



*"Actions on Inclusion,
Transparency & Harmony"*

**FAITH IN GHANA ALLIANCE
GENERAL CONCEPT NOTE FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION.**

www.faithinghana-alliance.org

Introduction: Ghana's Socio-Political Context.

Ghana's social and political context is important for defining the rationale and purposes of organizing for social change. This is particularly relevant for multifaith organizing in Ghana, because the citizenry expects much from religious leaders for social cohesion, peaceful co-existence, and sustainable development.

Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast before its political independence from colonial rule in 1957, has a significant history. It was the first Black Nation in Sub-Saharan Africa to free itself from the shackles of colonial rule, hence enjoying the appellation as the **"Black Star"** of Africa. Its post-colonial name is also a reminiscence of the ancient Sudanese Empires. Ghana is home to many ancient traditional kingdoms such as the Asante, Mole-Dagomba, Ewe and Ga who were independent territories in their own right. These ethnic groups and tribes still exist side by side in modern day Ghana with varying levels of political influence.

Castles and forts built by European Trading Companies along the coastline of Ghana are also reminders of participation in the Trans-Atlantic Trade beginning in the fifteenth century; including the horrors of slave trade over the course of three-hundred years. Hence many diaspora Africans trace their ancestry and roots to Ghana. The European trading companies came along with their Christian Missionaries or simply paved the way for other Christian Missionary exploits later. Islamic Religion was a legacy of the Ancient Sudanese Empires or accompanied Trans-Saharan Trade Caravans to what is modern day Northern Ghana. This is where the first record of formal education through organized Koranic Schools were established in Northern Ghana. The history of multi-religious interaction at the communal level – for which the country is well known today - expanded as new sects of Christianity and Islam grew in Ghana.

Today, Ghana remains a beacon of democracy in Africa. Post-independence democracy was interrupted shortly in 1966 and followed by spate of other coup d'états by the military. Democracy has only recently been sustained since 1992 with seven peaceful change of governments every four years through the ballot instead of the bullet of the military. The 1992 Republican Constitution provided for a decentralized political administrative framework to enhance democratic participation. However, this remains a mirage due to elite and political-party capture, weak fiscal decentralization, corruption and civic aloofness. In these circumstances, whereas over thirty years of stability of democracy deserve to be celebrated in a region marked by political instability, the quality of democracy remains a big deficit. Moreover, in recent time, violence and insecurity have been accentuated by threats of religious extremist groups, natural resource conflicts, communal unrests from chieftaincy disputes and an extremely divisive partisan

politics. High youth unemployment, rural-urban migration of unskilled youth and inter-ethnic rivalry and stereotyping are serious social problems in Ghana. Poverty which results in malnourishment of children of affected farm and some urban families remains a challenge. Various social protection measures, such as the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) and Public Health Insurance, have failed to address the needs of poor social segments due to corruption and mismanagement.

FAITH in Ghana Alliance Work in Context.

FAITH in Ghana Alliance (FIGA) was conceived in late 2015 as a common platform for all of the major Christian and Muslim faith groups in Ghana to intervene in the country's 2016 general elections, in a more coordinated and collaborative manner. It is worth noting that the results of the previous presidential elections in 2012 were contested by the main opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). That resulted in eight months of adjudication by the highest court of the land during which period, uncertainty, tension, anxiety and fear engulfed the whole country. Indeed, for the first time, Ghana came to the brink of social and political disruption as we were nearly at the end of the precipice. The country's religious leaders, at the highest level, resorted to prayer, diplomacy and mediation behind the scenes to avert a possible national calamity. We pulled through the eight-months period of electoral adjudication by the Supreme Court, which eventually upheld the results of that election as declared by the Electoral Commission. The aftermath of this witnessed the arming of Political Party Militias called **"Party Vigilante Groups"** towards the next general elections in 2016.

