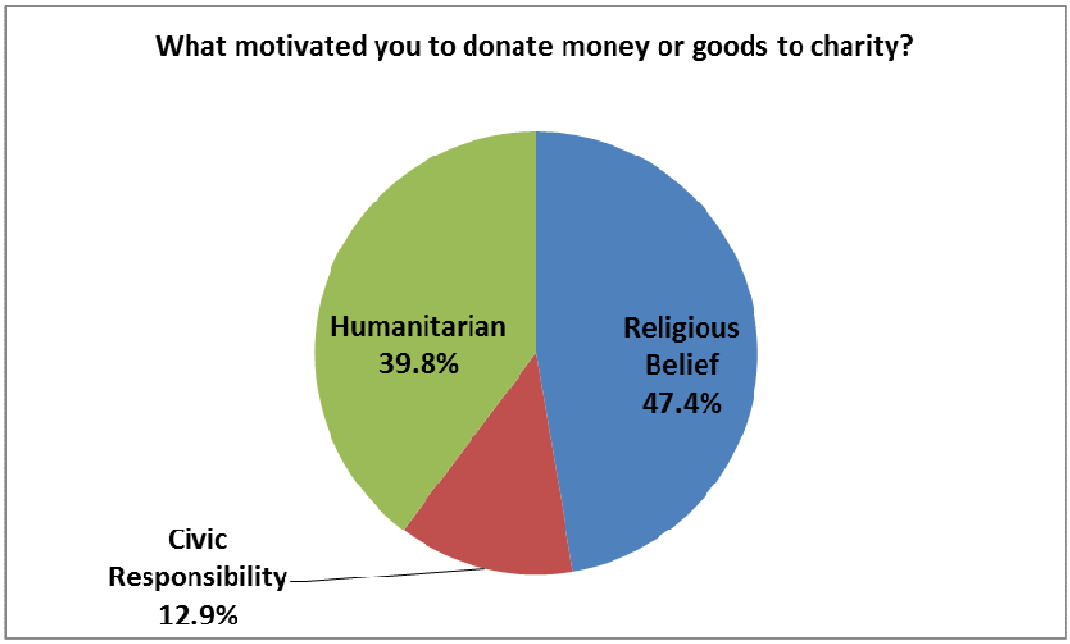

Figure 22: Motivations underpinning donations

5.2.3 Trust in CSOs

A series of questions sought information about trust in civil society. Around 65% of respondents answered that they trusted civil society as a whole, with 19% not trusting civil society and around 15% not sure. Of those who did express trust in civil society, about 73% of them said

they had high or very high levels of trust. For those who did not trust civil society, reasons included corruption, including when CSOs were seen to receive funds from donors but not implement projects, deceptiveness and bias.

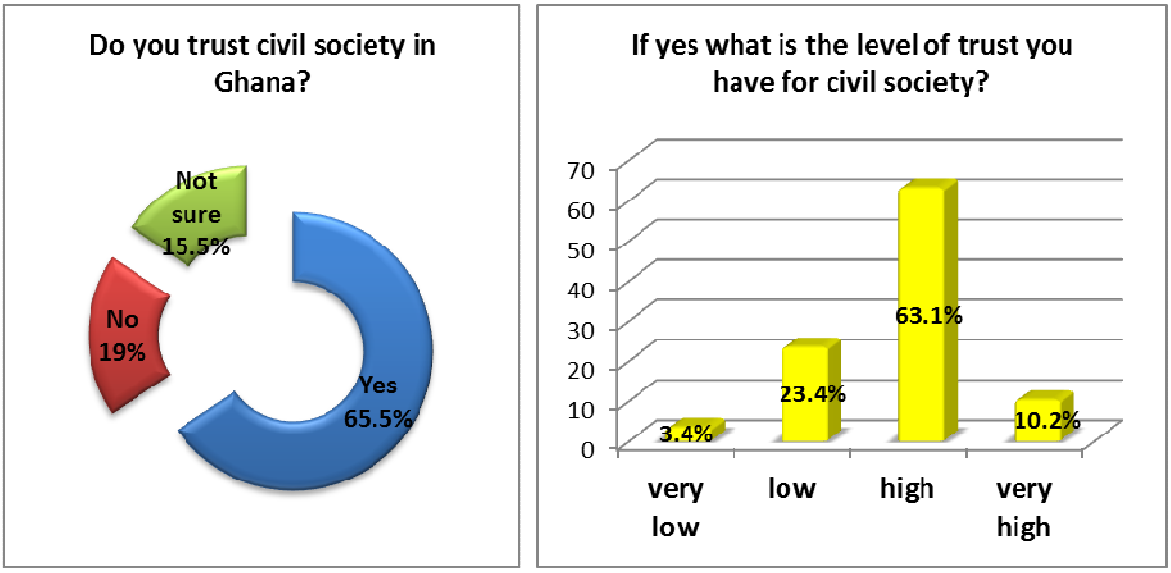

Figure 23: Trust for civil society and level of trust

However, when asked to what extent CSOs can be trusted more than local or national authorities, only around 40% of respondents answered that CSOs can be trusted to some extent, while almost 36% of respondents expressed limited trust in CSOs.

