CHAPTER 1

# Empowerment through NGOs

Starting as one of the wealthier countries in sub-Saharan Africa at independence in 1957, the Ghanaian economy suffered from serious economic instability and decline from the mid-1960s through the early 1980s. After the implementation of austere macroeconomic structural reforms by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in the 1980s and 1990s, the Ghanaian economy recovered and rapidly expanded, not least fuelled by the opening of the oil sector during the early decades of the 21st century.[1] Since the early 2010s, the World Bank ranks Ghana as a Lower Middle-Income Country (LMIC) and presents Ghana as a success in terms of political and economic development,[2] although its economic growth rate diminished drastically due to the combined effects of falling oil prices and Covid-19 in 2019 and 2020.[3]

In the past two decades, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been the fastest growing "businesses" in the Ghanaian economy.[4] Successive peaceful elections since the 1990s, relatively strong governance institutions and accountable systems, and a vibrant civil society have made Ghana a "donor darling" for bilateral and multilateral donors. Official Development Aid (ODA) pouring into the country had increased from USD 1.24 billion in 2006 to USD 2.1 billion in 2009. However, this donor goodwill took a nosedive in 2010, when the country gained LMIC status; ODA dropped from USD 1.8 billion in 2010 to USD 1.1 billion in 2014.[5]

One positive effect of Ghana's economic growth and political stability was the decline of the population living in extreme poverty from 47.4 per cent in

1 Jacob Songsore, *Regional Development in Ghana: The Theory and the Reality* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2011); Ernest Aryeetey and Ravi Kanbur, eds., *Ghana Sixty Years after Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

2 World Bank, *Ghana—Performance and learning review of the country partnership strategy for the period FY13-FY18* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2016).

3 The World Bank in Ghana, Overview, updated 28.9.2022, https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ghana/overview, accessed 27.12.2022.

4 George Bob-Milliar, "NGOs in Ghana—Profit Making Organisations?," 28.4.2005, https://www.modernghana.com/news/116769/ngos-in-ghana-profit-making-organisations.html, accessed 24.7.2021.

5 Albert A. Arhin, Emmanuel Kumi, Mohammed-Anwar Sadat Adam, "Facing the Bullet? Non-Governmental Organisations' (NGOs') Responses to the Changing Aid Landscape in Ghana," *Voluntas* 29 (2018): 349–350.

1991 (measured at 2011 purchasing power parity [PPP] USD 1.90 per day) to 13.3 in 2016.[6] Three years later, figures went down to 11 per cent in 2019.[7] These improvements were largely due to structural investments made by the government and ODA. International and domestic NGOs, and foundations, with their USD 394.2 million investment, played a substantial role in empowering the disadvantaged and marginalised. However, the economic boom resulting from a decline in poverty levels inadvertently widened income disparities, with Ghana's Gini index measuring 43.5 in 2016. Further, spatial inequality widened as poverty and inequality became more concentrated in the country's northern parts.[8]

NGOs preceded ODA in Ghana. Mutual assistance constitutes a core element in traditional Ghanaian ideals of self-help and communitarianism. The forerunners of modern NGOs, in part, stem from this tradition, blended with ideas of forming associations and clubs introduced by the western-educated coastal elite and Christian missionaries. Most of these groups were unofficial and informal; by 1930, only three officially registered NGOs existed in Ghana. Christian groups, especially, promoted local development and social welfare by setting up their own hospitals, schools and other institutions, sometimes with the help and financial assistance of the colonial government.[9] By independence in 1957, ODA inflow into Ghana had started, followed by a rapid increase of officially registered NGOs, numbering more than 320 in 1966 and about 1,500 in 2005.[10] In September 2021, the Non-Profit Organisation Secretariat of the Republic of Ghana listed more than 4,100 registered regional, national and international NGOs.[11]

The spectacular rise of the NGO landscape and the "NGO-isation of development"[12] became a marked feature throughout sub-Saharan Africa in 1970s

6 World Bank, Poverty & Equity Brief—Sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana, April 2019, https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Archives-2019/Global_POVEQ_GHA.pdf, accessed 29.12.2021.

7 International poverty rate in Ghana from 2017 to 2022, October 2020, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1222084/international-poverty-rate-in-ghana/, accessed 29.12.2021.

8 World Bank, Poverty & Equity Brief—Sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana, April 2019, https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Archives-2019/Global_POVEQ_GHA.pdf, accessed 29.12.2021.

9 See further L. Atingdui et alii, "The Non-profit Sector in Ghana," in *The Non-Profit Sector in the Developing World*, eds. H.K. Anheieer and L.M. Salamon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 158–197.

10 Bob-Milliar, "NGOs in Ghana."

11 NPO Secretariat, https://npos.mogcsp.gov.gh/, accessed 29.9.2021.

12 Hans Holmén, "NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa," in *Routledge Handbook of NGOs and Inter-*

and virtually exploited in the 1990s. State failure led communities to embark on self-help initiatives, in most cases through grassroots organisations. Sometimes, these organisations were but in name "non-governmental" as the ruling party had been sponsored and patronised them.[13] The mushrooming of small local grassroots and NGOs was closely linked to the expansion of activities and programmes of international NGOs (INGOs) and charities, who either needed local partners or operated through branch offices. Ghana was no exception to this. Many NGOs founded in the 1980s, such as the June Fourth Movement or the 31 December Women's Movement, were quasi- or semi-governmental institutions.[14] Consequently, as noted by Tsikata, Gyekye-Jandoh and Hushie, the rapid expansion of NGOs and civil society groups and associations was largely the result of a changing socio-political environment during the so-called Fourth Republic since 1992, characterized by a period of political and economic liberalisation and transition to civilian-democratic rule during the 1990s and a period of neoliberal policy ascendancy and a push to open democracy during the 2000s.[15]

Another remarkable feature in the expansion of the NGO landscape is their extensive use of social networking websites. Information technology and social media has provided NGOs of the "internet age" with an effective translocal tool to establish relationship with stakeholders, raise funds, and advocate for the vulnerable in society. Social media, especially, transgresses territorial borders and enables a local grassroots organisation to link up with members and (potential) donors on a regional, national and global scale.[16]

In Ghana, as elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, NGOs have played a major role in addressing the imbalances between urban and rural areas and have invested heavily in promoting agriculture, health, education, science and technology,

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*national Relations*, ed. Thomas Davies (London: Routledge, 2019), 516–528, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315268927, accessed 27.5.2024. See further Chapter 1.3.

13 Paul Nugent, *Africa since Independence. Second edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan 2012), 354–355, 357.

14 Gina Porter, "NGOs and Poverty Reduction in a Globalizing World: Perspectives from Ghana," *Progress in Development Studies* 3, no. 2 (2003): 131–145.

15 Dzodzi Tsikata, Maame Gyekye-Jandoh and Martin Hushie, *Political Economy Analysis (PEA) of Civil Society in Ghana*, STAR-Ghana report (Accra: STAR-Ghana, 2013), 15, 21–24, 26 (Figure 2), available at https://www.star-ghana.org/learning-2/publications-and-resources/political-economy-analysis/76-star-ghana-report-pea-of-civil-society/file, accessed 14.11.2023.

16 Daniel Kwame Ampofo Adjei, Festus Annor-Frempong, and Martin Bosompem, "Use of Social Networking Websites among NGOs in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana," *Public Relations Review* 42, no. 5 (2016): 920–928.

research and women's development and rights.[17] Bob-Milliar highlights that in deprived rural communities in northern Ghana,

> … the only important and very common names known to dwellers is either 31st December Women's Movement, World Vision, Action Aid, Catholic Relief Services, Adventist Development and Relief Agency … [as] it was the NGO that provided them with clean drinking water, the clinic in the village centre, the afforestation project, credit facilities, school building, extension services and many more …[18]

Nevertheless, a recent study on rural development in Northern Ghana critically concluded that in spite of more than three decades of NGOs and INGOs filling the "development gap", rural poverty remains pervasive. In part, the authors note this to be due to a lack of adequate coordination and regulation of the NGO complex alongside misuse of resources. NGOs, the authors remind, cannot substitute the State.[19]

The NGO boom in Ghana was (and largely still is) closely linked to the transfer of funds from foreign bilateral and multilateral partners. According to Emmanuel Kumi, external donor funding constituted up to 90 per cent of the total budgets of NGOs he investigated in the then Upper West, Northern and Greater Accra Regions.[20] A large part stems from cross-border resource flows, including remittances from Ghanaian diaspora groups. Kumi further notes that by 2019, migrant remittance inflows to Ghana were on the increase and estimated at USD 3.72 billion compared to USD 3.50 billion in 2018. Part of these sums was transferred to domestic organisations and foundations. Although comprehensive data is lacking, estimates indicate that some USD 140 million was directed to fund the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) between 2016 and 2018. Priority areas for cross-border giving were education, gender equality, and clean water and sanitation.[21]

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17 See further Thomas Yarrow, *Development beyond Politics: Aid, Activism and NGOs in Ghana* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

18 Bob-Milliar, "NGOs in Ghana."

19 Benjamin Kwao and Daniel Amoak, "Does Size Really Matter? The Prevalence of NGOs and Challenges to Development in Northern Ghana," *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift/Norwegian Journal of Geography* (2022): 149–163.

20 Emmanuel Kumi, Diversify or die? The responses of Ghanaian Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) to a changing aid landscape, PhD thesis, University of Bath, 2017.

21 Emmanuel Kumi, Global Philanthropy Tracker: Ghana, October 2020, 1–2, https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/25915/ghana-report21.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, accessed 13.7.2021.

Other trends in cross-border giving identified by Kumi are the increased use of digital technology, social media and crowdfunding platforms, and multi-donor pooled funding models in mobilising cross-border giving. The Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2008 and its amendment in 2014 and the Anti-Terrorism Regulations of 2012, in turn, have led to strict enforcement of financial regulations in Ghana. To what extent these regulations have affected the capacity of NGOs to mobilise cross-border giving is unknown. Following official data, at least 22 suspicious transactions were filed by banks on NGOs between 2010 and 2018.[22]

The gradual withdrawal of donors and the general dwindling of volume and pattern of aid to NGOs since 2010 and new priorities and emphasis on donors have resulted in a changing if not volatile aid landscape in Ghana.[23] On the other hand, the economic boom during the 2010s resulted in an increase of middle-class, upper-class and high net-worth individuals who stepped in as domestic donors and supporters of the Ghanaian philanthropic landscape.[24] Faith-based organisations, in particular, have successfully applied domestic resource mobilisation strategies for implementing programmes for social development.[25]

The NGO landscape in contemporary Ghana predominantly comprises Christian, non-denominational and secular factions. The existence, agenda and activities of local and international Muslim NGOs (IMNGOs), Muslim community-based organisations (CBOs) and Muslim civil society organisations (CSOs) have hitherto been regarded as a marginal phenomenon, if noted at all.[26] These NGOs constitute most of the registered NGOs in contemporary

22 Kumi, Global Philanthropy Tracker: Ghana, October 2020, 2.

23 See further Arhin, Kumi, Adam, "Facing the Bullet?"

24 See further SDG Philanthropy Platform, *Enabling Environment for Philanthropy in Ghana* (United Nations Development Programme, 2017), available at https://www.sdgphilanthropy.org/system/files/2018-02/SDG%20Ghana%20Final-2.pdf. On the emergence of middle-classes in Ghana, see Rachel Sponk, "Structures, Feelings and *savoir faire*: Ghana's Middle Classes in the Making," *Africa* 90, no. 3 (2020): 470–488. Sponk identifies three enabling conditions for the pursuit of social mobility, namely education, social networks, and access to financial resources of various kinds. See further Carola Lentz and Andrea Noll, "Across Regional Disparities and Beyond Family Ties. A Ghanaian Middle Class in the Making," *History and Anthropology* (2021), DOI: 10.1080102757206.2021.1885400.

25 See further WASCI, *Exploring Faith-based Giving as an Alternative Funding Model for Civil Society Organisations in Ghana—Experiences, Prospects and Challenges* (Accra: West Africa Civil Society Institute, 2020).

