CAGI

Criticality Analysis of Governance Issues

Center for Economic, Governance and Political Affairs

Policy & Administration | Transparency & Accountability

Anti-corruption | Peace, Security & Stability

Human Rights & Justice | International Relations

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In this issue

4 Guardians of the Republic or Opportunists? The dual faces of public whistleblowing among Ghanaian MPs.

5 Leveraging harmless and 'crime-less' economic ventures of the people to reduce unemployment and multidimensional poverty; the case of the Okada legalisation.

7 The significance of the government's suspension of post-retirement contract appointments for retired public servants.

8 Resolving the longstanding ethno-political conflict in Bawku: What kind and level of cooperation does the government need from the people to restore lasting peace?

9 Is Gabon's transitional elections a blueprint for the Association of Sahelian States?

What is the Criticality Analysis ?

The output of good governance is socioeconomic development that has greater impact on the citizens. Government takes the wheels of affairs of the state on the back of the many promises made to the electorates. Yet, it is no easy task when it comes to the processes and mechanisms required for true public services delivery. It must follow policy guidelines religiously, maintain the social contract, avoid excesses and wastages, and be an accountable steward of that which it has been entrusted.

IMANI Centre for Policy and Education in a bid to monitor the processes and mechanisms for public services delivery has devised the Criticality Analysis to evaluate the key actions of the government in this pursuit. The Criticality Analysis follows the major news reports on the key governance issues categorised under the following six (6) themes:

1. Policy and administration.
2. Transparency and accountability.
3. Anti-corruption.
4. Peace, security and stability.
5. Human rights and justice.
6. International relations and development

The Criticality Analysis assesses the key governance issues by employing rigorous narrative analysis. First, we collect the key governance issues from reliable and credible news sources. A preliminary screening is conducted to filter out low-impact and non-governance related issues. The issues are then categorised under the 6 main themes. The criticality analysis is not a performance assessment of government actions.

During the assessment, critical attention is paid to the factual accuracy of the reports, relevance and timeliness, and impact and significance. In view of this, the reports are corroborated by analysing same from multiple sources and monitoring the trends and development. In addition, expert opinions on the key issues are analysed to inform the final output of the Criticality Analysis which includes our recommendations for policy and practice to enhance public service delivery and accountable stewardship

Categorisation of Key Governance Issues

Policy & Administration	Leveraging harmless and crime-less economic ventures of the people to reduce unemployment and multidimensional poverty; the case of the 'Okada' legalisation. The significance of government's suspension of the of post-retirement contract appointments for retired public servants.
Transparency & Accountability	Guardians of the Republic or opportunist? The dual faces of public whistleblowing among Ghanaian MPs.
Peace, Security & Stability	The How Not to resolving the longstanding ethno-political conflict in Bawku for lasting peace.
International Relations, Politics & Development	Is Gabon's transitional election a blueprint for the Association of Sahelian States?

1. Guardians of the Republic or Opportunists? The Dual Faces of Public Whistleblowing among Ghanaian MPs.

Public whistleblowing by Members of Parliament (MPs) in Ghana has emerged as a critical yet contentious aspect of governance. While whistleblowing is often celebrated as a mechanism for transparency and accountability, its practice among MPs raises questions about motivations, credibility, and the broader implications for democratic governance.

Whistleblowing, the act of exposing wrongdoing within an organization or institution is often to promote accountability and prevent harm. Ghana's Whistleblower Act, 2006 (Act 720), provides a legal framework for whistleblowing, emphasizing protection for whistleblowers and the promotion of probity in governance.

However, studies have highlighted weaknesses in the Act, including limited scope, inadequate protections, and challenges in implementation. Such issues include potential violations of the secrecy restrictions, a lack of specialized supervisory institutions to coordinate its execution, and insufficient instruction on the complexity of the law for the average Ghanaian of the Act, the inefficiency of the compensation or reward given to the informant, and the absence of precautions.

In the context of MPs, whistleblowing intersects with their oversight role, which involves scrutinizing government actions and advocating for transparency. According to research on parliamentary transparency, MPs' actions can improve accountability when supported by reliable data and evidence. Nevertheless, the risk of opportunistic behaviour—where whistleblowing is used for political gains— and for fuelling public distrust in state institutions and generally misinforming the public remain a concern.

