ADDRESSING PREVENTING / COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (P/CVE) GAPS IN GHANA

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African Security Sector Network (ASSN)

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SIGLE : Definition
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ABSTRACT

Ghana remains relatively insulated from direct violent extremist attacks. However, spillover risks from the Sahel, regional political instability, porous borders, governance deficits, and persistent socioeconomic inequalities heighten its vulnerability to violent extremism. In response, the government has adopted the National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET) and implemented multi-level initiatives, supported by security institutions, civil society organisations, development partners and community actors. Despite these notable efforts, significant gaps continue to undermine the effectiveness and resilience of the national preventing / countering violent extremism (P/CVE) architecture. Drawing on policy documents, scholarly literature, institutional reports and emerging empirical insights, this paper critically examines Ghana's evolving violent extremism landscape and evaluates the functionality and gaps of its P/CVE architecture. The analysis identifies five interrelated gaps undermining resilience: weak integration of human security and development perspectives; limited institutional coordination and decentralisation; uneven operational capacities; short-term, top-down community engagement, and weak monitoring and evaluation systems that emphasise outputs over outcomes. These challenges are compounded by socioeconomic marginalisation in northern border regions, trust deficits between communities and security agencies, and weakened regional security cooperation mechanisms. The paper concludes that Ghana's approach to P/CVE remains overly securitised and project-driven, constraining long-term resilience. It proposes a strategic shift toward a whole-of-government and whole-of-society model anchored on inclusive governance, sustainable funding, strengthened early warning / early response systems, human rights-compliant security practices and locally-driven community resilience.

INTRODUCTION

Violent Extremism and Terrorism (VET) stands among the foremost security threats confronting Africa today. Across the different regions of the continent. particularly in the Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, North Africa and the Sahel, VE is destabilising states and undermining peace and development.[1] Over the past decade, the Sahel region of West Africa has become the epicenter of VE on the continent. According to the 2025 Global Terrorism Index, terror deaths in the Sahel are the highest in the world and ten times higher than in 2019.[2] VE groups, such as the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Boko Haram, have exploited porous borders, weak governance, state fragility and socioeconomic vulnerabilities to expand their operations from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger into West African coastal states.[3]

Ghana remains relatively stable and has not experienced VET attacks but faces risk of spillover effects from the Sahel and several vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities include the porosity of the country's borders, socioeconomic problems, youth unemployment, limited state presence in remote communities, limited service delivery in border areas and cross-border criminality.[4] Recognising the impacts of these threats, Ghana adopted the NAFPCVET in 2019.[5] As part of its implementation, the country has intensified border patrols and surveillance through the "Operation Conquered Fist"; established Forward Operating Bases in vulnerable regions' organised capacity-building programmes; undertake public sensitisation, and increased community engagement, including interfaith dialogues. Nevertheless, there are significant gaps in these efforts as they appear heavily securitised, top-down, fragmented and not adequately addressing the root factors driving Ghana's vulnerability to VE.

It is within this context that this paper examines the dynamics of violent extremism in Ghana and the national architecture for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). The objective is to identify existing gaps that undermine the effectiveness of current P/CVE interventions and to propose strategies to address these gaps and strengthen national resilience against violent extremism. To achieve these objectives, the paper draws on a range of secondary data sources, including research reports, policy briefs, journal articles and relevant online materials.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM DYNAMICS IN GHANA

The dynamics of violent extremism in Ghana is shaped by the Sahel spillover risk, political instability in the sub-region and internal vulnerabilities. The country is situated within a geopolitical context that has become

[1] Kuupiel, C. M., and Aubyn, F. K. (2025). Guardians at the borders: Localising violent extremism prevention through community watchdog groups in Northern Ghana. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. https://wanep.org/wanep/guardians-at-the-borders-localising-violent-extremism-prevention-through-community-watchdog-groups-in-northern-ghana/

[2] For more information see the 2025 GTI report: https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Global-Terrorism-Index-2025.pdf

[3] Aubyn, F. K. (2021). The risk of violent extremism and terrorism in the coastal states of west Africa: Assessing Ghana's vulnerabilities, resilience and responses. *Conflict Trends,* African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD).; United Nations. (2025, November 18). Sahel Now Accounts for Half of Global Terror Deaths, Secretary-General Tells Security Council, Urging Coordinated Action. United Nations. https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc16226.doc.htm

[4] UNDP Ghana. (2023). Vulnerability assessment on the threats of violent extremism and radicalisation in northern regions of Ghana. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ghana; NCCE. (2023). Baseline study on preventing and containing violent extremism in eight regions in the northern part of Ghana. National Commission for Civic Education; Kuupiel, C. M., & Aubyn, F. K. (2025). Guardians at the borders: Localising violent extremism prevention through community watchdog groups in Northern Ghana. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. https://wanep.org/wanep/guardians-at-the-borders-localising-violent-extremism-prevention-through-community-watchdog-groups-in-northern-ghana/

[5] The NAFPCVET is underpinned by four pillars that guide the fight against violent extremism and terrorism including pre-emption, prevention, protection and response. For more information see: Ministry of National Security. (2019). National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Ghana. https://www.peacecouncil.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/NAFPCVET-Document-29-Jan-2020.pdf.

a hotbed for political instability, armed conflicts, violent extremism, terrorism, humanitarian crisis, organised crime, and arms and human trafficking.[6] Heightened instability, the activities and expansion of VE groups like JNIM and ISGS in the Sahel towards coastal West Africa pose significant threat to Ghana. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the risk is more pronounced in Northern Ghana (Upper East, Upper West, Savannah, North East and Northern regions) where there are cross-border social and economic ties, unresolved conflicts and limited security presence in some of the border areas.

Ghana's risk is further compounded by recurrent political instability and unconstitutional changes of government (UCGs) through military coups in the sub-region, which is threatening democratic governance and undermining resilience efforts against violent extremism.[7] The coups in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have contributed to the collapse of key joint counterterrorism frameworks, such as the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Accra Initiative, thereby, weakening coordinated regional responses to violent extremism and terrorism. Violent extremist groups are capitalising on this to expand their operations. Already, coastal states along the Gulf of Guinea, including Benin, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana, are experiencing the consequences. While Ghana is increasingly confronted with rising refugee inflows and illicit trafficking, Benin and Togo are already recording direct attacks.[8]

Internal vulnerabilities, such as socioeconomic challenges, human rights violations, unresolved communal conflicts, cross-border criminal activities and porous borders, have compounded the risk of VE in Ghana.[9] Socioeconomic issues, including high youth unemployment, [10]marginalisation, limited state presence and provision of essential services, and governance deficits in vulnerable regions, especially areas where there are cross-border movement and economic activities, are exposing the country to VE. There are also concerns that communal conflicts over chieftaincy, land use and ethnic rivalry could be exploited by violent extremists to recruit and radicalise people, particularly in situations where mechanisms for addressing such disputes are seen as ineffective or bias.[11] The experiences in countries like Mali and Burkina Faso, for example, show how groups like JNIM, and ISGS exploit these communal tensions to expand and entrench themselves.[12]

Furthermore, the lack of inclusive governance, coupled with the country's "winner-takes-all" political system, has contributed to a deeply polarised political environment, fostering marginalisation, exclusion and

[6] UNFPA. (2022). Understanding the Sahel through its history, geography and socio-demographic and security challenges: White Paper. UNFPA; United Nations. (2025, November 18). Sahel Now Accounts for Half of Global Terror Deaths, Secretary-General Tells Security Council, Urging Coordinated Action. United Nations. https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc16226.doc.htm; Chidi, G. O. F. (2025, August 13). The SAHEL Region and Emerging Threats of Border Security in West Africa. Border Security Report. https://www.border-security-report.com/the-sahel-region-and-emerging-threats-of-border-security-in-west-africa/

[7] Sogah, B. (2025, November 27). Democracy under threat: Ghana's constitutional review key – British High Commissioner. Joy Online. https://www.myjoyonline.com/democracy-under-threat-ghanas-constitutional-review-key-british-high-commissioner/

[8] Security Council Report. (2025). West Africa and the Sahel. April 2025 Monthly Forecast. https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2025-04/west-africa-and-the-sahel-14.php

