

Ghana

Country Focus Report

2025

Credit: Nana Kwandoh



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A) An Introduction to the Enabling Environment

What we understand by an Enabling Environment is the combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered, in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

To capture the state of the Enabling Environment, we use the following six principles:

SIX ENABLING PRINCIPLES

- 1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms**
- 2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework**
- 3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources**
- 4. Open and Responsive State**
- 5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society**
- 6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment**

In this Country Focus Report, each enabling principle is assessed with a quantitative score and complemented by an analysis and recommendations written by our Network Members. Rather than offering a singular index to rank countries, the report aims to measure the enabling environment for civil society across the six principles, discerning dimensions of strength and those requiring attention.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in the insights and diverse perspectives of civil society actors who came together in a dedicated panel with representatives from civil society to discuss and evaluate the state of the Enabling Environment. Their collective input enriches the report with a grounded, participatory assessment. This primary input is further supported by secondary sources of information, which provide additional context and strengthen the analysis.

Period covered by the report: December 2024 – December 2025

Brief Overview of the Country Context

Ghana presents a strong [constitutional framework](#) that guarantees freedom of association, expression and assembly. Registration processes for Civil Society Organisations are clear and supported by modern legal instruments such as the [Companies Act \(2019\)](#) and the [National NPO Policy \(2020\)](#), creating a predictable pathway for CSO formation and operation. However, centralised procedures, bureaucratic reporting demands, and compliance burdens, especially for smaller and rural organisations undermine full accessibility. Groups working on sensitive issues, particularly LGBTQ+ rights, also face pushback, reflecting gaps between legal protections and lived realities.

Following the [reintroduction of the anti-LGBTQ+ bill](#) in January 2025, Ghanaian lawmakers intensified efforts to pass legislation that would criminalise all transgender and same-sex activities. This has fostered a climate of fear, discrimination and social exclusion for LGBTQ+ individuals. The bill also criminalises the funding or sponsorship of LGBTQ+ related activities and any form of advocacy support on the promotion of the rights of this group of people. This not only restricts freedom of expression and association but also weakens civil society's ability to advocate for marginalised communities.

Resource access remains partially enabling but constrained by overreliance on foreign aid and limited domestic philanthropy. While CSOs can legally receive domestic and international funding, stringent donor requirements, financial compliance procedures and delays in bank transactions create operational difficulties. Short project cycles and shrinking development assistance threaten long-term sustainability, with many organisations struggling to retain staff or continue interventions once funding ends. Efforts toward diversified financing such as [corporate social responsibility](#) (CSR) partnerships and social enterprises are emerging but still insufficient to ensure resilience.

Relations between the state and civil society offer structured avenues for participation, with CSOs actively contributing to legislative hearings, sector working groups and national policy consultations. The [Right to Information Act \(2019\)](#) has strengthened transparency, and accountability institutions such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the RTI Commission continue to play important oversight roles. Yet, implementation challenges persist where information requests are delayed, feedback from government is inconsistent and urban and well-resourced CSOs tend to benefit more from participation platforms than rural actors. While engagement mechanisms exist, consultation processes are often late-stage and do not always shape final decisions.

Oversight institutions face political and resource constraints, as government responses to CSO recommendations are rarely detailed, sometimes lack clear explanations on why certain

recommendations are not adopted, and [corruption](#) perceptions remain high. Ghana scored 43 out of 100 on the 2025 [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) (CPI), ranking 76th out of 182 countries assessed globally, resulting from coordination, and structural and political [challenges](#) including the independence of Ghana's anti-corruption institutions.

Throughout the year, the Ghanaian government [intensified](#) efforts to combat illegal small-scale mining - "galamsey" - through a mix of strict regulatory reforms, military operations and monitoring, though these were sometimes met with violence.

Public discourse on civil society is vibrant but increasingly polarised. CSOs enjoy visibility and public support, particularly in service delivery, health and livelihoods, but those working on governance or human rights often face politicisation. Inclusion efforts benefit from progressive legal frameworks, yet disparities remain for women, rural communities, persons with disabilities and sexual and gender minorities. The digital environment is largely open, with strong protections for online expression and active civic mobilisation through social media. Still, [cyber risks](#), uneven digital access, high data costs and gaps in digital literacy, especially in rural areas, limit equitable participation. Together, these dynamics create an environment that is broadly supportive but marked by inefficient implementation, structural inequalities and emerging threats to civic space.

B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

PRINCIPLE SCORE

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score:



Ghana continues to uphold a [democratic](#) framework and avoids severe forms of repression. Constitutional guarantees for fundamental freedoms continue to exist, but their practical enjoyment has been constrained by [political polarisation](#), security responses to dissent and attacks on civic and media actors.

