

Country Report

June 2019

Progress towards peaceful, just
and inclusive societies

SDG 16+ in Ghana



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1 Executive summary

The National Voluntary Review (VNR) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) undertaken by the Government of Ghana highlighted that “SDGs have been integrated into the national development agenda”¹. This recognises the importance of local ownership and progress on SDGs to sustain and strengthen Ghana’s democracy and peace. A key area of focus in this agenda are the goals and targets related to peaceful societies, access to justice and good and inclusive governance - called SDG 16+.

This prompted the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) in partnership with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) to initiate this research on the progress on SDG 16+. This research seeks to complement and support the official VNR process by providing a CSO perspective on advances and challenges of SDG 16+ implementation as well as an assessment of existing partnerships, coordination and awareness raising mechanisms.

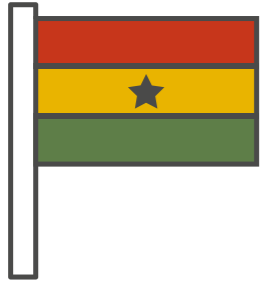
The project, initiated in January 2019, reflects comprehensive consultations and engagements with stakeholders representing civil society, state and international as well as intergovernmental organisations in nine out of sixteen administrative regions and at national levels. The data collection process commenced and was concluded in May 2019. Preliminary findings were presented at the conference in preparation for HLPF 2019: “Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies: SDG 16 implementation and the path towards leaving no one behind”

in Rome (May 2019). The process of data collection comprised both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with government, civil society, traditional authority and other relevant stakeholders across the country while a questionnaire was answered by 394 respondents. In June 2019, a final validation workshop held in Accra with participants from state, civil society, international organisations and the media guided the conclusion of the report, which resulted in policy recommendations and follow up actions.

The study undertook a three-pronged review, considering progress and implementation: in the way the government had integrated SDG 16+ in its plans and infrastructures, what practical progress could be found at operational level on all SDG 16 targets and if and how multi-stakeholder partnerships had been effectively used. In this process, the study identified in-country challenges and gaps in SDGs promotion and implementation, challenges of the VNR process as well as progress made and prospects of meeting the set targets of the SDG 16+. This was documented in the key findings below. The study finally provides key recommendations for government, civil society and the international community to further SDG 16+ localization and accelerate joint implementation.

¹ Ghana Voluntary National Review 2019, UNDESA, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=1570&menu=3170>, accessed 28 June 2019

Ghana at a glance



Population

28,8 million

source: Human Development Index, Ghana, UNDP, June 2019



Scores **140** out of **189** on Human Development Index

source: Human Development Index, Ghana, UNDP, June 2019



5000

internally displaced people by december 2018

source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, June 2019



41st

ranking most peaceful country in the world

source: Global Peace Index 2018

1.1 Key Findings

1. Just, peaceful and inclusive societies (Goal 16) is the number one SDG and priority among Ghanaians. But the official key VNR messages by the government does not mention this goal at all. Government must give more attention to this goal. At the same time, Ghanaians also consider other SDGs (such as Goal 3, 8, 6 or 9), that are inherently linked to Goal 16 as priorities. This demands increased focus on an integrated SDG 16+ agenda that pulls together all relevant peace targets.
2. Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents believed that SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions should be prioritized ahead of SDG 3: Good health and well-being (46 %); SDG 8: Decent work and Economic Growth (44 %); SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation (40 %) and Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. SDG 5: Gender Equality recorded the lowest ratings at 25%. It is also important to note that 62% of the respondents had never participated in any peace initiative as compared to 36% who had.
3. The research findings underscore the key role government must play in driving the implementation of the SDGs agenda, followed by CSOs. This should encourage more government led action, coordination and localisation of the goals. Indeed, 60 % of respondents believed that the government should lead the process, followed by CSOs (29%) with only few mentioning International organisations (16%) and "other" (3.3%).
4. Key implementation challenges include lack of institutional capacities, lack of political will and corruption. This is hampering the work of governmental organisations such as National Peace Council (NPC), National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) or Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), that should lead the implementation of the SDGs. Out of the options of major challenges impeding implementation, lack of personnel stood out with 383 responses (97.2%) followed by lack of political with 285 (72.3%), lack of funds with 252 (64%) and corruption with 218 responses (55.3%) respectively.
5. Lack of awareness about the SDGs hampers ownership, action and monitoring of key goals. Fifty percent of respondents did not know what the SDGs are, as against forty-eight per cent who did. Two per cent were not sure of what their knowledge about SDGs was. As already reflected above, this demands more government action with seventy-four per cent of the respondents believing that government had not created enough awareness about the SDGs.
6. Overall respondents consider Ghana as an inclusive society. But this positive news must be tempered when considering inclusion from the experiences of women and youth. Cultural views and practices still marginalize those groups, a finding that was corroborated during the focus group discussions. Out of 394 respondents, 55.3% had never suffered any form of exclusion or marginalization while 43% indicated that they had. Causes for exclusion and marginalization were seen (in decreasing order) as political leanings, age, sex, religion and disabilities and a significant group mentioning other reasons.

