



GHANA CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

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Border Communities Monitoring, Community Sensitization and Radio Programs Report for October to December 2021

Introduction

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) under the “**Enhancing Citizens Participation in Border Security**” project, continues to monitor and report on issues related to border security and facilitate continuous engagement between residents of border communities and the various security agencies present in the targeted border communities. Since mid-August of 2021, CDD-Ghana trained and deployed 85 local champions/volunteers to 44 selected border districts across 10 out of the 16 regions of Ghana.

The objective of this exercise is to enhance the security awareness of citizens along, and across border communities as a proactive step in contributing to strengthening Ghana’s border security in the face of surging cross border crimes and external security threats, particularly violent extremism and terrorism in West Africa. CDD-Ghana released its first report on the Border Communities Monitoring, Community Sensitization and Radio Programs, which covered August to September 2021. This second report contains findings on Border Communities Monitoring, Community and Radio Sensitization Programs covering October to December 2021.

This report is a compilation of individual reports received from all 85 trained volunteers. The volunteers monitored 369 border communities within the reporting period and conducted 267 community sensitization programs. Below are the key highlights from analyses of the information submitted by the volunteers.

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Summary of Findings

- The current security situation in the border communities has been generally calm, with a few reported criminal cases that have received the attention of security agencies present in the respective project districts.
- There appears to be a seemingly good relationship between residents in the border communities observed and the security agencies.
- In majority of the communities monitored, there were no reported cases of human rights abuses. However, in a few communities, there were observed issues of human rights abuses such as child trafficking and child labour.
- Radio and community sensitization programs facilitated by the volunteers have enhanced knowledge of residents in border communities on cross border crimes and external security threats.

Main Findings

Security awareness and consciousness among citizens in border communities monitored

According to the assessment by the trained community volunteers who monitored the selected border communities, the current security situation in about 8 in 10 (76%) of the communities observed was generally good. However, in 41 (11%) of the communities monitored in Bono, Oti, Upper East, Western North, Savannah, Northern, Volta, Western and Upper West regions, the volunteers rated the current security situation as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

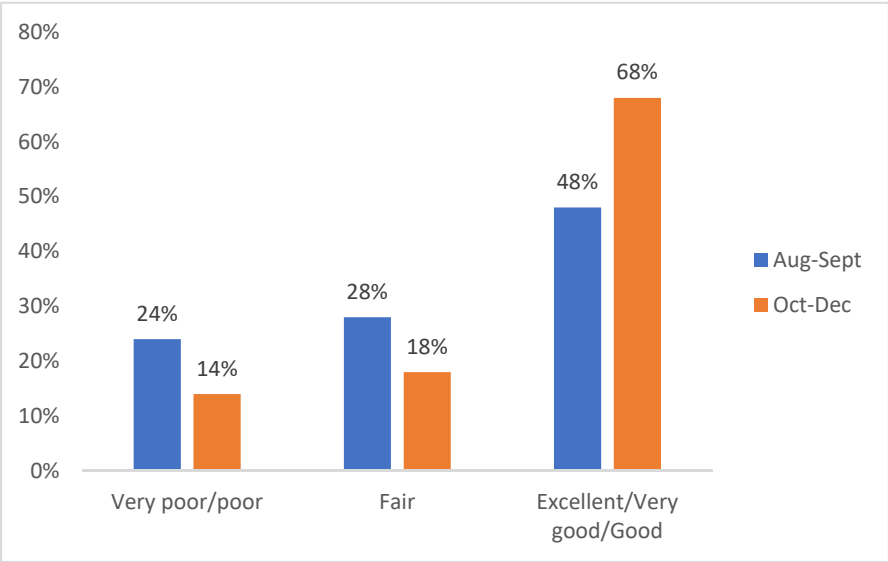


Figure 1: Level of security awareness among residents of border communities

Regarding the level of security awareness among residents of border communities across the country, 68% of the communities monitored, rated their security awareness level as 'excellent', 'very good', 'good' compared to 48% in the first report. However, this monitoring round covered more communities than the previous one. Also, 65 out of the 369 (18%) communities monitored rated the awareness of

border residents on security as 'fair', depicting an improvement in security awareness from 28% in the first report. In comparison, 53 (14%) of the communities monitored were rated as 'very poor' or 'poor'.