[9] NCCE. (2023). Baseline study on preventing and containing violent extremism in eight regions in the northern part of Ghana. National Commission for Civic Education; UNDP Ghana. (2023). Vulnerability assessment on the threats of violent extremism and radicalisation in northern regions of Ghana. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ghana; NSD-S HUB & ACSRT. (2022). The contagion of violent extremism in West African coastal states. A Joint Report by NATO Strategic Direction-South Hub & African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism. https://archives.au.int/bitstream/handle/123456789/10354/20220927_NU_JFCNP_NSD-s_hub_report_the_contagion_of_violent_extremism_in_west_african_coastal_states.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[10] However, it is important to note that majority of young people, even when unemployed, do not resort to violence. They find ways to cope. The UN Report "The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security" attests to this (https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3846611?ln=en&v=pdf#files). This is further corroborated by a recent Pan-African study on Youth Resilience in Africa - https://www.africansecuritynetwork.org/assn/download/youth-resilience-to-violence-in-africa-thematic-report/

[11] Ibid

[12] Ammour, L. A. (2020). How violent extremist groups exploit intercommunal conflicts in the Sahel. Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

growing grievances. This situation creates potential entry points for violent extremists to exploit existing distrust, divisions and societal fragmentation for radicalisation and recruitment.[13] Both the Commonwealth and the National Peace Council have cautioned that violent extremism may take advantage of heightened feelings of exclusion and perceived injustice, which are further intensified by misinformation and inflammatory rhetoric within Ghana's political and religious landscapes.[14]

GHANA'S P/CVE ARCHITECTURE

Ghana has a structured architecture for preventing and countering violent extremism. The P/CVE architecture exists at the level of the state / government, civil society and donor / development partners.

Government P/CVE Activities

The Government of Ghana has adopted a multi-institutional approach to P/CVE anchored on the National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET). The P/CVE activities are being implemented by various state institutions with a special focus on regional security cooperation, strengthening of border security, public education, capacity-building and localised peacebuilding efforts. The National Security Council Secretariat coordinates the government's P/CVE interventions with security and intelligence agencies; ministries; metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies (MMDAs); National Peace Council (NPC)National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), and other state institutions. The specific roles of these institutions are briefly analysed below.

National Security Council Secretariat

Ghana's National Security Council Secretariat, previously called the Ministry of National Security, acts as the central body for managing security threats (including current, emerging and future threats) to the country and ensuring the safety, stability, and prosperity of Ghana. It operates under Article 83 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which establishes the National Security Council (NSC), and it is also governed by the Security and Intelligence Agencies Act, 2020 (Act 1030), which replaced Act 526 of 1996.

In 2019, the Ministry of National Security developed the NAFPCVET under the instruction of the National Security Council (NSC). The framework aims to combat violent extremism and terrorism through four pillars – prevention, pre-emption, protection and response.[15] The Counter-Terrorism Fusion Centre within the Secretariat is leading the implementation of the NAFPCVET. Since its establishment, the centre has coordinated joint security operations, border patrols, capacity-building programmes, community engagements, sensitisation programmes, quick impact projects like construction of boreholes, among other activities. The centre has particularly enhanced its education and awareness initiatives to combat violent extremism (VE) through the "See Something, Say Something" campaign. This campaign promotes public involvement in community protection by sharing messages via SMS, social media, infomercials and jingles. The objective is to improve information exchange between citizens and security agencies while increasing vigilance regarding VE and terrorist activities.[16]

[13] de Bruijne, K., Courtright, J., Yaro, D. S., Ellis, G., Mensah, P. N. K. A., Khalfaoui, M., and Tanko, E. (2024). A beacon of democracy? How hyper-political competition increases the risk of violent extremism in Ghana. Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'.

[14] The Commonwealth and National Peace Council. (2022). Preventing and countering violent extremism. Practitioners' guide: Training for Ghana National Peace Council (NPC). Can you provide a link to this document, please? Commonwealth Secretariat.

[15] Ministry of National Security. (2019). National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Ghana. Ministry of National Security, Ghana.

[16] Appiah-Boateng, S., and Osei-Kufuor, P. (2024). Gaps and needs in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, early warning and mediation mechanisms and structures in Ghana and its border areas. Working Paper No. 2, Research and Action for Peace Network (REcAP Network).

Since the latter part of 2024, the Counter-Terrorism Fusion Centre has been leading a review of the framework through various stakeholder engagements and public consultations[17] across all the country[18] to collectively assess and refine the framework to address evolving VE threats and dynamics.[19] International partners, including the UNDP, Germany, Australia, The Netherlands, United Kingdom and the Coastal States Stability Mechanism (CSSM) of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), are supporting the review of the framework to align with international standards.[20]

Ghana has also adopted several policy and legal instruments which are supporting the implementation of the P/CVE, including: the National Security Strategy in 2020;[21] Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2008 (Act 749); Anti-Terrorism Act, 2008 (Act 762); Economic and Organised Crime Office Act, 2010 (Act 804); Security and Intelligence Agency Act, 2020 (Act 1030); Criminal Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29); Anti-Money Laundering Regulations, 2011 (L.I. 1987); Anti-Terrorism Regulations, 2012 (L.I. 2181), and Economic and Organised Crime Office (Operations) Regulations, 2012 (L.I. 2183).

Ghana Police Service

The Ghana Police Service, established by the Police Service Act of 1970 (Act 350), is responsible for ensuring internal security and promotion of law and order. Its mandate includes the prevention and detection of crime; maintenance of public order and safety; protection of life and property; traffic management, and specialised services, all of which are core to the country's internal security architecture. The police have a counter-terrorism unit that focuses on preventing / countering threats of VET in the country. Its community policing strategy is also building trust between citizens and security agencies, and fostering police-community partnerships to safeguard the country. For example, the EU-funded PEACE PROTECT project in August 2025 trained 30 senior police officers from five northern border regions in community policing and preventing violent extremism.[22] The National Peace Council (NPC) has also provided capacity-building and training to police officers on human rights, early warning systems for VET and social accountability through their multi-agency training programmes, thereby, increasing their ability to detect, and collaborate with other security agencies to respond to, radicalisation.[23] In March 2025, the NPC and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) also trained 30 police officers and officers of other security agencies in the Upper East Region to prevent VET through social accountability.[24] Furthermore, police officers carry out public awareness campaign in local communities. In northern border regions, they collaborate with community leaders and

[17] Stakeholder engagement workshops have been carried out across most of the regions in the country as at December 2025, with Dambai in the Oti Region being the 11th stop of the National Counter-Terrorism Fusion Centre of the National Security Council Secretariat in their regional engagement forums. For more information see: https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghana-news-anti-violent-extremism-workshop-ends-in-dambai.html

[18] UNDP Ghana. (2024). UNDP and Partners review Ghana's national framework to enhance response to violent extremism. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ghana. https://www.undp.org/ghana/press-releases/undp-and-partners-review-ghanas-national-framework-enhance-response-violent-extremism

[19] Ayibani, I. T. (2025). National Security engages stakeholders on counter terrorism and violent extremism in Sunyani. Modern Ghana. https://www.modernghana.com/news/1387439/national-security-engages-stakeholders-on-counter.html

[20] Modey, E. (2025). Anti-violent extremism workshop ends in Dambai. Graphic Online. https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghana-news-anti-violent-extremism-workshop-ends-in-dambai.html

[21] Ghana's National Security Strategy was adopted in 2020, representing the first framework for governing issues of national security in the country. Its objectives include preserving national sovereignty, promoting cohesion, ensuring human security, and enhancing Ghana's influence globally. The strategy is based on a whole-of-society approach, emphasizing values such as patriotism, good governance, and human dignity. Key principles include people-centred security, social cohesion, gender inclusivity, prevention, rule of law, and human rights respect. The framework outlined a tiered response system (Tier 1 to 4) for addressing various security threats. For more information see: https://mofa.gov.gh/site/images/pdf/national_security_strategy.pdf

[22] Coginta. (2025, August 26). Ghana: Community policing and prevention of violent extremism training. https://coginta.org/en/Ghana-training-on-community-policing-and-the-prevention-of-violent-extremism/

[23] The Commonwealth & National Peace Council. (2022). Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Practitioners' Guide: Training for Ghana National Peace Council (NPC).