1.2 Key Recommendations

Government should:

- Prioritise SDG 16+ in its localization and national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This must be done in an integrated manner that pulls together all relevant goals impacting on peace, justice and inclusive governance.
- Enhance state capacities to make full use of its current SDG 16+ linked institutions, such as NPC or CHRAJ, and implement existing policies.
- Establish a National Peace Fund under independent oversight to enable the effective functioning of the National Peace Council.
- As part of this, significantly increase its focus on anti-corruption and provide adequate political and practical support related to existing and new initiatives at all levels.
- Promote and facilitate the development of national and subnational targets on SDG 16 in a participatory manner as part of this localization drive. This will help to ensure that SDGs are implemented in a decentralized manner, respond to local needs and support inclusive processes. This decentralization will also enhance responsiveness to marginalized groups or communities.
- Develop a comprehensive (multisectoral) SDGs implementation, monitoring and assessment framework with budgets on priority areas identified in the VNR process, leveraging on ongoing programmes and initiatives.
- Facilitate and coordinate strong multi-stakeholder platforms on SDGs implementation across districts, regional and national levels.
- Enhance state and civil society intra and interagency coordination and cooperation to promote SDGs implementation and achievement of targets.
- Increase awareness raising about SDGs and SDG 16+ in particular.
- Enhance avenues for promoting and increasing youth participation in decision-making process through the development of National Action Plans (NAPs) on the UNSCR 2250 and UNSCR 2419. The Youth Parliament was singled out as a significant avenue for enhancing youth's participation in decision-making at various levels.
- Increase the participation of women in decision-making processes in particular those that are linked to economic empowerment, peace processes and representation. It is critical that the process of validating the NAP2 of the UNSCR 1325 (which has already been improved from NAP1) is prioritized.
- Support inter and intra-community socio-cultural and economic activities to promote social cohesion and unity (for example sports for peace, festivals or joint community development activities).

Civil Society Organisations should:

- Strengthen partnerships with the national government to support policy development, programme planning/ design as well as monitoring frameworks on SDGs promotion and implementation.
- Support the National Peace Council and other relevant agencies in policy and curricular review, advocacy, and actual implementation of SDG 16+ work such as Peace Education Programmes in schools.

- Support State agencies in building their own capacities on research, training needs or operational capacity to implement SDGs priorities.
- Facilitate mechanisms for early warning peace and security preparedness and awareness across the country.
- Develop a CSO led SDGs Implementation Index to track SDGs, in particular SDG 16+, implementation in Ghana.
- Work with government to increase awareness about SDGs and SDG 16+ in particular.

International Community should:

- Support multistakeholder platforms on the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the SDG16+ goals.
- Support SDG 16+ awareness raising and promotion initiatives to expand knowledge about the SDGs and SDG16+ to all and sundry especially the most vulnerable and excluded groups.
- Support government in its capacity to utilise its SDG 16+ institutions (such as NPC and CHRAJ), implement existing policies (such as NAP II, anti-corruption) or develop new ones (such as the National Peace Fund or youth NAPs) to its fullest.
- Support government in the localization of the SDG 16+ goals and targets in a participatory and inclusive manner.
- Support civil society as a key stakeholder in all the above and in their specific roles as watchdogs (e.g. on Early Warning) or experts (e.g. Peace Education).

2 Introduction

2.1 Background and context to the Report

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals adopted in September 2015 presents itself as a commitment by world leaders towards a comprehensive, and multilateral agenda that adopts rights-based approaches to development and prioritizes sustainable peace, resilience building, inclusivity and justice. In line with the provisions of paragraph 79 of the Agenda 2030, Member States are encouraged to “conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven”. These National Reviews are in turn expected to serve as a basis for periodic reviews by the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The overarching aim of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) is to engender experience-sharing and learning with the aim of enhancing policies and strengthening relevant institutions for the effective implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

To demonstrate its commitment to the SDGs, which resonates with Ghana’s Medium-Term National Development policies (2014–2017) and (2018–2021), the Government of Ghana in 2018 undertook an Indicator Baseline Study to ascertain the necessary actions and commitments to be made towards reaching their SDG targets. On January 23rd, 2019, The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) launched the Ghana Voluntary Review Process (VNR) of the SDGs. Of major concern to the Commission was the low level of awareness and knowledge of the SDGs among the population including some government and public service officials, businesses

and students. Low awareness levels have far-reaching implications on the ownership of this important agenda and the contributions and efforts of all actors towards its effective implementation.