26 For example, the Civil Society Directory for West Africa 2010–2012 listed only seven Muslim organisations, namely the *Educational Development Fund for Muslim Youth*, the *Federation of Muslim Women Association in Ghana*, the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Organ-*

Ghana and dominate in media and public space. Tuandike Sasa's list of international health, environmental, agricultural, and education NGOs in Ghana as of 2018 is illustrative as one looks in vain for any notes on international Muslim NGOs operating in Ghana,[27] and neither are any of them included in the list provided by www.ghstudents.com.[28]

The objective of this book is twofold. The first is to map the activities of Muslim NGOs in contemporary Ghana and provide an assessment of their operations in contemporary Ghana. Not much is known about the history of Muslim NGOs in colonial and early postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa; their rise during the 1980s and 1990s received little interest in academic research and few observers have hitherto noted their booming and multiplication during the 2010s. Even less attended to were the various ways Muslim communities tried to address political and socio-economic marginalisation processes in sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana.[29] On the other hand, Muslim leaders and scholars have repeatedly underscored the need to empower the Muslim pop-

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*ization*, the *Zongo Youth Foundation*, the *Central Mosque Club* in Berekum, the *Muslim Family Counselling Services*, and the *Muslim Relief Association*. See further *Civil Society Directory for West Africa 2010–2012*, eds. Charles Kojo Vandyck, Jimm Chick Fomunjong and Ramde Yaya (Accra: West African Civil Society Institute, 2012), 62, 84, 89, 92, 96, 104.

27 Tuandike Sasa, "List of International NGOs in Ghana," 5.4.2018, https://yen.com.gh/108012-list-international-ngos-ghana.html, accessed 16.12.2021.

28 "List of International NGOs in Ghana and Contact details," https://ghstudents.com/list-of-international-ngos-in-ghana-and-contact-details/, accessed 16.12.2021. However, the list includes at least one local Muslim NGO, the Accra-based Sabon Zango Youth Movement. The same list is also published as "NGOs in Ghana: Full List, Functions & Contacts (2021)," 4.8.2021, https://pricesghana.com/ngos-in-ghana/, accessed 16.12.2021.

29 M.A. Mohammad Salih, *Islamic NGOs in Africa: The Promise and Peril of Islamic Voluntarism* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, Centre of African Studies, 2001, revised version 2002). On Ghana, see Mumuni Sulemana, Islamic Organisations in Accra: Their Structure, Role and Impact on the Proselytization of Islam, MPhil thesis, University of Ghana, 1994; Fatimatu N-Eyare Sulemanu, Leadership in the Ghanaian Muslim Community: The Role of the Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Ghana, MPhil. thesis, Department for the Studies of Religions, University of Ghana, 2006; Holger Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving in Ghana: Muslim Positions towards Poverty and Distress* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2007); Yunus Dumbe, Transnational Contacts and Muslim Religious Orientation in Ghana, PhD thesis, Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, 2009; Holger Weiss, *Zakat in Ghana: A Tool for the Empowerment of the Muslim Community* (Kumasi: University Printing Press, KNUST, 2021); Sandy Zook and Cassidy Arndt, "Islamic NGOs in Education in Ghana: Analysis of the Scope, Activities, and Revenue Portfolios," *Journal of Education in Muslim Societies* 2, no. 2 (2021): 57–81; Holger Weiss, *Moving Mountains: Muslim NGOs in Ghana* (Kumasi: University Printing Press, KNUST, 2022).

ulation in Ghana.[30] However, the Muslim discourse on empowerment is overshadowed by the variations and complexities of doctrinal tension and political rhetoric within Muslim communities.[31] In addition, there has been an increasing concern in recent years that politically and socio-economically alienated Muslim youths are influenced by extreme forms of political Islam.[32] Nevertheless, as noted by David E. Skinner, the formation of local, regional and national Muslim NGOs and their interaction with Ghanaian governments and international agencies correlates with the efforts of Muslims to create and maintain an Islamic space. It also reflects their efforts to expand their political, economic and social influence in society.[33]

This book aims, therefore, to scrutinise the breath and width of Muslim NGOs in contemporary Ghana. By applying a historical-anthropological perspective, the book captures the rapid expansion and huge variety of local, national and international Muslim NGOs in Ghana during this 'internet age' of the 2010s and in the shadows of the COVID-19 pandemic in the early 2020s. In particular, it highlights the role of social media and traces the mobilisation, communication and networking processes of Muslim associations, grassroots organisations, groups, foundations and NGOs via Facebook.

Consequently, the book sets out to trace, locate, and analyse the large spectrum of associations, foundations, groups and organisations, the varieties of their activities and operational spaces, their campaigns and target groups, and

30 Rabiatu Ammah, "Islam and Poverty Reduction Strategies in the Ghanaian Muslim Community," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 2 (2007): 3–20.

31 See further Abdulai Iddrisu, *Contesting Islam in Africa: Homegrown Wahhabism and Muslim Identity in Northern Ghana, 1920–2010* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2013); Ousman Murzik Kobo, "Shifting Trajectories of Salafi/Ahl-Sunna Reformism in Ghana;" *Islamic Africa* 6, no. 1–2 (2015): 60–81; K.A. Balogun and A.A. Abdussalam, "Arguments and Counter-Arguments: A Critical Analysis of the Ahlus-Sunnah and Tijâniyyah Brotherhood Dispute in Ghana." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 4, no. 3 (2015): 1–11; Yunus Dumbe, G. Eshun and S.V. Gedzi, "Salafis and the Politics of Nationalism among Migrant Muslims in Ghana," *Africa Insight* 45, no. 2 (2015): 41–58; Yunus Dumbe, Zakaria Seebaway and Issah Zakaria Firdaus, "The 'Maikano Factor' in the Tijaniyya Power Politics in Ghana," *The Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 14 (2017): 87–95; Yunus Dumbe, "Islamic Polarisation: Tijaniyya and Salafist Struggles over Muslim Orthodoxy," *Islamic Africa* 10 (2019): 153–180.

32 Emmanuel Kwesi Aning and Mustapha Abdallah, "Islamic Radicalization and Violence in Ghana," in *West African Militancy and Violence: Religion, politics and radicalization, eds.* James Gow, Funmi Olonisakin and Ernst Dijxhoorn (London: Routledge, 2013), 90–125.

33 David E. Skinner, "Da'wa and Politics in West Africa: Muslim Jama'at and Non-Governmental Organizations in Ghana, Sierra Leone and The Gambia," in *Development and Politics from Below: Exploring Religious Spaces in the African State*, eds. Barbara Bompani and Maria Frahm-Arp (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 99.

their local, regional, national and international connections. While the impact of Muslim NGOs in establishing and financing the modern Islamic educational sector in Ghana as well as their support for *da'wa*, has been analysed in previous research,[34] their promotion of social welfare is a largely unknown terrain for academic research. Even less known is the use of social media by Ghanaian Muslim NGOs, CSOs and CBOs as a network platform to rally members and as tools to generate support from domestic and international donors in this 'internet age'. Some key mobilisers identified in this book are the various Muslim youth and Zongo associations, bloggers, communities and networks; this Muslim Ghanaian 'Facebook generation' has largely escaped academic research.[35]

The second aim of this book is to discuss and analyse the multiple ways Muslim NGOs constitute the core tool and vehicle for empowerment and development. For several decades, local and international Muslim CBOs, CSOs, NGOs, and charities have commissioned projects to improve the spiritual and socio-economic conditions of Muslims throughout the country. Such projects have primarily been the construction of mosques and, to a lesser extent, modern educational infrastructure, community centres and orphanages, basic social amenities such as libraries and hygienic sources of potable water, and the sinking of wells in Muslim communities. Of equal importance have been immunisation and healthcare programmes, gifts to inmates in prisons, assistance to hospitals, orphanages and handicapped institutions or distribution of food and clothes to the poor and needy during Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha festivals. This has been the essence of Muslim faith-based humanit-

34 See further Mark Sey, "Social and Educational Challenges of the Contemporary Muslim Youth: The Ghanaian Experience," *Jurnal Usuluddin* 14 (2001): 77–86; David Owusu-Ansah, Mark Sey, and Abbulai Iddrisu, *Islamic Learning, the State, and the Challenges of Education in Ghana* (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 2012); David E. Skinner, "Conversion to Islam and the Promotion of 'Modern' Islamic Schools in Ghana," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 43, no. 4 (2013): 426–450; Fatimatu N. Sulemanu, "Education a Tool for Sustainable Development: The Role of Muslim NGOs in Ghana," in *Religion and Sustainable Development: Ghanaian Perspectives*, eds. George Ossom-Batsa, Nicoletta Gatti and Rabiatu Deinyo Ammah (Città del Vaticano: Urbaniana University Press, 2018), 243–258, as well as Skinner, "Da'wa and Politics in West Africa", and Zook and Arndt, "Islamic NGOs in Education in Ghana".

35 Annette Haaber Ihle, "Islamic Morality, Youth Culture, and Expectations of Social Mobility among Young Muslims in Northern Ghana," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 28, no. 2 (2008): 267–288; Ali Baba Mohammed, The Phenomenon of Bases in Ghanaian Muslim Communities in Accra, MPhil thesis, University of Ghana, 2015. On the Muslim 'Facebook generation', see further Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin Soares, eds., *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation* (Santa Fe and Albuquerque: School for Advanced Research Press and University of New Mexico Press, 2016).

arian relief. Moreover, since the last two decades, new forms of communitarian self-empowerment have evolved, ranging from soliciting funds from within the Muslim communities and/or youth groups for establishing libraries and community centres as well as building Muslim hospitals and special-purpose institutions for Muslim persons with disabilities.

The third aim is to outline the discourses, agendas, and actions of Muslim scholars and leaders in their struggle to achieve political, social and economic empowerment for the Muslim population in Ghana. Some twenty years ago, I conducted a similar investigation on Muslim discourses on poverty alleviation in Ghana.[36] Returning to Ghana in 2017, I noted a tremendous change in the discursive landscape and institutionalization of *zakat* (obligatory/mandatory almsgiving) as a tool for poverty eradication. The unanimous reply of Muslim scholars to my question about achieving Muslim empowerment in Ghana has been: "*Zakat* is the Islamic solution to eradicate poverty." However, in my discussions with Muslim scholars and during my subsequent research on Facebook, it has become evident that non-mandatory faith-based forms of giving and private donations such as *sadaqa* (voluntary almsgiving/charity) and *infaq* (spending to please God but without asking for any favour or hoping for a return) have emerged as the cornerstones for funding Muslim self-empowerment.

## 1 Muslims in Ghana

Muslims in Ghana constitute a minority in Ghana. According to the 2021 census, they make up about 20 per cent of the total population of some 30 million people.[37] The 'Muslim landscape' in contemporary Ghana constitutes of six major religious sub-spheres or religious groups, namely the Tijaniyya (Sufi), the Ahlus-Sunnah (Salafi), non-aligned/non-denominational Sunnis (i.e., neither members of the Tijani or Salafi groups), the Ahmadiyya, the Istiqaama (Ibadiyya) and the Shi'a community.[38] According to a 2012 Pew Forum Report,

36 Holger Weiss, *Obligatory Almsgiving: An Inquiry into Zakat in the Pre-colonial Bilad al-*Sudan (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2003); Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving in Ghana*.

37 Ghana Statistical Service, *Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census. General Report Volume 3C Background Characteristics* (Accra: Ghana Statistical Service, November 2021).

38 Holger Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism: Muslims, the State and Society in Ghana from the Precolonial to the Postcolonial Era* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2008); Ousman Murzik Kobo, *Unveiling Modernity in Twentieth-Century West African Islamic Reforms* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Yunus Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana* (Huddinge: Södertörn University, 2013); Iddrisu, *Contesting Islam in Africa*; Balo-

51 percent of their sample study claimed Sunni affiliation (the majority of them or 27 percent out of the total Sunni adherents to belong to the Tijaniyya order), 8 percent Shia, and 16 percent Ahmadi affiliation, while 13 percent claimed to be "just Muslims".[39]

Two-thirds of Ghana's total population live in the Christian-dominated, affluent, and politically influential southern regions. The North, where about half of the Muslim population is living, see Table 1, is marginalised in political and economic terms. This general picture has been a marked feature since independence, although with some marked macro-demographic changes since the last decades of the twentieth century, the most notable being the influx of Muslims to the urban centres and regions in the southern part of the country. Consequently, substantial clusters of the Muslim population are nowadays found in the Accra and Kumasi metropolitan regions, where they constitute the majority of the Zongo communities.[40]

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gun and Abdussalam, "Arguments and Counter-Arguments;" Dumbe, "Islamic Polarisation and the Politics of Exclusion in Ghana." On the Ahmadiyya, see further John H. Hanson, *The Ahmadiyya in the Gold Coast: Muslim Cosmopolitans in the British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017). On the Istiqaama, see further Mahmud Mukhtar Muhammed & Umar Wahab Sina, Faith in National Development: A Review of the Activities of the Istiqaama Muslim Organisation of Ghana, paper presented at 3rd International Conference on Religion and National Development 6th–7th September 2018, Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana. On the Shiʿa, see further Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*, and Ousman Murzik Kobo, "Islamic Institutions of Higher learning in Ghana: The Case of the Islamic University College," in *Muslim Institutions of Higher Education in Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Mbaye Lo and Muhammed Haron (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 179–191.

