

DRAFT RESEARCH REPORT

ON

**ELECTORAL VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL VIGILANTISM IN GHANA: EVIDENCE
FROM SELECTED COMMUNITIES**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ghana's Fourth Republic has not been interrupted since its inception in 1992 and has had seven successive presidential and general elections resulting into three peaceful turnovers from one political party to another. These seven elections and all other elections including by-elections, re-runs, district level and internal political party contests have been marked with violence which keeps intensifying with increasing competitive election. Coupled with this is the surge and use of political vigilante groups in electoral and political activities, a phenomenon that threatens Ghana's democracy, peace and stability.

This research was commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and undertaken by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), to explore the underlying context of electoral violence and political vigilantism in some selected hotspots in the country. Again, the research collated citizens' perspectives on government initiatives that are aimed at addressing the phenomenon of political vigilantism and its implication for peaceful elections. In view of this, the study adopted a qualitative research design to help researchers gain in-depth contextual understanding about electoral violence and political vigilantism. Eight groups with respondents 18 years and above were purposively targeted as the study population in five sampled communities across three zones (Northern, Middle and Southern) in the country. These communities are Yendi, Bolgatanga, Sankore, Asawase and Aflao. The communities were selected based on either one or more of the criteria below:

- Communities in which there has been an incident of electoral violence; or
- Recorded incidence of political vigilante activity; or
- Highly competitive elections; or
- Border community.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used in eliciting information from all groups. In all 36 FGDs were conducted in the five communities sampled for this study.

Summary of main findings

- Generally, respondents have a fair knowledge about electoral violence and its manifestation. Across all communities, electoral violence manifests in several forms including verbal and physical assaults noted to result in destruction of properties, especially properties of political opponents, removal of electoral materials among others.
- The main actors of electoral violence are political party agents, supporters of political parties, youth groups, candidates or aspirants, vigilante groups/macho men, Electoral Commission staff, and security agents (Police).
- Largely, respondents identified unemployment, winner takes all, vote buying, lack of parental care, political influence on the media, lack of confidence in security agencies, poor enforcement of laws, verbal abuse, illiteracy, electoral malpractices, integrity issues with the Electoral Commission and poverty as the underlying causes of electoral violence.

- Generally, respondents identified ignorance, high illiteracy, peer influence, unfulfilled promises by politicians and political parties, enlistment of party foot soldiers into security agencies, chieftaincy disputes as potential drivers of electoral violence.
- In terms of the formation of vigilante groups, respondents generally identified mistrust for state institutions (EC and Police), internal party security, desire to win political power and conception of vigilantism as a business model as the underlying motives.
- Uncovering why people join vigilantism groups, respondents identified employment, rewards for services, recognition within parties, revenge and protection, and protection from the law as the main reasons.
- The use of drugs among political vigilantes was raised as a big concern in almost all the communities interviewed. Respondents mentioned the use of tramadol and also some ordinary medicines bought from pharmacy shops and combined with some other items to form strong drugs for consumption. Having consumed these drugs, the political vigilantes perpetuate crimes without consideration for their victims.
- Few citizens are aware and have knowledge about the recently passed Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law (2019) to tackle vigilantism and related offenses but skeptics do not think the law is necessary, and that more efforts should be channeled at enforcing existing laws. In addition, they noted that lack of political will coupled with hypocritical behavior of politicians, corrupt practices of police officers and interference from traditional authorities would militate against the effective enforcement of the law
- Citizens are optimistic a positive outcome of the dialogue between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) being mediated by the National Peace Council (NPC) would promote free and fair elections, enhance the electoral process, enhance confidence in the outcome of elections and increase Ghana's democratic credentials. However, it was on a caveat that a necessary condition that must be fulfilled is public awareness about the outcome of the dialogue.

Policy recommendations

Based on the discussions and findings as well as some recommendations from respondents on what could be done at the community level by stakeholders to complement ongoing efforts at promoting peaceful elections addressing the threat of political vigilantism, the underlisted are suggested for policy consideration.

- Promoting inter party dialogues in constituencies even at the ward level will be helpful in mitigating risks and threats to peaceful elections. Most often lies leading to suspicion creates anxiety between opposing political parties. This dialogue will offer the opportunity for all issues to be fact-checked and rumors dispelled.
- Resourcing the National Peace Council and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) at the district levels will go a long way for them to be proactive in taking center stage with convening such dialogues that is preventive-driven.
- Building the capacity of polling agents of political parties on the electoral laws and procedures would be very vital for enhancing their functioning and professionalism. The Electoral Commission in collaboration with the political parties can schedule

capacity-building sessions at the district level to train polling agents in the run up to elections.

- Continuous Education and sensitization on Peace – Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including faith-based organizations, the media, National Commission for Civic Education should embark on civic education and peace campaigns.
- Creation of sustainable jobs for the youth would go a long way to keep them from engaging in Political violence
- The Electoral Commission should ensure free and fair elections and independence in the delivering of its mandate in order to engender trust in the commission
- Religious leaders should continue to preach peace at social events and in the churches and mosques
- Building the capacity of the youth to be peace ambassadors in hotspot communities would create a crop of youthful persons who are interested in peaceful outcomes in their communities instead of being used as tools to perpetuate violence.
- The use of illicit drugs among some youth must be checked and prevented by all relevant organizations.
- While the National Peace Council is engaging the leadership of the NPP and NDC to find lasting solutions to political vigilantism, the awareness and knowledge about the process appears to be low at the constituency/community level. Community level executives are estranged from the process, and this may have negative consequences for buy-in of the outcomes of the dialogue. There is therefore the need for the main parties involved – National Peace Council, NPP and NDC leadership to engage with constituency actors especially in hotspots, and at best explore the possibility of replicating the dialogue at the grassroots to bring actors to speed on the roadmap/code of conduct and consequences.
- Similarly, conscious efforts should be made by the leadership of the NPP and NDC to disseminate the outcomes or agreement of the dialogue through engagements with executives in the party sub-structures. Such an approach will sensitize executives at the sub-structures and contribute to their buy-in of the roadmap or Code of Conduct on political vigilantism.
- Mass public sensitization on the Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law (2019) is required from the media, civil society, political parties, National Peace Council, and the NCCE to boost awareness about the law even as election 2020 approaches.
- Political will is needed to enforce laws without fear or favour. The ruling NPP government should take the lead with house cleaning by prosecuting cases that are committed by persons and vigilante groups affiliated to it to provide an exemplary deterrent to potential offenders not affiliated with their party.
- Job creation is very paramount in all this discourse since politicians take advantage of the vulnerabilities of unemployed youth to engage them as vigilantes. The various district assemblies should look at the prospects of empowering the youth within their communities through feasible Local Economic Development (LED) approaches.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In Africa, Ghana is touted as a model of democracy and good governance. Characterizing this enviable feat since resumption of multi-party democracy in 1992, is a record of seven successive and generally peaceful elections that have culminated into three successful transfer of power from one party to another in (2001, 2009, and 2017 respectively). However, beneath these positive credentials are undercurrents of recurring low intensity electoral violence that has virtually marred every election cycle (Bob-Millar, 2014), although this has not blown out into a civil war as exemplified elsewhere on the continent. Indeed, none of the seven presidential and general elections, by-elections and re-runs was without violence, with the level of violence intensifying as electoral and political competition intensifies with each election.

Mention can be made of re-run and by-elections that were characterized with violence that is Akwatia in the Eastern Region (August, 2009), Chereponi in the Northern Region (September, 2009), Atiwa in the Eastern Region (August, 2010), and Talensi in the Upper East Region (July, 2015) (Edu-Afful and Allotey-Pappoe, 2016:69). The most recent case of electoral violence was the Ayawaso West Wuogon (AWW) Constituency by-election held on January 31, 2019, in which there was a shooting incident and about a dozen persons were injured in clashes between supporters of the opposition and national security operatives. Political vigilante groups with affiliation to the two leading political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) have been at the forefront of unleashing torrents of violence during elections with the aim of undermining opponents, in either inter-party or intra-party contests and events, and safeguarding the electoral fortunes of their parties (Lartey and Danso, 2016:55). By-elections and re-runs have proven to be tensed atmosphere that is plagued with more violence largely because virtually the entire machinery of political parties, functionaries and droves of party footsoldiers descend to a single constituency to campaign and monitor elections.

Described as a brand of party activism that violates the norms of liberal democracy (Bob-Millar, 2014), dynamics round the operation of political vigilantes have evolved. According to Edu-Afful and Allotey-Pappoe (2016), “Historically, in Ghana, political vigilante groups have emerged in response to the theft of ballot boxes, violence, and the inability of security agencies, mainly the police service, to provide adequate security, especially during electioneering periods.” Over time, a new dimension has been observed with vigilante group activities, in which there is an apparent penchant for patronage spoils following electoral victory of their party, often negotiated as an entitlement through exhibition of violence and acts of hooliganism. Post-election and transition periods marking transfer of political power from one political party to the other – (2001: NDC handed over power to NPP; 2009: NPP handed over power to NDC; 2017: NDC handed over power to NPP) – witnessed NPP party footsoldiers in 2001 clashing with their counterparts in the NDC to seize control of lorry parks, and public places of convenience which were maintained by the latter. Similar acts of aggression and takeovers occurred when the table turned in 2009, with the NPP relinquishing power to the NDC. Groups associated with the latter took control of public places of convenience, lorry parks, National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) offices, the then National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) offices and Metro Mass Transit Limited. In some instances, these vigilante groups successfully ousted District Chief Executives (DCEs), managers and staff of state institutions such as the NHIS and NYEP (Armah-Attoh, 2017). The

transition of the NPP into office in 2017 was no different from previous times and marred the almost smooth process. NPP affiliated groups, mainly led by the Invincible Forces, Delta Force and Kandahar Boys plunged the nation into a series of unlawful invasions, seizures and forceful control of public assets and facilities – for example, public places of convenience, lorry parks, toll booths, Kintampo water falls, Tema Port and Harbour, Passports Office, School Feeding Program sites, Tamale Teaching Hospital, among many other public places.

Rationale for the research

Violence has become a regular feature of Ghana's elections and manifests in open confrontations, clashes, threats intimidation, ballot box snatching and stuffing which creates an atmosphere of tension and fear, and ultimately undermine election credibility. Election violence in Ghana is most often than not perpetuated by vigilante groups or party footsoldiers affiliated to political parties. Security experts such as Dr. Kwasi Aning had intimated that there are about 24 identifiable vigilante groups in the country, and many more without names. This number is likely to increase given the intense competition between the NPP and NDC, especially as elections approaches in 2020. Political vigilantism and its attendant electoral violence poses a threat to the nation's democratization process, peace and stability (CODEO, 2017) in a sub-region that is increasingly becoming volatile.

With the activities of vigilante groups no longer limited to the polling day, but dovetailing into post-elections, transitions and period of governance, the unabated scourge of their blatant disregard for the rule of law and penchant for impunity is a source of concern for Ghanaians. Recognizing the incessant seizures of state assets, attacks on state institutions, public officials and citizens, with the last straw that broke the proverbial camel's back being the AWW by-elections shooting incident, it sparked massive public criticism and swift action from the executive arm. This subsequently led to three major interventions from the executive arm. First is inauguration of the Justice Emile Short Commission of Inquiry on the AWW Constituency by-election. Second is introduction of Vigilantism and Related Offenses Bill and subsequent passage into law by parliament. Third is the dialogue between the NPP and NDC led by the NPC with the goal of finding lasting solutions to the problem of political vigilantism a worrying feature in Ghana's electoral and political spaces. These initiatives point to the need to preserve Ghana's peace and stability, and improve on its good governance now and beyond Presidential and General elections in 2020. It is based on this that this research is seeking to build on existing body of research on the phenomenon of electoral violence and political vigilantism, gain more understanding about the motivations and dynamisms within selected communities because of the unique contextual dimensions in hotspot communities with the aim of informing policy design of workable interventions to address problems. In addition, in the absence of any known assessment, there is a need to provide empirical information on what purposively sampled citizens in hotspot communities perceive about ongoing government initiatives that are geared towards tackling political vigilantism.

Research objectives

Specific objectives for the study are to:

- Gain in-depth contextual understanding of electoral violence and political vigilantism within selected communities;

- Examine the dynamics, manifestation and issues that have implications for peaceful and credible elections in selected communities;
- Collate views and perspectives on ongoing government initiatives for addressing political vigilantism;
- Build on existing research on electoral violence and political vigilantism in Ghana; and
- Make recommendations to inform catalytic peace and governance initiatives targeted at addressing the underlying causes of electoral violence at the community level.