To complement government efforts and leaning on the “Leave no one behind” principle with focus on the SDG 16, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) undertook a shadow assessment which focuses on the operationalization of the SDG 4, 5 and 16 at the local level. The project examined how far SDGs had been implemented and the readiness of various actors, particularly at the local grassroots level to facilitate the implementation and operationalization of the SDGs. Through the research and broad engagement with a variety of actors the project also created awareness on the SDGs, its principles and targets. This will further enrich the understanding of the principles, but also engender greater participation across all sectors including state, non-state, communities, media, businesses and student actors in the implementation process to ensure inclusivity. Ultimately, as CSO Networks, WANEP and GPPAC will leverage on its partnerships and networks to support and influence state policies on the SDGs, including in Ghana.

2.2 Methodology

The team adopted a mixed-method approach to collect the data, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative component of the research used a semi-structured questionnaire-interview guide. A total of 110 informants were featured in the qualitative research. This comprised undertaking 14 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 12 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in the project regions. The quantitative instrument, comprised open-ended questions, statements measured on a Likert Scale, Yes or No questions and three multiple choice and six (6) demographic questions answered by 394 survey respondents bringing the total number of respondents to 504.

The Research team selected KII interviewees and FGD participants based on a stakeholder analysis prior to field data collection and by suggestions and recommendations of WANEP Field Monitors. In addition, some KIIs were identified based on snowball sampling. In similar vein, FGD participants were recommended by WANEP field monitors as well as other FGD participants contacted. The team employed non-randomized, purposive² methods for identifying survey respondents.

The team limited FGDs to a maximum of 8 participants. The quantitative surveys were conducted in 9 out of the 16 regions namely, the Northern region, North East region, Savannah region, Bono region, Ahafo region, Ashanti region, Volta region, Oti region and Greater Accra region. Although this purposive survey could not comply with the rules governing a fully randomized survey, it remains in line with

² As a potential second option, randomization would have required greater resources in time and human investment at the outset and in control activities.

acceptable survey principles and criteria of a confidence level well above 95% with a margin of error under 5%. The 9 project regions were selected primarily based on two major scientific criteria: findings of the 2018 SDGs baseline survey and data generated from the WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS). Some of the criteria include:

- I. Communities most affected by violence;
- II. Geographic, resource and political diversity of the area;
- III. Level of development.

The team could conduct KIIs, FGDs and quantitative surveys in almost all the 9 regions except in Chereponi in the North-East region where data collection ended abruptly due to an outbreak of violence. This however did not affect the number of respondents earmarked for the project generally.

Key Informant Interviews:

The high number of KIIs performed in the Greater Accra region reflected two major facts that governance largely remains centralized, and two, that the implementation of the SDGs is more concentrated at the national level.

Focus Group Discussions:

There was deliberate effort to get views of youth and women. Out of the 12 FGDs held in the project regions, six were with the youth and the remaining six were with women. In spite of initial challenges with mobilizing participants for the FGDs due to the short notice, the maximum number of participants for FGDs were met and represented well the demographics of the regions visited.

Quality control:

The team ensured quality control through 1) selection of experienced enumerators from the WANEP’S Field Monitors and Trans4orm Network, Ghana, members who have been engaged in similar surveys in the recent past; 2) rigorous training of enumerators’;

3) pre-testing of the questionnaire; 4) monitoring of field operations by WANEP and 5) data cleaning using SPSS.

Limitations:

During the study, two major limitations were encountered. First, due to limited funding, the research was conducted in nine out of the sixteen administrative regions. Second, the duration for the VNR process was limited, and very close to the HLPF. However, the capacity and experience of the research team and oversight from GPPAC enabled the team to ensure quality of the research.

2.3 Structure of the Report

This report is divided in five main sections. The initial sections above provided an overview of the project, key findings, and recommendations. Sections 3, 4, and 5 below discuss the findings from the field work and are categorized under broad themes of: Legal and Legislative Frameworks (Section 3); Review of implementation (Section 4); and Space for and partnership with Civil Society in SDGs peace goals (SDG16+) Implementation (Section 5).

3 Assessment of legal and legislative frameworks

This section highlights key existing legal and legislative frameworks as well as policies and practices important for SDG 16+ progress as they emerged during the field work. Given the context of Ghana and the prominence the 1992 Constitution gives to customary law, the research suggests that there are traditional / customary practices that can or have impacted on the implementation of the SDGs. While constitutionally Ghana is a secular state, religious beliefs and practices permeate every area of Ghanaian life thus making religion a critical component of SDGs implementation in Ghana as indicated by respondents during the research. This area deserves more attention, also in the localization, implementation and monitoring of SDG 16+ progress.