39 Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity* (Washington DC: Pew Reseach Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2012), 29–31, available at https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2012/08/the-worlds-muslims-full-report.pdf.

40 See further Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving in Ghana*; Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*. The word Zongo (from Hausa: Zango, i.e., camp) describes an urban multiethnic settlement originally established as a camp of long-distance traders and travelling merchants. In contemporary Ghana, the term as a negative implication as the Zongo designates overcrowded habitations and inadequate sanitation. The majority of their inhabitants are Muslims. See further Emily Anne Williamson, "Understanding the Zongo: Processes of Socio-spatial Marginalization in Ghana," in *The African Metropolis: Studies over Urban Space, Citizenship, and Rights to the City*, ed Toyin Falola and Bisola Falola (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2018); Giulia Casentini, "Migration Networks and Narratives in Ghana: A Case Study from the Zongo," *Africa* 88, no. 3 (2018): 452–468; Benedikt Pontzen, *Islam in a Zongo: Muslim Lifeworlds in Asante, Ghana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Joseph Mensah and Joseph Kofi Teye, "A Geographic

TABLE 1 Ghana census 2021: Muslim population per region

| Region | Abbr. | Total pop | Muslim pop | Mp/tp% | Mp/tMp% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All localities, both sexes | | 30,753,327 | 6,108,530 | 19.9 | |
| *Southern regions* | | | | *11.9* | *48.5* |
| Western | WR | 2,054,863 | 193,794 | 9.4 | 3.1 |
| Central | CR | 2,853,335 | 259,902 | 9.1 | 4.3 |
| Greater Accra | GAR | 5,437,084 | 631,591 | 11.6 | 10.3 |
| Volta | VR | 1,654,650 | 77,136 | 4.7 | 1.3 |
| Eastern | ER | 2,918,623 | 194,838 | 6.7 | 3.2 |
| Ashanti | AR | 5,428,181 | 866,117 | 16 | 14.2 |
| Western North | WNR | 878,855 | 105,226 | 12 | 1.7 |
| Ahafo | AhR | 563,643 | 93,153 | 16.5 | 1.5 |
| Bono | BR | 1,205,462 | 154,145 | 12.8 | 2.5 |
| Bono East | BER | 1,199,786 | 289,268 | 24.1 | 4.7 |
| Oti | OR | 744,483 | 97,928 | 13.1 | 1.6 |
| *Northern regions* | | | | *54.1* | *51.5* |
| Northern | NR | 2,306,808 | 1,532,977 | 66.5 | 25.1 |
| Savannah | SR | 652,572 | 418,352 | 64.1 | 6.8 |
| North East | NER | 657,833 | 402,352 | 61.2 | 6.5 |
| Upper East | UER | 1,298,179 | 385,020 | 29.7 | 6.3 |
| Upper West | UWR | 898,970 | 406,731 | 45.2 | 6.5 |

Legend: Abbr. = abbreviation; Mp/tp = Muslim population (region)/total population (region); Mp/tMp = Muslim population (region)/total Muslim population (country)

SOURCE: *GHANA 2021 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS. GENERAL REPORT VOLUME* 3C *BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS* [ACCRA: GHANA STATISTICAL SERVICE, NOVEMBER 2021]

Economically and mentally, the most marked division of Ghana is the North-South divide of the country. The coastal and forest areas of the country, i.e., the eleven (until 2019: seven) administrative regions in the South,[41] are the richer part of the country; its inhabitants engage in the economically valuable agro-

Theorization of Zongo's in Urban Ghana: A Complex Systems Approach," *Ghana Journal of Geography* 13, no. 2 (2021): 66–95, DOI: 10.4314/gjg.v13i2.3.

41 Ahafo Region, Ashanti Region, Bono Region, Bono East Region, Central Region, Eastern Region, Greater Accra Region, Oti Region, Volta Region, Western Region, and Western North Region.

forest sector (cocoa, timber) the mining and oil industry. Not surprisingly, the southern regions have a profound influence on national politics. The five (until 2019: three) northern administrative regions,[42] in contrast, are regarded as the country's poor backyard.[43]

The North is marginalised both in political as well as in economic terms. According to the various national living standard surveys conducted since the early 1990s, the five savannah regions are by far the poorest in the country. The British colonial and subsequent Ghanaian governments have attempted to transform and modernise the agricultural, livestock and forestry sectors. They, however, have had little impact on the lives of smallholders and cattle-herding populations in the North, where the primary sector is mainly subsistence-oriented, small-scale and dominated by traditional techniques and practices.[44] Instead, increased variations in precipitation as well as a reduction in the rainy season due to climate change since the beginning of the twenty-first century have increased the vulnerability of farmers and cattle-herders. Local tensions between the two groups have sometimes escalated into armed conflicts. Illicit gold mining as well as the mushrooming of an underground border economy since the destabilization of the Sahel region since the push of Islamist groups into Mali and Burkina Faso have further deteriorated the security situation in northern Ghana.[45]

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42 Northern Region, North East Region, Savannah Region, Upper East Region, and Upper West Region.

43 Dzodzi Tsikata and Wayo Seini, *Identities, Inequalities and Conflicts in Ghana*, CRISE Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Queen Elisabeth House, Oxford University, CRISE Working Paper 5 (November 2004), available at https://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/publications/identities-inequalities-and-conflicts-ghana, accessed 1.4.2021; Joseph A. Yaro and Jan Hesselberg, "The Contours of Poverty in Northern Ghana: Policy Implications for Combatting Food Insecurity," *Research Review New Series* 26, no. 1 (2010): 81–112.

44 Jeff Grischow and Holger Weiss, "Colonial Famine Relief and Development Policies: Towards and Environmental History of Northern Ghana," *Global Environment* 7/8 (2011): 50–97; Yaw Agyeman Boafo, Godfred Seidu Jasaw and Frederick Dayour, "Exploring Some Social Dimensions to the Practice and Sustainability of Traditional Conservation Agriculture in Semi-arid Ghana," *Journal of Environment and Earth Science* 4, no. 10 (2014): 47–58; Jeff Grischow and Holger Weiss, "Pan-Africanism, Socialism and the Future: Development Planning in Ghana, 1951–1966," in *The Struggle for the Long-Term in Transnational Science and Politics: Forging the Future*, eds. Jenny Andersson, Eglė Rindzevičiūtė (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 218–239; Martin Oteng-Ababio, Simon Mariwah and Louis Kusi, "Is the Underdevelopment of Northern Ghana a Case of Environmental Determinism or Governance Crisis?", *Ghana Journal of Geography* 9, no. 2 (2017): 5–39.

45 See further Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (ed.), *The Jihadist Threat in Northern Ghana and*

Although Ghana's strong economic growth since the 1990s has cut the poverty rate from 56.5 per cent in 1991 to 24.2 per cent in 2013, thereby achieving Millennium Development Goal 1,[46] this progress has been very uneven. It has been mainly restricted to the South. Whereas the poverty rate was about 20 percent in the South, it was about 60 per cent in the North in 2012.[47] The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), therefore, defined Ghana (in 2015) as a low-income food-deficit country.[48] UNICEF Ghana, in turn, in its 2016 country report underscored that the then three northern regions, Northern, Upper East and Upper West, continued to have the highest poverty rates in the country. It noted that the then Northern Region saw its high level of poverty fall only marginally from 55.7 per cent in 2006 to 50.4 per cent in 2013: "This is a major issue for the country given that the Northern region now makes up the largest number of poor people of any of Ghana's [then] ten regions."[49]

The various investigations on poverty in Ghana indicate its rate being highest in the Muslim-dominated Northern Region, since 2019 split into Savannah and Northern Region, especially marking rural savannah regions. However, poverty is also prevalent among some urban communities, both in the North and the South, especially among rural migrants seeking their daily income from the informal sector.[50] A recent ODI Research Report sheds light on the multiple dimensions of vulnerability and exclusion in Ghana, identifying seven key groups. Most exposed as girls and women, especially those who are orphans, those who are elderly, and those who work in *galamsey* (illegal small-scale mining) or as *kayayei* (porters). Others are low-income individual and households

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*Togo: Stocktaking and Prospects for Containing the Expansion* (2022), available at https://www.kas.de/documents/261825/16928652/The+jihadist+threat+in+northern+Ghana+and+Togo.pdf/.

46 The Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Ghana Country Plan, August 28, 2018, 5, available at https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/Ghana_Country_Plan_Public_Version_WS_Edits.pdf, accessed 1.4.2021.

47 USAID/Ghana Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2013–2017 (December 2012), 1, available at https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Ghana_CDCS_fy2013-17.pdf, accessed 1.4.2021.

48 FAO Nutrition Country Profiles—Ghana, http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/gha_en.stm, accessed 1.4.2021.

49 Edgar Cooke, Sarah Hague, and Andy McKay, *The Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report: Using the 6th Ghana Living Standards Survey* (UNICEF Ghana, March 2016), available at https://www.unicef.org/ghana/reports/ghana-poverty-and-inequality-analysis, accessed 1.4.2021.

50 Kenneth Ofori-Boateng, "Analysis of Severity of Poverty and Social Cohesion among Urban Poor Migrants in Ghana," *Journal of Poverty* 21:3 (2017): 265–287.

in both rural and urban areas, alongside persons with disabilities and people living in areas without public services.[51]

Urban poverty, including the high rate of street beggars,[52] is a noted phenomenon in the predominantly Muslim Zongo settlements in Accra and Kumasi and in other southern and northern urban areas, depicted by outsiders and the media as 'slums' and 'squatter settlements',[53] and adding to the negative perception among outsiders that Muslims constitute a poor and marginalised minority in Ghana.[54] The outcome is the negative image of 'zongolism' as rudimentary-sanitary and improper-hygiene 'areas of filth', inhabited by unruly youth whose dubious reputation is to be experts in *sakawa* of cyber fraud. Nevertheless, zongolism is not Islam, as one critical observer stressed in his blog.[55]

Muslims, on the other hand, see their marginalisation as an outcome of historical trajectories. Constituting a relatively affluent group of merchants, scholars and traders mainly residing in precolonial urban centres in the North, their economic and political position changed during the British colonial period. In part, this was an effect of a deliberated policy by colonial and Muslim authorities of mutual non-interference in their respective 'spheres': The Muslim community gained internal cultural and religious autonomy and refrained from challenging the colonial order. The side-effect was the detachment of Muslim

51 Moizza B. Sarwar, Rebecca Holmes, David Korboe, Alex Afram and Heiner Salomon, *Understanding Vulnerability and Exclusion in Ghana* (London: ODI, 2022).

52 Alex B. Asiedu and Samuel Agyei-Mensah, "Traders on the Run: Activities of Street Vendors in the Accra Metropolitan Area, Ghana," *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift/Norwegian Journal of Geography* 62, no. 3 (2008): 191–202; Tufeiru Fuseini and Marguerite Daniel, "Exploring the Stressors and Resourses of Muslim Child Beggars in Dagbon of Northern Ghana in the Context of Child Rights and Existing Realities," *Cogent Social Sciences* 4 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2018.1542955; Tufeiru Fuseini & Marguerite Daniel, "Child Begging, as a Manifestation of Child Labour in Dagbon in Northern Ghana, the Perspective of Mallams and Parents," *Children and Youth Services Review* 111 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.104836.

53 George Owusu et alii, "Slums of Hope and Slums of Despair: Mobility and Livelihoods in Nima, Accra," *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift/Norwegian Journal of Geography* 62, no. 3 (2008): 180–190; Stig H. Jørgensen, "Some Perspectives on the Geographies of Poverty and Health: A Ghanaian Context," *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift/ Norwegian Journal of Geography* 62, no. 3 (2008): 241–250; Marta M. Jankowska, John R. Weeks and Ryan Engstrom, "Do the Most Vulnerable People Live in the Worst Slums? A Spatial Analysis of Accra, Ghana," *Annals of GIS* 17, no. 4 (2011): 221–235.

54 Rabiatu Ammah, "Christian-Muslim Relations in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa," *Islam–Christian Muslim Relations* 18, no. 2 (2007): 146.

