CAGI

Criticality Analysis of Governance Issues

Center for Economic, Governance and Political Affairs

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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



How to Bring Ghana's Foreign Missions to the "Reset" Accountability Agenda: The Case of Fraud at Ghana's Embassy in Washington, D.C.

When President John Dramani Mahama returned to Jubilee House for a second term, he vowed to "reset" the foundations of Ghana's governance and reforge the social contract between state and citizen. His eight-pillar strategy—announced in May 2025—promised everything from completing the IMF programme under strict fiscal discipline to accelerating public-financial-management reforms and positioning Ghana as a regional hub for trade and investment. Yet the recent exposure of a multi-year fraud scheme at Ghana's Embassy in Washington, D.C., laid bare the gulf between these national ambitions and the practices of one of Ghana's most important diplomatic outposts. At the heart of the scandal was an unauthorized online payment link—installed in 2017 and left unchecked through two ambassadorial tenures—that siphoned unrecorded visa and passport fees until the mission's temporary closure in May 2025. If the 'Reset' agenda truly means business, it must begin by bringing every overseas mission into alignment with the very pillars that will heal Ghana's public finances and restore institutional trust.

President Mahama's eight pillars are more than slogans. They call on government to complete the IMF programme with iron-clad fiscal targets; to reopen capital markets in a manner that rebuilds investor confidence; to revitalise exports via the Ghana Exim Bank; and above all to clear domestic arrears, rationalise public investments, and embed real-time budgeting through the Treasury Single Account (TSA) and the Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS). These reforms cannot live on paper alone. They demand comprehensive transparency, rigorous audit protocols, and an ethical culture that leaves no room for the kind of graft that thrived undetected at the Washington mission.

The case there forces a reckoning: how did a consular-services portal become a conduit for private gain, and what must change so that no mission anywhere in Ghana's diplomatic network ever strays so far from national policy objectives again?

The Washington scandal unfolded in plain sight but beyond the reach of standard oversight. In August 2017, under Ambassador Barfuor Adjei-Barwuah, the mission contracted an IT officer to modernize its visa and passport processing systems. Instead of rigorous tendering and clear deliverables, the contract was awarded informally and executed without independent verification of technical specifications. By early 2025, a simple audit of bank statements revealed revenue shortfalls that triggered a forensic probe. Following that, the mission shut its doors on May 26, 2025, after uncovering years of diverted fees; only three days later, a reconfigured system and a new management team allowed a formal reopening. The fraudulent link, which had operated under diplomatic immunity and the radar of routine financial reviews, highlighted how easily systemic gaps can metastasize when compliance culture is weak and specialized audit capacity is missing.

Three distinct lapses conspired to let the fraud persist. First, embassy-specific procurements were excluded from mandatory competitive bidding under both the Audit Service Act and the Diplomatic Service Regulations. Second, Ghana's Auditor-General, while granted constitutional authority to audit foreign missions, lacked the IT-forensic expertise and the mandate for routine deep-dive reviews of digital revenue systems. And third, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs neglected to conduct periodic reconciliation between consular revenues recorded in Accra and deposits made in Washington. The absence of secure whistle-blowing mechanisms meant that internal complaints went unreported until the scale of the leakage could no longer be ignored.

To reset accountability in Ghana's missions, each element of the 'Reset' strategy must translate into concrete governance measures abroad. Fiscal discipline—Pillar One—demands integration of every mission's bank accounts into the TSA and full adoption of GIFMIS for consular-fee tracking. Pillar Four's call to clear arrears and rationalise investments requires quarterly external reconciliations of consular revenue receivables, with any discrepancies fast-tracked to Parliament. Pillar Five's drive to accelerate public-financial-management reforms compels the institution of annual forensic IT audits of all mission-level platforms, overseen jointly by the Audit Service and an internal-audit liaison embedded within the MFA. Even Pillar Six, which seeks to revitalise exports, can strengthen trade desks in embassies by subjecting them to the same Management Information System controls and performance metrics as mission finance units.

Ghana need not start from scratch. The United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office operates an "Audit in Confidence" model that commissions independent—yet confidential—reviews of overseas posts, balancing oversight with the need for diplomatic discretion. Canada's Global Affairs Department publishes real-time consular dashboards on an open-data portal, allowing academic researchers and civil-society groups to monitor service-delivery metrics without compromising security. Kenya's Public Accounts Committee regularly summons its ambassadors to appear before parliament, reinforcing legislative scrutiny of mission budgets. By borrowing and adapting these peer practices, Accra can leapfrog incrementalism and embed robust accountability into the very DNA of its foreign service.