3.1 Key Findings

- The National Peace Council (NPC) and the Act that established the NPC are aligned with SDG 16+ and serves as a comprehensive framework for the promotion and implementation of the SDG16 and aspects of the SDG4.
- Some national institutions including the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) have institutionalized and aligned specific activities in their work plans to the specific SDGs to which they can contribute.
- Ghana has sufficient legal and policy frameworks for the effective implementation of the SDGs, particularly those that relate to the SDG 16+ peace goals. However, the challenge has been a lack of monitoring of targets, perceived selectivity in justice delivery, and external, excessive interference in the legal processes limiting effective and independent law enforcement.
- Citizens' perception of the rule of law is captured in one respondent's statements "s3 wo sika sua aa w'as3m sua' (If you are poor, you don't have a strong case). This is also a direct reference to the high level of corruption that came out as a key concern in both the quantitative and qualitative research parts.
- Chieftaincy institutions have enacted laws to address lack of progress on SDGs and reviewed or eliminated cultural practices that are hindering SDGs implementation.
- Festivals and infrastructure development programmes have become major avenues for harnessing camaraderie and brotherliness and by extension the promotion of peace across the country.
- Religion, religious institutions and religious commemorations have contributed to the promotion of brotherliness and peaceful coexistence in spite of religious differences.
- There are a significant number of newly introduced policies both at the national and communities' levels that vulnerable groups, especially women and children, indirectly benefitted from.
- Culture, politics and poverty are still major causes of marginalization and exclusion of groups such as young people, women, the aged and persons with disability.

3.2 Assessment of Frameworks

The research revealed that the following were the most prominent policies, laws and practices that interviewees thought contributed to peaceful, just and inclusive societies:

- **National Peace Act (NPC)** which was passed by parliament in 2011. The fundamental role of the council is to prevent, manage, resolve and build sustainable government in the country. These objectives are key to the attainment of SDG 16+.
- **Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda II (GSGDA II).** Its adoption has helped Ghana to develop a comprehensive approach towards transparency, accountability and responsive governance. GSGDA II states that it would address the following: deepening the practice of democracy and institutional reforms, local governance and decentralization, gender equity and women empowerment, rule of law and access to justice and access to rights and entitlements. The approaches shared under GSGDA II resonate with Goal 16+.
- **National Social Protection Policy Framework,** which was created under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to mitigate inequality and bridge the gender gap in terms of inclusiveness and social development. The target group for the policy was women in rural areas.
- **National Gender Policy.** In line with the objectives of SDG 5 this policy was implemented in August 2015 under article 17(1) and (2) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana. It serves as a trajectory into gender equality and women empowerment

in the national development process. It seeks to improve the social, legal, political, economic and cultural conditions of women. The policy promotes the enforcement and domestication of ratified international government commitments to advance the above. Ghana has completed the implementation of its UNSCR 1325 NAP 1 and is in the process of validating its NAP 2, which already looks like an improvement of NAP 1.

Others national frameworks and institutions include the National Youth Authority Act (2016), Act 939, the Nation Builders Corps programme, the Free SHS Ghana policy (2017) and the Office of the Special Prosecutor (2017) Bill with the prosecution of offences subject to the authority of the Attorney-General. The bill established the Office of the Special Prosecutor as an autonomous body to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption, bribery and other criminal cases pertaining to both private and public sectors at the national level.

3.3 Challenges

Several challenges were identified through the study, regarding the effective implementation of legal frameworks or policies.

First there is the unequal delivery of the justice system (perceived or real) as stated by a majority of respondents. The absence of clearly defined National Security Policy has contributed to fragmented implementation of security initiatives. Critical agencies such as the NPC, NCCE and Social Welfare are underfunded, under resourced and sometimes overlooked particularly at the district level thus inhibiting their effectiveness and reach.

Second is the low-level awareness of the legal provisions and the administration of these policies and frameworks. In many of the communities visited, this lack of understanding and awareness was identified as a major reason for tensions between citizens and state authorities. There was a strong call for increased and institutionalized awareness raising on SDG 16+ and other national or global level policies and programmes.

The third is the deliberate violation of laws by citizens in partnership with state security agencies. For example, in several communities individuals usually referred to as "Crime Agents" idle around police stations to stand in as surety and secure the release of crime suspects for a fee. Accountability remains a matter of grave concern amongst citizens and was identified as critical component in creating peaceful, just and inclusive societies. For the effective implementation of the SDGs, many of these issues relating to planning and enforcement must be overcome.

3.4 Recommendations

- The development of country and context specific SDGs targets will provide an avenue for Ghana to review existing policies and strategies, identify gaps and avenues for mitigating implementation constraints, prioritize identified issues in the VNR process and consolidate plans.
- Core to the effective implementation of the SDGs is mobilization of resources. Integrating national strategies for identified priority areas will support the development and the identification of sustainable resource mobilization.
- Government to scale-up its public education programmes to include peace education as part of SDG4, early warning and global citizenship as a means of

mitigating or addressing recurrent as well as emerging security threats.