55 Voice of Zongo Youth Foundation, "Poverty must never be an excuse for our poor sanitary conditions [...]," 21.6.2023, https://www.facebook.com/voiceofzongoyouthfoundation, accessed 17.8.2023.

education (the Qur'anic schools) from the colonial 'sphere' including the modern capitalist sector as only Western education (the Christian missionary and government schools) provided access to employment in the modern (colonial and later postcolonial) public and private sector.[56]

Consequently, while Muslim parents sent their children to Qur'anic schools as a deliberate strategy to block Christian influences and 'luring' their offspring from Islam, the effects were detrimental in the long run. The structural disempowerment of Muslims in early postcolonial Ghana was further exacerbated by the political marginalisation of Muslims as an outcome of the deportation of some Muslim leaders in the late 1950s, followed by the large-scale deportations of 'aliens' in the late 1960s. The latter deportation to a large scale affected the composition of the Muslim community as a substantial part of Muslims from Yoruba and Hausa ethnic descent had to leave the country and settle in Nigeria.[57]

The socio-economic and political marginalisation of Muslims further increased when the Ghanaian economy slummed during the 1970s and 1980s. The long-term effects of the various economic recovery programmes in combination with the political stabilization and emergence of a vibrant civil society, including its 'NGO-isation' (see Chapter 1.3 below) since the mid-1980s, have only positively impacted the position of Muslims and their lives in Ghana. Following the famine of 1983, northern Ghana became the target area for international Muslim NGOs. For the first two decades, however, their activities were seldom noticed in public (or academic research) and were mainly restricted to building mosques and places of worship.[58]

Since the 1980s, the Muslim leadership in Ghana has underlined the need to reform the Muslim educational system, especially the Qur'an schools in order to improve the political and social situation of Muslims in the country. Numerous Muslim activists, leaders and scholars have repeatedly underscored the need for Muslims and their organisations to invest in modernising educational facilities as well as in secular education.[59] Consequently, a market feature has

56 Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*. See further David E. Skinner, "The Incorporation of Muslim Elites into the Colonial Administrative Systems of Sierra Leone, The Gambia and the Gold Coast," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 29, no. 1 (2009): 91–108.

57 Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*. See further Ousman Kobo, "'We Are Citizens Too': The Politics of Independence in Ghana," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 48, no. 1 (2010): 67–94; Johnson Olaosebikan Aremu and Adeyinka Theresa Ajayi, "Expulsion of Nigerian Immigrant Community from Ghana in 1969: Causes and Impact," *Developing Country Studies* 4, no. 10 (2014): 176–186.

58 Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving in Ghana*.

59 "Invest in secular education—Islamic NGOs told," 9.11.2004, https://www.modernghana


FIGURE 1 Advertisement for Iqra Educational Centre. The Accra-based Iqra Educational Centre is one among the numerous efforts to modernise the Muslim educational system in Ghana.
ADVERTISEMENT PUBLISHED IN THE DAILY NEWS, SEPTEMBER 17, 2018. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

been the establishment of the Islamic Education Unit at the Ministry of Education alongside Arabic/English primary and secondary schools throughout the country, initially funded by MFBOs (Figure 1).[60]

In the last two decades, new openings in the Muslim educational sector were achieved by establishing private Muslim tertiary institutions. So far, the only

.com/news/66283/invest-in-secular-education-islamic-ngos-told.html; "Muslim workers asked to support Islamic Education Fund," 29.6.2005, https://www.modernghana.com/news/81012/muslim-workers-asked-to-support-islamic-education-fund.html; "Muslims urged to prioritise, invest in education," 27.7.2023, https://gna.org.gh/2023/07/muslims-urged-to-prioritise-invest-in-education/, accessed 12.11.2023; all accessed 12.11.2023.

60 On the reform of the Muslim education sector in Ghana, see Abdulai Iddrisu, "Between Islamic and Western Secular Education in Ghana: A Progressive Integration Approach," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no. 2 (2002): 335–350; Abdulai Iddrisu, "The Growth of Islamic Learning in Northern Ghana and Its Interaction with Western Secular Education," *Africa Development* XXX, no. 1&2 (2005): 53–67; David Owusu-Ansah and Abdulai

existing ones are the Islamic University College Ghana (IUGG) and the Lakeside University College Ghana (LUCG) in Accra alongside the Ghana Muslim Mission College of Education at Beposo, Ashanti Region, and the Muslim Teacher Training Institute in Kumasi. The IUGG, established in 2000, comprises of four faculties, Arts, Business Administration, Communication Studies, and Education. Although it is operated and funded by the Iranian Ahul-Bait Foundation, the IUGG includes Sunni faculty members and teachers.[61] LUCG,[62] formerly known as Madina Institute for Science and Technology (MIST), established by the Madina Foundation for Science and Technology in 2013, started its operations in 2017 and comprises three schools, namely Engineering, Business and Technology, and Liberal Arts and Sciences (Figure 2).[63] In contrast to the IUGG, Lakeside University College does not claim to be an Islamic university per se although highlighting its commitment to upholding Islamic values and ethics.[64]

In addition to the two operating universities, several other ambitious projects have been launched by Muslim scholars and NGOs. The fundraising campaigns for some of them are still running, others have been shelved. One of the earliest was Imam Rashid's Rashidiyya Islamic University in Tamale, envisioned to start with BA and BSc programmes in agriculture, engineering and medicine in 2000.[65] However, the project could not be realised due to lack of

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Iddrisu, "The Philosophy of the Revolution: Thoughts on Modernizing Islamic Schools in Ghana," *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 42, no. 2–3 (2008): 336–466; Ousman Kobo, "Paths to Progress: Madrasa Education and Sub-Saharan Muslim's Pursuit of Socioeconomic Development," in: *The State of Social Progress in Islamic Societies*, eds. Habib Tiliouine & Richard J. Estes (New York: Springer, 2016), 156–177; Kwame Achaw Owusu, "Perspectives of Reformers on the Transformation of Integrated Public Islamic Schools in Ghana," *The African Symposium* (TAS) *Journal* 17, no. 1 (2018): 25–52; Kwame Owusu, "Exploring the Transformational Leadership Strategies Used by Islamic Education Reformers to Influence the Integration of Islamic Schools in Ghana," *Journal of Comparative Studies and International Education* 1, no. 1 (2019): 50–72.

61 See homepage of Islamic University College, https://www.iug.edu.gh. For an analysis of its operations and impact, see Kobo, "Islamic Institutions of Higher Learning in Ghana."

62 See homepage of Lakeside University College, Ghana, https://lucg.edu.gh/. Its previous one, https://misst.edu, is defunct.

63 "Bawumia launches Madina Institute of Science and Technology," 30.9.2017, https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Bawumia-launches-Madina-Institute-of-Science-and-Technology-586560, accessed 17.8.2021.

64 About LUCG, https://lucg.edu.gh/about-lucg/, accessed 23.12.2022.

65 "Tamale Islamic University admits first students," 13.3.2000, https://www.modernghana.com/news/8581/tamale-islamic-university-admits-first-students.html, accessed 23.12.2022.

FIGURE 2 Lakeside University College, Ghana (LUCG), formerly Madina Institute of Science and Technology (MIST)
PHOTO: HOLGER WEISS/2017

funding.[66] Since 2008, Sheikh Mustapha Ibrahim started to promote for the ICODEHS university project at Tuba, Accra, with Dubai Charity as its major sponsor;[67] in 2014, the Al-Huda Islamic Society launched its 20,000-capacity university project at Gomoa Dasum, Central Region.[68] However, it seems as if the two projects have been shelved for the time being.[69] A third university project, the Tijaniyya University College of Ghana (TUCG) at Asokore, Ashanti Region, was inaugurated in 2016;[70] nevertheless, this project, too, found difficulties in attracting sufficient funding.

66 Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving*, 122–123.

67 "Islamic Council to establish university," 9.4.2008, https://www.modernghana.com/news/162209/islamic-council-to-establish-university.html; "Islamic group embarks on massive development in country," 24.1.2011, https://www.modernghana.com/news/313486/islamic-group-embarks-on-massive-development-in-country.html, both accessed 23.12.2022.

68 Gilbert Mawuli Agbey and Charles Andoh, "Al-HUDA constructs university at Gomoa Dasum," Daily Graphic 10.3.2014, https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/education/al-huda-constructs-university-at-gomoa-dasum.html, accessed 8.11.2017.

69 Interview with Haji Sulemana Mumuni, 5.12.2017. According to Haji Sulemana Mumuni, Sheikh Mustapha Ibrahim had difficulties to secure enough funding for the ICODEHS university project.

70 "Construction Works on the Tijjaniya University College commenced," http://www.tijjaniyamuslims.org/news/?news_id=15703d1639dd87&pn=5, the homepage is defunct (May 2024).

On the other hand, the plan of the Ghana Muslim Mission (GMM) to establish an Islamic university next to its College of Education in Beposo is making slow progress.[71] Similarly, the Islamic Mission Secretariat (ISM) managed to finish its Islamic University College project at Duayaw-Nkwanta, Ahafo Region, by 2019.[72] On the other hand, the fate of the ICODEHS Nursing Training College project at Potsin, Central Region, remains unclear.[73] Instead, the GMM commissioned the first Islamic Nursing College in early 2022 and admissions started in late 2022, see further Chapter 4.4.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the maiden annual National Muslim Conference (NMC) in August 2021 addressed the need for accelerating the Muslim education system in Ghana, and Vice-President Alhaji Dr Mahamadu Bawumia underscored the need for Muslim leaders to prioritize education, especially in the area of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, in their quest to develop the Muslim communities.[74]

Since then, the NMC has emerged as a forum for Ghanaian Muslims to deliberate on how to make communities economically prosperous and eliminate extreme poverty and deprivation. In his speech at its second conference in 2022, Sheikh Dr Amin Bonsu, National Chairman of the Ghana Muslim Mission, urged Muslims to join hands and raise the needed financial capital to embark on human development projects: "If the 2 million of us can raise one cedi each Friday in a week we can raise GHC 2 million." Other Muslim leaders, such as the National Imam of the Ahlus-Sunna Wal-Jama'a Sheikh Umar Ibrahim Imam, the Imam of the Shi'a community Sheikh Abubakar Kamaludeen, and

71 "Ghana Muslim Mission to begin construction of an Islamic University," 18.7.2012, https://www.myjoyonline.com/ghana-muslim-mission-to-begin-construction-of-an-islamic-university/, accessed 23.12.2022; "Educational Institutions," 21.4.2016, http://ghanamuslimmission.com/educational-institutions/, accessed 23.12.2022. Interview with Accra 13.10.2022.

72 "Islamic Mission bagged 55 million cedis for training college project," 1.3.2005, https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Islamic-Mission-bagged-55-million-cedis-for-training-college-project-76261; "Islamic Mission Secretariat holds 50th Annual National Convention," 11.1.2015, https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Islamic-Mission-Secretariat-holds-50th-Annual-National-Convention-342108; "Islamic Mission Secretariat (IMS)," 10.10.2019, https://www.facebook.com/IMS-TV-GH-114477779954806/; all accessed 23.12.2022. However, it is unclear if the college is operating, as I have found no traces on its activities on social media or the Internet.

73 "Work on Potsin Nursing Training College progresses," 26.6.2014, https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/education/work-on-potsin-nursing-training-college-progresses.html, accessed 23.12.2022. However, it is unclear if the college project was ever finished, as I have found no traces on its activities on social media or the Internet.

74 "Maiden Annual National Muslims Conference opens in Accra," 2.8.2021, https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Maiden-Annual-National-Muslims-Conference-opens-in-Accra-1322359, accessed 17.8.2021.

the Ameer of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission Maulvi Muhammad Noor Bin Salih, reminded Muslims to overcome their differences and to develop both the intra-Muslim as well as participate in the intra-societal dialogue on national development.[75]

## 2 Defining CBOs, CSOs and Muslim NGOs

A clear-cut definition and typology of non-governmental and civil society organisations (NGOs and CSOs) is difficult to provide. The World Bank defined the term CSO to embrace a wide spectrum of public associations, groups and organisations in civil society,

> [...] including not just NGOs, but also trade unions, community-based organisations or CBOs, social movements, faith-based institutions, charitable organisations, universities, foundations, professional associations, and others.[76]

On a global scale, the 1997-established SAPRIN (Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network) was a platform embracing the full spectrum of CSOs, ranging from community organisations, trade unions, women's groups, small business associations, environmental organisations, farmers' associations, Indigenous peoples' organisations, education associations, health care associations, an professional associations to NGOs, religious associations and youth groups.[77] Its branch in Ghana, SAPRIN-Ghana, encompassed more than 300 NGOs, church bodies and trade union umbrella organisations.[78]

NGOs, on the other hand, the World Bank defined as "professional, intermediary and non-profit organisations that advocate and/or provide services in the areas of economic and social development, human rights, welfare, and emergency relief."[79] Such a definition resembles that of grassroots or voluntary organisation, and excludes a variety of organisations defined as CSOs, including

75 "Muslims must eschew bickering, triviality to develop—Sheikh Dr. Amin Bonsu," 26.9.2022, https://www.modernghana.com/news/1185375/muslims-must-eschew-bickering-triviality-to-devel.html, accessed 27.9.2022.

76 World Bank Civil Society Team, *Consultation with Civil Society: A Source Book* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2007), 1, available at https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Civil%20Society/cso_documents/ConsultationsSourcebook_Feb2007.pdf.

