



ONE-YEAR ASSESSMENT OF THE MAHAMA ADMINISTRATION

The Second Coming



INTRODUCTION

On January 7, 2025, President John Dramani Mahama was sworn into office for a second term, following a significant electoral endorsement of over 56% and the attainment of a two-thirds parliamentary supermajority by the National Democratic Congress (NDC). This “Second Coming” was framed by a core mandate: the “Ghana Reset Agenda,” which promised a fundamental shift in the nation’s governance, economic, and ethical frameworks.

The “Reset” Context and Inherited Landscape

The Mahama administration assumed power against a backdrop of deep-seated public dissatisfaction and systemic challenges. The previous administration left a legacy in which 82% of Ghanaians perceived government anti-corruption efforts as “fairly” or “very” bad, while the nation’s Corruption Perceptions Index had stagnated at a decade-low score of 42. Economically, the country was emerging from a severe 2022–2024 crisis characterized by high inflation, exchange rate volatility, and a distressed debt position. Regionally, the administration inherited a “coup belt” across West Africa and amid intensifying security pressures from Sahelian extremism.

Priority Areas and Assessment Scope

In his inaugural address, President Mahama outlined four pillars for the “Reset” mandate:

1. Economic restoration and stabilization.
2. Improvement of the business and investment environment.
3. Constitutional and governance reform.
4. Accountability and the fight against corruption.

This report examines these priorities across six thematic areas:

1. Democracy, Governance, Human Rights and the Rule of Law;
2. Anti-Corruption and Accountability;
3. Economy and Jobs;
4. Environment and Social Development;
5. Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration; and
6. Defence, Security and Peacebuilding

Objectives

This assessment, authored by the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), evaluates the administration's performance during its inaugural year (January 7, 2025 – January 7, 2026) to provide an independent, evidence-based contribution to public discourse.

The specific objectives of this First-Year Assessment are to:

1. Present and launch CDD-Ghana's First-Year Assessment Report on the John Mahama II administration, highlighting key findings, trends, and evidence across the six thematic areas;
2. Provide an independent, non-partisan assessment of the administration's performance, policy coherence, and early outcomes in relation to democratic governance and development commitments;
3. Facilitate informed public dialogue among policymakers, civil society, academia, the media, and citizens on areas of progress, stagnation, and concern; and
4. Generate practical recommendations and reform pathways aimed at strengthening institutions, accountability, inclusive governance, and policy effectiveness going into the remainder of the administration's term.

This assessment evaluates the first year of the Mahama II administration through the lens of the six specific thematic areas stated above. By focusing on these distinct sectors, the report provides an independent, evidence-based analysis of institutional performance and governance outcomes. This thematic approach enables a detailed review of how the administration's "Reset" initiatives have been operationalized across Ghana's diverse national development landscape.

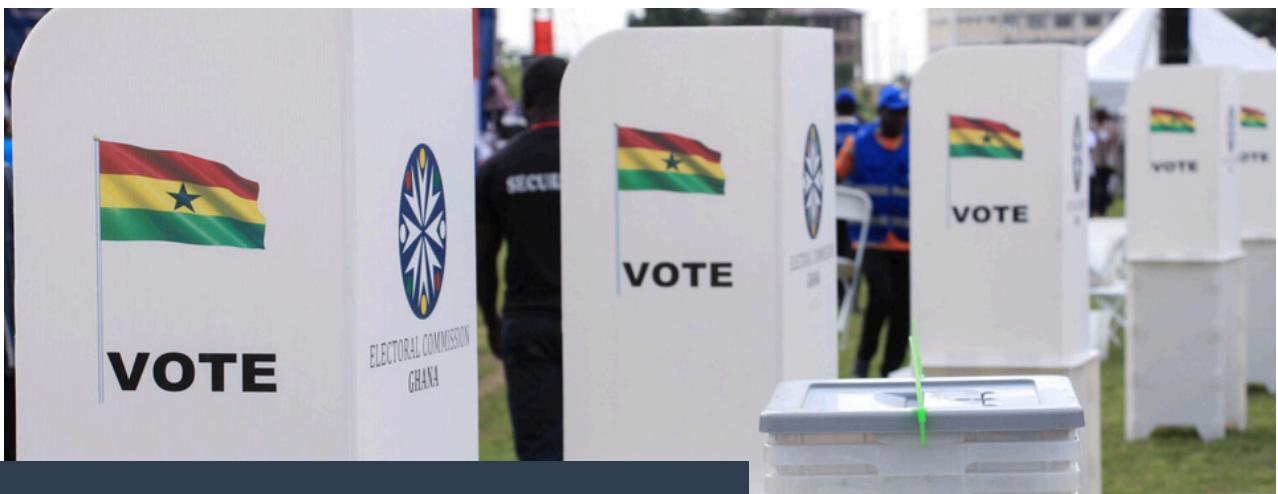
This report will be presented to stakeholders at a Roundtable Discussion scheduled for Thursday, 19 February 2026. Feedback and insights from the discussions will inform revisions to the document, after which the final version will be published on CDD-Ghana's website and social media pages.



DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Assessors:

Dr. Kojo Pumpuni Asante, Professor John Osae-Kwapong,
Paul Osei Kuffour, Dr. Michael Augustus Akagbor



INTRODUCTION

Before President Mahama assumed office in 2025, Ghana's democratic landscape was defined by historic trust deficits, with Afrobarometer data showing that only 28% of citizens trusted the presidency while 40% endorsed military intervention if elected leaders abused power. This era was characterized by a deteriorating quality of democracy and the perceived politicization of independent institutions such as the Judiciary and the Electoral Commission (EC). The handover itself was marred by "Transition Blues," involving partisan vigilante violence, notably the storming of Ghana Gas, and disputes over "last-minute" public service appointments that created significant governance gaps. These systemic challenges underscored the urgent need for a "reset" to restore public confidence in the state's architecture.

In response, the administration's first year focused on reconfiguring Checks and Balances, though this was met with mixed results as an unprecedented NDC two-thirds majority in Parliament frequently used certificates of urgency to fast-track impactful legislation, often bypassing public participation. The Judiciary faced significant upheaval following the unprecedented removal of the Chief Justice, an action that, while following legal procedures, triggered accusations of interference and partisan acrimony. These tensions regarding Horizontal Accountability persist as the Electoral Commission (EC) faces petitions to remove its chair. Furthermore, while the Fourth Estate and Civil Society remain active watchdogs, the Human Rights assessment remains "mixed," with progressive rhetoric undercut by documented police brutality and the detention of activists for "false news". Despite these hurdles, a major effort to empower Local Government is underway, highlighted by the work of a new Constitution Review Committee and a landmark increase in direct District Assemblies Common Fund (DCAF) disbursements to 80%.

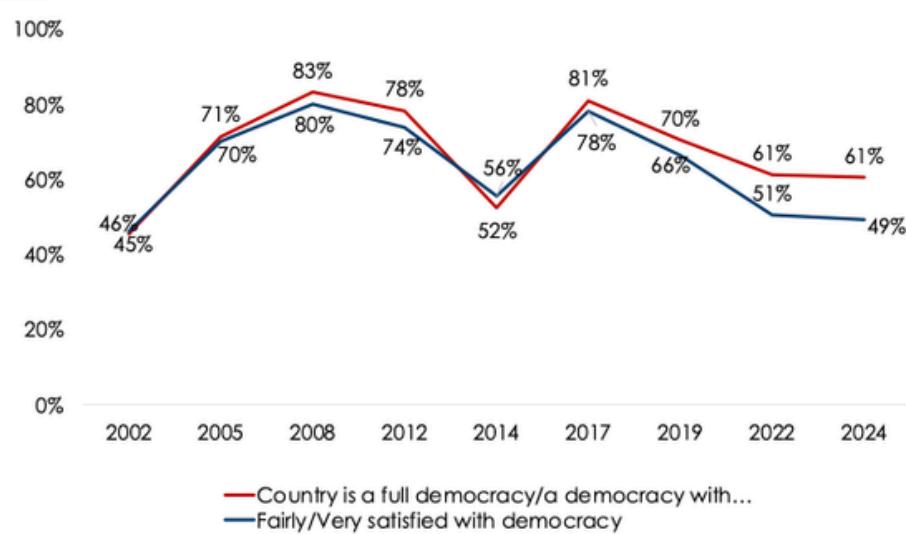
THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY

1.0 Introduction

Ghanaians have made their peace with democracy as the preferred form of government. This sentiment is expressed clearly over ten rounds (1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2022, 2024) of the Afrobarometer survey. Even in years (2014, 2019, 2020) where satisfaction with democracy has declined significantly by more than ten percentage points in comparison to the previous survey years, Ghanaians have generally remained supportive of democracy.

The John Mahama Administration came into office at a time when the quality of Ghana's democracy as reflected in several good governance indices and surveys (Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Corruption Perception Index, Afrobarometer Survey, Civicus, etc.) pointed to a democracy facing major challenges. The Round 10 Afrobarometer report on Ghana shows that while support for democracy has fluctuated over the years, satisfaction with democracy has declined by 31 percentage points since 2017.

Extent of and satisfaction with democracy | Ghana | 2002-2024



Respondents were asked:

In your opinion, how much of a democracy is Ghana today?

Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Ghana?

In addition, democracy in the West African sub-region faced a turbulent time, with successful (Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso) and unsuccessful (Benin) coups. Against this backdrop, it became imperative for the new administration to take measures to strengthen the quality of the country's democratic architecture and forestall any further deterioration in its quality.

It takes more than a year for the quality of a country's democracy to improve, especially if the challenges are systemic. This session, therefore, frames the assessment of JDM@1 guided by the following key question – what do the initial signals tell us about the quality of democracy? It makes no comparison with the past but examines whether the initial signals hold potential for improving the quality of the country's democracy.

2.0 Assessment

The good news is that the President has, from the day of his inauguration, been sending the right signals about the threats to Ghana's democracy. In his inauguration speech, he noted that Ghanaians are dissatisfied with the quality of governance and that if democracy is superior to other forms of governance, then it must improve the lives of Ghanaians. He has persisted with this message at a number of high-profile events, including the 13th African Union High-Level Dialogue on Democracy, Human Rights, Justice, Peace and Security, held in Accra. President Mahama argued that 'Democracy must not just be institutional but also Relational'. In essence, the people must feel its effects in their lives. The best example of the President's signalling of the good governance imperative is his warning to himself and his party that, if he fails to reset Ghana, it could lead to civil unrest, as young people would not forgive him. He made this statement at a meeting with the leadership of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT)¹¹. In this respect, the publication of a code of conduct to regulate the behaviour of his appointees, the open-door policy to receiving feedback from citizens on the actions of his administration, and the willingness to make a U-turn on government policy direction are all positive. Key examples include the reversals on the Lithium agreement and the decision to abrogate the Strategic Mobilisation Limited (SML) contracts.

The fulfillment of the NDC's promise to pursue Constitutional Reform is further testament to positive signalling on restoring citizens' faith in democracy. The composition of the Committee nurtured public confidence and enthusiasm for the reforms. The decision to publish the summary of the recommendations upon receiving it enhanced the President's commitment to transparency and consensus-building.

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MyRqwNbE5U>

However, subsequent statements to the effect that the government may issue a 'position paper' have raised concerns about the President's signalling around the national project. Ultimately, the next round of the Afrobarometer survey will indicate if the President's posture and actions are affecting the attitudes of Ghanaians, particularly the youth, towards the democracy project.

A key indicator of the President and government's response to the decline in the quality of governance is to rebuild the relationship with and trust of the Media and Civil Society. The media continues to play its watchdog role, regularly reporting on happenings in government. The overall environment freely enables the media to do its work. This is not to say there have not been incidents that have raised concerns about journalists' safety.

The NDC government, in its first year, has continued with the government accountability mechanisms established under the Akufo-Addo regime, where Ministers regularly made themselves available to brief media and other stakeholders on ongoing work in their various ministries under the President's Information Minister. The government has remained open and engaged with the media both offline and online. Two main challenges remain with media relations. First is the now persistent challenge of violence against journalists. The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) has raised concerns for many years, and the incidents continue to occur. In July of 2025, Carlos Calony was assaulted by men in Army fatigue when he went to cover the demolition of the McDan Warehouse at Spintex^[2]. As the GJA recently reported, the results of the Ghana Armed Forces' probe remain unknown. This, unfortunately, signals to the public that some sections of society are above the law and breeds impunity. It is important to note that the Afrobarometer, in its 2024 flagship report, identifies flawed elections and inequality before the law as two of the main drivers of declining support for and satisfaction with democracy. The second challenge with the media is the criminalisation of speech online, which has led to the arrest and incarceration of some individuals whose speech was deemed to have breached the law. An example was the arrest of Wendel Yeboah of Democracy Hub, who alleged that three Regional Ministers were involved in 'Galamsey' activities^[3]. The Ministers petitioned the Ghana Police, and he was arrested. In 2001, Ghana repealed criminal libel laws. However, it appears that there is a strong appetite for the government to bring it back. The content of the current Ministry of Communication Hate and Disinformation Bill reflects the government's intentions and actions. It is accepted that the digital space presents both opportunities and threats.

[2] <https://mfwa.org/issues-in-focus/mfwa-strongly-condemns-assault-on-joynews-journalists/>

[3] myjoyonline.com/cid-arrests-suspect-after-regional-ministers-petition-police-over-alleged-false-galamsey-claims/

Ghana must draw on its own history, culture, constitutional and international commitments to foster the right balance going forward in the governance of the digital space. Ghana must hasten slowly in the effort to regulate the digital space.



The President's active engagement with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) has continued since he assumed office. President Mahama engaged actively with CSOs for the entire period while out of office from 2018 to 2024. Civil Society was invited to serve on a number of working groups developing actions and proposals for the consideration of the government. Think Tanks like the Africa Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), Education Watch Africa (EduWatch), Africa Center for Energy Policy (ACEP), IMANI Africa, CDD-Ghana, Transparency International, Ghana, Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), and the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) have all played a leading role in several forums and committees of government. Suffice it to say that this engagement with CSOs is not novel.

In the first two years of the Akufo-Addo regime, Civil Society held almost quarterly meetings with the Presidency until the relationship broke down when the community was perceived as overly critical of the government.

The relationship between governments and organised civil society is not just a democracy imperative but also a development. As part of the government's accountability obligations, sustained engagement with organised citizens and the general public enables a structured feedback mechanism, thereby promoting transparency, participation, and the legitimacy of the government and its actions.

Overall, time is the key factor required to address all quality issues in Ghana's democracy. While the initial signals point in the right direction, there remain critical challenges that must be addressed.

MANAGING POLITICAL TRANSITION

1.0 Introduction

In the Fourth Republic, presidential and state transitions, particularly from an NPP to NDC government or vice versa have been characterized by violence, a run on public installation by marauding groups of party affiliated vigilantes, mass dismissals in public services, the pursuit of post-regime accountability and vestiges of post-election violence.

2.0 Assessment

The 2025 presidential and state transitions were not different from previous ones. Contestation and violence surrounding the declaration of parliamentary results in several constituencies, including the destruction of results sheets, property of EC, assault of poll workers, and an ineffective police containment strategy, created an atmosphere of fear and chaos in the run-up to the inauguration of President Mahama.^[4]

[4] <https://mfwa.org/issues-in-focus/mfwa-strongly-condemns-assault-on-joynews-journalists/>

Typical of the few weeks of transition, marauding groups of party-affiliated vigilantes illegally entered public installations in an effort to illegally remove NPP-appointed public officers or forcefully secure employment, supposedly promised by the incoming party. An egregious example is the storming of the Ghana Gas offices on 10th December 2024 by NDC supporters^[5]. It took a combined team of police and soldiers firing warning shots to disperse the group. These activities continued, and one week after President Mahama was sworn in, similar assaults on public institutions persisted. On 15th January 2025^[6], CDD-Ghana issued a statement calling on the new government and the NDC party to disband these groups and allow the police to maintain law and order. Typical of the history of presidential transitions, almost no one has been held accountable for clearly criminal acts.

Presidential and state transition in the Fourth Republic has also been plagued by constitutional and legal gaps that have created damaging governance gaps. Unfortunately, the passage of the Presidential (Transitions) Act 2012 (Act 845) has failed to cure these gaps. Act 845 was expected to sanitize and order the transition process from one party to another. In a way, it achieved the goal of an ordered process at the top of the governance structure, but less so at the middle and at the bottom. Since 2020, the public has witnessed the swift setting up of presidential transition teams and a cordial engagement between the outgoing and incoming governments. However, the application of the Act has not sufficiently addressed the transition of the state or even the Presidency. Apart from the regular complaints about inadequate handing over of notes, the biggest issue is with last-minute actions taken by the outgoing governments that place undue financial obligations on the incoming government. In the 2025 transition, the contention was about the handling of payments and recruitment in the transition period^[7].

As a result, the incoming government revoked what was termed 'last-minute appointments' (appointments made after 7th January 2025) to the public service. This substantively affected a large number of unemployed youth. Other state transition issues concern the directive to Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) to hand over to District Coordinating Directors upon the incoming President assuming office. Similar directives were issued for Boards and CEOs of public corporations. Both mass dismissals of political and non-political appointees created significant governance gaps in the administration of the state.

[5] <https://mfwa.org/issues-in-focus/mfwa-strongly-condemns-assault-on-joynews-journalists/>

[6] <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1371884/cdd-ghana-condemns-post-election-hooliganism-vand.html>

[7] <https://mfwa.org/issues-in-focus/mfwa-strongly-condemns-assault-on-joynews-journalists/>

The removal of MMDCEs, without clear protocols for managing the institutions they chair at the local government level, creates significant challenges. A typical example is the management of District Security Councils. Similarly, the removal of CEOs and Boards of public corporations essentially halted the operations of even purely commercial entities, sometimes with contractual implications. The long replacement processes compound the problem. In some cases, replacing a board or CEO, or appointing an MMDCE, can take six months or a year.

Lastly, another transition gap is the appointment of key officers under the Presidential Office Act, 1993 (Act 463). Section 4 (1) requires the appointment of presidential staff to be done in consultation with the Council of State. Often, incoming Presidents prefer to install their own Council of State to advise the President, meaning all presidential staffers are interim until the long process of establishing the Council of State is completed.

The recommendations of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) offer a solution to the challenges identified earlier. It specifically proposes an amendment to Chapter Eight of the Constitution to restrict certain acts during the transition period, including appointments, contracts or commitments, transactions, or legislation under a certificate of urgency. It solves the sequencing problem for the appointment of presidential staffers by proposing a six-year, fixed-term appointment that will not be coterminous with a sitting President's term. The newly organized Council of State will have very few political appointees. In addition to the CRC proposal, stakeholders must revise the Presidential (Transaction) Act of 2012 to provide substantially for transitions beyond the presidency to cover public and civil service and local government. The CRC already has proposals to manage State Enterprises by the State Interest and Governance Authority (SIGA).

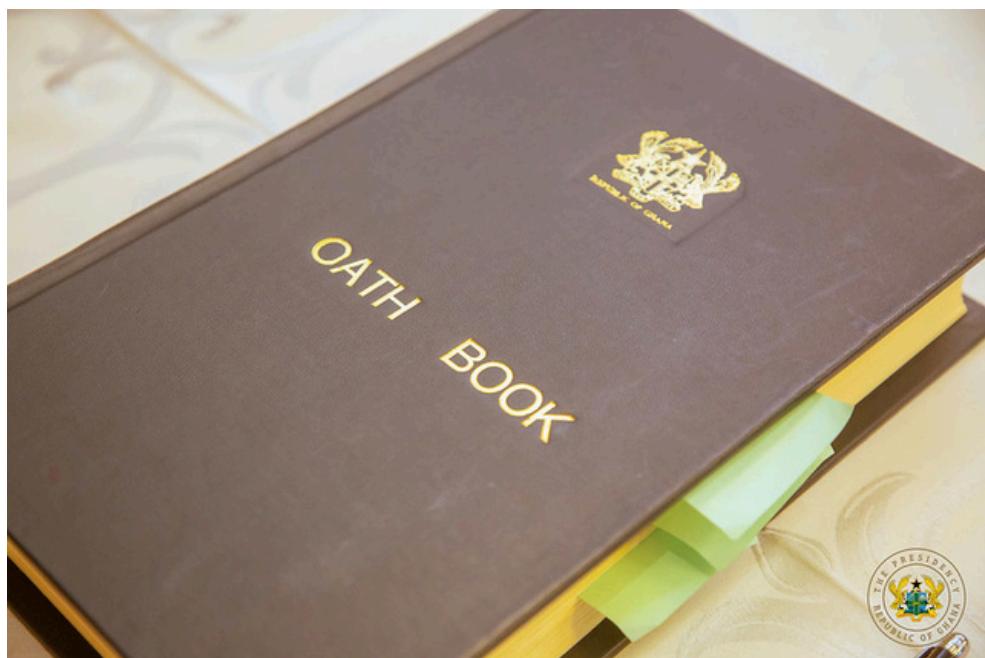
PERFORMANCE ON GOOD GOVERNANCE PRIORITIES

1.0 Introduction

As part of the President's interventions to restore trust in government and institutions, the NDC committed to reducing the size and cost of government, setting up a governance council, consolidating codes of practice and reviewing the framework for political financing. This section assesses how the John Mahama government tackled these issues and how successful they have been.