The December 2024 general elections and their [aftermath](#) were a defining context for civic freedoms. While citizens, political actors and civil society organisations actively used digital and offline spaces to engage in political debate and mobilisation, the period was marked by widespread disinformation and [post-electoral violence](#). According to the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), coordinated [disinformation](#) campaigns targeted political institutions and public officials, shaping narratives and deepening mistrust. Although the state did not impose blanket restrictions on online expression, the information environment became increasingly hostile and fragmented, undermining meaningful and informed participation.

At the same time, journalists faced persistent threats and physical attacks, while some media houses were [suspended](#), which significantly affected the safe exercise of fundamental freedoms. Multiple incidents were recorded in which journalists covering sensitive issues such as illegal mining, elections and security incidents were [assaulted](#) by unidentified armed individuals or members of the security forces. In one notable case, journalists were attacked while reporting on illegal mining activities in the Ashanti Region, while other incidents involved [attacks](#) by military officers during coverage of public events. On 26 November 2025 in Accra, the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) [arrested](#) Wendell Nana Yaw Yeboah, Head of Mobilisation at Democracy Hub and civil society advocate, following a [petition](#) by Ashanti Democrat members Daniel Sasu Omari, Jerry James Suker and Darren Jackson Pra on behalf

of three Regional Ministers, Dr Frank Amoakohene, Rita Akosua Adjei Awatey and Joseph Nelson. The petition was triggered by Yeboah's 18 November live radio [allegations](#) on Aluta FM where he accused the aforementioned ministers of illegal mining involvement, which Yeboah [retracted](#) the same day. Despite the retraction, the petitioners argued that the initial claims' seriousness warranted investigation due to their impact on public trust. Yeboah was detained and interrogated, taken to Circuit Court 11, which [granted bail](#) on 27 November, but he was only [released](#) on 3 December 2025 after police formalities. Civil society, including the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), [criticised](#) the arrest, calling for reform of speech-related criminal laws to better protect free expression and civic space in Ghana. These attacks, coupled with [limited accountability](#) for perpetrators, contributed to an atmosphere of intimidation that constrained both expression and civic oversight.

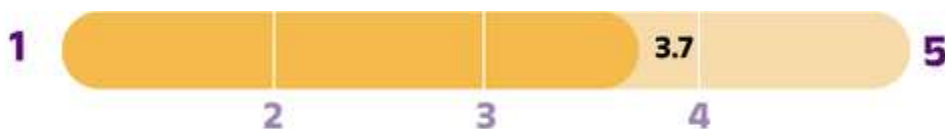
Fundamental freedoms were further tested through the state's response to protests and public demonstrations. In the months leading up to and following the elections, peaceful protests related to [environmental degradation](#) and governance concerns were frequently met with [arrests](#) and prosecutions. In some cases, demonstrators were detained despite prior notification to the police, charged with unlawful assembly and denied bail, signalling a restrictive approach to public order management. Electoral tensions also spilled into violent incidents, including the [vandalisation](#) of the Electoral Commission's regional office, which led to the suspension of vote collation processes in parts of the country. These developments illustrate how the exercise of civic freedoms, particularly collective action and protest, was often disrupted by security interventions and political tensions rather than facilitated through dialogue and de-escalation.

In general, while civic actors remained active and visible, their ability to operate freely and safely was frequently undermined. In addition, if adopted, the re-introduction of the draconian LGBTQ+ bill would also pose a threat to freedom of association and expression as it criminalises the promotion of LGBTQ+-related activities.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Score:



“However, the bureaucratic nature of the process needs to be eliminated. So many documents are required, and the mandatory annual renewal process is not efficient and takes significant time for completion (although said to be 3 weeks, it can take over a month).” Expert panellist

“Fair to state however that the process of receiving tax exemptions is not transparent or predictable, as considerable tax knowledge is required regarding qualifying donations and the processes involved, including getting the commissioner’s approval.” Expert panellist

“Even though the justification was public order or security, it shows how courts/police can significantly limit civic mobilization. Incidents like these affect the general enabling state of civil society work by legal intimidations and police evasion and brutality.” Expert panellist

“The proposed Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Act, if passed into law, would criminalize activities supporting LGBTQI+ rights and impose severe restrictions on related civil society work. While most CSOs operate with minimal interference, these targeted restrictions prevent a higher score.” Expert panellist

Ghana’s legal and regulatory environment provides a generally supportive foundation for civil society operations, anchored in the [1992 Constitution](#), which guarantees freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly. These constitutional protections underpin the legitimacy of civil society organisations (CSOs) and enable them to operate as [recognised](#) development partners. This enabling environment is further reinforced by statutory frameworks such as the [Companies Act, 2019](#) (Act 992), under which CSOs register as Companies Limited by Guarantee. Oversight mechanisms including the [Non-Profit Organisation Secretariat](#) (NPOS), the [Directives for the Management of NPO Operations in Ghana](#) (2020) and the [National NPO Policy](#) (2020) contribute to a transparent and predictable

[registration process](#) supported by [standardised procedures](#) at the Office of the Registrar of Companies (ORC).