- Initiatives such as the community policing, ZoomNurse³ and other community empowerment initiatives should be promoted and sustained.
- Continuous promotion of inter and intra-ethnic dialogue, inter and intra-faith cooperation, inter and intra-party dialogues to ensure peace co-existence and harmony.
- Government should intensify its anti-terrorism awareness programmes and initiatives particularly in border communities and regions with high migration rates.
- Mechanisms for addressing child trafficking, child abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation must be set up or strengthened. Where possible special courts and support units within the relevant state institutions to fast track the protection of victims should be set up.
- Government to prioritize the use of traditional and new media (such as social media) to expand outreach and galvanize interest of all citizens across all spectrums of society.

³ The ZoomNurse is an intervention that provides short-term healthcare service delivery training for young people to support the healthcare delivery system as a means of not only meeting the staff deficits in health facilities but also address unemployment issues

4 Review of implementation

4.1 Key Findings

The Government of Ghana is implementing various SDG 16+ related policies via its various Ministries' Departments and Agencies. Some interventions contributing to SDG 16+ have also been facilitated or led by traditional authorities, religious leaders and other civil society groups. Key in driving the work on peaceful societies are government affiliated institutions such as NPC, the CHRAJ or the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Police Service as well as other peace infrastructures such as chieftaincies and CSO's such as the Media Foundation for West Africa. Religious initiatives such as cross religious visits and socio-cultural activities (for example funerals or festivals) were recognized as important to further social cohesion. Important operational plans named included the anti-corruption action plan of the Judiciary and Judicial Services. To encourage inclusive, participatory governance and decision making processes mechanism such as Townhall meetings were identified as best practices as they facilitated the active participation of women and youth.

But paralleling the positive policies and frameworks that are in place it appears, according to the respondents of this research, that the institutions and plans are not delivering enough results and effects are not yet seen on the ground. Vigilantism is on the raise, disputes over chieftaincies have led to conflicts and violence, poor infrastructure is increasing the people's vulnerability, particularly of women. Nepotism and corruption is witnessed on a continuous basis and children's rights are frequently abused. Lack of capacities, political will and corruption are key issues underlying these mixed results by the Government of Ghana. These are therefore some of the main issues that the government should address to move the SDG 16+ agenda forward.

4.2 Assessment of Overall Goals and Specific Progress

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere

- The National Peace Council (NPC)'s mandate resonates with SDG 16+. Many of its interventions have been aligned with the targets of the SDG 16, particularly those targets that relate to peaceful coexistence. The NPC has launched Peace Clubs⁴ as part of the implementation strategies on SDGs. NPC is mandated to lead and facilitate the achievement of sustainable peace in the country.
- Violent vigilantism and political thuggery is fast becoming a menace in Ghana's democratic and electoral environment. It has the potential to affect stability, democracy and peace if the issue is not addressed. This poses a challenge to the security of the state and law enforcement. The growth has been attributed to low level of confidence in policing, prosecutorial and judicial systems including political interference and the slow pace of justice delivery, as well as bulging youth unemployment. Vigilantism has grown out of a sub-culture of client-patron relationship of Ghana's politics which limits effective actions to address their growth.
- Despite its limitations, the NPC in partnership with CSOs, academia, and INGOs are collaborating to address the issue, including supporting the government to pass a bill. The NCCE has also embarked on awareness raising on the negative effects of vigilantism in society and Ghana's democracy and governance.
- In light of recent attacks on journalists by politicians, security agencies and individuals and the growing sense of insecurity amongst journalists, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) is currently undertaking a project that promotes a cordial relationship between the various media outlets and security agencies in Ghana and across West Africa.
- The Chieftaincy institution in Ghana with a Ministry, serves as vital tool for peace, security and development in Ghana. Chiefs have facilitated community policing operations to promote security and fostered social cohesion through development initiatives, prudent land administration procedures and mediation. For instance, in Berekum, the ban on performance of funerals after 6pm, has helped to reduce crime rates and Sexual and Gender Based Violence.
- However, in most parts of the country, chieftaincy also contributes to conflict and violence, for example because of the lack of documented succession plans and interference in the structure and operations of traditional councils by politicians and conflict entrepreneurs.
- Lack of physical infrastructure such as poor roads and lighting coupled with no or limited police presence has been a major enabling factor for crimes with most common victims being women. Nepotism and favouritism in the police service has also had a negative impact on law enforcement.
- At the same time, most NGOs and the police are contributing to creating peaceful and just societies. A section of respondents believed that without the police, there would be disorder. The

⁴Peace Clubs are clubs set up in schools and within the community to promote the culture of peace: religious, ethnic and political tolerance, peaceful coexistence and the use of peaceful mechanisms for the resolution of conflict

Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service has been actively involved in raising against gender and sexual based violence awareness for example.

