

# STAR Ghana Foundation | FAQs



Teiko Sabah, STAR Ghana Foundation's Head of Programmes, with Hon. Ben Abdallah Banda, Chair of Committee on Constitutional, Legal & Parliamentary Affairs, at a question and answer session at a STAR Ghana Foundation event.

## What is the STAR Ghana Foundation?

The STAR Ghana Foundation was launched in November 2018 as a national centre for active citizenship and philanthropy. The Foundation works 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. It builds on the successful STAR-Ghana programme (Strengthening Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana), a multi-donor civil society initiative established in 2010.

The establishment of the STAR Ghana Foundation as a Ghanaian-owned and led national institution follows an intensive process of planning and public consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. It constitutes a major development in the landscape for active citizenship, civil society and philanthropy in Ghana and Africa as a whole.

## What is the rationale for the establishment of the Foundation?

The aspiration to build an independent organisation, with a more diversified funding stream, to advance active citizenship work in Ghana is a distinctive departure from earlier efforts to sustaining the civil society sector.

The case for an independent Ghanaian owned and led organisation has emerged from the lessons and experiences of

programmes such as RAVI, GRAP and STAR-Ghana.

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 civil society space over issues of turf, leadership and co-optation
- Questions around the legitimacy of some civil society entities and actions;
- Absence of a coordinated voice and engagements on key national and strategic development issues;
- Significant over-dependence of civil society on external funding sources, as well as the sustainability risks this dependence brings as traditional development partners shift their focus away from civil society and development support in Ghana.

STAR Ghana has acted as the incubator for an independent institutional platform – the STAR Ghana Foundation – that is purpose-built to deliver on an innovative convenor, coordinator, catalyst and learning (3C&L) approach. Capitalising on the considerable reputation, track record and relationship capital of STAR-Ghana, the Foundation is uniquely positioned to act as a broker of dialogue, collective action, partnerships and learning (among CSOs and across sectors).

At the core of the move towards independence is a compelling long-term vision of the Foundation which transcends the mandate of any short-term donor-funded grant-making facility: ‘a well-informed and active Ghanaian citizenry able to contribute to transformational change that advances democracy, accountability and social inclusion’.

### **How was buy-in and affirmation secured for the establishment of the Foundation?**

Over the period 2015-2018, the STAR-Ghana Steering Committee undertook a comprehensive series of national stakeholder consultations to determine how best to sustain the mobilisation of civil society around active citizenship, accountability and social inclusion. Those consultations confirmed that there is a leadership and institutional capacity gap to be filled in order to address the challenges of CSO sustainability; building a more resilient civil society sector; and mobilising long-term resources for civil society activism.

These consultations, informed by critical analysis of the current civil society context, resulted in a clear consensus on the need to create an independent Ghanaian-led and owned organisation that can:

- Work to sustain civil society activism;
- Safeguard the gains that have been made in strengthening civil society voice;
- Build on the capacity-strengthening agenda that has been initiated through STAR-Ghana and its predecessor programmes and also other civil society support initiatives;
- Mobilise strategic support/resource beyond grant-making;
- Act as a convenor, coordinator and catalyst for civil society and facilitator of learning.

### **What is the added value of STAR Ghana Foundation to Ghanaians?**

STAR Ghana Foundation aspires to achieve significant improvements in the way that citizens are supported to tackle underlying constraints to democratic governance and advance inclusive, sustainable national development.

The Foundation brings six critical contributions to the governance landscape in Ghana:

- Convening, catalysing and coordination support to civil society actions and engagements with diverse stakeholders. STAR Ghana Foundation will help bring about a more coordinated approach to civil society’s work.
- Facilitating continuous learning on active citizenship and social inclusion with partners, sharing lessons, innovations and evidence, adapting programmes to fuel wider change.
- A mission-driven commitment to grow the resource-base for CSOs and strengthen social justice philanthropy in Ghana. This will entail specific resource mobilisation and funding support to civil society collective action and collaborative efforts to diversify resources available to partner CSOs.

- Working to strengthen the enabling environment for philanthropy, active citizenship and social inclusion in Ghana,

while avoiding competition with partners for funding.

- Convening dialogue spaces and platforms for citizens to think, speak and act together on critical service delivery and accountability challenges. The Foundation will support on-going civil society and civic action to address these challenges.
- Generation of up-to-date political and social analysis, from a Ghanaian perspective, to identify salient issues that matter most to Ghanaians and inform the design and implementation of effective, home-grown responses to these issues.
- Capacity to respond on a timely basis to salient issues of service delivery, accountability and inclusion that have captured the attention of Ghanaians.

