

# ENHANCING CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN CROSS BORDER SECURITY: THE CASE OF GHANA

Nana Kwabena Aborampah Mensah  
Mawusi Yaw Dumenu  
Alessandro Anibi

## Key points

CDD-Ghana implemented a Border Security Project to raise security consciousness and enhance citizen participation in cross-border security in Ghana through its Security Sector Governance program. Under this project, citizens were involved in the design and implementation of counter-terrorism measures.

Border communities have their own cultures, reflecting the melding of sub-communities on either side of the internationally recognized border. Unfortunately, the open nature of these borders facilitate social cohesion but undermine security provision.

Some assessments on the risk of terrorism in Ghana indicate that the threat is getting closer due to the rise in the number of attacks along border communities in neighboring countries. The limited presence of security agencies in border communities, the lack of data, poor inter-security and international collaboration and the challenges with logistics increase the threat that terrorist groups pose in Ghana's northern parts.

Stakeholders within the security sector should enhance and deepen intra-agency, interagency, and international cooperation.

## INTRODUCTION

Border security issues are of concern to governments, particularly after the 9/11 attacks. In Africa, the recent spread of the Jihadist movements across the Sahel region, coupled with the perceived threat of terrorism and issues of porous borders, have compelled many governments to secure their borders. However, many African countries face the difficult task of securing their borders. Numerous challenges encountered in this regard means that boundaries have become transnational crime zones. In recent times, global security threats and terrorist acts are increasingly gaining ground in the West African Sub-Region. Ghana being part of the region, is at risk of being affected. Given these challenges, many countries have introduced new border management strategies with the twin objectives of improving security and facilitating trade and transit.

Consequently, the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) implemented a Border Security Project to raise security consciousness and enhance citizen participation in cross-border security in Ghana through its Security Sector Governance program. A vital component of the project was citizens' involvement in the design and implementation of counter-terrorism measures. With the assumption that security is a transnational phenomenon with border communities sharing similar ethnic identities and families on both sides and depending economically on each other, the project used inclusive and participatory mechanisms and tools to ensure that the voices of a broad range of stakeholders, including residents of border communities, were central to border management strategies. Therefore, empowering border communities while building the capacities of Border Agencies and increasing the physical presence of the State in border areas is very important to enhance interaction with local populations better, to articulate legitimate law and order efforts, as well as to protect and promote the informal cross-border trade that is often critical to their livelihoods and food security.

This policy paper discusses the following:

1. The rationale for border management
2. An overview of terrorism in Ghana
3. The nature and extent of terrorism in the West African sub-region and the Sahel, and
4. Provides a list of recommendations for strengthening border security and reducing the threat of terrorism to Ghana

## 1. RATIONAL FOR BORDER MANAGEMENT

The term border is often associated with a boundary established to control and, in some cases, to prevent the flow of people, goods, and services into a country. Borders define a country's sovereignty by determining its territory and where its administration and jurisdiction begins and ends. Nations are responsible for managing their internal affairs, which implies that they exercise control over licit and illicit flows and goods into and out of their countries.

Border management connotes the process of border security and border operations<sup>1</sup>. Border security is the act of protecting our borders from the illegal movement of weapons, drugs, contraband goods, and people while promoting lawful entry and exit. Border security, therefore, focuses on preventing unauthorized crossings. Border operations seek to speed-up passage with minimal interference for authorized people and goods<sup>2</sup>.

Managing a country's border is a complex activity because border management strategies must ensure that territories are secured, but at the same time there is the need to create an environment that conforms to national and international protocols. Legally, there should be free flow of goods and persons across borders, but there is also the need to address the numerous security challenges and illegal trans-border activities. The question of effective and efficient border management, therefore, hinges on two pillars:

- The need to prevent illegal and criminal activities at the borders
- The obligation to preserve the economic vitality that a country gains through trans-border trade

The balance between security and the flow of people and goods will undoubtedly vary depending on the perceived risks, threats, and vulnerabilities in the border area, vis-à-vis the strength and capacity of the institutions in charge of the border management.

In Ghana, border management within the broader context of national security is the Ghana Immigration Service<sup>3</sup>, the Police Service<sup>4</sup>, and the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority<sup>5</sup>. These security agencies are stationed at the entry points of the country. They are mandated to ensure border management and security, focusing on reducing irregular migration, human trafficking, smuggling of goods, and other cross-border crimes.



