

2022 / 2023

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



## Chair's Remarks



Dr. Esther Ofei-Aboagye

CHAIRPERSON OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

Distinguished Members, Ladies and Gentlemen

### Introduction

It is my singular honour and pleasure to welcome you all to the Fourth Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the STAR-Ghana Foundation. I would like once again to apologise for the re-scheduling of the AGM, which was originally planned for 2 November 2023. This was necessitated by the re-alignment of the Foundation's calendar and the need to capture and report to Subscribers its work, achievements and finances for the entire year.

As originally planned, the meeting would have been conducted with other activities marking the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Foundation. I therefore wish to thank Members for their participation in and valuable support for the other celebratory events. You will agree with me that they were very successful in highlighting the considerable prospects for the way forward. I am also grateful to you all for your contributions in getting the Foundation to this critical milestone.

On a more sombre note, in November 2023, the Foundation and Ghana at large lost a patriot in Mr. Anthony Akoto-Ampaw. Widely known as "Sheey-Sheey", Mr. Akoto-Ampaw, was a Founding Subscriber and Secretary to the Foundation. Prior to that, he had served on the Steering Committee of the STAR-Ghana Programme. For almost half a century, he contributed to national development thinking and was a passionate activist for the rights of any group of people he considered marginalised. May his soul rest in peace.

After these preliminary comments, permit me to make a few remarks on the situation of your organisation, STAR-Ghana Foundation. A fuller Annual Report with an account of the activities, achievements, lessons, finances and other highlights of the year under review will be provided during this meeting.

### Commemoration of the Fifth Anniversary

The fifth anniversary of the Foundation was commemorated with formal launches of the anniversary events in Accra and Tamale. These exciting events were well attended by our subscribers, partners and stakeholders. The Accra event, which was held on 22 August 2023, had the Chairperson of the National Commission on Civic Education in attendance as the Guest of Honour. The Tamale event took place on 5 September 2023 and we were privileged to have the Northern Regional Minister, Shani Alhassan Saibu, and the Vice Chancellor of the University for Development Studies, Professor Seidu Al-Hassan, as the Guest of Honour and Key-note Speaker respectively.

Other noteworthy commemorative events were the Active Citizenship Lecture and a Speaker's Breakfast Forum, held in collaboration with the Parliament of Ghana. The Active Citizenship Lecture was on the theme "Empowering Citizens, Enriching Nation Building: Fostering Active Citizenship for Sustainable Development in Ghana". We were privileged to have His Excellency, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas as the Distinguished Lead Speaker. The event was enriched further by the high-quality panel of discussants consisting of Ms. Shamima Muslim, a Diversity and Inclusion Advocate, Journalist and Convenor of the Alliance for Women in Media, Africa; Mr. Oliver Barker-Vormawor, a Lawyer and Convenor of Democracy Hub; and Mr. Victor Pa Kwesi Mensah, the Founder, Centre for Youth Development Services in Zambia.

I want to congratulate and thank the Anniversary Planning Committee, chaired by Mr. Kobena Okyere and ably supported by Madam Hajara Mohammed, Madam Ethel Coffie and Mr. Peter Yaro Badimark. To mark the fifth anniversary, an account of the Foundation's journey from its inception was commissioned. The legacy document has been completed

and we are happy to launch the publication today during the meeting.

## Reflecting on the Direction of the Foundation

At the beginning of 2023, the Governing Council (GC) reflected on the strategic direction of the Foundation and the particular niche STAR-Ghana Foundation should occupy within Ghana's development landscape, as well as the institutional approach it should take to leveraging and optimising partnerships with various actors. An institutional assessment commissioned last year provided the basis for further planning and strategic positioning. The assessment exercise and drafting of the second strategic plan were led by Ms. Adelaide Addo-Fening. We are deeply indebted to her for her ready assistance to the Foundation.

The institutional assessment reflected on the guidelines, frameworks and strategic plan that had been developed at the Foundation's inception. These instruments had been developed in the context of very different expectations of the future; and four years of implementation had tested them and generated very practical lessons in institutional collaboration, ways of organising and amplifying citizens' and civil society voice.

## Activities of the Foundation

Despite the exigencies, the Foundation had still been able to work towards its vision of a well-informed and active Ghanaian citizenry, able to contribute to transformational change that advances democracy, accountability and social inclusion. Most of the Foundation's activities have been directed at its role as a Convenor on issues of active citizenship, social equality and inclusion.

As part of its work to highlight and promote local philanthropy, the Foundation collaborated with various parties in the country and abroad, to convene the Ghana Philanthropy Conference on the 21-22 November 2023. A communique was published at the end of the event. A learning paper has been commissioned to collate and analyse the results and lessons from the Giving for Change Project, funded by the Dutch Ministry, as well as the Innovation for Localisation Initiative, supported by the Near Network.

Work on operationalising the Active Citizenship Strategy has started with the roll-out of a volunteerism initiative. A working group was constituted to develop a roadmap for recruiting the first cohort of STAR-Ghana Foundation volunteers as citizens for change. At the appropriate time, the volunteers will be presented to the Foundation's stakeholders and well-wishers.

