



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment Snapshot

Ghana

October 2025

Context

Ghana is popularly known as a model democracy in West Africa, characterised by regular democratic elections, political stability and [peaceful transitions](#) of power since 1992. According to IDEA's Democracy Tracker, Ghana ranks within the [top 25 percent of countries globally](#) in key areas such as elected government, civic engagement and freedom of expression. Despite this context, some civic space violations were documented surrounding the December 2024 legislative and presidential elections.

Prior to the December 2024 legislative and presidential elections, the [sociopolitical](#) environment was marked by widespread misinformation and disinformation. The economic landscape, [characterised](#) by high inflation and the increased cost of living and commodities, sparked widespread mobilisation in previous years. There were [protest violations](#) at the cost of living protests that had been taking place since 2021.

There were also heightened political tensions and [polarisation](#) in anticipation of the [2024 general elections](#). Digital surveillance, disinformation campaigns and harassment of journalists and activists intensified within this period, negatively affecting civic engagement in-person and online. There were growing concerns and fears among citizens about the threat to democracy and a [decline in public trust](#). The latter part of 2024 was marked by nationwide [protests](#) over electoral transparency and accountability as well as the escalating illegal mining crisis, resulting in [arrests](#) during protests.

Following Ghana's 7 December 2024 presidential and legislative elections, there was a peaceful transition of power from the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by Nana Akufo-Addo to the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) led by John Dramani Mahamama. President Nana Akufo-Addo, who ruled for two terms from 2017 to 2024, did not compete in the presidential elections as he had reached the end of the constitutional two-term limit for presidents. This transfer reinforced Ghana's reputation as a beacon of democratic stability in West Africa. In terms of funding, in addition to securing a [landmark debt restructuring agreement](#), the [IMF approved](#) an immediate USD 367 million disbursement following the successful completion of the fourth review of its Extended Credit Facility. This would go a long way to ease short-term fiscal pressure and restore investor confidence in the nation.

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

[Ghana's 1992 constitution](#) guarantees fundamental human rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech, religion, assembly and association. The fundamental civil society freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association in Ghana are considered relatively respected as Ghana maintains its '[Free](#)' status according to Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2025 report. However, Ghana's civic space is rated as [obstructed](#) by the CIVICUS Monitor since it was downgraded in March 2023, citing concerns on the safety of journalists, the use of 'false news' regulations to detain journalists and the draconian [anti-LGBTQ+ bill](#) as reasons for the downgrade. In February 2024, Ghana passed the anti-LGBTQ+ bill that criminalises consensual same-sex relations. If enacted, the bill will have [negative consequences](#) for civic space in Ghana. [According](#) to Reporters without Borders'

(RSF) press freedom index, Ghana dropped from 67.71 in 2024 to 67.13 in 2025, moving Ghana from the 50th to the 52nd position.

Under the 1992 Constitution, media outlets can be created without licences. While promoting pluralism and diversity, it has also led to the creation of [partisan media](#) outlets owned by politicians. Media freedom has increasingly come under strain, in particular for journalists and media houses critical of government policies. The safety of journalists is of particular concern as journalists have been subjected to threats and [physical assaults](#) by both state and non-state actors, such as members of parliament as well as supporters of political parties, during political activities. The first quarter of 2025 witnessed [eight violations](#) of journalists including physical attacks, arrests, intimidation and threats, with security agents being responsible for a majority (43%) of these violations, and physical attacks being recorded as the most frequent type of violations.

On 12 June 2025, the National Communications Authority (NCA) ordered the [suspension of 62 radio stations](#) across the country citing non-compliance with broadcasting regulations. However, President Mahama [offered reprieve](#) for these stations, requesting that their licences be reinstated and they be given 30 days to address their regulatory issues. This was followed by another [ban of nine radio stations](#) in August 2025 due to either failure, refusal to comply after the grace period or use of unauthorised appliances.

The freedom of peaceful assembly is also frequently violated. Some demonstrations were met with [police resistance and excessive force](#), raising alarms about selective enforcement of public order laws. The Ghana Police Service has been criticised for using disproportionate tactics, particularly during protests over economic hardship and governance issues. There have been few or no occurrences on the state of freedom of association and [human rights](#) within the past year in Ghana.

