

REPORT OF THE 2ND GHANA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM 2024

25th & 26th June 2024
Swiss Alisa Hotel, Ridge Accra





Overview of the forum

- From 25th to 26th of June 2024 at the Swiss Alisa Hotel, Ridge Accra.
- Over 300 participants, drawn from diverse CSOs, ranging from community-based organisations (CBOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs), national Think Tanks, non-governmental organisations and international NGOs (INGOs) operating in Ghana participated in the forum.
- Development partners, including Heads of Mission and Ambassadors also participated.
- Jointly funded by STAR-Ghana Foundation (STAR-Ghana), the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), NORSAAC, the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC), OXFAM Ghana and the United Nations (UN) in Ghana.



Background

In 2022, 194 civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ghana met in Accra to initiate processes towards the development of a space for improved collaboration, coordination and support among and between themselves. The impetus to develop a space, to be known as the Ghana Civil Society Forum (GCSF), was driven by a number of factors including:

- Growing restrictions and constriction of the civic space, through policy and regulatory reforms and overt and covert actions by state and non-state interest groups.
- Reduced funding to the civil society sector and reduced discretionary and core funding to CSOs, particularly following the covid-19 pandemic and the current global economic crisis.
- Weak coordinated actions among CSOs on issues of common interest. While there are sectoral networks and coalitions and a few regional alliances, there is no mechanism for mobilization and action on cross-sectoral and overarching issues affecting the civic sector and organizations. Weak coordinated actions among CSOs on issues of common interest. While there are sectoral networks and coalitions and a few regional alliances, there is no mechanism for mobilization and action on cross-sectoral and overarching issues affecting the civic sector and

GCSF 24' THEME

‘Civil Society at an Inflection Point: Strategizing for Increased Legitimacy, Effectiveness, and Sustainability’

The 2024 Forum aims to focus on strategizing Civil Societies' work for increased legitimacy, effectiveness and sustainability. The theme seeks to explore ways to nurture and strengthen networking and coordinated actions to address systemic challenges (issues) within the civic space.

Purpose and Expected Outcomes



The purpose of the forum is to nurture and strengthen networking and coordinated actions within the civil society sector for enhanced sustainability and effectiveness of civil society actors in Ghana.



The specific objectives of GCSF'24 are:

- a. Development of an inclusive mechanism, and spaces, for improving the coordination and collaboration amongst CSOs around salient issues.
- b. Provide a platform for networking and knowledge sharing among CSAs.
- c. Creating an environment where participants can engage on the challenges that the civil society sector in Ghana will face in the foreseeable future, and cocreate solutions for these.





Values Of The GCSF 24'

Participants discussed and came to agreement on the following as the values to part with from the **GCSF 24'**.

Increased Effectiveness

Redefine our roles and responsibility in the development sector.

Define our constituency comprehensively, build trust and capacity, exhibit and promote transparency and accountability.

Establish an effective and strategic communication and branding technique.

Sustainability

Embrace radical alternatives and perspective to the discourse on local and global challenges that affect citizens

Evolve new ways of mobilizing by leveraging social networks, technology and building capacity.

Impress upon donor to embrace and incorporate the concept of co-creation in development decision making.

Legitimacy

Explore innovative ways to diversify funding streams and approaches in the phase of dwindling donor funds from traditional source.

Build internal capacity including effective corporate governance systems and relevant skills to fully embrace the concept 'Shift The Power'

Leverage on partnerships for resource mobilization.

Opening Events And Speeches



Welcome and Opening Remarks: Alhaji Ibrahim-Tanko Amidu

- The Civil Society Forum commenced with a warm welcome and heartfelt thanks from Alhaji Ibrahim Tanko the Executive Director, STAR-Ghana Foundation to all participants and partners.
- He highlighted the necessity for CSOs to have a coordinated voice, which informed the inaugural forum in 2022. This year's theme was chosen in response to the current challenges within the civil society space in Ghana. It serves as a crucial platform for CSOs to strategize, ensuring they remain credible, relevant, and effective.
- He emphasized that achieving these goals requires putting our house in order, and the GCSF presents the best opportunity to do so.