## The Governing Council

In accordance with Article 68 of the Foundation's regulations, the tenure of members of the founding Governing Council (GC) who served on the Steering Committee of the STAR-Ghana Programme, which preceded the Foundation, has come to an end. Following the discussion and conclusions on this matter at last year's AGM, an ad-hoc committee was constituted to support the search for new GC Members and Subscribers. Background information on the august persons who have been proposed has been made available for this meeting. Subscribers will be requested to consider and approve a resolution for their appointments.

Most of the current GC members who were appointed at the start of the Foundation in 2018 have agreed to serve another five-year term. Prof. Gyimah-Boadi has offered to serve on the GC for half of the next term, after which his membership may be reconsidered.

## Funding the Activities of the Foundation

The Foundation has not been immune to the financing crises facing the civil society sector in Ghana over the past five years. I am happy to announce that the strenuous efforts of the Secretariat under the leadership of Alhaji Ibrahim Tanko-Amidu have paid off and a number of new projects and funders have come on board. These include the Co-Impact Gender Fund, the Action for Youth, Voice and Development (the Botnar) Project and the Civil Society Strengthening Fund supported under Comic Relief and managed in collaboration with the West African Civil Society Institute. The International Organisation on Migration has worked with us on Community Cohesion and Resilience Projects.

The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund for the Security in Northern Ghana Project and the Gender Rights and Empowerment Project funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office have been renewed. Other partners such as the

Jacobs Foundation have moved on in line with their priorities. STAR-Ghana Foundation continues to explore various sources of funding that align with our principles and our mission. The Executive Director will expand on our partnerships and collaborations in his report to the Meeting.

## Human Resources of the Foundation

Given the range of projects and new undertakings, our staff strength at the Secretariat has grown to 25. Among other positions, a Communications Officer has been recruited to strengthen the Foundation's visibility and information dissemination activities. During the period under review, the GC approved a modest increase in salaries to motivate our hardworking staff.

## Conclusion

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all who have supported the Foundation through this successful year. I particularly appreciate the Executive Director, Management and Staff of the Secretariat for their consistency and high-quality work, which have contributed considerably to the

Foundation's achievements. I would like to acknowledge our partners, collaborators and donors who have supported our efforts. My indefatigable colleagues on the Governing Council have gone beyond the call of duty – making themselves available for every assignment that was put their way. You, our esteemed Subscribers, have been there for the Foundation, giving us your time, counsel, energy and resources to make all these efforts worthwhile.

Our country Ghana is going through a series of developments that point to an evolution in national understanding and exercise of citizenship. This is evident in the ways Ghanaians express their views on public management through different means including individual and group protests, social and traditional media. Clearly, Ghanaians demand to be heard and accounted to and they will find ways of expression. STAR-Ghana Foundation must take its place in influencing the exercise of active citizenry to achieve the sustained well-being of our country.

On this note, I thank you for your attention and this opportunity.

# 1. Introduction

This report covers the period November 2022 to December 2023 and is the fourth Annual Report since the launch of STAR-Ghana Foundation in November 2018. It focuses on the work of the Foundation since the last Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November 2022.

The reporting period has been shifted from November-October to January-December, to align with the Foundation's financial year. Consequently, the AGM has been shifted from November to January to enable a full reporting of the Foundation's work during the financial year.

The reporting period coincided with STAR-Ghana's fifth anniversary as an independent national entity. This report therefore includes cumulative information on results achieved, progress made and lessons learnt over the five years of the Foundation's existence.

This Annual Report is complemented by the Auditors' Report and the Governing Council Chairperson's Report to Members.

## Operating Context

The operating context within the reporting period was characterised by a number of developments in the economic, social and political spheres, key among which are the following:

**Economic crisis.** The current economic crisis, which has necessitated a 17th visit by Ghana to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to secure balance of payments support, has negatively impacted poor people's livelihoods and their access to quality social services particularly health and education. This has put pressure on CSOs working with poor and disadvantaged social groups to fill the gaps left by the state and to also step up their advocacy actions within an environment hostile to civil society activism and advocacy. The Foundation has responded through its work facilitating the strengthening of broad citizens and stakeholders' alliances to address the challenges and issues.

**Extreme partisanship.** The trend towards extreme political partisanship and the vilification and attacks on CSOs undertaking advocacy actions has intensified in the run-up to the 2024 elections. CSOs criticising or critiquing the actions or policies of a political party or government are attacked by party foot soldiers and communicators and in some

cases shunned by state agencies on the orders of government officials. This has made advocacy extremely difficult for organisations and dangerous for activists. While alliance building provides opportunities to address some of the challenges, more needs to be done to strengthen these alliances particularly bringing on board social/citizens movements and other non-formal citizens' groupings.

**Donor funding.** Donor funding continues to be a challenge for most CSOs. The focus of funding from most bilateral funders has shifted to peace and security work, particularly countering violent extremism and private sector development. The continued use, by some of these bilateral donors, of international consulting firms and INGOs, to implement their large-scale projects and initiatives, even while they profess to shift towards localisation, is preventing national organisations from accessing such funding except as sub-contractors or sub-partners to these international organisations and firms. A lack of investment in core funding is resulting in a weakening of critical CSOs needed to undertake strategic level advocacy and of community organisations needed to channel the voices and actions of communities in governance. The Foundation's response has included its work in promoting local philanthropy and implementation of the Shift the Power programme, which includes provision of flexible funding to selected CSOs and support to the Ghana Social Enterprise Forum.