[24] Tiroong, G. A. (2025, March 24). Security personnel in the Upper East trained to prevent violent extremism through accountability. https://gna.org.gh/2025/03/security-personnel-in-upper-east-trained-to-prevent-violent-extremism-through-accountability/

watchdog groups to sensitise community members to the danger of VET and encourage vigilance and reporting of suspicious actors / activities.[25] In addition, the police are helping to strengthen local coordination and early warning referral pathways through their participation in the regional NAFPCVET review stakeholder engagement and public consultations led by the National Security Council Secretariat.[26]

Ghana Armed Forces (GAF)

The 1992 Constitution and the Armed Forces Act, 1962 (Act 105) mandate the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) to ensure the defence and protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ghana. The GAF duties also involve providing military assistance to civil authorities, ensuring internal security, protecting critical state infrastructure and installations, assisting national development and participating in international peacekeeping missions. The GAF is a unified armed force consisting of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Under the Accra Initiative, they have successfully carried out four joint operations (Operation Koudanlgou I, II. III & IV) with other ECOWAS members states between 2018 and 2021 to deter, detect and disrupt the mobilisations activities and movement of VET groups in borderlands[27]. Besides these joint operations, the GAF has launched the Operation Conquered Fist and established forward operating bases in the northern border regions of the country to counter VET. It has enhanced its prevention and counter-terrorism preparedness, particularly on joint operations, counter-insurgency rapid response, casualty evacuation, inter-operability with United States of America (USA) Forces and asymmetric warfare tactics through programmes such as "Exercise Tigers' Path" and "Operation Steel Wave" in 2025.[28] These trainings have undoubtedly contributed to upscaling the tactical techniques and strategic threat posture of the GAF. Through logistical support from the European Union, including vehicles, advanced communication systems, riverine assets and engineering equipment, the GAF has strengthened its operational readiness to protect border security and communities.[29] Together with other security agencies, military personnel have been trained by the NPC and CRS as part of the "Preventing Violent Extremism Through Social Accountability" (PoVETSA II) project. They have also participated in various capacity-building programmes by the UNDP and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), enhancing their knowledge and capacity on how to deploy community resilience and engagement to prevent radicalisation and recruitment by VET groups. Aside these programmes, institutions of the GAF. such as the National College of Defence Studies (NCDS), Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College (GAFCSC), have also organised training programmes and workshops to train security forces to strengthen their capacity to respond effectively to the VET.[30]

Ghana Immigration Service (GIS)

The Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) is responsible for regulating and monitoring the entry, residence, employment and exit of foreigners; preventing irregular migration; detecting and stopping threats at entry points, and combating transnational organised crimes, among other duties. As a public institution under Article 190 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the GIS is regulated by the Immigration Service Act, 2016 (Act

[25] Kuupiel, C. M., and Aubyn, F. K. (2025). Guardians at the borders: Localising violent extremism prevention through community watchdog groups in Northern Ghana. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. https://wanep.org/wanep/guardians-at-the-borders-localising-violent-extremism-prevention-through-community-watchdog-groups-in-northern-ghana/

[26] Ayibani, I. T. (2025, March 20). National Security engages stakeholders on counter terrorism and violent extremism in Sunyani. Modern Ghana. https://www.modernghana.com/news/1387439/national-security-engages-stakeholders-on-counter.html

[27] Aubyn, F. K. (2025). Re-imagining The Accra Initiative: Lessons and options for policy consideration. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding.

[28] Amoh, J. (2025). Ghana Armed Forces staged daring counter-terrorism simulation during African Land Forces Summit. https://gna.org.gh/2025/04/ghana-armed-forces-stage-daring-counter-terrorism-simulation-during-african-land-forces-summit/

[29] Woode, K. A. (2025, February 27). EU gives Ghana military equipment to counter national security threats. Ghana Peace Journal. https://ghanapeacejournal.com/eu-gives-ghana-military-equipment-to-counter-national-security-threats/

[30] Modern Ghana. (2025, May 21). National Defence University is for all security services, not only military — GTEC. https://www.modernghana.com/news/1402170/national-defence-university-is-for-all-security.html

908), which repealed the Immigration Service Act, 1989 (PNDCL 226), the Immigration Act, 2000 (Act 573) and its accompanying regulatory instrument (Immigration Regulations, 2001 (L.I. 1691).[31]

The GIS addresses VET by securing borders through border patrols, monitoring entry and exit points, and engaging in community sensitisation activities and intelligence-sharing with other security agencies and international partners. Since the adoption of the NAFPCVET, the GIS has deepened collaboration with international partners like the EU to enhance border management to counter the threat of VET in the border regions of Ghana.[32] Moreover, the GIS has received operational logistics from Germany, including vehicles, protective gear and ICT tools to enhance border security and officer safety, as well as, manage irregular migration effectively, combat VET along the border and deal with transnational crimes.[33] Officers of GIS have also received capacity-building training by the NPC and CRS to prevent V. They have also participated in regional stakeholder engagement forums organised by the Counter-Terrorism Fusion Centre to review the NAFPCVET. Furthermore, the GIS, with support from the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), has developed a 2023-2029 Strategic Plan aimed at strengthening border and migration management in the country. This strategic plan emphasises risk analysis, inter-agency coordination and technology adoption to counter irregular movements and security threats such as VET.[34]

National Peace Council (NPC)

The National Peace Council (NPC), established by Act 818 in 2011, is responsible for facilitating the development, harmonisation and coordination of mechanisms, and building of capacities to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts to promote sustainable peace in Ghana.[35] As one of the foremost peace infrastructures in the country, the NPC is central to Ghana's P/CVE architecture. In collaboration with partners like the CRS, UNDP, KAIPTC and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the NPC has provided capacity-building training to community actors and security agencies, increasing their knowledge on VET tactics and capacity to respond. It has intensified education and awareness creation across the country, particularly in the northern border areas, encouraging citizens to keep vigilance and report suspicious activities in their communities to authorities for response. Through the PoVETA II, the NPC has enhanced security-civilian trust and trained security officers on how to embed human rights principles in P/CVE operations and strengthen community relations.[36] Apart from these interventions, the Council leads dialogues and peace education programmes to foster religious tolerance; strengthen the rule of law; and promote peaceful, free and fair elections, social cohesion and sustainable peace in the country. Such activities help to discourage intolerance, discrimination, conflicts and violent electoral practices that compound the country's vulnerability to VET.

National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE)

The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), established under Article 231 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana,

undertakes public peace education, awareness-creation and capacity-building initiatives to increase civic responsibility for, and citizen participation in, P/CVE. Regional and district offices of the NCCE have conducted sensitisation and awareness-raising activities on violent extremism (VE) within communities in

[31]For more information see Ghana Immigration Service. (2026). Our Mandate. https://gis.gov.gh/our-core-mandate/
[32] Joy Online. (2025, December 7). GIS, EU vow closer security cooperation to boost northern border control. https://www.myjoyonline.com/gis-eu-vow-closer-security-cooperation-to-boost-northern-border-control/
[33] Graphic Online. (2025, December 6). Ghana Immigration Service receives essential equipment from Germany. https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghana-news-ghana-immigration-service-receives-essential-equipment-from-germany.html
[34] Ghana Immigration Service. (2023). Ghana Immigration Service 2023-2029 Strategic Plan. https://gis.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/GIS-STRATEGIC-PLAN-2023-2029.pdf
[35] https://www.peacecouncil.gov.gh/functions/
[36] Tiroong, G. A. (2025, March 24). *Security personnel in the Upper East trained to prevent violent extremism through accountability*. Ghana News Agency. https://gna.org.gh/2025/03/security-personnel-in-upper-east-trained-to-prevent-violent-extremism-through-accountability

Northern Ghana. [37] They use cinema vans to educate border communities about radicalisation, VE, and the importance of community cohesion. Through the support of the European Union, the NCCE implemented the "Preventing and Containing of Violent Extremism" project in five regions in the north (Savannah, Northern, Upper West, Upper East and North East), conducting research; sensitising communities and youth, and strengthening social cohesion, early warning, and community-based mechanisms to prevent radicalisation, detect early warning signs and proliferation of arms.[38] It has scaled up its community outreach programmes, focusing on digital safety and countering misinformation to reduce citizens' vulnerability to extremist propaganda and online fraud.[39] As part of its flagship programmes, the Commission holds dialogues to engage, educate and empower citizens to address national issues. For example, the Commission has held three of such dialogues on Preventing Electoral Violence and Providing Security to the Border Regions of Ghana (NORPRESEC), and eight on Accountability, Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Programme (ARAP).[40] It has also established civic education clubs in 6,213 basic, secondary and tertiary institutions across the country, deepening youth understanding and encouraging their participation in democratic consolidation, nation-building and national stability.

National Centre for Coordination of Early Warning and Response Mechanism (NCCRM)

Ghana has established a National Centre for Coordination of Early Warning and Response Mechanism (NCCRM) that coordinates and manages early warning systems and response mechanisms to security threats in the country. The centre is helping to gather, analyse and report early warning signals of threats of violent extremism and terrorism (VET) for timely response by security agencies.