Together, these frameworks offer a clear pathway for compliance and establish well-defined expectations for CSO operations at national, regional and district levels. CSOs are also encouraged to collaborate with district structures to align their work with local development priorities, and autonomy in internal governance and programme design is generally respected by the state.

Although these provisions create a strong legal basis for civil society participation, several practical barriers weaken the effectiveness of the enabling environment. Registration processes remain highly centralised in Accra, the capital, resulting in delays and increased costs for community-based and rural organisations. Ongoing requirements such as annual licence renewals, multiple interactions with oversight bodies including the [Ghana Revenue Authority](#) (GRA) and the [Financial Intelligence Centre](#) (FIC) and strict compliance obligations place disproportionate administrative burdens on smaller organisations.

Duplicate reporting to multiple regulators, together with the requirement to submit annual reports and audited accounts within tight timelines, further strains limited institutional capacities. Tax exemptions for charitable organisations, although provided for under Section 97 of the [Income Tax Act, 2015](#) (Act 896), are applied inconsistently due to discretionary decision-making. Legal and political constraints also affect the operational landscape. [Strict due diligence](#) measures under the [Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2020](#) (Act 1044) often delay the opening of bank accounts or the disbursement of funds.

Oversight bodies provide safeguards against undue interference including recourse to the courts and the [Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice](#) (CHRAJ). Legal frameworks such as the Companies Act, 2019 (Act 992) and existing NPO directives also outline due process for dissolution or sanctions, including written notice and the right of appeal, helping to constrain arbitrary state action. However, these protections are not always reliably enforced. Court [backlogs](#), implementation gaps and discretionary application of regulations reduce their practical effectiveness.

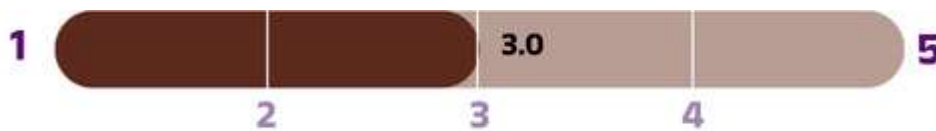
CSOs working on sensitive issues, especially governance, accountability and [LGBTQ+ rights](#), often encounter subtle forms of interference, including political pressure, social resistance, heightened scrutiny and occasional harassment. Emerging legislative developments such as the proposed [Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill](#) (2024) and debates around a new NPO Bill have raised concerns about potential future restrictions, including increased state control through selective licensing or regulatory oversight.

Overall, although Ghana has constitutional and legal protections for CSOs, the strength of those protections depends heavily on how laws are implemented and enforced, how willing state agencies are to tolerate dissent and how transparent and fair regulatory processes are. Autonomy for CSOs is legally recognised, but state-affiliated bodies and oversight laws are increasingly asserting control, sometimes under legitimate concerns, but often in ways that CSOs view as threatening civil society. These dynamics contribute to an environment that, while legally protective theoretically, remains operationally fragile due to inconsistent enforcement and selective application of laws.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Score:



“Generally, I think CSOs have access to funding sources, which is mainly through multilateral, bilateral and private foundations with some present in country, others at regional offices within the continent or even in the west.” Expert Panellist

“Donors always come with their own reporting requirements that overrides the internal reporting requirements of organisations.” Expert Panellist

“Donor resources have enabled CSOs to deliver impactful programming in climate action, health, livelihoods, and governance. However, effectiveness is often limited by short funding cycles, earmarked project funds, and limited provision for core institutional strengthening.” Expert Panellist

“Many NGOs in Ghana are therefore just surviving or are struggling to survive financially and operationally, in part due to the changing aid architecture, with some organizations struggling to mobilize the needed resources to sustain their interventions and secure the quality and continuity of programs and projects.” Expert Panellist

Ghana’s regulatory environment allows civil society organisations (CSOs) to seek, receive and manage resources without legal restrictions, both domestically and internationally. The [Bank of Ghana Act 930](#) (2016) provides a framework through which organisations can freely open bank accounts, receive transfers and access grants. In principle, this supports resource mobilisation and financial operations for CSOs. However, the operational reality presents barriers that affect equitable access. Smaller and rural CSOs face significant challenges in meeting stringent donor due diligence requirements. These challenges include inadequate administrative and financial infrastructure, lack of adequate technological capacity and absence of relevant policies, which tend to favour larger, more formalised organisations. Larger organisations tend to have audited accounts, written policies, safeguarding systems and procurement procedures which most smaller organisations do not have. Limited digital banking infrastructure, delays in fund transfers and unreliable access to real-time financial information further affect organisational responsiveness and project implementation. While international grants remain a primary funding source, domestic financing opportunities are

scarce and [structured local philanthropy remains weak](#), compounded by complex tax incentive processes under the [Income Tax Act](#) (896). As a result, many organisations remain dependent on external donors, making access to resources uneven and unpredictable.

