

# Ghana

## Democracy and Political Participation



**A review by AfriMAP  
and  
Open Society Initiative for West Africa**

**2007**



**AN OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE  
NETWORK PUBLICATION**

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and  
The Institute for Democratic Governance



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# List of acronyms

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AG	Auditor General
AMA	Accra Metropolitan Assembly
AU	African Union
CAP	Coalition against Privatization
CBC	Catholic Bishops Conference
CBO	Community-based organisation
CCG	Christian Council of Ghana
CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CHRAJ	Commission on Human rights and Administrative Justice
CI	constitutional instrument
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CODEO	Coalition of Domestic Observers
CPP	Convention People's Party
CSO	civil society organisation
CSPG	cross-sectoral planning groups
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DAs	district assemblies
DCE	district chief executive
DPP	Democratic People's Party
EAGLE	Every Accountable Ghanaian Living Everywhere
EC	Electoral Commission
ECASARD	Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West Africa States
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education

FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation
FIDA	Federation of Female Lawyers
FIDA	International Federation of Women Lawyers
FNS	Friedrich Naumann Foundation
GBA	Ghana Bar Association
GCPP	Great Consolidated People's Party
GNA	Ghana News Agency
GPF	Growth and Poverty Forum
GPRS II	Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (2005)
GPRS I	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (2003)
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
IDEG	Institute for Democratic Governance
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEC	Interim National Electoral Commission
IPAC	Inter-Party Advisory Committee
ISAG	International Spouses Association of Ghana
ISODEC	Integrated Social Development Centre
LI	legislative instrument
MDA	ministries/departments/agencies
MDBS	multi-donor budgetary support
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFJ	Movement for Freedom and Justice
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
NCA	National Communications Authority
NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education
NCD	National Commission for Democracy
NCWD	National Council on Women and Development
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDI	National Democratic Institute (US)
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NEDEO	Network of Domestic Election Observers
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NLC	National Liberation Council
NMC	National Media Commission
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NRC	National Redemption Council
NRP	National Reform Party

NTC	National Tripartite Committee
NUGS	National Union of Ghana Students
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PNC	People's National Congress
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PSIA	poverty and social impact assessment
PTA	parent teacher association
RCC	Regional Coordination Councils
ROPAB	Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill
SMC	Supreme Military Council
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UGM	United Ghana Movement
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UTAG	University Teachers Association

# Preface

The Africa Governance Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP) is an initiative established in 2004 by the Soros Foundation Network's four African foundations to monitor observance of standards relating to human rights, the rule of law and accountable government, by both African states and their development partners.

African states have undertaken increasing commitments to good governance since the African Union replaced the Organisation of African Unity in 2002. Among these commitments are the provisions of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, in which member states agree to promote human rights, democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance. Other newly adopted documents include the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and the Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. AfriMAP's research is intended to facilitate and promote respect for these commitments by highlighting key issues, and providing a platform for national civil society organisations to engage in their own monitoring efforts.

AfriMAP's methodology is based on standardised reporting frameworks that link respect for good governance and human rights, to development that benefits poor people. Through a process of expert consultation, AfriMAP has developed reporting frameworks in three thematic areas: the justice sector and the rule of law; democracy and political participation; and the effective delivery of public services. The questionnaires that result, among them the questionnaire on democracy and political participation that guided this report, are available at the AfriMAP website: [www.afriMAP.org](http://www.afriMAP.org).

The reports are elaborated by experts from the countries concerned in close collaboration with the Open Society Institute's network of foundations in Africa and AfriMAP's own staff. Drafts of this report were reviewed by a range of experts, with their comments and criticisms reflected in the final content. The aim is that the reports should form a resource both for activists in the country concerned, and for others working across Africa, to improve respect for human rights and democratic values.

In line with the broad AfriMAP objective of establishing a systematic and standardised reporting framework that links good governance and respect for human rights to progress in development, this report goes beyond simply noting compliance with minimum standards of political participation, to highlight successful reform initiatives, account for shortfalls and suggest remedial measures. It assesses government's commitment to democratic principles and popular participation in terms of free and fair elections, greater political competition, an enabling environment that facilitates broad-based participation on a decentralised basis and a free and independent media.