2. Supportive legal framework for the work of civil society actors

The legal environment in Ghana generally [provides room](#) for CSOs to function. Ghana's legal framework transitioned from the Companies Code, 1963 (Act 179) to the [Companies Act, 2019 \(Act 992\)](#) to enhance transparency and accountability for companies and organisations in Ghana. This Act offers an enabling framework that CSOs in Ghana can leverage to engage stakeholders, promoting anti-corruption efforts and policy advocacy. There is currently no specific law in place that facilitates the activities of CSOs.

According to a WACSI [2022 civic space report](#), earlier attempts, like the 2007 Trust and Non-Profit Bill, were criticised for treating CSOs like trusts, leading to regulatory concerns. As a result of these criticisms, the government is now developing a dedicated Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) Bill to provide appropriate oversight while safeguarding civic space. Based on the current draft NPO bill, CSOs are required to register with multiple agencies, each applying different rules, fees, and timelines. This fragmented system results in duplicating paperwork and delays in registration approvals. A research report by WACSI confirms that these [overlapping processes](#) pose significant challenges to the effective formalisation of CSOs. In addition, some provisions are vague and [restrictive](#), making it difficult

for CSOs to interpret and comply. The NPO Bill is currently being developed with increased stakeholder participation with the aim of reflecting the unique role and operational realities of CSOs and NGOs. The [bill](#) seeks to ensure that civil society has a stronger voice, clearer accountability and greater legitimacy. If passed, the bill will serve as the primary legal framework to guide the functioning of CSOs in Ghana.

To broaden stakeholder participation, between February and March 2025, three regional consultation workshops were held in Tamale, Kumasi and Accra. Each consultation provided a platform for practitioners in the sector to contribute to the Bill. Notably, three [Technical Advocacy Working Group \(TAWG\)](#) members were selected from both Tamale and Kumasi, while five were selected from Accra, creating a diverse and regionally representative group to lead advocacy efforts.

A CSO coalition, led by STAR Ghana Foundation, has made several recommendations to improve the bill, such as shifting its objective towards supporting rather than restricting NPOs, ensuring board independence and creating an independent arbitration tribunal. During the Ghana Civil Society Forum in June 2025, the Vice President, Professor Naana Jane Opoku Agyemang, announced the [government's commitment](#) to working with civil society to pass the bill into law.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

In Ghana, funding for CSOs remains heavily [reliant on foreign donors](#), with no existing legal or policy framework to incentivise domestic corporate support for the sector. Government funding for CSOs in Ghana is [limited](#), as the government does not provide direct core funding to support their operations. However, some CSOs are able to access funding indirectly through contractual arrangements or project-based partnerships with government agencies. In particular, service-oriented CSOs occasionally collaborate with government and private-sector actors at the local level to implement initiatives in sectors such as water, sanitation, health and education. While this dependence poses sustainability challenges, some CSOs are beginning to [diversify their funding sources](#) by engaging government, the private sector and philanthropists. Additionally, CSOs are exploring [alternative mechanisms](#) such as crowdfunding, diaspora giving, online campaigns, service delivery and establishing for-profit subsidiaries to generate income and reduce reliance on external aid.

In the last year, access to adequate funding for civil society has been restricted by declining international development aid and, more specifically, US foreign aid. The [USAID freeze](#) by the Trump administration for example saw CSOs struggling with limited resources due to competition for scarce funds. Annually, Ghana received about [150million USD](#) as development assistance from USAID. These cuts have had a huge [negative impact](#) on many sectors, particularly agriculture, healthcare and education. The agriculture sector for example received about 25million USD from USAID in 2023 as support to agricultural productivity and food security.

Other barriers to access to funding include short-term, project-based, restricted funding received by many organisations in Ghana. Ghana's status as a middle-income country has reduced opportunities for many CSOs to secure certain international funding. Nonetheless, growing opportunities such as alternative financing, resource diversification, sustainability and

local philanthropy in Ghana are creating new pathways for strengthening the funding landscape of civil society in the country. For example, the Ghana Civil Society Forum sustainability working group has initiated [Ghana CSO Sustainability Webinar Series](#), which aims to spark deep reflection and share practical strategies for long-term sustainability, including financial sustainability for civil society in Ghana. Also, the annual [Ghana Philanthropy Conference](#), is fostering growth in the local giving and volunteerism landscape within the civil society sector by increasing funding access within the sector.