Structure of the report

The research is structured into five major chapters, with chapter one introducing the topic with a brief background on electoral violence in Ghana's Fourth Republic and its linkage with political party vigilantism and the rationale for undertaking this research. Chapter two describes the methodology which was used in designing, sampling, collecting and analyzing the data. In chapter three, the results and findings are thoroughly discussed, and concluded with considerations for policy makers in chapter four. The last chapter focuses on context specific cases for each of the communities sampled for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this section, the methodology adopted for conducting this research is highlighted. Discussions cover the research design, study population, sampling procedure, data collection methods, and analysis.

Research design

The research adopted a qualitative design with the aim of gaining deeper insight into the causes, manifestations and dynamics of electoral violence and political vigilantism within the context of each of the selected communities. Basically, the study was interested in the question of ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the phenomenon under study to get a better understanding of the phenomenon beyond the questions of ‘what’ which usually does not uncover the in-depth reasons for explaining issues.

Study Population

In each of the communities, a wide variety of groups with members 18 years and above were targeted and selected as respondents for the study. Respondents were constituted into groups based on the eight categories listed below:

- Identified persons involved in election violence (including identifiable political vigilante groups)
- Political party executives/representatives
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
- Youth groups (including tertiary wing of parties, political party youth groups, community youth associations etc)
- Profession based groups (Taxi/bus/Okada drivers’ union, Teachers association, dressmakers and tailors association etc)
- Women groups (Market women association, Christian Mothers Association, Federation of Muslim Women Association (FOMWAG) etc.)
- Assembly members
- Religious based organizations and traditional authorities

Sampling Procedures

Based on the design, a non-probability sampling procedure was applied in selecting communities that are designated as flashpoint for violence. In the first place, the country was clustered in three zones, that is the Northern, Middle and Southern. Five communities were purposively sampled to represent each of the three zones based on at least either one or more of this criterion:

- Communities in which there has been an incident of electoral violence; or
- Recorded incidence of political vigilante activity; or
- Highly competitive elections; or
- Border community.

Bolagatanga, Yendi, Sankore, Asawase and Aflao were sampled with the justifications provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Sampled communities

Community	Zone	Justification
Bolagatanga	Northern	Recorded incidence of electoral violence Recorded incidence of vigilante activities,
Yendi	Northern	Recorded incidence of electoral violence Record incidence of vigilante activities
Sankore	Middle	Recorded incidence of electoral violence Recorded of vigilante activities Close electoral competitiveness/close margin constituency
Asawase	Middle	Recorded incidence of electoral violence Recorded incidence of vigilante activities, Close electoral competitiveness/close margin constituency
Ketu South	Southern	Recorded incidence of electoral violence Border community

Data collection methods and analysis

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) was employed as the method of data collection in soliciting useful information from targeted groups whose constitution was not more than 15 persons in group. An FGD guide with open-ended questions to allow for further probing of responses was developed and used to facilitate discussions with the targeted groups. Cumulatively, 36 FGDs were held in the five communities sampled for this study. Researchers took copious notes during the FGDs in addition to the audio recording of nearly all sessions after seeking informed consent, and assuring respondents of keeping all information confidential and their identity anonymous. Audio recordings were transcribed for the purposes of complementing the researchers' notes for data

analysis and report writing. Themes and categories were drawn from the many responses provided by respondents and used in drafting the research report.

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CHAPTER THREE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter focuses on discussing the results and findings following the analysis of the data. It has been structured into two sections, with the first section focusing on understanding electoral violence whereas the second section delved into exploring the context and drivers of political vigilantism in the selected communities.

SECTION A: Understanding Electoral Violence: Actors, Drivers and Dynamics

Understanding of violence

This section of the study sought to understand respondents' knowledge of violence. Respondents were asked about their understanding of violence. Nearly all respondents described violence as a misunderstanding/disagreement between two or more people that leads to the destruction of properties and lives, death, chaos and confusion. There was a consensus among respondents that the bedrock of violence is misunderstanding/disagreement between two or more people, hence the need for patience and tolerance. The views expressed by the respondents brought to bear the fact that violence leads to strained relationships-thus culminating into physical and psychological outcomes of violence.

A respondent of the Community Based Organization Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) in Yendi defined Violence as:

“Violence is an act of committing/inflicting physical or emotional injury on an individual or a group of people as a result of a misunderstanding or differences that exist among people”.

A respondent of the Political Party Executives FGD in Bolgatanga also defined violence as:

“Violence refers to disturbances that can lead to loss of property and life, and sometimes it creates fear so that people cannot be themselves”

Aside accessing respondents level of understanding of violence, the study also sought to establish the types or forms of violence and those that are prominent in the study area. From the data gathered, the study areas in Northern Ghana (Yendi and Bolgatanga) were characterized with chieftaincy and political violence while communities visited in Middle and Southern Ghana (Sankore, Asawase and Aflao) are characterized by mainly political violence. It is imperative to note that political violence in the former are embedded in chieftaincy disputes.

A participant in the FGD conducted for Assembly members' in Yendi noted:

“In Yendi here, chieftaincy is the most prominent violence, followed by political violence and then ethnic violence”

A participant of the political party executive FGD in Bolgatanga noted:

“The main ones that happen in Bolgatanga are chieftaincy and political violence, but chieftaincy is the prime kind of violence”.

A participant of the Religious Leaders FGD in Asawase noted:

“Political violence- thus violence between political parties is the commonest violence here.”

A respondent of the Professional Based Group FGD in Aflao noted:

“Mostly the major violence is political violence. However, after the elections then things become normal.”

A respondent of the NPP Executive FGD in Sankore noted:

“Electoral violence is not common here but political violence is and at any given day and time there could be violence and yet it is not time for the polls. So election is not terrifying in Sankore.”

Manifestation of violence and its connection to electoral violence

The study also sought to establish how the prominent forms or types of violence in the study areas are related to electoral violence. From the evidence gathered, it is of vital importance to note that political violence is embedded in chieftaincy disputes in Yendi and Bolgatanga. Politicization of the Dagbon Chieftaincy dispute and the Bolgatanga chieftaincy dispute have given rise to political violence in these areas.

Tsikata and Seini (2004) and Tonah (2012), underscored the politicization of unresolved chieftaincy and communal disputes across the country. The authors accentuated that rival groups/royal gates in chieftaincy or communal disputes often align or identify with either the New Patriotic Party (NPP) or National Democratic Congress (NDC) to gain influence at the local level to enhance their chances of winning the chieftaincy dispute especially when their party of affiliation gets the nod to govern the country. The consequences are that local conflicts play out in the political arena as part and parcel of party related squabbles that spark violence. The NPP and the NDC has been accused by several groups and individuals of politicizing the Dagbon Chieftaincy dispute. Key among these individuals is the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the King of the Ashante kingdom who doubled as the Chair of the Committee of Eminent Chiefs assigned with the responsibility of bringing peace to Dagbon. He blamed the NDC and the NPP for the failure of the committee in bringing peace to Dagbon in its initial attempt due to the suspected meddling of the two main political parties in the chieftaincy conflict. He indicated that while the NDC claimed to be Andanis, the NPP supported the Abudu's.¹

¹ <https://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/politics/politics/201112/82641.php>

Similarly, the Omanhene of the Sankore Traditional area, Nana Ogyedom Appiah Kubi also accused the NDC and NPP for being responsible for the political violence in Sankore. According to him, the political violence began in 1992 and since then it has been recurring due to the activities of the two main political parties.²

A respondent of the NDC youth group FGD in Sankore noted:

“Political violence is the most prominent one. The violence started in 1992, there was no parliamentary candidate from Sankore then...2008 and 2012 we were supposed to end the attacks but now we cannot even go to town now”.

Drawing from the dominant forms of violence in their communities, respondents indicated that electoral violence is expressed through the following actions in the study areas:

Intimidation of Opponents and Voters- intimidation of opponents and voters was identified in almost all the FGDs as one of the key actions through which electoral violence is expressed in the study areas.

A respondent of the NPP executive and youth group FGD in Asawase noted:

“I want to repeat that election is just around the corner. Each political party knows and can identify their strongholds and their weak points. So they will try to intimidate residents of the opposition strongholds so they would not come out in their numbers to vote. They try to move heaven and earth to put some fear in the people so as to prevent them from coming out to vote. And ensure that the electorates in their strongholds come out to vote massively. So as we approach election 2020, if that was how a certain party behaved four years back then there is the fear of retaliation by the other party in the upcoming election.”

Another respondent of the NPP Executive and youth group FGD in Asawase acknowledged same:

“I wouldn’t mention any political party’s name. In 2012, I was an Assemblyman here at Asawase. Asawase Keneako school park had two polling stations. From morning to around 11am when there was a long queue that everybody knew, that was when some macho men came in with motorbikes on top speed to give warning shots and then the people dispersed, running for their lives. So people informed their relatives and people ended up not going out to cast their ballots for fear of the possibility of being shot dead”.

These views expressed by respondents concurs with the views expressed by the African Union Election Observation Mission to Ghana during the 2016 Presidential and parliamentary elections. The Observer Group noted that the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections was characterized with incidents of violence, intimidation and use of offensive language across the political divide.³

² <https://www.modernghana.com/news/885178/politicians-responsible-for-sankore-violence-traditional-r.html>

³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ghana/african-union-election-observation-mission-presidential-and-parliamentary-elections>

Use of abusive or indecent language—Respondents indicated the use of abusive language has become a common phenomenon in Ghana’s body politics and these verbal abuse on radio and campaign platforms of political parties is one of the triggers of election violence.

A female respondent in the Yendi Youth Parliament FGD noted:

“When they come to the platform instead of them to tell people what they will do when they are voted into power, they would rather insult or attack their opponent which leads to violence”.

These views expressed by respondents were alluded to by the Commonwealth Observer Group that was in Ghana to observe the 2016 general elections. The observer group in its interim statement after the 2016 presidential and general elections raised concerns about the use of inflammatory language particularly on radio.⁴ Also the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) in its final report of the 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary election noted the pre-election period was characterized by the use of abusive language on campaign platforms by politicians (CODEO, 2016).

Violation of electoral Laws- Respondents indicated that the violation of electoral laws by political parties and their supporters give rise to electoral violence. Respondents bemoaned the weak enforcement of electoral laws by the EC. Respondents accused the EC of not enforcing its own laws.

A respondent of the NPP Executive FGD in Sankore noted:

“The electoral laws are not enforced here. When your party is not in power nothing works for you and when you oppose they beat you up and wound you with machete. The Electoral Commission does not ensure that the challenge form works.”

These views expressed by respondents were alluded to by CODEO in its communique that assessed Ghana’s 2016 Presidential and General elections. CODEO (2017) bemoaned the weak enforcement of electoral rules by the EC.⁵

Destruction of life and property- Ghana’s elections have been characterized by incidence of violence before and after elections. Respondents expressed how their lives and properties have been destroyed as a result of electoral violence. They indicated these incidences are often characterized with gunshots, cutlass wounds, throwing of stones and other physical attacks which eventually results into injuries, loss of life in some cases, and loss of properties.

A participant of the NPP executive FGD in Sankore noted:

“Again I want to say that people are hurting and bitter. All of us sitting here have had cutlass inflicted wounds; some on their head, arm or any part of the body. All of us are bitter and until there is a compensation to victims, there is nothing you can do to make Sankore progress. It is one

⁴ <https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/interim-statement-ghana-2016-general-elections>

⁵ www.codeoghana.org/assets/downloadables/CODEO%20Communique_6April17.pdf

very important thing to look at. Some may forgive and let go but it's not all people who can do that”.

A respondent of the Faith Based women FGD in Bolgatanga noted:

“When those political parties clash, they attack our businesses by stealing, burning down of kiosks, houses and motorbikes”.

The use of illicit drugs- The use of drugs among political vigilantes was raised as a big concern in almost all the communities interviewed. Respondents mentioned the use of tramadol and also some ordinary medicines bought from pharmacy shops and combined with some other items to form strong drugs for consumption. Having consumed these drugs, the political vigilantes perpetuate crimes without any consideration for their victims.

A respondent of the Bolgatanga Professional Bodies noted:

“Some of the vigilantes take drugs like tramadol or a solution of teda cough mixture, tomtom and coke drink. These make them feel high and engage in the social vices we are talking about”

A respondent of the Asawase Political Party Youth noted:

“Most of the vigilante activities emanate from the Aboabo spare parts area and the Subin areas where the big gutters are. The boys there are on drugs and are sometimes paid to cause confusions and wicked acts. After committing crimes in town, they go back to their ghettos at Aboabo and the big gutters at Subin.”