In 2018, Hon. Kennedy Agyepong, former MP of Assin Central in the Central Region of Ghana, in his will and power to unveil investigative journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas and expose his alleged unscrupulous modus operandi aired his "Who watches the watchman" series. While this purportedly gave eager audience a glimpse into the operations of Anas, the serial rants of the MP led to the public unveiling and bastardisation of Anas' Associate, Ahmed Hussein Suale, who was tragically murdered in 2019.

Between 2021 and 2024, the MP for North Tongu, Hon. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa held the public on edge with his exposes on former President Akufo Addo's extravagant private jet travels, and financial malfeasance in the National Cathedral building project. Both instances revealed wasteful expenditure of taxpayers' monies by the Akufo Addo led government without cognisance of the country's post Covid-19 economic crisis.

Two air ambulance operated by AirMed which landed in Ghana in March 2025 became the centre of a multifaceted controversy, reflecting the intricate challenges of misinformation and opacity. Rev. John Ntim Fordjour, the MP for Assin South, alleged that the aircraft's arrival was tied to drug trafficking, particularly in the light of recent cocaine seizures. These claims rapidly escalated into a fervent public banter between the minority caucus in Parliament and the government. Subsequently, an attempt was made by the NIB to arrest the MP in his residence to assist in investigation which was foiled due to resistance by members of the minority.

Consequentially, the case of Hon. Kennedy Agyepong blowing the cover of Anas to expose his alleged shady dealings present ethical dilemmas in whistleblowing especially when it involves sensitive information and personal safety of journalists—whether they are corrupt or not.

Likewise, Hon. Okudzeto Ablakwa's revelations of reckless expenditure of taxpayers' monies by the erstwhile government presents a dual nature of public whistleblowing used as a tool for accountability and potential strategy for political leverage by discrediting the very principle—protecting the public purse—upon which the Akufo Addo government won power in 2016. And Hon. Rev. Ntim Fordjour's recent remarks on the suspicious landings of the air ambulance flights demonstrates the risk of misinformation—unsubstantiated claims—in the name of exacting transparency through investigation, while evading invitations to assist in investigations.

By bringing corruption and poor management to light, whistleblowing can improve democratic governance. However, the veracity of claims and their underlying motivations determines the effectiveness. Hon. Okudzeto Ablakwa's expose on financial recklessness and Hon. Rev. Ntim Fordjour's collocation of suspicion demonstrate how whistleblowing can be influenced by political considerations, although the former's claims were verily validated.

Public whistleblowing by MPs is a powerful tool for promoting transparency and accountability. MPs resort to public whistleblowing through the media because it could gather clout for their story and portray their essence of parliamentary work to their constituents and the public, but it must be exercised responsibly to avoid ethical pitfalls and political opportunism. The legal framework for whistleblowing must be strengthened to foster a culture of accountability.

Referred trends links

Whistleblowing in Ghana: A Conceptual Analysis

Mobilising-Grass-Root-Level-Participation-for-Effective-Implementation-of-Anti-Corruption-Laws-.pdf

Parliamentary Transparency and Accountability

In March 2025, the Police arrested a suspect in the murder of Ahmed Hussein-Suale.

For more details see IMANI's CAGI for March 31 – April 5, 2025. Available at Assessing Governance in Ghana: Insights from IMANI's CAGI Report | March 31 – April 5, 2025 - Imani Africa

2. Leveraging Harmless & 'Crime-less' Economic Ventures of the People to Reduce Unemployment & Multidimensional Poverty; the Case of the Okada Legalisation.

In Ghana, informal economic activities have long been the backbone of daily livelihoods for millions. Among these, the okada (commercial motorcycle) sector has played a critical role in providing fast, low-cost transportation and generating income in urban and rural areas alike. Yet, despite its importance, this sector—and others such as traffic hawking, pottering (kayayei), and carting (truck/barrow pushers)—has often been relegated to the margins of formal economic policy. Recent developments in legislation signal that integrating such ventures into the formal economy can become a transformative strategy for reducing unemployment and tackling multidimensional poverty.

Okadas have been perceived as a "harmless and crime-less" economic activity, providing a vital source of income for many without relying on large capital investments. The proposal to legalise and regulate okadas intends to standardise their operations through measures such as mandatory licensing, compulsory training, periodic vehicle inspections, and the imposition of safety regulations (e.g., helmet use and minimum age requirements). These measures are designed not only to enhance public safety but also to transition the sector from an informal survival mechanism into a regulated, professionally run industry.