4. State openness and responsiveness

In the past year, authorities in Ghana have demonstrated notable openness and responsiveness towards civil society and marginalised groups, particularly in advancing women's representation and strengthening state–CSO collaboration. A key milestone was the [passage of the Affirmative Action Bill into Law](#) in July 2024, which aims to achieve 50/50 gender representation in governance, public leadership and decision-making processes by 2030. Despite this legislative progress, women's representation in Parliament remains relatively low, increasing only marginally from 40 out of 275 seats (14.5%) in the [previous parliament](#) to 41 out of 276 seats (14.86%) in [the current one](#). The approach on advancing women's representation has been maintained by the current administration as the Affirmative Action Act was [launched](#) on 31 July 2025 by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP).

Engagement between the government and CSOs has been active and strategic. On 6 February 2025, the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Hon. Dr. Agnes Naa Momo Lartey, [met with CSO stakeholders](#) to strengthen collaboration on issues such as child and social protection, women's empowerment and vulnerability reduction. The government also showed inclusivity in national reform processes, notably in the ongoing review of the 1992 Constitution. The [Constitutional Review Committee](#) comprises eight members, including three women and several individuals with deep roots in civil society, such as the Chairman of the committee, Prof. Henry Kwasi Prempeh, who is also the Executive Director of CDD-Ghana, the Executive Director of STAR-Ghana Foundation, Alhaji Ibrahim-Tanko Amidu and other prominent legal and academic professionals. The committee held public consultations across the [northern](#) and [southern](#) zones to solicit citizen input.

In a bid to [foster inclusivity](#), Ghana's parliament, spearheaded by the Speaker of Parliament, the Rt. Hon. Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin in March 2025, embarked on an initiative to improve collaboration with CSOs and think-tanks. This discussion was further reinforced in June 2025 when the Vice President of Ghana, Prof. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, attended the Ghana Civil Society Forum, calling on CSOs to [reimagine development aid](#) while underscoring the executive's commitment to collaborating with the sector.

5. Political culture and public discourses on civil society

Civil society in Ghana operates within an environment that has demonstrated significant public, media and governmental support in recent years. Public backing of civil society has been particularly visible during demonstrations and advocacy campaigns. In September 2024, Oliver Barker-Vormawor, activist and leader of Democracy Hub, spearheaded a protest

against illegal mining, popularly known as *galamsey*, calling on the government to take decisive action against environmental offenders. The protest drew large numbers of supporters dissatisfied with the government's approach in handling the issue. His subsequent [arrest](#), along with 52 others, sparked public outrage, including online, with the hashtag [#FreeTheCitizens](#) trending widely in solidarity.

The media has consistently amplified CSO voices by covering their activities and advocacy initiatives. Notable examples include widespread reporting on the 2024 [Ghana Philanthropy Conference](#), the Ghana CSO Forum as well as on CSO coalitions' positions on [the Non-Profit Organisation \(NPO\) Bill](#). This level of media coverage has strengthened public awareness of civil society initiatives and highlights the support CSOs receive from the media.

Several high-profile engagements between government officials and CSO representatives demonstrate institutional recognition of CSO contributions. These include the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Hon. Dr. Agnes Naa Momo Lartey, meeting CSO representatives in February 2025 to reaffirm [government's commitment](#) to fostering more effective partnerships aimed at driving social development with a focus in areas such as child and social protection, empowering women and reducing vulnerability. In addition, the Speaker of Parliament met with CSOs in April 2025 during a forum titled '*Embracing Inclusivity, Engagement and Collaboration with the Parliament of Ghana*.' The discussions during the forum centred around promoting [inclusive governance](#), signalling strong political will for collaboration.

Generally, there appears to be strong support for civil society in the country by the government, the media and the public, creating a conducive atmosphere for CSOs to make their voices and initiatives known by the general public.