THESE SECURITY AGENCIES ARE STATIONED AT THE ENTRY POINTS OF THE COUNTRY TO ENSURE BORDER MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY, FOCUSING ON REDUCING IRREGULAR MIGRATION, HUMAN TRAFFICKING, SMUGGLING OF GOODS, AND OTHER CROSS-BORDER CRIMES.

1 Gerstein, D. M., Adler, A., Davenport, A. C., Grill, B., Kadlec, A. & Young, W. (2020) Managing International Borders: Balancing Security with the Licit Flow of People and Goods. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018.

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE290.html>

2 Ibid

3 It operates under the Immigration Service Law of 1989(PNDC Law 226) and the Immigration Service Act of (2000)

4 Under the Police Force Act 350 (1970), protect life and property, detects crime, apprehends and prosecutes offenders and promotes peace and order. Under (Act 30) of Criminal and other Offence Act of 1960, the police can arrest and search any person, premises and vessels without warrant

5 The Ghana Revenue Authority Act, 2009 (Act 791) establishes the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue with the responsibility for the collection of Import Duty, Import VAT, Export Duty, Petroleum Tax, Import Excise and other taxes, levies and fees. The Customs Division also ensures the protection of revenue by preventing smuggling.

## 2.TERRORISM, CROSS - BORDER CRIMES AND INSECURITY IN GHANA

Ghana continues to suffer from cross-border insecurities due to weakness of border enforcement, smuggling driven by informal cross-border trade, human trafficking, the smuggling of light weapons, and the activities of terrorist groups across the northern neighbors – Burkina Faso and Mali. The vibrant nature of communities often complicates security issues in border communities. A mix of people live and work through flows of trade in goods and services in transit regularly. In Ghana, many of the border communities share common languages, ethnic and family ties. Border communities do not differ much from one country to another. They share common characteristics with the nations to which they belong. These communities have their own cultures, reflecting the melding of sub-communities on either side of the internationally recognized border. Unfortunately, the open nature of these borders facilitate social cohesion but undermine security provision.

The border communities are generally reliant on the commerce that flows across international boundaries and the informal networks that have developed as a result. For instance, along with the border communities of Paga, Hamile, Kulungugu in the North, Elubo in the West, and Aflao in the East, informal cross-border trade is the essential income-generating activity. Consequently, it has a significant impact on livelihood. Regrettably, smuggling through unapproved routes dominate the business activities in the border communities and account for substantial losses to the national Treasury. Ordinarily, smugglers have no specific business line that they trade-in. Instead, they monitor the market situation across the countries and respond accordingly. However, across Ghana's borders, specific illicit trades are noted for particular routes. For example, smuggling along the country's northern borders takes the diversion of fertilizers and fuel from Ghana to Togo and Burkina Faso and vehicles from Libya to Ghana. Smuggling is also used for overtly criminal purposes, such as syndicated theft of motorbikes from Burkina Faso and Niger for sale in Ghana. Cattle rustling is also recorded along the borders. Along the Western border, cigarettes are commonly the most heavily smuggled goods by these traders. Currency exchange is highly developed in the border cities of Aflao and Elubo.

Apart from petty smuggling and theft, the threats from terrorist groups are considered a significant driver of insecurity along border communities in Ghana. The insecurity level is still high in countries that share the northern boundary with Ghana, especially Mali and Burkina Faso. The address on January, 8, 2020, by Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the UN Special Representative and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) to the UN Security Council, summarises the security situation in the Sahel region. He states that there is an "unprecedented" rise in terrorist violence across the region. He emphasizes that "the geographic focus of terrorist attacks has shifted eastwards from Mali to Burkina Faso and is increasingly threatening the West African Coastal States." Indeed, the West African states have been under severe terrorist invasion. Both countries that have already suffered attacks of terrorism and those who are yet to experience any terrorist strike are on the constant lookout.

“The vibrant nature of communities often complicates security issues in border communities. A mix of people live and work through flows of trade in goods and services in transit regularly.”