CSO-Led P/CVE Activities

Civil society organisations (CSOs) play significant role in Ghana's P/CVE agenda. CSOs like WANEP, COGINTA and CRS, as well as religious, traditional, youth and women groups and local communities, implement various activities to prevent and counter VET in Ghana. Some of theinterventions are discussed in this section.

West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)

WANEP is building relationships at both local and national levels for peaceful coexistence, harmony and non-violent approach to addressing disputes or conflicts. It has an early warning system called the National Early Warning System (NEWS) that monitor, gather, report and store data on early warning signals of security threats in Ghana and other West African countries. The NEWS is part of WANEP's Alert and Response Mechanism (WARN), providing support to the ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) and the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). Through its NEWS, WANEP provides real-time data on early warning signals of threats of violent extremism and terrorism, conflicts, electoral violence and various threats to security in the country. This informs timely design and implementation of interventions to address security threats and counter VET.

Furthermore, WANEP provides capacity-building for security and civilian stakeholders in communities to detect and prevent the infiltration of VET, while fostering security-civilian relations. For example, in 2024, WANEP trained 240 security personnel and 448 civilian stakeholders in Northern Ghana under the programme: "Enhancing Social Cohesion and Social Contract through Empowerment of Women and Youth

[37] Appiah-Boateng, S., and Osei-Kufuor, P. (2024). Gaps and needs in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, early warning and mediation mechanisms and structures in Ghana and its border areas. Working Paper No. 2, Research and Action for Peace Network (REcAP Network).
[38] Ghanaian Times. (2024, December 4). NCCE engages Tempane youth to prevent violent extremism. https://ghanaiantimes.com.gh/ncce-engages-tempane-youth-to-prevent-violent-extremism/
[39] Ghana Business News. (2025, December 4). NCCE intensifies outreach against online fraud. https://www.ghanabusinessnews.com/2025/12/04/ncce-intensifies-outreach-against-online-fraud/
[40] National Commission for Civic Education. https://nccegh.org/page/flagship-programmes

in Three Northern Regions of Ghana."[41] Through the support of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), WANEPalso trained security officers, traditional authorities, assembly members, unit committee members, women groups, beauticians, dressmakers, religious leaders, youth group leaders, persons with disabilities and minority group leaders in the Upper West, Upper East and North East regions to promote social cohesion and prevent the spillover of VET from the Sahel. WANEP has also trained security officers, community stakeholders in border areas on early warning, illicit economies and activities, as well as how to foster peace, trust and confidence to enhance security-civilian relations and prevent VET infiltration.[42]Through these interventions, WANEP has enhanced border communities' awareness of how illicit economies increase Ghana's vulnerability to VET infiltration. Through, especially, the capacity-building programmes, WANEP has empowered and positioned youth, women and community leaders as strategic actors in Ghana's P/CVE agenda.

COGINTA

COGINTA remains one of the strategic partners in Ghana's P/CVE architecture, designing, supporting and implementing initiatives aimed at addressing the causes of VET, and strengthening response institutions and policy implementation. With the support of the regional peace councils (RPCs), COGINTA is implementing the 'Peace Protect' project (2024–2026) in Northern Ghana with funding from the European Union (EU).[43] The project is aimed at preventing socio-economic, environmental and political destabilisation in border regions that increase their vulnerability to VET. Notable achievements of the project include the establishment and development of the capacities of 25 local peace committees in 25 vulnerable areas; facilitation of 17 radio dialogues on the 2024 general elections, and distribution of 20 motorbikes to RPCs to enhance prompt response to conflicts.[44]

In addition, COGINTA has supported RPCs to participate in 15 shuttle diplomatic missions across Northern Ghana. It has also trained RPC trainers and local peace committees on early warning and response mechanisms. Furthermore, it has trained 100 chiefs, queenmothers and landowners on good land governance and provided customary land secretariats with motorbikes to improve land management in vulnerable areas. COGINTA also supported the Judicial Committee of the Upper West Regional House of Chiefs to adjudicate chieftaincy disputes in the region. It also leads dialogues to resolve conflicts in Northern Ghana that VET could exploit to infiltrate and gain foothold. For instance, in 2024, COGINTA. with support from the Upper West Regional Peace Council, led a dialogue to address the land dispute between the Sissala and Dagaaba in Lambussie and encouraged the parties to use non-confrontational approaches to resolving the conflict.[45]

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

The Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is a non-governmental organisation focused on facilitating trust-building mechanisms for peacebuilding. The CRS has implemented several initiatives to build resilience against VET in Ghana, including training and capacity-building, community engagements and sensitisation. In partnership with the National Peace Council and KAIPTC, CRS implemented the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Social Accountability (PoVETSA I & II) projects, funded by the Netherlands Ministry of

[41] Media Without Borders. (2024, October 23). Violent Extremism Watch: WANEP-Ghana trains 240 security personnel, 448 civilian stakeholders under PBF-funded project. https://mwbonline.org/violent-extremism-watch-wanep-ghana-trains-240-security-personnel-448-civilians-under-undp-funded-project/

[42] Apubeo, A. A. (2025, March 2). WANEP-Ghana trains border communities on illicit activities. Ghana News Agency. https://gna.org.gh/2025/03/wanep-ghana-trains-border-communities-on-illicit-activities/

[43] COGINTA. Preventing Violent Extremism and Supporting Peace in the Northern Border Regions of Ghana (PEACE PROTECT) Project. https://coginta.org/en/projects/project-to-prevent-violent-extremism-and-support-peace-in-the-border-regions-of-northern-ghana-peace-protect/

[44] Futukpor, A. (2024, October 25). Coginta Ghana supports Peace Council, House of Chiefs to manage land, conflicts issues. Ghana News Agency. https://gna.org.gh/2024/10/coginta-ghana-supports-peace-councils-houses-of-chiefs-to-manage-land-conflicts-issues/

[45] Coginta. (2024, August 28). Ghana: Coginta leads a dialogue to resolve the Lambussie inter-ethnic conflict. https://coginta.org/en/ghana-coginta-leads-a-dialogue-to-resolve-the-lambussie-conflict/

Foreign Affairs. Through this project, CRS empowered and trained 40 young people as peacebuilding agents, enhancing their capacities in dialogue, mediation, conflict resolution and early warning and response systems to prevent VE.[46] Most of these interventions were implemented in the vulnerable regions in the northern part of the country. The CRS is also strengthening community monitoring of governance and service delivery to promote accountability and responsiveness of local government agencies to the needs of the people.

Traditional and Religious Leaders (other section)

Traditional and religious leaders are actively involved in peacebuilding in Ghana, addressing local tensions / disputes, as well as promoting social cohesion, and inter-faith and inter-ethnic tolerance. Christian and Muslim leaders continue to dialogue to promote religious tolerance, peace and stability, thus, deepening Christian-Muslim relationship in the country. Various religious leaders, including those from the Christian Council of Ghana, Catholic Secretariat, Ghana Pentecostal Council and Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, actively mediate conflicts and promote peace through education, dialogue and capacity-building. [47] Notably, the National Chief Imam, Sheikh Osmanu Sharubutu, has, over the years, employed diplomacy, as well as religious and social capital, to encourage inter-faith dialogue and prevent conflicts such as intra-Muslim tensions.[48] In July 2022, he joined forces with the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference to host a Muslim-Christian dialogue aimed at fostering peace and religious tolerance. [49]

Other religious organisations have been instrumental to institutionalise faith-based peacebuilding in Ghana. For instance, the Catholic Church was a leading architect of the National Peace Council as a national infrastructure for peace.[50] Since its establishment, religious leaders continue to sit on the NPC's structures, leading mediation, dialogue, conflict resolution and peace education, all of which are critical to P/CVE.[51] Through the NPC, Christian and Muslim leaders work together to promote tolerance, peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and non-violent interactions. The Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference is also implementing the Sahel Peace Initiative focused on preventing violent extremism in Ghana and the Sahel region through inter-religious dialogue, thereby, enhancing security and social cohesion, as well as promoting socioeconomic and environmental sustainability.[52]

Furthermore, at the local level many religious leaders engage in peace education, awareness-creation and sensitisation of their communities on violent extremism and its associated dangers, the importance of vigilance and reporting of suspicious activities or actors to security authorities. In Northern Ghana border

[46] Apubeo, A. A. (2025, October 30). CRS empower youth in Bolgatanga to prevent violent extremism. Ghana News Agency. https://gna.org.gh/2025/10/crs-empowers-youth-in-bolgatanga-to-prevent-violent-extremism/

[47] Osei-Kufuor, P., and Bukari, K. N. (2022). Civil society organisations, conflict prevention and peacebuilding in northern Ghana. Oguaa Journal of Social Sciences, 10(1),1-17.