- Migration, poverty, ignorance, parental neglect, marginalization, greed, inadequate police presence and visibility as well as political interferences were listed as some of the major drivers of crimes and criminality in most communities across the country.
- Socio-cultural events and practices such as funerals, festival, intermarriages have been and continue to be a unifying factor across the country by promoting inter-ethnic and inter-faith interactions and coexistence.
- Ghana's educational system, particularly the Senior High School system has significantly enhanced societal inclusivity of all minority or disadvantaged groups across Ghana.
- The visit of the National Chief Imam to the Christ the King Catholic Church in Accra-Ghana to commemorate its 100th birthday has been hailed by many across the country as a positive symbolic move promoting brotherliness. One respondent summed it up as follows "different beliefs in God doesn't mean we are enemies, humanity first".

16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

- Child labor, child trafficking and exploitation continuous to be prevalent in fishing, mining and cocoa growing communities across the country such as Dambai, Kete Krachi, Ada, Prampram, Wenchi and Afram Plains in spite of efforts by Government and Civil Society to eliminate them. There are also suspicions of particularly girls being

trafficked from other parts of West Africa and Ghana for rituals by occultist groups. Some girls are reported to have been brought into the country for prostitution.

- Inadequate infrastructure inhibits the full operationalization of the free education policy. Because of this, children had to stay at home or engage in economic activities.
- Poverty and parental neglect were cited as factors prompting children of school-going age (6 to 15) to become economically active instead of attending school. For example, in the Tamale Metropolis and, in Berekum West District basic school children ride tricycles on commercial basis to make a living or pay their school fees. Interestingly, the provision of the tricycles forms part of the district assembly's initiatives to create youth employment. Respondents in Walewale, Nalerigu and Damongo district capitals, revealed that migration of school going females from northern Ghana to southern Ghana to work as market porters (Kayeye) for their living remains a daunting social and economic problem.

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

- In December 2017, the Chief Justice launched the Anti-Corruption Action plan for the judiciary and Judicial Service to enhance integrity among judges and staff as a sustainable means of reducing or eliminating corruption in the justice delivery system.
- However, in one of the focus group discussions, a respondent emphasized that: "The justice system is monetized and since women are a lot poorer than men and, even if we have money, we would rather take care of our children than pay

bribes". She further said: "There is rule of money, there is one justice system for the poor and women, and another justice system for the rich and powerful".

16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime

- Ghana is not immune to security threats in neighbouring countries. Threats of violent extremism and terrorism coupled with increased proliferation of small arms and light weapons requires institutions, such as the Small Arms and Light Weapons Commission, the Ghana Police Service and border security agencies, to be strengthened. The porous nature of Ghana's borders need to be efficiently managed. Interviewees' particularly those from the general public indicated that awareness creation on cross-border security issues was crucial to enhance the understanding of the Ghanaian population of those threats and their own roles in early warning and prevention of violent extremism.

16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

- Most Ghanaians believe that corruption remains a major challenge to security and development in the country and by extension a challenge to the implementation of the SDGs. Mismanagement of funds at the District Assembly level remains a major challenge. Most respondents believed that: "You do not get anything done if you do not bribe someone." Despite these challenges two major initiatives were pointed out as critical to corruption prevention. These are: the Anti-corruption, Rule of Law and Accountability Programme (ARAP) including the "Ipaidabribe" reporting

platform and the establishment of the Office of the Special Prosecutor.

16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

- The capacity of public institutions to function optimally and effectively have been affected by the influence of political party considerations, corruption and nepotism. This affects effective implementation of policies and plans, for example the government's ban on illegal and indiscriminate lumbering of rose wood and shea trees negatively affecting communities has not been effective in the Savannah region even though youth staged demonstrations in the forest. The lack of political will to ensure that institutions function independently and effectively with minimal or no outside interference affects the attainment of this target. As respondent expressed "S3 wo sika sua a, woas3m sua" (if you are poor your case has no merits). Without clear actions on this target, a peaceful Ghanaian society will not be achieved.

16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

- Most women participants in this research believed that, women's participation in decision-making processes, and in particular elections, is restricted to voting. Much more needs to be done to engage women and amplify their voices towards their inclusion in decision-making in line with the UNSCR 1325 and the NAP II. Even in circumstances where women appear to have rights to decision making, it is limited. Many respondents attributed this to cultural beliefs and practices that are supporting patriarchal structures. "Here, the Queenmother enstools the chief but when it comes to decision making, the Queenmother does not play a role."

