GHANA: Experience with Partnerships between Government and CSOs

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FAST FACTS:
- GDP (2012): $40.71 billion
- GDP per capita (2012): $1,605
- GDP growth (2012): 7.9%
- Inflation (2012): 9.2%
- Human Development Index (2012): 0.558 (ranked 135/186)
- Mean Years of Schooling (2010): 7.0 years
- Literacy Rates (2010):
  - Adult total (% of people ages 15 and above): 71%
  - Adult Male (% of males ages 15 and above): 78%
  - Adult Female (% of females ages 15 and above): 65%
- Life Expectancy at Birth (2011): 61 years
- Poverty Headcount at national poverty line (% of population):
  - 2006: 28.5%
  - 1998: 39.5%
  - 1992: 51.7%
- Access to Information Law: Legislation Pending
- Form of Government: Unitary Multiparty Republic with one legislative house
Characterization of Government-CSO Relationship in Ghana through Time

• Evolution of a constructive engagement from discordant, confrontational, and limited relations to increased engagements, accommodation, and partnership.

• Post-independence Ghana (1957 onwards):
  – Growth in number and the formal organization of CSOs in pursuit of their political, economic, and social interests.
  – However, CSOs tended to function mainly as co-opted or affiliated organs of the government or political parties.
  – This trend of organizational or leadership affiliation with ruling political parties, for official recognition and/or opportunity to participate in the State’s decision-making processes, continued to be the basis of State-CSO relations in the successive military and civilian regimes from 1966 to 1992.
Ghana’s Enabling Environment

• The most influential forces of State-CSO partnership have been the country’s Constitutional provision and deliberate government policy of inclusion.

Constitutional Autonomy

➢ Ghana’s 1992 Constitution guarantees freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of political participation/representation and free movement of persons, goods and services. Thus, CSOs are not legally constrained.

The Consultative Principle of Governance

➢ What has really driven the closer collaboration and partnership between the State and CSOs in the course of Ghana’s 4th Republic has been the principle of consultation.
Factors and Forces Conducive to Constructive State-CSO Relations

The Consultative Principle of Government (continued)

- In 1991, a Consultative Assembly that embraced the representation of virtually all occupational groups and associations, met for 18 months to deliberate and adopt or modify a draft constitution drawn by a sub-committee of experts of the NCD.


- On the 7th of January 1993, the 4th Republic of Ghana was born, with the promulgation of Parliament and the swearing-in of the President. Since then, after four peaceful successions of Government, Ghana’s process of consultation and State-CSO partnership has continued unabated.

- The most recent test case has been the nation-wide and Diaspora consultations that preceded the constitutional amendments presented to the Government in 2012 by the Constitutional Review Commission. These amendments are awaiting implementation by Parliament and, where necessary, by national Referendum.
Growing Collaboration and Partnership between Government and CSOs

- State-CSO relations have, over the course of the 4th Republic (1992 onwards), been progressively closer, more cordial and developmentally constructive.

- Currently over 500 CSOs operating in the country of which 447 are formally registered and officially recognized by the government.

- Their activities span the wide spectrum of human rights advocacy, environmental protection, anti-corruption campaigns, the championing of democratic rights and freedoms, and economic and political policy advocacy.

- Examples of this growing collaboration and partnership include:
  
  - Ghana signing on to the Open Government Partnership in September 2011
  
  - State-CSO dialogue for either the resolution of policy differences or project implementation has preceded the OGP as far back as the mid-1980s.
  
  - National Development Planning Commission has engaged CSOs since 1993
  
  - Government withdrawing the NGO bill from Parliament in 1993
In September 2011, the government of Ghana signed onto the Open Government Partnership, that has a membership of 57 countries and is financially sponsored by the World Bank.

Ghana joined the OGP as it provides a good framework for the coordination of policies and programs that promote transparent and accountable government.

Ghana’s OGP has a national Steering Committee that embraces the equal representation of the State (Executive, Parliament, and Judiciary) and the CSOs.

In December 2012, the Steering Committee finalized Ghana’s National Action for the achievement of the OGP’s commitments of:  
- Transparency
- Citizen participation
- Accountability
- Technological Innovation

The National Steering Committee adopted the Action Plan after it had been publicly discussed in nationwide consultative forums organized in three zones.
Open Government Partnership (OGP) Countries
State-CSO Dialogue on National Political and Economic Issues

• PAMSCAD (Programme of Amelioration and Mitigation of the Social Cost of Adjustment) - CSOs were a major agent in its implementation.

• CSOs have also had representation on several statutory boards of the State, such as the USA-funded Millennium Development Authority (MIDA) which managed the US$560 million Millennium Challenge Account targeted at agricultural and infrastructure development (2007-2012).

• The National Development Planning Commission (a constitutional body) has, since its inception in 1993, engaged CSOs in the preparation of advisory, policy documents for the President’s presentation to the Parliament.

• In 1993, dialogue was the medium of conflict resolution between the Government and the CSOs, whereby, the Government withdrew from Parliament the NGO Bill which the CSOs felt was aimed at their control by the State.
Challenges Confronting the Future Progress of State-CSO Relations in Ghana

• Partisan Politics

• Inter-party competition for power

• Mushrooms of CSOs which are really sub-groupings within their parent political parties. ➢ This Damages CSO credibility.
Dimensions of Lack (or Perceived Lack) of CSO Credibility

- CSOs vying for equal political space with the government due to historical origins of some CSOs as pressure groups and liberation organizations.

- Some CSOs lack transparency and accountability:
  - They fail to register for recognition by the government.
  - Some don’t provide information on the scope of their activities. They don’t submit annual or periodic reports on their operations to state authorities.
  - Some CSOs embark on projects without coordinating with district and regional planning authorities, creating problems of duplication, diverting attention, and leading to the inefficient use of limited resources.

- Most CSOs get their financial support from foreign donors without the knowledge or inter-mediation of the government.
  - CSOs do not report on the usage of these funds, although such funding counts towards foreign donors’ total claim of support to the country.

- Others: Misapplication of foreign donor funds for personal purposes, Tax evasion, inter-CSO rivalry and competition, Bad CSO governance
  - The fraudulent practices of some CSOs hurt credibility of all CSOs.