6. Access to a secure digital environment

By January 2025, Ghana had registered approximately [24.3 million internet users](#), slightly growing from the 24.1 million reported in the year before. In Ghana, civil society enjoys relatively open access to the internet and can freely share information online without facing systematic censorship, internet shutdowns, or overt government surveillance. However, the broader digital environment is [increasingly threatened](#) by rising cyber insecurity. According to the [Cyber Security Authority](#) (CSA), the country recorded a sharp rise in cybercrime, with reported [incidents increasing](#) from 1,317 in early 2024 to 2,008 in the first half of 2025 alone. Results from the Ministry of Communications, Digital Technology and Innovation showed that [Ghana lost GHS15 million](#) to cybercrime in the first half of 2025, largely from fraud and impersonation.

The [National Communications Authority](#) (NCA) in Ghana is the statutory body mandated to license and regulate electronic communications activities and services in the country. Legal and policy frameworks such as [Ghana's Data Protection Act](#), (GDPA), [Ghana's Electronic Transactions Act](#), 2008 (Act 772) and [Ghana's National Cyber Security Policy and Strategy](#), serve as strategic guidelines regarding data governance in Ghana and demonstrate Ghana's alignment with the [African Union's Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection](#) 2014. These laws offer a more flexible approach in defining personal data and the legal handling of data compared to the stricter standards adopted by many African countries.

In 2024, Ghana recorded a score of 65/100 according to the Freedom on the Net index, indicating a state of 'partly free'. The legal framework in Ghana contains some provisions such as the Cybersecurity Act, 2020 (Act 1038) that seek to combat cyber harassment, though [enforcement remains weak](#). However, others contain provisions that [criminalise false or misleading electronic communication](#) and arbitrary publication of false statements, such as [Section 76 of Electronic Communications Act](#), 2008 (Act 775). In April 2025, an [activist was arrested](#) for allegedly spreading false news. These laws are broad and have been used in ways that raise concerns about free speech and public discourse.

Digital safety remains a concern for some civil society actors, most especially those working in advocacy, media and rights promotion. According to a study conducted by WACSI, in West Africa, [Ghana ranks second](#) with a score of 5.38% after Nigeria in terms of countries experiencing the most digital security threats in general. On 16 March 2025, Ghana experienced a major [cybersecurity breach](#) when President John Dramani Mahama's official X account was hacked and used to promote a fraudulent cryptocurrency scheme. This incident exposed significant vulnerabilities in the nation's cybersecurity infrastructure and highlighted the urgent need for stronger, real-time cyber defence measures across government and other critical sectors.

The Government of Ghana is taking proactive steps to [strengthen national cybersecurity awareness](#), towards building a digitally secure public sector and enhancing resilience against evolving cyber risks. CSOs have also become more conscious about these attacks and are deliberately putting in place [measures to curb](#) and mitigate them.

Challenges and opportunities

In the next couple of months, the civil society sector will continue to navigate the complex and bureaucratic processes resulting from the delay in the integration of the sector's feedback and the passage of the NPO bill in Ghana. On the other hand, the uncertainty surrounding the possible reintroduction of the draconian anti-LGBTQ+ bill might reignite concerns among CSOs. The bill criminalises promoting or advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, with penalties ranging from about 3 –10 years' imprisonment. For CSOs working in areas like human rights, gender equality and social inclusion, this could mean a scaling down or shutdown of some of their programmes. CSOs could also face further funding cuts and possible closure due to insufficient funding for operations, leading to a negative impact on civic space within the country.

There have also been positive developments. Other opportunities, such as the potential outcome from the passing of the [affirmative action bill](#) that seeks to address the gender divide within the country, create new avenues for the inclusion of women and girls in the development sector. Also, civil society coalitions like the Ghana CSO Platform on Sustainable Development Goals and the INGO Forum have continued to mobilise effectively on policy issues, including calls for electoral reforms. Additionally, platforms such as the [Civic Space Resource Hub](#) and the Ghana Giving Summit have amplified local voices and bolstered community-led development efforts, showcasing the resilience and innovation of the civil society sector in Ghana. These provide an opportunity for opening new spaces for community-led development and promoting indigenous philanthropy among CSOs. It also creates a fertile ground for CSOs to deepen their local engagement, diversify funding sources and amplify grassroots voices.

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