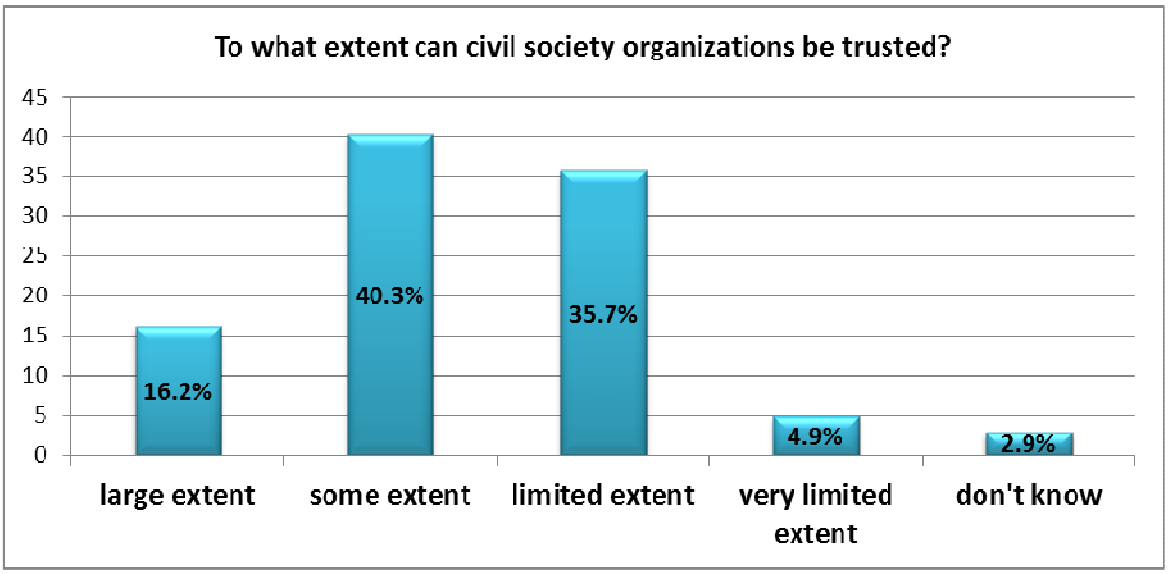

Figure 24: Extent to which people believe CSOs can be trusted compared to local and national authorities

Respondents were further asked, as an indicator of trust, which person or group they would most seek assistance from in case of need. Around 41% of respondents would seek assistance from their families, compared to only around 9% that would first turn to CSOs. However, CSOs were rated higher than any form of government agency, or traditional authorities. Together these responses suggest that CSOs need to prioritise initiatives that build public trust.

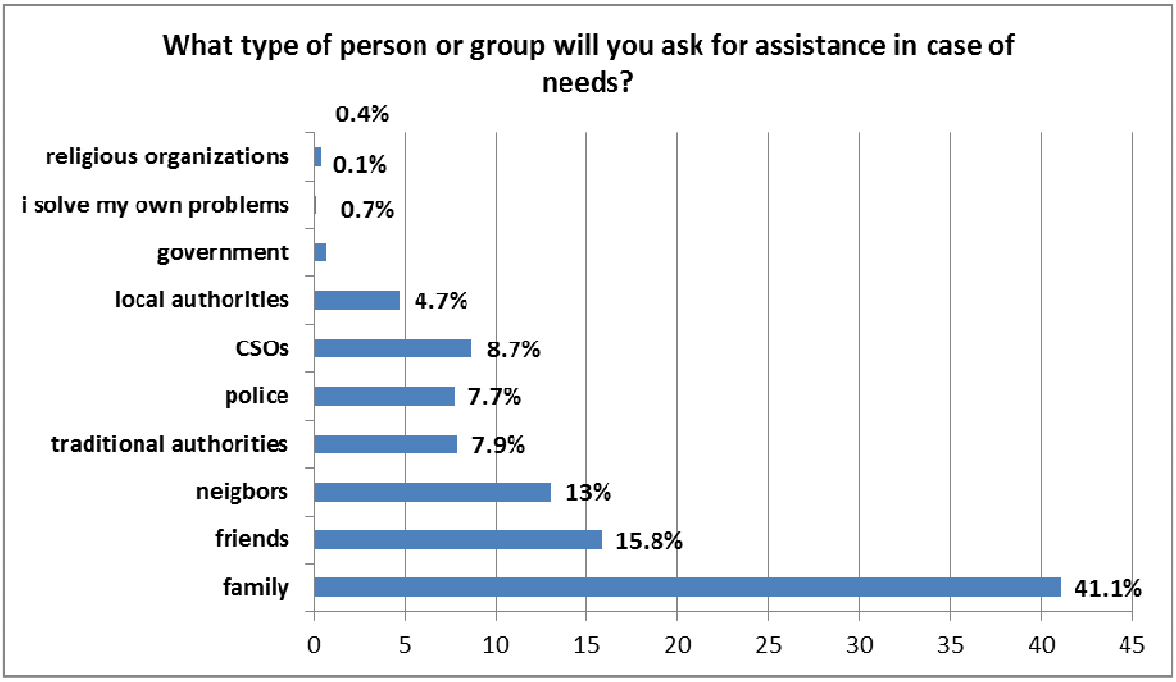

Figure 25: Type of person or group likeliest to be sought for assistance

Of the various CSO types, respondents expressed trust in NGOs the most, followed by religious bodies, then political parties and youth groups. CBOs were the least trusted groups, which may reflect the fact that many CBOs are in their nascent stages, and so are still developing trust, or that they are not well known by many people.