**NPO bill.** The passage of the not-for-profit organisations (NPO) bill, aimed to regulate the civil society sector, has faced challenges that have slowed down the process. These challenges include disagreements among CSOs and between sections of civil society and the regulator on the content of the bill and the strategy for stakeholder consultations, as well as the weak capacity of the NPO secretariat shepherding the process. The Foundation is facilitating the convening of the Ghana CS Forum to provide an inclusive space for civil society dialogue on the bill and other salient issues and has convened CSO engagements with the NPO secretariat, through the Ghana Philanthropy Conference and workshops organised under the Giving for Change programme.

## 2. Who we are

STAR-Ghana Foundation seeks to contribute to a more just and equitable society in which all citizens, irrespective of gender, social status and geographical location, can participate equally and effectively in governance and developmental processes and benefit equitably from these processes.

We act as:

- Convenors or facilitators of inclusive dialogue among citizens and between citizens and duty bearers on salient local and national issues;

- Catalysts facilitating the strengthening of citizens' actions to realise their potentials and address the systemic causes of their exclusion and poverty;
- Facilitators of Coordinated stakeholder actions, strengthening inclusive spaces for stakeholder coordination around salient issues at local and national levels.
- Facilitators of Learning as a prerequisite for effective citizens' actions to achieve transformational change.

Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) is mainstreamed in all our strategies and actions.

This is reflected in:

- Our partnerships. Most of our partners are community-based organisations, and organisations representing or working with excluded and marginalised communities and social groups.
- The geographic focus of our work. Our projects are concentrated in the five regions of northern Ghana, together with the Central, Oti and Volta regions and marginalised communities in the other regions.
- Our focal issues. Our thematic priorities or

areas of work reflect issues and thematic areas of concern to disadvantaged and excluded communities and social groups.

- Our governance and staffing policies. Our Governing Council (GC), 68% female and chaired by a female, reflects a cross-section of Ghanaian society. The secretariat, comprising the management and operational teams, reflects STAR-Ghana's approach as an equal opportunities employer. Women make up 66% of staff and there is balanced representation at management level.

Working within our key thematic areas of Rights to Services; Peace and Security; Inclusive Governance; and Civil Society Strengthening, we:

- Work with citizens' organisations, particularly those representing disadvantaged and excluded social groups, strengthening their capacities to thrive and effectively represent their constituents.
- Broker relationships among citizens' organisations and between citizens' organisations and

other stakeholders to achieve transformational change.

- Promote active citizenship and local philanthropy for sustainable citizens' actions and organisations and transformational change.
- Facilitate the development and strengthening of inclusive platforms for collective and coordinated stakeholder actions around salient issues.

## 3. Overview of Progress Towards Our Mission

- Significant progress has been made under our Promoting Active Citizenship and Local Philanthropy initiatives.
- In all, 26 communities and 12 local partners have been supported to develop and implement models of community philanthropy to address salient local issues, from women's livelihoods and improving school outcomes to support for alleged witches in camps. These initiatives will directly benefit over 300,000 citizens.
- Two local volunteerism schemes have been launched to provide opportunities for active citizenship at all levels of governance. A first cohort of 18 development expert volunteers has been deployed to support 22 grassroots organisations. In all, 25 CSOs, most of them CBOs, have been selected for support to develop

and implement community and district schemes around access to social services, peace and security and natural resource management. A minimum of 1,300 citizens will be provided opportunities to participate actively in development processes in their communities and districts.

- Of the 101 partners the Foundation is working with, 80% are grassroots CSOs representing disadvantaged social groups. Through these partners, STAR-Ghana is supporting market women, scrap collectors, PWDs, Fulbes and young people to play more active roles in addressing the underlying causes of their exclusion.

- The Foundation has worked with 157 partners since it was launched in 2019.
- It is currently working with 101 partners, of which 82 are grassroots organisations, in the thematic areas of Rights to Services, Peace and Security, Inclusive Governance and Inclusive Natural Resource Governance.
- STAR-Ghana has facilitated the development of, and hosts, four thematic and two cross-sectoral platforms to enhance coordination and improve effectiveness.
- The Foundation implemented nine projects across its five thematic areas.

- Total funds raised rose from approximately \$1.5m in 2019 to the cumulative figure of approximately \$22m in 2023.
- Similarly, STAR-Ghana's annual operating budget rose from US\$1.5m in 2019 to \$6m for 2023.
- Approximately 80% of all funds raised go directly to support partners and communities.
- The Foundation has diversified its funding partnerships from one bilateral donor in 2019 to nine funding partners comprising six foundations, two bilaterals and one multilateral partner.
- A total of GHS 66.77m was disbursed as grants to 66 partners during the reporting year. Cumulatively, GHS 25.8m has been disbursed to support civil society/citizens' actions at all levels of governance.