2.0 Assessment

President Mahama and the NDC's commitment to reduce the size of government by capping the appointment of ministers and deputies to 60 was fulfilled. This required the closure of some ministries, the merger of others, and the renaming of others. This is a welcome development after years of advocacy on the cost of Ghana's oversized Executive and the need to significantly reduce the cost of governing. The NDC also committed to significantly reducing the number of staffers appointed to the presidency, which notoriously reached over 1000 in 2023^[8]. In March 2025, the President indicated that he had appointed 26 staff members and 4 directors^[9]. The President is expected to report to Parliament by March 2026 on the number of staff and other personnel working at the Presidency. The report will provide the nation with a clearer sense of how well the President is fulfilling the promise to reduce the size and cost of government. So far, the numbers signify substantial improvement.



However, the process of amalgamating ministries created some functional and institutional weaknesses. In the case of the Ministry of Information, which was brought under the control of a single government spokesperson, the positive side is that it has centralized government and presidential communication. The downside is that it has diminished the relevance and effectiveness of key departments, including the Information Services Department and the Right to Information Unit.

[8] <https://mfwa.org/issues-in-focus/mfwa-strongly-condemns-assault-on-joynews-journalists/>

[9] <https://citinewsroom.com/2025/03/mahama-has-appointed-only-30-presidential-staffers-not-100-kwakye-ofosu/>

It is also observed that the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) is largely sidelined in its role as the public recorder and archivist of the President's official duties in favor of private media brands. The problem we will face in the future is the lack of publicly accessible archival records from the President's time in office. The Presidency should reflect seriously on these institutional lapses for the sake of posterity.

Another area of cost arises from the harmful decisions of various governments to discontinue projects started by a previous government. A large part of this anti-development and pro-partisan tendency is to avoid giving credit to an opponent at the expense of prudent management of the country's resources. Similar concerns were raised in the first year of President Mahama's government, and several assurances were given that the government is committed to continuing projects of the previous regime, with the usual caveats about accountability. Examples of such projects of continuity are the Ofankor-Nsawam road, which was added to the 'Big Push' infrastructure projects^[10]

The Education Minister, Haruna Iddrisu, has also affirmed the government's commitment to continuing projects^[11]. This posture should be encouraged to ensure prudent resource management.

A major challenge in the second term of the Akufo-Addo regime was the poor management of the policy-making process. A symbol of that governance gap was the E-Levy. Despite palpable opposition by citizens to the government's decision to levy electronic transfers, various actions were taken to force through the measure. The NDC identified poor engagement with civil society, citizens, and organized labour as a deficit to be corrected. The governance of the policy-making process in the first year has been mixed. While the government and the President have signaled an open-door policy for policymaking, coordination still leaves much to be desired.

There have been a number of instances of Ministers and other officials articulating major policy decisions not discussed in Cabinet. Two examples showcase the challenge: the Education Minister's initial pronouncement of the use of mother tongue for instruction at the basic school level and the initiative of the Majority Leader and the Chief Whip to table a Private Members' Bill to repeal the OSP Act. The fact that the Cabinet Secretary had to issue a directive to Cabinet members not to make policy pronouncements unless discussed by the Cabinet is telling^[12].

[10] <https://presidency.gov.gh/govt-clears-pre-2025-arrears-on-ofankor-nsawam-road-and-holds-contractor-to-june-2026-completion-date/>

[11] <https://citinewsroom.com/2025/11/mahama-will-continue-viable-projects-from-past-govt-education-minister/>

[12] <https://citinewsroom.com/2025/10/cabinet-directs-ministers-to-seek-approval-before-announcing-policies/>

The President's legislative reform agenda is ambitious but needed, and it requires a well-coordinated approach that always places the ultimate beneficiary, the Ghanaian people, at the center of these decisions. If that is done, citizens will participate fully, and policies and laws will be embraced by the people.

Lastly, a lot of controversy was generated in the application of law in pre-trial detention and the granting of bail by the police and other investigation bodies. Several suspects, mostly former appointees of the Akufo-Addo regime, felt the EOCO, in particular, was abusing the exercise of their discretion to detain a suspect and set bail conditions. This became a saga in the case of the arrest and detention of the NPP Ashanti Regional Chairman, Mr. Bernard Antwi Boasiako, popularly known as Chairman Wontumi^[13]. Even though the current laws allow for decisions of investigative bodies to be contested in court, it still leaves the process open to abuse. Again, the CRC proposals provide a solution to the problem, which should be considered carefully. The CRC recommends, among other things, that Parliament pass a law to govern arrest, bail, pretrial detention, and remand, primarily to set clear timelines and grounds for exercising such powers under the law. It goes further to require a similar framework for prosecutions.

In respect of the Governance Advisory Council (GAC) to monitor and advise the government on critical issues of human rights, corruption, and governance, the President engaged civil society and other stakeholders to discuss the proposal^[14]. The general sentiment from civil society was that the government needed to think through the objectives clearly to avoid redundancy and duplication with existing bodies like the Council of State and the Peace Council^[15]. The engagement with the President further affirmed the President's concern about tackling protracted governance issues across regimes through a permanent institution. Before Parliament rose in 2025, it was reported that the GAC bill had been laid before Parliament^[16]. If it passes, it will need to determine what role the GAC will play in improving the quality of governance in Ghana.

The government is yet to state formally how it wishes to approach the process of reviewing the political financing framework. The CRC has provided an elaborate set of proposals to deal with internal party democracy, party and campaign financing, and vote buying. CDD-Ghana has also engaged the government through the Attorney General on a comprehensive legislation to regulate political financing. A draft model legislation has been shared with the Attorney General. It is expected that the government will consider these proposals and opportunities to finally address the problem of monetisation of politics.

[13] <https://www.myjoyonline.com/wontumi-granted-gh%2A250m-bail-by-eoco/>

[14] <https://presidency.gov.gh/mahama-meets-csos-on-the-establishment-of-a-governance-advisory-council/>

[15] [Mahama engages CSOs on Governance Advisory Council to deepen accountability - MyJoyOnline](https://www.myjoyonline.com/mahama-engages-csos-on-governance-advisory-council-to-deepen-accountability/)

[16] <https://x.com/odekro/status/1996287642246484341>

PROMOTING CHECKS AND BALANCES

1.0 Introduction

Checks and balances amongst the three main branches of government (Executive, Legislature and Judiciary) are essential for any effective democracy. Earlier the aspects of the Executive's role were assessed. This section assesses mainly the legislature and judiciary and a small aspect of the Electoral Commission which is among the class of institutions of executive restraint.

2.0 Assessment

Parliament in 2025

Ghanaians had high expectations for the 2021 'Hung' Parliament, which produced the same number of seats for the NPP and the NDC. However, the verdict of Ghanaians after two years of experimentation was both positive and negative. In the Round 9 Afrobarometer survey results, 46% of adult Ghanaians said the 'hung' Parliament made MPs more effective in scrutinizing Executive expenditure, but only 39% thought MPs were effective in passing laws or cooperating with parties on the opposite side. Despite the mixed feelings of Ghanaians of the 8th Parliament, the leadership has to be commended for adopting a very progressive Standing Orders that have increased the number of important committees chaired by the opposition to 14 (representing almost a third of all committees), including the Government Assurances, Budget, Judiciary, and Public Accounts Committees.

In the 2024 election, Ghanaian voters surprised the nation and produced a two-thirds majority in Parliament for the first time in the 4th Republic, excluding the transitional 1992 elections boycotted by the NPP. Concerns were raised as to whether the NDC was going to use its majority in Parliament to bully the minority party. Parliament's very public role was triggered when the President sent his ministerial nominees to Parliament for vetting. During the vetting, the usual weaknesses of Parliament during vetting reared their ugly head again. Parliament failed to reform its vetting process even though it attempted to make some tweaks to allow for Members with subject matter expertise to support the Appointments Committee.

At the end, the process was still dominated by the leadership of the Appointments Committee, and at times form took over substance. A strange example was the decision not to ask any questions of the Greater Accra Regional Minister-designate^[17].

The rationale later presented by leaders of the Committee was not persuasive^[18]. Ghanaians also witnessed the ugly scenes of fighting and destruction of public property during the vetting of Hon. Okudzeto Ablakwa (Foreign Affairs Minister Designate) and Kwabena Mintah Akandoh (Health Minister Designate)^[19]. The Speaker set up a Committee to investigate the matter, and a report was laid, but a year down the line, it is yet to be discussed and action taken.

The concerns about the abuse of the NDC Parliamentary Majority manifested in the abuse of the use of certificates of urgency to fast-track bills in Parliament. Some important bills were passed through this process, and some were attempted. These include the Energy Sector Levy Bill, which introduced a GHC 1 per litre on petroleum products, the Road Traffic Bill (Amendment) to regulate Okada, praya, and quadracycles, and the Virtual Assets Service Providers Bill to regulate cryptocurrency and digital asset trading.

These pieces of legislation will impact the public in many significant ways and were rushed through Parliament^[20]. CDD-Ghana, Edu-Watch, and other CSOs had to intervene to stop the Ghana Scholarship Authority Bill from being rushed through Parliament. Citizen participation in policymaking throughout the process, from the Executive to the Legislature, is a bedrock of any democracy. These actions fall well short of the checks and balances needed to protect the public from Executive abuse. In this regard, it is important to support the CRC proposals that require amendments to Chapter 10 of the Constitution to guarantee a right to public participation in legislative processes, and other proposals to clarify the use of certificates of urgency.

The Judiciary in 2025

As noted earlier, the Judiciary, like many key institutions of democratic governance, was experiencing trust deficits according to the 2024 Afrobarometer. The NDC had intensified its criticism of the Judiciary throughout the 2024 election year and even indicated that it was unlikely to resort to the courts if it were to lose the election^[21].

[17] <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/linda-akweley-ocloo-greater-accra-minister-designate-completes-vetting-without-questions.html>

[18] <https://www.gbcghanaonline.com/news/politics/minority-leader-3/2025/>

[19] <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Fight-in-Parliament-over-Okudzeto-Ablakwa-Akandoh-s-Vetting-What-we-know-so-far-1969622>

[20] <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Parliament-suspends-consideration-of-Scholarships-Authority-Bill-pending-CSOs-consultation-1992177>

[21] <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1350144/election-2024-omane-boamah-explains-mahamas-deci.html>

The party, in its manifesto, had flagged as a problem what they perceive to be the appointment of known NPP party activists to the bench.

At the end of March 2025, the President informed the public that he had notified the then Chief Justice Gertrude Torkonoo of petitions seeking her removal and that he had also triggered the role of the Council of State to determine a *prima facie* case against her. These actions had triggered Article 146 of the Constitution, 1992, on the removal of the Chief Justice. The processes that followed dominated the public discourse on the lawfulness of the President's actions. On 1st September, the President announced the removal of the Chief Justice following a recommendation of the Committee set up to investigate allegations made against her in the petitions^[22].

The Chief Justice's removal is an unprecedented development in the 4th Republic and has created general unease about the robustness of the safeguards in place to protect the heads of independent governance institutions.

In April 2025, CDD-Ghana published a blog post arguing for a different approach to addressing the perceived lack of independence of the Judiciary and allegations of abuse of discretionary power. It argued that the root cause of the problem with the judiciary lies in its governance architecture.^[23]



The expansive administrative powers given to the Chief Justice to empanel judges, transfer, and support the promotion of Judges can easily be abused without the appropriate fetters. It called for an approach that regulated these powers rather than throwing the baby out with the bathwater. The blog also affirmed the actions of the President as consistent with the letter of the law. However, the process also provided opportunities for the Committee and President to promote transparency in such an unprecedented action by releasing the report of the Committee, but this was not taken, leading CDD-Ghana to call for the release of the report.

[22] <https://presidency.gov.gh/chief-justice-gertrude-torkonoo-removed-from-office/>

[23] <https://cddgh.org/2025/04/14/governance-roots-of-the-cj-petition/>

Legally, there are lingering fairness questions that require reform. Justice Torkonoo had raised human rights and natural justice issues during the process. The Supreme Court has chosen the easier route and declared the process non-justiciable during its application. However, given the finality of the Art. 146 procedure, the accused has no remedy once the process is completed. The CRC has made very substantive proposals on the removal and appointment procedures for the Judiciary that will go a long way in addressing some of the deficits.

The removal of a sitting Chief Justice, even though it followed the letter of the law as prescribed in the Constitution, degenerated into accusations of judicial interference along with deep partisan disagreements. The public discourse created an image of two co-equal branches of government at “war” with each other. Although a new Chief Justice has been sworn into office and the partisan acrimony appears to have subsided, the entire process appears to have its transparency deficits that have left the institution vulnerable. The spillover effect was a contentious vetting process, which was eventually boycotted by the minority on the committee, which continued to the floor of the house when the nomination was referred for approval. Independent constitutional bodies serve as an important safeguard of the country’s democracy. The administration must therefore balance the need for accountability with the protection of the bodies whenever actions are being contemplated against them.

New Matters Arising from the 2024 Election Adjudication Process - Short Note

Ghana has performed well since the 2014-2016 electoral reforms in organizing elections on election day. The efficiency of the electoral process is evident in the ease with which voters can cast their votes on election day. Generally, by 4 pm, most polling stations have no voters in the queue. The remaining challenge concerns the management of results and the declaration process.

The 2024 elections, however, have created additional challenges for the judicial resolution of parliamentary election petitions. In essence, it raises questions as to where the EC mandate ends and the courts begin. At what point can the EC vitiate a result if tainted by fraud or corruption? To what extent does corruption constitute a sufficient ground for cancelling a result? These questions must be answered clearly before they create further problems for election integrity. CDD-Ghana and CODEO have proposed to the Judiciary to set clear timelines for adjudicating parliamentary petitions. This work will need to be enhanced to examine the questions about the role of courts in the electoral process. The right of every adult to register to vote is the cornerstone of a democracy. Any legal arrangement that places the determination of the people’s choice in the hands of the court can undermine the very foundations of democracy.

HUMAN RIGHTS

1.0 Introduction

Undoubtedly, human rights and their enjoyment by every person (under Chapter 5 and articles of the 1992 Constitution) form the foundation upon which Ghana's democratic enterprise rests. A cardinal point that President Mahama had reiterated during the campaign season. Additionally, the National Democratic 2024 manifesto highlighted human rights violations and the shrinking of civic space as governance failures under the Nana Akufo-Addo administration. In that regard, a periodic assessment is warranted to ensure that the freedoms and liberties Ghanaians enjoy are not compromised by government actions as citizens exercise those rights. Drawing on reporting from civil society, international, and national sources, this section provides a balanced overview of the human rights situation in Ghana during President John Mahama's first year in office (2025).

2.0 Assessment

Policy and Legal Reform Agenda – Moderately Positive Assessment

Push for Judicial Reform and Human Rights Protection: President Mahama, in his first year, reiterated his commitment and that of his government to upholding and protecting the human rights bona fides of the country through his utterances and pronouncements during the year, indicating the 'new' direction he seeks to pursue. He has explicitly called on the judiciary to strengthen its protection of human rights and civil liberties to ensure that every Ghanaian's rights are upheld. Key highlights of this judicial reform include expediting the legal process to ensure timely resolution, making justice accessible and affordable, and promoting stronger collaboration between the courts and civil society^[24].

Press Freedom & Freedom of Expression – Mixed Assessment

Public Commitment to Press Freedom: Riding on the goodwill endorsement of Ghanaians during the elections, President Mahama and his government very early affirmed their commitment and support for press freedom and freedom of expression by explicitly declaring that the administration did not intend to restrict press freedom and free speech.^[25]

Numerous statements from the president himself and his ministers reflected a public commitment to upholding press freedom as a democratic value. These public statements were buttressed by constructive engagements with media stakeholders^[26]. The Media Foundation for West Africa commended the president for maintaining a culture of open, regular media engagement and deepening the principles of transparency and accountability through these engagements^[27].

The president's public commitment to stakeholder consultation and engagement in response to concerns raised by the GJA and civil society regarding the Cybersecurity (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and the Misinformation and Disinformation Bill is a promising sign of a willingness to collaborate on governance and the protection of rights. Nonetheless, concerns deepened over the declining safety of journalists in Ghana during 2025. Data from the MFWA freedom of expression monitor indicated widespread dissatisfaction with the ongoing attacks on journalists since January 7, 2025, and the ongoing calls on the government to uphold journalists' protections and rights.

A positive institutional action during the first year of the government was the reactivation of the Media Development Fund to support the capacity building, welfare, investigative journalism, and safety training for journalists^[28]. The reactivation of the MDF signalled a renewed commitment to press freedom and to protecting journalists' rights from intimidation and attacks. Although this reactivation of the MDF signalled a commitment from the government, MFWA and media stakeholders have raised concerns and asked the government to publicly disclose the fund's status since the February announcement. Although it is considered a promising initiative with perceived positive outcomes if functional, no disbursements have been reported since its announcement. The lack of clarity and transparency in the Fund's operationalization creates a misleading impression of its authenticity and functionality^[29].

Protection of Civil Liberties and Democratic Space – Mixed Assessment

Ghana continues to be recognized as a democratic and 'free' nation in various international ratings. In its inaugural year, the government openly advocated for participatory rights and inclusive governance that uphold the rule of law and human rights. Civil society thrived and remained actively engaged in pressuring the government on governance concerns.

[26] [President Mahama to host first media encounter of his second term. - The Presidency, Republic of Ghana](#)

[27] [Ghana: MFWA's Perspective on President's Encounter with Media – Media Foundation For West Africa](#)

[28] [Government Reactivates Media Development Fund - Information Services Department](#)

[29] [Disclose status of GH¢1m media fund - Media Foundation tells Ghana gov't - Ghana Business News](#)

The year witnessed Ghanaians exercising their right to protest and demonstrate on issues such as galamsey, without the Police intervening under the Public Order Act to suppress these protests and civic demonstrations^[30]. However, while government rhetoric about protecting civic liberties and democratic space has been strong, the arrest and detention of bloggers and activists under the guise of “false news” dissemination was criticised as a threat to freedom of speech and expression^[31].

At the beginning of his tenure, the president made a bold commitment to initiate a comprehensive RESET of the Ghana Police Service. He emphasized that the key pillars underpinning this transformation would be professionalism, respect for human rights, and accountability. This commitment aimed to restore public trust in law enforcement and ensure that the police operate with integrity and transparency. The president outlined specific strategies, including enhanced training programs for officers, the establishment of independent oversight bodies, and a revamp of internal policies to align with international human rights standards. Through these measures, the administration sought to foster a police force that not only protects citizens but also upholds their rights and dignity, thereby ensuring a safer and more just society for all Ghanaians^[32]. However, the year witnessed documented cases of police brutality and the excessive use of force, especially against journalists, raising concerns about civil liberties, especially the rights to freedom of speech and expression. The Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the MFWA, and Civil Society raised concerns over police treatment of journalists and activists during this period. Although the government affirmed its commitment to human rights in policing, concerns about alleged abuses of the police have civil advocates and rights bodies worried.