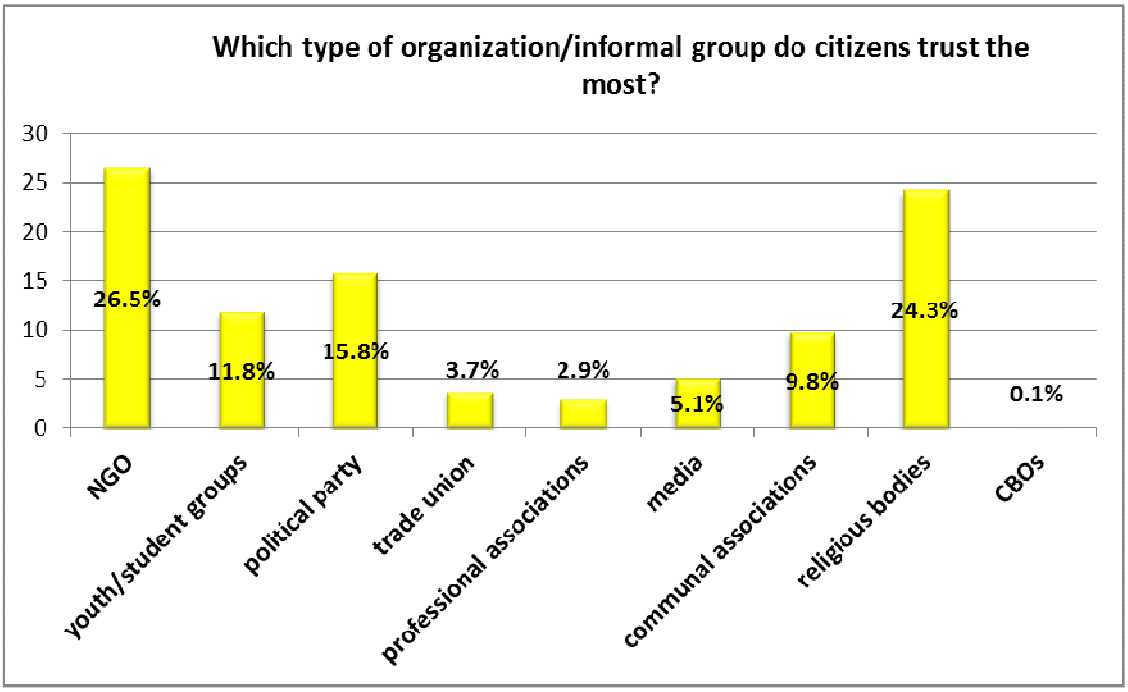

Figure 26: Levels of trust for different CSO types

6. CIVIL SOCIETY IMPACT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This section assesses the impact of CSO activities in Ghana. It looks at the policy influence of CSOs, the extent to which CSOs have empowered citizens, the response of CSOs to social interests, and finally challenges to achieving impact.

6.2 INFLUENCING PUBLIC POLICY

In a survey conducted by GACC, 70% of respondents, mostly from civil society groups, believe that civil society has had impact on government policy. However, when respondents were asked to rate the level of impact, most (38.5%) respondents stated that the level of success was only average, suggesting that there is room for improvement. Only a very small number (3.8%) rated success as very high.