*Anti-Terrorist Units have been established in all structures, i.e., Police, National Security Council Secretariat, and the Army, and allocated resources to detect subversive activities. Reforms have been introduced to allow the staff of the Ghana Immigration Service to bear ammunition during patrols. Immigration Authority Intelligence-sharing with Togo, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire is organized and well structured.*



### 3. THE SPREAD OF TERRORISM TOWARDS GHANA'S BORDERS

Violent extremist groups are no longer confined to the Sahelian states of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Chad. Their threat is spilling over into the northern regions of West African coastal countries, particularly Benin, Ghana, Togo, and La Cote D'Ivoire. The spread becomes more alarming with the reported incidence of terrorist attacks along border communities with the coastal states. For example, terrorists crossed from Burkina Faso to attack a mobile customs unit in the northern region of Togo, leaving five dead.

The incidents in Ghana so far have been minor and have not led to any attacks or deaths. For example, one incident happened in January 2018, when three suspects were arrested in Accra's suburb for possessing seven grenades<sup>6</sup>. Sources stated that the explosives were intercepted based on police intelligence. In June 2019, a 55-year-old Burkinabe with a loaded handgun was arrested in a church in Hamile, located on the border to Burkina Faso, during church service one Sunday<sup>7</sup>. The suspect's license for the gun was only valid in Burkina Faso. The case was still under investigation at the time of producing this paper.

Some assessments on the risk of terrorism in Ghana indicate that the threat is getting closer due to the rise in the number of attacks along border communities in neighboring countries. The limited presence of security agencies in border communities, the lack of data, poor inter-security and international collaboration, and the challenges with logistics increase the threat that terrorist groups pose in Ghana's northern parts. However, Ghana is not considered a soft target due to its preventive measures through the security agencies. For example, Anti-Terrorist Units have been established in all structures, i.e., Police, National Security Council Secretariat, and the Army, and allocated resources to detect subversive activities. Reforms have been introduced to allow the staff of the Ghana Immigration Service to bear ammunition during patrols. Immigration Authority Intelligence-sharing with Togo, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire is organized and well structured. Security cooperation among Togo, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire to maintain a constant presence along the borders have been institutionalized. In addition to the above interventionist mechanisms, there have been several joint operations among the security services of Togo, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire along the borders of the three countries.

### 4. ENGAGING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN COMBATING BORDER INSECURITIES IN GHANA

Engaging border communities in combating transnational organized crime will improve the security context and enhance social cohesion. Border communities are trade hubs where a mix of people make a livelihood. Unfortunately, these communities face several socio-economic and security vulnerabilities that

6 myjoyonline.com, 2018

7 Adjetey (2019)

prompt their involvement in cross-border illicit activities. Rather than considering these illegal activities as driving the insecurity context, border communities generally regard them as sources of livelihood and survival means. As a vital component of the trafficking chain and the most accessible link, border communities tend to be the critical entry point to combat transnational organized crime. Therefore, engaging them in fighting cross-border crime could help to achieve at least three main results<sup>8</sup> – break the cross-border illicit traffic chain, increase awareness about the threat of terrorism and violent extremist activities, and facilitate community rebuilding efforts and reinforce social cohesion among border communities.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. Recommendations for Ghana

In the case of Ghana, a specific set of recommendations must be presented. These recommendations have to cut across different levels from border communities to the national level institutions. Specific recommendations are as follows:

1. Undertake awareness-raising campaigns within the border communities on the threat caused by transnational organized crime. This could be done through local civil society organizations by mobilizing local leaders and their respective communities to foster endogenous responses befitting the context.
2. Define and implement alternative livelihood sources for local communities as illegal activities are viewed as means of survival. That should be realized collaboratively with state authorities and local communities to foster endogenous and sustainable solutions in the context of a Local Economic Development (LED) program.
3. Stakeholders within the security sector should enhance and deepen intra-agency, interagency, and international cooperation. The “Fusion Center” model established in Accra must be decentralized and similar inter-agency command centers established at the local border regions/districts.
4. The local Fusion Command Centers, if established, will facilitate joint operations in coordinated cross-border patrols, as well as joint multi-agency and interdisciplinary operation exercises.
5. Counter-terrorism operations should focus on combating transnational organized crime as a step to minimize terrorism.
6. The government should provide adequate resources and support to the joint intelligence fusion center to improve border security and combat border crimes.

“Engaging border communities is vital in achieving these results – breaking the cross-border illicit traffic chain, increasing awareness about the threat of terrorism and violent extremist activities, and facilitating community rebuilding efforts to reinforce social cohesion.”