Main Actors of Electoral Violence

From the data gathered from the field, it is evident that the following individuals or groups of individuals are the main actors of electoral violence. The actors noted by respondents ranged from the structures within the parties to executives and aspirants on one hand and state agencies such as staff of the EC and police who are all situated within the value chain of electoral processes in Ghana. The study found that women had unique roles in fuelling violence in the selected communities (*Refer to Appendix 1 for a detailed discussion on this*).

Political Party Youth- Respondents noted that the youth are mostly involved in electoral violence in the study areas. They indicated that the youth often affiliate themselves with the two main political parties (NPP and NDC). Respondents noted the youth especially the unemployed are used by political parties and politicians to perpetuate violence with the promise of securing jobs for them. The youth engage in electoral malpractices such as removal and defacing of posters, registration of minors, snatching of ballot boxes among others to disadvantage their opponents. Respondents noted that apart from the youth being used by political leaders to perpetuate violence during election, the youth also engage in post-election violence such as seizure of public facilities such as places of convenience, markets, chasing out of public officials they perceive as belonging to the opposition party from public offices on their own accord.

A respondent who was in the FGD for Tertiary Students Wings of political parties held at Asawase noted:

“Most of the time they party youth will not even wait for orders from their leaders and they just go around taking over markets, public toilet facilities, etc. There should be education right at the grassroots to ensure that things are done according to what the constitution says.”

A respondent of the Women FGD in Yendi noted:

“These political parties also use the youth to cause violence by giving them money and motorbikes to attack people.”

These views expressed by respondents were accentuated in CODEO’s final report on Ghana’s 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary election. CODEO in its observation report noted there were incidence of post-election violence, disturbances and attacks on public properties such as places of convenience and the invasion of public offices by NPP youth groups. Furthermore, there were reports in the media after the swearing in of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo in 2017.⁶ This phenomenon has become part of Ghana’s body politics. As same incidents were recorded in 2013 when the NDC’s John Dramani Mahama was sworn into office as President.⁷

Furthermore, in a political environment that accords extensive powers to the president, and underpinned by strong neo-patrimonial tendencies, winning elections is key to maintain patronage networks, control resources and dispense jobs, public services, or lucrative government contracts (Gyimah-Boadi, 2007; Lindberg, 2003). With a youthful population structure, coupled with a lack of opportunities for participating in formal political, economic and social decision-making, young people become vulnerable to political manipulation and are exploited for violence (Asante, 2006a; Danso and Aborampah Mensah, 2015; Gyampo, 2011; Bob-Milliar, 2014).

Supporters and Polling Agents of Political Parties-Ghana currently has twenty-three (23) registered political parties and these political parties have supporters across the country. However, the two main political parties in the country (NPP and NDC) have more supporters than the other parties that barely have representatives in parliament and command smaller proportions of votes cast. Respondents identified political party supporters (intra or inter party supporters) and party supported who are fielded as polling agents as one of the main actors of violence. From the study, it was evident that female supporters of political parties are used by their husbands’ to verbally assault their political opponents. Additionally, respondents indicated that party polling agents spark up violence due to their lack of knowledge of the electoral laws and regulations.

A respondent in a FGD for Assembly members in Yendi explained a scenario of how supporters of candidates indulge in violence:

⁶<https://www.myjoyonline.com/politics/2017/january-9th/rampaging-tamale-npp-youth-invade-lock-up-nhis-yea-nadmo-offices>

⁷ <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/angry-ndc-youth-lock-up-dce-s-office.html>

“I must say there have been instances where two candidates are going for a position and one candidate is being favoured by the government and given the position, supporters of the second candidate may decide to attack the other candidate and his supporters which may lead to violence.”

A respondent of the FGD held with Women in Yendi noted:

“The party agents are not patient to handle polling stations. They become biased and fight over ballot boxes. During elections, some people use stones and buckets to form queues and this causes violence.”

A respondent of the Professional Based Group FGD in Aflao commented:

“The party agents don't know their work. Even when you are enquiring on something, they are clueless on how to explain it to you. They rather resort to exchange of vulgar words.”

A respondent in the FGD for women in Yendi described the role of women in inciting violence:

“Both men and women cause violence, especially women in the market. Some make unnecessary comments and rain insults for no reason. These women are just party sympathizers who are encouraged or incited by their husbands to insult and make noise in retaliation to attacks from their opponents.”

Aspiring Candidates of Political Parties- Aspiring candidates of political parties were identified by respondents as one of the main actors of electoral violence in the study areas. From the discussions, it was evident that aspiring candidates of political parties use abusive language on their opponents on campaign platforms. These abusive language or offensive words turn to infuriate the supporters of the opponent leading to violence/clashes among the supporters of the two political parties, the NPP and NDC.

A respondent of the women group FGD in Yendi noted:

“Those aspirants who want to be nominated speak anyhow and that tends to cause violence. This happens in both inter and intra party politics.”

A respondent of the Professional Based Group FGD in Aflao noted:

“I believe there are guidelines concerning elections to identify a person who is not eligible to vote at a particular center. There are rules to follow in that case. Unfortunately, when such issues arise party representatives mostly do not follow the official instructions, instead they just engage in arguments over peoples' nationality. That's just what they do instead of following the appropriate electoral process. And this leads to people fighting and causing violence”.

Electoral Commission- The Electoral Commission of Ghana by law is the election management body mandated by law to conduct free and fair elections and manage and regulate the activities of political parties in Ghana. By law, the EC is to be independent and neutral in the discharge of its functions and duties. From the discussions, it is believed by respondents that the EC is not neutral and independent in the discharge of its functions hence mistrust among political parties and their

supporters which often results in violence. Sometimes the behavior and conduct of some staff of the EC gives cause for the neutrality of the EC to be called to question. Some respondents indicated that often the processes leading to the elections and declaration of the election results by the EC are not free and fair and these result in violence.

A respondent in FGD with Professional Bodies in Asawase noted:

“The EC is also at fault sometimes. Left to me alone the EC officer here should be transferred, because she is responsible for what happened just recently at the NPP office and four years ago during the election. Due to her actions, even the soldiers got angry and wanted to leave, and she also refused to declare results and handed that duty to her assistant. She doesn't consult the community on anything and she is the cause of what happened some years ago.”

A respondent in the FGD with executives of Tertiary Students Wings in Asawase acknowledged:

“We all know that elections are run by the EC and when the processes are not fair on both sides there may be issues; and if the registration is not fairly distributed and in the end the party which is disadvantaged will rise up and use mayhem or violence as a means to address their grievances. The EC should not reject candidates from one side and register candidates from the other side. They should do things fairly.”

Political Party Leaders- Respondents noted political party leaders use the youth in perpetuating violence. There was a general agreement among respondents that the leaders of the two main political parties in Ghana (NDC and NPP) influence their supporters and provide them with the necessary resources and incentives to blatantly defy electoral laws and regulations.

A respondent of the Assembly members FGD in Yendi noted:

“Our political leaders sometimes influence these groups (vigilantes or violence groups). This act can especially be attributed the two main political parties in the country”.

A respondent of the Professional Bodies FGD in Asawase

“Another thing is registration of minors. Political leaders will take them to register. I saw something like that four years ago and I did not allow them to register the minor.”

Vigilante Groups/ Macho Men - Vigilante groups have been visible in all elections (district level elections, intra party contest, and by-elections). Evidence on the ground indicates that increasingly the NDC and NPP rely on vigilante groups for security and electoral victory (ISS, 2018). Political parties, particularly, opposition parties, tend not to trust the police, especially during elections. Instead of depending solely on the police, the NDC and NPP prefer to entrust the safety and security of their presidential candidates, running mates and campaign contingents, political events, including rallies and delegates conferences to vigilante groups along with the police personnel assigned by the state.

These views expressed by the author above were alluded to by respondents of the study. Respondents underscored the use of vigilante groups/macho men for political party internal security primarily the NDC and the NPP. From the discussions, the two main political parties do not trust the security agencies to provide them with security, especially when they are in opposition. Hence, the resort to their own internal security arrangements.

A respondent in the FGD for Religious Leaders in Asawase noted:

“The political parties say they have internal security and the internal security are these macho men. They form these groups because of lack of trust in the police.”

A respondent in the FGD for Assembly members in Yendi made these observations:

“In order for us to have a peaceful election, we should be able to dissolve these groups (vigilantes or violence groups) but I don’t think we can measure up to these groups because they are well trained and have objectives including providing security. So during election periods, they want to make sure they achieve these objectives they have been trained to accomplish. As a matter of urgency, we need to dissolve such groups or educate them so we can have a peaceful election.”

Media- The media which serves as a source of information for the general public and a watchdog—thus monitoring government and its officials, monitor the implementation of government policies and programs among others, was identified by respondents as one of the actors responsible for instigating electoral violence. Respondents noted that the political alignment or affiliation of media houses to political parties prevent them from channeling the right information hence propagate falsehood which insights violence.

A respondent, an executive of political parties’ tertiary students wing FGD in Asawase noted:

“Some media stations are affiliated to certain specific political parties and their day-to-day activities are in favour of these political parties, and they mostly misinform the unsuspecting public which leads to a lot of things when it comes to election day. You cannot tell who is saying the truth. One station says things to favour their party and blacklist the other and that generates violence.”

Security Agencies- Respondents identified the police as one of the main actors of electoral violence. Respondents indicated that due to mistrust and lack of independence of the police in the discharge of its duties, the police are unable to fight crime and provide effective security during election hence culminating into violence. Police conduct and professionalism especially in properly handling informants and keeping their identities anonymous was cited as a source of concern that negatively affects trust in the police and puts informants in jeopardy of attacks from suspected culprits.

A respondent of the NDC Youth Group FGD in Sankore noted:

“The politics here is such that even the police and soldiers are powerless. They can't control these guys because their weapons are even mightier than those of the state security. They are

able to threaten people or even uniformed officers including the commanders and the ACPs, wielding these sharp edges and guns in their faces.”

Religious Leaders FGD in Asawase noted:

“If you report a case and the police come to arrest the accused, the same police will let the accused person know that you are the one that reported him and they come out to attack you. There is no trust in the police.”

Others Actors

Respondents outlined other actors such as traditional and religious leaders as actors of election violence. They indicated these opinion leaders align themselves to political parties hence are not able to influence their subjects.

A respondent of the Party Tertiary Executives in Asawase noted:

“Influential people such as the chiefs, religious leaders etc. are supposed to play a neutral role within the process of election. They have so much influence on the electorates but when it so happens that here in Asawase some opinion leaders identify themselves with a particular candidate in the election period, it angers the other side who see it as a threat or disadvantage and then it results into chaos.”

When respondents were asked which type of election related violence (i.e. consider general and parliamentary elections, assembly level election and primaries of political parties) usually record high incidence of violence.

There was a general consensus among respondents of the FGDs that electoral violence occurs throughout the political season. However, it intensifies especially during the campaign seasons.

Drivers and Causes of Electoral Violence and Current Dynamics

The study also sought to examine the drivers or the underlying causes of electoral violence in the study areas. Respondents identified the following as the underlying causes of electoral violence.

Winner-Takes-All- Ghana’s electoral system is based on first-past-the-post and winner-takes-all system of political interactions (Republic of Ghana, 1992). Consequently, the contestation for power is fierce and distinctly competitive. Even though the results of presidential and parliamentary elections tend to be close, losing candidates get nothing. The net effect is that losing parties/candidates are excluded from access to state resources and decision-making process. In addition, the longer a party stays in opposition, chances are that the party will collapse. Thus, politics is reduced to a zero-sum game, parties and contestants see elections as a win-or-die affair (ISS, 2018; Danso and Adu-Afful. 2012), increasing the potential for distrust, tensions, and violence.

Responses from the FGDs concurred with the views expressed by these authors.

A respondent of the professional bodies FGD in Asawase noted:

“Everyone wants to win so they will do anything to ensure their opponents lose and as a result it turns out to be violent.”

A respondent of Asawase Tertiary Executive

“Refusal to accept defeat- thus when people tend to refuse the verdict of the day when there is a parliamentary primary and a person wins, the others refuse to accept the verdict. I see it as monetization of our election. Where people pay huge amounts to delegates so they can be voted for, if such a person loses it is difficult for him/her to accept the verdict”.

Unemployment and Poverty-According to the Ministry of Labour, currently there are 422,000 unemployed Ghanaians. ⁸The country’s unemployment rate stands at 6.7 percent as at 2018.⁹ Unemployment especially youth unemployment has been identified as one of the main challenges of Ghana’s development. The subject of unemployment was one of the issues that featured greatly in the run up to 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Whilst the NPP outlined its strategies (including the formalisation of the economy, financial inclusion, diversification of export base and development of the property market, favourable policy framework and economic stability) in addressing the issue of unemployment in the country.¹⁰ On the other hand, there was a growing decline among Ghanaians in the ability of the incumbent government (NDC) in addressing the issue of unemployment (Asiamah et.al, 2019).