This was the immediate context within which the FAITH in Ghana Alliance sought to promote intentional and proactive multifaith collaboration. We coined **Forum for Actions on Inclusion, Transparency and Harmony (FAITH)** to fit our purpose to achieve both peaceful co-existence and social progress. FAITH in Ghana Alliance (FIGA) was also intended to establish a framework that will meet the requirements of the national pooled-funding mechanism for civil society organizations in Ghana at the time, under the STAR Ghana Foundation arrangement. Hence, the founding members of FIGA agreed, through the arrangement of a Memorandum of Understanding to apply for the Funding Call for the 2016 Elections from STAR Ghana Foundation. FIGA's bid was successful and STAR Ghana Foundation became our first partner in 2016 to work towards promoting social cohesion in the 2016 general elections. The National Catholic Secretariat (Department of Human Development) acted as prime and surrogate for the grant application and funds management respectively. FIGA's work was published in the groundbreaking reports – **"TRANSFORMING RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES AND EXPERIENCES FOR SOCIAL COHESION AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE: 1. A REPORT ON LESSONS LEARNT & BEST PRACTICES FROM AN INTERFAITH COOPERATION FOR THE 2016 ELECTIONS ENGAGEMENTS IN GHANA"** and **2. "A REPORT ON THE ROLE OF AN INTERFAITH PLATFORM IN THE 2016 ELECTIONS IN GHANA"**. Both reports, edited by Mr. Samuel Zan Akologo and published in June, 2017, are available online at www.faithinghana-alliance.org and www.caritas-ghana.org.

FIGA maintained its partnership relations with the STAR Ghana Foundation in three additional projects, namely; "I-SHAME Corruption in Ghana" (2017), "ETHICS Against Vigilantism" (2019)

and “COVID-19 Social Behavior Change Communication” (2020). Reports of work done on all these projects are also available online at www.faithinghana-alliance.org.

Up till 2020, FIGA remained a rather loose national-level structure with a National Steering Committee comprising representatives from the following Member Faith-Based Organizations: Office of the National Chief Imam (ONCI), Marshallan Relief and Development Services (MAREDES), Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in Ghana (AMM), Caritas Ghana, National Catholic Secretariat (NCS), Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) and Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Ghana (FOMWAG). The Christian Council of Ghana signed the 2019 Memorandum of Understanding for the funding application to work on the 2020 Elections and thus joined the National Steering Committee later. The Catholic Women’s Group, Christian Mothers Association, momentarily joined the alliance at the onset in 2016 but left shortly due to their internal disagreements on representation. Caritas Ghana served as the coordination secretariat for FIGA, all this while until in May, 2022, when they voluntarily opted out of this support service. The Marshallan Relief and Development Services (MAREDES) assumed responsibility as coordination secretariat and surrogate for managing FIGA funds since July, 2022.

The FAITH in Ghana Alliance originally created structures in five political regions (Northern, Upper West, Upper East, Ashanti and Greater-Accra) solely for the implementation of the projects funded by STAR Ghana Foundation. Since the Anti-corruption Project (I-SHAME Corruption in Ghana) had a national coverage, arrangement was made with the National Member Bodies to do outreach to cover all the former ten political regions at the time. By 2020, six new political regions were created in Ghana bringing the national total to sixteen (16) political regions. This enabled FIGA to do its first regional-level expansion from five to eight regions, thus incorporating the two new regions in Northern Ghana (North-East and Savannah) and adding Central Region.

In 2021, FAITH in Ghana Alliance (FIGA) started a process of reorganizing the multifaith structures in Ghana. The main purpose was to bring clarity to the national-level structure and support a process of multifaith organizing at the grassroots, beginning with strengthening our regional structures. The reorganizing process benefitted from the facilitation and experience of Faith in Action International (USA) in two separate phases: November, 2021 to June, 2022 and July – December, 2022. A third phase began in January, 2023 for a twelve-month period till December, 2023. The main outcome of the reorganizing process in **Phase I** was the national seminar of stakeholders (Faith Leaders, Partners and Grassroots Actors) in April, 2022 which made a clarion call to sustain the culture and practice of multifaith organizing with emphasis on grassroots structures. The main outcome of **Phase II** process (July to December, 2022) was the training of 100 regional-level religious and lay leaders on multifaith organizing, to begin the processes of organizing for social change in target communities.

