

## Sustaining civil society actions for inclusive national development

### About STAR-Ghana

The Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana programme (**STAR-Ghana**) is a £22 million, five-year programme, which aims to strengthen civil society and enable citizens to engage with the state to ensure accountable, transparent and responsive governance at both local and national levels.

Funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), the European Union and the Danish Government's development arm, DANIDA, STAR-Ghana is in its second phase of implementation, the first phase having ended in April 2015.

The current phase builds on the results and learning from the first phase of the programme to improve its contribution to the effectiveness of citizen-influenced advances in democratic governance, accountability, and inclusive national development through support for civil society organisations.

### How we see change happening

STAR-Ghana's approach to change is framed around the "3Cs&L" (Convener, Catalyst, Coordinator and Learning) within a wider framework that prioritizes gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). This means

- Convening a broad range of stakeholders for dialogue and collective strategizing and action;
- Catalysing change through the identification of opportunities and critical entry points for action, and promoting joint working with new and innovative strategic partners;
- Coordinating action by civil society organisations to ensure optimal use of limited resources; and
- Generating and incorporating learning in all aspects and at all levels of STAR-Ghana's work including engagements with grants partners and other stakeholders.

In this approach, grant making is no longer the principal function of STAR-Ghana. The new focus is on the promotion of an active citizenry, able to champion democratic governance, accountability and inclusive development.

### Sustainability of civil society activism

Over the past two decades various efforts have been made to optimise and sustain the contribution of civil society to inclusive national development. However the impact of these efforts at growth has been constrained by:

- Fragmentation of CSO front by issues of turf, leadership and co-optation
- Questions around the very legitimacy of some civil society entities and actions
- Absence of a coordinated voice and engagements on key national and strategic development issues
- Significant dependence of civil society external funding sources, which is currently threatened by the shifting focus of development partners.

Within this context, there is the need for an entity to sustain civil society activism and safeguard the gains that have been made in strengthening civil society voice as well as build on the capacity strengthening agenda that has been initiated.

Such an entity could amongst other functions provide a mechanism through which CSOs could pursue a 3Cs&L approach based on the core values of inclusive development.

Ghana has a wide range of civil society entities, community-based organisations, issue-focussed and political movements, professional associations, workers' unions and faith-based organisations. These organisations can be large or small, operating at national, regional or local levels. They may represent certain groups of people and communities - urban or rural - and respond to particular political, economic or social interests. They can be well-funded or financially challenged - with extreme variation in their access to resources.

### **Towards an independent national entity**

The aspiration to build an **independent national entity** with a more diversified funding stream for active citizenship work in Ghana is a distinctive departure from earlier efforts at sustaining the civil society sector.

STAR-Ghana's move towards a national institution, owned and governed by Ghanaians, is premised on:

- Solid track record of support to CSOs and Parliament and the media
- Considerable convening power to create spaces for citizens' voice
- Trust and relationship capital, as an honest broker
- Dynamic local leadership
- Robust and reliable financial management system and proven grants and fund management capacity
- Significant profile, visibility and credibility
- National brand recognition across sectors, by governance and development players
- Ability to document and share compelling human stories of social change
- Proven capacity for monitoring and evaluation of programme results and impact
- Prioritisation of continuous learning as a basis for flexible and adaptive programming
- Proven commitment to putting gender equality and social inclusion at the heart of national development.

Our compelling vision is of an active, well-informed society mobilising active citizenship as a critical national asset for realising Ghana's promise for the future – a more equitable and inclusive society that truly 'leaves no-one behind.'

To this end, STAR-Ghana is undertaking general engagements in all 10 regional capitals to solicit inputs for the proposed independent national entity. These consultations will be completely open to public participation. Other channels for stakeholder contributions include social media, surveys and targeted submissions.

### **Why are we conducting these consultations?**

STAR-Ghana is undertaking wide-ranging consultations within civil society and with other key stakeholders, to help to define the nature and form of the proposed independent institution and the particular gap it could fill in the evolving Ghanaian context. The process is aimed at ensuring genuine co-creation and broad national ownership of the envisaged entity.

The consultations provide an opportunity to test the relevance of this ambitious institutional vision and in the process generate innovative ideas for sustainability. Practical options relating to the

character, composition and legal form of the entity as well as how to ensure buy-in and general ownership shall be considered. Transition processes to the independent national entity will be explored. The agenda will also include discussions on the challenges of gatekeeping as well as financial sustainability.

STAR-Ghana will take advantage of these consultations to update participants on the implementation of the recommendations generated through similar consultations that preceded the development of the current phase of the programme.

**What shall we do with your feedback?**

- Identify emerging consensus around civil support areas and mechanisms for addressing these issues long-term basis;
- Validate the findings with more targeted consultations;
- Use the findings as bases for decisions on the way forward; and
- Communicate agreed decisions and implementation timetable to key stakeholders.