Respondents recounted how politicians influence youth and women especially the unemployed to engage in all forms of violence. From the discussions, respondents believe that unemployment is one of the key drivers of electoral violence. They indicated if the youth were gainfully employed they would not have the time to engage in acts of violence.

A respondent from the women FGD in Yendi noted:

“It is the political parties which create fights that sometimes lead to death. When they are out campaigning, the youth or some of the women are influenced especially those who are not working. We all have to be vigilant because when they come out for you to do those things, the youth have to stop and avoid all forms of violence and should know they are being used. What I want to add is unemployment and illiteracy because when you busy working you wouldn’t have

⁸ <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/422-000-Ghanaians-unemployed-417-000-others-not-searching-Employment-Minister-772320>

⁹ <https://tradingeconomics.com/ghana/unemployment-rate>

¹⁰ <https://www.pulse.com.gh/ece-frontpage/elections-2016-bawumia-outlines-plan-on-how-npp-will-solve-unemployment/rlc2c8p>

time to follow politicians and political vigilantism. We have to educate them that when they come to influence them, they should not listen to them and their directions”.

A respondent from the women FGD in Yendi noted:

“Because they know they have nothing doing, they entice them with little amount of money. Sometimes they only give them food and some ten Ghana cedis and instructs them to go and disturb their opponents.”

Polarization of Chieftaincy Disputes- Ghana is a multi-ethnic and a multi-cultural society. The resumption of competitive multi-party elections has resulted in a resurgence of cleavages along ethnic, religious and party lines hitherto buried or latent during the authoritarian period (Asante and Gyimah-Boadi, 2004; Frempong, 2001; Anebo, 2006; Heinz, Kohnert and Nugent, 2010). Both the NPP and NDC play the ethnic card to score points in their traditional regional strongholds by complaining that incumbent governments marginalize and neglect their base. Both parties have further extended the politicization of issues to chieftaincy disputes in the country. It is the belief of respondents that most chieftaincy disputes have not been resolved in the country largely because of political interference.

Electoral Malpractices- Losing candidates and parties in elections often claim electoral irregularities and complain that they have been robbed of winning. Examples of irregularities that trigger violence include misconduct by some political actors, registration of minors and non-Ghanaians as well as busing people to register in constituencies where they are not resident as required by law (CODEO, 2016; EU, 2009 & 2017). Also, defacing of publicity materials of political opponents including billboards and posters, and shootings at political rallies by political opponents orchestrated by political elites often lead to violence. Furthermore, growing intolerance evident in the use of hate speech, inflammatory and derogatory comments against political opponents, particularly during political talk shows and phone-in radio programs and social media are injurious to peace.

These views expressed by the authors above concurred with the views expressed by the respondents in the study areas. Respondents identified malpractices such as verbal abuse, vote buying, registration of minors by political parties, campaigning on election day and at the polling station among others as drivers of electoral violence.

A respondent of the Assembly members FGD in Yendi noted:

“Where a political party suspects the EC for not being neutral during elections. When the election is not free and fair in the sense that one political party feels cheated this may trigger electoral violence.”

A respondent of Executives of the Student wing of political parties FGD in Asawase observed:

“Another cause of electoral violence has to do with voter registration and how some people who are not 18 years still get registered. People try to register minors and that causes a lot of violence.”

A respondent of Executives of the Student wing of political parties FGD in Asawase acknowledged:

“People on election day itself try to entice people to vote for a particular party so they share items. When the other side sees that they come in to chase those people away and that is bound to bring about violence. So on election day people just flout the laws; campaigning at the election grounds etc. has a great effect on our electoral process.”

A respondent of the Professional Based group FGD in Aflao noted:

“That is something that baffles our minds. It happens a lot even in the recent limited voters’ registration exercise, party representatives failed to follow due process.”

Media-Respondents identified the media as one of the drivers of the electoral violence. Respondents underscored the sensationalistic way media houses report and how the media allows its platforms to be used by politicians and political parties inciting people to engage in violence .

A respondent of the Assembly members FGD in Yendi commented:

“Media is also a potential risk for the upcoming elections in the sense that some of the headlines being captured in their stories against two dominant political parties and individuals supporting different political parties may say things on social media against each other that may cause violence during elections”.

A respondent of the Religious leaders FGD in Asawase acknowledged:

“The media doesn’t help at all. They allow people to use their platforms for unworthy things. These stations belong to the politicians. so they sit on the radios and exchange words but when they come out you don't see violence”.

Others

Respondents identified other factors such as lack of parental care and guidance, lack of confidence in security agencies, lack of integrity by the electoral commission, vigilantism/violent groups poor enforcement of laws and illiteracy as drivers of political violence.

A respondent of the women FGD in Yendi

“Yes, because of illiteracy among the youth and elderly people is very high. It can lead to the eruption of violence in 2020 election because they are not being educated on the causes and effects of these violence in the community.”

SECTION B: Understanding Political Vigilantism: Manifestation, Motivation and Dynamics

Perception and manifestation of political vigilantism

In an attempt to conceptualize political vigilantism, respondents were asked how they understood the term, and varied responses were used to describe it. Generally, respondents viewed vigilantism in a negative light while a dissenting view noted that in the past vigilantes were deployed for house-to-house campaigns. Across the broad spectrum of responses,

Vigilantism as a means to protect and defend party interest: Some respondents described vigilantism as the act of political parties and politicians recruiting and forming groups for the purposes of protecting and defending the interests of their parties. This view introduces the element of conscious mobilization of people for actions that serve the interest of political party leaders and the party since the ultimate goal is to win elections. These actions though in the interest of the party, may contravene the laws of the country and mostly criminality. Common practices of vigilante groups cited by respondents include protection of ballot boxes, perpetuating violence on political opponents, harassing and intimidating voters especially in opposition strongholds to dissuade them from voting. Essentially, acts of vigilantism are used by political parties to undermine electoral processes and gain electoral advantages over their opponents.

A respondent in a Faith Based Organizations focus group at Yendi shared a perspective on this:

“Vigilantism is the selection of macho boys by a political party to support its cause for good or for bad. E.g. Guarding the ballot box so that opponents do not get the chance to cheat and yet they themselves cheat for their party when the chance crops up.” – Respondent, Yendi, Faith Based Organizations

“Illegal security formed by political leaders to protect ballot boxes. They take instructions from their leaders and get support in the forms of guns, motorbikes and cars.” – Respondent, Bolgatanga womens’ group

Vigilantism as informal security for protective services: In describing vigilantism, some respondents largely view it as the protective services that well-built and muscular men provide for politicians and at political party events such as rallies, campaigns, primaries etc. It is occasioned by the state’s inability to provide adequate number of police personnel to guard political elites and particularly during such political functions where massive number of people from all backgrounds congregate at a particular venue and there is a need for personalized protection and crowd control. Ruling party functionaries such as ministers and their deputies at a minimal level have their own personal security detail that has been provided by the state. However, political parties, mostly the party in opposition have found it convenient to use that as a pretext for setting up vigilante groups for purposes of personal protection in addition to the primary reason of not trusting the police to be neutral; and the police have often times been tagged as biased in favour of the ruling government. Political parties, thus, rely on their own informal security arrangements (machomen and party foot soldiers) outside of the legally recognized security services to provide bodyguards for themselves as well as for party events. Some politicians are known to organize vigilante groups

to serve as bodyguards as their contribution to the party (*Refer to Appendix 2 for the Typology and Formation of Vigilante Groups*).

Towards elections in 2016, the leadership of the police administration, led by Inspector General of Police (IGP), John Kudalor recognizing the danger that comes with the use of informal security by political parties, made arrangements after consultation with the parties and provided four bodyguards for all presidential flag bearers and two police personnel for running mates. This arrangement was put in place by the police administration following the arrest and subsequent deportation of three ex-South African police officers who were brought in by the New Patriotic Party (NPP), then in opposition to train a security detail for their presidential aspirant^{[11] [12] [13]}.

“Political Vigilantism is a practice more for opposition parties because ruling ones have the police on their side. An opposition party may just be given two policemen to handle a whole lot of crowds during campaign activities. So vigilantism is used to solve security challenges of opposition parties. Ruling parties do not have such problems.” – Respondent, FGD for Political Party Executives, Asawase

“Vigilantes are people selected by a leader to protect him and to prevent others from voting.” – Respondent, FGD for NPP Party executives, Sankore

“Political vigilantism is the exploitation of the weak state institutions, the police for that matter. Now the protection of politicians by the police has been taken over by youth.” – Respondent, FGD for Religious and Traditional Groups, Bolgatanga

Presence of vigilante group in communities

One sampling criteria used for the selection of communities for this study is the activities of vigilante groups in the selected communities. Respondents were asked whether there were any known vigilante groups operating in their respective communities; this was to uncover more information about the existence of lesser known groups. In virtually all communities sample for this study, respondents indicated that such groups exist, are informal and have no names, and are contracted by persons who require their services including politicians to foment trouble during electoral and political seasons. With respect to groups without names, some variations were noted where there were groups of youth party foot soldiers who undertake acts in line with vigilantism

¹¹ See link: <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Political-parties-welcome-police-protection-ahead-of-polls-471856>

¹² See link: <https://www.pulse.com.gh/ece-frontpage/ghana-election-2016-full-police-protection-for-flagbearers-running-mates-begins/mw3262x>

¹³ See link: <https://www.todaygh.com/bodyguards-not-errand-boys-police-warns-flagbearers/?pr=70286&lang=en>

and are somewhat referred to by the name or nickname of their leader. For instance, Anointing is the leader and people refer to the group as ‘Anointing’s Boys’ and are affiliated to the NPP; Van Dame Boys in Asawase. Similarly, there are corresponding groups that are affiliated to the NDC and which are named after their leaders in Sankore (*Respondents did not mention specific names*). Some respondents pointed out that some groups indulge in thuggery and make their services available to the highest bidder, and thus are not limited to being used for chaos during elections and political events. They are muscle for hire as land guards, chieftaincy disputes and indulge in criminal vices.

However, respondents in a Bolgatanga FGD with political party executives were quick to draw the line between youth groups that are affiliated to political parties and are not violent from vigilante groups that are associated with lawlessness and violence. That strong comment throws in a cautionary note for researchers not to lump all youth groups which have affiliation with political parties with vigilante groups, and this is consistent with findings by CDD-Ghana (2017) which found that there is a thin line between party youth groups and vigilante groups.

Table 1: List of political vigilante groups operating in sampled communities

Name of Group	Location	Affiliation
Burma Camp	Yendi	NPP
Bolga BullDogs	Bolgatanga	NPP
Dazota (Don’t fear)	Bolgatanga	NPP
Invincible Forces	Bolgatanga, Asawase	NPP
The Hawks	Bolgatanga, Asawase	NDC
Aluta Boys	Bolgatanga	NDC
No weapon <i>(members have fled town since NPP came to power in 2017)</i>	Sankore	NDC
Anointing’s Boys	Sankore	NPP
Salifu 11	Goaso	NDC
Cyborg Killers	Asawase	NDC
Kandahar Boys	Asawase	NPP
Delta Forces	Asawase	NPP
Bamba Boys	Asawase	NPP
Taskforce	Asawase, Aflao	NDC
Alidu Mafias	Asawase (Oforikrom Municipality)	NPP
Maxwell Boys	Asawase	NPP
Gym 44	Aflao	NDC & NPP <i>(noted to have been used by NDC in the past and now by the NPP)</i>

Source: Fieldwork (August – September, 2019)

Motivations for the formation of vigilante groups

The study is interested in understanding the motivating factors for the establishment of vigilante groups, and proceeded to solicit the views of respondents. Among other things, a number of thematic factors were cited by respondents as underpinning the formation of vigilante groups and includes mistrust for state institutions, quest to win political power, patronage spoils and vigilantism as a business model.