Source: VOA

A sore spot in the past year on citizens' rights has to do with the inability of the government to produce a pathway for promoting and protecting the constitutional rights of sexual minorities (LGBTQ+).^[33].

[30] [Ghana: Freedom in the World 2025 Country Report | Freedom House](#)

[31] [MFWA condemns creeping criminalisation of speech in Ghana; calls for urgent reversals](#)

[32] [Professionalism non-negotiable as Mahama calls for reset of Ghana Police Service - MyJoyOnline](#)

[33] [Anti-LGBTQ Bill Returns to Parliament for First Reading – List of Sponsors Revealed – Rightify Ghana](#)

The president has not taken a clear stance on the issue, even though, since winning the election, he has offered contrasting views on the matter, depending on the constituency he's addressing. Parliament's reintroduction of the Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Bill in 2025 as a Private Member's Bill undermines the President's earlier rhetoric on his policy of inclusion and equality of all persons. According to Rightify Ghana, the reintroduction of the Bill has contributed to heightened hostility, discrimination, and rights violations against LGBTQ+ populations in Ghana.

CDD-Ghana has maintained that the Bill, as currently constructed, offends the fundamental rights of Ghanaians in terms of the rights to association, speech, thought, economic rights, fair trial, and many more. More importantly, the failure to cure the unconstitutionality betrays the proclaimed commitment of the proponents and supporters of the bill to the welfare of sexual minorities.

3.0 Conclusion

President Mahama and his government publicly championed press freedom and freedom of expression, while also acknowledging concerns that underscored the need for their responsible use. During the year, President Mahama and his government expressed a commitment to protecting the human rights landscape by progressively engaging with civil society, the media, and other relevant stakeholders. However, persistent challenges to human rights threatened to derail the government's efforts to fully realize the human rights promises made.

Objective indicators and civil society monitoring indicate that, although the president and his administration publicly showcased their commitment to human rights, resulting in a significant improvement in the human rights situation compared to the previous year, civil liberties and freedoms faced considerable strain in 2025. Instances of violations and abuses impeded the full enjoyment of certain rights, particularly freedom of expression, during this period. Consequently, despite some progressive actions and movements toward institutional reforms, especially within the judiciary and police, significant human rights risks and constraints persisted in Ghana during President Mahama's first year in office. Overall, the human rights assessment of this period is mixed.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE & DECENTRALISATION

1.0 Introduction

Ghana's public administration system includes a local government architecture that provides platforms for community participation and inclusion in governance. The policy dates back to 1988 under PNDC Law 207, which established District Assemblies as the highest political, administrative, and executive authorities, aimed at stimulating grassroots participation in development. The 1992 constitution further consolidated local governance under Chapter 20 as an entrenched provision. This section examines the performance of the government on local governance and decentralization in support of the CDD-Ghana's "First-Year Assessment Report" on the John Mahama II administration.

Local Governance has experienced fundamental and systemic challenges despite the modest gains. Postponement of local government elections and the low turnout by voters compared to national elections have undermined local participation. Other challenges include the delay in the disbursement of central government transfers alongside the deductions from the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), weak accountability mechanisms, dysfunctional sub-structures creating a disconnect between the assembly and citizens, lack of effective involvement of chiefs in local governance, and institutional overlaps regarding the failure of some departments and agencies to fully decentralize and devolve powers to local authorities. The latter has been a source of tension between the center and the local, and weakened local-level oversight and coherence in service delivery. Some assemblies are also not economically viable and overdependent on central government transfers, raising questions about legitimacy and rationality in the creation of districts in Ghana.

The mode of election of MMDCEs has been a source of debate and contestation among stakeholders. In 2019, the Government introduced two bills in Parliament to amend Article 243, clause (1) of the 1992 Constitution to change the method of selection of MMDCEs from appointment by the President to direct election by local voters. The second bill also proposed to amend Article 55, clause (3), of the Constitution to open all local government elections, including the election of MMDCEs, to participation by political parties and party-sponsored candidates. As an entrenched provision, the second proposal required a national referendum. The failure to reach a national and bi-partisan consensus on the two bills led to the discontinuation of the constitutional amendment process.

While the CDD-Ghana post-election survey (2021) indicated strong public support for the idea of electing MMDCEs (76%) and on a non-partisan basis (71%), the government stuck to the election of MMDCEs on a party basis.

Another bold attempt at local government reform was the 2012 Constitutional Review Committee, which recommended that Parliament determine specific mechanisms for choosing MMDCEs, which should vary among a Metropolis, a Municipality, or a District. However, the Government white paper opposed these recommendations and proposed an appointment process involving the president, the Public Services Commission, and final approval by the Assembly. The 2024 campaign reignited the debate with the NPP and the NDC renewing their commitment to the election of MMDCEs in their Election 2024 manifestoes, in addition to other complementary reforms.

2.0 The NDC Manifesto Promises on Local Governance – Key Highlights

The government's efforts at strengthening local governance revolve around the key pillars of decentralization: political decentralization, fiscal decentralization, administrative decentralization, and popular participation.

The following are some of the major proposals presented as a social contract with citizens on local governance:

- Upgrade of selected Municipalities and Districts within the first year of coming into office
- Strengthen local level participation and political accountability through the election of MMDCEs on a non-partisan basis by amending articles 243 and 246 (2) of the 1992 Constitution;
- Increase the share of the DACF of total national revenue from 5 percent to 7.5 percent and implore Parliament to review the disbursement formula to ensure fairness and equity;
- Introduce Municipal Bonds to raise revenue and promote public-private partnerships (PPPs) linked to specific development projects of MMDAs;
- Enact and implement the Local Government (District Assemblies Borrowing) Act to allow MMDAs to access resources from the capital market and the private sector for development and municipal services delivery;

- Increase the representation of traditional authorities in the decentralized structures;
- Accelerate the decentralization of departments to the District Assemblies to reduce institutional overlap.

3.0 Assessment

Implementation of the manifesto promises was envisaged for a four-year duration in accordance with the term of the president. Hence, no specific timelines were ascribed to the implementation of the promises. The assessment is therefore based on the level of commitment and political will demonstrated by the government, particularly in setting the foundational policies and programmes required to drive the full implementation of the manifesto promises and policies on local governance.

The major milestones achieved within the assessment period are as follows:

- The government initiated the review of the National Decentralization Policy Strategy (NDPS) for the period 2026-2030. Led by the IMCC, the process facilitated the integration of the manifesto promises and to align it with the government's medium-term strategy on local governance. The plan is also expected to provide clear timelines and concrete actions for the implementation of the proposed strategies and initiatives. That notwithstanding, the review and launch of the draft policy should ordinarily have been completed in the first year (2025) to allow enough time (3 years) for execution of the plan.
- On assumption of office, the president inaugurated the CRC II. The Committee submitted its report to the President within the first year of the government. On local governance, the committee proposed the establishment of an Independent Devolution Commission to oversee and provide technical support for the functions of MMDAs, rationalize the creation and proliferation of districts, elect MMDCEs on a non-partisan basis, enhance the role of chiefs in local governance, and increase the DACF to 10% of national revenues. While these are indicative, the proposals present an ambitious agenda to comprehensively reform local governance and address the systemic challenges and institutional bottlenecks within Ghana's decentralization programme.



- Although the government failed in its promise to increase the share of the DACF of total national revenue from 5 percent to 7.5 percent in the first year of office, some progress was made regarding the decline in the quantum of deductions made by the central government. In a statement to Parliament, the Minister of Finance informed the house that Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) received 80% of the funds earmarked for the DACF, contrary to an average of 40% to 50% previously disbursed directly to the District Assemblies. While this could restore hope for local-level governance in terms of financing and development, the government must strengthen accountability and transparency mechanisms around the fund. Again, the government must show evidence of how the improvement in the transfers impacted development at the local level beyond the numbers.
- The government also organized a National Dialogue on Decentralization and Responsive Governance under the auspices of the IMCC on “Resetting Decentralization for Responsive Local Governance and Effective Service Delivery”. The event contributed towards gathering experts and multi-stakeholder inputs into the draft NDPS and also ensured an inclusive process and approach. The government must publish the report from the deliberations to enhance learning and knowledge on decentralization and local governance in Ghana.

- Again, although the government did not deliver on its promise to upgrade selected Municipalities and Districts within the first year of coming into office, we will advise the government to draw lessons from the CRC report proposal on the need to rationalize the creation and proliferation of districts in Ghana. Research has shown most districts are not viable and sustainable to anchor development and governance through service delivery, oversight and resource mobilization.

4.0 Conclusion

The government's priority for the first year focused largely on political decentralization through the inauguration of the CRC to facilitate legal reforms and improve the efficiency and accountability of local authorities. Secondly, the government focused on a review of the NDPS to provide new policy direction on decentralization and local governance.

Additionally, Governments' decision to transfer 80% of the DACF directly to assemblies is laudable. However, Ghana remains one of the lowest (5%) in Africa regarding the percentage of funds transferred from the Central government to local authorities to support development at the local level. Some countries in the region are doing between 10% to 15% in terms of central government transfer to local authorities.

The NDC promised a "People's Manifesto" for the 2024 elections. Local government reform is critical in achieving this goal and enhancing the sustainability of government programs and interventions at the local level.



ANTI-CORRUPTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Assessors:

William Nyarko; Jacob Tetteh Ahuno; Frederick Asiamah;
Vera Abena Addo



INTRODUCTION

The return of John Dramani Mahama to Ghana's presidency on January 7, 2025, marked a fundamental "Reset" of the nation's governance, economic, and ethical frameworks^[34]. promised by Mahama. This shift came against a troubling backdrop: 82% of Ghanaians said the Nana Akufo-Addo administration was doing "fairly badly" or "very badly" at fighting corruption in government^[35] and Ghana's 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index score dropped from 43 to 42 out of 100, its lowest in half a decade, reflecting stagnant anti-corruption efforts and a perceived culture of impunity^[36]. The Mahama administration inherited an immediate challenge of balancing the public's demand for accountability with the necessity of maintaining macroeconomic stability and constitutional due process. The "Reset" mandate explicitly focused on tackling corruption, restoring fiscal discipline, and creating a culture of accountability through visible legal and administrative actions designed to address vulnerabilities in the state's fiscal and moral architecture^[37].

This anti-corruption and accountability assessment evaluates the first year of the Mahama "Reset" by examining critical areas including the 2024 NDC Manifesto and 120-Day Social Contract, key anti-corruption initiatives such as Operation Recover All Loots (ORAL) the Independent Value for Money Office, the operational autonomy of accountability institutions (OSP, EOCO, Auditor-General, and Judiciary), policy frameworks like the National Ethics and Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NEACAP 2026-2030), constitutional reform recommendations for an Independent Anti-Corruption and Ethics Commission, and emerging gaps in ethical standards and civic space protection.

[34] <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/john-dramani-mahama-sworn-in-as-ghanas-president.html>

[35] Ghanaians' decry widespread corruption, Afrobarometer survey shows – Afrobarometer

[36] <https://tighana.org/assets/Uploads/GII-PRESS-RELEASE-CPI-2024.pdf>

[37] <https://apnews.com/article/ghana-mahama-inauguration-economic-crisis-president-985c317852f35d1ff5d0e8ae07e099d3>

2.0 Assessment

The Anti-Corruption Commitment in the 2024 NDC Manifesto and the 120-day Social Contract

The NDC 2024 anti-corruption agenda was articulated through two principal instruments: the 2024 NDC Manifesto and the 120-Day Social Contract. The manifesto, particularly Chapter Six titled Restoring Good Governance and Combating Corruption, situates corruption as a systemic governance failure linked to state capture, abuse of office, weak oversight, and erosion of institutional independence^[38]. The stated objective is to reset governance, reduce the cost of political administration, restore public trust, and insulate state institutions from partisan influence.

The specific commitments included:

1. Strengthen independent constitutional and accountability bodies, restoring their autonomy, credibility, and effectiveness;
2. Enforce compliance with the Public Procurement Act to curb abuse of sole-sourcing and emergency procurement;
3. Restore and operationalize a government contract database and ensure timely publication of contract awards;
4. Establish a comprehensive and transparent asset declaration regime for all public officeholders, with mechanisms for independent verification and publication;
5. Pass and enforce a Code of Conduct for Public Officers to give full meaning to Article 284 of the Constitution;
6. Establish an independent Value for Money Office to conduct systematic audits of major government contracts and projects;
7. Strengthen the Office of the Special Prosecutor by ensuring operational independence and adequate resourcing;
8. Implement the recommendations of the Constitutional Review Committee on anti-corruption institutional reforms;
9. Transition from NACP I (2015-2024) to the National Ethics and Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NEACP, 2026-2030) with stronger political commitment and adequate funding;
10. Launch Operation Recover All Loots (ORAL) to retrieve assets allegedly misappropriated under the previous administration;
11. Cap ministerial appointments at 60 to reduce the cost of governance and demonstrate fiscal discipline;
12. Initiate legislation prohibiting political appointees, politically-exposed persons, and all serving public officials from purchasing state asset;
13. Collaborate with the judiciary to establish a special court for persons against whom the Auditor-General and Parliament have made adverse findings;

[38] Other members included former COP Kofi Boakye and Raymond Archer

14. Repeal all anti-press freedom laws, reverse the current climate of fear, intimidation, harassment, and broaden the frontiers of media freedoms and development.

While full realization of these promises in the first year is not expected, the most important indicator is whether realistic steps taken so far suggest the promise of a governance “Reset” will be met.

Key Anti-Corruption/Accountability Initiatives

The first year of the Mahama administration’s “Reset” agenda witnessed several concrete actions that signaled a departure from the perceived culture of impunity that had characterized previous years. While these initiatives are still in their nascent stages and their ultimate impact remains to be fully realized, they represent a notable shift in the government’s approach to accountability and anti-corruption enforcement. These early actions have been marked by high-profile institutional interventions, targeted asset recovery efforts, and public commitments to strengthen the frameworks that had been weakened or underutilized in the past. The following measures illustrate the government’s attempts to translate campaign promises into tangible governance reforms:

1. At the heart of the 2024 NDC Manifesto's promises to fight corruption and ensure transparent governance was ORAL, the administration's anti-corruption drive, which functions as a specialized task force to identify and recover stolen state assets allegedly siphoned by the previous government. Chaired by Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa and including members such as the former Auditor-General, Daniel Domelevo, and the prominent lawyer, Martin Kpebu^[39], the ORAL Committee submitted a comprehensive dossier of cases to the Attorney-General, estimating that the 36 high-level cases reviewed alone accounted for a staggering \$20.49 billion in alleged misappropriated funds^[40].



[39] Other members included former COP Kofi Boakye and Raymond Archer

[40] <https://presidency.gov.gh/oral-committee-report-presented-estimated-value-of-36-cases-reviewed-20-49billion/>

2. On May 6, 2025, President Mahama launched the 2025 Code of Conduct and Ethics for Political Appointees, fulfilling a core promise of his 120-day “Social Contract” with Ghanaians. According to Mahama, this Code represents a departure from the “moral persuasion” of the past, establishing a set of binding, enforceable standards for the President, Vice President, Ministers, and Presidential Staffers. The President stated that the Code is intended to foster a new political culture characterized by transparency, humility, and the total elimination of the “clearing agent” culture that had previously shielded officials from scrutiny^[41].

Policy Area	Specific Mandate or Threshold	Enforcement Mechanism
Gift Acceptance	Prohibited from commercial entities; gifts > ₦20,000 must be surrendered	Mandatory declaration to the Presidency
Travel Restrictions	No first-class air travel; ban on non-essential international travel	Chief of Staff approval required for all trips
Asset Purchase	Total prohibition on purchasing state assets, direct or indirect.	Legislative prohibition via proposed new law
Hampers and Luxuries	Ban on purchasing hampers or gifts using government/IGF funds	Audit Service scrutiny of departmental spending
Conduct and Tone	Requirement for “decorous language” and “civility”	Public feedback and performance reviews

A critical innovation in the 2025 Code of Conduct is its emphasis on immediate consequences. President Mahama has pledged to deal swiftly and decisively with any appointee who breaches these standards. This administrative discipline is intended to complement the criminal prosecutions handled by state agencies, creating a multi-layered deterrent against misconduct^[42]. Apart from that, the promise of initiating legislation prohibiting political appointees, politically-exposed persons, and all serving public officials from purchasing state assets was partly fulfilled through the launch of the President’s code of conduct for ministers.

[41] https://www.johnmahama.org/files/shares/Mahama_Key%20Policies%20brochure.pdf

[42] <https://apanews.net/president-mahama-unveils-landmark-code-of-conduct-for-appointees/>

3. To move beyond the “moral persuasion” of previous eras, the administration has utilized both symbolic and punitive measures to ensure compliance with asset declaration laws. However, following an investigation by The Fourth Estate, which revealed that 32% of appointees had missed the initial March 31, 2025, deadline, the President ordered that defaulters lose three months of their salary as an immediate sanction. This disciplinary action, coupled with a “lifeline” deadline of May 7, 2025, and a threat of automatic dismissal for further non-compliance, resulted in nearly all appointees complying, the highest rate of compliance recorded within a six-month window since 2013.
4. One of the impactful policy decisions taken by President Mahama in his first year was to keep his promise of appointing a maximum of 60 ministers. The President has appointed a total of 60 ministers comprising sector ministers, ministers of state, deputy ministers, and regional ministers in fulfilment of the pledge to appoint not more than 60 ministers. That is a good sign for citizens of the willingness of the political class to reduce wastage of public resources. This obviously built the confidence of the public in the president, hence they put up little resistance when the government levied one Ghana cedi on every litre of fuel bought at the pump.
5. The President gave life to the transition from NACAP to NEACAP. A key policy framework for the country’s anti-corruption agenda is the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP I, 2015–2024), which was launched during the Mahama I administration. As fate would have it, the Mahama II administration has assumed the task of designing a successor policy framework christened the National Ethics and Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NEACAP, 2026–2030). The transition from NACAP to NEACAP is being guided by two principles: first, to place a stronger emphasis on ethics and behavioral change; and second, to correct the weaknesses of the NACAP by demonstrating a stronger political will and commitment. Therefore, the new NEACAP (2026–2030) has been placed directly under the Office of the President for stricter oversight and prioritization. It is commendable to note that the government is determined to avoid underfunding of, and weak political commitment to, the implementation of the new framework – the twin weaknesses that undermined the effectiveness of NACAP I.

Critique and Shortcomings of key Anti-Corruption/Accountability Initiatives

1. Despite the public enthusiasm for ORAL, the initiative faced scrutiny regarding its legitimacy within the Ghanaian criminal justice system. Legal scholars debated whether ORAL's mandate overlapped with the prosecutorial powers of the Attorney-General under Article 88 of the Constitution or the investigative mandate of the OSP, CHRAJ, Audit Service, and EOCO. Critics argued that the ORAL approach risked creating a parallel justice system that could be susceptible to political influence, especially if it was seen as targeting only officials from the previous administration^[43].
2. The threshold of GH₵ 20,000 for gifts that can be received by ministers in the Code of Conduct is alarmingly high and creates significant loopholes for potential corruption. The President's silence on calls to review this threshold downwards is concerning and partly undermines the credibility of the Code while neglecting to pass the Conduct of Public Officers Bill.
3. While asset declaration deadlines were set and some sanctions imposed, the disclosures remain practically inaccessible and unverifiable to the public. The government has not yet implemented comprehensive reforms to make asset declarations public and independently verifiable, despite publications of a purported laying of the Conduct of Public Officers Bills before Parliament.
4. The government did not initiate the repeal of all anti-press freedom laws to reverse the current climate of fear, intimidation, harassment, and broaden the frontiers of media freedoms and development as promised. Instead, there seems to be a reintroduction of the repealed criminal libel law through the use of the publication of false news under the Criminal Offences Act. There have been cases of clear-cut defamation that have been turned into supposed publication of false news and treated as criminal cases by state security agencies. This is concerning because defamation matters must be tackled through civil action taken by respective aggrieved persons, whether they are public officials or not. The use of security agencies to pursue such cases is undesirable because it often leads to the gagging of citizens and the shrinking of civic space. This is likely to impact the work of investigative journalists and whistleblowers.
5. While the commitment to transition from NACAP I to NEACAP is commendable, and the new framework has been placed under the Office of the President for stricter oversight, the proof will be in implementation. The twin weaknesses that undermined NACAP I, underfunding and weak political commitment, must genuinely be addressed, not just rhetorically.