## 4. Key Activities Undertaken

### Programmes

A five-year Programme Framework has been developed with a Theory of Change derived from the Foundation's TOC. The programmatic priorities are: Peace and Security, Rights to Services, Democratic and Participatory Governance and Civil Society Strengthening. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is mainstreamed in the strategies for the thematic priorities. Nine projects were implemented during the year (see Annex 1). Four projects ended during the year. These were the Community Livelihoods project funded by the International Organisation on Migration (IOM), the Gender Rights and Empowerment Project (GREP) funded by FCDO, the Security in Northern Ghana (SING) project funded by FCDO and the Communities of Excellence for Basic Education project funded by the Jacobs Foundation.

Five new projects were onboarded. These are:

- i. SING phase III;
  - ii. GREP Phase II;
  - iii. Actions for Youth Development (AfYD) project funded by the BOTNAR Foundation;
  - iv. Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism funded by the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund; and
  - v. Mobilising for Girls' Education (M4G), funded by Co-Impact, a feminist US funding organisation. Co-Impact is supporting the design phase of the exploratory M4G project with a \$300,000 grant to design a more substantive five-year project.
- The Shift the Power (StP) and Systems Change approaches to programming and development have been mainstreamed in the design and implementation of all programmes and projects. For StP, this is being piloted through the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP) funded jointly by Comic Relief and FCDO, and the Systems Change approach through the Mobilising for Girls (M4G) project being developed with support from Co-Impact.
  - Capacity strengthening activities are ongoing with the 101 partners of the Foundation.
  - A pilot project on local volunteerism, as part of the implementation of the Foundation's Active Citizenship strategy, has been launched. The project will support 25 local organisations and a minimum of 1,300 volunteers.

### Convenings and Coordination

Fourteen convenings were organised at national, regional, and zonal levels. Issues covered included: peace and security; enhancing CS coordination, youth inclusion, Shift the Power and an enabling environment for local philanthropy; measuring the value of social development initiatives; and girls' education. Over 3,000 people participated directly in these conversations.

The Foundation led in organising the Ghana Philanthropy Conference.

STAR-Ghana is hosting or facilitating the following spaces:

- The CSO Platform on Elections
- The Ghana Philanthropy Conference
- The Northern Ghana CS Platform
- The Northern Ghana Security Coordination Forum

### Governance

- 1 The secretariat has been implementing the key recommendations of an institutional assessment of the Foundation, commissioned by the GC.
- 2 The process towards complying with the provisions of the Foundation's constitution on membership of the GC was completed during the year. A Nominations Committee set up by the GC to make recommendations for appointments to the GC submitted its report to the GC during the period. The GC's shortlist is being presented to the AGM for approval.
- 3 The Nominations Committee also recommended a shortlist for appointment as Subscribers to bring the number of subscribers to the level indicated in the constitution. The shortlist will be presented to the AGM for approval.
- 4 Activities were organised to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the launch of the Foundation. These included a national and regional dialogue on active citizenship, a breakfast forum hosted by the Speaker of Parliament and media engagements. In addition, a legacy document has been developed, documenting STAR-Ghana's journey from a donor programme to an independent national entity. The document will be launched at the AGM.

## 5. Key Results Achieved

### Institutional Strengthening

At the level of the organisation, significant progress was made during the period under review to position the Foundation as a partner of choice for both state and non-state actors locally and internationally.

It continues to be a trusted broker of relationships and facilitator of dialogue among and between civil society actors. It led partnerships of CSOs to organise the Ghana Philanthropy Conference and to lead on the planning for the second Ghana Civil Society Forum and the National Volunteer Conference.

In addition, STAR-Ghana hosts or plays a key facilitating role in several civil society platforms, including the CS Platform on Elections, the Platform on Security and Development in Northern Ghana, the Northern Ghana CS Platform, the Northern Ghana Development Summit, and the CS Alliance on Girls Education. With state actors, the Foundation facilitated the establishment of the Northern Ghana Security Coordination Forum in partnership with the five Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) in northern Ghana. The forum is entering its third year of existence with the RCCs playing a key role in its institutionalisation and sustainability. It is also working with the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and the National Peace Council (NPC) and other stakeholders to develop the Northern Ghana Peace Index and to mainstream peace and security in the medium-term development plans of key state agencies, ministries and assemblies.

It has developed, and leveraged, a strong relationship with Parliament to provide inclusive spaces for civil society engagement with the House and its committees on critical national issues, including advocacy for inclusive access to high quality public goods and services. This culminated in the joint hosting with Parliament in December 2023 of the Speaker's Breakfast Forum on strengthening the Parliament-CS nexus for accountable and responsive governance.

In the year under review, the Foundation has taken positive steps towards realising its mission of promoting active citizenship and local philanthropy.

Two volunteering initiatives have been launched with the potential to provide at least 1,300 citizens, particularly young people and professionals, opportunities to play more active roles in development

processes at local and district levels. The 25 CSOs being supported with grants and technical assistance will have enhanced capacities to continue to implement volunteering initiatives targeting many more citizens. It is also expected that through the volunteerism projects, the Foundation will be contributing towards strengthening citizens' civic awareness and engagement.