[48] Iheduru, O. C. (2020). The National Chief Imam of Ghana: Religious Leadership and Peacebuilding in an Emerging Democracy. Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis, 2(2), 66-98.

[49] In 2022, a Christian-Muslim maiden dialogue was organised by the Ghana Catholic Bishops Conference (GCBC) in collaboration with the Office of the National Chief Imam to deepen relationship between Christians and Muslims in Ghana and find better ways of building upon the relationship. The dialogue was attended by the then president of the GCBC, Most Reverend Philip Naameh; the National Chief Imam, Sheikh Dr Osman Nuhu Sharubutu; the leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission Ghana, Maulvi Mohammed Bin Salih; as well as Christian and Muslim clergy and other religious organisation. See: Ghanaian Times. (2022, May 27). Muslims, Christians dialogue to promote peace, stability. https://ghanaiantimes.com.gh/muslims-christians-dialogue-to-promote-peace-stability/

[50] Agyeman, E. A. (2023). Religion, Conflict Transformation, Peacebuilding, and Development in Ghana: The Role of the National Peace Council. In Kilonzo, S. M., Chitando, E., & Tarusarira, J. (eds.), The Palgrave Handbook of Religion, Peacebuilding, and Development in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36829-5_28

[51] Agyeman, E. A. (2023). Religion, Conflict Transformation, Peacebuilding, and Development in Ghana: The Role of the National Peace Council. In: Kilonzo, S.M., Chitando, E., Tarusarira, J. (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of Religion, Peacebuilding, and Development in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36829-5_28

[52] Obeng, H. (2024, July 30). Sahel Peace Initiative, Ghana launched in Accra. Ghana News Agency. https://gna.org.gh/2024/07/sahel-peace-initiative-ghana-launched-in-accra/; Antwi, G. A. (2024, August 8). Episcopal Conference of Ghana hosts Sahel Peace Initiative to address regional crisis. Vatican News. https://www.vaticannews.va/en/africa/news/2024-08/episcopal-conference-of-ghana-hosts-sahel-peace-initiative-to-ad.html

areas, religious leaders play a pivotal role in countering social vices by using their sermons and teachings to foster tolerance and discourage extremist ideologies among their worshippers.[53]They collaborate with traditional leaders to mobilise community members and local resources aimed at building resilience against violent extremism. Additionally, these leaders act as intermediaries by relaying early warning information from the community to security agencies for appropriate response.[54]

Moreover, traditional leaders mediate land, chieftaincy and inter-ethnic disputes, which are potential windows of opportunity for extremist infiltration or exploitation. These leaders, including the Asantehene, Nayiri and Yagbonwura, were instrumental in the successful resolution of the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict, leading years of dialogue, resolution and reconciliation between the parties.[55] The Asantehene has also led the mediation of the Bawku conflict between the Kusasis and Mamprusis, based on which a report was submitted to the President, John Dramani Mahama on December 16, 2025.[56]However, the Mamprugu Overlord has rejected the report, calling the process flawed.[57]Given Bawku's proximity to the border regions of Burkina Faso and Togo that have experienced violent extremist attacks, achieving a peaceful resolution to the conflict is essential for preventing violent extremism and terrorism.

Youth, Women Groups and Communities

Youth and women group have been established in northern border communities to lead local peacebuilding initiatives, mediate local disputes, support early warning and response, and prevent VET. The COGINTA, in partnership with RPCs, have established and trained 25 local peace committees in sensitive northern border communities to effectively monitor, detect and report early warning signs timely for response.[58] In northern Ghana, border communities are implementing a whole-of-society strategy to prevent and counter violent extremism. These initiatives actively engage various community stakeholders, including youth, women and local leaders, emphasising that all community members share a civic responsibility to observe and report any suspicious activities or individuals to security authorities. [59] Women play a crucial role in this effort by focusing on educating young people about the risks associated with violent extremism and urging them to reject criminal activities and extremist beliefs.[60] Additionally, communities along the border regions have established community watchdog groups (CWGs) involving the youth. The CWGs are tasked with patrolling neighbourhoods, raising awareness among residents, sharing vital early warning information with state security agencies, arresting suspicious individuals and addressing issues related to criminality such as cross-border illicit activities. [61] This collaborative approach aims to enhance security and foster a safer environment within these border regions.

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[53] Kuupiel, C. M., & Aubyn, F. K. (Forthcoming). Beyond the Pulpits: Religious Leaders as Strategic Partners in Confronting Violent Extremism in Northwestern Ghana Borderlands.
[54] Kuupiel, C. M. (Forthcoming). Preventing Violent Extremism in Northern Ghana: Understanding Indigenous Resilience Mechanisms and Practices of Border Communities. Policy Brief, Research and Action for Peace Network.
[55] Issifu, A. K., & Bukari, K. N. (2022). (Re)thinking homegrown peace mechanisms for the resolution of conflicts in Northern Ghana, Conflict, Security & Development, 22(2), 221-242. https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2022.2059934
[56] Baisie, S. (2025, December 9). Asantehene to present Bawku mediation report to Mahama on December 16. https://www.gbcghanaonline.com/general/asantehene-to-present-bawku-mediation-report-to-mahama-on-december-16/2025/
[57] Adomonline. (2025). Mamprugu Overlord rejects Otumfuo's Bawku mediation report calls process flawed. https://www.adomonline.com/mamprugu-overlord-rejects-otumfuos-bawku-mediation-report-calls-process-flawed/?utm_source=ReviveOldPost&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=ReviveOldPost
[58] COGINTA. Preventing Violent Extremism and Supporting Peace in the Northern Border Regions of Ghana (PEACE PROTECT) Project. https://coginta.org/en/projects/project-to-prevent-violent-extremism-and-support-peace-in-the-border-regions-of-northern-ghana-peace-protect/
[59] Kuupiel, C. M. (Forthcoming). Preventing Violent Extremism in Northern Ghana: Understanding Indigenous Resilience Mechanisms and Practices of Border Communities. Policy Brief, Research and Action for Peace Network.
[60] Ibid
[61] Kuupiel, C. M., and Aubyn, F. K. (2025). Guardians at the borders: Localising violent extremism prevention through community watchdog groups in Northern Ghana. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. https://wanep.org/wanep/guardians-at-the-borders-localising-violent-extremism-prevention-through-community-watchdog-groups-in-northern-ghana/

Donor / Development Partners

International donors and development partners, including the EU, UNDP, Netherlands, Denmark, Australia, World Bank and USAID, have provided logistical, financial and technical assistance to support Ghana's resilience against violent extremism. The Netherlands Embassy funded the Prevention of Violent Extremism Through Social Accountability (PoVETSA) project, which is being implemented jointly by the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and RPCs. This initiative aimed to build the capacity of peacebuilding institutions while fostering public trust in security agencies. [62]

Additionally, Australia, Germany, Norway and Denmark provided funding support to the UNDP-Ghana to implement the Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in the Atlantic Corridor project in targeted communities in Northern Ghana.[63] This project aimed at addressing local drivers of radicalisation that may lead to VE. It focuses on at-risk groups, including women and youth, by promoting socioeconomic resilience and bolstering early warning and response mechanisms (including countering hate speech that can incite VE) at the community level. In October 2025, UNDP Office in Ghana and the Denmark Embassy signed an agreement to implement the Phase Two of the Atlantic Corridor project, covering the period 2025-2028.[64]

Similarly, the governments of Germany and Australia have provided funding to the UNDP and the Ministry of National Security to review the National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism (NAFPCVET), which was adopted in 2019 to prevent and counter VET.[65] Also, the Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA) and the West African Centre for Counter Extremism (WACCE) are implementing the Mining for Peace programme, which is funded by the Australian High Commission, to help vulnerable mining communities bolster their resilience against VE.[66]