## **Methodology**

The research for this report was carried out by a team working under the supervision of a technical facilitator, all recognised experts in the field. It involved, first, a desk-review of the relevant documentation on political participation. The major sources of information in this respect are relevant AU and other international documents, the 1992 Constitution and other relevant Ghanaian laws, government and other official documents, published works, research by other organisations and media reports. This was followed by empirical research through elite interview and focus group discussion targeting relevant institutions; and prescriptive analysis including recommendations in response to weaknesses and shortfalls identified in the course of information-gathering. The draft report was reviewed and discussed at several stages in the process at meetings with the research team, technical facilitators and other commentators, and ultimately presented and the recommendations considered at a validation workshop attended by a wide range of civil society organisations.

# Foreword

Since the introduction of a new constitution in 1992, Ghana has definitively turned the page on the constitutional instability that characterised the country for more than a quarter of a century. In place of the coups d'états and military regimes in place from 1966 to 1991, the country now has a more open political system and more stable democratic institutions. Four general elections have been held, including one peaceful change of ruling party.

Considerable progress has also been achieved in relation to respect for civil and political liberties. Democratic oversight institutions, such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), have played an important role in consolidating this achievement.

To what extent has this increased openness been translated into a more genuine participation of the wider population in the process of political decision making ?

How can ordinary Ghanaians influence the political direction of their country other than through elections? Has the establishment of institutions and norms at the top of society been followed by the progressive development, at the grassroots, of a culture of democracy and popular participation in the political process?

It is these questions that this report, *Ghana: Democracy and Political Participation*, tries to answer. The report is the product of comprehensive research exercise taking place over two years, based on an analysis of the respect for the norms of governance and democracy incorporated in the Ghanaian constitution, as well as endorsed by the regional institutions of the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) and African and international treaties. While welcoming the substantial progress made since 1992, the report draws attention to the challenges that still threaten the consolidation of democracy and political participation in Ghana.

Among these challenges, the report highlights:

- The need to ensure a greater level of independence for the Electoral Commission and also to review the electoral system in order to ensure a greater representation of all political tendencies in Ghana;
- The need to guarantee in law and practice a greater level of consultation in relation to the taking of important political decisions, including in the decisions around national budgetary priorities;

- The importance of putting in place a clear and overarching policy of openness in government, in particular by taking simple but critical measures such as the adoption of a law on the right to information and the allocation of adequate resources to the democratic oversight institutions;
- The need to give real effect to policies that have already been adopted on the representation of women and disabled people in politics.

This report could not arrive at a better moment. Ghana is celebrating this year the 50th anniversary of its independence. The country will also host an important summit of the African Union, during which heads of state will debate the establishment of a 'Union government'. The last AU summit earlier this year adopted the African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance, reinforcing the commitment of all African states to the principles that this report documents. Ghana will also present the first annual report on its implementation of a programme of action it has adopted under the framework of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the NEPAD programme for monitoring respect for governance standards. A whole set of different commitments and developments thus confirm the existence of the political will to ensure the consolidation of democracy in Ghana.

The Open Society Initiative for West Africa hopes that the detailed analysis in this report will make a contribution to the debate on the reforms necessary to promote access to democratic decision making for a much wider section of Ghana's citizens. With its companion volume, *Ghana: Justice Sector and the Rule of Law*, this is the first report in West Africa of the AfriMAP series, through which OSIWA hopes to contribute to the establishment of respect for the norms of the African Union and ECOWAS on good governance and democracy.

Nana Tanko

Executive Director

Open Society Initiative for West Africa

# Acknowledgements

At a workshop convened by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) on 14 August 2004 at which AfriMAP was presented, representatives of a number of civil society organisations selected the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) as the coordinating institution for the Ghana AfriMAP studies. IDEG provided the secretarial back-up for mobilising research teams, a steering committee, technical facilitators and coordination, as well as piloting the research through its various stages to a successful conclusion. The reports covering the three monitoring benchmarks are the outcome of the efforts and resources that IDEG applied to support and ensure the success of the project. We wish to record our appreciation for the leadership of IDEG and its Executive Director, Dr. Emmanuel Akwetey as well as the crop of administrative staff who offered dedicated service to this project. The entire project was carried out under the supervision of OSIWA and within the framework of their West Africa strategy.


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*Ghana: Democracy and Political Participation* provides a comprehensive review of the state of democracy and popular participation in government in Ghana, 2007. It evaluates Ghana's compliance with African and international law and best practice relating to citizenship and discrimination, participation in the policy process, elections, political parties and local government. The report is an essential resource for all actors interested or involved in issues of democratic governance in Ghana.

This report is part of a series published by the Africa Governance, Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP) and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa. AfriMAP is a project of the Open Society Institute's network of African foundations and was set set up in 2004 to monitor and promote compliance with standards of good governance, human rights and democracy in countries of the African Union.



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