Political parties mistrust for state institutions is very high and often directed at the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC), the body mandated to oversee the conduct of any elections in the country and the security services particularly, Ghana Police Service. As noted by respondents, the EC is perceived by the political parties to be mostly biased in favour of the ruling government. On the other hand, the ruling government is seen by the opposition to wield undue influence over the commissioners of the EC partly due to perception that commissioners' appointed by the ruling government by a particularly party is likely to do the bidding off the latter. In some instances the posturing, actions and inactions of the EC tends to fuel this strong perception held by political parties. Hence, the political parties, mostly in opposition tend to trumpet a foul cry that they have diminishing confidence in the EC to be a neutral arbiter in organizing credible elections. As noted by respondents, this has become a justification for parties to resort to the use of party foot soldiers as vigilantes to 'police' the electoral process. Similarly, the police is accused of not being fair to opposition parties and this can be traced to the undue influence that successive government exert over the service, through politicization of recruitments, promotions and appointments. The police is perceived not to be independent in its actions. A typical case that can be considered is when the police refers electoral related crimes to the Attorney General's department for advice before it can proceed to take an action on prosecuting such incidents. Cases involving persons affiliated to the ruling government have a high tendency of receiving kid glove treatment at best while a blind eye is turned by the police to complaints from the opposition party as remarked by a respondent in Yendi.

"The Police should be seen to be impartial in their conduct and should not turn a blind eye to complaints from aggrieved persons in the opposition parties otherwise they would resort to their own security" – Respondent, FGD with Faith/Religious based organizations, Yendi

As alluded to in respondents conception of '*Vigilantism as informal security for protective services*', a similar point is raised again by respondents in that regard. In addition to the deep seated mistrust for the police service, respondents pointed out that vigilante groups are formed and used by politicians as internal security for the party. The cost associated with engaging vigilante groups for security purposes at party offices, during campaigns, rallies, primaries and so forth is relatively lower than engaging state security and further sidesteps the bureaucracy that comes with it. Intrinsicly, vigilantes have additional value for politicians and political parties that simply cannot be derived from engaging state security agents, and this includes but is not limited to undertaking acts of violence which contravenes the law, personal errands, organizing event grounds, gathering intelligence on their opponents etc. As noted by a respondent in the FGD with the tertiary wings of political party in Asawase, the parties and politicians require people to do their 'dirty job' for

them and who best fits the job description than vigilante groups. It is inconceivable to get law enforcement officers to perform such ‘dirty jobs’ that involves breaking the law.

“The one who forms this group [vigilante group] cannot take certain actions that will be noticed by the public because he is widely known. So he will get people who will act in his favor, by doing the dirty jobs for him while he keeps a clean sheet.” – Respondent, FGD with Executives of Tertiary students’ wings of Political parties, Asawase

In 2016 when the Ghana Police Service provided bodyguards for presidential candidates and their running mates, the then Director of Operations, Dr. Benjamin Agordzo at a meeting with political parties cautioned that policemen were not errand boys (Kessben fm, 2016)¹⁴ and that lends credence to the argument. He warned that:

“It will not be nice for us to see any presidential candidate use the policeman as if he is a servant in the house or go to the mall and then the policeman will be carrying the basket and the politician will be dropping stuffs in it...Those are issues that we would want to state unequivocally that we will withdraw our people as soon as we have this information and we have evidence to that effect...Personal activities and other things should not be part of his [Police officer’s] business. And they must be provided with decent meals so far as they stay with you. When you travel out of the region, it is your responsibility to provide them with accommodation and meals and they will be subject to police rules and regulations even as they are with you and we are observing them very well. Remember that they are always on camera and therefore when they are captured in uncompromising situations and other things and we will withdraw them, we will have evidence to that effect”

Respondents pointed out the desire for political parties to win power at all cost is a driving force for the establishment of political vigilante groups. Given Ghana’s very competitive and almost duopolistic system that rotates power between the NPP and the NDC in the Fourth Republic, and the mutual mistrust that exists between them, party foot soldiers are engaged as vigilante groups to outdo each other. All manners of strategies are adopted by political parties to give them an electoral advantage, and this includes machinating cheating schemes, ballot box snatching, ballot box stuffing, and instilling fear into voters in opposition strongholds to limit vote for opponents.

¹⁴ See link: <http://kessbenfm.com/bodyguards-not-errand-boys-police-warns-flagbearers/>

“It is the youth in a political party who are organized to use their physical strength and ideas to help protect and defend the party, in order to make sure the party wins political power.” – Respondent, NPP Youth Groups, Sankore

Strongly connected with winning elections and ultimately ascending to political heights is the easy access and management of patronage spoils that accompanies state capture by the winning political party. Respondents opined that the allure of patronage spoils becomes the basis for the formation of political vigilante groups to be used by politicians to attain electoral victory. The ‘winner-takes-all system’ by virtue of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana vests the president with the power to appoint virtually all persons to positions in public institutions including District Chief Executives, and this practice has conventionally been exclusive of minority parties. And thus reinforces political parties to fight tooth and nail, and by fair or foul means to capture parliamentary seats, and votes for their presidential candidates. Patronage spoils often come in the form of doling out financial largesse, contracts, travelling and job opportunities to cronies and party members. Politicians’ take advantage of the vulnerability of young people such as poverty and unemployment by making promises to secure jobs and improve the lives of these persons on the basis that they support their bid to capture political power, which opens up the floodgates to patronage goods. Most respondents were of the view that the promises of providing employment for members particularly in the state security agencies is highly correlated with the formation and use of vigilante groups by politicians.

“Persons who form these groups and use them for party activities and interest expect some rewards, which may be in the form of contracts, jobs etc when their party comes into power.” – Respondent, FGD with Political Party Executives

Realizing the opportunities (financial, promises of jobs etc) that come with the electoral and political season, young people mostly men coalesce themselves into groups that are willing to hire its services to the highest bidder. Respondents in a number of Focus Group Discussions across the sampled communities revealed this as a *form of business model*. Group members are usually unemployed and see an opportunity to profit from politicians who would approach them for their services. While it is not one-directional, the groups may also approach a politician to offer their services at an agreed fee. Respondents further noted that vigilante groups that operate this way are often linked to bodybuilding gyms where members build their bodies in anticipation to be engaged by politicians especially during election years. Their services are not limited to election and politics and transcends into other areas such as chieftaincy, land disputes, enforcers, thuggery and other criminal activities.

“When a political party is in power, it regulates everything in the country and mostly create these groups to protect the interest of the party which serves as a source of forming these groups to achieve the party’s goals.” - Yendi FGD with Assembly Members

Why do people join vigilante groups?

Aside trying to understand respondents’ views on what motivates the formation of vigilante groups, the study further explored reasons why people join these groups irrespective of the wide public condemnation of vigilantism. The reasons provided by respondents for which people joined vigilante groups were along the same tangent as the factors they cited as being the motives for which vigilante groups are formed, and include: job opportunities; rewards for services; recognition within the party; protection from the law and for purposes of revenge and protection.

Job opportunities: Promises made by politicians to provide job opportunities for party foot soldiers who fight for their cause serves as an incentive, which lures people into joining vigilante groups. Absorption of group members who are at the forefront mainly into the state security services, facilitated by political elites tends to seemingly exemplify what politicians are capable of doing for those that are loyal to them, and this keeps other members committed to the political figure, in the hope that it would get to their turn soon. Potential persons on the fringes are encouraged by what they see and join vigilante groups because of the promises and prospects that are offered to them. A study by CDD-Ghana (2017) confirms that frontline foot soldiers mostly benefit directly from politicians the promises made to them while most members barely receive anything.

“The core reason people join is the lack of jobs. Those who have their jobs don’t have the time to engage in vigilantism. – Respondent, NPP Executives and Youth Groups, Asawase

“They form these groups because they don’t have jobs. Politicians who visit the bases of these groups make promises to them in return for their support with the hope that if he wins the election he will provide them with jobs. After the elections when the promises are not fulfilled then they start committing violent acts” – Respondent, FGD with Women Groups, Bolgatanga

Rewards for services: Respondents noted that perceived rewards from politicians such as money and other favours becomes compelling for people to join these groups. Persons willing to join these groups tie their livelihoods and fortunes to political figures in the hope that they will be provided with patronage goods such as jobs, money, contracts etc.

Yendi, party activist/youth groups – “For potential benefits such as money, jobs, positions, contracts that would be derived from politicians if the party wins the elections” – Respondent, Party Youth Activists, Yendi

“First, the promises of politicians to help some individuals lures them into it. What they [politicians] tell me, I also tell my friends. He pledges some form of reward so I tell my friends about the ‘good news’. If we are able to help him win then we also get our positions. Just as you have assembled us here; the same way the person will tell me and I will mobilize other people and bring them to him [politician] and he tells us his message.” – Respondent, Profession Based Groups, Aflao

Recognition within the party: Activists desiring recognition within the party ranks as hardworking and ardent supporters find affiliation with vigilantism as one sure route to achieving such a goal. Sacrifices that are made by party foot soldiers to protect or promote the interest of the party are used as a trump card to negotiate for rewards – financial, jobs, travelling opportunities, positions etc. Joining and affiliating with vigilante groups has the tendency of propelling the political aspirations of individuals who are seen to command respect and is to an extent due to the dignified socio-cultural celebration of violence and bravery as heroism. In other words, display of violence is a signal for leadership and it is captured aptly in the comments of two respondents in a FGD with Political Party Youth Activists in Yendi.

“Sometimes in the minds of voters [delegates] if you are not violent or if you are ‘sober’ they would not like you to stand for a position because when it becomes necessary you would not act. They would tag you as somebody who is timid and cannot ‘bite’[1]...It would enable you to obtain a position because the electorates [delegates] will say this man is a strong guy, he is not afraid of fights[2]”

The appointment of Kwadwo Bamba, the Ashanti Regional Commander of the NPP affiliated Delta Forces as the Deputy Director of Operations of the NPP’s youth wing¹⁵ in October 2018; and the rise of Chief Sorfo Azorka, the leader of pro-NDC vigilante group Azorka Boys from the position of NDC Northern Regional Chairman in a November 2018 national executives election to become the National First Vice Chair of the NDC¹⁶ exemplifies a pathway to political leadership. Responses from some respondents in Sankore falls in line with the narrative

“Who knows the name of Sankore Manhene? But you know Nana Addo, you know Bawumia, the ministers etc. Do you know the name of the local chief? Nobody knows you when you don't affiliate yourself with politics.” – Respondent, FGD with NPP Affiliated Youth Groups, Sankore

“People help the party so they can make a name for themselves, by becoming popular.” – Respondent, FGD with NPP Affiliated Groups, Sankore

¹⁵ See link: <https://www.modernghana.com/news/894335/delta-force-commander-now-operational-director.html>

¹⁶ See link: <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/sofo-azorka-elected-ndc-national-vice-chairman.html>

Revenge and Protection: Some people get encouraged to join vigilante groups because they or a close relative of theirs suffered an attack some time ago from persons or groups associated with their opponents. Becoming a member of a vigilante group will offer the chance for the ‘victim’ now turn vigilante to avenge the past attacks when the best opportunity is presented. On similar grounds, others join vigilante groups in order to benefit from the protection that the group offers its members. Members in the group can mobilize to defend their counterparts in addition to launching reprisal attacks on individuals and opponents. The notion of revenge is a feature that seems common in Sankore due to the cycle of violence that is closely related to which political party is in power at a given time.

“People will join because they want to be able to defend themselves against other people who have hurt them in the past.” – Respondent, FGD with NDC Youth, Sankore

Protection from the law: Respondents opined that vigilantism is an avenue through which perpetrators aligned to political parties escape justice when they commit crime. With the seeming helplessness of the security services when party foot soldiers and political vigilante groups blatantly break the laws with impunity, and the influences from political elites in the work of the police, vigilante groups have been emboldened to commit even more brazen crime without recourse to consequential action. The kind of protection and shielding that perpetrators in vigilante groups receive from politicians urges them on to flout laws with impunity knowing very well that they would be granted bail, and prosecution of their cases halted eventually. As noted by respondents, persons with criminal intentions are encouraged to join these groups with the notion that they are immune from prosecution once they have the backing of political godfathers. Credence is given by respondents from the study on the discourse.

“People join these groups because of the assurance that if one commits a crime his party will bail him from the situation.” – Aflao, Religious group

“Following the incident in which Delta Force members stormed the courthouse and freed their members on trial and with the subsequent pronouncement by the court which set them free, a number of bad nuts with criminal background have joined these groups [vigilante groups] knowing very well political parties can easily get them off if they commit any crime.” – Respondent, FGD with Party Executives, Asawase

“There are many laws but some are above the laws. When culprits are arrested and released in no time, they are emboldened to commit worse crimes.” – Respondent, FGD with NPP affiliated youth & vigilante groups, Sankore

Awareness of laws to tackle political vigilantism and electoral violence

The study sought to find out respondents awareness of laws that are available to deal with vigilantism and electoral violence. In starting the conversation, respondents were asked if they were aware of any existing laws in addressing electoral violence and political vigilantism. Responses were generally of the view that they were not aware of any such existing laws that specifically dealt with issues of electoral violence. However, opinions shared by other respondents recognize that there are no existing laws that focus primarily on vigilantism and electoral violence, but that specific laws are in place to tackle crime and disorder.