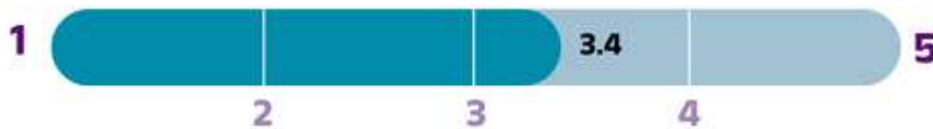
[Donor funding](#) continues to play a central role in [enabling CSOs](#) to deliver projects in governance, health, education and climate-related sectors. However, donor conditions are often rigid and driven by external priorities, with limited space for local input. Many CSOs adapt their missions or programming to align with donor agendas due to resource scarcity. Compliance and reporting obligations which are typically elaborate, standardised and time-consuming add [administrative pressures](#), particularly for smaller organisations with limited capacity. Short project cycles, often between 6 and 12 months, restrict long-term planning and undermine sustainability, especially in areas requiring extended engagement such as behaviour change, governance reforms and community empowerment. Larger and more established CSOs are better able to navigate these constraints, while smaller groups risk [exclusion](#) due to these complex compliance demands. Although consortium models and capacity-building initiatives are emerging, the funding landscape remains predominantly donor-driven, limiting flexibility for CSOs to pursue locally led strategies.

[Sustainability](#) remains a major challenge for the sector. Most CSOs rely heavily on project-based funding that is short-term and tied to donor priorities, limiting their ability to maintain staff, support institutional systems, or sustain programme results after funding ends. Ghana's transition to middle-income status and the resulting [shrink](#) in Official Development Assistance (ODA) has intensified competition for grants and heightened vulnerability to geopolitical shifts, such as the recent [USAID funding freezes](#). Attempts to diversify revenue streams through local philanthropy, [corporate social responsibility partnerships](#) and [social enterprise models](#) remain in early stages and are insufficient to offer a stable financial footing. The broader domestic philanthropic culture is still weak and limited tax incentives contribute to reduced local giving. Additionally, the integration of CSO programmes into national development systems remains low, increasing the risk of programme decline once donor support ends. While emerging approaches such as [blended financing](#), consortium building and locally driven [resource mobilisation](#) show potential, they require stronger [domestic frameworks](#), more flexible funding mechanisms and sustained investment in organisational resilience to achieve long-term sustainability.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

4. Open and Responsive State

Score:



“Generally, government creates opportunities to consult CSOs. There are a number of platforms, government bodies and institutions that have CSOs as part of their set ups. Some form working groups and coalitions with CSOs to work on policy documents and so on. An example is the Affirmative Action Law that was done between the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and the Affirmative Action Coalition.” Expert Panellist

“Invitations to consultations often arrive late, and the time allowed for comments is short. These compressed timelines limit the breadth and depth of civil society input, even when formal mechanisms exist. As a result, the quality and diversity of contributions are reduced.” Expert Panellist

Ghana’s governance framework provides a strong legal and institutional basis for [transparency](#), participation and accountability, creating an environment that generally enables civil society engagement. The [Right to Information Act, 2019](#) (Act 989), forms a key pillar of this framework by guaranteeing citizens and CSOs the right to access public information. The Act outlines clear procedures, timelines and sanctions for non-compliance and recent enforcement actions such as the RTI Commission’s imposition of [administrative penalties](#) in March 2025, signal increasing institutional responsiveness. CSOs, investigative journalists and media organisations like the [Fourth Estate](#) and the [Media Foundation for West Africa](#) (MFWA) frequently rely on RTI requests to promote public accountability, while national [budget statements](#) and [parliamentary proceedings](#) are made publicly available.

[Formal mechanisms](#) for [CSO participation](#) in national policy processes further reinforce openness. CSOs are included in sector working groups, budget consultations, parliamentary hearings and specialised coalitions such as the [Affirmative Action Bill Coalition](#) and [Open Government Partnership](#) platforms, enabling them to influence major policy debates and legislative reviews. Parliament routinely invites CSOs to public hearings, and ministries such as Finance incorporate stakeholder input during budget preparation. CSOs have demonstrated their influence in several national debates and revisions to university legislation, where civil society advocacy shaped or delayed key decisions. These mechanisms allow both

national and international NGOs to provide input, reinforcing accountability and participatory governance.