- Some District Assemblies have mainstreamed inclusivity in their plans and interventions. For instance, in the Berekum West District of the Bono Region of Ghana, 2% of the District Assembly Common Fund is allocated to Persons with Disability (PWD). For those of school going age, their fees and some basic essentials are provided by the District Assembly. For those with skills such as sewing, catering and hairdressing, they are provided with necessary equipment to support their trade and to train others with similar interest. Some PWD respondents emphasized that this policy is better and more sustainable than the previous one where they were simply handed a stipend.
- Infrastructural development policies need to be more age and disability friendly. Ghana is signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) and has since domesticated this international obligation. Despite this, many public infrastructures are still not fully accessible and culture equally remains a barrier to their inclusion.
- One of the major mechanisms for enhancing inclusivity, particularly at the local level was the organisation of Townhall meetings by the District Assemblies. According to the youth and women's groups that participated in the study, these meetings create an avenue for particularly women and young people to participate in decision-making. Interviewees however highlighted the need for opening more channels for publicity as the current practice of sending invitation letters to attend meetings has not been that effective. Some youth have also developed initiatives to facilitate youth participation in such processes. One of the young participants indicated that because most young people are excluded from agenda-setting and law-making in the country, young people are not at peace tables with those who make the laws.

- To make the SDGs more inclusive, interviewees highlighted that they needed to be translated into local languages and disseminated via various mediums including at places of worship, schools, assemblies and public announcement systems at community levels.

16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration

- Most interviewees had at least one national or legal identification document such as birth certificate, passport, national identity card (Ghana Card) and voters' ID. Many were also aware of the necessity to have documents proving their legal identity and undertook actions to obtain them.

16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

- The passage into law of the Right to Information Bill was hailed by all respondents as a significant first step towards this goal because it would ensure access to information and promote fundamental freedoms. In spite of recent attacks on journalists and the press, Ghana still has a healthy climate for the promotion of press freedoms. Interviewees were of the view that because of the media, their voices were being heard and they were more aware of their rights and could therefore demand more from the authorities.
- CHRAJ provides general legal and alternative dispute resolution services to the vulnerable and socially excluded free of charge, or even pay transportation for complainants who cannot afford to access their services.

- Civil Society groups and organisations continue to advocate for strong institutions and develop and deliver programmes that support this. For instance, WANEP supported the capacity building of the National Peace Council and other state agencies through trainings on: early warning, dialogue and mediation, gender and peacebuilding, peacebuilding program design and peace education.

16.B Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

A concerted effort against the practice of accusing women of witchcraft and discriminating them on that basis has been undertaken. This includes the closure of a 'witch camp' at Bonyase in the Savannah Region and the established of re-integration committee for women who had been accused of being witches.

4.3 Challenges

- A variety of challenges threaten the attainment of the SDGs broadly and SDG 16+ specifically. These challenges range from ineffective law enforcement mechanisms or poor justice delivery systems, to corruption, discriminatory cultural and religious beliefs and practices as well as general resource constraints (technical, financial, logistical). This seriously limits Ghana's capacity to build strong institutions (for example universal, inclusive education), peaceful societies (for example through support of peace infrastructures such as the NPC, which is not fully operational nor decentralized) and ensure access to justice for all (for example linked to the corruption of the judicial system).

4.4 Recommendations

- Development of inter-community actions such as sports or soccer for peace to promote national unity.
- Establishment of Youth Parliament to enhance youth participation in decision making.
- Establishment of the Peace Fund including intensifying advocacy for the private sector to support peace initiatives.
- Effective decentralization of SDGs including institutional work planning and awareness raising activities and all other aspects of developmental interventions to facilitate the meeting of the SDG16+ targets.
- Establishment of a coordination agency on SDGs so that no one is left behind.

5 Space for and partnership with Civil Society in SDGs peace goals (SDG 16+) Implementation

The fieldwork and validation workshops highlighted the need to support multisectoral collaboration on SDG 16+. This should be backed by shared interests and understandings of the context and needs and hinged on the principles of complementarity and accountability (this could be done for example through inclusive action researches such as this study and support of follow-up activities).

5.1 Key findings

- The critical role of civil society groups and organisations was widely acknowledged. It is evident in the number of civil society organisations contributing to SDGs promotion and implementation, among others through working groups set up by the Government of Ghana. There is still ample room for increased engagement of civil society for partnerships in the conceptualisation and roll out of SDGs plans including the VNR process and follow up actions.
- Civil society must maintain a healthy balance between its role as a partner to and as a watchdog of the state.
- Particularly on goal 16+, government, civil society as well as international organisations must prioritise a fully integrated and coordinated approach as envisaged in the SDGs agenda and confirmed, for example in the World Bank and UN “Pathways for Peace” report which highlights the invaluable role of civil society in prevention and peace processes.