### **Why the focus on active citizenship and philanthropy?**

The focus on active citizenship is not new. Since its launch in 2010, the STAR-Ghana programme has worked with a wide array of civil society partners, as well as Ghana’s Parliament, to mobilise citizen voice and action to secure greater transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the provision of public services.

The STAR Ghana Foundation intends to build on this work in line with its distinctive vision: ‘a well-informed and active Ghanaian citizenry able to contribute to transformational change that advances democracy, accountability and social inclusion.’ The Foundation recognises that to realise its mission of ‘increasing the effectiveness of citizens and civil society to achieve an equitable, inclusive society,’ it needs to look at mobilising new domestic resources to sustain citizen and civil society activism. The Ghana beyond Aid agenda, aligns with this thinking.

Ghana’s ‘middle income country’ status brings with it the prospect of declining official donor assistance in the future. For CSOs, this highlights the need to mobilise new domestic and international resources to sustain citizen-based social change initiatives. Ghana’s economic and democratic gains offer new potential and opportunities for private philanthropy and local resource mobilisation. For civil society, the challenge is to move away from over-dependence on waning aid resources, through diversification of funding and development of a domestic support base in Ghana and the region.

This shift requires a stronger enabling environment for both civil society and philanthropy. It demands a change in mindsets about citizen engagement in local resource mobilisation as well as cross-sector collaboration – between civil society, government and business – to nurture a culture of giving and a practice of ‘social justice philanthropy.’

The Foundation is well placed, along with strategic partners such as the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), Ghana Philanthropy Network and others to provide leadership and foster civil society collaboration with both government and business around domestic resource mobilisation and the enabling environment for active citizenship and philanthropy.

The enhanced focus on philanthropy is a corollary to the Foundation's mission and a necessary condition for its sustainability and that of civil society partners.

### **What are the key structures/organs of the Foundation and their roles?**

The STAR Ghana Foundation Governing Council comprises twelve members from diverse backgrounds appointed by a 25-member Subscribers of the Foundation. The Governing Council is the highest decision-making body of the Foundation. It provides strategic oversight and direction to STAR Ghana Foundation, including guidance on how the Foundation engages on political issues and occupies political spaces, while managing sensitivities. It ensures adherence to the highest standards of good governance, ethical practice and social responsibility.

### **Is membership of the Governing Council and Subscribers of the STAR Ghana Foundation based on regional representation?**

The STAR Ghana Foundation does not have regional representation on either the Governing Council or its 25 subscribers. However, it has representation based on expertise and diverse skill sets from civil society, academia, private sector and industry. Gender equality and social inclusion considerations were factored in the selection and appointment of the Governing Council. The subscribers and members of the governing council were selected based on criteria that included non-party political partisanship and demonstrated independent thought and action Council's members.

### **Is the STAR Ghana Foundation the voice of all civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ghana?**

STAR Ghana Foundation does not claim to represent or to speak for all CSOs in Ghana. It does, however, support the coordination of civil society actions and voice, minimising divided focus and enabling CSOs to be more coherent and effective in evidence-based engagement with government and other duty bearers. Intensive conversations with civil society, driven by the Governing Council, have underscored the reality that it is not sufficient for CSOs simply to have voice – their voice must be effective, organised and influential.

To achieve voice with agency and effectiveness requires active collaborations between and among citizens, CSOs and other stakeholders. The Foundation's convenor, coordinator, catalyst and learning (3C&L) approach is designed to facilitate such collaborations and partnerships. The Foundation aims to provide 'bridging leadership' to bring diverse actors and interests together across social divides to form innovative coalitions, alliances and partnerships to tackle critical issues of poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

### **Is STAR Ghana Foundation autonomous and free from undue external influence (including partisan political influence and government or private sector interests)?**

STAR Ghana Foundation is an independent non-partisan

organisation. It has developed ethical policies for partnerships and funding that require the Foundation to guard its independence and integrity at all times, resisting any attempts by individuals, parties, corporate interests or other groups to exercise self-serving, partisan or corrupt influence over its decision-making, programming and the delivery of its mission. All external funding, including government and private sector funding, must be compatible with the Foundation's aims and values and will be subject to the ethical criteria and guidelines adopted by the Governing Council.

In developing its ethical guidelines for funding and partnerships, the Foundation has listened closely to the concerns of stakeholders consulted in its co-creation process. Some stakeholders have warned that the Foundation must ensure that any direct funding from business and/or government should not compromise its independence and public standing as a non-partisan standard-bearer for transparency and accountability.

Some difficult choices will have to be made to balance the financial and reputational dimensions of sustainability. However, the Foundation is clear that civil society and active citizenship work can no longer remain dependent on international donor funding. There is an urgent need to harness new resources from Ghanaian citizens, government and the private sector in transparent, values driven partnerships. The Foundation's future sustainability will be closely linked to a mission-driven leadership role in forging such partnerships and strengthening the enabling environment for social justice philanthropy.