Taking the discussions a step further, respondents were asked if they knew parliament had passed a law to tackle vigilantism and other related offenses. This law now known as the Vigilantism and Related Offenses Act, 2019 was first laid as bill in parliament by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice under a certificate of urgency following directives from the President on the back of the fallout from the Ayawaso West Wuogon constituency by-election violence. At the time of collecting data (August – September 2019), the bill had been passed into law by parliament in July 2019 and was later assented by the President in September 2019. For all the FGDs, majority of respondents indicated they did not know about the passage of Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law, and therefore had no knowledge about the law. Few other respondents who knew about the law had little to say about it since they did not know the provisions contained in the law. A follow up question sought respondents' assessment on the general awareness of citizens in each community, including stakeholders (politicians, political party executives, chiefs, youth groups, etc) on the new law. Respondents opined that in their assessment majority of citizens in their communities were ignorant about the Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law (2019). This finding was not surprising because awareness about the new law was low even among the various groups that are microcosmic of the communities they represent. Indeed, at the time of compiling this report, the final law that was passed by parliament was not in the public domain even after the president had assented to it. The only draft copy that was in circulation was the first draft submitted by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, and which subsequently went through the review process, led by the Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee to culminate into the final version of Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law.

Perspectives on the efficacy of Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law (2019) to deal with vigilantism and electoral violence

After asking respondents about their awareness and knowledge about the law, it was critical to hear their views on how effective they thought the new law would be in cracking down on the surging threat of political vigilantism. Respondents were asked this question: In your opinion, is the new law enough to adequately address the problems of vigilantism and electoral violence. Why? By implication, every response given, whether positive or negative had to be explained by

respondents. Although most respondents were not aware of the new law, they expressed a lot of pessimism with its passage as opposed to few respondents who expressed glimmers of optimism.

Pessimistic views

Respondents generally believe the Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law (2019) will not work for the following reasons.

- Laws that are already in existence and has the tendency to effectively deal with any type of crime, including acts of violence and lawlessness which are often not enforced. Perceived weaknesses in enforcing laws coupled with the selective biases by law enforcement agencies in applying the law, gives respondents the impetus to question any guarantees about the ability of the new law to be effective in rooting out vigilantism from Ghana's political and electoral space. Slightly differing opinions posited that the criminal laws are enough to tackle acts of vigilantism and therefore there is no need for the new law.
- The absence of political will to enforce laws regardless of which party the culprit is affiliated will water down the intention and implementation of the law. Respondents are of the view that politicians will undermine the enforcement of the law by interfering with criminal justice processes. There is the notion that politicians will pay lip service to enforcement of laws and clandestinely use vigilante groups after openly declaring their support for its passage. Comments from some respondents is in harmony with this notion.

“The laws won't work because the MPs rely on the services of the vigilante groups”. – Bolgatanga, Party Executives

“Our politicians are hypocrites. They will go to a roundtable (an official gathering) and talk but they will go behind and do differently” – Yendi, CSOs/CBOs

- Corrupt practices from police officers will render the enforcement of the laws ineffective, and that has implication for perversion of justice and discontinuity in prosecuting genuine cases.
- Traditional leaders often command a lot of respect and reverence from their subjects and in the communities that fall within their jurisdiction. Some respondents fear that these attributes in some instances have implications that negatively affect the ability of law enforcement agents in their operations. For instance in the Dagomba culture a person is accused of crime and runs to the chief's palace immediately comes under the safety and protection of the chief, thereby eluding arrest from the police. The police out of courtesy cannot forcibly enter the palace and arrest the suspect. Chiefs and elders use their influence to negotiate for the release of the suspect. With regards to this a respondent in Yendi was convinced this cultural norm will militate against the effective enforcement of the new law by remarking that:

“Traditional leaders disrupt the implementation of the law. When a culprit runs to a chief’s palace, he/she cannot be arrested.” – Respondent, FGD for Party Youth Activists, Yendi

Optimistic views

Views expressed by respondents in favour of effective enforcement of the law were premised on certain conditions, which they thought of as pre-requisites for successful implementation. Most respondents with positive outlook for the laws were in Sankore and Asawase. In the first place, some respondents advocated for mass public sensitization and education to increase the level of citizens awareness about the law and sanctions associate with breaching it. Others also believe the law has the potential to work since it was initiated enacted in the administration of the ruling NPP government. Therefore, if the law is enforced without fear or favour or recourse to biases against groups and members affiliated to the NPP that are found culpable of an offense, it will have a deterrent effect on groups affiliated with the NDC, and limit future infractions. It is paramount as Ghana approaches elections in 2020 where the stakes are high and it provides a test case for enforcement of the law. Following from this, an optimistic view pointed out that because the law was passed after majority of political parties had made inputs in revising the initial bill, and with the usual culprits – the NPP and the NDC – taking an active part in the legislative process; it gives a positive indication that any person who flouts the law will be punished. In addition, commitment and political will from politicians, devoid of interferences that undermine the work of law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system was highlighted as a sufficient condition to ensure efficacy of the law in addressing the vigilantism.

“The new law will be tested in 2020 but I believe it is enough to work” Respondent, FGD with Party Executives, Yendi

“[I think it will be effective] ... if the law is properly implemented. I don’t think the law alone will be enough because Ghana has many laws that are not properly implemented. However, [it can work] if the leaders are able to set good examples without influencing the application of the law” – Respondent, Religious Group, Aflao

“Yes because this law was enacted by the two major political parties hence anyone who goes contrary to the law will be punished.” – Respondent, Party activists, Aflao

Awareness and expectations about outcomes from the National Peace Council led dialogue between NPP and NPC

In response to the violence incident that rocked the Ayawaso West Wuogon (AWW) constituency by elections, the executive arm of government initiated a number of actions to forestall future

occurrence. First of which is the setting up of a 3-member commission of inquiry headed by former Commissioner of the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Justice Emile Short to investigate the incident and proffer some recommendations to address the issue. Subsequently, the President, Nana Addo-Dankwa Akuffo Addo in his State of the Nation Address (SONA) on February 21, 2019 directed the leadership of the NPP and NDC (the two parties mainly associated with vigilantism in the 4th Republic) to meet within one week to dialogue on the way forward in disbanding their respective vigilante groups. He further stated in the SONA that if the two parties failed to find solutions to disbanding the vigilante groups he would introduce legislation to quell vigilantism, and that later culminated into the process leading to the passage and assent of Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law (2019) by parliament and the President respectively. The President in his address to the nation on the 62nd Independence day celebration on March 6, 2019 in Tamale, reiterated his call for the parties to meet and dialogue in finding lasting solutions to the problems of political vigilantism. Eventually the leadership of the NPP and the NDC agreed to the dialogue, which is led by the National Peace Council, and several meetings have been held since April 2019.

In view of this, the study sought to find out the level of public awareness and expectation from the ongoing National Peace Council led dialogue between the NPP and the NDC. Respondents were asked the question: Are you aware that the National Peace Council (NPC) under the direction of the government is leading a dialogue between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to disband vigilante groups and find lasting solutions to end vigilantism? What are your views on this ongoing dialogue? On a whole, most respondents were aware of the ongoing dialogue and pointed out they had heard it on the news. However, few people were able to provide significant details – beyond the headlines – of the dialogue. In furtherance of this discussion, respondents were asked a hypothetical question about a positive outcome of the dialogue and how that will affect actors, politics and elections at the community level. In the ensuing discussions, two categories of responses were obtained from respondents, with more people expressing optimism about the outcomes of the process while others were pessimistic.

For those who were optimistic, positive outcomes of the ongoing dialogue will be a test of the system especially with respect to the upcoming District Level Elections [in December 17, 2019] and the voter registration exercise in 2020, as noted by a respondent in Sankore. Optimistic respondents posited that a positive outcome between the NPP and NDC will translate into peaceful elections at the community level since national leadership of the two leading parties have agreed to disbanding political vigilante groups, hence local level executives and actors will fall in line with the decision. This view came with a caveat that conclusions and agreement reached at the national level should not be left hanging, however, conscious efforts should be made by party leaders and National Peace Council to disseminate the information to increase awareness about the implications of the decision particularly within the party structures at the grassroots.

“It will not change the outcome of the election. However, decisions must go down to the grassroots and if it is well absorbed, there will be less violence and the promotion of free and fair elections.”

– Respondent, FGD with Religious and Traditional Leaders, Aflao

On the other hand, respondents who were skeptical, wondered how a positive outcome of the dialogue will translate into violent free elections and political environment. Their opinions indicated any agreement reached will not work because politicians will only pay lip service on committing to the agreement, and while in principle it would be contravened at the least opportunity to their electoral and political advantage. In the same vein, respondents pointed out that the agreement will not work for non-compliance and asked that penalties be included to strengthen its ability to deter would be offenders. Yet still, lingering mutual mistrust between the two parties has the potential to derail any progress made with the outcome of disbanding vigilante groups as this is seen as a ‘paperwork’ that holds no sway with realities and dynamics on the ground. In discussions with the various political party executives and activists, it became known that the national leadership of the two leading parties have not been updating the decentralized structures about this ongoing dialogue. This gap in information dissemination to the grassroots has the tendency to alienate local level actors from the outcomes of the dialogue and may not augur well for buy-in at the community level.

These sentiments are reflected in a view shared by respondents:

“Party leaders can sit in Accra and decide to disband vigilante groups, but we the executives at the constituency level cannot trust what has been agreed upon. Mistrust between political parties will still keep vigilantism active in the constituencies. I simply cannot believe the decision that will be taken.” – Respondent, NPP Affiliated Youth Groups, Asawase

“It will not work because the group’s [vigilante] name is gone, but the job that they do for the party, they will still do it even if they are disbanded on paper.” – Respondent, NPP Party Executives and affiliated Youth Groups, Asawase

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarizes and concludes on the entire results and findings from the previous chapter, and goes a step further to prescribe some recommendations for policy consideration and to inform interventions even as stakeholders' are making efforts to address electoral violence and political vigilantism.

Summary and Conclusion

- Generally, respondents have a fair knowledge about electoral violence and its manifestation. Across all communities, electoral violence manifests in several forms including verbal and physical assaults. These results in the destruction of properties, especially properties of political opponents, removal of electoral materials among others.
- The main actors of electoral violence are political party agents, supporters of political parties, youth groups, candidates or aspirants, vigilante groups/macho men, Electoral Commission staff, and security agents (Police).
- Largely, respondents identified unemployment, winner takes all, vote buying, lack of parental care, political influence on the media, lack of confidence in security agencies, poor enforcement of laws, verbal abuse, illiteracy, electoral malpractices, integrity issues with the Electoral Commission and poverty as the underlying causes of electoral violence.
- Generally, respondents identified ignorance, high illiteracy, peer influence, unfulfilled promises by politicians and political parties, enlistment of party foot soldiers into security agencies, chieftaincy disputes as potential drivers of electoral violence.
- In terms of the formation of vigilante groups, respondents generally identified mistrust for state institutions (EC and Police), internal party security, desire to win political power and conception of vigilantism as a business model as the underlying motives.
- Uncovering why people join vigilantism groups, respondents identified employment, rewards for services, recognition within parties, revenge and protection, and protection from the law as the main reasons.
- The use of licit drugs among some political youth vigilantes is big issue with diverse consequences. It is seen as a challenge across most of the communities studied.
- Few citizens are aware and have knowledge about the recently passed Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law (2019) to tackle vigilantism and related offenses but skeptics do not think the law is necessary, and that more efforts should be channeled at enforcing existing laws. In addition, they noted that lack of political will coupled with hypocritical behavior of politicians, corrupt practices of police officers and interference from traditional authorities would militate against the effective enforcement of the law.

- Citizens are optimistic a positive outcome of the dialogue between the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) being mediated by the National Peace Council (NPC) would promote free and fair elections, strengthen the electoral process, enhance confidence in the outcome of elections and increase Ghana's democratic credentials. However, it was on a caveat that a necessary condition that must be fulfilled is public awareness about the outcome of the dialogue.

Policy recommendations

Based on the discussions and findings as well as some recommendations from respondents on what could be done at the community level by stakeholders to complement ongoing efforts at promoting peaceful elections addressing the threat of political vigilantism, the under listed are suggested for policy consideration.