Additionally, [institutional mechanisms](#) such as oversight committees, the [Auditor-General's Office](#), [CHRAJ](#), the Right to Information Commission and anti-corruption agencies have been set up to [promote accountability](#). The President's periodic "[Meet the Press](#)" sessions, [State of the Nation Addresses](#) and structured parliamentary hearings also provide platforms for government to share updates with citizens and CSOs. These mechanisms signal a functioning framework for oversight and citizen engagement. In recent years, government bodies have occasionally imposed sanctions for non-compliance, such as [fines by the RTI Commission](#), demonstrating some level of institutional responsiveness.

Despite these enabling provisions, several implementation gaps continue to constrain openness and responsiveness. Access to information remains challenging due to [delays](#) and [outdated data](#). Proactive disclosure varies widely across government agencies and sectoral data particularly in health, education, and the environment, and is often incomplete or not updated in real time, weakening evidence-based advocacy.

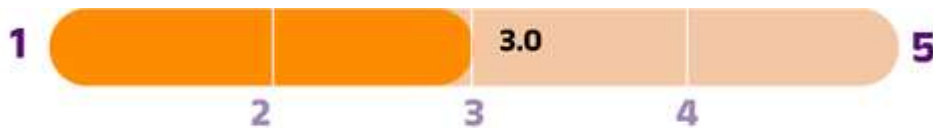
Participation, while institutionalised, is sometimes late in the policy cycle and tends to favour urban-based CSOs with more resources and better connectivity. Grassroots organisations face barriers related to timeliness, limited consultation windows and accessibility challenges. While CSOs and the media actively expose corruption and demand transparency, follow-up actions from state institutions are selective and [weak](#). Consultation processes seldom include formal mechanisms for tracking or responding to CSO input, leaving accountability dependent on advocacy and public pressure. The National Communications Authority's 2025 consultation on the Electronic Communications Bill [invited comments](#) from CSOs and the public, but did not explain how comments were assessed, or notify contributors how their input was used. The [Right to Information Manual](#) also outlines a 30-day period for applicants to submit applications if access to information is denied or if the 14-day statutory deadline passes without a response.

These gaps indicate that while Ghana's legal and institutional frameworks support an open and responsive state, their practical effectiveness is weak, requiring strengthened implementation, inclusivity and sustained institutional commitment. Nevertheless, Ghana's consistent use of [consultation platforms](#) and legislative requirements for public input reflect a relatively fair [enabling environment](#) for civil society participation, even as inclusivity and timeliness require further improvement.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Score:



“Historically, Ghanaian governments and political leaders have treated civil society organisations (CSO’s) as important partners in service delivery and advocacy. Why I say this, the evidence, in human terms: Governments still present CSOs as partners, publicly and in practice. Ministers, agencies, and some programmes routinely invite CSOs to sit on policy platforms, co-deliver projects (health, education, anti-corruption, border/security dialogues), and participate in consultations.” Expert Panellist

“Afrobarometer surveys show Ghanaians value civic engagement, but participation beyond elections remains low. Citizens generally trust religious and community groups more than advocacy CSOs. Civic education exists in schools, but its depth and reach are limited. Many youth feel disconnected from formal decision-making.” Expert Panellist

“In general, there is inequality in Ghana with different dimensions of it. And so definitely some rural folk may be disadvantaged to participate on some civic processes, as a result of having to rather spend time on economic and survival issues.” Expert Panellist

Ghana’s public environment generally recognises and values the contributions of civil society, with CSOs playing an active role in service delivery, advocacy and governance. However, the case is not the same for civic actors working on more sensitive issues such as LGBTQ+ rights. The re-introduction of the anti-LGBTQ+ bill poses a threat to organisations working on the rights of this group.

Government ministries and public institutions frequently invite CSOs to participate in policy discussions, co-implement programmes and contribute to debates on national issues. Media platforms regularly [highlight CSO initiatives](#), reinforcing their role as credible actors and intermediaries between citizens and the state. Citizen-led movements such as [#OccupyJulorbiHouse](#) and [#FixTheCountry](#) further demonstrate the vibrancy of civic discourse, showing that civil society continues to shape national conversations and mobilise public engagement.

Ghanaian citizens generally perceive CSOs positively, recognising their contributions to service delivery, advocacy and governance. [Public trust](#) in CSOs remains moderate, with community-level actors especially valued for mobilising livelihoods, promoting health interventions and advancing climate resilience. Civic participation is strongest during elections, where most citizens believe their vote can influence political outcomes. However, participation in other areas such as policy debates and [decision-making](#), manifesto engagements and political accountability processes is limited, reflecting a narrow view of democratic engagement. While CSOs working in health, education and humanitarian aid enjoy broad trust and strong community support, governance and rights-focused organisations sometimes face [scepticism](#), [political pressure](#), threats and lack of cooperation from state institutions, particularly in politically polarised contexts. In Northern Ghana, human rights defenders who were supporting victims of anti-LGBTQ violence have been [threatened and some banished](#).