The volunteers also reported that about 9 out of 10 (91%) of the communities monitored, there were no visible threats of terrorism or violent extremist activities. However, in about 9% of the communities in the Bono, Oti, Upper East, Western North, Northern, Volta, Western and North East regions, the volunteers reported either observing or hearing about suspected criminal activities and cases of illegal cross-border activities, including smuggling of goods.

Some of the cases reported include the following:

- Officers of Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) at Kulungugu in the Upper East Region arrested a foreign national in connection with a seized gun, some quantity of bullets and a cutlass. The suspect was handed over to the police for further investigation.
- Five men were arrested at Tonasuano in the Volta Region for concealing four guns and 200 DB cartridges in a bag of charcoal.
- At Hwemehaa in the Western North Region, the volunteer reported that illegal migrants (Ivoriens) are using unapproved routes into the community for trading and smuggling of agricultural inputs and cocoa from the community to Ivory Coast.

Improving Trust and Confidence between Community and Security Services

According to reports from the volunteers, the relationship between residents living in border communities monitored and the security officers at the borders during this reporting period was generally 'good' or 'very good'. Specifically, most (69%) of the volunteers rated the relationship between residents and the border security officers as 'very good' or 'good'.

Furthermore, the volunteers also indicated that 88% of the communities did not have any form of disputes between members of the border communities and the security officers. In the few instances where there were disputes between the two groups, disagreement over fines, arrests and enforcement of prevention orders at the border crossing were the main reasons. These issues mainly occurred in border crossings in the Upper East, Western North, Volta, and Oti regions.

Human Rights Abuse

According to a few incidents reported by the volunteers, human rights abuses in border communities remain very low. They indicated that close to 9 out of 10 (88%) communities monitored recorded no such incidents. However, about 1 in 10 (10%) of the communities monitored documented abuses such as child trafficking and child labour. For instance, there were reports from Hwemehaa, a community in the Western North Region, that children are being trafficked to neighbouring Ivory Coast. Furthermore, at Bandaya in the Western North Region, the volunteer reported that some migrant children were seen working permanently as labourers on cocoa farms.

Radio & Community Sensitization Forums

During the reporting period, nearly all volunteers (98%) successfully facilitated and organized community forums across the various assigned border communities. Reports from the volunteers indicated that about 6 in 10 (62%) of the community forums organized, security officers collaborated with our volunteers to educate residents in several border communities across the country. However, in about 38% of the communities, the security agencies could not honour the invitation to sensitize community members at the forums.

Some of the reasons given by the security officers for their inability to honour the invitations are summarized below:

- Invitations were not received on time, thereby limiting the time the security officers needed to prepare for the community forums;
- In some cases, the security officers were engaged in other duties making it challenging to participate in the community forums.