Moreover, this initiative is expected to yield significant multiplier effects. By formally recognising okada operators, the government can extend benefits such as access to social security and microfinance opportunities. This pathway from informality to formal economic participation is crucial to alleviating multidimensional poverty, as it directly impacts areas beyond income—improving overall quality of life, access to finance, and lifelong learning and personal development.

Legalisation is more than an administrative realignment. It represents a proactive strategy to empower vulnerable populations. With formal status, registered operators may receive credit, insurance, and pension benefits, reducing the financial vulnerability that comes with informal work; the introduction of mandatory training and proficiency assessments will help ensure that operators are not only safer on the roads but also more competitive in a rapidly modernising economy; and the process will help stimulate additional economic activities that benefit local communities. The formalisation of okadas is thus a model of how a seemingly modest venture can propel broader socioeconomic development.

Ghana's informal economy is not limited to okadas. Sectors such as traffic hawking, pottering (kayayei), and carting have long provided livelihoods despite minimal support from successive governments. In the major cities, hawkers and vendors are forced to sell their wares on pavements because a lack of dedicated markets keeps them out of the mainstream economy. With targeted policy reform, these ventures can also be modernised using strategies similar to those proposed for okadas. Instead of remaining a survival strategy marked by vulnerability and exploitation, they could evolve into an organized, dignified, and sustainable urban service.

For example, in parts of Asia, traditional rickshaw services have undergone major transformations. Transitioning from manual or non-motorised rickshaws to motorised, digitally integrated systems, these services now offer safe, reliable, and efficient last-mile mobility solutions with a market size of $5.5 billion in 2024 and 2034 projection of $11.2 billion. The evolution of these systems shows that with proper regulatory support and technological integration, even the most informal of ventures can be revitalised to drive urban mobility and economic inclusion. Ghana could mirror this approach—adopting digital platforms to coordinate services, improving customer trust through certification, and linking operators to microfinance networks.

For okada legalisation and similar initiatives to succeed, several key policy measures are essential. Policymakers must design regulatory frameworks that are inclusive rather than exclusionary. For example, while a minimum age requirement (such as 25 years) may enhance safety, complementary programs should support younger operators through training and apprenticeship schemes. Additionally, creating designated zones for street hawking and modernised marketplaces can integrate informal vendors into the urban fabric, thereby improving both livelihoods and urban aesthetics. Furthermore, digital platforms can facilitate the management of these informal sectors, enabling real-time coordination, secure payment systems, and enhanced accountability. Lastly, collaborative efforts between the government, finance and insurance institutions, and tech innovators could amplify the impact of formalisation measures, ensuring that innovations are both scalable and sustainable.

In conclusion, addressing the multifaceted challenges of informality—such as inadequate regulation, lack of social protection, and limited access to finance—these policy measures have the potential to create a more resilient and inclusive economic landscape in Ghana.

Referred trends links

'Okada is a more convenient and cost-effective transport option' - Mahama announces legalisation plans - MyJoyOnline

New rules set for Okada riders in Ghana; Only 25-year-olds and above can ride - Graphic Online

Rickshaw Renaissance: Timeless Human-Powered Transport - Seasia.co

Rickshaw Ride-Hailing Service Market Soars $11.72 Bn by 2034

3. The significance of the government's suspension of post-retirement contract appointments for retired public servants.

In a bold restructuring effort, the Government of Ghana has suspended all post-retirement contract appointments for former public service staff. Announced on April 2, 2025, and signed by Dr. Callistus Mahama, Secretary to the President, this directive marks a significant shift in public sector employment practices. Notably, the measure exempts public university academics—a decision clarified by Education Minister Haruna Iddrisu—to ensure that critical sectors retain the experience essential for continuity and high-level mentorship.

Hitherto, post-retirement contracts have allowed retired public servants to continue contributing their expertise on a contractual basis. While these arrangements have provided continuity and extended the value of seasoned professionals, they have also been criticized for hindering opportunities for younger talent and escalating public expenditure. The government's decision to halt such contracts for retired personnel aims to recalibrate the workforce, streamlining public service delivery while opening up space for fresh talent.

Amidst concerns for the potential loss of valuable experience and continuity that retirees bring to government agencies, some experts have proposed transitional measures—such as mentorship programs, part-time consultancies, or structured advisory roles—to allow retirees to share their expertise on a limited basis while making room for new talent. Ultimately, the suspension of post-retirement contracts marks a significant shift in how Ghana manages its public resources and human capital.