Building on these lessons, the 'Reset' accountability agenda for Ghana's missions must rest on four pillars of reform.

First, legal and regulatory amendments should extend the Audit Service Act to mandate annual IT-forensic audits of all diplomatic-mission platforms and tighten procurement rules in the Diplomatic Service Regulations by requiring competitive bidding and clear sunset clauses for ICT contracts.

Second, institutional strengthening calls for the creation of an MFA–Audit Service Liaison Unit, with rotating financial-control officers in each mission and fortified whistle-blower protections that extend Ghana's domestic framework to staff overseas.

Third, digital and process innovation means rolling out a unified, MFA-managed consular-services platform—complete with blockchain-backed receipts—and publishing mission-level dashboards on an open-data portal in Accra.

Finally, ethics and capacity building demand a Diplomatic Integrity Code that codifies asset-declaration obligations and conflict-of-interest rules, alongside mandatory annual training in both professional ethics and IT-forensic basics for all mission staff.

Implementation must be swift and staged. In the first six months, the forensic audit of the Washington mission should conclude, legislative amendments to the Audit Service Act must be tabled in Parliament, and the pilot consular platform rolled out in D.C. Over the next year, forensic audits and the new platform should extend to every mission, the Liaison Unit should become fully operational, and Ghana's Foreign Affairs Committee should convene its inaugural oversight hearing. Within two years, embassy accountability metrics ought to feature in the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, a biennial Missions' Accountability Report should be published, and the MFA ought to host a roundtable with stakeholders to assess early outcomes and chart continuous improvements.

The fraud scandal in Washington was not a one-off aberration but a symptom of a diplomatic governance model that tolerated opacity and under-resourced oversight. By embedding the 'Reset' agenda's core tenets into the legal, institutional, digital, and ethical frameworks governing every Ghanaian mission abroad, President Mahama can ensure that no embassy ever again becomes a shadow economy under the guise of consular service. Reset is not simply a campaign slogan; it is an urgent covenant between the Ghanaian state and its citizens. Bringing our foreign missions into full compliance with that covenant will restore public trust, safeguard national resources, and elevate Ghana's standing on the global stage.



A Governance Advisory Council Should Sit Within Ghana's Open Governance Framework and National Action Plan.



The moment President Mahama invited civil society leaders to Jubilee House on May 26, 2025, to discuss a new Governance Advisory Council, one question loomed large: how can we ensure this body strengthens, rather than fragments, Ghana's accountability architecture? The answer lies in weaving the Council's mandate directly into the fabric of Ghana's Open Government Partnership (OGP) framework and its latest National Action Plan (NAP 5). By anchoring the Council within an existing multi-stakeholder process—one that already binds government, civil society, and development partners to shared commitments—we avoid the pitfalls of institutional proliferation and instead leverage proven co-creation and monitoring mechanisms. Even more ambitiously, Ghana should translate its OGP commitments and the 'Reset' Agenda into a National Open Governance Strategy: a single, roadmap-style document that aligns governance reforms across ministries, assemblies, and diplomatic missions, ensuring that transparency, accountability, citizen participation, technology & innovation, and anti-corruption measures reinforce one another in a coherent whole.

Since joining the OGP in 2011, Ghana has co-created four successive action plans. The most recent, NAP 5 (2023–2027), structures its fifteen commitments around Accountability, Transparency, Citizen Participation, and Technology & Innovation. Yet an independent OGP review lamented that NAP 4's reforms were undermined by weak local-level engagement, budget shortfalls, and monitoring gaps—and that many of those same design flaws have crept into NAP 5. Commitments to strengthen the Special Prosecutor's Office, launch beneficial-ownership registers, or expand participatory budgeting risk gathering dust unless they are backed by clear implementation plans, dedicated resources, and a mechanism that holds each actor—at national, regional, and district levels—to account.



Embedding the Governance Advisory Council within the NAP's established architecture precisely offers that: a standing body whose work is not tacked on as an afterthought but flows directly from co-created commitments, midterm reviews, and the OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism.

The strength of Ghana's OGP framework lies in its multi-stakeholder Steering Committee, which already convenes government officials, development partners, and civil-society representatives to debate, refine, and monitor reform actions. By situating the Governance Advisory Council under this umbrella, we can harness familiar processes—co-creation workshops, thematic working groups, and public progress reports—to define the Council's mandate, select its membership, and evaluate its impact. This approach also guards against duplication: the Council would complement, not compete with, the Auditor-General's audits, the Special Prosecutor's investigations, or parliamentary oversight by focusing on thematic analyses of governance performance, real-time policy diagnostics, and the public release of findings tied explicitly to NAP commitments.