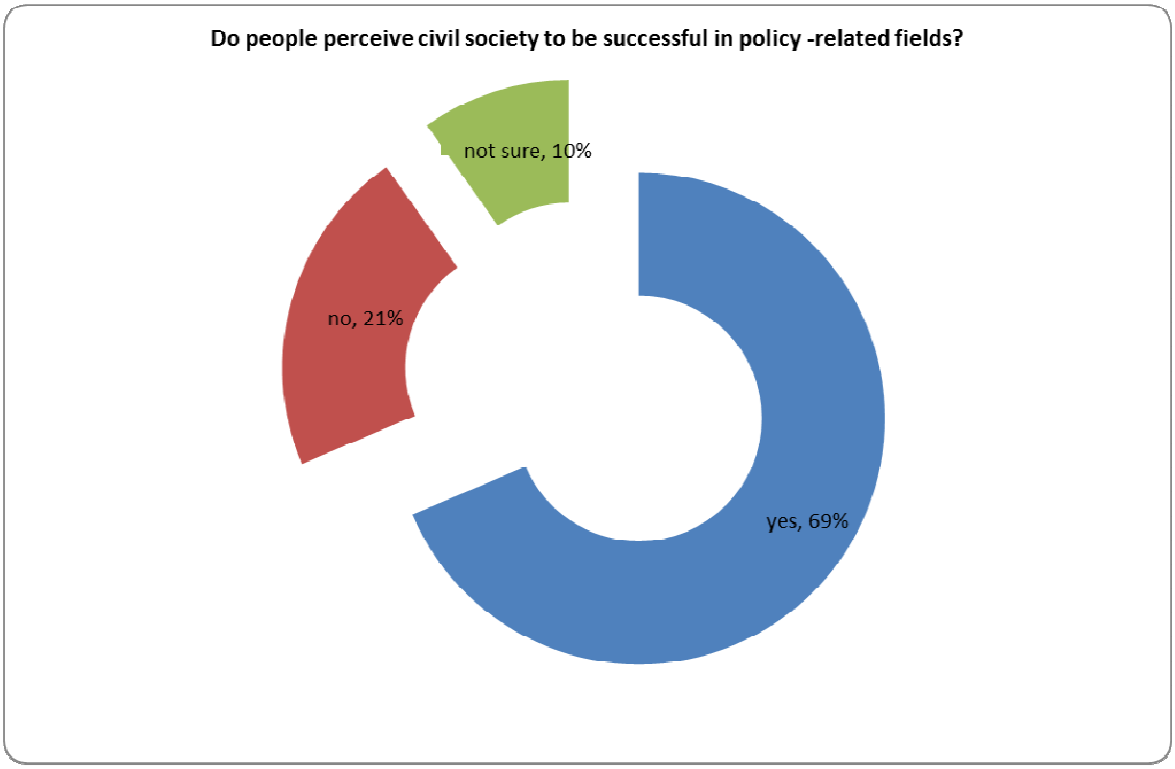

Figure 27: Perceived policy impact of CSOs

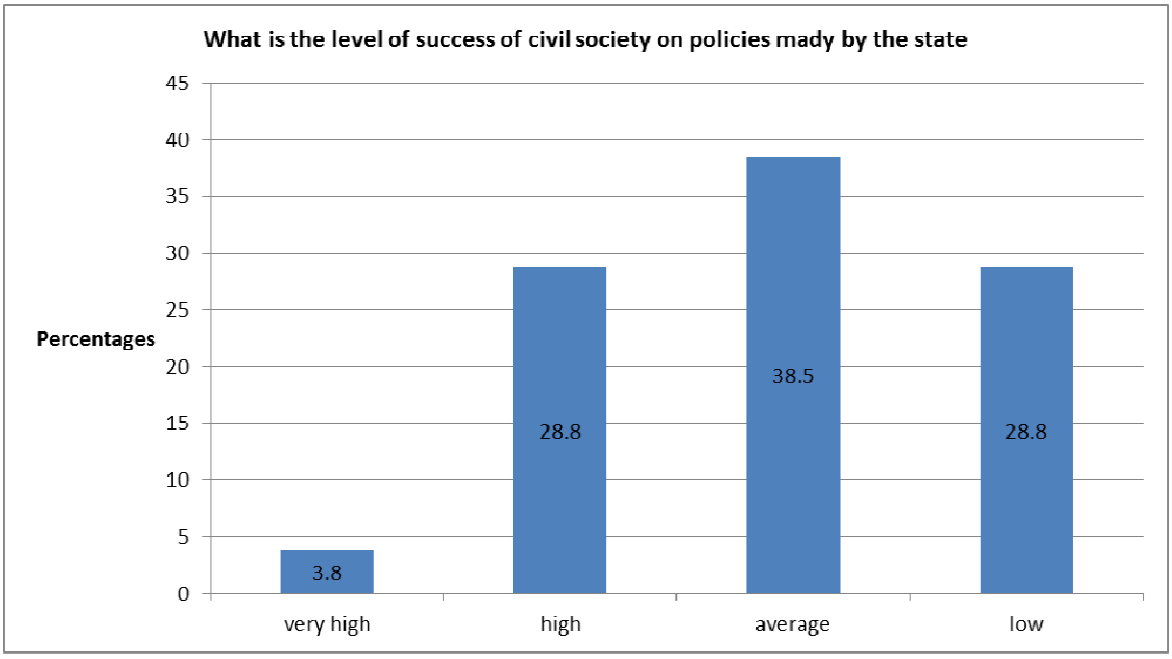

Figure 28: Perceived level of impact

Data gathered for this study suggests that CSOs influence public policy in three main ways: through input during the early stages of policy formulation; advocacy; and indirectly, through influencing the choice of political actors.

6.2.1 Policy formulation process

Influence here partly results from the presence of think tanks in Accra, which can be observed to have had some representation in policy formulation processes. For example, an interview with DFID pointed out that IMANI Centre for Policy and Education was invited by the government to take part in work discussing and formulating a policy on salaries. The Ghana National Union of Polytechnic Students was also involved in the fashioning of the current Polytechnic Act 245, which helped to redefine and solidify the mandate of polytechnics. In the education field, CSOs are represented during the sector's annual meetings and are able to put forward their views on how to improve the education system.

The analytical capacity of CSOs, particularly in the coastal zone, has been a key factor in achieving policy impact. Political parties are also seen as important in directly influencing policy, both when they are in office and not.

As discussed above, one of the reasons CSOs come together in networks is to attempt to influence policy decisions. Most CSOs surveyed (64%) report that networks have engaged with parliament or local governance structures in attempts to influence policy decisions in the last five years.

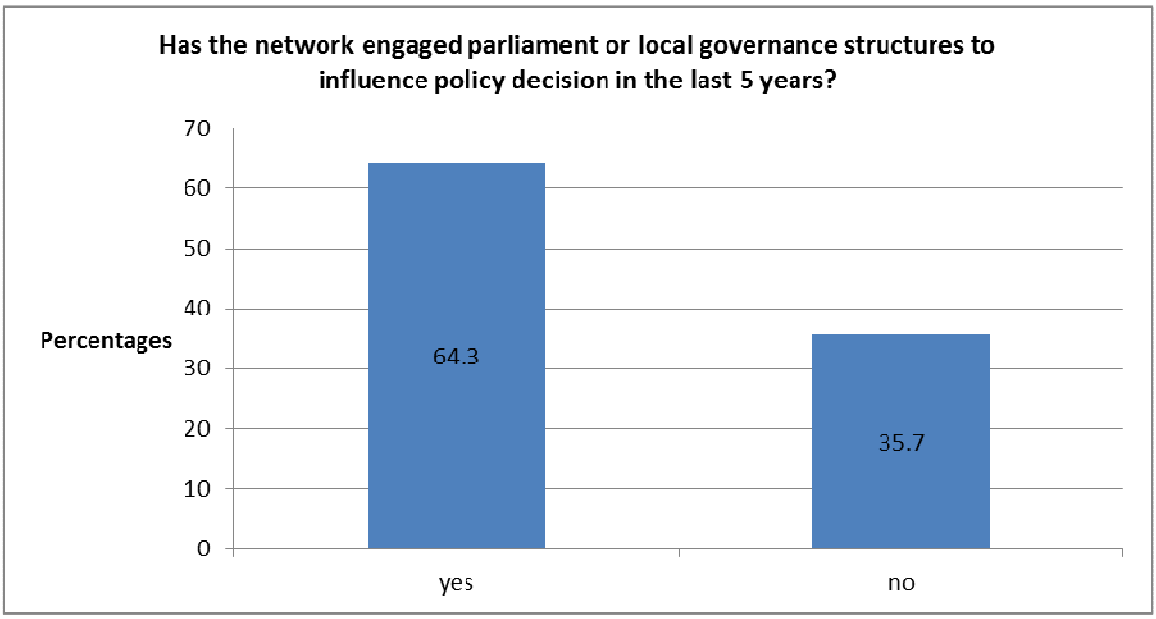

Figure 29: Engagement of networks for policy influence

6.2.2 Advocacy

Advocacy is one of the major tools CSOs in Ghana can use to influence public policy. Recent influences to public policy have happened when CSOs have persistently critiqued existing policies. Some examples of advocacy-influenced public policies, in the education field, are the creation of the University of Education to train teachers, the addition of kindergarten level education to basic school education and the formation of the Ghana Education Service as a separate entity to the civil service, which followed advocacy carried out by GNAT. Impact of advocacy was also seen in water, where CSOs worked with the government to reverse its decision to allow private companies to supply water.