Setting the Tone: Beauty Narteh



- Mrs Beauty Narteh, Executive Secretary of the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition, took the stage to set the tone, reflecting on the journey that began in March 2022.
- *"Despite the progress made, challenges persist, particularly in terms of funding. The way forward involves building on the gains of the first forum. 'Today's gathering seeks to explore ways to nurture and address systemic changes within the civil society space'" she said.*
- She expressed hope that the 2024 forum would provide further space for CSOs to reflect on their progress, challenges, and future expectations. She highlighted key agenda items, including discussions on the Non-Profit Organizations Bill.

Highlights Of Keynote Speeches

Keynote address 1 Charles Abugri

Topic: 'Civil society in Ghana at an inflexion point: strategizing for resilience, effectiveness and legitimacy'

HIGHLIGHTS

Inflection: The CSO inflection is part of a global phenomenon affecting both local and international contexts. Inflection Direction: While inflection is constant, the direction we choose is up to us.

Legitimacy: A civil society is validated by its positive actions and contributions.

Legitimacy of CSO: Should be judged based on its impact on fostering civil society.

Resilience and Effectiveness:

- A radical alternative perspective on addressing local and global challenges, such as climate change and economic or governance crises.
- CSOs must evolve innovative ways of mobilizing resources – both human and financial.



Highlights Of Keynote Speeches

Keynote address 2 Charles Abani

HIGHLIGHTS

Legitimacy

- CSO legitimacy is conflated with constituency – CSOs must define clearly their constituencies and their needs.
- Legitimacy must be about what CSOs stand for – Consistency.

Effectiveness

- Judge effectiveness on the amount of influence on a particular issue and context
- CSOs must constantly reflect on what we stand for.
- There should always be conceptual clarity on issues if CSOs want to have impact

Sustainability

- We must recognize that on the big issues everything is connected – Climate Change, Macro Economy etc.
- CSO should coordinate to make the whole more than some of the parts
- Embrace change e.g. IT Revolution.
- Conversations should shift from mere academic contestation to practical solutions.



Some Reflections From Participants

1. The need to harness their collective strength and collaborate: Participants emphasized the importance of CSOs coming together and collaborating, rather than working in isolation.
2. CSOs must not be sidelined by external labels: Participants stressed that CSOs must not let external tags or labels diminish their role and influence. They must remain steadfast in fulfilling their mandate.
3. Importance of understanding gender in development: Participants highlighted the need for CSOs to deeply understand the gender dynamics in development, which are shaped by natural, economic and social factors. This understanding can enable more fruitful collaboration.
4. Inclusion of grassroots CSOs: Participants noted that when new development initiatives or policies emerge, grassroots civil society organizations should not be left out. For instance, the registration process for the Non-Profit Organization bill should ensure smooth and accessible registration for grassroots CSOs.



Shifting the Power and Localization – Implications for CSOs-Donor Relationships

Panel Discussion with Clara Osei-Boateng, Governance Advisor at the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO); Alhassan Mohammed Awal, Executive Director at NORSAAC; Anita Ampofo Amoako-Gyimah, Founder and President of Care for Society Network International; and Adam Sadat, Country Director of Oxfam in Ghana



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is ShiftThePower?
- What does it practically mean for donors, Civil Society and CBOs?
- What are the implications for donors, Civil Society and CBOs?
- How do all actors involved in the development value chain shift the power?

HIGHLIGHTS

Practical Implications for Donors, CSOs, and CBOs

- Practically, "Shifting the Power" means reevaluating and restructuring the dynamics between donors, CSOs, and CBOs.
- For donors, it involves decentralizing decision-making and resource allocation to support local initiatives directly.

Implications for Stakeholders

- For donors, this shift necessitates a willingness to relinquish control and invest in the capacity-building of local organizations.
- CSOs and CBOs need to enhance their governance structures and operational capabilities to meet the rigorous standards expected by international donors.

Strategies for Shifting the Power Across the Development Value Chain

To shift the power effectively, actors in the development value chain must:

- Change their lexicon, referring to all groups as development partners rather than differentiating between local and international entities.
- Prioritize accountability and sustainability.
- Promote a mindset change,
- Strengthen local capacities, ensuring organizations can meet international standards.

Breakout Sessions

- **Breakout Session 1:
Participatory Grant
Making (PGM)**
- **Breakout Session 2:
The Social Enterprise
Model**
- **Breakout Session 3:
Branding and
Communicating
Impact**
- **Breakout Session 4:
Private Sector
Partnerships and
Development Funding**



Breakout Session 1:

Participatory Grant Making (PGM) (implications for CSOs and Donors)

Speaker: Mohammed Awal Alhassan, Executive Director, NORSAAC

Moderator: Beatrice Boakye-Yiadom, AWDF

SOME DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How can CSOs generate new sources of funds?
- Who are the new actors in the donor/funding space?
- What are their priorities? How do CSOs work with them? What are the new grant management approaches and methods?
- What are the challenges that face funders working to pursue progressive models of civil society support?