To sharpen the link between high-level strategy and on-the-ground reform, Ghana needs a National Open Governance Strategy that consolidates the disparate strands of the 'Reset' Agenda and the OGP into a unified template.

Designing the Council itself demands careful calibration. Its membership must balance technical expertise—drawn from academia, think tanks, and civil society—with practical governance experience, while explicitly excluding active office-holders and partisan operatives to safeguard independence. Its mandate should encompass ongoing monitoring of NAP-linked reforms, policy advisory functions to the Presidency and Parliament, and the power to convene public hearings or summon senior officials for explanation. Crucially, the Council's legal footing should rest on amendments to the OGP Steering Committee's terms of reference and targeted revisions to the Public Financial Management and Diplomatic Service statutes, ensuring that its work carries the weight of both national-level strategy and sector-specific regulation.

Under five pillars—Transparency, Accountability, Citizen Participation, Technology & Innovation, and Anti-Corruption—this Strategy would unpack each NAP 5 commitment into detailed sub-initiatives, designate lead MDAs and local authorities, and set out clear timelines, budgets, and performance metrics. The Governance Advisory Council would then serve as the Strategy's independent guardian, evaluating progress against each pillar, advising government when course corrections are needed, and publishing an annual scorecard that maps real outcomes back to stated objectives.



Institutional integration will make or break the Council's credibility. It must forge formal linkages with the OGP Secretariat, the Auditor-General's Office, the Special Prosecutor's Office, and the Parliamentary Select Committees on Governance. Co-creation workshops should be replicated in each of Ghana's sixteen regions—bringing traditional leaders, local-government assemblies, and grassroots NGOs into the fold—to prevent the "consultation fatigue" that plagued past NAP cycles. And communication cannot be an afterthought: the Council must leverage open-data portals, biannual town-hall dialogues, and a resolute civil-society liaison network to keep citizens informed, solicit real-time feedback, and demonstrate that the annual report is a living document, not a ceremonial footnote.

By embedding the Governance Advisory Council in Ghana's OGP framework and National Action Plan—and by centering it within a broader National Open Governance Strategy—we sidestep the temptation to multiply institutions and instead multiply their effectiveness. This alignment transforms the Council from a stand-alone promise into a dynamic instrument for realizing the 'Reset' Agenda's vision of transparent, accountable, and citizen-driven governance.

Now is the moment for government, civil society, Parliament, and development partners to seize this design, mobilize the necessary resources, and prove that Ghana's journey toward open government is both relentless and resolutely joined-up, from Jubilee House to every district assembly—and beyond our borders to every diplomatic mission we steward.



Beyond the Political Twists on Post-Regime Accountability: A Toned-Down Reaction by Opposition Partisans can Enhance Trust in Public Institutions.

The arrest of Bernard Antwi Boasiako, the Ashanti Regional Chairman of the NPP, better known as Chairman Wontumi, last week by the EOCO, lit a fuse that quickly set social media, party constituencies, and the nation's leading newsrooms ablaze. Outside the EOCO headquarters, young partisans set rubber tyres ablaze to upset the atmosphere and create chaotic scenes. Videos circulated of party members imploring General Secretary of the NPP, Justin Kodua to authorize a ten-day siege on the office, demanding Wontumi's release. Yet this brand of headline-grabbing protest may do far more harm than good to the very institutions the opposition claims to defend.

Last week, IMANI's Criticality Analysis of Governance Issues (CAGI), May 18-24, rightly warned that sensational law-enforcement tactics and frenzied media narratives corrode public confidence in governance. Dr. John Osae-Kwapong has also reminded us that "post-regime accountability" too often slides into partisan theatre: today's hero becomes tomorrow's witch-hunt, and every inquiry is judged not on its merits but on which party stands to benefit. In the case of Wontumi, tyre-fires and extended pickets quickly shifted attention from the substance of EOCO's allegations—unlicensed mining, pollution, and alleged fraud—to confrontations with riot police and traffic snarls in the regional capital. Rather than reinforcing the rule of law, these scenes invited questions about whether the protestors themselves respected public order.

A more measured form of civic action could sharpen the focus on due process and lend credibility to the opposition's call for fair treatment. By filing protest notifications under Ghana's Public Order Act, organizers signal respect for legal frameworks and place the onus on law-enforcement to safeguard demonstrators' rights.

A brief, permit-compliant march or a two-hour silent vigil punctuated by carefully crafted statements would maintain public pressure without veering into spectacle. Simultaneously lodging formal petitions with EOCO, the courts, and Parliament's Select Committee on Justice ensures that grievances are officially recorded and cannot be dismissed as mere street theatre.