National civil society groups, such as GNAT, GMA, TUC and various policy think tanks, are seen able to influence national level policies, because they have the funding and capacity to engage policy-makers. Indeed, most CSOs that influence public policy, or make efforts to do so, are based in the coastal zone, particularly Accra. This may reflect proximity, and therefore better access to, decision-makers.

A challenge identified in advocacy is that there are some civil society groups that adopt positions of implacable opposition to the government, which makes dialogue hard and can damage the credibility of civil society as a whole.

6.2.3 Political influence

Indirect influence, by influencing political selection, is little seen in Ghana. It was raised during a focus group discussion with some CBOs in the Ashaiman Community in the Greater Accra Region that they sought to impact on policy by influencing the selection of Members of Parliament (MPs). These CBOs are particularly vocal and seen as influential by politicians, who observe that MPs who are seen to listen to the CBOs retain their seats and those that do not lose them. This influence seems relatively new in Ghana, and may be something to track.

6.3 EMPOWERING CITIZENS

Data gathered from this research suggests that CSO in Ghana help to empower citizens in two main ways: capacity-building and awareness raising.

6.3.1 Capacity-building

Capacity-building can be described as a process of developing the abilities of people to meet developmental challenges that confront them.

In the northern zone, many capacity-building efforts focus on trainings to develop business skills and proper agronomic practices. A majority of the women interviewed in this region stated that CSOs had provided them with simple management training in business and taught them entrepreneurship skills. Interviews with the Kpalyorgu community in Savelugu reported that CSOs had provided capacity-building in rice, shea oil and cereal production and retail, which had increased agricultural yield considerably. The contribution of the Rural and Urban Women's Association (RUWA) to building the capacity of its female members in the Tamale area and surrounding towns was to train workers in the shea industry such that they are able to extract better shea butter from the shea nut.

In the coastal zone, capacity-building initiatives tend to offer training in a wider range of issues. In a focus group discussion in Ashaiman, the work of CSOs to train communities about peace

and have them sign a peace treaty before the 2012 elections was noted. Another form of capacity-building identified in this discussion came in the form of political training, such that citizens were able to make more informed decisions in choosing their political heads, and encouraged to seek political office themselves.

The TUC can be seen to have invested in building the capacity of their members through the establishment of its Labour College and the Vocational Training institution, and in establishing a programme in Labour Studies at the University of Cape Coast, which is an attempt to build capacity on labour issues. The GMA helped build the Ghana College to increase the number of medical specialists in Ghana, as well as to try to combat the loss of trained staff to other countries. IBIS, an education CSO, and its associate CSOs, have helped schools to build management committees to increase accountability, and this has been seen to lead to a reduction in teacher absenteeism in some rural schools.

6.3.2 Awareness raising

CSOs in Ghana report that they raise awareness in three main ways: through mobilising people, informing citizens and monitoring governance.

In the northern zone, particularly in the Savelugu area, it was observed that most CSOs engage in awareness raising on issues such as education, hygiene and sanitation, and malaria, these being some of the key challenges faced by the community. Responses suggest that women's groups have been the major beneficiaries of awareness raising. There was also awareness raising on the need for citizens to be involved in the governance of their communities, and CSOs believe they had seen an appreciable increase in levels of involvement and participation as a result, while also acknowledging that much remains to be done.

In the southern zone, an example was given of how the Ashaiman Governance Forum (AGF) organised and educated citizens of the effects of dust on their health as a result of the refusal of a road contractor to work on their roads. This led to mobilisation, with the organisation of a mass demonstration that achieved the impact of forcing a quick resumption of work on the roads.

On a more national level, CSOs also raise awareness by providing information to people, and the media play an important role here, in the views of respondents both within and outside media circles. In recent times, alleged corruption at the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Agency (GYEEDA) was first made known to the public by a journalist, and excerpts of the government report on it were also circulated through the media. The media can also play a role in sensitising citizens on social issues that can help to change attitudes. For example, the media was seen as effective in encouraging Ghanaians to wash their hands often to prevent the spread of cholera. Ghanaian media were however also criticised in interviews for being partisan, unprofessional and lacking proper training.

One example given of CSOs as generators of collective action is the fight against corruption, which has been led by CSOs: a variety of CSOs and networks addressing corruption has arisen, and CSOs contributed to the instigation of the Whistleblowers Act of 2006, which makes it easier for citizens to report corruption.

CSOs further seek to raise awareness by monitoring governance issues and processes, often through collaboration with the media. GACC, for example, undertakes a media monitoring programme, monitoring coverage of governance issues such as corruption, transparency and accountability. Findings are then disseminated to citizens through the media, with the aim of making citizens better informed about and able to engage on governance issues. However, a concern raised was that while there is a focus on corruption among high level politicians, there is less attention paid to corruption by lower level civil servants.

A view was also expressed that collective action suffers from a shortage of activists, and is challenged by competition between CSOs. In response, there is need for national level CSOs to link with those at the grassroots level to increase impact as a whole; there is currently an absence of such links. Networks have a role to play here, in making links and encouraging unity.

6.3.3 Impact at the community level

It is important to triangulate these views from CSOs with those of communities. Respondents in the public survey were asked if CSOs had an impact on their communities, and if so, what the nature of the impact was. Around 46% of respondents answered that CSOs had made an impact on their community, but a large 40% answered negatively. For those who saw impact,

these generally fell within the service provision category, including the provision of basic services such as education and water, as well as microfinance.

Issues addressed

Respondents were asked to identify the issue areas that CSOs respond to most and least in their communities. Education was the issue area identified as most addressed, by 46%; 28% stated that health was the issue least addressed by CSOs in their communities.