The Foundation celebrated five years of existence in 2023. From a very difficult start, particularly after the programme ended and the umbilical cord to its donors were severed, the Foundation has demonstrated tenacity in its quest to survive, thrive and impact on lives. This is a very significant result that was achieved cumulatively over the period and is worth celebrating.

### Programmes

#### Peace and Security

The Foundation's activities in this sector were funded by the FCDO, the International Organisation on Migration (IOM) and the Hewlett Foundation.

Significant progress has been made towards strengthening the role of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) in the implementation and monitoring of Ghana's national security strategy. The NDPC, with the Foundation's support, is working with six key ministries and district assemblies in the five regions of northern Ghana, to mainstream the national security strategy and the Roadmap for Peace and Security in northern Ghana, developed by STAR-Ghana, into their medium-term development plans and budgets and to develop frameworks for monitoring and reporting on this.

To improve synergies and enhance the effectiveness of stakeholders' actions towards peace and security in northern Ghana, the Foundation has supported the development and institutionalisation of a Northern Ghana Security Coordination Forum by the five RCCs. The forum brings together relevant state and non-state actors working in the peace and security sector and is hosted bi-annually by the RCCs.

Nine districts in four regions have developed and are implementing district action plans to sustainably address the perennial farmer-herder conflicts over access to grazing lands and water. It is expected

ted that the learning from these pilots will enable RCCs and other actors to scale up and replicate the strategy in other areas.

At the community level, 10 community watchdog groups and 12 community security monitors and mediation groups have been set up by border communities in the Upper West and conflict prone communities in the Northern Region to complement the efforts of the security agencies in preventing infiltration by extremist groups and internal conflicts, particularly around access to and control of grazing land and water for herder groups.

Over 2,000 small-scale farmers, mainly young people, in six border communities in the Upper East region have been supported with irrigation facilities and other equipment and farm inputs to improve their livelihoods as part of the fight against radicalisation and violent extremism.

To promote evidence-based decision-making and programming in the sector, the Foundation commissioned three research papers on various aspects of peace and security in northern Ghana. These comprise a political economy analysis of political vigilantism in northern Ghana, a Fulbe (Fulani) perception survey and the role of social media in the Bawku conflict.

In partnership with the National Peace Council, the northern Ghana RCCs, the NDPC and other civil society actors, the Foundation is developing a Northern Ghana Peace Index that will provide a baseline and framework for assessing the state of peace and security in the north. It will also provide a repository for relevant reports and other documents on peace and security in the area.

#### Civil society strengthening and effectiveness

Work in this area was funded primarily by the Hewlett Foundation, Comic Relief, FCDO & Fondation Botnar. Over 110 CSOs, most of them small and medium-sized organisations, are being supported with grants and technical assistance to strengthen their organisations and enhance their effectiveness.

Disadvantaged and underserved social groups and populations have become increasingly active in engaging with duty bearers and civic actors to address salient issues. Organisations such as the Akwatia Line Scrap Dealers Association, the United Petty Traders Association and the United Traders Forum in the Kumasi metropolis with a total membership of more than 6,800 are engaging with their

respective assemblies around improved access to services, registration and licensing and fee fixing.

#### Rights to services

The Gender Rights and Empowerment Programme is the main intervention on rights to services although promoting access to services is integral to many of the other projects.

The Government of Ghana made provision for financing complementary basic education (CBE) in the 2023 budget. A total of GHS 2.1 million was earmarked for the CBE secretariat in the 2023 budget, following engagements between SGF partners – School for Life, Africa Education Watch and the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition – with the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education and their pledge to push the MoF to increase the allocation for CBE.

Over 170 schoolgirls, including Fulbe girls in the Upper West Region who dropped out of school, were able to re-enter because of advocacy efforts by Community Development Alliance (CDA) and other stakeholders on the issue. Two broad coalitions bringing together diverse civil society organisations (CSOs), including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and professional teacher associations, coordinated under GREP, have issued a petition to the President over concerns with basic education.

#### Local philanthropy

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is funding STAR-Ghana's work on promoting local philanthropy, through the Giving for Change (GfC) project. Twelve organisations and 26 communities have been supported to set up and strengthen their local philanthropy initiatives. Over 1,500 citizens have benefited from these actions during the reporting period, ranging from improved access to school facilities for learners, community support to PWDs, improved access to maternal health facilities and support to women accused of being witches and banished to camps.

Penplusbytes was supported to set up the Yensomubi platform, which provides CSOs access to a digital platform for local fundraising. During the period under review, the platform was used to launch over 80 fundraising campaigns. An alliance of over 40 CSOs has been set up to engage with the Ghana Revenue Authority and other relevant agencies on reforms to tax regimes affecting the work of CSOs.