The process of reorganizing FIGA has energized participation at the regional and local levels and tapped into a strong desire that many Ghanaians have to work together across religious lines. As we decentralize FIGA, we have also had to do careful and patient work at the national level to balance the power relationships among religious bodies and build support for bottom-up multi-faith community organizing.

FAITH in Ghana Alliance Theory of Change.

FAITH in Ghana Alliance is akin to a social movement led by lay people and clergy and their religious institutions, who are inspired to act from the social teachings of their respective faith traditions (practice, belief, theology, etc.). FIGA is navigating a path away from the popular narratives of NGOs as vendors for Donors in the implementation of pre-determined projects. We know that our approach of engaging communities to empower people to make demands for resources and policy change is critical for the future of Ghana. Our challenge is to find partners who will support bottom-up civic engagement and social change that cuts across issue silos.

FIGA is evolving based on response to the signs of the times. Much has already changed from the narrative since 2016. Structurally, our transition from a national structure to regional and now taking root in communities, has been a phenomenal organizational change. A gradual shift in mindset is also occurring among the actors themselves from an NGO-prototype perception to a social organizing process. Facilitating individuals and communities to tell their stories and make efforts to listen to everyone before deciding on priorities, are gradually replacing prescribed projects brought to communities by external agents. We are sustaining this change process across the existing ten regions through outreach to target communities in each region.

Ghana's District Assemblies, in their various statuses (District, Municipal & Metropolitan) are important units for local governance and development planning in Ghana. As we decentralize FIGA, we see an opportunity for the local and regional structures we are building to animate the development activities of District and Regional Assemblies. FIGA is designing and supporting our local FAITH Alliances so that they can effectively engage with these Local Government Authorities, and hold them accountable to meet community needs. There is also a serious consideration of how FIGA can assume a national scope by covering the remaining six regions; thus, bringing our coverage from the present ten regions to 16 regions. We also see the opportunity for local and regional leaders to shape FIGA's national agenda from the bottom up.

Over the next 3-4 years, we have set the following objectives:

1. Deepen the ownership of the FAITH in Ghana Alliance among the eight participating national Muslim, Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal religious bodies, so that they are actively promoting the engagement of their members in FIGA activities.
2. Build Regional FAITH in Ghana Alliances in the remaining six regions, and strengthen the existing Regional Alliances so that they are able to effectively seed and support local multi-faith organizing in their region.
3. Build local Faith Alliances in dozens of districts across Ghana, led by multi-faith teams of local lay and religious leaders.
4. Support the local Faith Alliances in listening to the concerns of all of the people in their communities, prioritizing the most important issues, and negotiating solutions with District and Regional officials.
5. Building a national FAITH in Ghana agenda that includes the priorities of local communities, for example, decentralizing power over development by directly electing municipal leaders, and making public education affordable to the poorest families.

Ongoing and Planned Activities:

National work: FIGA's national-level focus is supporting each National Member Body to deepen their theological reflection and practice of multifaith organizing according to their respective faith traditions, through a process we are calling "**Embedding**". Each Member's representative on the National Steering Committee is responsible for facilitating this within their own faith-based organizations and bringing the learning to the periodic meetings of the National Steering Committee. Those processes are expected to build up to a minimum of two national stakeholders dialogue meetings that will define themes/agendas for follow up actions by the National Religious Leaders. For instance, it is expected that the 2023 dialogue meetings of Religious Leaders might likely set action agendas for the 2024 National Elections and Environmental degradation by illegal mining. Another effort at the national level is to improve FIGA's visibility and outreach to broader stakeholders through online processes. The website – www.faithinghana-alliance.org is up and running already. Webinars and other online seminars will be used to facilitate broader public discourses on pertinent issues that will bring voices from grassroots organizing experiences. The national structure of FIGA will maintain its membership with Faith in Action International, participating in their international learning events and also making an effort to do an outreach to Liberia and other countries with an enabling democratic environment.