77 http://www.saprin.org/index.htm, last updated 15 December 2005, accessed 27.12.2022.

78 http://www.saprin.org/ghana/ghanax.htm, accessed 27.12.2022.

79 World Bank Civil Society Team, *Consultation with Civil Society: A Source Book*.

religious organisations or youth groups. However, as will be discussed further below, such a narrow definition of an NGO does not reflect the situation in Ghana and definitively not that of the Muslim communities in Ghana who use the term 'NGO' in a broader way, defining also councils and foundations as NGOs in the sense that they are 'non-governmental'.

A narrow definition of an NGO underlines its professionality. Arhin, Kumi and Sadat Adam, for example, define a professional NGO as an organisation that exhibits five (5) characteristics: being formal, private, non-profit distributing, self-governing, and voluntary. Therefore, a professional NGO has institutionalised and regular meetings, office staff, some form of organisational permanence and some degree of voluntary participation in the conduct and management of the organisation.[80] Glauco D'Agostino, in turn, distinguishes civil society organisations from politico-religious subjects, NGOs and the third sector. The last type consists of a set of independent institutions, each organised and non-profit seeking, and each aiming to serve the public interest. Third sector organisations are similar to those termed by Arhin, Kumi and Sadat Adam as professional NGOs, formal, non-profit distributing, private, independent, and voluntary.[81] However, the narrow definition of professional NGOs excludes the myriads of grassroots and voluntary associations, clubs, movements and networks that are not or only rudimentarily professionalized. In Ghana and especially within the Muslim communities, many of them are termed 'NGO', either in the daily vocabulary of their activists or when they register on Facebook and open an account.

The Ghana Non-Profit Organisations Secretariat (NPO Secretariat) applies another typology, distinguishing between non-profit organisations (NPOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs). NPOs, according to the NPO Secretariat, are defined as not-for-profit, non-governmental legal persons, associations, or organisations that have been voluntarily established. It further explains that NPOs primarily engage in mobilising and using resources for charitable, religious, cultural, educational, social or communal purposes or for carrying out other types of not-for-profit activities and the public good. A community-based organisation (CBO), in turn, is a group of enthusiasts that support a common motive in a specific area. CBOs are also referred to as grassroots organisations or peoples' organisations and are distinct in nature and purpose from other NPOs. CBOs are normally "membership" organisations made

80 Arhin, Kumi and Adam, "Facing the Bullet": 350.

81 Glauco D'Agostino, Muslim NGOs, Zakât and Civil Society for Emergency and Development, 12.3.2019, http://www.islamicworld.it/wp/muslim-ngos-zakat-and-civil-society-for-emergency-and-development/, accessed 28.12.2021.

up of individuals who have come together to further their own interests (e.g., women's groups, credit unions, youth clubs, cooperatives and farmer associations, community development associations, etc.). However, the NPO Secretariat also notes that NPOs and CBOs work on identical grounds and share a common motive—the welfare of society and the people.[82]

Religious NGOs, note Heuser and Koehrsen, are hybrids in the sense that they engage in both religious and "secular" fields and institutions of development and therefore form subcategories of professional NGOs, CBOs and CSOs.[83] Others, such as Clark, deploy the term faith-based (charitable/development) organisation when referring to religious NGOs.[84] In contrast to secular humanitarian organisations, faith-based organisations (i.e., religious NGOs) are characterised by Ferris as having an affiliation with a religious body, a mission statement with explicate reference to religious values, receive financial support from religious sources, having a governance structure where the selection of board members or staff is based on religious beliefs or affiliation, and/or decision-making processes based on religious values.[85]

The term Muslim NGO can be used as a broad or a narrow category. Used in the narrower sense, Muslim NGOs are distinct forms of religious or faith-based organisations. Nejima, Harmsen and Akutusu, for example, use the term as a collective denominator for associations, groups and organisations established and operated by Muslim activists, such as 'Islamic Charities', 'Islamic NGOs', 'Islamic Social Institutions', 'Muslim NGOs' and 'Muslim Faith-Based Organisations'. What they have in common is the 'Muslim' or 'Islamic' nature of their vision and mission driving their activities. The core motive for engaging in and donating to a Muslim NGO are based on the Qur'an and the Hadith, namely *thawab* (reward) as well as *fi sabil li-llah* (for the sake of Allah) for pious deeds. The concern with the afterlife is a core motivation for members and donors of Muslim NGOs. To give and serve the needy is are considered as a moral and social duty and is supposed to counter one's greed and egoism and to have a morally purifying effect.[86] Similarly, Sandy Zook and Cas-

82 "NPOs Profile," https://npos.mogcsp.gov.gh/profile/, accessed 16.1.2022.

83 Andreas Heuser and Jens Koehrsen, "From a Quiet Revolution to the Tolerance of Ambiguity: Religious NGOs in International Development Discourse," in *Does Religion Make a Difference? Religious NGOs in International Development Collaboration*, eds. Andreas Heuser and Jens Koehrsen (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2020), 13.

84 Gerard Clarke, "Faith Matters: Faith-Based Organisations, Civil Society and International Development", *Journal of International Development* 18 (2006): 835–848.

85 Elizabeth Ferris, "Faith-based and Secular Humanitarian Organizations," *International Review of the Red Cross* 87, no. 858 (2005): 311–325.

86 See further Susumu Nejima, Egbert Harmsen and Masayuki Akutsu, "Introduction," in

sidy Arndt identify a Muslim (Islamic) NGO to be guided by Islamic principles in their selection of their activities, scope of work, and revenue strategies employed.[87]

Narrowly defined Muslim (national and transnational) NGOs, Kaag highlights, base themselves on an understanding of Islamic solidarity composed of three elements: *ighatha* or humanitarian relief, *da'wa* or the call to Islam, and *jihad* in the sense of armed conflict support of the Islamic cause.[88] However, most of them combine two of the three elements as noted by Petersen in her analysis on the trajectories of transnational Muslim NGOs. The first transnational Muslim NGOs emerged at the end of the 1970s and made headlines during the famines in the Horn of Africa during the 1980s. Petersen defines these organisations—such as the International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO, est. 1979), Islamic Relief (est. 1984) and Muslim Aid (est. 1985)—as *da'wat-ist* since their objective was not only to provide aid but also to counter the influence of Western, Christian NGOs in order to protect the Muslim faith and identity.[89]

The conflicts in Afghanistan and Bosnia in the 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of two different types of Muslim transnational NGOs, namely jihadists and solidarity-based NGOs. *Jihadist* NGOs blend humanitarian relief with supporting the armed struggle of Muslim groups and have, after the attacks in Kenya in 1998 and the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington DC in 2001, been marked by governments as terrorist organisations. *Solidarity-based* Muslim NGOs, on the other hand, emphasise neutrality and inter-faith dialogue

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*NGOs in the Muslim World: Faith and social services*, ed. Susumu Nejima (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 1–16. See also Matthew Clarke and Vicki-Anne Ware, "Understanding Faith-based Organizations: How FBOs are Contrasted with NGOs in International Development Literature," *Progress in Development Studies* 15, no. 1 (2015): 37–48.

87 Zook and Arndt, "Islamic NGOs in Education in Ghana," 64.

88 Mayke Kaag, "Aid, Umma, and Politics: Transnational Islamic NGOs in Chad," in *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, eds. Benjamin F. Soares and René Otayek (New York & Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan 2007), 85–102.

89 Marie Juul Petersen, "Trajectories of Transnational Muslim NGOs," *Development in Practice* 22, no. 5–6 (2012): 766–767; Marie Juul Petersen, *For Humanity or For the Umma? Aid and Islam in Transnational Muslim NGOs* (London: Hurst, 2015); Marie Juul Petersen, "Islam and Development: International Muslim NGOs," in *Does Religion Make a Difference? Religious NGOs in International Development Collaboration*, eds. Andreas Heuser and Jens Koehrsen (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2020), 111–134. Chanfi Ahmed provides a similar discussion on the hybrid character, i.e., combining relief and *da'wa*, of some Muslim NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa, see Chanfi Ahmed, "Networks of Islamic NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa: Bilal Muslim Mission, African Muslim Agency (Direct Aid), and al-Haramayn," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 3, no. 3 (2009): 426–427.

over jihad and *daʿwa*, although, as Petersen highlights, most of these transnational Muslim NGOs still maintain a particularistic focus on restricting their relief efforts to fellow Muslims.[90]

The *daʿwatist*, jihadist and solidarity-based Muslim NGOs are varieties of faith-based NGOs operating locally, nationally or internationally. *Daʿwatist* NGOs have dominated the Muslim NGO landscape in much of sub-Saharan Africa, implementing self-improvement schemes and contributing to the Muslim community's infrastructure, such as schools, mosques, health clinics, and housing. These schemes, in turn, have a positive local multiplier effect as they produce jobs for builders and maintenance personnel, teachers, administrators and other workers.[91]

However, a narrow definition of Muslim NGOs will not necessarily embrace organisations that serve Muslim populations but do not have an explicit or demonstrable commitment to Islamic principles. This has been a noticeable phenomenon in Europe, where many local charities, especially those established by a younger generation of Muslims, are in William Braylo's words "not exclusively 'Muslim' charities. According to him, they do not define themselves as 'Muslim', their volunteers are not all Muslim and they do not provide services only to Muslims … they can better be described as charities based on 'Islamic ethics'."[92] In Ghana, too, many of the youth associations, clubs, movements and Zongo organisations, too, operate within a broad rather than a narrow framework. Furthermore, following Antje Daniel's and Dieter Neubert's definition, some of them could be categorised as social movements as they are articulate "public protest and collective action which is based on a shared identity and which aims at social change," sometimes resulting in violent expressions of protest.[93] Therefore, to embrace the spectrum of Muslim NGOs a broad framework is necessary. Petersen defines such organisations as *secular* Muslim NGOs, applying an inclusive focus such as poverty reduction, sustainable development and capacity building irrespective of one's faith as their main and sole objectives.[94] In addition, a narrow definition of Muslim NGOs does not include the various forms of initiatives defined by Kumi. He defines them as professional or formal substantive philanthropies, such as foundations established

90 Petersen, "Trajectories of Transnational Muslim NGOs," 767, 770–771.

91 Skinner, "Daʿwa and Politics in West Africa:" 103.

92 William Barylo, *Young Muslim Change-Makers: Grassroots Charities Rethinking Modern Societies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 36.

93 Antje Daniel and Dieter Neubert, "Civil Society and Social Movements: Conceptual Insights and Challenges in African Contexts," *Critical African Studies* 11, no. 2 (2019): 183, 186.

94 Petersen, "Trajectories of Transnational Muslim NGOs," 773.

by high net-worth individuals and local/multinational corporate organisations, innovation hubs by social enterprises and impact investors, and various support organisations.[95]

The broad definition on Muslim NGOs embraces the various forms or categories of giving in Ghana as provided in the catalogue of the Sustainable Development Goals Philanthropy Platform.[96] Muslim initiatives on philanthropic giving often come from Muslim business entrepreneurs and High Net-Worth Individuals (Chapter 2.1.1), politicians (e.g. foundations and trusts established by politicians, see Chapter 2.1.2), faith-based groups (e.g. Muslim NGOs, Muslim transnational NGOs, Muslim philanthropists), foundations and trusts. Others have come from endowments set up by artistes in showbiz as well as Muslim celebrities and influencers (Chapter 2.1.3), families (e.g. family foundations and endowments), issue-based public-private collaborations and networks of giving (e.g. between domestic and foreign local communities and Muslim diaspora networks). A recent one is a venture or hybrid philanthropy (e.g. social entrepreneurship and, most recently, the establishment of hubs and investment in start-up companies and business projects).[97]

What defines a particular association or group as a Muslim CBO, CSO, or NGO in Ghana is sometimes difficult to establish. Most, if not all of them, in addition to some foundations, define themselves as NGOs, and my distinction applied in this book between CSOs and NGOs is arbitrary, although not farfetched. This book, therefore, combines a narrow and a broad framework to capture the spectrum of Muslim NGOs in Ghana, see Table 2.

Arguably, one baseline for identifying and categorising an organisation as a Muslim NGO is when its founder or initiator was/is a Muslim. However, not every such an establishment is a Muslim NGOs. This is especially the case with the various CBOs and CSOs engaging in agricultural and community development in the northern parts of Ghana. Rather, depending on a narrow or a broad

95 Kumi, Global Philanthropy Tracker: Ghana.

96 The thirteen categories of giving listed in the SDG Philanthropy Platform are condensed in Tijani and Abdallah to nine ones, namely 1) traditional giving, 2) State-led resourcing and professionalized philanthropy, 3) Informal/individual philanthropy and giving, 4) Political philanthropy, 5) Family foundations and endowments, 6) Faith-based philanthropy, 7) Corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility, 8) Issue-based public-private collaboration, 9) Philanthropic giving by High Net-Worth Individuals, and 10) Networks of giving. See further Ahmed Hamza Tijani and Ibrahim Abdallah, "Philanthropy in the Muslim World: Ghana," in: *Philanthropy in the Muslim World*, eds. Shariq A. Siddiqui and David A. Campbell (Cheltenham/Northampton, Mass: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 55–59, Table 4.2.