HIGHLIGHTS

What is PGM

- On a face value, PGM is a grant making that involves many actors bringing resources together.
- PGM is grant making which involves community's inputs in decision-making of stakeholders.
- PGM is one of the several strategies adopted to untie AID and it was prototyped in Kenya, U.K and then Ghana with each country trying to work independently because the initial idea was to make it context specific and also a reflection on the daily practices of the people.

Principles of PGM:

- There should be transparency at the local level where transparency was defined as; involving the local community in the contracting processes and interaction between the actors.
- No harm should be caused irrespective of one's group.
- PGM must be decided with the participation of the people at the local level.

Challenges:

- Risk of mismanagement of big amounts of money.
- Lack of self-discipline that is, failure to report on funds granted and meeting agreed timeline.
- Another major challenge with PGM is acceptance at the local level.

Breakout Session 2:

The Social Enterprise Model

Panelists: Dr. Annie Wesley, Catalyst, Advisor on Sustainability and Fundraising, Social Enterprises Ghana Network. Yaw Osei Tutu, Strategic Partnership Manager, Impact Investing Ghana. MacCarthy M. Mac-Gbathly, Founder, HopIn Academy
Moderator: Frank Amoateng, Star-Ghana Foundation

SOME DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How can CSOs develop products or services that cater to local needs while ensuring financial stability?
- How do you set up a social enterprise?
- Can the success of institutions like the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh be emulated in Ghana?

HIGHLIGHT

Defining Social Enterprises

Based on the individual experiences of the panel members, social enterprises were defined as enterprises aimed at solving social problems using a business model.

Opportunities of funding for Social Enterprises

The minimum considerations for attracting funding for a social enterprise is as follows:

- Should have a business track record, credibility to attract external funding.
- Attract angel investors from among people you know who trust you eg. Family and friends.
- Participate in incubator processes where capacity is gradually built over time.

Tips for setting up a self-sustaining social enterprise

- Understand the business idea.
- Have a structure that can evolve.
- Be clear on the business vision and mission, what the business exists to do.
- Have a strategy for converting skills into revenue generation activity.
- Plough back profit into developing business around services that are outsourced to retain funding.

Breakout Session 3:

Branding and Communicating Impact

Panelist: Ewurama Greenslade, Communications & Knowledge

Moderator: Dede Amanor-Wilks

DISCUSSION QUESTION

How can CSO benefit from the myriad of opportunities that branding offers and consciously brand their projects, programmes, leaders and their organisations?

HIGHLIGHT

Branding in the Context of a CSO

Branding represents the public's perception of an organization. A strong brand should clearly communicate:

- The organization's offerings.
- The target clients.
- The mission and purpose.
- The unique aspects that differentiate it from others.
- The geographical and operational scope.
- Distinctiveness in approach and impact.

Key Elements of Branding:

- Brand Identity: Visual and thematic elements representing the organization.
- Brand Voice and Messaging: Consistent communication style.
- Brand Guidelines: Standards for maintaining brand integrity.
- Brand Story: Narrative that connects with the audience.
- Market Positioning: Strategic placement in the sector.
- Visual Elements: Logos, colors, and design elements.
- Online Presence: Digital footprint across platforms.

Communicating for Impact

Effective communication is crucial for CSOs to achieve:

- **Visibility and Awareness:** Raising global awareness on key issues.
- **Engagement:** Encouraging active participation from stakeholders.
- **Advocacy:** Influencing policy and decision-making processes.
- **Resource Mobilization:** Attracting funding and building partnerships.

Challenges:

- **Resource Constraints:** Limited resources for comprehensive communication strategies.
- **Information Overload:** Navigating the abundance of information.
- **Technological Barriers:** Ensuring access to and effective use of technology.

Solutions:

- **Leverage Partnerships:** Collaborating with other organizations to pool resources.
- **Exploring Technologies:** Utilizing innovative technologies to enhance communication.
- **Sustainability Focus:** Ensuring communication efforts are sustainable over time.