Civic education plays an important role in shaping perceptions and participation in civic activities such as voting. Institutions like the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) run [civic clubs](#) in schools and community-based programmes, but their reach and resources are limited, particularly in rural areas. Urban youth have been especially active through social movements such as #FixTheCountry, demonstrating that civic energy exists. Overall, these interactions reflect a culture in which civil society remains visible and engaged in addressing national priorities.

Despite these positive elements, the broader discursive environment has become increasingly polarised. Rights-based and governance-focused CSOs sometimes face [politicisation](#), with some government officials framing them as partisan or externally influenced, particularly when they critique government actions or address sensitive issues such as corruption, illegal mining or LGBTQ+ rights. Public trust in CSOs is shaped by this dynamic. Civic participation also remains limited outside election periods, reflecting narrow public perceptions of democratic engagement.

In addition, Ghana's legal and institutional frameworks provide strong foundations for equality, inclusion and civic participation. Key legislative instruments such as the [Affirmative Action Act](#) (2024), the [Children's Act](#) (1998) and the [Persons with Disability Act](#) (2006) support gender equality, youth inclusion and the rights of [marginalised groups](#). These frameworks are complemented by oversight and human rights bodies such as CHRAJ and the NCCE, which are mandated to protect civic rights and promote participation. However, despite these legal safeguards, practical barriers persist. Women remain underrepresented in decision-making spaces, with about [14.5%](#) of women representatives in Parliament. Rural communities, persons with disabilities and economically marginalised groups face structural obstacles such as [poverty](#), low literacy, unemployment and lack of access to information that restrict their ability to engage meaningfully in civic processes.

While inclusion efforts have advanced for women through affirmative action policies, other groups face rising exclusion, particularly sexual and gender minorities who remain at risk of [criminalisation](#), [violence](#) and restricted access to services. CSOs have responded with targeted initiatives in youth [climate action](#), [women empowerment](#) and [inclusive governance](#), but persistent inequalities in political representation, geographic access and social tolerance limit their impact. Inclusion tends to be stronger in urban centres than in rural areas, where economic survival often takes precedence over civic participation.

Government and institutional forums sometimes [recognise CSOs](#) as partners in policy dialogue, but public debate around sensitive rights issues sometimes exclude CSOs, are polarised, exclusionary and less grounded in evidence-based engagement. The re-introduction of the anti LGBTQ+ bill highlights the lack of inclusion of CSOs in public debates, especially on issues around advocacy.

This imbalance between legal frameworks and lived realities creates an environment where progressive laws exist, but enforcement gaps, cultural barriers and selective tolerance weaken their effectiveness in practice.

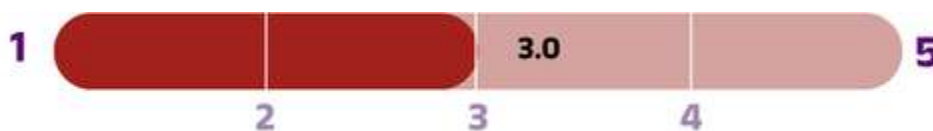
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PRINCIPLE SCORE

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Score:



“Observably, there has not really been a deliberate shutdown of the internet and social media by the government of Ghana even during protests, electioneering periods, heated national discussions where there are insecurity and conflict implications, yet the government will allow access but rather take proactive measures to calm nerves such as immediate press conferences telecasted live on TV, radio and social media, while ensuring the security agencies are actively at post to ensure safety, peace and security.” Expert Panellist

“Internet is more available in urban areas as compared to rural. There is limited access to training and capacity strengthening on digital tools and platforms. Data prices are high making it difficult for some CSOs to afford using the internet. It is difficult to use digital platforms due to lack of electricity in some areas in Ghana.” Expert Panellist

Ghana’s digital environment remains relatively open in terms of legislation, granting access to digital platforms and the absence of systematic internet shutdowns. The digital environment is grounded in constitutional protections for freedom of expression under [Article 21](#) of the 1992 Constitution. Citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs) enjoy open access to widely used digital platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, Facebook and WhatsApp, which have become essential channels for civic participation, mobilisation and political engagement. Digital activism movements like [#FixTheCountry](#) demonstrate the power of these online spaces to drive accountability and shape national discourse. Importantly, since 1992 the government has never initiated a nationwide internet shutdown, even during sensitive moments such as the 2024 elections or the August 2025 [helicopter crash](#), despite public pressure to [restrict access](#). Instead, authorities relied on communication and security responses, earning commendation from digital rights actors such as the [Internet Society Ghana Chapter](#).