97 See further SDG Philanthropy Platform, *Enabling Environment for Philanthropy in Ghana*.

TABLE 2 Frameworks of Muslim NGOs in Ghana

| Narrow framework | Broad framework |
|---|---|
| – Established by Muslims<br>– Membership: Muslims<br>– Objective: empowerment of the Ummah; Da'wah plus spiritual/ religious development<br>– Projects:<br>  – Ramadan Iftar and Qurban<br>  – Water projects<br>  – Mosques<br>  – Educational projects<br>  – Orphans | – Established by Muslims<br>– Membership: Muslims and non-Muslims<br>– Objective: empowerment of the community (Muslims as well as non-Muslims)<br>– Projects:<br>  – Community development<br>  – Humanitarian relief |

definition of a Muslim NGO, its membership is either in total or to a large part Muslim, and its objective is to empower the Muslim population. Following a narrow framework, Muslim FBOs, on the other hand, put the spiritual welfare and religious development of the Muslim *ummah* in the foreground of their activities and are exclusively faith-based organisations, although they combine *da'wa* with humanitarian relief and strive to improve the social welfare, health and education of Muslims in Ghana.

Community development at large, in turn, is on top of the agenda of broadly defined Muslim CSOs, CBOs and secular NGOs. Some of them do not necessarily define themselves as faith-based organisations, although their membership comprises Muslim activists. Some Muslim CBOs and NGOs are formal and institutionalised organisations with CEOs, boards, and dues-paying members alongside voluntaries who participate in their campaigns and programmes. Others are informal networks and movements that rally their supporters for ad-hoc activities. Most professional NGOs are registered organisations; many informal NGOs, especially local youth groups and movements, are not. Some Muslim NGOs and foundations are, in essence, intermediary organisations for international Muslim charities and foreign Muslim philanthropists. Others generate their funds from members and local supporters through social media.

## 3 Empowerment and the NGO-isation of Philanthropy

Empowerment has become a watchword in the programs and policies of the UNDP, UNIFEM and other UN bodies, as well as in the practices of social work and health care, and is frequently used in as various fields of research as psychology, sociology, political science, gender and development studies. However, there is no singular understanding of what it entails. One distinction to consider is that between a community based and an individualistic understanding of it. In the late seventies, empowerment entered the scholarly discussions on local development, local self-governance, activism and social mobilization. The focus then was on the individual life situation as related to social and structural conditions. Empowerment was thus linked to collective consciousness raising processes among marginalized communities, inspired by Paolo Freire, and aiming at social mobilization against social injustices. Two decades later the discourse on empowerment changed to an individualistic market oriented one, focusing on enhancing the individual's capacity to promote individual goals and make autonomous choices within the welfare sector of society. Along with this development followed a purely individualistic therapeutic position on empowerment, as expressed in the fields of health care and social work.[98]

Of Askheim's five approaches to empowerment—empowerment as resistance, empowerment as part of market-logic, empowerment from a therapeutic approach, empowerment as individual self-realisation and empowerment in the light of Foucault's concept of governmentality[99]—this study uses the concept to address the emergence of collective mobilisation, resistance and self-reliance among Muslims in contemporary Ghana. For them, empowerment, or rather self-empowerment, is a multi-dimensional social process for individuals and collectives to gain control of their lives. At best, it strengthens their capacities to act, to transform social (including gender), economic, and political structures as well as to organise themselves to reduce poverty, social injustice and environmental degradation.

98 Ole Petter Askheim, "Empowerment as Guidance for Professional Social Work: An Act of Balancing on a Slack Rope," *European Journal of Social Work* 6, no. 3 (2003): 229–240; Anne-Emmanuèle Calvès, "Empowerment: The History of a Key Concept in Contemporary Development Discourse," *Revue Thiers Monde* 200, no. 4 (2009): 735–749.

99 Inge Storgaard Bonfils and Ole Petter Askheim, "Empowerment and Personal Assistance—Resistance, Consumer Choice, Partnership or Discipline?" *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research* 16, no. S1 (2014): 62–78.

The 'NGO-isation' of philanthropy, in turn, is an expression of contemporary self-empowerment of Muslims in Ghana. The crisis of postcolonial secular nationalism has created favourable conditions for a religiously oriented mobilization that integrates individual salvation and self-realization with a commitment to community welfare. Morally and religiously inspired social action underlies the building of organizations that give assistance to the needy, basic health care and education—services that the state often cannot efficiently provide (Figure 3). Religiously based charitable associations focusing on a wide array of services (medical, educational, family welfare and emergency assistance), play exactly such a role. Initially, they build on ties of local trust and community, although they can also provide a base for subsequent political participation.

Both narrowly and broadly defined Muslim NGOs represent distinct vertical and hybrid philanthropy categories. Similar to other sub-Saharan countries, the Ghanaian philanthropic landscape contains a mixture of informal indigenous and traditional (horizontal) and more formal institutionalised (vertical) philanthropy. According to Kumi, examples of indigenous philanthropic cultures in Ghana include donations from individuals and religious bodies and volunteerism. His investigation identified donations from religious bodies to be largely non-institutionalised. He also highlights that Christians and Muslims are more concerned about donations to religious organisations like churches and mosques rather than supporting the needy (Figure 4). Further, the non-institutionalised nature of religious giving points to important issues such as financial transparency and accountability.[100]

Muslim religious giving in the form of *zakat*, *zakat al-fitr*, and *sadaqa* has traditionally been informal, private and horizontal, although there has been a noticeable expansion of formal, institutionalised and vertical forms of philanthropy not least through the launching of the *Zakat and Sadaqa Trust Fund of Ghana* in 2010 (see Chapter 5.3.1).[101] Similarly, one can identify many of the Muslim initiatives that have mushroomed during the last two decades as forms of vertical philanthropy.

A common feature of the institutionalised philanthropic landscape is the clear lack of distinction between trusts, foundations, and NGOs. They are all registered as companies or trusts limited by guarantee under the Companies

100 Emmanuel Kumi, "Aid Reduction and NDGOs' Quest for Sustainability in Ghana: Can Philanthropic Institutions Serve as Alternative Resource Mobilisation Routes?," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 30 (2019): 1332–1347.

101 See further Weiss, *Zakat in Ghana*.

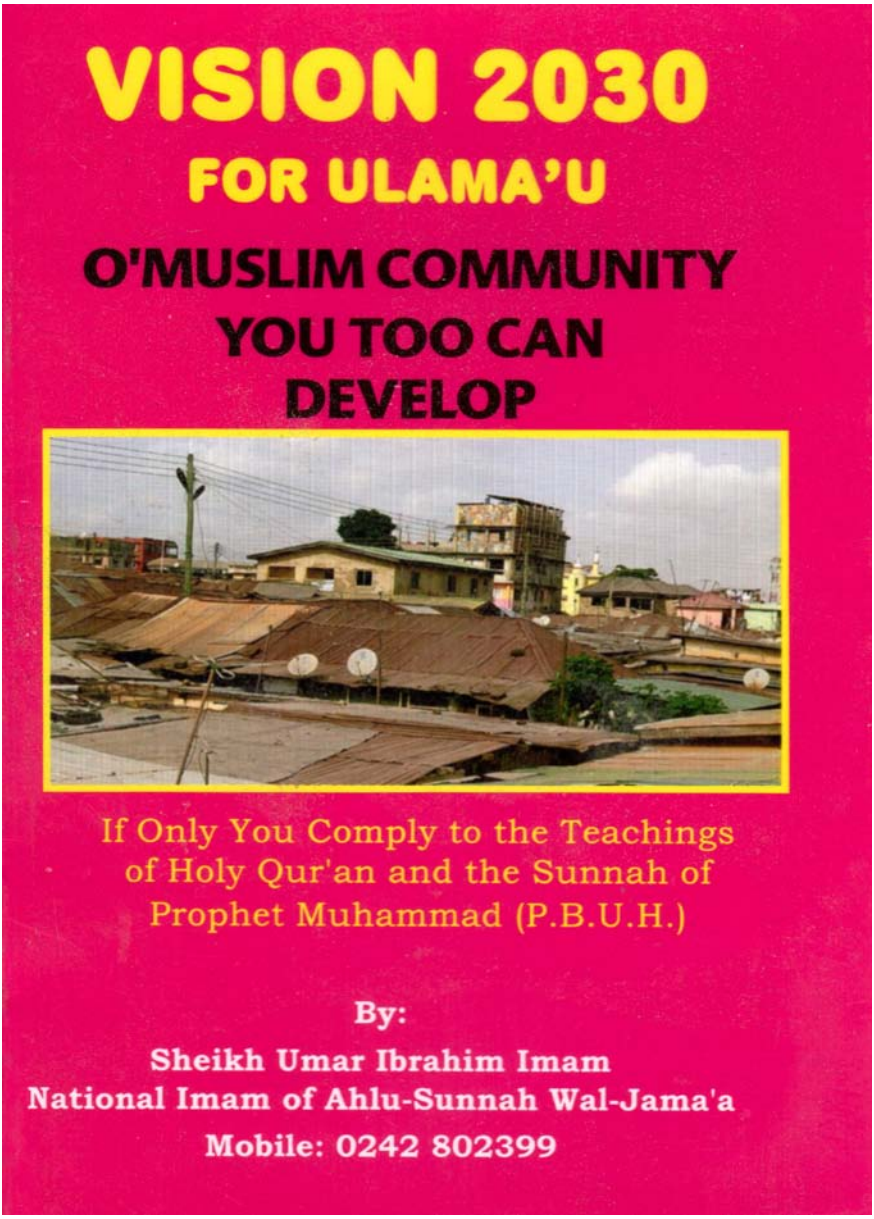


FIGURE 3 *Vision 2030 For Ulama'u*. Booklet published by Sheikh Umar Ibrahim Imam
AUTHOR'S COLLECTION


FIGURE 4A Informal collections organised by mosques. Hamile Central Mosque Contribution Chart
PHOTO: HOLGER WEISS/2019

Code of 1963 (Act 179). Ghanaian law makes no distinction between a CSO, an NGO or a philanthropic organisation, and no legislative body or government agencies, including the Ghana Revenue Authority, the Department of Social Welfare or the Registrar General's Department, deals specifically with or regulates philanthropic work and charitable giving.[102] Foundations, therefore, have become claim-bearing labels where individuals avoid calling their foundations NGOs. Many of the foundations established by politicians and political parties have been criticised for luring voters.[103] Additionally, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a key characteristic of the Ghanaian philanthropic sector. Corporate giving in Ghana is voluntary, and therefore some national

102 SDG Philanthropy Platform, *Enabling Environment for Philanthropy in Ghana*, 51; Tijani and Abdallah, "Philanthropy in the Muslim World: Ghana," 60.

103 Emmanuel Kumi, "Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals: An Analysis of the Potential Role of Philanthropy in Ghana," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 54, no. 7 (2019): 1090.


FIGURE 4B
Collection box of Ar-Rahma mosque in Nima, Accra
PHOTO: HOLGER WEISS/2022

and multinational companies in the telecommunication and extractive sectors have established foundations for implementing their developmental projects.[104]

The 1992 constitution of Ghana's Fourth Republic set the legal framework for grassroots movements, CSOs and NGOs as it guarantees the freedom of speech, freedom of thought, conscience and belief, freedom of the press and other media, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of information and freedom of movement.[105] In principle, religious groups

104 Kumi, "Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals," 1092.
105 Tsikata, Gyekye-Jandoh and Hushie, *Political Economy Analysis of Civil Society in Ghana*, 30.

and NGOs must register with the Office of the Registrar General in the Ministry of Justice to receive formal government recognition and status as a legal entity. Registered religious groups and NGOs are exempt from paying taxes on non-profit religious, charitable, and educational activities. However, there is no penalty for not registering.[106] Furthermore, Tsikata, Gyekye-Jandoh and Hushie assume that most informal CSOs and NGOs are not registered,[107] an observation that also seems to apply to Muslim NGOs.