Furthermore, the EU provided funding for the NCCE to implement the "Preventing and Containing Violent Extremism (PCVE) in Eight Border Regions in Northern Ghana".[67] The World Bank also funded the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion project across the five regions in Northern Ghana, aimed to address issues such as conflict, poor governance, poverty and social exclusion.[68] The USAID also played a significant role in Northern Ghana and Coastal West Africa through various programmes, including the Ambassador's Resilience Fund, which is designed to strengthen community resilience against instability and fragility. It also helped to develop the peacebuilding and conflict resolution skills of communities, youth, journalists and security personnel. In addition, USAID implemented the Community in Action for Peace and Inclusion (CAPI) project, which aimed to enhance social cohesion among diverse groups such as religious,

[62] Appiah-Boateng, S., and Osei-Kufuor, P. (2024). Gaps and needs in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, early warning and mediation mechanisms and structures in Ghana and its border areas. Working Paper No. 2, Research and Action for Peace Network (REcAP Network).
[63] Azinim, M. (2025, February 12). Building partnerships towards preventing violent extremism in Ghana: case of the Atlantic corridor project. https://www.undp.org/ghana/blog/building-partnerships-towards-preventing-violent-extremism-ghana-case-atlantic-corridor-project
[64] GhanaWeb. (2025, October 8). UNDP Ghana, Denmark sign Phase II of Atlantic Corridor Project deal. https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/UNDP-Ghana-Denmark-sign-Phase-II-of-Atlantic-Corridor-Project-deal-2004224
[65] UNDP Ghana. (2024, March 19). UNDP and Partners review Ghana's national framework to enhance response to violent extremism. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ghana. https://www.undp.org/ghana/press-releases/undp-and-partners-review-ghanas-national-framework-enhance-response-violent-extremism
[66] Appiah-Boateng, S., and Osei-Kufuor, P. (2024). Gaps and needs in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, early warning and mediation mechanisms and structures in Ghana and its border areas. Working Paper No. 2, Research and Action for Peace Network (REcAP Network).
[67] NCCE. (2023, April 7). NCCE/EU prevention & containing violent extremism project begins. https://nccegh.org/news/ncceeu-prevention-containing-violent-extremism-project-begins#:~:text=The%20National%20Commission%20for%20Civic%20Education%20%28NCCE%29%20with,Preventing%20and%20Containing%20Violent%20Extremism%20%28PCVE%29%20in%20Ghana.
[68] World Bank Group. (2022, March 31). A New $450-Million Regional Investment in Northern Regions of Gulf of Guinea Countries Seeks to Build Trust, Opportunities, and Resilience through Social Cohesion. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/31/afw-450-million-regional-investment-in-northern-regions-of-gulf-of-guinea-countries-seeks-to-build-trust-opportunities

ethnic, trade and political actors, as well as improve local-level early warning and response systems to resolve shared security and economic challenges.[69]

Regional Counterterrorism Framework

Accra Initiative

Ghana was a founding member of the Accra Initiative, which is a sub-regional security cooperation mechanism established in 2017. Other members of the Accra Initiative included Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Mali and Niger, with Nigeria as an observer. Since the latter part of 2024, the Accra Initiative has ceased operation following the serious of coups among some of its member states. The Initiative was aimed to prevent the spillover of violent extremism and terrorism from the Sahel and combat transnational organised crimes in border areas of member states.[70] The establishment of the Accra Inititive provided a "stop-gap" mechanism for member states to respond to the security crisis of VET, as well as signalled the capacity of Africa to design and implement homegrown solutions to their security problems without overly dependent on external solutions. This security cooperation provided Ghana with the platform to share intelligence with other members states, conduct joint operations (Operation Koudanlgou I, II, III & IV), strengthen cross-border security, and build the capacity of their frontline institutions / actors to counter the spillover of VET from the Sahel.

Through intelligence sharing under the Accra Initiative, Ghanaian security authorities have been able to counter illicit cross-border trade and smuggling of goods such as arms, fuel, fertilizer and motorbikes, at border areas like Hamile, Namori and Kulungungu. Security agencies also closely monitored these border areas and others, such as Tumu, Gwollu, Wechiau, Charikpong, Dorimon, Babile Mognori, Paga, Pulmakan, and Missiga, which serve as major routes for illicit trade and the smuggling of grains, fuel, fertilizer, firearms, motorbikes, vehicles and clothing. These efforts helped to disrupt the activities of criminal networks that are also linked to violent extremist and terrorist groups.[71]

GAPS IN P/CVE INTERVENTIONS IN GHANA

Despite the tremendous efforts by governmental, CSOs and development partners to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism in Ghana, significant gaps remain in the country's P/CVE interventions. These gaps can be categorised into policy and institutional; operational and capacity; socioeconomic and development; community engagement and monitoring, and evaluation.

Policy and Implementation Gaps

The NAFPCVET, which is Ghana's strategic blueprint to combat the spread of VET, is undergoing a comprehensive review to respond to emerging challenges and the evolving landscape of terrorism threats in the West African sub-region. The gaps in the implementation of the framework have also necessitated the thorough review to enhance the nation's defence against potential terrorist activities. One of the major implementation gaps is the insufficient integration of development and human security approaches. Current P/CVE responses remain predominantly security-focused, prioritising military, intelligence, and law enforcement measures, with limited attention given to addressing the underlying drivers of violent extremism.

[69] Appiah-Boateng, S., & Osei-Kufuor, P. (2024). Gaps and needs in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, early warning and mediation mechanisms and structures in Ghana and its border areas. Working Paper No. 2, Research and Action for Peace Network (REcAP Network).

[70] Aubyn, F. K. (2025). Re-imagining The Accra Initiative: Lessons and options for policy consideration. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding Research Report.

[71] Ibid; UNDP Ghana. (2024, March 19). UNDP and Partners review Ghana's national framework to enhance response to violent extremism. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ghana. https://www.undp.org/ghana/press-releases/undp-and-partners-review-ghanas-national-framework-enhance-response-violent-extremism

Additionally, although multiple state institutions, including the National Security Council, Ghana Armed Forces, Ghana Police Service and Ghana Immigration Service, as well as non-state actors like traditional authorities, CSOs and development partners, are involved in P/CVE interventions, there is no strong central coordinating mechanism to harmonise roles, lead multi-stakeholder engagement, or reduce duplication of efforts. Moreover, since the adoption of the NAFPCVET in 2019, none of the 16 regions in the country has adopted a regional strategy to implement the framework based on their own realities and local context. Few ministries and agencies of state have also developed sectoral plans and institution-level strategies to implement and align their work with the NAFPCVET. As a result, there is weak decentralisation and ownership in the implementation of the framework. Thus, P/CVE approaches are not fully adapted to local context and power structures to generate operational, localised level strategies and practices, particularly in high-risk border areas.

Ghana's NAFPCVET has yet to fully adapt to the speed and complexity of evolving threats such as the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) and information and communication technologies (ICT). Another important gap is the collapse of the Ministry of National Security, which was the lead ministry responsible for the overall implementation of the NAFPCVET, as well as the merger / collapse of certain ministries such as the Ministry of Youth and Sport, Ministry of information, Ministry of Aviation and Ministry of Planning, with specific roles in the implementation process. This has impacted the implementation process although the National Security Council Secretariat continues to lead the P/CVE efforts. There is also the creation of new ministries and institutions like the National Centre for Coordination of Early Warning and Response Mechanism (NCCRM) whose roles are not captured in the NAFPCVET. Other gaps include the limited budgets, human resources, logistics and technological capabilities, leading to the over-reliance on external support and security assistance for the NAFPCVET implementation, as well as the limited dissemination of the NAFPCVET to the public and among security sector stakeholders to support the implementation process. These implementation gaps, among others, have informed the ongoing review of the framework to respond to emerging challenges and the evolving landscape of VET threats.[72]

Operational and Capacity Gaps

The peace and security structures that are responsible for the implementation of P/CVE interventions at various levels in Ghana exhibit a significant disparity in operational capacity. In particular, there are notable skill gaps among personnel within these structures and local stakeholders, especially in key areas necessary for effective P/CVE. These areas include early warning mechanisms and response strategies; methods for facilitating dialogue, mediation, conflict analysis and resolution, and the programming of preventive measures. Additionally, there is a lack of robust integration between early warning systems and early response actions. As a result, critical information sourced from communities, especially those situated in remote border regions of Northern Ghana, do not consistently prompt immediate action from state authorities.[73] This fragmentation undermines the effectiveness of Ghana's counter-terrorism strategy and highlights the need for enhanced training and tools to operationalise preventive measures in the context of emerging threats.