Breakout Session 4:

Private Sector Partnerships and Development Funding

Panelists: Robert K. Kwuam Kuzoe, Senior Manager, Sustainability, and Social Impact MTN Ghana. Dr. Kofi Osei Kusi, Executive President Osei Kusi Foundation Accra, Ghana
Nana Osei-Bonsu, Chief Executive Officer, Private Enterprise Federation (PEF)
Moderator: Charles VanDyck, WACSI.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Diversification: Civil society needs to diversify their funding approaches. Do not depend on only the traditional funders. There is also the need to diversify our fund-raising approaches. Such as engaging corporate organizations and businesses in-country.
- Research-based approach: Both Civil Society and Private Sector believe in empirical evidence to work. A good research or data allows civil society to identify the iniquities in the society and advocate on them.
- Policy advocacy: Civil society can advocate for good policy environment that can benefit the private sector and the private sector in turn can work on products to ensure a social impact.
- Tax rebates as incentives: The profits of businesses can support the work of civil society through their corporate responsibilities. Businesses who support in these could be given tax rebates.
- Fundraising as a skill: Fund raising is a skill and Civil Societies should develop fund raising skills. Nevertheless, when we seek to use community situations to seek funding, we should do so without affecting the dignity of the community being targeted for support.
- Civil society organizations should run their organizations like a business. There is a need to have marketing skills to market the work of civil society organizations, in order to attract funders and partners.

Plenary Sessions

- **Plenary session 1:**
Building constituencies: pathways for legitimacy for CSOs in Ghana
- **Plenary Session 2:**
NPO Bill and matters arising
- **Plenary Session 3:**
Models of networks, alliances, and coalitions.
What has worked, what hasn't worked.
- **Plenary Session 4:**
How might CSOs work better in the fast- changing technology space?



Plenary session 1: Building constituencies: pathways for legitimacy for CSOs in Ghana



Plenary session 1:

Building constituencies: Pathways for legitimacy for CSOs in Ghana

Panelists:

- Nafisah Salifu,
Executive Director,
Civil society and
Institutional
Foundation
- Most Rev. Gabriel
Kumordji, Episcopal
President, CARITAS
Ghana
- Letitia Ohene- Effah,
Executive Director
LeadAfrigue
International
- Oliver Barker
Vormawor,
Convener,
FixTheCountry
- Eunice R.
Agbenyadzi, STAR-
Ghana Foundation

Moderator:

Charles Van Dyck,
WACSI.

Defining constituency

- Beneficiary of the work of CSOs
- Gatekeepers
- those who have influence and authority over our primary beneficiaries and targets
- A constituency may be defined by may be territorial or thematic/sectors, online and offline.

Challenges of Building strong constituencies by CSOs

- Burn out: it was elaborated that burn out should be incorporated in advocacy process as it is difficult to get people fully involved always.
- Maintaining momentum: The strategy of involving people in the social media space is to elicit a firststep, an action that transcend beyond the online interface.
- Imposing donor agenda on local partners/ Constituents.

Building strong constituency

- Empower the constituents.
- Build trust.
- Be transparent and accountable.
- Validate assumption by getting to the roots cause of the problems we seek to address.

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Plenary Session 2: NPO Bill and matters arising



The NPO Bill and matters arising

Speakers:

- Derek Obeng, Head of secretariat, NPO secretariat
- Douglas Quartey, Research and Development Consultant
- Michael Nuamah, Office of the Chief Director, Ministry of Finance.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Impetus for bill:

- Lack of regulatory framework for the NPO sector
- 2019 GIABA MUTUAL evaluation report
- The need to comply with international best practices.
- The result of the enactment of the 2020 NPO policy and the establishment of the NPO Secretariat.

What's in the bill?

- Establishment of the NPO Commission
- Financing of the commission
- General principles of NPO operations – including funding
- Licensing of NPOs and related organizations
- Legal basis of operations – NPOs and the Commission
- Provisions on Money Laundering and Terrorism Finance
- Channels of reporting dubious and unprofessional acts of NPOs.