5.2 Assessment of civil society space and partnership with government

Overall civil society and government are cooperating in a productive manner and the necessary space for work by civil society is both recognized and provided for. Relating to the SDGs and VNR process specifically, an established CSO platform on SDGs exists. It has been involved in consultations with the government and the National Development Planning Commission (that oversees implementation of SDGs). But this platform was not fully representative of sectors covering the specific SDGs under review in 2019, particularly SDG 16. This led to limited engagements with key peacebuilding organisations, such as WANEP, that are working on SDG 16+ issues in close cooperation with relevant government entities. This might be one of the reasons why SDG 16 is not highlighted in the

government’s main VNR messages. This lack of engagements at least led to the present CSO review.

The government of Ghana as well as CSOs should therefore increase awareness about SDGs related processes and increase CSO participation in the SDGs steering committees to include those that have expertise in specific thematic areas. Overall much greater joint attention to SDG 16+ is needed. This goal must be implemented in a complementary, integrated manner by all parties in a way that supports and strengthens existing capacities. Closer cooperation would help ensuring the SDGs agenda in Ghana builds on bottom up approaches that serve the needs on the ground and ceases to be seen as an elitist issue.

5.3 Challenges

Turf protection and issues of attribution remain a major challenge to creation of multistakeholder platforms on SDGs implementation. Particularly as it relates to SDGs program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, there are discrepancies in reporting mainly because reported progress or lack thereof have implications on government tenure. Lack of resources, be it human resource, funding resources or logistical resources is a major hindrance to stakeholders involvement in SDGs implementation.

5.4 Recommendations

- The government should facilitate platforms for the development of sectoral or thematic strategies on SDGs implementation.
- Civil society organisations should share: analytical reports, data and resources with relevant state institutions to support ongoing project.

6 Conclusion

This shadow assessment on SDG 16+ by WANEP and GPPAC seeks to support the implementation of the SDGs in Ghana. It complements efforts by the Government of Ghana – including its comprehensive VNR process – as well as INGOs and development missions to meet SDGs targets in Ghana by 2030.

The review highlights a general lack of awareness about the SDGs, especially at the grassroots level. In some sectors such awareness exists, particularly among the top hierarchy of institutions and those working closely with the United Nations. Paralleling this lack of awareness, lack of actual implementation and progress on the ground is a key take-away from the surveys and discussions with government and civil society representatives. On the positive side the research revealed that Ghana has most of the required infrastructure for SDG 16+ implementation, including policies, systems and plans. Those infrastructures must then be strengthened, for them to become more responsive, inclusive, effective and accountable – and thereby drive actual delivery on the ground.

To fast track the implementation of SDG 16+ for a peaceful, just and inclusive society in Ghana by 2030, several particularly critical components emerged from the research.

First, Ghana needs a stronger drive at national, institutional level and CSO-led level to implement the SDGs through specific, joint and integrated planning and implementation.

Second, awareness raising on the SDGs, and SDG 16+ in particular, must be undertaken at all levels especially aiming at urban and rural poor and the vulnerable population to help them access their rights.

Third, the national, community infrastructures for peace (such as the NPC) must be strengthened with policy and adequate funding to support their operations.

Fourth, political and financial support to CSOs and national institutions to promote SDG 16+ implementation and goals must be increased and sustained.

Finally, a national coordinating agency for SDGs implementation is a pre-requisite. If we want to see more progress, while sustained CSO oversight of government implementation of all SDGs using monitoring and tracking frames should be initiated.

As one respondent in Tamale in the Northern Region put it: “Let us walk the talk on SDGs implementation and targets”.

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GPPAC

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a network of civil society organisations active in conflict prevention and peacebuilding practice world-wide, promoting a fundamental shift in how the world deals with violent conflict: moving from reaction to prevention. GPPAC members work together to inform policy, improve practice and facilitate collaboration amongst civil society, intergovernmental organisations and state actors.

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WANEP

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) is a leading Regional Peacebuilding organisation founded in 1998 in response to civil wars that plagued West Africa in the 1990s. Over the years, WANEP has established strong national networks in every Member State of ECOWAS with over 550 member organisations across West Africa. WANEP places special focus on collaborative approaches to conflict prevention, and peacebuilding in a bid to establish a platform for dialogue, experience sharing and learning, thereby complementing efforts at ensuring sustainable peace and development in West Africa and beyond. Underlying its work is a commitment to professionalism and a dedication to a world of mutual respect, tolerance and peace.

WANEP has also entered into close partnerships with intergovernmental organisations, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union Commission (AU), signing a Memorandum of Understanding with them in 2004 and 2015 respectively. This formalised WANEP's cooperation on early warning and responses with ECOWAS and in the implementation of the continental Peace and Security Architecture with the AU. WANEP also plays active roles in the AU's Economic, Social and Cultural Council and the AU-EU Joint Strategy and is a founding member of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC).

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