[43]

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388678772_OPERATION_RECOVER_ALL_LOOT_ORAL_IS_IT_RECOGNISED_UNDER_GHANAIAN_CRIMINAL JUSTICE_SYSTEM

6. The progress on the Conduct of Public Officers Bill into law has been very slow. While a Code of Conduct for Appointees was launched, the comprehensive legislative framework promised in the manifesto has not yet been enacted.

Accountability Institutions Related Actions

At year's end, President Mahama's public statements, policy actions, and institutional interactions demonstrated a strong pro-accountability rhetoric, publicly framing anti-corruption as a central pillar of his administration, expressing support for anti-corruption and accountability institutions under siege, and engaging with accountability institutions to reset reform initiatives.

1. A carryover from his campaign promises, Mahama continued his anti-corruption and support-for-institutions tone in the State of the Nation Address (SONA) in February 2025, describing his commitment to accountability as unwavering and linking governance reform to economic recovery and public trust^[44].

2. The Attorney General, Dr. Dominic Ayine, also demonstrated a bold reformist energy in 2025 by positioning the prosecutorial function as a central pillar of the governance "Reset" through his periodic press conference. His office achieved notable progress in the National Service Scheme (NSS) "ghost names" scandal, where a nationwide audit uncovered over 81,000 fictitious names and led to charges against 34 individuals for the loss of over GH¢ 548 million^[45]. Furthermore, the AG's use of plea-bargaining and out-of-court settlements in the Unibank case resulted in the transfer of GH¢ 824 million in landed assets to the state, establishing a structured pathway for reclaiming an additional GH¢ 1.2 billion^[46].

3. Perhaps, the clearest example yet of Mahama's support for an anti-corruption and accountability institution under siege^[47] was when he directed the Majority in Parliament and co-sponsors of a private member's bill seeking to repeal the Office of the Special Prosecutor Act, 2017 (Act 959), to withdraw^[48] the bill. This was quite significant because with the super majority of his own party in Parliament, the bill would likely have passed and would have led to the abolishment of the Office of the Special Prosecutor. The Majority Leader and Majority Chief Whip promptly withdrew the bill^[49], citing Mahama's directive.

[43]

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388678772_OPERATION_RECOVER_ALL_LOOT_ORAL_IS_IT_RECOGNISED_UNDER_GHANAIAN_C RIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388678772_OPERATION_RECOVER_ALL_LOOT_ORAL_IS_IT_RECOGNISED_UNDER_GHANAIAN_CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM)

[44] <https://ghanaiantimes.com.gh/my-commitment-to-fighting-corruption-unwavering-president>

[45] <https://thefourthestategh.com/2025/06/nss-scandal-attorney-general-commends-the-fourth-estate-for-diligent-work/>

[46] <https://imanafrica.org/2025/07/ghanas-attorney-general-has-recovered-10-6-of-the-unibank-liability-not-60-as-he-claims/>

[47] <https://www.businessghana.com/site/news/politics/339620/Speaker,-MPs-unanimously-agree-to-abolish-OSP>

[48] <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1455819/withdraw-private-members-bill-tabled-to-abolish.html>

[49] <https://thevaultznews.com/2025/12/12/mahama-ayariga-heeds-president-mahama/>

4. In a move designed to bridge the gap between audit findings and actual consequences, the President met with the Chief Justice, Attorney General, and Auditor-General to deliberate on strengthening the enforcement of audit findings. A key outcome of these high-level deliberations is the plan to establish specialized courts dedicated to adjudicating cases arising from the Auditor-General's reports^[50]. Furthermore, these specialized courts are intended to handle cases related to illegal mining, or "galamsey," recognizing the strong corruption nexus within illegal mining networks and the need for a credible, impartial enforcement mechanism to restore the rule of law.

5. As a primary structural reform to safeguard the "public purse," the government announced plans to establish an independent Value for Money Office (VfMO) during the 2026 budget presentation. Designed to act as a "permanent guardian of efficiency," the VfMO will implement three lines of defense: certifying project costs pre-award to prevent inflation, providing real-time oversight during construction, and conducting post-completion evaluations^[51]. While full implementation is pending, the office is projected to save the state approximately GH₵ 3 billion annually and will be supported by a Transparency Portal to allow citizens to monitor certified projects in real-time. Further actions to promote good effective public financial management, is the passage of Act 1136 (Public Financial Management (Amendment) Act, 2025 to require covered entities to obtain a commencement authorization from the Ministry of Finance before awarding contracts. Other amendments have stiffened sanctions, introduced debt ceilings and targets and created a stronger independent fiscal council. To facilitate enforcement, the Ministry of Finance has also set up a Compliance Desk to monitor and enforce fiscal rules.

Critique and Shortcomings of Accountability Institutions Related Actions

1. While Mahama's signalling and actions have been supportive and commendable, it is recommended that he must do more to resolve structural weaknesses bedeviling these institutions of horizontal accountability. Some of the weaknesses include chronic underfunding of anti-corruption and accountability institutions, overlapping mandates of the OSP, EOCO, and CHRAJ^[52], continued dominance of the Attorney-General over prosecutions, and the persistence of political influence^[53] and fragmented structures.

[52] IMF Technical Assistance Report, *Ghana: Governance Diagnostic Assessment* (Nov. 2025)

[53] Channel One News, AG's overconcentrated powers undermine Ghana's fight against corruption – IMF warns (25 Nov 2025)

[54] <https://imanafrica.org/2025/07/ghanas-attorney-general-has-recovered-10-6-of-the-unibank-liability-not-60-as-he-claims/>

2. The administration's prosecutorial record is deeply marred by a widening perception of selective justice. The concern that while the Attorney-General has been aggressive in pursuing opposition figures like Gifty Oware, "Chairman Wontumi" and Ken Ofori-Atta, several high-profile cases involving NDC-affiliated officials including the Saglemi Housing and COCOBOD trials were abruptly discontinued through *nolle prosequi*. This trend, coupled with the controversial Unibank settlement where independent analysts (particularly IMANI Ghana) suggest the state recovered only 10.6% of liabilities despite the AG's claim of 60%, fuels public mistrust and suggests political calculations may outweigh impartial enforcement.
3. Though the administration succeeded in saving the OSP from "legislative death," this rescue does not resolve the underlying structural problems plaguing Ghana's anti-corruption architecture. Deep-seated institutional friction and legal redundancy persist. The core issue stems from a fundamental contradiction: while the OSP was established to operate independently of political influence, it remains constitutionally bound to the authority of the Attorney General who is a political appointee. This friction was clearly noticed by the public in 2025, when the relationship between the two offices descended into "significant tension".
4. The IMF's 2025 Governance Diagnostic highlighted that sole-sourcing and restricted tendering still account for over 40% of contract value. There is limited evidence of concrete enforcement actions to curb these practices despite manifesto commitments to enforce the Public Procurement Act.
5. The Constitutional Review Committee recommended consolidating anti-corruption mandates into an Independent Anti-Corruption and Ethics Commission and removing prosecutorial powers from the Attorney-General for corruption cases. These recommendations, despite their potential to significantly strengthen the anti-corruption architecture, await a government response for the implementation process to begin.

Going Forward

To genuinely deliver on the "Reset" mandate and build a credible anti-corruption framework, the following actions are essential:

Immediate Actions:

- Revise and speed up the passage of the Conduct of Public Officers bill to set reasonable and realistic thresholds for gifts, strong sanctions for conflict of interest and influencing peddling infractions and to make all asset declarations by public officials publicly accessible and independently verifiable.
- Cease the use of security agencies to arrest and harass citizens for alleged publication of false news; deal with defamation through civil legal processes.
- Establish the independent Value for Money Office as promised, with a clear mandate, adequate resources, and operational independence.

Institutional Reforms:

- Implement the Constitutional Review Committee's recommendation to establish an Independent Anti-Corruption and Ethics Commission, consolidating the fragmented mandates of OSP, EOCO, and CHRAJ.
- Remove the Attorney-General's power to prosecute corruption cases and vest it in the proposed Independent Anti-Corruption Commission.
- Ensure that the Attorney-General or any person exercising prosecutorial authority may not discontinue a commenced prosecution without leave of court.
- Provide adequate and sustained funding for accountability institutions, moving beyond rhetorical commitments to actual transfer of budgetary allocations.

Legislative and Policy Actions:

- Fast-track the passage of the Conduct of Public Officers Bill into law, with comprehensive provisions on ethics, asset disclosure, and conflict of interest.
- Ensure NEACAP (2026-2030) is adequately funded and implemented with genuine political will, avoiding the weaknesses that undermined NACAP I.

- Enforce the Public Procurement Act rigorously, particularly provisions against sole-sourcing and emergency procurement abuse.
- Establish and operationalize the government contract database with mandatory, timely publication of all contract awards through the E-Procurement Platform.

ORAL and Asset Recovery:

- Ensure that asset recovery efforts are conducted within the framework of Ghana's criminal justice system, respecting due process and constitutional protections.
- Provide greater transparency about ORAL processes, actual recoveries made, and how recovered assets are being managed and deployed.
- Ensure that accountability mechanisms are applied consistently across all administrations, not just focused on political opponents.

Conclusion

The first year of the Mahama II administration has shown both promising signals and concerning gaps in the anti-corruption and accountability agenda. While there have been positive steps (including limiting ministerial appointments, launching a Code of Conduct, supporting the OSP, and initiating asset recovery efforts), critical structural reforms remain unaddressed.

The test of the “Reset” agenda will not be in rhetoric but in concrete institutional reforms, consistent enforcement, and the political will to apply accountability standards uniformly across all actors in government. As citizens who have vested sovereignty in this government, CDD-Ghana will continue to hold the government accountable to its promises.



ECONOMY AND JOBS

Assessors:

Prof. William Brafu-Insaidoo, Daniel Armah-Attoh, Paul Suhuyini, Cheetham Mingle



INTRODUCTION

The John D. Mahama-led administration took over the realms of power at a time that the Ghanaian economy was plagued with high rates of inflation, volatile exchange rate, and an unwarranted debt position following the 2022-2024 crisis. Additionally, there was a general dissatisfaction among the citizenry and residents with the preceding administration's management of the high cost-of-living crisis. To restructure the deeply distressed economy and restore confidence, the Mahama-led administration has been pursuing a series of reforms to achieve macroeconomic stability and to set the economy on a path towards sustained growth and development. The advent of the Mahama-led administration II has been characterized by a number of proposed measures to bring about a radical shift in fiscal and monetary policy toward fiscal consolidation and innovative resource-backed monetary strategies, under the theme 'Resetting the Economy for the Ghana We Want'. Other key structural reform measures include the launch of the ambitious job creation agenda centered 24-hour economy programme.

This report relies on a range of datasets including official data from the Ghana Statistical Service, Ministry of Finance, and the International Monetary Fund databases, to evaluate the performance of the Mahama-led administration in her first full year of governance, with much emphasis on macroeconomic stabilization, fiscal consolidation, macroeconomic structural reforms and job creation. In particular, we investigate the successes and failures of economic policy and attempt to explain the observed performance.

2.0 Assessment

Macroeconomic Stabilization and Cost of Living

For the first time in several years, many Ghanaians attest to experiencing a tangible fall in the cost of living. Even though lower inflation just means that prices are rising more slowly, the living conditions in the country at the end of 2025 compared to early 2026 indicate that domestic currency appreciation and falling fuel prices have, in reality, elicited price drops in several key areas. The price reliefs are notable in fuel prices at the pump, which have dropped by about 4% to 8% in the December 2025/January 2026 space. In turn, this has resulted in an exceptional reduction in commercial transport fares by 15%, which tends to directly lower the daily cost of commuting and transporting goods. Food inflation has also dropped significantly from 28.3% in January 2025 to 4.9% by December 2025, whilst the cost of imported essentials like medicines and raw materials has stabilized due to the appreciation of the Cedi.

But whilst the impact of macroeconomic stability on the cost of living is significantly positive, it is also acknowledged that the experience is not identical for everyone. For instance, anecdotal evidence shows that lower transport fares and more stable food prices in the major cities like Accra and Kumasi have significantly enhanced disposable income, but regional disparities also remain. Logistics bottlenecks like poor communication and transportation delays mean that in some northern regions, prices have not fallen as fast as in the south.

Fiscal Sector Performance

The first full year of the Mahama-led administration has been characterized by an ambitious fiscal consolidation drive and a milestone turnaround in public debt indicators.

By aggressively cutting wasteful spending and shutting down underperforming programs, the administration successfully slashed the national deficit from 7.9% to 3.1%, even managing a healthy surplus by mid-2025. This newfound political will for fiscal discipline allowed the government to provide direct relief to citizens and entrepreneurs by abolishing what it termed “nuisance” taxes like the E-Levy, Betting Tax, and Emission Tax, while also raising the VAT threshold to protect small businesses. Essentially, by cutting down overspending, the state has stabilized the economy without burdening the average Ghanaian with high taxes.

Nevertheless, there have been some failures and challenges in this area. Firstly, in spite of the government's efforts to fix the economy, it still struggles to collect enough revenue, with tax revenue at 16.1% of GDP (a level that remains lower than neighbouring countries like Senegal or Côte d'Ivoire). This "revenue lag" means the state isn't yet earning enough on its own to fully cover its expenditures. The obvious consequence is that the government has to resort to increased borrowing to finance its excess expenditure, which gives rise to public debt accumulation. At the same time, the administration is launching large-scale, expensive social projects such as the GH₵13.85 billion "Big Push" infrastructure plan and the "MahamaCares" health trust. The general worry is that if the government doesn't find a way to generate more revenues soon, these high-cost programs could eventually break the budget and undo the financial stability the country has achieved in the first year of the current administration.

In spite of the challenges with revenue mobilization, there are significant prospects because we expect government revenue to be bolstered by the full implementation of AI-driven tax compliance measures, which will help offset the revenue loss from the abolishment of the "nuisance" taxes, such as the E-levy.

Public Debt Management

In 2025, Ghana achieved a historic turnaround in managing its national debt, with the debt-to-GDP ratio falling sharply from 61.8% to 45%. This recovery was fuelled by a major agreement with international lenders and the successful restructuring of Eurobonds, which rebuilt global trust. As a result, major credit agencies like Fitch and Moody's upgraded Ghana's rating to a 'B-' status, signalling to the world that the country is once again a safe place for investment.

Overall, the year 2025 has witnessed an impressive fiscal restructuring, outclassing almost all the main macroeconomic targets set by the government and the IMF. The performance is mainly attributed to the successful completion of external debt restructuring, ambitious expenditure rationalization, and the significant appreciation of the Cedi.

Under the Mahama-led administration, unlike the 2024 election year, the 2025 fiscal cycle has seen strict adherence to commitment-based spending, thereby preventing the accumulation of new arrears.

The Table below presents the actual full-year 2025 fiscal performance compared to the budget/IMF targets.

Table 1: 2025 Fiscal Performances as against Targets

Fiscal Indicator	2025 Target (Budget/IMF)	2025 Actual (Provisional/Year-End)	Status
Overall Fiscal Deficit	3.1% of GDP	2.4% of GDP	Exceeded
Primary Balance (Ratio)	1.5% of GDP (Surplus)	1.7% of GDP (Surplus)	Exceeded
Public Debt Stock (Ratio)	56.6% to 66.0% of GDP	43.8% to 45.0% of GDP	Exceeded

Source: Ministry of Finance Ghana database; IMF database; Bank of Ghana database; & Ghana Revenue Authority database

The core factors accounting for the fiscal turnaround under the Mahama-led administration are an aggressive fiscal consolidation, the successful conclusion of the massive debt restructuring, and a return to strict expenditure discipline under a renewed IMF-supported framework.

This newfound stability led to a dramatic collapse in interest rates, with Treasury bill rates plunging from 30% to just 11%. This shift is a massive win for the government and the private sector alike, as it significantly lowers the cost of borrowing money. However, despite these successes, the domestic bond market remains a bit shaky and cautious; experts don't expect investors to fully jump back into long-term local bonds until well into 2026.

Looking ahead, the "Reset Agenda" faces its toughest test yet in the form of "repayment humps." The government is scheduled to pay back GH₵20 billion in 2026 and a massive GH₵50.3 billion in 2027. To avoid falling back into a debt trap, the administration must maintain strict discipline and ensure that the economy continues to grow fast enough to cover these looming bills.

Economic Restoration, Sectoral Transformation, and Job Creation

One of the landmarks of the Mahama-led administration in its first full year in office is the establishment of the Ghana Gold Board (GoldBod) in March 2025. The success of this initiative is the significant exports of gold from small-scale miners at a quantity of 103 tonnes valued at US\$ 10.8 billion, outperforming exports from the large-scale mining sector at a quantity of 96.6 tonnes valued at US\$ 9.2 billion.

This allowed the Bank of Ghana to accumulate its reserves rapidly, which helped to strengthen the Ghana Cedi and reduce the country's vulnerability to instabilities and uncertainties in the international capital market. But alongside this, the initiative faces intense scrutiny over environmental ethics. The 'galamsey' (illegal mining) concern has been the central tension point of the current administration's mining policy. By becoming the sole buyer of small-scale gold, GoldBod risks creating a 'cleaning' effect where gold from destructive, illegal sites is mixed up with legitimate production. Additionally, the Cedi's recent is more of a temporary solution than a permanent cure. By selling off gold reserves to flood the market with US dollars, the Bank of Ghana has artificially boosted the currency's value, but this hasn't fixed the underlying problem: Ghana still imports more than it exports. Once the gold gets depleted and the gold reserves run low, the Cedi risks a sharp crash.

Provisional estimates from the Ghana Statistical Service show that overall economic activities grew by 6.3% (1.1 percentage points above the targeted growth rate) for 2025. The economic growth in 2025 was characterized by a strong services sector and a reviving agriculture sector, but contrasted by a severe decline in the industrial sector, especially the extractive industries. The good performances of the services sector (8.8%) and agriculture (6%) are driven by the digital and financial sectors, whilst agriculture is driven by stronger crop production and a rebound in cocoa.

The data shows that the Ghanaian economy is gradually transforming from a jobless industry to a resource-backed stability, and hence an indication of a resource-led transformation, following the formalization of the 103 tonnes of gold from small-scale miners (which outperformed the large-scale mining sectors).

The impact of the resources-backed transformation on employment is in two-fold. First, the artisanal and small-scale mining sector is more labour-intensive than large-scale mining. The formalization of this sector through GoldBod is contributing to the protection and legitimization of the livelihoods of millions of Ghanaians. Secondly, the digital and finance sub-sectors, which are the leaders of growth in the services sector, are usually 'capital-intensive' rather than 'labour-intensive'. Also, they require a skilled workforce, leaving behind the unskilled or semi-skilled labour. Thirdly, the rebound of agriculture could probably be the catalyst for broad-based job creation. Since most of Ghanaians still work in the agricultural sector, growth in this sector directly improves the incomes of rural households and is capable of stemming the tide of rural-urban migration.

Job creation lies at the centre of the Mahama-led administration's 24-hour Economy Policy. The intention of the policy is to transform Ghana into an export-led economy with emphasis on agro-processing, manufacturing, and public services including the ports and passport office. Whilst the 24-hour Economy Policy is yet to become operational, Ghana's job market showed real signs of recovery in 2025, with roughly 333,000 more people finding work between January and September (Ghana Statistical Service database).

This steady increase in hiring helped pull the national unemployment rate down from a high of nearly 15% in early 2023 to an average of 12.8% over the first nine months of the year. Essentially, while challenges remain, the economy is moving in the right direction by creating more opportunities for Ghanaians to earn a living.

In spite of the modest growth in employment, the quality of jobs remains a significant failure. Over 67% of the employed population was in vulnerable, informal employment, particularly in agriculture and small-scale urban trade. Despite the overall economic progress, the situation for young people remains difficult. Roughly one in three young Ghanaians aged 15 to 24 is unemployed, and about 21% are 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)'; meaning they are not in school, not working, and not learning a trade. This highlights a serious "jobless growth" problem, where the country's rising wealth isn't reaching the youth or creating enough entry-level opportunities for those just starting out.