UNDERTAKE AWARENESS-RAISING CAMPAIGNS WITHIN BORDER COMMUNITIES ON THE THREAT CAUSED BY TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME.

8 Soumahoro, M. (2020) Community Engagement in Fighting Transnational Organised Crime in the Liptako-Gourma. Policy Brief. Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Vol. 1 | Issue 1 | June 2020

“ Government must close unapproved routes as much as possible. This can be done through border walls, fencing etc, to prevent the easy and unchecked entry of contraband goods, including guns.”

7. The Government must equip the main security agencies that manage the borders with the needed equipment such as tracking devices, including Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES) to meet the ever-changing and dynamic security environment.
8. Since most border security cases are recorded through unapproved routes, the government must close such routes as much as possible. This can be done through border walls, fencing etc, to prevent the easy and unchecked entry of contraband goods, including guns.
9. Almost all known Ghana's entry borders are "artificial" borders. By this, it was either created by the colonialists or for demographic purposes. As a result, there are many overlapping settlements across the borders; this makes it necessary to involve the communities across borders in border security. This can be done through using community watch groups and encouraging the setting up of inter-community associations across the borders, regularize their activities, and incentivize them to check any strange movements across such borders.
10. The Ministry of Tourism and the hospitality industry's operatives must develop special programs to educate their frontline staff and raise awareness of necessary security checks and acceptable visitor standards. Conscious of the fact that visitors to the country are more likely to use the services of the industry more than other places – hotels, restaurants, taxis, among others.
11. Finally, special accommodation and rent guides must be prepared for homeowners who rent out houses and apartments to others, including foreigners, to ensure proper checks into their backgrounds and adequate documentation for tracing if need be. For example, a law that binds landlords to submit to rent control, a file of details of people who occupy their premises. A form to take the particulars of tenants must be designed by the rent control department and the Police Service to capture needed information that could help in proper investigations if there are problems.



RAISE AWARENESS OF NECESSARY SECURITY CHECKS AND ACCEPTABLE VISITOR STANDARDS

## 5.2. Conclusion

Growing insecurity across border communities necessitates a new approach to border management. The incidence and spread of terrorism and violent extremism in the sub-region from northern states of Chad, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, and further down to the coastal countries of Ghana, Togo, and Benin is alarming. Ghana's vulnerability to the threat of terrorism is not

"imagined" but "real" and "emerging" to a higher degree. Ghana's general risk to terrorism depends on domestic factors and external conditions. Drivers of terrorism and violent extremism in Ghana do not vary significantly from known causes such as poverty, unemployment, poor governance, porous borders, corruption, unreliable institutions, transnational organized crimes, political alienation, and religious radicalization.

So far, the incidents of terrorism in Ghana have been minor and have not led to attacks and deaths. However, some assessments on the risk of terrorism in Ghana by foreign governments are rather bleak, with the United Kingdom government cautioning that terrorist attacks are imminent in Ghana with the threat of terrorist acts from groups like "AQIM, as well as ISWA, present a threat to the country. Ghana's active participation in peacekeeping operations by providing military support to troubled countries such as Mali, Ivory Coast, Sudan, and other parts of the region has been identified as an avenue that exposes Ghana to security threats. Again, the availability of small arms and light weapons in the country poses a significant threat to Ghana's stability.

Border communities are inextricably part of the cross-border illicit chain. Residents of border communities engage in cross-border criminal activities, which is enabled by several factors: poverty, unemployment, porous borders, the limited presence of security agencies, and the "absence of the state." Several categories of people with diverse social backgrounds are involved in cross-border illicit activities. However, their line of involvement varies depending on the location of the community. Border communities serve as safe havens for extremist groups who stand to partake and benefit from the vibrant illicit business to support and sustain their operations. Consequently, engaging border communities in addressing transnational organized crime appears to be critical to resolving the border insecurity.

“Engaging border communities in addressing transnational organized crime is critical to resolving border insecurity.”

**Nana Kwabena Aborampah Mensah** is Senior Programs Officer and Team Lead for CDD-Ghana's Local & Urban Governance and Security Sector Governance.

**Mawusi Dumenu** is a Research Analyst with CDD-Ghana

**Alessandro Anibi** is consultant to the Security Sector Governance Team at CDD-Ghana.



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