The government's strategy is not only about cost-cutting; it is an intentional effort to modernize the public service by ensuring that fresh perspectives are given the opportunity to shape policy and drive progress. As agencies across the nation begin implementing new succession plans and alternative engagement models, the success of these reforms will depend on the careful calibration of policies that protect critical expertise while opening the door to a more inclusive work environment.

In conclusion, addressing the multifaceted challenges of informality—such as inadequate regulation, lack of social protection, and limited access to finance—these policy measures have the potential to create a more resilient and inclusive economic landscape in Ghana.

Referred trends links

Mahama suspends post-retirement contract appointments for retired public service staff

Academics excluded from suspension of post-retirement contracts - Minister - Ghana Business News

Suspension of post-retirement contracts; kudos to government

4.The How Not to resolving the longstanding ethno-political conflict in Bawku for lasting peace.

The Bawku conflict has evolved into a national crisis, transcending its regional boundaries and affecting neighbouring areas such as Binduri, Bulenga, and Walewale. Once seen primarily as a localized dispute between the Kusasis and Mamprusis, each with deep historical roots in Bawku, the escalating violence has not availed previous attempts by governments to resolve it. President Mahama, and recently, James Agalga, Chairman of Parliament's Defence and Interior Committee, spoke with urgency about the crisis, urging patience and support for mediation efforts spearheaded by Otumfuo Osei Tutu II.

The unrest, marked by a series of reprisal attacks that have resulted in the killings of over 300 people since 2021 including security personnels portrays not only deep-seated ethnic tensions but also the complex interplay of political interests and historical unaddressed grievances. With the conflict spilling over into previously peaceful communities in the Upper East and North-East Regions, local residents face daily insecurity that disrupts normal life and stifles economic activity.

Yet, the measures taken by security forces have not always been received without controversy. During his visits, Inspector General of Police, Mr. Yohuno's attempt to incentivize peace by promising priority police recruitment for local youth in return for laying down arms triggered an adverse reaction where irate young residents expressed their discontent through boos. This reflects the intricate expectations of the community, which demands not only opportunities for employment and economic stability but lasting peace. It also highlights a critical moment in the conflict where security measures and political promises intersect and have sometimes fuelled suspicion and heightened tensions rather than diffusing them.

When political interests become intertwined with local disputes, the prospects for a neutral and sustainable resolution become even more complicated, fanning the flames of resentment on all sides.

Moreover, the direct deployment of military forces in resolving the Bawku conflict risks deepening local grievances and escalating tensions rather than addressing the underlying issues. Traditional military operations are designed for external defence and counterterrorism, not for delicate intra-community disputes where historical and cultural sensitivities play a critical role. Their involvement may be perceived by local communities as an imposition of brute power, which could trigger further resistance, fuel mistrust, and potentially polarize factions further. In conflicts rooted in longstanding local dynamics, the heavy-handed use of military force may also inadvertently overshadow opportunities for dialogue, reconciliation, and community-led conflict resolution, all of which are essential for lasting peace.

In contrast, bolstering the capacity of the specialized Immigration and Boundary Force offers a more measured and effective strategy to secure regional stability. With its focused mandate, this force can prioritize the protection of national borders, ensuring that no foreign mercenaries or external agitators are able to exploit the local conflict for their own agendas.

The announcement of a mediation committee led by Otumfuo Osei Tutu II is a promising step toward resolving the Bawku conflict, but its implementation must be expedited to prevent further escalation of tensions. Meanwhile, a temporary truce should be brokered and firmly committed to by the chiefs of both ethnic groups involved in the conflict. This truce would serve as a critical confidence-building measure, creating a conducive environment for dialogue while reducing the immediate risk of violence.

Referred trends links

President Mahama condemns Bawku violence; Backs Otumfuo's peace efforts

Bawku conflict now a national crisis, but Otumfuo's talks with factions offer hope — Agalga - Graphic Online

Bawku conflict claims 300 lives - Institutions, workers flee from danger - Graphic Online

Why Bawku youth hooted at IGP after his police recruitment promise - Upper East Minister explains

5. Is Gabon's transitional elections a blueprint for the Association of Sahelian States?

Gabon is currently in the midst of a significant political transition. After General Brice Oligui Nguema led the 2023 coup that ended over five decades of Bongo family rule, the country has now taken a major step by holding its first presidential election since the coup. According to provisional results, Nguema secured an overwhelming victory, winning roughly 90.35% of the vote with a reported turnout of about 70.4%.