Furthermore, even though the government claims Ghana is back on its feet, the "galamsey" (illegal mining) crisis is still a huge problem that hasn't been fixed. The GoldBod initiative is at risk of mixing illegal mining with legitimate gold production. Many people are unhappy because their drinking water is still muddy and poisoned, and beautiful forest areas are being destroyed. While the economy might be growing, many Ghanaians feel the government is failing to protect the nature and clean water they need to survive.

General Conclusion

The first full year of the Mahama-led administration in 2025 has been a story of impressive financial recovery balanced against deep-rooted social and environmental challenges. On the surface, the "Reset Agenda" worked wonders for the numbers: inflation dropped sharply, the Cedi grew stronger, and the national debt was cut significantly. For many Ghanaians, this led to real relief at the pump and lower food prices, proving that the government's strict discipline and new gold-backed strategies could successfully pull the economy back from the brink of collapse.

However, this stability is built on a fragile foundation. Much of the Cedi's strength came from selling off gold reserves rather than a permanent increase in local manufacturing, and there are serious worries that the "GoldBod" initiative is unintentionally fuelling the "galamsey" crisis by purchasing gold from illegal, water-polluting mines. While the economy is growing, it is not yet "quality" growth; most new jobs are in the informal sector, and a staggering one-third of young Ghanaians remain unemployed or out of school, showing that the country's rising wealth hasn't yet reached the next generation.

Looking toward 2026 and 2027, the administration faces a major "test of fire" as massive debt repayments loom. To turn this temporary recovery into a lasting transformation, the government must move beyond just managing gold and debt. The success of the "24-Hour Economy" and the "Big Push" will determine whether Ghana can finally stop relying on imported goods and raw gold and instead begin producing its own wealth while protecting its contaminated water bodies and forests for the future.



ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Assessors:

Daryl Bosu, Frederick Adu-Gyamfi, Dr. Kwame Sarpong
Asiedu



INTRODUCTION

Environment and Social Development serves as a framework for protecting vulnerable populations and fostering human capital development through integrated policy actions. Central to this framework is Social Protection, which acts as the government's primary mechanism for mitigating poverty, economic shocks, and inequality through programs such as LEAP and School Feeding. This is closely aligned with the Health sector, where recent initiatives (including the passage of the Ghana Medical Trust Fund Act and the pursuit of Free Primary Healthcare) aim to remove financial barriers to care and recalibrate financing to improve system-wide liquidity and provider confidence. Together, these pillars seek to strengthen the national safety net and improve the overall resilience and welfare of Ghanaian households.

Furthermore, the advancement of Education and Gender equality are critical drivers for achieving long-term social mobility and sustainable economic growth. In the education sector, recent efforts have focused on system stabilization, addressing infrastructure deficits, and enhancing teacher and student welfare to restore learning conditions. These measures are complemented by Gender policies that have transitioned from symbolic advocacy to operational implementation, highlighted by the Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act and practical interventions like the nationwide distribution of sanitary pads to improve girls' school retention. Collectively, these thematic areas represent a strategic shift toward transforming temporary coping mechanisms into a robust, state-led system for poverty reduction and national development.

ENVIRONMENT

1.0 Introduction

The first year of HE John Dramani Mahama was marked by intensified efforts to combat illegal mining, significant policy shifts, enhanced enforcement mechanisms, and historic legislative reversals reflecting the government's stated commitment to addressing what had become a national emergency. However, environmental outcomes frequently fall short of public expectations as polluted rivers, heavy metal contamination, and the influence of powerful interests continued to undermine progress.

Public confidence has further weakened by reports of political interference, including incidents where enforcement operatives faced opposition from politically exposed persons, highlighting deep-seated governance challenges that complicated the technical response to environmental degradation. This paper examines the full spectrum of environmental governance in 2025, drawing on multiple authoritative sources to inform policy dialogue, guide resource allocation, and support the development of more effective strategies for protecting Ghana's environmental heritage.

2.0 Evidence of the Scale of Impact

2.1 Forest Reserve Degradation

Fifty (50) of Ghana's 288 forest reserves are now besieged by illegal mining, with over 5,500 hectares degraded, an area equivalent to 7,500 football pitches carved out of protected land. The destruction is concentrated in a continuous mining corridor stretching through the Ashanti, Western, and Western North Regions, where three reserves account for more than 60 percent of total impacts. The Oda River Forest Reserve has lost 2,654 hectares, Upper Wassaw 1,666 hectares, and Apamprama 1,206 hectares, with the latter having lost more than half its total land area, transformed from moist semi-deciduous forest into a lunar landscape of pits and tailings. The categorization of affected reserves exposes the enforcement nightmare: nine used to require military intervention against armed miners, twelve demand constant surveillance against recurring incursions, and only five are secure enough for routine management by local forestry officials

2.2 Rivers and Water Body Pollution

Field data from surface and underground water sources confirm that Ghana's river systems are dying: the Birim River at Kyebi registers a Water Quality Index of 15, classifying it as grossly polluted, while the Pra River system languishes in the poor quality range across multiple sampling points, with only the Offin River maintaining fairly good water quality as a tragic exception. The human consequences are immediate and severe. The Bonsa Headworks, which supplied 75 percent of potable water to Tarkwa Township, was forced to shut down entirely in January 2025, and communities now face a proposed 280 percent increase in water tariffs directly attributable to galamsey pollution.

2.3 Heavy Metal Contamination

The scientific data paints a portrait of systemic poisoning: at Wassa Kayianko, communities breathe mercury vapor that spikes to 150 times safe limits during peak smelting, while children in Konongo Zongo play on soil where mercury exceeds playground guidelines by 560% and arsenic soars to 40,000 percent above safe levels. The same communities drink water at Konongo Odumase with arsenic concentrations 16,519 percent higher than WHO permits, and families consume fish and pumpkin leaves where lead contamination exceeds vegetable guidelines by 3,000 percent. This is not environmental degradation in the abstract, it is a wholesale poisoning of the air, soil, water, and food chain that sustains human life.

2.4 Public Health Implications

The health data reveals a generational catastrophe: children in mining communities face hazard indices 5 to 35 times above safe thresholds, with cancer risks soaring to 310,000 times the regulatory limit. Their blood lead levels already exceed CDC safety standards, and because children consume more water relative to their body weight while their organs are still developing, they bear two to eight times the toxic burden of adults—making galamsey not just an environmental crime but a direct assault on the nation's future.

2.5 Economic Consequences

The economic toll of galamsey now constitutes a national fiscal crisis: cleaning just three river basins will cost GHC105.4 billion, which is a 10 to 15-fold increase in water treatment costs passed directly to citizens. Meanwhile, the state bleeds revenue, with \$2.3 billion lost in 2016 alone and a \$5 billion gap exposed between Ghana's reported gold exports and UAE import records, revealing the scale of illicit financial flows.

The agricultural sector is collapsing under the weight of this destruction, with COCOBOD losing GHS4.8 billion on a single 35-hectare concession, over 19,000 hectares of cocoa farms destroyed, and national production halved from one million tonnes to just 430,000 tonnes in three years.

3.0 Policy and Governance Framework

3.1 Historical Context

Small-scale mining was formally recognized in 1989 through PNDC Law 218, subsequently integrated into the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703). The Forest and Wildlife Policy 2012 explicitly aimed to "reduce as much as possible the prospecting and mining of mineral resources in gazetted forest reserves," with targets of 60% reduction by 2020 and 100% by 2035. Between 2009-2016, 1,482 licenses were approved. Between 2017-January 2025, approvals accelerated to 2,207 licenses, a dramatic increase coinciding with rising gold prices and increased mechanization, creating conditions where regulatory oversight struggled to keep pace.

3.3 The Controversial L.I. 2462

The Environmental Protection (Mining in Forest Reserves) Regulations, 2022 (L.I. 2462) represented a fundamental policy shift. Before 2022, only 2% of gazetted production forest areas were opened to mining. Under L.I. 2462, 89% became exposed to mining. Even after the 2025 amendment, 80% of forests still faced significant risk. Investigative reporting revealed politically motivated permits fast-tracked for companies tied to ruling party officials between 2020-2024, including the Kumasi Mayor, NPP Ashanti Chairman, and an NPP parliamentary candidate. Legal violations included rushed passage of L.I. 2462 allowing mining in protected reserves under presidential discretion, contradicting Ghana's Forest Policy and constitutional obligations under Article 36(9).

3.4 The "Pay to Destroy" Mechanism

A disturbing governance failure documented in 'Tax-for-Galamsey' by the Multimedia Hotline Documentary team reveals local authorities charging fees for activities deemed illegal by the national government. A District Chief Executive admitted authorizing stickers costing approximately GH¢6,000 per year that function as local 'permits' granting immunity to operate banned equipment. This mechanism transforms a crime into a revenue stream, creating a paradox where local government effectively invalidates national laws.

4.0 Government Actions in 2025

4.1 Revocation of L.I. 2462

On 18th December 2025, Parliament completed the revocation of L.I. 2462. Civil society has described this as "one of the most significant and progressive legislative reversals in Ghana's recent environmental history". Government subsequently initiated revocation of fraudulently acquired licenses, publishing a list of about 300 small-scale mining licenses facing revocation.

4.2 Establishment of NAIMOS

The National Anti-Illegal Mining Operations Secretariat (NAIMOS) was launched in June 2025 as a centralized body coordinating core security services (National Security, Armed Forces, Police, NIB, Immigration, Narcotics Commission) and collaborating agencies (Forestry Commission, Lands Commission, Minerals Commission). Field Task Forces of 50 personnel each deploy across seven regions, creating multi-agency capability for sustained enforcement.

4.3 Key Government Initiatives

Initiative	Progress	CSO Rating
Blue Water Initiative	980 Guards deployed	Partially Ongoing
Tree For Life Reforestation	17 million seedlings planted	Mostly Ongoing
Geotagging/Geofencing Excavators	1,181 registered, 724 tracked	Fully Ongoing
Ghana Gold Board	Established via Act 1140	Completed
Responsible Cooperative Mining	40+ communities engaged	ongoing

4.4 Enforcement Achievements

- Nine forest reserves previously "red-zoned" repossessed (Jimira, Afao Hills, Tano Anwia, Offin Shelterbelt, Anhwiaso East/South, Subri, Asenayo, Desiri)
- Over 1,400 arrests made
- 450 excavators seized
- Over 500 changfan machines destroyed
- Over 1,000 water pumping machines seized
- 33 Chinese nationals arrested
- 400 security personnel trained for permanent deployment in 21 hotspots

4.5 CSO Assessment of Government Performance

Based on the CSO scorecard assessing the government's first year, the administration has achieved satisfactory progress across most environmental sectors, meeting or exceeding the 25% annual benchmark in mining, environment, forestry, climate, and petroleum governance particularly in respect of intervention commencement, but not outcomes. However, anti-corruption efforts lag slightly behind at 23.04%, signaling that despite enforcement gains, the failure to address corruption within the system remains the weakest link in the fight against galamsey.

5.0 Implementation Gaps

5.1 The Prosecution Deficit

Despite over 1,400 arrests in 2025, data for 2023-2024 reveals critical weakness: 845 arrests yielded only 35 successful prosecutions, which is a 4% prosecution rate. This creates a culture of impunity where perpetrators view arrests as temporary inconveniences rather than meaningful consequences. The Coalition Against Galamsey (2025) expressed concern about delays in establishing promised fast-track courts.

5.2 The Financier Problem

Enforcement has failed to target wealthy financiers who bankroll galamsey operations. Civil society analyses note that political interference and complicity by local authorities undermine national campaigns. While 33 Chinese nationals were arrested, Ghanaian financiers providing capital and political protection remain largely untouched.

5.3 Political Interference and Capture

Political interference has crippled enforcement, with local officials prioritizing electoral gains over environmental protection and permits fast-tracked for the politically connected, while public distrust is validated by presidential statements perceived as condoning the very menace they vow to combat.

5.4 Institutional Fragmentation and Enforcement Capacity

The effectiveness of enforcement operations is systematically undermined by a combination of structural weaknesses including uncoordinated intelligence application; enforcement units remain severely under-resourced and outmatched by illegal miners who deploy excavators and armed protection with impunity. This asymmetry is compounded by fragmented mandates across multiple institutions, which diffuses accountability and allows offenders to exploit jurisdictional gaps. Even when arrests are made, the deterrent effect is nullified by weak sanctions that impose penalties far outweighed by the financial rewards of illegal mining. Most damaging is the corrosion from within, where corruption and complicity within enforcement agencies themselves actively subvert the very laws, they are mandated to uphold.

5.5 Restoration and Rehabilitation Gaps

Despite government assertions of progress, restoration efforts remain tragically inadequate, leaving fragmented habitats incapable of supporting ecological recovery or functional land use. The financial commitment required stands in stark contrast to current allocations: sustained enforcement through task forces and drones demands \$40 million over five years, enrichment planting across 5,000 hectares requires \$15 million, phytoremediation at twenty contaminated sites adds another \$3 million, and stabilizing one hundred kilometers of riverbanks costs \$5 million. Sediment dredging for ten major rivers requires \$10 million, while annual education and training programs need \$2.5 million over the same period. These are not extravagant requests, but the minimum investment required to begin healing landscapes poisoned by years of criminal exploitation, yet current funding falls woefully short, condemning degraded forests and contaminated water bodies to continued desolation.

5.6 International Dimensions

Ghana is a top global gold producer, yet a significant portion of galamsey gold enters international supply chains illegally. Global demand in India, the UAE, and the global North creates markets for illegally-mined gold. Weak enforcement of the commodity chain of custody domestic and international regulations enables opaque supply chains that obscure environmental and social costs.

5.8 Water Scarcity Projections

CSIR-Water Research Institute's 2016 warning of water crisis by 2030 has proven prescient:

Basin	2020	2030	2040	2050
Ghana (national)	1,568	1,317	1,140	1,021
Pra Basin	752	632	546	488
Densu Basin	337	286	249	223

Water availability (m^3 per person per year). Water scarcity is defined as $<1,700 m^3$ per person per year, absolute scarcity as $<500 m^3$. Pollution accelerates this trajectory by rendering available water unusable without expensive treatment.

6.0 Strategic Recommendations

6.1 Legislative and Regulatory Reforms

Amend the Minerals and Mining Act to explicitly prohibit all forms of mining in forest reserves, preventing future policy reversals, while strengthening penalties, requiring reclamation bonds, and criminalizing the financing of illegal operations, and complement all this with the implementation of a national forest protection strategy developed with key partners.

6.2 Enforcement and Accountability – Effect full implementation of Act 995

To dismantle illegal mining effectively, enforcement must pivot from arresting workers to prosecuting the financiers who fund the operations, which requires a dedicated Financial Intelligence Unit backed by aggressive asset forfeiture. This must be paired with the immediate revocation of all politically motivated mining permits issued in forest reserves between 2020 and 2024, while specialized fast-track courts and independent investigative bodies are established to finally deliver convictions and restore public trust. Coordinating these efforts demands a permanent Inter-Agency Task Force under the President's office, complemented by strict local accountability where chiefs and police commanders face dismissal or transfer if galamsey persists in their jurisdictions.

6.3 Galamsey as a Public Health Emergency

Declaring galamsey as a public health emergency would unlock resources for health surveillance, treatment protocols for heavy metal poisoning, and culturally tailored public education campaigns. A 20-year national restoration program must prioritize stabilizing riverbanks and removing sediment from water bodies that supply drinking water, while the Ghana Water Company is directed to publish monthly water quality data to assure the public that levels remain within safe limits.

6.4 International Engagement and Value Chain Traceability

Ghana should leverage its position as Africa's leading gold producer to negotiate bilateral agreements with key importing countries, including the UAE, Switzerland, India, and China, for enhanced due diligence and traceability requirements. Ghana cannot currently trace its ASM from pit to port, leaving the sector vulnerable to illicit flows and revenue leakage. The government must urgently operationalize traceability systems by 2026 through clear production mapping, operator identification, and inter-agency coordination. Full public disclosure of GoldBod's commercial deals and financial statements is essential to prove its gold is legally mined. With global demand for responsible sourcing rising, Ghana must act now to secure its position as a trusted gold origin or risk losing premium markets.

6.5 Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Business and Human Rights

Capacity building within the extractive sector as part of the implementation of Ghana's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights is paramount. NAIMOS as a standalone entity cannot effectively cover grounds and enforce compliance without the effective participation of decentralized law enforcement and regulatory agencies.

7.0 Conclusion

Ghana faces an environmental catastrophe: 50 forest reserves invaded, rivers poisoned, cocoa production halved, and cancer risks hundreds of thousands of times above safe limits. The current administration has made some progress, from its baseline; revoking L.I. 2462, recovering nine reserves, and deploying coordinated enforcement, exceeding annual benchmarks. Yet critical failures persist: a 4% prosecution rate ensures impunity, financiers operate freely, local corruption undermines national law, restoration remains grossly underfunded, and anti-corruption efforts lag. The crisis demands transformation from piecemeal enforcement to a fully resourced, long-term national mobilization grounded in intelligence, science, and sustained political will. Half-measures guarantee water and food insecurity, depleted forests, and compromised human security.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection programmes serve as the government's primary mechanism for protecting vulnerable populations against poverty, economic shocks, and inequality. Evaluating the first year of a presidency in this sector involves assessing whether programmes have merely been maintained or strengthened in ways that improve household welfare and resilience.

This narrative review the social protection system inherited in January 2025, the policy measures taken during the year, and the remaining challenges.

The Situation Inherited in January 2025

Before 2025, Ghana possessed one of the more developed social protection architectures in West Africa. The system included the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer programme, the School Feeding Programme, and health insurance exemptions for vulnerable groups. However, the macroeconomic crisis of 2022–2024 significantly weakened programme effectiveness. Payments to LEAP beneficiaries were often delayed, the number of beneficiaries was limited relative to national poverty levels, and inflation eroded the real value of transfers. School feeding providers experienced arrears, and programme reliability declined.

Targeting accuracy was also inconsistent. Some vulnerable households were excluded, while grievance redress mechanisms were weak. As a result, although the programmes remained operational, their capacity to protect households from hardship had diminished.

The system, therefore, existed but was losing real impact.

Government Response and Policy Direction

During its first year, the John Mahama administration prioritised restoring and expanding social assistance. The government increased funding allocation to GH¢953.5m. and expanded the number of LEAP beneficiary households from 350,000 to 400,000. Importantly, transfers were indexed to inflation to preserve purchasing power. Payment predictability improved relative to previous cycles.

Support to school feeding also improved, and funding flows became more stable. Because school feeding functions both as a nutrition and social protection intervention, these measures had implications for both poverty relief and educational attendance.

The policy direction indicates a prioritisation of safety nets as part of a broader human capital development strategy. The Social Protection Act, 2025 (Act 1148) was passed, with the accompanying Legislative Instrument being finalized.

What Has Changed After One Year

The most visible change has been improved programme reliability. Beneficiary households now experience more predictable transfers, and the real value of assistance has improved relative to the pre-2025 period. These measures have likely improved short-term consumption support for poor households and restored public confidence in government assistance programmes. In practical terms, the administration has strengthened the safety net function of social protection.

Remaining Structural Gaps

Despite improvements, the system still faces important limitations. Coverage remains insufficient relative to urban poverty levels, and targeting mechanisms still produce inclusion and exclusion errors. Beneficiaries lack clear pathways out of poverty because programmes are not yet strongly linked to employment, skills training, or livelihoods support.

Grievance redress systems also remain underdeveloped, limiting accountability and programme transparency. The system therefore protects households from immediate hardship but does not yet consistently enable them to transition out of poverty.

Recommendations

The government should integrate social protection programmes with the national household registry and digital identification systems to improve targeting accuracy. Coverage should expand to urban poor populations, and social protection should be linked to skills training, employment, and livelihood programmes. Transparent grievance mechanisms and graduation strategies should be developed so beneficiaries can move from assistance to self-sufficiency.

Overall Assessment

The first year represents a restoration and expansion phase for social protection. The safety net has become more reliable and better funded. The next challenge is transforming it into a long-term poverty reduction system rather than a temporary coping mechanism.