Disciplined activism also invites constructive engagement from the very institutions whose impartiality is under scrutiny. When demonstrators stick to predetermined routes and schedules, police resources can be allocated to protect both protesters and bystanders. Journalists are more likely to report on the legal merits of the case rather than the drama of clashing barricades and smoke. And ordinary citizens—whose trust in public institutions is the real prize—are more inclined to see opposition protests not as partisan gambits but as principled demands for transparency and accountability.

In the weeks ahead, as Wontumi's lawyers challenge the evidence and EOCO prepares its charge sheet, opposition partisans have a choice: to surrender to the energy of mass spectacle, or to channel that energy into lawful, focused actions that emphasise respect for due process. Choosing the latter will not dilute political resolve; it will demonstrate that the drive for accountability transcends party loyalty. It will show Ghanaians that the opposition believes in the strength of institutions and is prepared to work within them—even when they appear to move against their own ranks.

Ultimately, post-regime accountability must escape the zero-sum logic of election-night vindication. By toning down street theatrics and embracing rights-based, law-abiding protest tactics, opposition partisans can repair the trust they seek to defend. In doing so, they transform each gathering from a political rally into a reaffirmation of Ghana's democratic promise: that no citizen —however influential—stands above the law, and that every call for justice need not be accompanied by the flash of tyre-fire and open confrontation.



Recommendations



1. Ghana must fully integrate all foreign missions into the nation's PFM architecture—bringing each embassy's bank accounts and consular-fee systems under the TSA and GIFMIS umbrella—and mandate annual forensic IT audits by a joint Audit-Service/MFA unit. Embassies should also host embedded financial-control officers and rotate internal-audit liaisons, ensuring real-time reconciliation of revenues and rigorous digital oversight so that no mission can again become an opaque conduit for unrecorded funds.

2. The Governance Advisory Council should be carved out not as a standalone commission but as an empowered pillar within Ghana's OGP framework and NAP-5 co-creation process. Its charter, membership and work-plan must flow from OGP Steering-Committee workshops, tie directly to NAP commitments, and operate under a unified National Open Governance Strategy. By anchoring the Council in existing multi-stakeholder mechanisms, Ghana will avoid duplicating the Auditor-General, Special Prosecutor or parliamentary committees and instead amplify their impact through coordinated monitoring, public reporting and thematic governance reviews.

3. Opposition partisans should replace spectacle-driven sit-ins with rights-based, permit-compliant protests that underscore respect for due process. Short, clearly notified marches or silent vigils —paired with formal petitions to EOCO, courts and the Parliamentary Justice Committee—will focus public attention on legal questions rather than clashes with police. This disciplined approach not only shields demonstrators' rights under the Public Order Act but also signals a genuine belief in institutional impartiality, thereby strengthening Ghanaians' trust in both civic activism and our justice system.

Further Readings

How to Bring Ghana's Foreign Missions to the "Reset" Accountability Agenda: The Case of Fraud at Ghana's Embassy in Washington, D.C.

1. Ghana Audit Service - the service
2. Embassy Scandal: Recalls, suspensions and dismissals completed – Ministry provides update
3. Ghana temporarily shuts embassy in US over alleged visa scandal
4. A day after Minister orders closure of Ghana Embassy in DC, GTC's links still active - Ghana Business News
5. Ghana's embassy in Washington to reopen following closure over fraud scandal | Pulse Ghana

A Governance Advisory Council Should Sit Within Ghana's Open Governance Framework and National Action Plan.

1. Mahama engages CSOs on Governance Advisory Council to deepen accountability - MyJoyOnline
2. President Mahama Engages Civil Society on Governance Advisory Council Plans - Imani Africa
3. Franklin Cudjoe proposes bold accountability framework for Mahama's Governance Advisory Council
4. I'm committed to strengthening governance, accountability systems — Mahama - Graphic Online

Beyond the Political Twists on Post-Regime Accountability: A Toned-Down Reaction by Opposition Partisans can Enhance Trust in Public Institutions.

1. Criticality Analysis of Governance Issues: May 18–24, 2025 - Imani Africa
2. The politics of post-regime accountability - Graphic Online
3. NPP's Chariman Wontumi arrested and detained by EOCO
4. Dr Bawumia slams government over arrest and detention of Chairman Wontumi | Pulse Ghana
5. Video: Minority MPs sit on the floor in front of EOCO's office to protest Wontumi's detention - Prime News Ghana
6. Security tightened at EOCO as tension mounts over Wontumi's arrest - MyJoyOnline
7. Anger at EOCO as NPP supporters go berserk over arrest of Chairman Wontumi

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