Furthermore, community-based actors demonstrate a notable deficiency in training related to early warning and response mechanisms, as well as community policing and security practices. This inadequacy significantly hampers the quality and timeliness of the information they collect and disseminate concerning violent extremism (VE).[74] While the establishment of community watchdog groups in northern border

[72] UNDP Ghana. (2024, March 19). UNDP and Partners review Ghana's national framework to enhance response to violent extremism. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ghana. https://www.undp.org/ghana/press-releases/undp-and-partners-review-ghanas-national-framework-enhance-response-violent-extremism

[73] Kuupiel, C. M. (Forthcoming). Preventing Violent Extremism in Northern Ghana: Understanding Indigenous Resilience Mechanisms and Practices of Border Communities. Policy Brief, Research and Action for Peace Network.

[74] Kuupiel, C. M., and Aubyn, F. K. (2025). Guardians at the borders: Localising violent extremism prevention through community watchdog groups in Northern Ghana. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding.

regions aimed at supporting P/CVE is a positive initiative, these groups largely operate without formal regulation or oversight. They lack defined operational guidelines, relying instead on traditional authority oversight and loose partnerships with security agencies to address and mitigate threats posed by violent extremism. This unregulated framework ultimately undermines the capacity of the security agencies to effectively manage and control any potential excesses or misconduct within these groups.

In addition, interventions aimed at preventing and countering threats of violent extremists are predominantly project-driven rather than institutionalised within permanent state practices. The majority of these initiatives are funded by external donors and development partners, and are time-limited, fostering over-reliance on temporary funding rather than establishing durable mechanisms within governmental institutions. Consequently, CSOs are arguably increasingly engaging in what can be termed as 'transactional peacebuilding', prioritising areas with available funding over areas aligned with their expertise. Although external technical, financial and logistical support is beneficial, the absence of a robust internal funding mechanism for P/CVE activities in Ghana poses significant risks to the sustainability of these efforts. This lack of internal funding could undermine the country's capacity to combat violent extremism effectively, particularly if external support diminishes or ceases altogether.

Socioeconomic and Development Gaps

Despite numerous donor-funded initiatives aimed at tackling socioeconomic vulnerabilities, challenges like unemployment, poverty, inequality and governance deficits remain persistent, especially in Ghana's high-risk northern border regions. These areas suffer from issues such as inequality, marginalisation and limited access to education and healthcare[75] which impede economic development. Such challenges also foster inter-communal strife, thereby, creating opportunities for extremist groups to exploit. Ghana's efforts in preventing violent extremism, which have largely focused on security responses and raising awareness, while neglecting improvements in service delivery, inclusive governance and economic opportunities.[76]The lack of integration of socioeconomic development issues in the P/CVE agenda has led CSOs and development partners to initiate specific projects to address these socioeconomic drivers of violent extremism. However, these CSO-led initiatives are often project-based and have limited in duration, making it difficult to achieve sustainable impact in areas like youth empowerment, inclusion and livelihoods. Consequently, structural grievances persist in many northern border communities, compounded by the porosity of borders and connections to cross-border criminal activities, which heighten the vulnerability of these communities to violent extremism.

Gaps in Community Engagements

Community engagement P/CVE interventions are predominantly characterised by short-term, top-down approaches that hinder genuine participation and inclusivity among local communities and agencies outside the security sector.[77] Particularly, community and local leaders, women and youth have not been adequately involved in the co-creation of these programmes. The findings of the Pan-African study on "Youth Resilience to Violence in Africa" underscores the importance of this issue, especially with resoect to young people.[78] The report specifically notes the failure of programmes to establish a baseline understanding of the opinions, expectations and ideas of future peace and security among

https://wanep.org/wanep/guardians-at-the-borders-localising-violent-extremism-prevention-through-community-watchdog-groups-in-northern-ghana/

[75] UNDP Ghana. (2023). Vulnerability assessment on the threats of violent extremism and radicalisation in northern regions of Ghana. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ghana; NCCE. (2023). Baseline study on preventing and containing violent extremism in eight regions in the northern part of Ghana. National Commission for Civic Education.

[76] The Commonwealth & National Peace Council. (2022). Preventing and countering violent extremism. Practitioners' guide: Training for Ghana National Peace Council (NPC). Commonwealth Secretariat.

[77] ibid

[78] Africa Security Sector Network. (2022). Youth Resilience to Violence in Africa. Thematic Report. https://www.africansecuritynetwork.org/assn/download/youth-resilience-to-violence-in-africa-thematic-report/

the youth. Although some CSO-led initiatives engage youth, women and marginalised groups, their insights are not systematically incorporated into the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of P/CVE programmes and policies. This highlights the need to meaningfully include these voices in ongoing regional stakeholder engagements and consultations reviewing the NAFPCVET to ensure thatit aligns with the evolving security context and violent extremism threats. Additionally, research reveals a significant trust deficit between state security actors and residents in certain border communities, such as the Wa West District, which limits community willingness to share critical information.[79] This situation reinforces the urgent need for dialogue, collaboration, and transparency to foster trust between security agencies and local populations, ultimately strengthening the effectiveness of P/CVE efforts.

Monitoring and Evaluation Gaps

The implementation of Ghana's P/CVE interventions has been marked by inadequate coordinated monitoring and evaluation practices, which fail to align national policies and local resilience mechanisms with the realities on the ground. The misalignment largely stems from weak coordination and inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems that limit feedback between national and sub-national actors. The top-down policy design, compounded by capacity gaps at the local level, has also resulted in interventions that insufficiently reflect community-specific drivers of violent extremism and existing resilience mechanisms. Moreover, institutional silos, fragmented information flows and donor-driven programming further undermine policy coherence, limiting the ability of national frameworks to adapt to evidence from the ground and respond effectively to local prevention needs. Therefore, despite efforts from state actors, CSOs and community stakeholders, there is a lack of substantial outcome-level evidence indicating a decrease in vulnerability or effective prevention of radicalisation, recruitment, or cross-border movement of violent extremist elements. The current monitoring and evaluation discourses tend to emphasise quantitative metrics, such as counting implemented projects, individuals or institutions trained, and the geographical areas reached, rather than assessing meaningful impact or community resilience.

Additionally, there are insufficient feedback mechanisms for policy improvement and institutional reform, as well as few platforms that allow state, CSO and local actors to collaboratively evaluate risks and formulate response strategies. Consequently, the the ongoing review of the NAFPCVET aims to rectify these issues by enhancing the alignment of interventions with local realities and emerging threats while improving the overall effectiveness of P/CVE efforts in Ghana.[80]

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THE P/CVE GAPS

Addressing the gaps in Ghana's P/CVE interventions requires the implementation of multiple measures that improve policy and institutional coordination; enhance security and operational capacities; address the root causes of VE; protect human rights, and build community resilience and cohesion.

Improving policy and institutional coordination

To effectively address policy and implementation gaps in the NAFPCVET, it is essential that the framework undergoes regular review and update every four years. This iterative process will ensure that it remains aligned with the rapidly evolving security environment and emerging threats. While the ongoing review, supported by UNDP, is a positive step, institutionalising a periodic multi-stakeholder review process is crucial to ensure the framework is responsive to new security challenges within the country and the sub-region.

[79] Kuupiel, C. M., & Aubyn, F. K. (2025). Guardians at the borders: Localising violent extremism prevention through community watchdog groups in Northern Ghana. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding.

[80] UNDP Ghana. (2024, March 19). UNDP and Partners review Ghana's national framework to enhance response to violent extremism. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ghana. https://www.undp.org/ghana/press-releases/undp-and-partners-review-ghanas-national-framework-enhance-response-violent-extremism

It is also important to enhance the whole-of- government and whole-of-society approaches to P/CVE to facilitate meaningful collaboration among the various state and non-state actors involved in the implementation of the NAFPCVET.[81]To enhance effective collaboration, inter-agency coordination platforms should be established at the national, regional and district levels. These platforms would play a critical role in facilitating information sharing, joint planning, risk assessments, and monitoring and evaluation of responses to security threats. It is essential that youth, women, traditional leaders, regional authorities and CSOs are recognised as equal partners in P/CVE efforts. Furthermore, localising the NAFPCVET is crucial, which entails translating it into actionable P/CVE plans at regional and district levels. These localised plans should include clear leadership structures, established information-sharing channels and coordination mechanisms that ensure that national policies are effectively aligned with local contexts

Enhancing security and operational capacities

There is the need to strengthen Ghana's security and operational capabilities across various institutions, including security agencies, NPC, NCCE, media and local actors. A comprehensive capacitation in risk assessment, conflict analysis, as well as early warning and response mechanisms, is essential for effective prevention and countering of violent extremism. Institutionalising P/CVE training within the curricula of security academies is recommended to foster a skilled workforce adept at managing VE threats.