The NPO Bill and matters arising

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Implications of the NPO law for CSOs and NPOs:

- Gives credibility and legitimacy to NPOs – Access to funding from funders with strict regulatory requirements.
- Stems out government interference in the operations of NPOs/CSOs
- Granting of tax and duty exemptions.
- Forum for NPO provides opportunity for peer review and stronger voice to engage with government.
- Prevents the use of NPOs and CSOs to facilitate Terrorists Financing and Money Laundering.
- Opportunity for partnerships and fund raising General Concerns on the NPO Bill by Participants
- Lack of broader consultation
- Clarification on the Term 'MINISTER': More clarity was requested regarding the specific minister referenced in the NPO bill.
- Cumbersome Registration Process with the NPO secretariat
- Regional and District NPO Offices: proposed to facilitate the registration process and improve service delivery
- It appears the inputs of CSOs on the bill are not being taken into account.
The revised bill does not reflect inputs previously submitted by CSOs on the bill.

Plenary Session 3: Models of networks, alliances and coalitions. What has worked, what hasn't worked



Models of networks, alliances and coalitions. What has worked, what hasn't worked

Panelists:

- Patricia Blankson Akakpo, Executive Director, NETRIGHT
- Kofi Asare, Executive Director, Africa Education Watch
- Richmond Komla Agbenyaklu, Coordinator, Western Region NGOs Coalition
- Bright Owusu, Eastern Regional Chairman, Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health

Moderator:

Mary Awelana Addah, Executive Director, Ghana Integrity Initiative

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Coalitions can be loose or formalized

How are coalitions formed:

- Unified through shared interests and aims .
- From loose networks to formalized coalitions
- Members typically take on voluntary roles until it is formalized
- Communications are facilitated through social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp groups and Emails etc.
- Most coalitions and Networks start of from community-based organizations (CBOs) to national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international NGOs (INGOs).
How do we ensure Coalitions are effective?
- Independent secretariat
- Set clear distinction between coalitions strategic objectives and members personal interests
- Partnerships in their areas of operations.
- There should be accountability among members and from leadership
- Avoid partisanship

Models of networks, alliances and coalitions. What has worked, what hasn't worked

Participants shared experiences on benefits of Networks and coalitions:

- Networks and coalitions enable organizations to pool their resources, expertise, and manpower, leading to greater impact and influence.
- Networks and coalitions amplify the voices of their members and present a united front in advocacy efforts. This enhances their bargaining power and can lead to more favorable outcomes for the issues they advocate for.
- Networks and coalitions build the capacity of their members in various ways, helping them become more effective in their work.



Plenary Session 4: How might CSOs work better in the fast-changing technology space?

Global Forum



How might CSOs work better in the fast-changing technology space?

Speakers:

- Jerry Sam, Executive Director of Penplusbytes,
- Maximus Amertorgoh, Lead and CEO of PopOut

Moderator:

Franck A. Sombo,
Head of the Monitoring,
Evaluation and
Learning Unit

KEY TAKEAWAYS

New Emerging Technologies

- The rapidly evolving technological landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).
- Innovation continues to transform the technological landscape, propelling CSOs to adapt swiftly to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

Opportunities for CSOs In the Tech-Space

- Virtual Reality for Awareness: Utilizing virtual reality can create immersive experiences that raise awareness and educate the public on critical issues.
- Drone Technology for Efficiency: Drones can enhance operational efficiency, particularly in remote monitoring and data collection.
- Data Analysis and Research: Advanced data analysis tools can provide valuable insights, aiding in strategic planning and decision-making.
- Crowdfunding for Fundraising: Leveraging crowdfunding platforms can diversify funding sources and increase financial sustainability.
- Active Online Presence: Maintaining a robust website and social media presence is essential for visibility and engagement in the digital age.

Models of networks, alliances, and coalitions. What has worked, what hasn't worked

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Challenges

- **Data Privacy:** Ensuring robust data privacy policies is critical to protect sensitive information and maintain trust.
- **Digital Insecurity and Fraud:** The risk of digital insecurity and fraud necessitates stringent cyber security measures.
- **High Costs:** The expense of adopting and maintaining technology remains a significant challenge.

Mitigation Measures

- **Cost Mitigation:** Thoroughly researching funding opportunities and providing comprehensive documentation can help secure financial support for technological initiatives.





Purpose and Expected Outcomes

The GCSF 24' team is proud to note that the forum achieved its stated objectives, namely:

- The forum provided a platform for networking and knowledge sharing among CSOs.
- The forum created an environment where participants engaged on the challenges that the civil society sector in Ghana will face in the foreseeable future, and cocreated solutions for these.
- A Communique was adopted at the end of the forum by the participants as our collective commitment to enhancing the legitimacy, effectiveness and sustainability of the civil society sectors in Ghana.

The team wish to thank all participants and partners whose support and contribution made the forum a success.

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