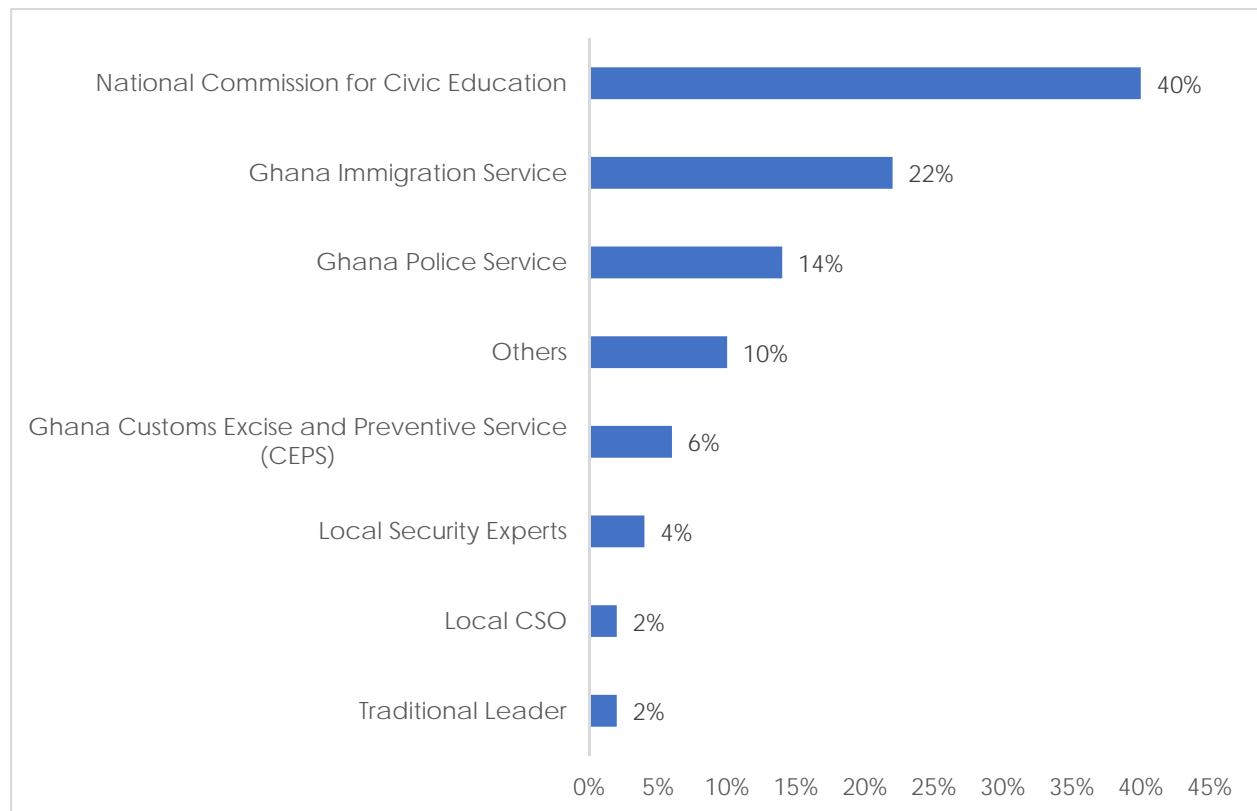


Figure 2: Institutions of the Resource Persons

In all, the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) ranked highest (40%) among the institutions whose officers served as resource persons during the forums. They were followed by the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) with 22% representation in all the education-related activities, and the Ghana Police Service came third with 14%.

The trained volunteers used radio stations or Community Information Centres as a medium to inform the people. Some of them also organized the sensitization and education programs at churches and Mosques. Representatives from the NCCE, and the security agencies, that is, the Ghana Police Service, and GIS served as resource persons for the radio programs. Other individuals, including the project volunteers, assembly members and radio program hosts, also served as resource persons who educated community members as part of efforts to increase the number of residents who receive educational messages, and improve upon their level of awareness on security issues.

An estimated 22,014 people were reached directly, with an average of 80 people per community forum during the reporting period.

Conclusion

- CDD-Ghana urges all security agencies in border communities to frequently sensitize residents in their jurisdiction and leverage on public gatherings and other platforms to foster greater collaboration between citizens and security personnel for more efficient management of the country's borders.

- Religious leaders, including Pastors and Imams, must use their platforms – churches and mosques – and their influence within the various communities to educate citizens on their responsibility to collaborate and to share security information with the security agencies, especially those living in border communities.
- While CDD-Ghana commends the security agencies to intensify patrols at the country's borders, the residents of the border communities must ensure that security in their communities is not compromised.
- While we commend security agencies for their interest and support for the project by sensitizing communities. We urge them to further increase their collaboration with the volunteers and the community members to increase their education and sensitization efforts.

CDD-Ghana will continue its field observation in selected border communities across the country and keep informing the public about its findings.

Acknowledgement

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