GENDER

Introduction

Gender equality policy in Ghana has historically advanced through legislation, advocacy, and civil society mobilisation. However, the persistent challenge has been the translation of legal commitments into enforceable institutional practice. The first year of a new administration is therefore an important test: it shows whether gender policy remains symbolic or becomes operational.

This assessment examines the gender policy environment inherited in January 2025, the actions taken by the government over the past year, the changes observed so far, and the remaining institutional gaps.

The Situation Inherited in January 2025

By the time the administration assumed office, Ghana had developed a relatively comprehensive legal and policy framework for gender equality. These included national gender policies, legal protections against domestic violence, and programmes promoting girls' education. Most significantly, Parliament had just passed the Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act (2024), intended to increase women's participation in decision-making. However, the central problem was not the absence of policy – it was weak implementation capacity. Women remained under-represented in Parliament, local government, and senior public administration. While gender-based violence (GBV) units existed within the police service, they were overstretched and lacked sufficient logistical support. Survivor services, including shelters and legal assistance, were limited and unevenly distributed across regions.

Institutionally, the Ministry responsible for gender and social protection had limited financial and administrative capacity to coordinate gender mainstreaming across the public sector. The new law, therefore, existed largely as a legal commitment, with no enforcement mechanisms, reporting structures, or compliance monitoring. In practical terms, Ghana entered 2025 with strong gender laws but weak enforcement systems.

Government Response and Policy Direction

During its first year, the administration focused on operationalising the Affirmative Action framework and expanding social interventions affecting girls and women. The government undertook stakeholder engagements across ministries, civil society organisations, and professional bodies to discuss implementation pathways. Public awareness campaigns on gender-based violence and women's participation were intensified.

A major policy intervention with gender implications was the nationwide distribution of sanitary pads to school-going girls in both basic and secondary schools. This programme sought to address menstrual-related absenteeism, a documented barrier to girls' school retention, and to improve educational participation among adolescent girls. The gender agenda, therefore, began to shift from a primarily advocacy-driven space to a state-led implementation phase.

What Has Changed After One Year

The most important change over the year is institutional activation. The gender equality law is no longer dormant; it now forms part of ongoing government policy discussions and administrative planning. Government successfully set up the Gender Equity Committee to oversee compliance with the law.

Public awareness of gender-based violence has increased, and gender issues have become more visible in education and social policy. Interventions such as sanitary pad distribution link gender equality to human capital development by targeting girls' retention in school.

However, measurable outcomes – such as increases in women's representation in leadership have not yet materialised. This is expected, as such changes typically occur over longer political and administrative cycles. The year has therefore produced policy momentum rather than structural equality outcomes.

Remaining Structural Gaps

Despite progress, major institutional weaknesses remain. There is still no dedicated compliance authority responsible for monitoring adherence to the Affirmative Action law. No sanctions or enforcement procedures have been clearly operationalised, and ministries are not yet systematically required to report gender performance indicators. Also, the lack of a legislative Instrument to regularize the implementation of the Affirmative Action law after over a year of its passage into law is most unfortunate.

Additionally, support systems for survivors of gender-based violence remain inadequate. Shelters, counselling services, and legal aid infrastructure are still limited in coverage and funding.

The principal gap, therefore, is enforcement capacity: the state has begun implementing gender policy but has not yet built the administrative machinery needed to sustain it.

Recommendations

To consolidate progress, the government should resource the gender equity committee to enable it perform its function by publishing gender representation reports across public institutions. The legislative instrument for the Affirmative Action law should be finalized and passed without further delay. Gender-responsive budgeting should be required across ministries, and performance contracts for public institutions should include gender indicators. In addition, the government should expand funding for GBV shelters, counselling, and legal services, and strengthen coordination between the police, social welfare services, and the judiciary.

Overall Assessment

The first year represents an institutional activation phase in gender policy. The administration has moved the agenda from legal commitment toward operationalisation. However, measurable improvements in gender equality will depend on sustained enforcement, monitoring systems, and resource allocation.

EDUCATION

Education remains one of the most important sectors through which governments in Ghana pursue social mobility, human capital development, and long-term economic growth. For this reason, the first year of a new administration is a critical period for assessing whether policy actions are restoring system functionality, improving learning conditions, and addressing structural weaknesses.

This assessment reviews the state of the education sector inherited in January 2025, the policy and budgetary actions undertaken during the first year in office, the changes observed to date, and the remaining reform challenges.

The Situation Inherited in January 2025.

When President John Dramani Mahama assumed office, he inherited an education system under considerable stress. The sector faced accumulated financial obligations, stalled infrastructure, and administrative bottlenecks that constrained service delivery across basic, secondary, and tertiary education. A combination of macroeconomic pressures and policy expansion over the previous years had created a system struggling to sustain itself. Among the major inherited challenges were:

1. Financing Weakness

- Capitation grants to public basic schools were frequently delayed.
- Schools relied on informal parental contributions despite fee-free policy.
- Teaching and learning materials were inadequate in many districts.

2. Learning Quality Crisis

- Foundational literacy and numeracy performance remained low.
- Many pupils completed primary school unable to read at grade level.
- Teacher supervision and accountability systems were weak.

Education remains one of the most important sectors through which governments in Ghana pursue social mobility, human capital development, and long-term economic growth. For this reason, the first year of a new administration is a critical period for assessing whether policy actions are restoring system functionality, improving learning conditions, and addressing structural weaknesses.

This assessment reviews the state of the education sector inherited in January 2025, the policy and budgetary actions undertaken during the first year in office, the changes observed to date, and the remaining reform challenges. The Situation Inherited in January 2025.

When President John Dramani Mahama assumed office, he inherited an education system under considerable stress. The sector faced accumulated financial obligations, stalled infrastructure, and administrative bottlenecks that constrained service delivery across basic, secondary, and tertiary education. A combination of macroeconomic pressures and policy expansion over the previous years had created a system struggling to sustain itself. Among the major inherited challenges were:

1. Financing Weakness

- Capitation grants to public basic schools were frequently delayed.
- Schools relied on informal parental contributions despite fee-free policy.
- Teaching and learning materials were inadequate in many districts.

2. Learning Quality Crisis

- Foundational literacy and numeracy performance remained low.
- Many pupils completed primary school, unable to read at grade level.
- Teacher supervision and accountability systems were weak.

3. Infrastructure Pressure

- Double-track SHS system due to overcrowding.
- Congested classrooms at the basic level.
- Unequal teacher distribution (urban vs rural).
- Stalled school infrastructure projects, including Community Day SHS (E-Blocks)

4. School Feeding Strain

- Arrears owed to caterers.
- Reduced meal quality due to inflation.
- Attendance in deprived areas affected.

The Free Senior High School (Free SHS) programme had expanded access but created new pressures. Overcrowding, infrastructure deficits, and the double-track system reduced instructional time and strained learning quality. At the same time, investment in basic education (the foundation of learning) had weakened relative to system expansion.

Special needs education and teacher management systems also experienced delays, while unresolved administrative obligations affected morale across the sector. Overall, the education system inherited in early 2025 was characterised by high enrolment, operational instability, and declining quality-assurance capacity.

Government Response and Policy Direction

Recognising the complexity of the situation, the administration initiated a broad consultative approach. A National Education Forum was convened in Ho, bringing together teachers, unions, students, parents, academics, civil society organisations, policymakers, and the President himself to deliberate on reform priorities. The recommendations from this forum now inform the ongoing reform direction alongside government manifesto commitments.

Basic Education: Renewed Focus on Foundations

A major shift in the first year has been renewed emphasis on foundational learning. Basic education received a historic allocation of approximately GH¢9.1 billion – the largest allocation to the sub-sector in decades. This was aimed at strengthening classroom infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, sanitation, and teacher support.

Government also cleared inherited obligations, including:

- Capitation grant arrears
- BECE registration payments
- Feeding support for special needs schools

Resetting Free SHS

Rather than abolish Free SHS, the administration has pursued a “reset” approach – maintaining access while attempting to improve quality and sustainability. Funding to the programme increased significantly, with allocations through the GETFund strengthening feeding, logistics, and school operations. A major objective has been to phase out the double-track system; approximately 100 schools have already transitioned back to single-track operations, with plans to eliminate the system entirely.

Student Welfare and Girls' Education

Student welfare interventions have expanded during the year. At the basic level, support to the school feeding programme increased and payments improved. At the secondary level, student feeding logistics have reportedly stabilised.

A notable intervention has been the nationwide distribution of sanitary pads to school-going girls, aimed at reducing absenteeism and supporting retention. This initiative addresses a long-standing barrier to girls' participation in education.

Teacher Welfare and Management

Teacher welfare has been a major focus of policy action. Measures implemented include:

- Payment of teacher training allowances
- Restoration of promotion eligibility up to Director rank
- Placement of upgraded teachers onto appropriate salary scales
- Removal of post-graduation licensure exam requirements
- Reactivation of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs)

These measures were intended to improve morale, retention, and administrative efficiency within the teaching workforce.

Tertiary Education and Infrastructure

The government has also addressed tertiary education access and institutional stability. Through the "No Fees Stress" initiative, first-year students in public tertiary institutions received reimbursement of academic user fees, reducing entry barriers to higher education.

Funding was also provided to relatively new public universities to support their development, while construction projects such as student accommodation facilities have been approved. Stalled Community Day SHS projects have been revisited as part of infrastructure revitalisation.

In addition, Parliament passed legislation to reform scholarship administration by introducing transparency and aligning awards with national skills priorities.

What has changed after one year

The first year has produced noticeable improvements in operational stability. Reported achievements/outcomes include:

- Schools are receiving more predictable funding (GETFund uncapped, capitation grant increased)
- Feeding programmes have improved (school feeding allocation raised and per meal cost increased to GH¢2.00)
- Student welfare measures have expanded
- Million packs of sanitary pads distributed to girls in public basic schools (with extension planned to SHS).
- Restored Parent-Teacher Associations in pre-tertiary schools.
- Expanded Free SHS to include 70 private schools through placement system (explicitly linked to eliminating double-track).
- “No Academic Fee Policy” benefited 120,222 first-year tertiary students (validation still ongoing for some applications).

Remaining Structural Gaps

Despite these interventions, major systemic challenges remain. The core learning crisis – weak foundational literacy and numeracy, has not yet been directly addressed through a nationwide instructional reform programme. Improvements so far have largely affected inputs rather than outcomes.

Key unresolved issues include:

- Weak learning outcomes
- Teacher effectiveness variation
- Accountability and inspection gaps
- Sustainable financing framework for secondary education
- Data-driven performance monitoring

The reforms have improved conditions but have not yet transformed classroom learning.

Recommendations

Going forward, policy should move from stabilisation to performance improvement. The government should implement a national learning recovery programme, strengthen school inspection, publish performance data, and link funding to measurable learning outcomes. A long-term financing model for Free SHS is also necessary, alongside continued teacher professional development and rural deployment incentives.

Overall Assessment

The first year of the administration in education can best be described as a system stabilisation and restoration phase. The government has addressed arrears, improved welfare, expanded foundational funding, and reduced operational uncertainty. However, the next phase of reform must focus on improving learning outcomes and system accountability if education is to translate into human capital development.

HEALTH

1.0 Context and Baseline Conditions

At the beginning of 2025, Ghana's health sector was under measurable strain. The country faced a high multidimensional poverty rate, rising non-communicable disease burden, fiscal pressure within the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), and sustained migration of skilled health professionals. Infrastructure gaps, uneven primary care access, and delayed reimbursements had weakened provider morale and public confidence.

Within the broader Ghana Reset Agenda, health was embedded within social protection and human capital development rather than presented as a standalone transformation pillar. The 2025 Budget Statement positioned health within the Social Sector envelope under Section 6 of the budget, reflecting prioritisation but also confirming that reforms would be implemented within broader fiscal consolidation constraints.

The first year, therefore, combined legislative reform, financing recalibration, and selective policy rollout, with uneven implementation depth.

2.0 Free Primary Healthcare Policy

2.1 Policy Design and Strategic Intent

The Free Primary Healthcare commitment aimed to remove financial barriers at the first point of care. This aligns with universal health coverage principles and the World Health Organisation (WHO) best practice. The 2026 Budget explicitly allocated GH₵1.5 billion for Free Primary Healthcare under the NHIS framework.

However, the 2025 Budget did not include a fully ring-fenced allocation for the national rollout, meaning implementation in the first year was preparatory rather than nationwide.

2.2 First-Year Implementation Status

In 2025:

- Fiscal alignment work occurred
- Operational design advanced
- Nationwide rollout remained incomplete

2.3 Financial Impact on First-Year Performance

The absence of a dedicated 2025 budgetary line support constrained immediate implementation. The GH¢1.5 billion allocation in the 2026 budget demonstrates credible fiscal backing but also confirms that year-one impact was structurally limited by the timing of resource flows.

Assessment Impact:

Strong policy intent. Moderate execution in year one due to phased funding.

3.0 Ghana Medical Trust Fund Act, 2025

3.1 Legislative Achievement

The Ghana Medical Trust Fund Act (Act 1144) was passed in 2025.

3.2 Budgetary Support

The 2026 Budget allocated GH¢2.3 billion to the Ghana Medical Trust Fund (MahamaCares). Parliamentary approval later referenced GH¢2.9 billion.

The 2025 Budget reflected policy commitment but did not show full-scale operational funding within that fiscal year.

3.3 Impact on First-Year Assessment

- **Legislative performance:** Strong
- **Operationalisation:** Limited to 2025
- **Financial realisation:** Materialised mainly in 2026

This sequencing means the Trust Fund's health system impact was prospective in year one rather than realised.

4.0 Uncapping of NHIS Funds and Financing Reform

The 2025 Budget proposed a review of the Earmark Funds Capping and Realignment Act. This created fiscal space for previously capped statutory funds, including NHIL. By 2026, the National Health Insurance Fund allocation stood at approximately GH¢9.2 billion.

Additionally, the broader health sector allocation in 2026 reached GH¢34.2 billion, representing a significant nominal increase over prior years. Despite this stronger nominal envelope, further analysis indicates that even at GH¢34.2 billion, health spending remains below global benchmarks (e.g., Abuja declaration target of 15% of national expenditure and WHO regional averages) and as a share of GDP (around 2.1%).

Impact on Reimbursements

The uncapping decision improved liquidity within the Scheme, reducing arrears and strengthening provider confidence. This also reflects significant fiscal prioritisation compared with past years.

First-Year Performance Implication

Although uncapping was initiated in 2025, the full financial impact was realised late in the fiscal year and into 2026.

Assessment Impact:

One of the clearest areas of measurable improvement within year one, though its strongest effect appears in early year two.

5.0 Continuity in Social Protection and NHIS

The 2025 Budget maintained NHIS exemptions and social safety nets under the Social Sector allocation. The 2026 Budget reaffirmed continued support to NHIS, LEAP, and social intervention programmes. A significant share of the Ministry of Health allocation in 2026 was devoted to compensation, with personnel costs absorbing over 70% of sector spending.

Assessment:

Continuity was preserved. However, the high share of compensation expenditure limited capital expansion and service delivery upgrades during the first year.

6.0 Ghana Medical Trust Fund and NHIS Interaction

While both mechanisms are now financially backed, the 2025 Budget did not provide a published integration framework between NHIS and the Trust Fund.

Assessment Impact:

Institutional coordination remains a gap in implementation affecting first-year performance ratings.

7.0 No Academic Fee Policy for First-Year Tertiary Students

Although primarily an education policy, this initiative has direct long-term health workforce implications. By reducing financial barriers to tertiary education, including nursing, pharmacy, and allied health programmes, the policy may expand the domestic training pipeline.

Impact in Year One

- Strong signal toward human capital investment
- Increased access to tertiary training
- No immediate service delivery effect

Assessment

This is a forward-looking reform with indirect but meaningful health system implications. Its impact will be medium to long-term rather than immediate. However, there is no immediate 2025 service delivery impact.

8.0 Health Workforce Stabilisation

The 2026 Budget shows personnel compensation dominating the Ministry of Health spending. While overall health allocations increased, the budget structure limited fiscal room for rural incentive packages and structural migration countermeasures.

Assessment Impact:

The financial envelope grew, but expenditure composition constrained transformative workforce reform during the first year.

9.0 Public Health and Disease Burden Response

Ghana's epidemiological transition toward non-communicable diseases continues. Hypertension, diabetes, stroke, and chronic kidney disease now account for a growing share of mortality. Neither the 2025 nor the 2026 budgets contain large, dedicated line items exclusively targeting NCD prevention. This is concerning as 40% of all mortality in Ghana occurs between 40 years and 60 years and is predominantly due to poorly managed or undiagnosed NCDs.

Assessment Impact:

While structural financing reforms were prioritised, population-level prevention policy innovation was modest. This represents a missed opportunity to link the Free Primary Healthcare rollout with aggressive NCD screening and early detection in year one.

10. Mental Health

Budget allocations in 2025 and 2026 do not show major distinct increases for mental health services relative to total social sector growth. As a result, no major legislative or financing reforms were introduced in mental health during the first year.

Assessment Impact:

Limited fiscal prioritisation contributed to modest first-year reform progress. Mental health remains under-prioritised relative to its growing public health importance. The absence of major reform reduces the overall social development performance in the first year.

11. Health Industrialisation and the Legon Pharmaceutical and Innovation Park

The 2025 Budget reaffirmed commitment to the 24-Hour Economy policy, within which the Legon Pharmaceutical and Innovation Park is situated. However, no explicit capital allocation for park infrastructure appears in the 2025 Social Sector resource allocation tables.

Assessment Impact:

Strategic articulation is strong. First-year fiscal backing is limited. No measurable operational output was seen in 2025.

12. Overall Sectoral Performance (Financially Informed)

Strengths:

- Passage of the Ghana Medical Trust Fund Act
- Uncapping NHIL and strengthening NHIF liquidity
- Increased overall health sector allocation to GH₵34.2 billion by 2026
- GH₵1.5 billion allocated to Free Primary Healthcare
- GH₵2.3 billion allocated to the Ghana Medical Trust Fund
- Stable funding of NHIS exemptions

Moderate Performance:

- Free Primary Healthcare funding materialised mainly in 2026
- Trust Fund operationalisation phased
- High personnel expenditure is crowding out capital investment

Weaknesses:

- Limited dedicated NCD prevention funding
- Mental health under-resourced
- Pharmaceutical Park without first-year capital funding
- Workforce retention reforms are not structurally financed

13. Balanced First-Year Verdict

Financial prioritisation of health increased markedly under the administration, as evidenced in both the 2025 and 2026 Budget Statements.

However, the sequencing of funding meant that:

- Legislative achievements occurred in 2025
- Major fiscal backing materialised in 2026
- Population-level health outcome impact in year one was therefore moderate

The administration's first-year health record can be characterised as legislatively strong, fiscally expanding, but operationally phased.

The real test of reform success lies in the efficiency and transparency of the 2026 budget execution.

Assessment Impact:

Strategic articulation is strong. First-year fiscal backing is limited. No measurable operational output was seen in 2025.

12. Overall Sectoral Performance (Financially Informed)

Strengths:

- Passage of the Ghana Medical Trust Fund Act
- Uncapping NHIL and strengthening NHIF liquidity
- Increased overall health sector allocation to GH₵34.2 billion by 2026
- GH₵1.5 billion allocated to Free Primary Healthcare
- GH₵2.3 billion allocated to the Ghana Medical Trust Fund
- Stable funding of NHIS exemptions

Moderate Performance:

- Free Primary Healthcare funding materialised mainly in 2026
- Trust Fund operationalisation phased
- High personnel expenditure is crowding out capital investment

Weaknesses:

- Limited dedicated NCD prevention funding
- Mental health under-resourced
- Pharmaceutical Park without first-year capital funding
- Workforce retention reforms are not structurally financed

13. Balanced First-Year Verdict

Financial prioritisation of health increased markedly under the administration, as evidenced in both the 2025 and 2026 Budget Statements.

However, the sequencing of funding meant that:

- Legislative achievements occurred in 2025
- Major fiscal backing materialised in 2026
- Population-level health outcome impact in year one was therefore moderate

The administration's first-year health record can be characterised as legislatively strong, fiscally expanding, but operationally phased.