Regional and Local Organizing: FIGA is currently facilitating multifaith organizing in ten (10) out of the sixteen (16) political regions in Ghana (Northern, Upper West, Upper East, North East, Savannah, Ashanti, Greater Accra, Central, Bono and Western). We cover all the five regions of Northern Ghana which are home to all the negative indicators of poverty, inequality, infrastructure, illiteracy and general wellbeing. There are FIGA Regional Teams, made up of representatives of diverse faith groups, who meet monthly to get feedback on community-level organizing and actions emanating from their respective faith traditions. Each region is at different stages of establishing Community FAITH Alliance Teams, which also comprise representatives of diverse faith and vulnerable identity groups (Youth, Women, Outcasts, etc.) in the targeted communities. Each Community FAITH Alliance has a Leadership Team responsible for doing one-on-one listening with families, households, social actors, etc. to establish consensus on the change desired in their respective communities and how they will work together to bring about that expected change. Community FAITH Alliance Teams are meeting in spaces and arenas available in their communities and using a local language that is common to all for communication. Guests can participate through the instrument of interpretation.

Staffing: At the moment, all members of FIGA Regional Teams are volunteers, which is beneficial for broadening and deepening ownership over the mission of the Alliance. However, as the facilitation and organizing work expands, with the goal of supporting teams in dozens of communities, there will be a critical need to hire full-time Community Organizers for each of the ten regions.

Leadership Development: In addition to many local and regional trainings, once a year, we hold a Learning Festival that brings together people participating in FIGA at both Regional and Community levels to share and learn. As the scope of the communities and identity groups has

become broader, the annual Learning Festivals face the challenge of translation to enhance participation. FIGA is looking into available and effective technologies to overcome this challenge.

Coordination and transport: Coordination of the regions in Northern Ghana poses a unique challenge of accessibility. Public transport in Northern Ghana has the barest minimum reliability and comfort. Only Tamale, capital of Northern Region, is linked to Accra by regular domestic flight. All other routes to Upper West, Upper East, North East and Savannah, are only most assured by rental vehicles. The other alternative is a resort to days of waiting for public transport. There are plans to secure a Four-Wheel Drive (4WD) vehicle for the National Coordinator's work especially in Northern Ghana.

The ongoing structure of FIGA's work is most suited to address Ghana's democratic deficit which we described earlier; especially in promoting civic participation, fighting endemic corruption, promoting fiscal decentralization, economic and social justice.

Reorganizing FAITH in Ghana Alliance.

Research and Documentation: FIGA needs research and documentation that demonstrate the impact of our work in empirical and evidential ways. This will require support with experts and universities who have understanding of studying, measuring and documenting social processes and outcomes in the context of integral human development.

Outlook for Financing

FAITH in Ghana Alliance financial outlook for 2023 is USD120,000 which is barely enough to sustain the current work profile at National and in 10 regions. We ended 2022 with about the same level of funding. The planned investment and expansion plans will require a minimum of USD215,000 per year on average, over a five-year horizon. The base year for the expansion plan is 2024 which might require a higher than annual average budget at about USD250,000 to cover the provision of transport.

Conclusion:

Ghana's faith communities have played an instrumental role in protecting democracy and promoting peaceful co-existence. Sustaining these achievements cannot be taken for granted, and requires more coordinated and intensive efforts to address the underlying policies and structures that cause poverty and suffering. Democracy and sustainable development depend on citizens having organized power to hold political leaders accountable. To meet the urgent challenges facing Ghana, the FAITH in Ghana Alliance is reorganizing to reach into every region and community in the country and building a solid foundation for multi-faith collaboration that goes beyond ad hoc projects and crisis response. Together we can create a better, more peaceful future for Ghana, and demonstrate the potential for faith communities to work together to catalyze social change.

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