Moreover, Muslim NGOs are, as LeBlanc and Gosselin note, products of neoliberal globalisation. Starting with the economic and political crisis of the postcolonial sub-Saharan African states in the late 1970s, NGOs have taken over a significant responsibility for services that had previously been provided by the state, especially in education, health care and public safety. This 'NGO-isation' of associations and religious groups, LeBlanc and Gosselin underline, resulted in the formal (Western) NGO model extension to a vast array of civic and religious organisations that hitherto had not identified themselves as NGOs. On the other hand, the virtual explosion of small-scale associations and faith-based NGOs also reflects in their mind the increased visibility of religion and religious activists on both the political sphere and the logic of social development.[108]

In addition, the 'NGO-isation' is a result of the 'hollowing out' of the state in the wake of neoliberal globalisation where the State has transferred some capacities to other levels such as international bodies at the regional and local level inside its country and horizontal networks that bypass states and interlink localities in several localities. As Tok and O'Brien highlight, Muslim as well as other faith-based NGOs are fundamental examples of this 'hollowing out'.[109]

The broad spectrum of Muslim organisational patterns in Ghana is reflected by Rabiatu Ammah and other researchers who differentiate between tradi-

106 U.S. Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom, *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Ghana*, https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/ghana/, accessed 14.11.2023.

107 Tsikata, Gyekye-Jandoh and Hushie, *Political Economy Analysis of Civil Society in Ghana*, 14.

108 Marie Natalie LeBlanc and Louis Audet Gosselin, "Introduction: Faith, Charity and the Ethics of Voluntarism in West Africa," in *Faith and Charity: Religion and humanitarian assistance in West Africa*, eds. Marie Natalie LeBlanc and Louis Audet Gosselin (London: Pluto Press, 2016), 2, 5. Also Marie Natalie LeBlanc and Benjamin Soares, eds., *Muslim West Africa in the Age of Neoliberalism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008).

109 M. Evren Tok and Ben O'Bright, "Reproducing Spaces of Embeddedness through Islamic NGOs in Sub-Saharan Africa: Reflections on the Post-2015 Development," *African Geographical Review* 36, no. 1 (2017): 85–99.

tional and modern ones. Traditional forms include the Sufi orders and mosque communities of the various Muslim denominations active in the country, including various Tijani and Salafi as well as Shia, Ibadi, and Ahmadi groups. Modern Muslim organisations, Ammah lists, include different councils, student organisations, NGOs and Muslim women's groups.[110] Sulemana Mumuni makes a similar distinction between traditional Muslim organisations and modern Muslim NGOs organisations and discusses the initial NGO-isation of the Muslim sphere in Ghana until the mid-1990s. Focussing on the emergence of modern Muslim NGOs in Accra, Mumuni applies a narrow definition and outlines the proliferation of Islamic organisations during the twentieth century. Following his analysis, Muslim NGOs constitute a corpus of different associations, councils, groups and organisations, ranging from non-governmental Islamic organisations such as the Gold Coast Muslim Association and the Ghana Muslim Mission to various representative bodies such as the Council of Muslim Chiefs, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, the Ghana Muslim Representative Council, the Office of the National Chief Imam or the Coalition of Muslim Organisations–Ghana, see further Chapter 1.3.1 below.[111]

Muslim NGOs constitute a small fraction in the Ghanaian landscape of philanthropy. As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, this landscape is changing and leaning towards an institutionalization of giving. While Christian NGOs have dominated the Ghanaian landscape of philanthropy since independence in 1957, institutionalized and vertical Muslim NGOs are a relatively recent phenomena and in general invisible for non-Muslims.[112] Despite the success of some individual Muslims to gain economic and political influential positions in Ghanaian civil society, some of them have even emerged as Muslim High Net-Worth Individuals; the majority of the Muslim population in Ghana constitute an economically and politically marginalised minority.[113] Traditionally, various forms of horizontal philanthropy constituted the basic form of support within the Muslim community. *Zakat* was a private matter, too: informal, individual and person-to-person. At times, the imam was consulted but no mosque or *zakat* funds existed.[114] In addition, the sums that were doled out to beggars

110 Rabiatu Ammah, "Islam, Gender and Leadership in Ghana," *CrossCurrents* 63, no. 2 (2013): 233.

111 Mumuni, Islamic Organisation in Accra, 68–74; Sulemana Mumuni, "A Survey of Islamic Non-Governmental Organisations in Accra," in *Social Welfare in Muslim Societies in Africa*, ed. Holger Weiss (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002), 146–148.

112 SDG Philanthropy Platform, *Enabling Environment of Philanthropy in Ghana*, 27–28; Kumi, Diversify or Die?

113 Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving in Ghana*; Skinner, "Da'wa and Politics in West Africa."

114 Holger Weiss, "Reorganising Social Welfare among Muslims—Islamic Voluntarism and

and poor people were usually small tokens, keeping the recipient alive for a day but hardly changing their life. Therefore, *zakat* has been neither a tool for eradicating poverty nor an instrument for empowering Muslims in twentieth-century Ghana. This, at least, was the conclusion most Muslim scholars made when I interviewed them on the issue about 15–20 years ago.[115]

Instead, what existed in terms of formal forms of vertical philanthropy directed towards the Muslim community in Ghana were various local, national and trans/international Muslim faith-based organisations. Some of them were established by Muslim scholars or leaders of Muslim communities, others by Muslim entrepreneurs and political activists. Starting from the early 1990s, Muslim faith-based NGOs have advocated 'development', 'democracy' or even 'individual rights', goals and objectives, which they sometimes signal in their names. Many of them are actively attempting to gain access to funds from overseas, mostly from OIC member countries and international/transnational Muslim faith-based NGOs, for mosque, health clinics and school construction projects as well as educational activities.[116] However, only a few Muslim faith-based NGOs concentrate on the social and political empowerment of Muslim women.[117] In addition, a new phenomenon is the engagement of the Muslim intellectuals, activists and faith-based NGOs in public communication and media, especially via private radio stations and recently also on the internet.[118]

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Other Forms of Communal Support in Northern Ghana," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32, no. 1 (2002): 83–109.

115 Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving in Ghana*. See also Kumi, "Aid reduction and NDGOs' Quest for Sustainability in Ghana," 1443.

116 Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving in Ghana*. See further Skinner, "Da'wa and Politics in West Africa;" Jibrail Bin Yusuf, 'Muslim Leadership in Ghana: A Critical Analysis', *Scottish Journal of Arts, Social Sciences and Scientific Studies* 5, no. 2 (2012): 14–27; Ammah, "Islam, Gender, and Leadership in Ghana."

117 Ammah, "Islam, Gender, and Leadership in Ghana;" Rabiatu Ammah, "'And they Must also Call unto the Way of the Lord with Wisdom': The Perspective of a Muslim Woman on African Women in Inter-Faith Encounters," *Studies in World Christianity & Interreligious Relations* 48 (2014): 185–202; Sulemanu, "Education as a Tool for Sustainable Development."

118 Musa Ibrahim, "Media and Religious Engagement: Shaykh Seebaway Zakaria and Ghanaian Broadcasting Media," *Annual Review of Islam in Africa* 11 (2012): 7–11; Benedikt Pontzen, "'Caring for the People": ZuriaFM—An Islamic Radio Station in Asante, Ghana," *Islamic Africa* 9, no. 2 (2018): 209–231; Amin Bamba Muzzammil, Islamic Reform in Ghana: The Roles of Selected Islamic Scholars and Movements, M.Phil. thesis, Department for the Studies of Religions, University of Ghana, October 2018.

### 3.1 *A Long History of Muslim Self-Help in Ghana*

Collective agency among Muslims in Ghana has an old tradition and concentrates on two institutions, namely the mosque and the Sufi brotherhood (*tariqa*). Both institutions emerged already during the precolonial period, the former one as the centre of a distinctive local community, the latter one marked by the position and (trans-regional) networks of its shaykh or leader. Murray Last and Benjamin Soares have introduced the term 'prayer economics' in describing the complex practices among Muslim societies and enclaves in West Africa where adherents give considerable sums to Muslim scholars for prayers, blessings, and Islamic medicine.[119] Soares further describes the prayer economy as operating through the circulation of capital—economic, political and spiritual or symbolic which particular social actors can convert from one domain to another. According to him, the prayer economy is, in effect, an economy of religious practice in which people give gifts to certain religious leaders on a large scale in exchange for prayers and blessings. In his view, the exchange of blessings and prayers for commodities has resulted in the process of commodification that has proliferated and intensified around such religious leaders in the postcolonial period.[120]

The British Provincial Commissioner Angus Duncan-Johnstone provides an early description of the prayer economy in Ghana after he participated in congregational prayer in Kumasi in 1928:

> Last night I attended the all night service at the Mosque the night of Leila al Kadiri when the Koran is read from the start to the finish. On this particular occasion when everyone had assembled in the Mosque at 10 P.M. the Limam [Imam, HW] Malam Babbali proceeded to recite the Suras by heart while all the Malams sat with their Korans open in front of them to catch him out. [...] It is no easy task for the audience is all literate, and highly critical, following every verse in their own Koran. We all gave alms half-way through and I was amused to watch the Limam still mechanically chanting, casting his eyes from time to time on the presents brought to me.[121]

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119 Murray Last, "Charisma and Medicine in Northern Nigeria," in *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, eds. D.B. Cruise O'Brien and C. Coulon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 183–204; Benjamin Soares, "The Prayer Economy in a Malian town," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 36, no. 4 (1996): 739–754.

120 See further Benjamin Soares, *Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town* (Edinburgh and London: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 2005).

121 [Angus Colin] Duncan-Johnstone, Informal Diary Ashanti, entry for 20.3.1928, Papers of

Religious choreographies are still the same one century later, and especially the religious gatherings organised by Sufi scholars in Ghana come close to Soares' definition of a 'prayer economy'. However, what has changed is the size of these gatherings, and especially Tijani seasonal prayers muster thousands of participants.

In Muslim societies in general, and likewise among Ghanaian Muslims, social and especially spiritual capital is held in high esteem. Traditionally, social hierarchy was not equivalent to economic wealth. Poorly paid occupations such as that of a Muslim healer, an imam or a *malam* (Muslim scholar) were more prestigious than the income-generating occupations of a trader or a merchant. This is clearly reflected in the records from the precolonial and colonial period: the most influential Muslims were the scholars and imams, not the traders. Though Muslim scholars and their leaders did not despise wealth, their societal influence was based on their *baraka* or spiritual charisma, never on their worldly assets.[122]

However, with the increased poverty among the Muslim segment within Ghanaian society, the emphasis on social and spiritual capital and normative duties has become problematic since the latter half of the twentieth century. The inner cohesion of the various Muslim communities has come under pressure due to a clash between modern ideals and traditional values. 'Old' or 'traditional' social capital in the form of one's *baraka* and position as a religious leader or spiritual leader has little influence in modern Ghanaian society. Success and influence are gained through political and economic activities outside the community; social status in modern Ghana is measured according to one's position and influence in modern civil society. As the Muslim community has become increasingly marginalised in modern Ghana, old ways of coping with the problems of everyday life are questioned—both by the youth and increasingly by the Muslim scholars themselves.

One reflection of this re-evaluation is the mushrooming of Muslim NGOs; another is the increased discussion on *zakat* and community-based self-help.[123] Muslim associations and organisations are discerned from the mosque and Sufi communities as formalised, sometimes even institutionalised bodies that evolved during the colonial period. Interestingly, this also marked a noticeable shift within the (Sunni) Muslim community in Ghana when Muslim grassroots and self-help organisations emerged in urban centres in the South rather

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Lieutenant-Colonel Angus Colin Duncan-Johnstone MSS.Afr.s.593 (1, 2–14), Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

122 Weiss, *Obligatory Almsgiving*, Chapter 7.

123 Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving in Ghana*, 26–27.

than in the old-established Muslim (urban and rural) centres in the North. The oldest one, the Accra-based Gold Coast Muslim Association, started as an organisation for community-based self-help in 1932,[124] and was reorganised into the first (and hitherto only) Muslim political organisation, Muslim Association Party, existing from 1954 to 1957 when it was banned by the Nkrumah government.[125] In Kumasi, several voluntary associations, sometime in competition to existing ones, emerged in the Muslim Hausa community during this period, such as the Muslim Friendly Association, Katsiro, the Jamiyyat Takadum Al-Islam, the Zongo Volunteers, the Muslim Youth Organisation, the Ghana Muslim Association, the Jamiyat al-Ulama, the Ashanti Muslim Council, the Muslim Youth Council, the Muslim Youth Congress, the Jamiyat Al-Yatiyati, and the Muslim Progressive Union Society.[126] The main feature of these organisations was them being predominantly social welfare associations, serving as training grounds for future leaders and being formed on ethnic rather than religious lines.[127]

Several Muslim political/civil society associations existed during the Nkrumah era: the Muslim Youth Congress, the Muslim Youth Association, the Gold Coast Muslim Council, and the Muslim Council of Ghana, all dissolved after the military coup d'état against Nkrumah in 1966.[128] Furthermore, the Nkrumah era also marked the beginning of diplomatic contacts with North African and Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt (1957), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1960) and Libya (1961). These contacts enabled Ghanaian Muslim students to go abroad and study at universities in these countries. Another consequence of these Middle Eastern contacts was the beginning of direct and indirect support for Ghanaian Muslim organisations by various Islamic governmental and non-governmental bodies. Since the 1970s, Saudi Arabia with some other Gulf countries—and since the 1980s also Iran (diplomatic contacts were

124 Mumuni, Islamic Organisations in Accra, 96–100; Mumuni, "A Survey of Islamic Non-governmental Organisations in Accra," 138–161.