A comprehensive legal architecture including the [Data Protection Act](#) (2012), [Cybersecurity Act](#) (2020) and [Electronic Communications Act](#) (2008) further anchors digital rights and provides regulatory structure for online activity. Alongside these protections, Ghana has developed institutions such as the [Data Protection Commission](#) (DPC) and [Cyber Security](#)

[Authority](#) (CSA) supported by a [National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy](#) that guide incident response and cross-sector coordination. The CSA coordinates national cyber incident handling by collecting incident reports and sharing threat information across the relevant sectors, while the DPC focuses on implementing appropriate data-protection procedures. Collectively, these institutions provide CSOs with a clearer mechanism for reporting cyber incidents and accessing support.

According to [Freedom on the Net 2025](#), Ghana's internet remains largely open with no systematic blocking of content, but has experienced a gradual decline in internet freedom, including isolated arrests related to online expression, increased online harassment and heightened disinformation during the electoral period.

The online environment generally remains safe, with no recorded state-sponsored cyberattacks against civil society. Expanding infrastructure has also improved digital accessibility. [Internet penetration](#) has reached approximately 70%, with more than 24 million active users, aided by initiatives like the [National Fibre Optic Backbone](#), the [Digital Innovation Agenda](#), and private sector investments such as the approval of [Starlink](#) for commercial use. Urban CSOs typically possess strong ICT capacity and benefit from digital finance systems such as MTN Mobile Money, which enhance operational efficiency.

Despite this largely supportive environment, significant risks and barriers persist. [Concerns](#) around surveillance and restrictions are emerging and linked to legal and policy trends. The [Electronic Communications Act](#), 2008 (Act 775), which criminalises the publication of "false information" online, has been used to [arrest individuals](#) over their social media posts.

Freedom House reported that internet freedom in Ghana slightly declined during the period from June 2024 to May 2025, noting that political actors spread [false information](#) on social media ahead of the 2024 elections, and online users also faced arrest risks for digital posts. The Media Foundation for West Africa also highlighted the widespread use of [false narratives](#) aimed at influencing the credibility and peaceful outcome of the vote, including AI-generated audio purporting to show presidential candidates inciting violence or plotting electoral fraud, coordinated hashtag campaigns designed to manipulate trends on X and false claims about election violence, thugs and ballot materials.

Although Ghana has avoided systemic censorship, individuals have occasionally been arrested for "[false publication](#)" or content considered [threatening](#) to public peace. Concerns about [online surveillance](#) and the discretionary application of cybersecurity laws by government officials have created anxieties that may [suppress free expression](#) for journalists, activists and citizens. The bill grants powers to regulators and law enforcement such as inspections without warrants and freezing of assets without judicial review.

The rapid [growth of social media](#) has also intensified misinformation, prompting calls for more [balanced regulatory responses](#). Digital security challenges further complicate the environment. Cyber incidents including the [hacking](#) of President Mahama's social media account and a [cyber breach](#) at MTN in early 2025 highlight vulnerabilities across the ecosystem. Many CSOs, particularly smaller organisations, lack [technical capabilities](#), [cyber awareness](#) or dedicated security personnel, exposing them to [phishing](#), hacking and disinformation.

While legal protections exist, enforcement remains challenging and citizens often lack clarity about how data is collected, stored or shared. Although these incidents do not amount to systemic censorship, they highlight the importance of [transparent due process](#) and clear communication during enforcement or disruptions.

Accessibility gaps persist nationwide. Rural and underserved communities, especially in northern Ghana, face [weak connectivity](#), unreliable electricity and [high data costs](#), limiting their ability to engage meaningfully in digital spaces. Many target groups of CSOs also experience low digital literacy, creating further barriers to participation. Persons with disabilities encounter

additional exclusion, as most digital platforms are not optimised for screen readers, sign language support or other accessibility features. The re-introduction of the anti-LGBTQ+ bill exposes journalists, media houses and digital platforms to scrutiny and self-censorship as it [criminalises](#) any medium that facilitates the dissemination of content supportive of LGBTQ+ advocacy. Although CSOs employ hybrid engagement approaches to bridge these divides, persistent infrastructure, affordability and skills gaps continue to restrict equitable [digital inclusion](#).

C) Recommendations

Based on the contributions from the different panellists, the following were suggested as recommendations for government institutions to enable a more enabling environment for the effective functioning of CSOs in Ghana:

Principle 2: Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework

Decentralise the Registration and Compliance System

Strengthen the Office of the Registrar of Companies (ORC)'s service coverage through regional and district offices and digital platforms to reduce delays and burdens associated with centralised processes in Accra.