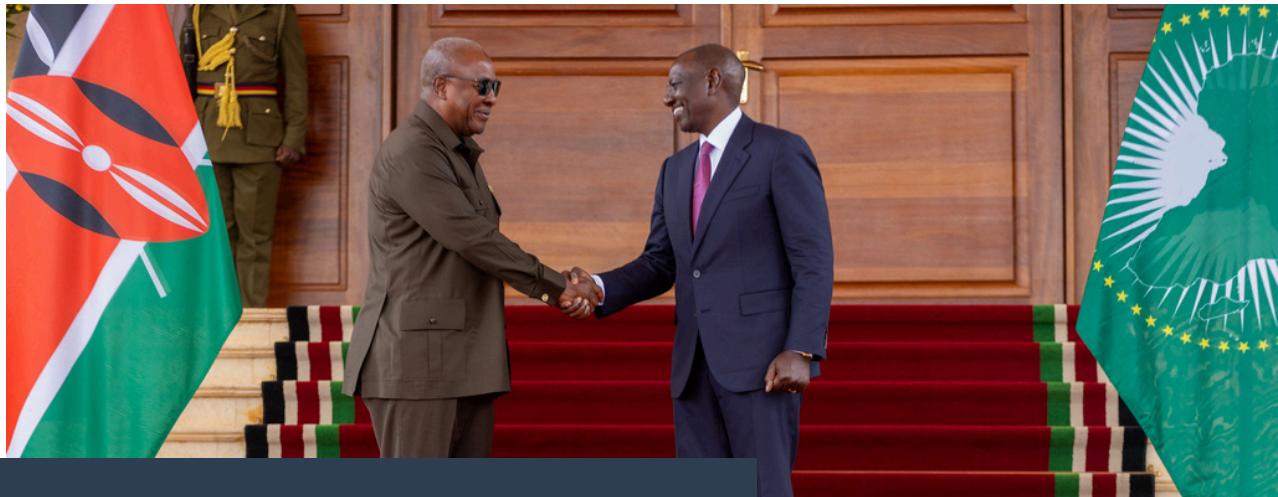
The real test of reform success lies in the efficiency and transparency of the 2026 budget execution.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Assessors:

Emmanuel Yeboah and Ambassador Francis Tsegah



INTRODUCTION

This section of the First-Year Assessment Report examines Ghana's foreign policy and regional integration under the Mahama II administration during its first year in office. It assesses how the government has (re)positioned Ghana within the West African sub-region, across the continent, and in the broader international system.

Mahama's return to office in January 2025 brought distinctive implications for foreign policy. Unlike a first-term president, he assumed office with prior executive experience (2012-2016) and an established diplomatic profile, including his previous tenure as Chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. This experience provided a foundation of regional relationships, familiarity with West Africa's security and governance challenges, and a predisposition toward Pan-African and multilateral engagement.

The analysis proceeds in five stages: first, it outlines the foreign policy terrain inherited in January 2025; second, it examines pre-inaugural diplomatic signals and the January 7, 2025, inauguration as a potential diplomatic reset; it assesses key policy actions undertaken in the first year. Finally, it critically examines achievements, risks, and strategic implications for Ghana's regional influence and global positioning.

1.0 The Foreign Policy Terrain Mahama Inherited

When President Mahama assumed office on 7 January 2025, he entered a regional and global environment marked by instability, geopolitical realignment, and economic constraint.

1.1 Sahelian Coups and Democratic Reversal

Between 2020 and 2023, West Africa saw at least seven successful coups, including two in Mali (2020, 2021^[55]), one in Guinea (2021^[56]), two in Burkina Faso (2022^[57]), and one in Niger (2023^[58]), as well as attempted coups in countries such as Sierra Leone^[59] and Guinea-Bissau. Now labelled by analysts as a 'coup belt', West Africa represents a significant reversal in democratic governance in a sub-region once viewed as a beacon of democracy.

1.2 Regional Political Fragmentation: The AES-ECOWAS Impasse

Following tensions with ECOWAS over sanctions, transition timelines, and the threat of the use of force, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and formally announced their withdrawal from ECOWAS on January 29, 2025^[60]. This marked one of the most significant fractures in West Africa's regional integration project since the bloc's establishment in 1975. The impasse reflected deeper disagreements over sovereignty, democratic conditionalities, and the perceived influence of external actors.

1.3 Regional Security Pressures and Geopolitical Reordering

Simultaneously, violent extremist activity in the Sahel intensified, with armed groups expanding operational reach. While Ghana had not experienced large-scale attacks, concerns about southward spillover and border vulnerabilities increasingly shaped national security discourse.

The growing presence of Russian-linked paramilitary actors in the Sahel further complicates the regional landscape. Allegations, including claims by former President Nana Akufo-Addo^[61] regarding arrangements between Burkina Faso and Russian mercenary forces, heightened diplomatic tensions and introduced geopolitical sensitivities into Ghana-Burkina relations. The bilateral relationship required careful recalibration to prevent deterioration while safeguarding Ghana's security interests.

[55] See: <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20250818-five-years-after-the-2020-coup-where-is-mali-today-assimi-goita>

[56] See: <https://www.theafricareport.com/in-depth/guinea-coup-the-fall-of-alpha-conde/>

[57] See: <https://issafrika.org/iss-today/burkina-faso-progress-and-problems-after-two-years-of-transition>

[58] See: <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/2023/the-coup-in-niger/>

[59] See: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67920473>

[60] See: <https://wademosnetwork.org/2025/02/sahel-states-withdrawal-from-ecowas-undermines-accountability/>

[61] See: <https://citinewsroom.com/2022/12/akufo-addo-alleges-burkina-faso-paid-russian-mercenaries-with-mine/>

1.4 Ghana's Diplomatic Position

At the global level, continued fallout from the Russia-Ukraine war, intensifying US-China rivalry, debates over multipolarity and BRICS expansion, and growing competition for influence in Africa shaped diplomatic calculations.

The outgoing Akufo-Addo administration had maintained a strong pro-ECOWAS and pro-constitutional governance stance. The erstwhile administration positioned Ghana as a defender of democratic order in the region. However, this posture intersected with tensions involving Sahelian juntas and emerging geopolitical realignments.

In sum, Mahama inherited a region politically fragmented, increasingly securitized, and geopolitically contested, alongside a constrained domestic economic environment. The central question was whether his administration would pursue mediation, recalibration, continuity, or repositioning in Ghana's regional diplomacy.

2.0 Pre-Swearing-in Diplomatic Signals (December 2024 - January 2025)

Even before his formal inauguration, President-elect John Dramani Mahama began signalling the contours of his intended foreign policy approach. These early signals must be interpreted in light of the National Democratic Congress' (NDC) 2024 manifesto, which articulated a comprehensive recalibration of Ghana's external relations anchored in Pan-Africanism, pragmatic multilateralism, economic diplomacy, and renewed regional leadership.

2.1 Early Regional Engagements

During the transition period following the 2024 elections, Mahama undertook visits to several African states, including Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. These engagements were widely interpreted as early diplomatic consultations aimed at rebuilding rapport with key African partners and strengthening regional ties. Beyond their symbolic value, these visits suggested an effort to operationalize manifesto commitments to "reinforce cordial and mutually supportive relations with all immediate and strategic neighbours" and to reactivate bilateral cooperation frameworks such as Permanent Joint Commissions for Cooperation (PJCCs).

2.2 Manifesto Framing: “Friendly” Foreign Policy

The 2024 manifesto^[63] of the National Democratic Congress provides a more substantive foundation for interpreting these early diplomatic signals. Rather than merely advocating a rhetorical “friendly” foreign policy, the document outlines a structured foreign policy doctrine with several interrelated pillars:

1. Reaffirmation of Pan-Africanism and commitment to continental integration, including support for a Union of African States and strengthened ECOWAS institutions;
2. Reintegration of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger into regional frameworks to enhance stability;
3. Reactivation of bilateral cooperation mechanisms to promote peace, security, and economic development;
4. Renewed activism in multilateral institutions (e.g., UN and Non-Aligned Movement) grounded in principled multilateralism;
5. Expansion of economic diplomacy, including the appointment of trade attaches and leveraging Ghana’s hosting of the AfCFTA Secretariat;
6. Stronger diaspora engagement and protection of Ghanaian nationals abroad;
7. Development of a Comprehensive Foreign Policy (CFP) with measurable output indicators.

This agenda indicates that the anticipated foreign policy shift was not simply tonal (i.e., more conciliatory diplomacy) but structural, emphasizing institutional re-engineering, economic statecraft, and continental leadership. It also reveals a critique of the preceding administration’s external relations as “unstable and incoherent,” thereby framing Mahama’s prospective diplomacy as corrective and restorative.

^[63] See: <https://cdn.modernghana.com/files/912024122209-k5fri7t2h0-resetting-ghana-ndc-manifesto-2024---full-text-1.pdf>

3.0 The Inauguration As Diplomatic Reset (January 7, 2025)

President John Dramani Mahama's inauguration on 7 January 2025 constituted a major diplomatic moment with implications extending beyond ceremony into the realm of regional influence and soft power projection.

3.1 Attendance of Over 20 Heads of States and Governments and the Participation of AES Leaders

The presence of over 20 African Heads of State and Government underscored Ghana's enduring diplomatic capital on the continent. Particularly noteworthy was the participation of leaders from the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), including Burkina Faso's leader, Ibrahim Traoré. Given the strained relations that had existed between some Sahelian juntas and ECOWAS, their presence suggested a willingness to re-engage with Accra and a recalibration of diplomatic engagement with Ghana. Further, the enthusiastic public reception accorded to Traoré also revealed an undercurrent of growing populist appeal of military-led governments among sections of the youth across West Africa.

3.2 Implications for Ghana's Soft Power

Beyond protocol, the inauguration illustrated Mahama's capacity to deploy soft power as a stabilizing and bridging actor in a polarized regional landscape. By successfully hosting leaders across democratic and military-led regimes, Ghana projected itself as a neutral convening space capable of facilitating dialogue even amid ideological and governance divides.

4.3 Inaugural Messaging

In his inaugural address^[64] on 7 January 2025, President John Dramani Mahama placed strong emphasis on themes of good neighbourliness, African solidarity, and the shared historical and cultural ties among West African states. His remarks framed Ghana's foreign policy outlook within a cooperative and conciliatory regional posture, highlighting the importance of peace, diplomacy, and collective regional progress. The rhetoric suggested a reset tone, framing Sahelian states not as adversaries but as "brothers" bound by shared history, geography, and mutual security interests. This framing suggested a deliberate attempt to lower diplomatic tensions and reopen channels of engagement with transition-led regimes in the Sahel.

[64] See: gbcghanaonline.com/speeches-and-lectures/mahama-text-inauguration/2025/

4.0 Foreign Policy Actions in First Year

Following the inauguration, the administration began operationalizing its foreign policy agenda through diplomatic engagements, institutional innovations, and strategic positioning within regional and global forums.

4.1 Operationalising the “Good Neighbourliness” Doctrine in Repairing Strained Relations

In line with the NDC manifesto pledge to “reinforce cordial and mutually supportive relations with all our immediate and strategic neighbours” and to “work strategically to reintegrate Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger^[65] into ECOWAS^[66],” the Mahama administration prioritised sustained diplomatic engagement with both Sahelian and coastal West African states. Beginning shortly after his inauguration in January 2025, President John Dramani Mahama embarked on early regional outreach that included visits and high-level engagements in key West African capitals such as Dakar^[67] and consultations with authorities in Mali^[68], Burkina Faso^[69], and Niger^[70]. These engagements, largely concentrated in the first quarter of 2025 and sustained throughout the year, were framed as efforts to maintain dialogue with both democratic governments and military-led transition regimes and to recalibrate previously tense bilateral relationships, particularly with Burkina Faso, where diplomatic tensions had been heightened by earlier allegations.

4.2 Appointment of a Special Envoy to the Sahel

One of the earliest foreign policy decisions of the administration was the appointment of a Special Envoy (to the Sahel) on 21 January 2025. The President justified the appointment on three interrelated grounds:

1. The growing spillover risk from Sahelian jihadist insurgencies toward coastal West Africa required sustained diplomatic engagement alongside security preparedness.

[65] See: <https://presidency.gov.gh/president-mahama-confers-with-niger-head-of-state/>

[66] See: <https://cdn.modernghana.com/files/912024122209-k5fri7t2h0-resetting-ghana-ndc-manifesto-2024---full-text-1.pdf>

[67] See: <https://dakar.mfa.gov.gh/his-excellency-john-dramani-mahama-president-of-the-republic-of-ghana-pays-working-visit-to-senegal>

[68] <https://presidency.gov.gh/mahama-champions-collaboration-trade-during-bamako-visit/>

[69] <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/President-Mahama-receives-loud-cheers-from-Burkinabes-upon-meeting-Captain-Traor-1974787>

[70] <https://presidency.gov.gh/president-mahama-confers-with-niger-head-of-state/>

2. Ghana sought to facilitate dialogue between the Sahelian transition governments and ECOWAS, particularly amid tensions surrounding the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and withdrawal disputes.
3. The envoy position directly reflected the NDC manifesto promise to “work strategically to reintegrate the fraternal countries of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger into ECOWAS” through engagement rather than isolation.

By institutionalising Sahel engagement through a dedicated envoy, the administration signalled that relations with the Sahel were not episodic but a central pillar of Ghana’s foreign policy. The move also aligned with broader manifesto commitments to strengthen relations with Francophone and UEMOA states and to pursue a pragmatic, Pan-African foreign policy responsive to contemporary geopolitical realities.

The appointment of a Special Envoy^[71] to the Sahel served to institutionalize engagement and signal Ghana’s willingness to act as a neutral mediator between AES states and ECOWAS, particularly amid perceptions that Ghana had previously aligned too closely with Côte d’Ivoire in regional disputes.

4.3 Economic Diplomacy: Ambassadorial KPIs

In September 2025, the government, as promised in its 2024 manifesto, introduced performance-based Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for ambassadors, heads of mission, and foreign service officials^[72]. The reform sought to align diplomatic representation with economic diplomacy objectives, including trade promotion, investment attraction, and measurable development outcomes. This represented an institutional innovation intended to link foreign policy more directly to national development priorities.

4.4 Multilateral and Global Engagement

The administration maintained active participation in ECOWAS, the African Union (AU), and broader global forums, positioning Ghana within ongoing discussions on regional security, economic cooperation, and global geopolitical balance. This sustained engagement reflected Ghana’s longstanding commitment to multilateral diplomacy and rules-based international cooperation, consistent with the NDC manifesto’s pledge to “renew activism at the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and other strategic arrangements” and to reassert Ghana’s leadership within ECOWAS and AU processes.

[71] <https://www.theafricareport.com/374852/ghana-mahama-puts-seasoned-veteran-in-post-to-liaise-with-sahel-states/>

[73] <https://www.gbcghanaonline.com/general/president-mahama-launches-first-kpis-for-envoys-to-drive-results-oriented-diplomacy/2025/>

4.5. South-South Solidarity and Humanitarian Diplomacy

The first year also saw renewed emphasis on South-South cooperation and humanitarian diplomacy, reflecting the manifesto's commitment to Pan-Africanism, diaspora engagement, and solidarity with the Global South. A notable example was Ghana's donation of approximately 40 metric tonnes of cocoa-based "Golden Tree" products to civilians affected by the humanitarian crisis in Gaza on 1 August 2025. This gesture symbolized solidarity with Palestine and reaffirmed Ghana's longstanding support for peaceful conflict resolution and humanitarian relief.

Beyond material assistance, the government repeatedly called for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and condemned the scale of civilian casualties, positioning Ghana within a moral-diplomatic tradition that combines humanitarian advocacy with multilateral diplomacy.

In the Caribbean, Ghana deployed an engineering reconstruction team to Jamaica to support post-hurricane rebuilding efforts, reinforcing historic Afro-Caribbean ties and Ghana's Pan-African and diaspora-oriented diplomatic identity.

Additionally, Ghana issued foreign policy statements on unfolding political crises in other regions, including developments in Venezuela and electoral and governance situations in Tanzania, underscoring its continued willingness to comment on international democratic and governance developments in line with its normative foreign policy tradition.

Taken together, these actions demonstrated an attempt to reposition Ghana as a promoter of a rules-based international order, combining humanitarian diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and South-South solidarity to reinforce its moral authority and soft-power influence within the Global South and the broader international system.

5.0 Analysis of Policy Actions Undertaken

The Mahama administration's first-year diplomatic initiatives have produced measurable effects, but also surfaced some concerns.

A. Neighbourliness Doctrine and Sahel Engagement

5.1.1 Bilateral and Regional Engagement: Sahel-Centric Focus

Bilateral outreach and revived Joint Permanent Commissions for Cooperation (PJCCs) have reinforced dialogue on border management, intelligence sharing, and economic cooperation. The approach also positions Ghana as a potential facilitator of dialogue between sanctioned regimes and the regional body, especially in a context where trust deficits among West African leaders have limited the effectiveness of collective mediation.

However, several critiques and institutional tensions emerge. First, the doctrine increasingly appears Sahel-centric, with Burkina Faso as the dominant reference point, raising questions about whether Ghana's neighbourhood policy risks being narrowly securitized around northern threats. Second, while bilateral engagement is not prohibited under ECOWAS frameworks, intensive outreach to military-led governments under sanctions risks being interpreted as diluting ECOWAS's normative stance on unconstitutional changes of government.

5.1.2 Coordination and Institutional Challenges

Coordination challenges have surfaced between Ghana's efforts and existing ECOWAS mediation structures, including previously appointed regional negotiators and envoys on the Sahel crisis. The creation of parallel diplomatic channels may create duplication and reduce coherence in regional engagement strategies. Similar concerns arise regarding inter-agency coordination domestically, where the relationship between the Special Envoy's office and other foreign policy and security institutions remains insufficiently institutionalized, and this may potentially affect policy coherence.

B. Global Posture: Non-Alignment and Normative Activism

5.1.3 Pragmatic Non-Alignment, Pan-African Solidarity and Global South Activism

Since assuming office in January 2025, President John Dramani Mahama has projected a foreign policy posture that can broadly be described as pragmatic non-alignment anchored in Pan-African solidarity and principle-based critiques of great-power conduct. While not a wholesale rupture from previous administrations, the tone and visibility of these positions represent a more vocal and normatively assertive diplomacy on continental justice, sovereignty, and the global rules-based order.

5.1.4 Continental Engagement and Cultural Diplomacy

In its first year, the Mahama II administration emphasized stronger intra-African engagement through bilateral cooperation, visa facilitation, and cultural diplomacy. Agreements such as visa waivers with countries like Zambia signaled support for continental mobility and regional integration. At the same time, the strategic use of cultural symbols, such as promoting traditional attire like fugu at high-level international events and institutionalising initiatives like “Fugu Day”, has projected Ghana’s cultural identity and enhanced soft power. Importantly, this approach represents a continuation and repackaging of the preceding administration’s cultural diplomacy posture, which foregrounded heritage and diaspora engagement through initiatives like the “Year of Return,” now expanded under Mahama as “Black Star Experience” to sustain Ghana’s positioning as a cultural and historical gateway to Africa. This has been reinforced through the designation of prominent creatives and public figures as Cultural Ambassadors, alongside the conferment of diplomatic passports on globally visible personalities such as Rocky Dawuni, Anita Erskine, Ibrahima Mahama, Jeremy Doku, and even lately iShowSpeed, to leverage their international platforms to amplify Ghana’s cultural diplomacy and global branding.

5.1.5 Positions on Global Conflicts: Principle-Based Activism

A defining feature of the first year has been the government’s unusually outspoken posture on major international crises, most notably the Israel-Palestine conflict. At the 2025 UN General Assembly, President Mahama adopted strong language condemning civilian suffering in Gaza and criticizing the perceived reluctance of major powers to confront violations of humanitarian norms. This stance was reinforced by the August 2025 humanitarian donation of cocoa-based products to Palestinian civilians, framed as both solidarity and symbolic diplomacy.