## 6. Reflections

### Sustainability of the Foundation

Against great odds, the Foundation has succeeded in marking its fifth anniversary. The lessons learnt on the journey so far have been compiled into a legacy document for dissemination to stakeholders. The FCDO played a critically supportive role in the transition from programme to foundation, as did Christian Aid, who managed the FCDO grant. Other factors that ensured the Foundation's sustainability included:

- the quality of leadership of the GC, which is viewed by stakeholders as one of the Foundation's biggest assets;
- the idea and values behind the decision to transition the programme into a local entity. Upholding these values has helped to reassure sections of the civil society community who had concerns about possible competition from the Foundation for funding and voice.
- the process of intensive and extensive consultations that shaped the development of the Foundation.

### Fundraising

Funding and fundraising continue to be critical challenges, despite the positive results achieved. Lack of core funding constrains a relatively young organisation's ability to develop and strengthen its systems, invest in staff development and finance activities central to the Foundation's core business but which do not usually reflect in donors' calls for proposals. In addition, the relatively short-term nature of funding attracted, except for the Comic Relief and FCDO-funded Shift the Power programme, has limited the Foundation's level of ambition and capacity to work towards achieving the kind of systemic change envisaged in its vision and mission statements. STAR-Ghana, as part of the global Shift the Power movement, is working to engage donors around these issues.

### Local philanthropy

Local philanthropy is at the heart of the Foundation's mission and work. We have consequently focused a lot of our work on turning it into a tool for inclusive development. Experiences to date do not, however, bear out the assumption that local philanthropy can be a sustainable source of funding for large scale civil society actions in the immediate to medium-term. The relatively limited scale of local

private sector philanthropy, the focus of giving on charity and the weak trust in NGOs as trustees of philanthropic funds bear out this conclusion. Advocacy towards a more enabling environment for philanthropy, particularly private sector giving and a more intentional strategy to link local level philanthropy with strategic advocacy actions addressing root causes of exclusion and poverty are recommended. The Foundation is working with other CSOs to convene and institutionalise the Ghana Civil Society Forum as a space for enhancing the accountability and legitimacy of CSOs, particularly NGOs.

### Civil society coordination

STAR-Ghana is playing a key role in the strengthening of civil society coordination in Ghana, in line with its 3Cs&L strategic approach. The number of civil society platforms and spaces hosted or facilitated by the Foundation is testimony that it is viewed as an honest broker of relationships. Donor-funded approaches tend to incentivise competition – including competition to claim credit for success – rather than collaboration and coordination. CSO experiences with networks and coalitions, where these networks or their secretariats tend to compete with their memberships for funding, have also affected the appetite to collaborate, particularly in formalised structures and mechanisms. The Foundation's strategy has been to keep these platforms as informal as possible. This avoids the trap whereby formalised networks need to set up staff secretariats and raise funds. The Foundation has also sought to limit the levels of ambition of the platforms to the core issues or reasons for their formation. This has helped in achieving the modest gains indicated above.

## 7. Looking Forward

Priorities for 2024 will focus on the following critical areas:

### Governance

**Onboarding new GC Members and Subscribers:** New GC members and subscribers whose nominations are successfully approved by the AGM will participate in an onboarding programme to familiarise them with the work of the Foundation and enable them fulfil their roles effectively.

**Strategic reviews and planning:** The GC approved a number of external strategic reviews of the Foundation's key strategies and policies as inputs to the development of the next five-year strategic plan. Due to the late start of the process and a full calendar, this could not be completed in 2023 and will therefore be prioritised in the first quarter of 2024.

### Programmes

**New projects:** Commencement of the Building Resilience against Violent Extremism (BRAVE) project in January 2024 will add to and complement work already being done by STAR-Ghana in the Peace and Security sector.

**Project closures:** For four projects winding down in 2024, the necessary steps will be taken to comply with the terms of the grant contracts and, equally importantly, ensure that their closures do no harm to the partners, communities and citizens the projects supported.

**Elections programming:** With funding from the FCDO of the UK Government, the Foundation is implementing two projects with components focusing on the 2024 elections. Under the SING project, support will be provided to key stakeholders towards addressing or minimising political vigilantism in northern Ghana. Under the G-REP project, the focus will be on mobilising an alliance of CSOs to influence the manifestos of the main political parties on health, education and social protection. In addition, support will be channelled to the National Peace Council to engage national level stakeholders in ensuring peaceful and credible elections. The Foundation will also continue its work, through the CSO Elections Platform, to facilitate coordinated civil society actions around key issues of the elections and to ensure more effective collabora-

tion in the implementation of elections-related initiatives.

**Programme review:** An external evaluation of STAR-Ghana's programming over the past five years is planned, to feed into the development of the second Five-Year Strategic Plan and to improve the effectiveness of the Foundation's programming.

### Convenings and Thought Leadership

**Ghana Civil Society Forum:** The second Forum will be organised in January 2024, following its postponement in 2023.

**Ghana Philanthropy Conference:** This is planned as an annual event in the development calendar. The first conference was held in November 2023 and the second is scheduled for October 2024.

**Thought Leadership:** The GC approved the Foundation's Thought Leadership strategy in 2023 and in the last quarter of 2023 the first webinar was held on 'Measuring the value of social development actions and programmes.' Three international dialogues are planned for 2024 and several blogs and research papers are also planned.