### **Would the STAR Ghana Foundation provide support to individuals or start-up businesses by individuals or organisations?**

No. The Foundation grants will not be awarded to individuals but will rather be awarded to eligible registered organisations who intend to implement projects that fit within the Foundation's mission and objectives. Individuals encourage to form partnerships with organisations implementing similar projects. Most of the grants are awarded to non-profit organisations. In exceptional circumstances, the Foundation may consider grants to for-profit groups, but the project must have a social development focus, be advocacy-related or respond to an issue of national interest.

The vision of the Foundation is to support active citizenship with a strong focus on democracy, accountability and social inclusion. However, the Foundation will work with professional associations, business associations and business donors, including corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social impact investors.

### **Is the Foundation just an exit strategy for donors?**

The establishment of the Foundation was not the idea of donors. This idea was rooted in learning from the STAR-Ghana programme's work with civil society and was taken up by the members of the Ghanaian-led STAR-Ghana Steering



Committee. However, formation of the Foundation is timely, as the government has also initiated public dialogue about sustainability as well as publication and the launch of the Ghana Beyond Aid Charter and Strategic Document. During the nationwide consultations around the co-creation of the Foundation, stakeholders confirmed that the vision and mission of STAR Ghana Foundation will fill critical gaps in Ghana's civil society space, adding value to the work of CSOs. Stakeholders have welcomed our commitment to grow the resource-base for CSOs and to strengthen social change philanthropy in Ghana.

The intention to build a sustainable national institution and funding stream for active citizenship work in Ghana is seen as a distinctive 'added value' that sets STAR Ghana Foundation apart from other civil society programmes and actors. By playing an enhanced role as an honest broker, a trusted convenor and a driver of change and in responding effectively to civil society's challenges and opportunities, STAR Ghana Foundation can provide high quality local leadership, capacity and support beyond the life of current donor funding. Capitalising on its distinctive reputation, track record and relationship capital, the STAR Ghana Foundation brand is uniquely positioned to act as a broker of dialogue, collective action, partnerships and learning, among CSOs and across sectoral divides. In so doing, it can help to build a more resilient civil society sector, mobilise long term resources for civil society activism and nurture active citizens as a critical national resource to realise Ghana's promise for the future – a more equitable and inclusive society that truly leaves no-one behind.

### **How is the Foundation financially resourced?**

The Foundation is initially supported by a grant from UK aid. Efforts are however being made to diversify its funding sources including local resource mobilisation.

The STAR Ghana Foundation will play a lead role in supporting the future development of philanthropy in Ghana.

The Foundation will explore the potential of social investment and enterprise to encourage smarter, more innovative and effective programming focused on results. The Foundation will work with national and international organisations and donors to champion the highest standards in fundraising. The Foundation will mobilise resources from a wide range of funders to secure our future and deliver our ambitious plans.

STAR Ghana Foundation will diversify its funding beyond existing institutional donor funds, to include: diversified resourcing from other official development assistance (ODA) agencies, new resourcing from local and international foundations and philanthropy (including individual giving), corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding (and possibly other private sector resourcing), the development of an endowment fund, and earned income from social enterprise activities. Other sources to explore include diaspora giving, crowd sourcing, and constitutionally- mandated state funds.



### **Will STAR Ghana Foundation continue to give grants to CSOs?**

Yes. STAR Ghana Foundation will continue to engage with civil society through strategic grant-making as part of a continued focus on the 3C&L approach. The Foundation will, however, be much more than a grant-making mechanism – indeed grant-making will no longer be its distinguishing function. It will develop a hybrid model of support which combines strategic grant-making with other value-add contributions like:

- Convening and facilitation of multi-stakeholder dialogue
- Partnership-building and coordination with CSOs and other stakeholders
- Capacity development
- Social movement-building
- Relevant social/political analysis (including political economy analysis (PEA with an integrated gender and inclusion perspective)
- Thought leadership on issues such as sustainability, social justice and philanthropy (including bridging the divide between 'traditional' and 'new' philanthropy).

### **Will the Foundation be making any grant calls soon?**

Yes. Plans are underway to launch a call before 2020. More information will be shared soon, with the general public.

### **How should the Foundation's donors be acknowledged during the transition phase?**

All projects and programmes will now be undertaken under the auspices of the STAR Ghana Foundation. The Foundation will continue to receive funding from UK aid, the European Union and DANIDA during the transition phase of the current programme (2018-2020). As part of the existing funding arrangements, the Foundation and current partners will continue to acknowledge funders' support in all communications, but there will no longer be co-branding.

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