The 2024 Afrobarometer (Round 10) Survey Report of Gabon revealed that 67.7% of Gabonese preferred to choose their leaders through regular, free, and transparent elections; 64% agree that multipartyism is necessary to ensure they have a true choice in who will govern them; and 74.9% further agree that once the election is over, opposition parties and politicians should accept their defeat and cooperate with the government to help develop the country.

The transitional election is being viewed by some as a pathway toward a more transparent and accountable government, yet it also raises questions about the sustainability of change.

Ghana and Nigeria in West Africa offer a shining example of how transitional or founding elections are an opportunity for achieving democratic consolidation and dividends such as steady economic stability and development. Regular free and transparent elections also offer the opportunity to remove corrupt leaders from office by the citizens and reaffirming trust in the electoral process.

For the Association of Sahelian States, Gabon's approach could indeed serve as a blueprint, particularly in its emphasis on national dialogue, constitutional reform, and the establishment of clear electoral guidelines. Key statistics from Burkina Faso according to Afrobarometer (Round 9) 2022 suggests that 78% of Burkinabè disapprove of the government's management of the economy, and 81% say their country is heading in the wrong direction; and 74% of citizens disapprove of their government's performance in the fight against crime and insecurity.

The dissatisfaction expressed by Burkinabè citizens, as highlighted by Afrobarometer data, stresses a broader crisis of governance and public trust. Gabon's transitional election, therefore, carries significant implications for Sahelian states of Mali and Niger, which have also experienced political instability and military takeovers in their politics. Gabon's emphasis on national dialogue, constitutional reform, and transparent electoral processes offers a potential framework for addressing the governance challenges that fuel public discontent in the Sahelian regions.

Referred trends links

Gabon's Leader Nguema Elected President With 90.35% of Vote, Interior Minister Says

GAB_R10_SOR-16oct24.pdf

Burkina Faso – Afrobarometer

Recommendations

1. To address the complexities surrounding public whistleblowing by Members of Parliament (MPs) in Ghana, it is essential to strengthen the legal framework governing whistleblowing, particularly the Whistleblower Act, 2006 (Act 720). This can be achieved by expanding the scope of the Act to include specialized supervisory institutions that ensure the credibility and impartiality of whistleblowing claims. Additionally, MPs should also be encouraged to channel whistleblowing efforts through parliamentary committees or independent or constitutional investigative bodies rather than relying solely on public platforms, which often risk ethical dilemmas and public distrust.

2. To harness the potential of Ghana's informal sectors and drive inclusive socioeconomic development, the government should implement an integrated policy reform framework that formalizes these ventures through targeted licensing, mandatory training, and designated trading zones while promoting technological innovation. Collaborative efforts with financial institutions, tech innovators, and local stakeholders will be essential to scale these initiatives, transforming informal economic activities into professional, sustainable enterprises capable of reducing multidimensional poverty and enhancing urban mobility.

3. To balance the need for fiscal prudence with the preservation of critical expertise, the government should implement a structured transitional framework that formally mandates part-time consultancy and mentorship programs for retirees. This initiative would allow seasoned public servants to transfer their institutional knowledge and provide targeted mentorship to emerging talent through time-bound advisory roles, ensuring continuity while opening space for youthful innovation. Such a framework would include establishing a dedicated oversight committee to monitor and evaluate the program's impact, fine-tuning measures as needed to safeguard national capacity and support the long-term modernization of Ghana's public service.

4. Given the complex and intertwined nature of the Bawku conflict—characterized by deep-seated ethnic tensions, politicized security interventions, and the risk of external agitators exploiting the situation—it is recommended that the Government of Ghana urgently expedite the mediation process led by Otumfuo Osei Tutu II while simultaneously broker a temporary truce, with firm commitments from the chiefs of the conflicting ethnic groups. This dual approach would create a secure and conducive environment for sustained dialogue and reconciliation, prioritizing targeted support from the specialized Immigration and Boundary Force to secure national borders rather than deploying heavy military forces, which may further inflame local grievances.

5. For Sahelian states like Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, adopting Gabon's emphasis on constitutional reform and clear electoral guidelines could address governance challenges, but these efforts must be tailored to local contexts, prioritizing economic stability, security, and public trust to achieve long-term political and social cohesion.

IMANI
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IMANI Center for Policy & Education is a Think Tank of considerable local and international repute based in Ghana. Founded on the 9th of March 2004, IMANI has carved a niche in Ghana's policy environment for putting out objective, independent analysis and critique on many issues, using tried and tested techniques that apply across different disciplines.

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