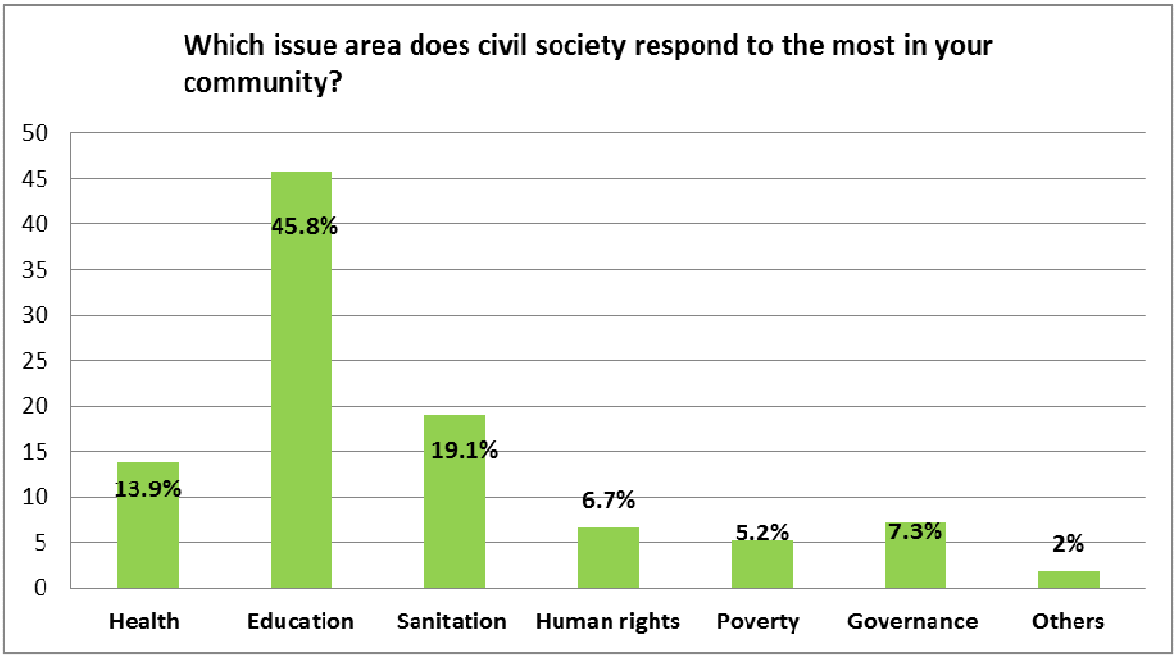

Figure 30: Issues civil society respond to the most

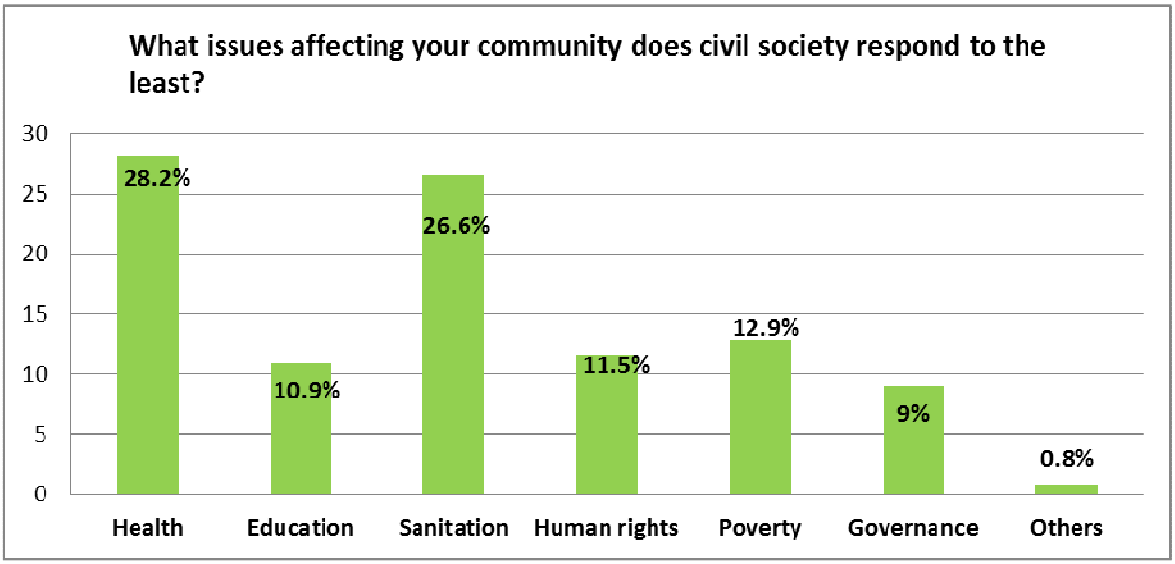

Figure 31: Issues civil society respond to the least

6.4 RESPONDING TO SOCIAL INTERESTS

CSOs in Ghana respond to social issues both by providing social amenities, and seeking to influence social norms and attitudes.

6.4.1 Social amenities

In a focus group discussion, CSOs were identified as being very active on education service provision, such as school building and school feeding programmes, and to have achieved better results than government initiatives. Water provision was identified as another area of strong CSO achievement.

As discussed above, most CSOs in the northern zone provide services, which can be understood as social amenities. One key amenity identified by respondents was microfinance, particularly provided to women to boost their trading activities. This was identified in interviews and discussions with CSOs and women's groups in the Tamale and Savelugu areas. For some women's groups, this was the only benefit they could point to gaining from CSOs.

A further key thematic area where CSOs are seen to have providing social amenities is in water and sanitation facilities, which are often lacking in the northern zone. Activities include the

drilling of boreholes to replace the use of water from streams and rivers, and the provision of sanitary facilities such as public toilets. Impact was noted in interviews with the Social Welfare Department and with some professional and trade associations.

Other amenities provided by CSOs include educational support, such as school uniforms and school fees; free mosquito nets to help prevent malaria; and seeds and fertilisers.

6.4.2 Attitudinal change

CSOs also seek to address social norms to create attitudinal changes. The media particularly can have a major impact here. Campaigns on girls' education, ending widowhood rites and preventing female genital mutilation are seen as having had impact partly because of the influence of the media in spreading messages, including through drama, songs and adverts. One specific example was offered by the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), which in collaboration with a community radio station in the western region discussed the negative effects of polluting the environment; following the programme, young community members mobilised to clear a refuse dump that had been unattended for a long time.