Strengthen Consistent Enforcement of Non-Profit Organisation Regulations

Ensure uniform application of regulatory standards, including timelines for annual filings, tax exemption processes and complaint mechanisms.

Enhance Transparency and Predictability of Oversight Processes

Clarify the roles of the Office of the Registrar of Companies (ORC), the Non-Profit Organisation Secretariat, the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) and the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) to reduce duplication and enhance CSO confidence.

Protect Rights-Based Civil Society Organisations from Discretionary Interference

Safeguard constitutional freedoms for organisations working on sensitive issues such as accountability or minority rights.

Strengthen Appeal and Redress Mechanisms

Improve responsiveness of the courts and administrative bodies in handling civil society disputes.

Principle 3: Accessible and Sustainable Resources

Improve Access to Domestic Funding Sources

Promote local philanthropy, corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributions and structured national funding mechanisms for civil society organisations.

Streamline Donor Reporting and Compliance Requirements

Encourage more flexible donor procedures to reduce administrative burdens, particularly for smaller organisations.

Facilitate Equitable Distribution of Donor Funds

Ensure that rural, community-based and emerging organisations can access opportunities often dominated by urban or well-established organisations.

Support Long-Term Sustainability Models

Promote multi-year funding, strengthen financial management capacity and encourage diversified income streams.

Principle 4: Open and Responsive State

Improve Responsiveness to Information Requests

Strengthen implementation of the Right to Information Act (RTI Act) by ensuring timely responses, proactive disclosure and reduced bureaucratic barriers.

Strengthen Civil Society Participation in Policymaking

Institutionalise civil society involvement earlier in the policy cycle to improve inclusiveness and influence.

Enhance Functionality of Accountability Mechanisms

Provide oversight institutions with adequate resources, independence and enforcement powers to take action on corruption and public grievances.

Principle 5: Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society

Promote Positive Public Narratives about Civil Society

Amplify evidence of civil society contributions to development, democratic governance and accountability to counter negative or politicised narratives.

Reduce Politicisation of Civil Society Work

Encourage fair, balanced engagement between government and civil society organisations to reduce mistrust and political labelling.

Expand Inclusive Civic Education

Strengthen efforts by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and civil society partners to reach marginalised groups, rural communities and populations with low literacy.

Address Social Exclusion and Intolerance

Promote rights-based dialogue and inclusive policies for women, youth, persons with disabilities and minority groups.

Principle 6: Access to a Secure Digital Environment

Strengthen Enforcement of Digital Rights Protections

Ensure transparent implementation of the Data Protection Act (2012), the Cybersecurity Act (2020) and the Electronic Communications Act (2008).

Improve Digital Security Capabilities of Civil Society Organisations

Expand training, resources and tools for safe digital operations, especially for smaller organisations vulnerable to cyber threats.

Reduce Digital Inequalities

Improve rural connectivity, reduce data costs and expand affordable internet access to ensure equitable participation.

Enhance Digital Literacy Among Citizens and Grassroots Actors

Support capacity building in safe internet use, fact-checking, digital advocacy and cyber hygiene.

Promote Accessibility in Digital Platforms

Ensure digital platforms incorporate inclusive design features to support persons with disabilities.

D) Research Process

Each principle encompasses various dimensions which are assessed and aggregated to provide quantitative scores per principle. These scores reflect the degree to which the environment within the country enables or disables the work of civil society. Scores are on a five-category scale defined as: fully disabling (1), disabling (2), partially enabling (3), enabling (4), and fully enabling (5). To complement the scores, this report provides a narrative analysis of the enabling or disabling environment for civil society, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as offering recommendations. The process of drafting the analysis is led by Network Members; the consortium provides quality control and editorial oversight before publication.

For Principle 1 - which evaluates respect for and protection of freedom of association and peaceful assembly - the score integrates data from the [CIVICUS Monitor](#). However, for Principles 2–6, the availability of yearly updated external quantitative indicators for the 86 countries part of the EUSEE programme are either limited or non-existent. To address this, Network Members convene a panel of representatives of civil society and experts once a year. This panel uses a set of guiding questions to assess the status of each principle and its dimensions within the country. The discussions are supported by secondary sources, such as [V-Dem](#), the [Bertelsmann Stiftung Governance Index](#), the [RTI Rating from the Centre for Law and Democracy](#), and other trusted resources. These sources provide benchmarks for measuring similar dimensions and are complemented by primary data collection and other secondary sources of information available for the country. Guided by these deliberations, the panel assigns scores for each dimension, which the Network Members submit to the Consortium, accompanied by detailed justifications that reflect the country's specific context. To determine a single score per principle, the scores assigned to each dimension are aggregated using a weighted average, reflecting the relative importance of each dimension within the principle. This approach balances diverse perspectives while maintaining a structured and objective evaluation framework.

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