Furthermore, early warning and response systems at the community level should be strengthened to ensure that local community alerts or warnings lead to swift government action. The role of the NNCRM in the implementation of the NAFPCVET should be enhanced. As the statutory national agency established under Act 1070 to strengthen Ghana's capacity to detect, prepare for, and respond to emerging crises, it is vital that its role is elevated since it was not in existence when the NAFPCVET was adopted. This enhancement should also involve the establishment of effective operational structures at national, regional, district and community levels for prompt responses to alerts, with standardised reporting channels, designated focal persons at each level, regular joint analysis meetings and protocols for timely interventions that align with human rights and local contexts.

Additionally, the government needs to institutionalise P/CVE efforts beyond the time-limited initiatives funded by development partners. Sustainable funding and collaborative partnerships between civil society organisations and the state are critical to msusain P/CVE efforts after donor-funded projects end. In this direction, the National Security Council Secretariat, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance, could consider the establishment of a "Special Fund" for P/CVE similar to the "Security Fund" in the National Security Strategy. The establishment of a homegrown funding mechanism, with consistent budget allocations, is necessary to enable governmental bodies and CSOs to transition and integrate donor-funded projects into ongoing programmes. Indigenous funding mechanisms offer a reliable source of financing, facilitating the efficient implementation of P/CVE initiatives.

Addressing root causes of VET through a human security and development approach

For a long time, Ghana's P/CVE responses have been more of securitised measures that do not translate into improved governance, socioeconomic opportunities, essential services and employment, particularly in high-risks border areas. While securitised approaches are beneficial in in times of urgency and preventing VE attacks, there is the need to address issues of corruption, unemployment, socioeconomic deprivation, marginalisation, discrimination, exclusion, poverty and inequality, which are the root causes of VE. This requires the use of a human security and development approach, where inclusive governance and development are integrated into P/CVE, and the wellbeing of the people is the focal point of concern in governance and socioeconomic matters. Employing a human security approach requires improving citizens'

[81] The Commonwealth & National Peace Council. (2022). Preventing and countering violent extremism. Practitioners' guide: Training for Ghana National Peace Council (NPC). Commonwealth Secretariat.

personal, community, food, political, economic, environment and health security, which reduce grievances and close vacuums that VE elements can exploit to infiltrate, radicalise, and recruit people.

In the Sahel, VE groups and activities have gained foothold because of governments' failure to address governance deficits, livelihood and socioeconomic problems, and exclusionary and discriminatory grievances. Overtime, groups like JNIM and ISGS are expanding southward into coastal regions, with Togo, Côte D'Ivoire and Benin recording attacks. Ghana therefore faces high risks of VE spillover. The government must improve social and economic development by enhancing access to education, healthcare, water and sanitation, good transportation networks and creating an economic environment that allows citizens to freely exercise their life choices. Governance must be inclusive, transparent and accountable, with mechanisms for citizens to express their grievances without being frustrated or targeted. Specialised development programmes should be implemented in northern border regions, especially at high-risk communities where people fleeing from VE attacks in the Sahel seek refuge, to increase state presence, improve essential services and reduce pressure on local resources.

Also, anti-corruption systems need to be strengthened to deter corrupt behaviours and activities. These systems should be localised to allow citizens to use peaceful engagements to channel their frustrations about governance and not resort to extremist acts. For example, the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP), which has been established to fight corruption, is centralised only in Accra with no regional and district offices. There is need for the OSP to decentralise its operations by setting up regional and district offices to allow citizens at all levels to report perceived corruption in the governance process rather than resorting to extremist behaviours to express those frustrations or grievances. Furthermore, the government, National Peace Council, CSOs and relevant stakeholders, including traditional leaders, must work together to address chieftaincy, land and resource conflicts in the country, particularly in Northern Ghana, where these disputes are numerous and could be exploited by VE elements.

Building community resilience and social cohesion

Securitisation approaches are indispensable, but they are not enough. P/CVE efforts need to go beyond security deployment to promote social cohesion and resilience in communities. This requires making dialogue, mediation, communal risk assessment and problem-solving, and local early warning and response mechanisms as central to P/CVE agenda. The government must establish a post-donor funded project mechanism that continues to support local peace committees, women and youth peace groups, inter-faith dialogue committees, watchdog groups and local early warning structures to strengthen local capacity and resilience against VE. Furthermore, there is the need to build state-citizens trust and confidence to promote communities' willingness to share alerts or warnings with security agencies without fear. [82]One way this can be achieved is through community-security dialogues, where security officers and community member meet regularly and jointly interact to clarify intentions to address community grievances regarding security operations. Another way is ensuring meaningful partnership with, and participation of, local actors such as religious and traditional leaders, youth, women, assembly members, unit committees and marginalised groups in the design and implementation of P/CVE interventions. These local structures should be harnessed to build local monitoring, evaluation and adaptation mechanisms that provide a feedback loop for the national framework.

Ensuring human-rights-based approaches

Addressing Ghana's P/CVE gaps also requires embedding human rights in security operations so that security officers are not pressured to act in a manner that undermine the NAFPCVET. There is the need to

[82] Kuupiel, C. M., and Aubyn, F. K. (2025). Guardians at the borders: Localising violent extremism prevention through community watchdog groups in Northern Ghana. West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. https://wanep.org/wanep/guardians-at-the-borders-localising-violent-extremism-prevention-through-community-watchdog-groups-in-northern-ghana/

orient security personnel and ensure that their training curricula are infused with human rights, community policing and the principles of non-discrimination and proportionality. This will ensure that security officers are capacitated to effectively implement P/CVE activities without committing abuses that have the potential to fuel grievances in local communities and push them to embrace VE groups. In this regard, the ongoing NAFPCVET review should take into account the alignment of P/CVE frameworks with good governance and human rights norms, and in order that security policies and VET frameworks do not contravene constitutional guarantees such as due process. In doing so, the government must ensure the protection of civic space that allows CSOs to engage local communities independently and critique counter-VET policies[83] to bring legitimacy, trust and rights-based approach to Ghana's P/CVE architecture.

CONCLUSION

Ghana faces growing vulnerability to violent extremism and terrorism (VET), driven by geopolitical volatility in the Sahel; expansion of extremist activity into coastal regions, and compounded by socioeconomic challenges, governance deficits, youth unemployment, marginalisation, limited access to services, communal tensions and cross-border crime. In response, the government has implemented multiple interventions. Through the NAFPCVET, security agencies (including national security, military, police and immigration) coordinate to address cross-border threats, transnational crime and extremist spillovers. Other institutions, such as the NPC and NCCE, promote peace education, civic awareness and citizen engagement in reporting VET-related risks.

CSOs like WANEP, COGINTA and CRS have strengthened early warning systems and capacitated traditional, religious, youth and women leaders to spearhead local prevention initiatives. Development partners, including the EU, UNDP, Germany, Australia, Norway, Denmark and The Netherlands, have funded programmes to enhance livelihoods, social cohesion and resilience in high-risk areas, while ongoing support is refining the NAFPCVET to meet emerging threats. Traditional and religious leaders, youth, women and community groups have also played a vital role in conflict mediation, inter-faith dialogue, peace education and vigilance against extremist activity. Community watchdog groups complement these efforts by monitoring neighborhoods and sharing intelligence with security agencies.

Despite these efforts, significant gaps remain. The NAFPCVET has not fully adapted to changing VET dynamics and evolving threat landscape, leading to limited coordination and responsiveness. Operational capacity is uneven, community engagement is often top-down and monitoring focuses on outputs rather than outcomes. Socioeconomic vulnerabilities, poorly integrated initiatives and trust deficits further constrain the effectiveness of P/CVE interventions. Addressing these gaps requires: (i) strengthening policy and institutional coordination; (ii) enhancing security and operational capacity; (iii) tackling the root causes of extremism through development and social inclusion; (iv) promoting community resilience and cohesion, and (v) embedding human rights and development approaches in all P/CVE interventions. A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, inclusive of state actors, civil society, media and local actors. is essential. Regular review and updating of the NAFPCVET, alongside inclusive, transparent governance, will ensure that Ghana's P/CVE framework remains agile and effective in the face of evolving security threats.

[83] The Commonwealth & National Peace Council. (2022). Preventing and countering violent extremism. Practitioners' guide: Training for Ghana National Peace Council (NPC). Commonwealth Secretariat.

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