Some interview respondents stated that CSOs had encouraged them to adopt practices such as keeping their children in school and maintaining their environment.

Many people surveyed (87%) believe that CSOs can influence societal behaviours in Ghana. Around half of respondents believe that the level of influence of civil society on societal behaviours is high, and only around 8% believe it is low.

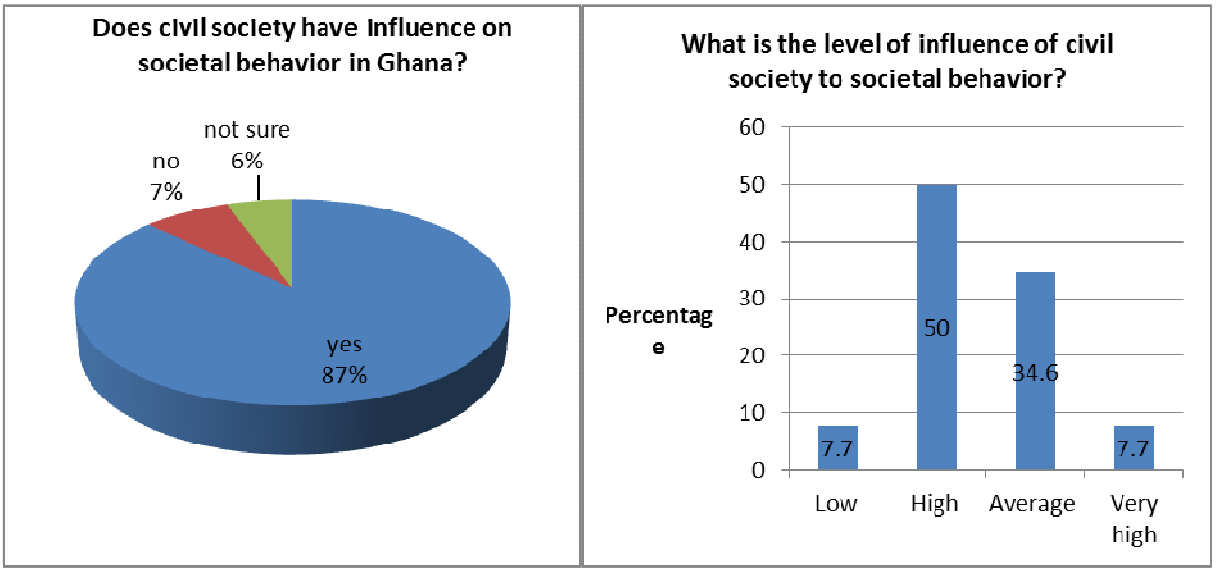

Figure 32a and 32b: CSO influence on societal behaviour

6.5 IMPEDIMENTS TO GREATER IMPACTS

Focus group discussions highlighted areas where impact could be increased. It was identified that there is a need for CSOs to improve their capacities to conduct proper research, and to be able to present their findings convincingly, and also to use evidence from research to propose alternatives, rather than simply criticise existing policies. This would also require better information sharing between different CSOs, suggesting a role for networks.

Discussions also considered how members of society are also able to influence different civil society groups. The media, in particular, was identified as being vulnerable to influence by politicians and other powerful individuals. Some media practitioners, in the Accra FGD, stated that some journalists have a salary of approximately US$25 per month, and this makes them more open to external financial influence. Some CSOs, including CBOs, were also accused of being over-influenced by those that provide funds. Here it was noted that people who work in CSOs tend not to be well remunerated and that CSOs depend on donor funds.

Another barrier to impact is the issue that some CSOs lack legitimacy. These include CSOs that only exist on paper or as fronts for an individual, often with motives of attracting funds, without undertaking any serious work. According to staff of the Social Welfare Department interviewed in Tamale:

> "Most of the local organisations exist for the profit motive and name. The names and missions of the groups are realistic but everything else is not. Their aims are clear but they will not be able to implement them."

According to some respondents in interviews and discussions, some CSOs do not do the work they are supposed to do, but still spend the funds they receive.

A further barrier to impact, seen in some service provision CSOs, is lack of local ownership and participation, connected to accountability deficits. This means that local needs may not be correctly identified or addressed, and initiatives may lack local support.

Another challenge is the short duration of most programmes. As a DFID official remarked, "[S]trategic impact cannot be made with 18 and 24-month programmes. The focus should shift onto the long-term view of programmes." Some women's groups interviewed also remarked that, "[T]he NGOs run programmes and the programmes end abruptly and the people do not come again." The short-term nature of programmes mean that many are hurried and impacts may not be sustained, which could eventually erode trust in CSOs.

Also identified as a key impediment to achieving greater policy impact is the fact that many CSOs, particularly at the local level, are focused on the provision of services, and so do not focus on seeking policy change. According to STAR-GHANA, about 80% of CSOs are service providers. This means that issues such as public service efficiency, budget tracking and expenditure tracking are less tackled.

The media was also highlighted as a section of civil society where impact has not been as great as it could be expected. As well as low salaries leaving media practitioners vulnerable to corruption, the media grapples with low capacity, in both technical and human resources. A lecturer at the University of Ghana's School of Communication remarked:

> "[N]ot all who train in journalism become journalists. Not all who pretend to be practising journalism are trained in journalism… Some are not trained at all, some are poorly trained and some are not good no matter the training. A journalist cannot afford to be an illiterate."

A further set of issues that inhibit impact is related to the funding of CSOs. Limited funding stimulates competition between CSOs, as discussed earlier. Related to this, a lack of harmonisation of CSO activities caused by competition means that opportunities for impact are lost through duplication. Further, a lack of core funding means that CSOs are unable to attract and retain high calibre staff. High staff attrition levels affect the quality of CSO outputs.