- Promoting inter party dialogues in constituencies even at the ward level will be helpful in mitigating risks and threats to peace. Most often lies leading to suspicion creates anxiety between opposing political parties. This dialogue will offer the opportunity for all issues to be fact-checked and rumors dispelled.
- Resourcing the National Peace Council and the National Commission for Civic Education at the district levels will go a long way for them to be proactive in taking Center stage with convening such dialogues that is preventive-driven.
- Building the capacity of polling agents of political parties on the electoral laws and procedures would be very vital for enhancing their functioning and professionalism. The Electoral Commission in collaboration with the political parties can schedule capacity-building sessions at the district level to train polling agents close in the run up to elections.
- Continues Education and sensitization on Peace – Civil Society Organizations, including faith-based organizations, the media, National Commission Civil Education should embark on civic education and peace campaigns.
- Creation of sustainable jobs for the youth would go a long way to keep them from engaging in political violence
- The use of illicit drugs among the youth must be checked and prevented by all relevant organizations.
- The Electoral Commission should ensure free and fair elections and independence in the delivering of its mandate in order to engender trust in the commission
- Religious leaders should continue to preach peace at social events and in the churches and mosques
- Building the capacity of the youth to be peace ambassadors in hotspot communities would create a crop of youthful persons who are interested in peaceful outcomes in their communities instead of being used as tools to perpetuate violence.
- While the National Peace Council is engaging the leadership the NPP and NDC to find lasting solutions to political vigilantism, the awareness and knowledge about the process seems lower at the constituency/community level. Community level executives are estranged from the process, and this may have negative consequences for buy-in of

- the outcomes of the dialogue. There is therefore the need for the main parties involved – National Peace Council, NPP and NDC leadership to engage with constituency actors especially in hotspots, and at best explore the possibility of replicating the dialogue at the grassroots to bring actors to speed on the roadmap/code of ethics and consequences.
- Similarly, conscious efforts should be made by the leadership of the NPP and NDC to disseminate the outcomes or agreement of the dialogue through engagements with executives in the party sub-structures. Such an approach will sensitize executives at the sub-structures and contribute to their buy-in of the roadmap or Code of Conduct on political vigilantism.
 - Mass public sensitization on the Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law (2019) is required from the media, civil society, political parties, National Peace Council, and the NCCE to boost awareness about the law even as election 2020 approaches.
 - Political will is needed to enforce laws without fear or favour. The ruling NPP government should take the lead with house cleaning by prosecuting cases that are committed by persons and vigilante groups affiliated to it to provide an exemplary deterrent to potential offenders not affiliated with their party.
 - Job creation is very paramount in all this discourse since politicians take advantage of the vulnerabilities of unemployed youth to engage them as vigilantes. The various district assemblies should look at the prospects of empowering the youth within their communities through feasible Local Economic Development (LED) approaches.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDY ON SAMPLED COMMUNITIES

Introduction

This last chapter gives a special focus on each of the communities sampled for the research. The essence is to provide case specific context and reflections from responses in each of the communities, simply because chapter three focuses on all five communities although nuances exist in each community.

Yendi

Located in the eastern corridor of the Northern Region, Yendi is the capital city of the Dagbon Kingdom and the seat of the Ya-Na, the overlord of Dagbon traditional area. From the data gathered from the various discussions held, Yendi has dominantly experienced chieftaincy and political violence. The chieftaincy disputes have assumed political dimensions, and thus have taken the forms of political violence. The two royal gates of the Dagbon (the Abudus and Andanis) are affiliated to the NPP and NDC respectively. The political season in Yendi has often been characterized with violence which is manifested during voter registration, electioneering campaigns and during elections. The violence is caused by actions such as registration of minors, verbal and physical abuse, and intimidation of opponents in party strongholds. These actions culminate into destruction of property and life. Political party agents, active members of political parties, youth groups, aspiring candidates of political parties, electoral commission staff, party supporters and sympathizers were identified as the main actors in electoral violence in the area. It is interesting to note that respondents accused the Electoral Commission of not undertaking due diligence in recruiting its temporary staff for election-related activities. Hence, the EC recruits known supporters of political parties who are not trusted by the people. As a result, they are unable to mediate when misunderstanding occurs.

Unemployment, the desire of aspiring candidates to win elections at all cost, lack of parental care, the influence of aspirants/candidates, verbal abuse, illiteracy, politicization of the Dagbon chieftaincy dispute and electoral malpractices (such as multiple registration, registration of minors, cheating during counting of polls and intimidation of political opponents) were identified by respondents as the underlying causes of electoral violence in Yendi. Women were identified by respondents as the main culprits of verbal abuse.

There was a general consensus among respondents that there may be cases of electoral violence during the 2020 political and election period due to unresolved issues during the limited voter registration undertaken by the Electoral Commission. Few others were optimistic the resolution of the long-standing Dagbon chieftaincy dispute and the enskinment of the new Ya-Na (the Over Lord of Dagbon) will minimize the level of violence during the 2020 elections.

Respondents identified the following actions as potential triggers of violence in upcoming elections in 2020

- The enlistment of party foot soldiers into security services may trigger violence in the 2020 elections as these recruits tend to be loyal to their political parties who employed them.
- High illiteracy among citizens especially the youth and women
- Failure of political parties to deliver on their campaign promises and manifestos
- Ignorance of the electoral laws and regulations and peer influence among the youth

Respondents recommended the following as measures towards ending electoral violence

- Effective education and sensitization on election and electoral violence by the National Commission for Civic Education, National Peace Council, Non- Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations through the use of the media, drama, games among others.
- Ensure economic empowerment of the youth through creation of sustainable jobs for the youth to ensure improved livelihoods
- Provision of adequate logistics and resources to the National Commission for Civic Education to enable the commission deliver on its mandate
- Disbandment of vigilante groups by political parties especially the NDC and the NPP
- Security agencies should be given the latitude to operate and perform their functions diligently without political interference.
- Strict enforcement of laws of the country
- Provision of formal education to the youth.
- Civil Society Organizations and other relevant institutions should provide the media with adequate information to ensure informed reportage.

Residents are optimistic the recent resolution of the Dagbon Chieftaincy dispute and the enskinment of the Ya-Na will minimize political violence in the area.

Bolgatanga

Bolgatanga is the regional capital of the Upper East Region of Ghana. Bolgatanga has been in the news quite often in recent times due to a protracted chieftaincy dispute in the area. From the evidence gathered from the study, chieftaincy disputes, land disputes, electoral violence, religious violence (inter and intra) and domestic violence were identified as the forms of violence in Bolgatanga. However, chieftaincy and political violence were identified as the most prominent forms of violence in the area. Respondents indicated that political violence has found an expression in the protracted chieftaincy dispute. Thus political parties (especially NPP and NDC) have aligned themselves with the various factions of the chieftaincy dispute. Political violence in Bolgatanga are associated with electoral activities and these are manifested through actions such as removal and defacing of posters of opponents, use of abusive language on campaign grounds and radio, throwing of stones, blowing of false alarms and threats, clashes during campaigning and provocation of political opponents.

The youth, aspiring candidates and their supporters, and political party financiers were identified as the main actors in electoral violence in Bolgatanga. Respondents identified winner-takes- all, unemployment, the use of the media by politicians in propagating lies, lack of confidence in

security agencies, poor enforcement of laws, intimidation of opposition parties by ruling party, misconduct of political parties and their supporters, non-compliance with electoral laws and regulations, poverty and vote buying as the underlying causes of electoral violence.

Respondents called on the government and other stakeholders to take the necessary steps in resolving the current chieftaincy dispute in Bolgatanga, as it may escalate to violence in the 2020 electoral season considering the royal gates are affiliated to the two main political parties in the country.

Respondents identified chieftaincy disputes, ignorance, unemployment, misguided party representatives on airwaves, violation of electoral laws and regulations as the potential risk for violence during the 2020 electoral and political season.

Respondents went further to identify the following as measures towards ending electoral violence.

- Education and sensitization of citizens especially the youth on the effects of electoral violence by the National Commission for Civic Education, National Peace Council, Civil Society Organizations and Traditional Authority
- Engagement of traditional leaders so they impress on the youth to be peaceful
- Deployment of more security to hot spots on the day of election.
- Election management bodies and institutions should ensure neutrality in delivering their mandates
- The Electoral Commission should provide mechanisms such as the hotline to report potential violence for action
- The use of women and People Living with Disability (PWDs) as Peace Ambassadors
- Enforcement of electoral laws and regulations
- Creation of sustainable jobs for the youth for improved livelihoods
- The National Peace Council and National Commission for Civic Education should provide political parties a platform to dialogue

Aflao

Aflao, located in the Ketu South Municipality of the Volta Region, is a border town on the Ghana-Togo border. In discussions with the various groups, it was revealed that the most endemic form of electoral violence is intimidation and physical violence which stems from the difficulty in defining and identifying citizens of Ghana. Determination of citizenship is a big issue, and the electoral laws have not been explicit in clearly stating who a citizen is. This gap has created a bone of contention between the two leading political parties – NPP and NDC. It often results in physical violence between the perceived foreigners and NPP polling agents on the one hand, and the NPP and NDC polling agents on the other hand. This often results in disenfranchising some persons.

There is the notion that the NDC buses citizens of Togo to participate in voter registration exercises and on polling day to vote. Respondents explained that some Ghanaians live and work in Togo but when it is time for elections they come and vote. Others cited instances where some families have some of their relatives resident in Togo and possibly have Togolese accent because

of the long stay in that country. Party agents for the NPP usually use that (the accents) as a measure to counter claims of suspected foreigners.

It was revealed that party agents do not use the voter challenge forms provided by the EC but rather resort to use of physical attacks (confrontation). The reason may be ignorance. It was intimated that people do not use the challenge forms because the EC officials are perceived to be working in the interest of the ruling government, and so completing the form will amount to nothing.

Respondents identified some potential triggers of violence in upcoming elections in 2020 by pointing out these factors.

- Suspicion that macho-men would be imported into the district to prevent suspected foreigners from crossing over to participate in the limited voter registration exercise and subsequently voting on election day.
- Persons living in Togo who are qualified to vote may be stranded at the border and this can likely spark violence.
- Misinterpretation of rules on verification: People were disenfranchised because the Biometric Verification Devices (BVDs) allegedly could not verify them, while manual verification was not applied by temporary staff of the EC as a second means of verification. There is a strong perception that the BVDs are deliberately manipulated to disenfranchise voters.
- Prevention of suspected persons at voter registration centers has the potential to spark violence.
- Suspicion that some names were deliberately deleted from the voters register has implications for peaceful elections when people realise they cannot vote in the 2020 elections.
- Suspicion that the NPP, ruling party would want to use state power to prevent persons suspected to be affiliated to NDC from voting on polling day.

In attempts to find solutions to the problems, a call was made for stakeholders such as religious and traditional leaders to be educated on electoral laws for them to extend this knowledge to their congregation and people.

Sankore

Located in the Ahafo region of Ghana, Sankore is one of the notable towns in the Asunafo South District. Electoral and political violence are very dominant whilst other forms of violence pale in comparison. The levels of mistrust and acrimony between the NPP and the NDC in the community has reached unprecedented levels that transcends into violence beyond the political and electoral cycle.

The Community is marked by *stark* divisiveness along NDC-NPP party lines and fuelled by strong acrimony as a result of injustice perpetuated by party-affiliated militant youth groups in times past which have not been punished and which perpetrators are walking scot free. Violent crime and reprisal attacks are very rampant even when there are no political or electoral related activities, and tends to be a way of settling personal feuds. Fear of and actual reprisal attacks from the NPP affiliated vigilantes for what they suffered during NDC's reign (2008-2016), has forced many NDC affiliated youth and vigilante members to migrate (flee) from Sankore, until an opportune time when their party is in power before they can return.

Voter registration produces a lot of violence because of the use of suspected minors and foreigners to register. Each party seems to resist the other's activities and that spirals into violent attacks. Women groups noted that this affects their trading activities especially during market days. The voter challenge forms are seldom used by agents to challenge suspected minors or 'foreigners', instead, party agents and activists resort to verbal altercations and physical attacks. This is due both to the belief that nothing good comes from the use of the challenge process on one hand, and ignorance of the process on the other hand.

Ordinarily in other communities visited, the research team was able to meet all political parties, primarily the NDC and NPP in one meeting. However, at Sankore, the situation was different. FGDs were held separately with all the parties. NDC party executives and youth activists indicated that their safety was not guaranteed because they feared attacks from their counterparts in the NPP. It was only in Sankore that scores of police officers were present at the venue for the FGDs to provide security for the Research Team and to avert any possible violence from ensuing.