**National Volunteer Convening:** Volunteerism is a key component of the Foundation's Active Citizenship strategy. Building on the lessons from the two volunteerism pilots, and in line with the other components of the volunteerism strategy, STAR-Ghana will facilitate the implementation of a national volunteerism conference. The conference will seek to work towards an enabling environment for volunteerism in Ghana and to provide a space for learning and sharing among stakeholders and practitioners.

**Fundraising:** The difficult funding context facing CSOs in Ghana has been indicated in preceding sections of this report. While the Foundation's fundraising efforts have been relatively successful, a lot more needs to be done to enable it withstand shocks and enhance its effectiveness. Key activities planned for 2024 include the operationalisation of the Business Development Unit, more proactive and strategic outreach and engagements with potential funding or resource partners and increased resourcing of its strategic communications work, including the recruitment of a strategic communications advisor.

## 8. Annexes

### Annex 1: Nine projects implemented

#### Action for Voice, Influence and Inclusive Development

The Action for Voice, Influence and Inclusive Development (AVID) project aims to improve access to social services and economic resources for underserved populations including Fulbes, rural women, persons with disabilities, youth, informal sector workers (particularly market women) and small-holder farmers. The project is funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Through capacity building and grants, the project aims to strengthen the voice of underserved groups and support their participation in governance at community, district and national levels.

AVID works with 21 grant partners, who are largely community-based organisations (CBOs) and less formalised networks and associations. These grant partners are implementing projects in 52 districts across 14 of the 16 regions of Ghana.

#### The Civil Society Strengthening Programme/ #Shifting the Power

The Civil Society Strengthening Programme/#Shifting the Power (CSSP/#StP) offers long-term support to enable CSOs in Ghana become more resilient, responsive and effective in addressing the priority concerns of their constituents. This is an eight-year programme implemented by STAR-Ghana Foundation and the West Africa Civil Society Institute with funding from Comic Relief and FCDO. The CSSP/#StP maintains that 'if we connect capacities at the local and national levels and we maintain civic advocacy on critical issues, then we would be strengthening agencies of groups and communities to demand and ensure accountability and responsiveness to issues of social and economic inclusion'.

The main delivery mechanism for this programme comprises grants and capacity strengthening. There are three grant components: the Catalyst Fund, the Civil Society Strengthening Fund (CSSF) and the Matching Fund. The Catalyst Fund supports the institutional and capacity strengthening of small organisations, networks and associations. The CSSF will support CSOs to implement their strategic plans, including institutional strengthening elements. The Community Matching Fund will

explore innovative funding for CSOs who want to explore local resource mobilisation and diversify their sources of funding. Overall, CSSP will support about 90 CSOs.

#### Gender Rights and Empowerment Programme

The Gender Rights and Empowerment Programme (GREP) seeks to contribute to the increased exercise of rights and access to quality social services for women and girls. It focuses on three dimensions of the rights of women and girls, namely: the right to education for girls; the right to freedom from violence and abuse; and the right to participate in public governance. While designed as a three-year programme, it is implemented in annual phases. Launched in October 2022, Phase One worked with 18 grant partners across 42 districts.

Funded by FCDO, GREP is national in scope. It is implemented at both national and sub-national levels, providing an opportunity to link community and district-level interventions with policy level engagements.

#### Action for Youth Development

The Action for Youth Development (AfYD) project, also called 'our city project', aims at contributing to an enabling environment for youth inclusion and influence in governance and access to quality public goods and services within the city of Koforidua in New Juabeng Municipality. The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of youth-led and youth-based organisations to participate actively in governance and to engage constructively with duty bearers to improve services in the municipality. AfYD also strengthens the municipality's accountability to the youth on issues surrounding planning, service delivery and the distribution of resources. AfYD is a two-year multi-country project funded by the BOTNAR foundation.

#### Giving for Change

The Giving for Change (GfC) project contributes to consolidating the civic space in various ways. It promotes local philanthropy to increase local ownership and unlock citizens' agency. It also strengthens communities' ability to claim entitlements from different actors, especially governments. The key strategy for implementation is to promote communities of practice among civil society organisations that can influence the creation

of an enabling environment for civil society and local giving. It is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by the Giving for Change Alliance (GfCA) in eight countries across Africa, Asia and South America. STAR-Ghana Foundation is the GfCA's anchor institution for Ghana.

### Security in Northern Ghana

The Security in Northern Ghana (SING) project builds on STAR-Ghana Foundation's work in peace and security started since 2020 under the Conflict Security and Stability Fund (CSSF) project in Northern Ghana. Funded by the UK's FCDO, the SING project works towards strengthening local and national capacity for achieving sustainable peace, security, and stability in Ghana. It supports stakeholders at various levels of governance to take up actions and build capacity to address the key drivers of conflict and insecurity, with a specific focus on northern Ghana. It adopts a mix of grants and technical support in working with local partners towards achieving the project's goal.