The administration's criticism of certain U.S. and Western actions, alongside support for a two-state solution, signals a shift in tone compared to the more cautious balancing adopted under Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. While framed as a principled defence of international law and human rights, such positions also introduce diplomatic sensitivities given Ghana's economic and security ties with Western partners. The late-2025 tensions following the detention and deportation of Ghanaian nationals at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport, and Ghana's reciprocal diplomatic protest, illustrate how norm-driven activism can generate immediate bilateral frictions that require careful diplomatic management.

The administration's argument appears to be that consistency in defending international law, condemning aggression whether in Ukraine or Gaza, enhances Ghana's credibility as a rules-based actor. Critics, however, caution that smaller states with limited economic autonomy must calibrate the intensity of public criticism toward major partners to avoid unintended strategic costs.

5.1.6 Pan-African Justice, Sovereignty and Norm Entrepreneurship

Another pillar of the administration's diplomacy is its emphasis on historical justice and African sovereignty. President Mahama's role as African Union Champion on Reparatory Justice and plans to advance global recognition of the transatlantic slave trade as a crime against humanity exemplify Ghana's attempt to exercise normative leadership within Pan-African discourse.

This approach extends to positions on democratic governance and sovereignty beyond West Africa. Ghana's public statement on post-election violence in Tanzania in late 2025, calling for credible investigations, was notable for departing from the traditional African norm of quiet diplomacy on domestic electoral disputes and signaling commitment to democratic standards.

Similarly, the government's strong condemnation of reported external intervention and the detention of President Nicolás Maduro in early 2026 underscored Ghana's defence of sovereignty and self-determination. By challenging unilateral military actions and warning against neo-imperial precedents, Ghana positioned itself as an advocate for Global South autonomy. Yet, the assertiveness of this stance generated domestic debate over whether Ghana risked overstretching diplomatically in theatres where its direct strategic interests are limited.

C. Institutional Governance and Policy Coherence

5.1.7 Governance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Beyond specific diplomatic initiatives, an important dimension of the first year concerns the governance and institutional management of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its missions abroad. Several issues have emerged relating to appointments, policy coordination, transparency, and strategic planning, all of which have implications for the effectiveness and coherence of Ghana's foreign policy.

Concerns have been raised regarding the balance between political appointees and career diplomats within ambassadorial and senior mission postings. Historically, Ghana has combined a limited number of political ambassadors with a strong core of career officers in the Ghana Foreign Service, preserving institutional memory and professional expertise. However, recent appointment patterns are perceived to reflect a growing tilt toward politically affiliated nominees occupying not only ambassadorial but also deputy ambassadorial roles (positions that traditionally served as part of the professional diplomatic pipeline). This shift, now echoed and justified in political discourse, has fuelled critiques that some postings risk becoming "jobs for the boys" rather than merit-based selections. The perception that senior A1-level officers are being bypassed raises concerns about morale, career progression, and the technical quality of diplomatic representation. While political appointments are not unusual in many systems, a sustained imbalance that sidelines experienced career diplomats could weaken institutional continuity and the professionalization of Ghana's foreign service.

Second, the absence of a clearly articulated and publicly accessible comprehensive foreign policy framework remains a structural concern. Although the administration has outlined foreign policy priorities through its manifesto commitments, diplomatic speeches, and performance-based Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for ambassadors, these elements do not yet amount to a consolidated strategic policy document that clearly sets out Ghana's long-term objectives, priorities, and guiding principles. In an era marked by shifting geopolitical alignments and intensified competition among external powers in Africa, the lack of such a framework may limit policy predictability, coordination, and long-term strategic planning.

Fourth, the introduction of performance-based KPIs for ambassadors represents an important institutional innovation intended to align diplomatic missions with economic and strategic national priorities. However, the limited public disclosure of these KPIs constrains external scrutiny and makes it difficult to assess whether missions are meeting the targets set by the government. Greater transparency in publishing broad priority areas and evaluation benchmarks would improve accountability and provide clearer signals regarding Ghana's diplomatic priorities.

Finally, issues of transparency have also surfaced in relation to sensitive bilateral arrangements, including cooperation with external partners on migration and deportation matters. While the government's willingness to support the repatriation of affected African nationals has been interpreted by some as pragmatic diplomacy, the limited public information regarding the terms and strategic trade-offs involved in such arrangements has generated concern. The opacity surrounding these agreements raises broader questions about parliamentary oversight, public accountability, and the balance between diplomatic pragmatism and transparency in foreign policy decision-making.

6.0 Overall Assessment

Overall, the first year of foreign policy under the second administration of John Dramani Mahama reflects calibrated continuity with selective recalibration. The government has sought to reposition Ghana as a bridge-building actor in a fragmented West African environment, prioritising engagement with Sahelian states while maintaining commitment to multilateralism and regional integration through ECOWAS. This approach has enhanced Ghana's diplomatic visibility and mediation potential, but also generated normative and coordination tensions, particularly regarding alignment with ECOWAS positions and the risk of parallel regional initiatives.

Globally, a more vocal, Pan-African and Global South-oriented diplomacy has strengthened soft-power appeal, though it raises questions about calibration given Ghana's material constraints. Institutionally, innovations such as KPI-driven economic diplomacy coexist with concerns about policy coherence, transparency, and the balance between political and career diplomatic appointments.

Going forward, amid an increasingly fluid and competitive geopolitical environment, Ghana could more systematically leverage existing policy advisory platforms with deep diplomatic expertise. Institutions such as the Council on Foreign Relations-Ghana, an independent, non-partisan body specializing in Ghana's foreign policy and regional affairs provides valuable reservoirs of experience that could be more deliberately engaged by state institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Special Envoy to the Sahel, to enhance strategic coordination, policy coherence, and evidence-informed diplomacy.



DEFENCE, SECURITY, AND PEACEBUILDING

Assessor:

Paul Nana Kwabena Aborampah Mensah



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As of January 2026, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) administration has concluded its inaugural year of governance. Guided by the “Resetting Ghana” Manifesto, the government has transitioned from a centralized, presidency-led security model to one defined by parliamentary oversight, institutional transparency, and correctional reform. Significant milestones include a 195% budgetary realignment toward the Ministry of the Interior and a focus on non-kinetic mediation in communal hotspots. However, challenges persist in the high cost of military deployments, the radical (yoyo) effect of institutional restructuring, and the modernization of equipment following recent technical failures.

1.0 Introduction: The 2024 Security Landscape

The security climate inherited in early 2025 was marked by a volatile convergence of pressures:

- **External:** The southward expansion of Sahelian violent extremism and shifting geopolitical alliances (e.g., the Alliance of Sahel States - AES) threatened northern frontiers.
- **Internal:** Ghana faced chronic overcrowding in prisons, the systemic politicization of recruitment to security services, and high-intensity communal violence across the country, most notably in Bawku, where protracted chieftaincy and land disputes frequently escalated despite military presence.

- **Democratic Pressure:** Consistent with previous cycles, the 2024 elections exposed persistent vulnerabilities in Ghana's security architecture. Critical gaps were identified in collation centre protection and result-management protocols. Furthermore, the transition phase was marred by a surge in "militarized" tactics and radicalized enforcement, characterized by the deployment of unidentified "masked men" and unauthorized raids on public agencies, state facilities, and the private residences of former appointees. These incidents sparked significant public and international concern regarding the professional conduct, accountability, and political neutrality of National Security operatives.
- **Specific Security Challenges:** The nation's peace was further challenged by a surge in farmer-herder conflicts, highway robberies, and increasingly radicalized, armed illegal mining operations. Furthermore, a rise in public demonstrations and labour strikes, coupled with strained police-citizen relations, created significant internal stability pressures.

2.0 Institutional Architecture & Governance

A core pillar of the "Reset" was the decoupling of security from the Presidency.

- **The Ministerial Shift:** Moving the National Security budget (GH¢2.35 billion) to the Ministry of the Interior fulfils the mandate of the Security and Intelligence Agencies Act, 2020 (Act 1030). The action fulfils Section 17 of Act 1030, which empowers the President to assign ministerial oversight. This shift addresses the historical lack of transparency by ensuring that security expenditures are subject to the reporting requirements of Section 47, effectively bringing internal peacekeeping and intelligence costs under the direct scrutiny of Parliament.
- **The Sustainability Question:** Critics note the noise around the ministerial realignment, bringing the National Security Coordinator under the Interior Ministry. The NPP favoured a standalone Ministry of National Security, and the NDC favours Interior oversight. While this shift increases Parliamentary scrutiny (e.g., vetting procurement and internal peacekeeping lines), frequent restructuring risks "turf wars" between the National Security Coordinator and the Interior Minister.
- **Parliamentary Role:** To ensure efficacy, the Parliamentary Select Committee on Defence and Interior must move beyond "confidentiality" excuses to provide real oversight on high-value assets, such as the presidential jet and intelligence spending.

3.0 Managing Communal & Resource Conflicts

3.1 The “Bawku Strategy” & Mediation

Historical Context: Similar to previous interventions (e.g., the Yendi Chieftaincy crisis), the State has historically employed a hybrid of kinetic military force and traditional mediation to address the Bawku conflict. For decades, the reliance on “law and order” measures, such as prolonged curfews and tactical raids, yielded limited results. These efforts were frequently undermined by intelligence failures, as long-tenured NIB (formerly BNI) officers were often perceived as having developed partisan local interests. While the Otumfuo-led Committee of Eminent Chiefs eventually provided a mediation roadmap, the underlying ethnic and political tensions remain volatile.

Current Strategy: The current administration has formalized a Security-plus-Mediation model. This strategy seeks to empower the National and Regional Houses of Chiefs with the technical and financial resources necessary to expedite more than 300 pending chieftaincy cases nationwide, thereby preventing them from escalating into active conflict zones such as Bawku.



The Challenge: Strategic permanent military deployment is financially unsustainable. In the 2023/2024 period, the Bawku Security Task Force required a monthly allocation of approximately GH¢6 million (totalling GH¢72 million annually) to maintain peace.

Path Forward: Ultimately, the resolution of chieftaincy conflicts in Ghana depends on more than just funding for traditional councils. True success hinges on:

- **Political Neutrality:** Ensuring that state power is not weaponized to favour specific factions during political transitions. This requires a significant reduction in inflammatory campaign rhetoric and “political profiling,” where candidates make promises or statements that suggest an alignment with one side of a chieftaincy or land dispute for electoral gain.
- **Constitutional Compliance:** Adhering to Article 270 of the 1992 Constitution, which guarantees the independence of the chieftaincy institution and mandates its de-politicization.
- **Trust-Building:** Bridging the deep-seated mistrust between security enforcement agencies and the local citizenry through transparent, neutral, and consistent engagement.

3.2 Galamsey & Resource Violence

To tackle illegal mining, the government launched “Water Guard” units and replaced sporadic raids with permanent enclaves using the National Anti-Illegal Mining Operations Secretariat (NAIMOS). This aims to decouple local militias from gold exploitation. However, communal violence remains high where ‘land guard’ systems have not yet been successfully transitioned into licensed, unarmed security firms.

4.0 Professionalization & Human Resource Reform

Recruitment and Promotions: To end the systemic “politicization of the uniform,” a comprehensive Human Resource Audit is currently underway. The administration must decisively address the “tragedy of recruitment,” a legacy issue where partisan quotas have historically superseded merit-based entry. Furthermore, the practice of retiring young, capable Inspectors General of Police (IGPs) and other top brass for purely political reasons must cease. Such actions deplete the leadership pool and create ad incentives for career officers, who may feel compelled to align with political factions to secure their tenure.

- **Militia Disbandment:** Progress in this area remains in the audit phase. To restore public trust and uphold the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999), the government must move beyond identification and finalize the removal of all partisan vigilante elements from the state payroll and security agencies.
- **The “Neutral Audit” Mandate:** To be effective, the human resource audit must be conducted through a strictly professional lens, devoid of partisan influence. This neutrality is critical to preventing the perception of a political purge, which risks retaliatory actions from opposing parties upon a change in government. To break this cycle of “winner-takes-all” security management, the audit must be institutionalized as a standardized, non-biased administrative routine. By anchoring these exercises in objective metrics, the State can ensure that the ultimate goal is achieved: the establishment of merit-based, professional, and competent security institutions that serve the Republic, not the party in power.
- **Political Neutrality:** Ensuring that state power is not weaponized to favour specific factions during political transitions. This requires a significant reduction in inflammatory campaign rhetoric and “political profiling,” where candidates make promises or statements that suggest an alignment with one side of a chieftaincy or land dispute for electoral gain.
- **Constitutional Compliance:** Adhering to Article 270 of the 1992 Constitution, which guarantees the independence of the chieftaincy institution and mandates its de-politicization.
- **Trust-Building:** Bridging the deep-seated mistrust between security enforcement agencies and the local citizenry through transparent, neutral, and consistent engagement.

3.2 Galamsey & Resource Violence

To tackle illegal mining, the government launched “Water Guard” units and replaced sporadic raids with permanent enclaves using the National Anti-Illegal Mining Operations Secretariat (NAIMOS). This aims to decouple local militias from gold exploitation. However, communal violence remains high where ‘land guard’ systems have not yet been successfully transitioned into licensed, unarmed security firms.

5.0 Pillar Performance Analysis (2025)

Pillar	Key Achievement	Status/Challenge
Border Defense	Operational Maidabuuri & Jagboi Air Base	Sahelian drift remains a high threat
Correctional Reform	Inmate feeding increased from GHC 1.80 to GHC 5.00	Prison congestion remains at 150% capacity
Narcotics Control	Legislation Framework for Act 1019 (Cannabis)	Cross-border drug running persists
Disaster Preparedness	NADMO Fund GHC 100M established	Digital integration with military is pending
Public Safety	Gun Amnesty Program (December 2025-January 2026)	High Civil Society support but recovery rate was low

6.0 Equipment & Technical Capabilities

The Resetting Ghana agenda faces a critical modernization crisis. Decades of equipment fatigue and technological gaps have culminated in high-profile failures, most notably the August 6, 2025, Harbin Z9 helicopter crash in the Akrofuom District. This tragedy, which claimed eight lives including two cabinet ministers, serves as a stark catalyst for a mandatory overhaul of the national security logistics chain.

- **New Threats: Cyber & Electronic Warfare:** The 2026 focus has shifted from traditional guarding to counter-insurgency and digital defense.
- **Drone Warfare:** Following the January 2026 presidential directive, Ghana is establishing its first National Cyber and Electronic Warfare Center in Tamale. This hub will deploy strategic drones for border surveillance (particularly along the northern frontier) and response to asymmetric threats.

- **Cybersecurity:** Under the Cyber Security Act, 2020 (Act 1038), the administration has inaugurated a Joint Cyber Security Committee to secure critical national information infrastructure against increasingly sophisticated non-state actors.
- **Compliance Enforcement (Audit & Update):** The 2026 Budget has allocated resources for an immediate “Retooling Audit.”
 - **Mandatory Fleet Update:** In direct response to the Z9 crash report, the Air Force is beginning the procurement of four new helicopters and two aircraft equipped with Terrain Awareness and Warning Systems (HTAWS) and advanced navigational infrastructure to replace aging platforms.
- **Local Industry & The Kumasi Hub:** To mitigate the escalating “security cost” of imports, the government is leveraging the 48 Engineers Regiment at the Kumasi Machinery and Technology Park. The hub is being resourced to produce 40% of all security uniforms, boots, and tactical gear locally. This initiative is integrated into the 24-Hour Economy policy, creating three shifts for production to ensure self-reliance and reduce the foreign exchange burden on the Ministry of Defence.

7.0 Recommendations and Conclusion

As I conclude this assessment of the “Resetting Ghana” Security Agenda, it is clear that the administration’s first year (2025) has been a period of significant structural transition. By shifting from a model of centralized executive control to one of parliamentary oversight and specialized enforcement (such as NAIMOS), the government has laid a foundation for more accountable governance. However, the “Reset” is now at a critical juncture where policy intent must meet fiscal and political reality.

7.1. Summary of Key Challenges

- **Fiscal Overstretch:** The high cost of permanent deployments, specifically the GH¢6 million monthly spend in Bawku, strains a national budget already balancing IMF-led fiscal consolidation with urgent retooling needs after the Harbin Z9 crash.
- **The “Neutrality” Perception:** There is a persistent risk that the Human Resource Audit and militia disbandment efforts could be perceived as “political purges,” potentially triggering a retaliatory cycle in future transitions.

- **Institutional “Yoyo” Risks:** Frequent reshuffling of security agencies between the Presidency and the Ministry of the Interior risks a loss of institutional memory and creates friction between political leadership and career intelligence officers.
- **Modernization Gaps:** While drone and cyber-warfare are prioritized, the procurement process must be transparent to avoid the technical and safety failures that have plagued aging Air Force assets, and all processes must be subjected to parliamentary scrutiny for transparency and accountability purposes.
- **Domestic Security Pressures:** National stability was significantly tested by the persistence of farmer-herder conflicts and a surge in organized highway robberies. The security landscape was further complicated by increasingly radicalized illegal mining (galamsey) operations. This could create a system in which non-state actors form alliances with transnational crime networks to procure military-grade weapons and encrypted communication systems. Furthermore, although the Otumfour’s mediation appears to have reduced tension in Bawku, the government’s actions on the report and subsequent radical responses through press conferences and demonstrations by the Mamprusis demand a deep reflection on land and chieftaincy issues in Ghana.

7.2. Strategic Recommendations

- **Institutionalize Independent Oversight:** To safeguard the Human Resource Audit of the security services, it must be overseen by a multi-stakeholder body (including the Public Services Commission, National Peace Council, and a representative of CSOs) to ensure it remains a merit-based, non-partisan exercise.
- **Fast-track the Community Service Act:** This is a “low-hanging fruit” for 2026. Prioritizing non-custodial sentencing will immediately reduce prison congestion without the massive capital expenditure of new facilities.
- **Establish a Permanent Chieftaincy Resolution Fund:** Transition away from ad-hoc military “peacekeeping” by resourcing the Judicial Committees of the Houses of Chiefs to resolve the 300+ pending cases that serve as triggers for communal violence, and depoliticize the institution as provided in the 1992 Constitution.

- **Decentralize NAIMOS Oversight:** Empower Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) to play a frontline role in anti-illegal mining enforcement, ensuring that cleared sites are protected by local authorities rather than distant military task forces.
- **Ensure Police Professionalism:** Revisit the 2017 Police Transformation Agenda and implement its commitments and provisions, especially the sections related to democratic policing, professionalism, and the complaints handling systems, to improve police professionalism and reduce the increasing citizens-police attacks.
- **Modernize Elections Prosecution Strategy:** There is a disconnect between legislation and enforcement regarding electoral violence in Ghana. Despite the passage of the Vigilantism and Related Offences Act, 2019 (Act 999), law enforcement continues to rely on the antiquated Act 29 of 1960. To significantly reduce electoral violence, it is imperative to leverage the specific, rigorous framework of Act 999, which was custom-built for these modern challenges.

7.3. Conclusion

The inaugural year of the 'Resetting Ghana' agenda has successfully pivoted the national security discourse from a focus on 'force' to one of 'reform.' By migrating the security budget to the Ministry of the Interior, the administration has fulfilled the mandate of Act 1030, marking a pivotal shift toward transparency. However, the ultimate success of this agenda will be measured not by the momentum of its 'quick wins,' but by its capacity to build institutions that endure beyond political cycles.

For Ghana to truly 'reset,' its security services must be shielded from political capture. Through the integration of evidence-based planning, the administration can construct a resilient, future-proof security architecture. The objective remains steadfast: a security sector that upholds the Constitution, protects all citizens equitably, and serves as a stable anchor for Ghana's democratic and economic prosperity. As the foundation has been laid in this first year, we, as security experts, will continue to observe and analyse how these initial steps translate into tangible achievements over the remainder of President Mahama's term."

CDD-Ghana

No.95 Quarcoo Lane,
North Airport Residential Area, Accra.

Digital Address: GA-086-9627



P.O. Box LG 404, Legon – Accra, Ghana

Telephone: +233 30 277 6142 | 777214 | 784293/4

Mobile: +233 24 435 0266 or +233 27 774 4777

Email: info@cddgh.org

Website: www.cddgh.org