Upon reflection of the current situation in the community, respondents indicated some possible triggers and threats to election in 2020. A couple of indicators

- Intense competition between the NDC MP (Eric Opoku) and NPP's parliamentary candidate (George Boakye) for the parliamentary seat will see the use of more vigilante groups and militant youth to undermine each other. It is apparent that the NDC will want to use their incumbency to retain the seat. The NPP who now dominate politically (because they are the ruling party) will use the state security apparatus in its control to unseat the NDC.
- Perceived unresponsiveness of the police to members of the opposition, and the perceived alignment of the police with the ruling party., .
- On-going reprisal attacks, threats and intimidation of opposing party will magnify violence during the 2020 elections.
- First-time voters were afraid to register during the voter registration exercise (2019), and there are fears they would not come out to vote. As noted by a respondent,

“My daughter is more than 18 years and was afraid to go and register, let alone how can she go out to vote during the elections” – Respondent, FGD with women groups, Sankore.

- Availability of idle youth as a result of high rate of unemployment. These unemployed youth are prone to engaging in violent crime, aside their availability for manipulation by politicians.

Interestingly, most of the groups engaged, especially party executives and youth groups were aware of Parliament's passage of Vigilantism and Related Offences Law (2019). They intimated that for the law to work effectively in Sankore, there is a need for public sensitization and awareness on the law. In addition, respondents provided some suggestions that has the potential of dealing with the problem in Sankore.

- The respondents' first and main unanimous recommendation was for the siting of a military barracks in the town. Request for a military presence in Sankore since the police is perceived to be compromised and 'weak' in dealing with party affiliated vigilante groups who are found culpable of committing crime. In their views, the military on the contrary are feared by vigilante groups as opposed to the police which were seen to be weak and compromised, and the military are also , in addition to being perceived as more neutral, disciplined and professional. They explained that the military has a rotational system, which in their view does not allow them to stay longer at a place to mingle with the local people; hence, it insulates them to an extent from being compromised.
- Creation of jobs and opportunities for livelihood improvements are needed to absorb the teeming youth and get them engaged meaningfully.
- Compensation for persons who suffered attacks, as well as those whose livelihoods were destroyed in previous bouts of violence . In respondents' view, it was very crucial for the government to compensate this category of people else laws and the outcome of the National Peace Council's dialogue between the NPP and NDC will be negated by continuous cycle of reprisals.
- Political actors should allow the law to work regardless of offenders/criminals party affiliation
- Identify and target leaders of vigilante groups and speak to them about peace and the need for them to disband their groups in one-on-one sessions. While engaging these persons, the idea of meeting all group leaders at a neutral venue outside of Sankore to find lasting solutions to the issue with these actors in the same meeting should be floated. In this vein, continuous engagements with these groups over a considerable period of time is required instead of one-off and sporadic events.

Asawase

Asawase is located in Kumasi the capital city of the Ashanti Region, a region dominated by the NPP. It is one of three constituencies represented by NDC Members of Parliament. Violence during elections is a regular feature of all elections and is mostly associated with the Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Suspicions about rigging of the elections in some polling stations, whether real or imagined becomes a basis for party activists and affiliated vigilante groups to

launch physical attacks on political opponents. This deep-seated mutual mistrust is exacerbated by rumors, fabricated stories about eruption of violence, or alleged rigging at some polling stations, which compels all sides to dispatch vigilante groups to these polling stations for investigation. The presence of the first team of vigilante groups at the polling station in question stalls the electoral processes and intimidate voters. In the event that the second group of vigilantes from the opposing party arrive at the polling station, a section of voters become terrified and run away because they perceive that the second group have come to cause commotions. Rumor travels around the electoral area and often inhibits voters from stepping out to vote for fear of their lives.

It is interesting to note that in some instances the actions of women within the community tends to incite violence, and this is not only limited to political and election periods. They do this by insulting persons who do not belong to their parties and provoke them to retaliate. The ensuing altercations draws people to the scene and leads to squads of party activists taking sides. Situations in which the incident is not diffused amicably, it has the tendency of degenerating into brawls between factions along political lines.

Respondents noted that the issue of political parties pushing minors to register is very rife. Coupled with that people suspected not to be resident in Asawase are imported by politicians to the registration centers to be registered, a phenomenon that is repeated during voting day with its attendant problems of being the fulcrum on which opposing political parties clash with each other. On what could constitute threats or triggers violence during the 2020 elections, a number of factors mentioned by respondents are highlighted below:

- Voter registration process would be problematic since minors and non-resident persons are bused into the constituency to be registered, amidst the fierce contestations and resistance that leads to violence;
- There are fears that the parliamentary contest promises to be very fierce and that implies politicians would employ any means necessary, whether fair or foul to win the elections.
- Mistrust for temporary staff of the EC – Some of the EC staff were noted by respondents to be surrogates of political parties and would take the least opportunity to do the bidding of the parties they affiliated to, an occurrence that have implications for peaceful and credible elections.
- Police interference and biases towards a particular party.
- Suppression of opposition party activities such as floats, keep fit exercises, rallies etc in strongholds.
- Spread of fake news and unfounded rumors has the possibility of sparking violence between vigilante groups affiliated with political parties.
- Increasing drug use by the youth in the community was flagged as a source of concern as politicians take advantage of these persons to foment trouble during the electoral cycle.
- Increasing gun circulation and the growing gun culture has the potential of marring the elections if gun owners are engaged by political parties.

With regards to vigilante groups operating in the area, apart from those with names – NDC Taskforce, Maxwell Boys, Delta Forces, Invisible Forces, Cyborg Killers, Bamba Boys, Alidu Mafias – there were a lot more groups that cannot be identified with names, and they are available for hiring by politicians, factions in land and chieftaincy disputes and enforcers for private individuals. Respondents noted that drug use among members of these groups is high and their association with crime is undisputed. Awareness of the vigilantism and Related Offenses Law (2019) was slightly higher among respondents and even more so with political party executives, youth activists and tertiary students wings of political parties. On the other side, respondents think most of the citizens in Asawase are not aware of the passage of the law by parliament. Primarily respondents were skeptical about the law and stressed that the need for political will to enforce the law. Yet still, awareness of the National Peace Council led dialogue between the NPP and NDC was somewhat appreciable, however, only a few respondents knew more details about the dialogue. Similarly, respondents were pessimistic about any positive outcome of the dialogue in which the two leading parties would agree on disbanding their groups. Some respondents offered the following reasons:

“The person [politician] who will come down to disseminate that information is the problem. National executives have failed us with promises so they cannot come down here.” – Respondent, FGD with NPP Executives and Youth groups

“It won't work because the groups are no longer there [they may be disbanded] but the individuals are there. They will still work for the party as they used to do when they were in a group. They will guard the ballot boxes and defend their parties' interest. Once we still have such people in our midst, the law won't work.” – Respondent, FGD with NPP Executives and Youth groups

Owing to the discourse in the preceding paragraphs, some remedial actions were suggested by respondents as measures to mitigate electoral violence in Asawase.

- There is the need for stakeholders to promote dialogue and cordiality between the parliamentary candidates of the NDC and NPP ahead of the elections in 2020. Such an action will go a long way to influence supporters to perceive their candidates as competitors and not enemies, and somewhat contribute to easing the unnecessary tensions during elections.
- National Peace Council, National Commission for Civic Education and civil society organizations should target churches and mosques to sensitize congregants on the Vigilantism and Related Offenses Law (2019).
- Influential persons in the community should be identified and used to reach out to known persons and leaders of vigilante groups for one-on-one sessions using moral suasion approaches.
- Community consciousness about the drug use menace and its devastating effects should stir up conversations and social action against drug abuse.

APPENDIX 1

Instigators and Informants: The Case of Women Residing in Electoral Violence Hotspots in Ghana

It is a truism that women are among the worst affected in times of unrest. The narrative has been, that women are often shot and suffer all manner of abuse and violations in conflict situations. Women are also seen getting involved in conflicts nursing wounded men and generally helping with aid efforts. Women are usually seen as peace loving and for that reason in Ghana, women are engaged to provide conflict early warning, support in peace education and to volunteers counseling the youth on non-violence and other peace campaign activities.

Recent work undertaken by a research team investigating electoral and political violence in some of Ghana's electoral violence hotspots has indicated the changing role of women in conflicts, that do not often come to the fore of discussions, possibly because it does not fit the well-crafted and much-promoted narrative of women as victims and peace ambassadors. It must be noted that the research did not set out to understand the role of women in electoral violence in Ghana, however the subject came up in most of the FGDs. The research team documented some of the roles the women played.

Instigators/Enablers

In the 36 rounds of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) held around the topic of Electoral Violence in Ghana, one of the roles women were found to play in the violence was as instigators of violence. They usually do this by engaging in the use of abusive language or verbal assaults. In all of the FGDs the use of insulting language by some actors including women came up. The women use the abusive language on opponents until one gets angry and strikes, then the other goes to call her brothers and other supporters who come to attack and eventually degenerate into larger conflicts. A respondent at one of the FGDs remarked;

“We have some ladies who insult political opponents till it degenerates into a fight between the two main political parties here. We normally call such ladies the ‘Kyeiwaas’. They are bold, aggressive and loud mouthed.” – Respondent

The women also, for fear of being ridiculed by their peers for having so called ‘weak’ men, push their men to join in the fights. It came up in the discussions that some women gather stones for the men to throw at their opponents. Others also made it a point to call out their men to join in the violence for fear of being ridiculed.;

“When the fight starts, women run to call their men to come and join in. If your man does not join in, the other ladies will laugh at you that you’re married to a coward” – Respondent.

There was also the trend where women whose family members or relations were vigilantes seemed to wield power in the towns and were almost untouchable;

“Some of the mothers whose wards are involved in political violence can sometimes dare other people by telling them; Do you know whose mother I am? If you are not careful I will make my son discipline you” – Respondent

This forced other women to push their male relations into joining vigilante groups so they could also enjoy the power that came with it.

Informants

It also came to light that the women served as informants for the various political party-affiliated vigilante groups. This aided the vigilante groups to avoid arrest from the state security agencies who seek to arrest these vigilantes when they commit an offense. Some of the vigilantes intentionally offer their sisters or girlfriends to the security personnel whilst they pose as brothers of those girls, in order for the girls to relay information to them about impending security operations to cause their arrest.

“When the security people want to carry out an operation, they tell the ladies “tell your brothers that we are going to do an operation against them”. The girls give us this information and we run away even before the operation is started” – Respondent

The women also attend political party rallies and meetings to spy. They take note of townsfolk who have attended the meetings and report them to the vigilante groups as being members of the other political party. The vigilantes then attack the such townsfolk.

“Some of the ladies in Sankore act as informants for their respective political parties. They go to their opponents’ campaigns and look at the attendees just to go back to report to their fellow party members. Based on this information, opponents are sometime attacked.” – Respondent.

It is the researchers’ position that any efforts aimed at combating electoral violence and vigilantism should include women, as they play important roles in sustaining vigilantism and violence.

APPENDIX 2

Typology and Formation of Political Vigilante Groups

In a series of about 36 rounds of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) held in 5 randomly selected electoral violence hotspots, researchers got a deeper meaning into the creation of vigilante groups, and this also influences the typology of those groups. Three main types of vigilante groups based on how they are formed emerged from the study and includes:

- Social Group
- Party Boys
- Business Model

Social Group

This type of vigilante group starts off as a social group. They may be a group of boys who train in the same gym or stay in the same area who form a self-help group (popular in sub-urban and rural area). Thus they do not start off as a vigilante group, but become a vigilante group when they are contacted by an influential persons in political parties, and carry out activities in defense of that influential person or his political party's interest. After this job is done, they revert to their social grouping. Usually this influential person is related to a member by blood or marriage, or even stays in the same area with them. Their activities may also be localized and would hardly be exported outside the locality they live in.

Party Boys

This type of vigilante group is intentionally created by political party figure heads from the young persons within their ranks. Thus membership is restricted purely to members of the same political party. In some areas they are often referred to as "party foot soldiers". They are easily accessible by the political parties and are used to promote or protect party interest in the particular electoral areas in which they are formed. They may or may not be given names, but people easily identify these groups as belonging to one political party or the other.

Business Model

This type of vigilante group exist mainly in the urban areas. They are not started by political party agents or community members. They are started as a 'business venture' by a leader and their services are offered to the highest bidder. Their activities are not confined to a single area as they can be hired to do jobs in other parts of the country. Members of this model of vigilantes also serve as bodyguards to influential persons, act as land guards during the political off-season, or in extreme cases indulge in criminal vices. It was purported that some of these persons end up being recruited in the security services as rewards for their services. In one particular FGD, it was revealed that membership into these groups cost as much as GHS 1,200 or US\$240.

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