6.6 CONCLUSION

CSOs are generally perceived to have made some impact, but as significant change can take years of effort, it is not always easy to capture their contribution to change. For example, CSOs advocated for many years before family planning was added to the National Health Insurance Bill. CSO policy input seems most recognisable in education and governance. The media has had some impact on policy, managing to change some policies and causing a modification of others, but this could be improved by more collaboration with other civil society actors. Once again, a challenge is that there are not clear ways to measure some of these successes.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This section sets out the key strengths and weaknesses of Ghanaian CSOs identified in the assessment, and offers recommendations and an action plan to address the challenges identified.

7.2 WEAKNESSES OF GHANAIAN CSOS

The strengths and weaknesses of CSOs in Ghana are summarised below.

Strengths	**Weakness**
1 Good knowledge of constituents' problems and ability to engage their constituents, including in local languages. 2 Some CSOs have qualified, dedicated, committed and efficient staff. 3 Freedom and space to operate. 4 Large numbers of constituents, which help in gaining attention. 5 CSOs have some bargaining power. 6 Ability to mobilise and effect change at grassroots levels. 7 Local basis, particularly of CBOs. 8 A generally non-partisan and unbiased outlook. 9 Existence of functional offices close to constituents. 10 Ability to contribute to development, including by influencing policy, providing skills and resources.	1 Inadequate knowledge of government policies. 2 The lack of a common voice or platform: CSOs are competitors rather than partners. 3 Inadequate resources (e.g. funding, staff). 4 Other staffing challenges, such as inadequate qualified personnel, high attrition and poor orientation for new staff. 5 Inadequate skills and knowledge capacity. 6 No clear system of accountability, and more upward than downward accountability. 7 Conflicts of interest in project management. 8 Weak sustainability in project design and implementation. 9 Low credibility of some CSOs.

11 Expertise and capacity to lead and facilitate development processes. 12 Community recognition and goodwill, coming from credibility and impact of projects.	10 Some CSOs are not formalised or registered, which can affect advocacy and credibility.

Table 6: Strengths and weakness of CSOs

Some of the key weaknesses point towards recommendations, as follows.

7.2.1 Competition

There is a lack of a common voice from CSOs, which tend to see each other as competitors instead of partners. Competition can be subtle but damaging, because it can lead to a duplication of efforts and an attendant waste of resources. However, competition is not solely the fault of CSOs, as donor funding encourages CSOs to be seek visibility and promote themselves in order to attract and retain funding. Further, inflexible donor timelines, and CSOs' determination to meet them, mean CSOs do not take time to share information and explore collaboration. Harmonisation is unlikely when competition for funding is seen as a zero-sum game and collaboration may make individual visibility harder. This also influences networks. These may be transactional – focused only on working on a project for which funding is available – or there may be competition between network secretariats and their members for funding, meaning that networks have the effect of exacerbating competition. This can then affect impact.

7.2.2 Accountability

Many CSOs are accountable, but mostly to their donors. CSOs are mostly able to fit into donor accounting procedures. However, downward accountability is mostly lacking, and projects may be undertaken without input from or feedback to constituents. This erodes trust and local ownership, which again affects impact and sustainability.

7.2.3 Sustainability

CSOs in Ghana, as elsewhere, are built on the availability of funds, but there is no government funding for CSOs. Thus CSOs depend on donors. Ghana has attained the status of a middle-income state, and so some donors have begun to announce plans to withdraw from Ghana, to concentrate funding on lower income countries. CSOs, while depending on donor funds, have

neglected to find other ways of sustaining themselves. The question now is how Ghanaian CSOs will survive when donors pull out.

Another factor that affects sustainability is high staff attrition. CSOs tend not to be able to hang on to experienced staff for long periods. One of the causes of this is the lack of adequate remuneration. Many CSOs rely on volunteers, or staff who receive stipends which fall short of full salaries. Even in Accra, where more CSOs can pay staff members a monthly salary, staff members still tend to leave after some time. Most CSOs lack proper human resource functions. Given this, international CSOs are able to source experienced staff from local CSOs.

7.2.4 Low capacity

A related weakness is low capacity. Many CSOs have few staff members educated to tertiary level, or with a level of training sufficient for their duties. Even more educated staff may lack the skills and knowledge for effective advocacy. Tertiary institutions do not offer courses that equip students for work in CSOs. Many CSOs do not offer sufficient in-house opportunities, such as training, to enhance staff capacity, or provide opportunities for external capacity-building. Low capacity affects quality of work, and also CSOs' relevance and legitimacy, if they are not able to advance constructive and workable solutions to challenges.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The weaknesses discussed above are not exhaustive, but they suggest key issues that should be prioritise.

- CSOs should recognise, and play to, their strengths.
- CSOs must realise they are partners and not competitors, and cooperate more closely to produce greater impact. One way in which CSOs can work together without losing their individual characteristics or functions is to create networks and resource these networks to function effectively. CSOs need to take their memberships of networks seriously and to be active members of these.
- CSOs need to give more emphasis to generating funds locally, including through more partnerships with local organisations and businesses. Closer partnerships could be made with the corporate social responsibility (CSR) functions of businesses in the mining, telecommunication and banking sectors; CSOs could take on functions currently

being covered by these CSR departments. This may require CSOs to give attention to improving their corporate image and developing their accountability mechanisms.

- Possibilities for harmonisation should be explored to encourage streamlining and cost-saving, as well as increase impact. Harmonisation would imply that CSOs plan together in order to avoid duplication.
- CSOs can help combat high staff attrition by developing their human resource functions, which implies having designated and expert human resource departments. One of the roles of human resource departments should be to develop clear routes for progression and promotion in CSOs.
- To improve capacity, a greater emphasis needs to be given on the organisation of capacity-building workshops. CSOs should also target partnerships with international organisations to develop capacities. CSOs also need to find ways of paying competitive salaries or providing more attractive working conditions and benefits in order to retain staff.

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