### Community Cohesion and Livelihood Enhancement Projects

The Social Cohesion and Community Livelihood Enhancement projects are funded by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The Community Cohesion Project aims to enhance communal and social cohesion through the establishment of dialogue platforms for resolving salient security threats and challenges in six border communities in the Upper East region of Ghana. Key strategies being implemented are: (i) facilitating the formation of and strengthening the capacity of dialogue platforms; (ii) promoting public education and campaigns; and (iii) facilitating the development of roadmaps for coordinated actions on mainstreaming human security, gender and community engagement around border security strategies. The Community Livelihoods Enhancement Project complements the Social Cohesion project. It aims to address the socio-economic drivers of and vulnerabilities to violent extremism and radicalisation in border towns by providing small-scale livelihood enhancement projects to selected border communities. By providing a socio-economic base to at-risk border community members, this project takes a human security approach to prevent radicalisation and susceptibility of communities to extremist recruitment.

### Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism

The Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE) project aims at building the resilience of targeted populations in selected border communities in northern Ghana. Here, vulnerability to radicalisation and violent extremism is worsened by the influx of cross-border refugees and displaced persons fleeing increased violent extremist attacks in Burkina Faso. The BRAVE project is implemented across three communities in the Upper East and Upper West regions, and targets both host communities and refugee women and youth to enhance their livelihoods and digital literacy through vocational skills training in income generating activities as well as capacity building and digital literacy clubs. The project is funded by the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund.

### Mobilising for Girls' Education

The Mobilising for Girls' Education (M4G) initiative seeks to address the problem of poor retention, completion, and transition rates among girls at the basic and secondary levels, together with girls of school-going age who are out of school in the poorest regions of Ghana. Using a systems change approach to addressing the challenge at scale, the expected outcome is that 70% of all girls of school-going age in the poorest regions of Ghana access and complete basic education. The project is currently at the design phase to further refine the vision, analysis, strategy, outcome goals and Learning Measurement Evaluation approach. It will also establish partnerships and assess key organisational capacities for the implementation of the M4G initiative. Upon successful completion of the nine-month design phase, the initiative will be implemented over 3-5 years with partial funding from Co-impact.

## Annex 2: Partners and people who made this possible

### Our Donor Funders

- The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom
- The European Union
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
- The Hewlett and Flora Foundation
- Fondation Botnar
- Comic Relief
- CISU (Denmark)
- International Organisation for Migration
- Co-Impact

### Our Governing Council

Dr Esther Ofei-Aboagye	Chairperson
Mr Charles A. Abugre	Vice Chairperson
Alhaji Abdul-Nasir Yusif	Chair, Finance & Audit Committee
Prof Audrey Gadzekpo	Chair, Programme Quality Committee
Hajia Hamdia Ismaila	Chair, Fundraising & Financing Committee
Mr Kobina Okyere	Chair, Grants Committee
Mr Francis Asong	Member
Prof Gyimah-Boadi	Member
Ms Nana Afadzina	Member
Prof Agnes Apusigah	Member
Hajia Hajara Mohammed	Member
Mr Akoto Ampaw	Company Secretary (Ex-Officio member)

### Our Subscribers

- Mrs Adelaide Addo-Fening
- Prof Akilagpa Sawyerr
- Mrs Ellen Hagan
- Justice Emile Short
- Prof Esi Sutherland-Addy
- Prof Kwame Karikari
- Mr Steve Manteaw
- Professor Takyiwa Manuh
- Mr Franklin Cudjoe
- Dr Rose Mensah-Kutin
- Alhaji Mohammed Awal Alhassan
- Dr Deodat E. Adenutsi
- Alhaji Abdul-Nasir Yusif
- Nana Asantewa Afadzina
- Prof Audrey Gadzekpo
- Mrs Ethel Cofie
- Mr Peter Badimak Yaro
- Mr Francis Bichnord Asong
- Prof Gyimah Boadi
- Rev Dr Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong
- Prof Richard Adanu
- Dr Sulemana Abdulai
- Hajia Hajara Mohammed
- Dr Esther Ofei-Aboagye

## Our Staff

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Ernestina K. Tetteh	Projects Manager
Sarah Adjei	Projects Manager
Emmanuel Dedoo	Senior Grants and Finance Officer
Feruzah Salisu	Project Officer
Anita Awuku Asare	Projects Officer
Owusuwaa Owusu-Brempong	Projects Officer
Ama Baafi	Communications Officer
Josephine Adjei	Programmes & Admin Support Officer
Allswell Garbrah Hooper	Programmes Support Officer
Papisdaff Ali	Communications Officer
Richmond Duku	Finance Assistant
Amina Abdullah	Projects Assistant
Joel Abbew	Driver
Abdallah Mahamadu	Driver
Mohammed Abdullah	Driver
Eric Mensah	Janitor
Juliana Baidoo	Intern

## Annex 3: Abbreviations and Acronyms

AfYD	Action for Youth Development
AGM	Annual General Meeting
BRAVE	Building Resilience against Violent Extremism
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSS	Civil Society Strengthening
CSSP	Civil Society Support Programme
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GC	Governing Council
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GREP	Gender Rights and Empowerment Project
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organisation on Migration
M4G	Mobilising for Girls Education
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NPC	National Peace Council
NPO	National Non-profit Organisation
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RCC	Regional Coordinating Council
SING	Security in Northern Ghana
StP	Shift the Power
TOC	Theory of Change



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