125 Misbahudeen Ahmed-Rufai, "The Muslim Association Party: A Test of Religious Politics in Ghana," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series 6 (2002): 99–114; Sean Hanretta, "'Kaffir' Renner's Conversion: Being Muslim in Public in Colonial Ghana," *Past and Present* 210, no. 1 (2011): 187–220.

126 See further Norris Brian Winchester, Strangers and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of the Hausa in Kumasi, Ghana, PhD thesis, Department of Political Science, Indiana University, 1976. Also Prof. Sheikh Osman B. Bari, *A Comprehensive History of Muslims & Religion in Ghana*, Volume 1 (Accra: Dezine Focus, Printing & Publications Co, Second edition, 2014), 288–294.

127 Nathan Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950: Its Effects upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations* (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2006), 85–86.

128 Mumuni, Islamic Organisation in Accra.

re-established in 1982 by the Rawlings' military government) and Turkey since the 2010s—have become the most important partners of Ghanaian Muslim organisations and councils. Muslim returnee students have not only become ardent propagators of a genuine "Islamic" (Salafi) way that at times has resulted in clashes between Sufi and Salafi followers but have also been able to establish financially more effective networks than those of the old Muslim (Sufi) elite.[129]

The most profound effect of the Gulf connection has been the transfer of official development aid (ODA) and assistance from Muslim countries and international Islamic organisations and charities to Ghana (see further Chapter 2.4). Starting after the 1970s oil boom and multiplying since the 1990s, the Ghanaian state, too, has received ODA, investments and loans from Muslim countries and international Islamic financial institutions, such as the Saudi-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB). International Muslim charities such as the Saudi-based International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) or the Kuwaiti African Muslim Agency (AMA, since 1999 known as Direct Aid) have been present in Ghana since the 1980s. Sometimes their investments are presented to the Ghanaian public as for being for the common good, especially when a project, for example a borehole or well, targets a religiously mixed village or community.[130]

However, the most visible sign of "Muslim" investment during the 1990s and early 2000s was the mushrooming of newly built mosques in urban as well as rural communities throughout the country. To a lesser extent, religiously motivated investments were directed into educational, social and infrastructural development project. Whereas local Muslim communities regard such projects as having a positive impact, the building of mosques have at times been criticised by local Muslim activists and leaders for not responding to the needs of the local population. This was the response I received from Muslim authorities I encountered during my earlier research some twenty years ago. Sometimes they even aired their criticism in public.[131]

Much of the criticism some thirty years ago reflects the novel conditions for grassroots and social movements during the first decade of the Fourth Republic in Ghana. The constitution of 1992 paved the way for a vibrant civil society and the establishing non-governmental organisations, including the first generation of Muslim NGOs, followed by a second generation in the early 2000s

129 Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, 351–353. See further Dumbe, "Islamic Polarisation and the Politics of Exclusion in Ghana", and Kobo, "Shifting Trajectories of Salafi/Ahl-Sunna Reformism in Ghana."

130 Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, 354–355.

131 Weiss, *Begging and Almsgiving in Ghana*, 124.

and a third one since the 2010s, as will be discussed in the next sub-chapter. Parallel to this process was the reorganisation of Muslim representational bodies and councils. Some of them had been established in the 1960s and 1970s, several of them existed side-by-side and were at times at loggerheads with each other. These include the Ghana Muslim Community (GMC, established 1966), the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA, established 1969), Ghana Islamic Council (GIC, established 1971), Ghana Muslim Representative Council (GMRC, established 1973), United Ghana Muslim Representative Council (UGMRC, established 1984), and the National Islamic Secretariat (NIS, established 1984), reconstituted in 1988 as Federation of Muslim Councils (FMC), Dinil-Islam of Ghana (DIG, established 1991). All of them became defunct in the early 1990s as the 1992 Constitution only recognised the FMC. About ten years later, the Coalition of Muslim Organisations—Ghana (COMOG, established 2002),[132] challenged the FMC—and at times also the Office of the National Chief Imam, see below—as the national platform for Muslim representative bodies and organisations.[133] In public, the verbal clash between the various Muslim stakeholders made national headlines almost annually when they accused each other for the mismanagement of organising the annual hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca.[134]

During the Fourth Republic, the two dominant political parties, the National Democratic Convention (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), started also to target Muslim voters. Already Jerry Rawling's Provisional National Defense

132 Mumuni, Islamic Organisation in Accra; Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*; Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*.

133 See further Weiss, *Between Accommodation and Revivalism*, 346–348. COMOG stakeholder organisations and institutions are (in 2021): the Tijaniyya Group, the Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a, the Shia Community, the Ghana Muslim Misson, the Islamic Mission Secretariat, the National Association of Imams and Ulema, the Society for Muslim Preachers, the Ghana Muslim Students' Association, the Ghana Academy of Muslim Professionals, the Islamic Medical Association of Ghana, the Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services, the Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Ghana, the Tabligh Jama'a, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, and the Committee for Muslim Rights, Ghana. See further https://www.facebook.com/comogghana/. COMOG has made several attempts to launch a similar mouthpiece for Muslim youth organisations, the *Network of Muslim Youth Organisations in Ghana* (NEMYOG), its most profound impact being the National Muslim Youth Leaders' Summit of which the third one was called for September 2021, see https://www.facebook.com/MuslimYouthAllianceforDevelopment/posts/share-your-ideasnetwork-of-muslim-youth-organizations-in-ghana-nemyog-callingas-/1665438233658343/, 25.8.2021, accessed 4.1.2022.

134 See further Holger Weiss, "Managing the Hajj in Contemporary Ghana," in *Politics of the Hajj in the Postcolonial Era*, eds. Cedric Jourde, Marie Brossier and Muriel Gomez-Perez (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press forthcoming 2024).

Council (PNDC) government recognised the Tijaniyya movement and tried to capture Muslim votes when Rawling's contested the 1993 elections. During the 1990s, Rawling's NDC presented itself as pro-Muslim and pro-Northern in contrast to the NPP that had its roots in the Christian-dominated southern regions.[135] Consequently, both the Zongo communities and the northern regions emerged as strongholds of the NDC during the first decade of the Fourth Republic. The NPP, in order to challenge the NDC in the elections since, started to show commitment to Muslims and Zongo inhabitants, resulting in it gaining Muslim voters especially in areas where Muslim communities were split into various quarrelling and competing denominational (Sufi Tijani versus Salafi) and ethnic groups.[136]

The main body representing the Ghanaian Muslim community in national affairs is the Federation of Muslim Councils (FMC), recognised in the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, whereas the 1992-founded Office of the National Chief Imam (ONCI) serves as the spiritual overlord for Sunni Muslims, its current holder being Sheikh Dr Osman Nuhu Sharubutu, elected in 1993.[137] Other national (Sunni Muslim) bodies are the National Council of Muslim Chiefs, established in 1953, as well as several Salafi bodies, including the Islamic Research and Reformation Centre (IRRC, established in 1969) and

135 See further Dumbe, "Islamic Polarisation and the Politics of Exclusion in Ghana," 167–168.

136 See further Abass Mohammed, Samuel Abu-Gyamfi, Sheikh Seebaway Muhammed Zakaria, Henry Tettey Yartey, Benjamin Dompreh Darkwa, "Muslims and Party Politics in Ghana: Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Analysis," *Annals of Philosophy, Social and Human Disciplines* Volume 1 (2021): 40.

137 https://www.facebook.com/Office-of-the-National-Chief-Imam-of-Ghana-ONCI-706802429426853/. See further http://www.sonsetfundgh.org/_fsdb/_p_contents/resources/_files/brief_biography_of_sheikh_dr._osman_nuhu_sharubutu,_the_national_chief_imam_of_ghana.file/brief_biography_of_sheikh_dr._osman_nuhu_sharubutu,_the_national_chief_imam_of_ghana.file.pdf, accessed 12.4.2021 (the homepage is defunct, checked May 2024); Dr. Mark Sey, Interview with Ghana's National Chief Imam, 16.7.2006, https://projects.kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/173-642-61/Harvard-ChiefImaminterview.pdf, accessed 12.4.2021; Okechukwu C. Iheduru, "The National Chief Imam of Ghana: Religious Leadership and Peacebuilding in an Emerging Democracy," *Journal of Transdisciplinary Peace Praxis* 2, no. 2 (2020): 66–98; Mohammed Kasim Ameen, "The National Chief Imam of Ghana: Intervention, Collaboration and Contestation," in *Islam and Muslim Life in West Africa: Practices, Trajectories and Influences*, ed. Abdoulaye Sounaye and André Chappatte (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2022), 15–37. Most members of the ONCI Board represent various Tijani groups or are Sufi sympathisers, apart from one member representing the Ahlus-Sunna Wa'l Jama'a. On the other hand, the Board has established a sub-structure called the Stakeholders Forum, comprising of members from other Muslim communities, including the Shi'a, Ahmadiyya, and Istiqama, see Ameen, "The National Chief Imam of Ghana," 25.

its youth wing, the Islamic Research Youth Organisation (IRYO, established in 1972),[138] the Supreme Council for Islamic Call and Research (SCICR, founded in 1985),[139] the Ahlus-Sunna Wal-Jama'a (ASWAJ, established in 1997), Tijani bodies, such as the Tijaniyya Muslim Council of Ghana and the Tijaniyya Muslims Movement of Ghana,[140] and the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Ghana (FOMWAG).[141] In 2021, several Muslim stakeholders established the National Muslim Conference of Ghana (NMC) as a national forum to spearhead the self-empowerment of the Muslim communities.[142]

Alongside the above-mentioned religious representational bodies, a wide range of formalized and institutionalised Muslim professional and advocacy associations, groups, and platforms operate nationally in Ghana. Most of them are NGOs, some of them operating since the 1990s.

The *Ghana Muslim Students' Association* (GMSA) ranks among the oldest still existing Muslim youth organisations, established in 1972 with branches in all tertiary educational institutions and universities. GMSA was early in using social media and establishing a Facebook account by 2013. This has also been the case of the *Ghana Academy of Muslim Professionals* (GAMP, formerly Ghana Muslim Academy,[143] on Facebook since 2012) as well as Muslim professional organisations founded during the last decade, including the *Ghana*

138 For an analysis of the activities of the IRRC and IRYO, see Yunus Dumbe, Mustapha Abdul-Hamid, and Musa Ibrahim, "Contesting Visions of Modernity in Ghanaian Salafis' Islamic Reform," *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 6, no. 1 (2021): 1–28.

139 On the SCICR, see Yunus Dumbe, "Intra-Salafi Power Struggles: Politicization of Purity and Fragmentation of Authority in Ghana," *Africa Today* 68, no. 4 (2022): 115–133.

140 See further the Facebook account of the Tijaniyya Muslim Council of Ghana, https://www.facebook.com/TMCOG1/.

141 Dumbe, Transnational Contacts and Muslim Religious Orientation in Ghana; Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*.

142 The NMC lists as members the Office of the National Chief Imam as well as representatives from the Tijaniyya, the Ahlus-Sunna Wal-Jama'a, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, the Shia, the Ghana Muslim Mission, the Muslim Caucus in Parliament, the Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Ghana, the Muslim Medical Association of Ghana, the Muslim Lawyers Association, the Ghana Muslim Students' Association, the Islamic Education Unit, the Zakat and Sadaqa Trust Fund, as well as representatives from Muslim tertiary educational institutions and Islamic research institution. See "Deed of National Muslim Conference of Ghana," [no date], https://www.theinsightnewsonline.com/deed-of-national-muslim-conference-of-ghana/, accessed 8.7.2022.

143 The Ghana Muslim Academy was formed in 1992, inaugurated in 1994, and adopted its new name in 2017. The membership of GAMP includes Muslim intellectuals and professional academics, see further https://ghana-academy-of-muslim-professionals.business.site/, and https://www.facebook.com/GhanaAcademyOfMuslimProfessionals/.

*Muslim Nurses and Midwives Association* (GMNMA, on Facebook since 2012),[144] the *Muslim Mobile Preachers Association* (MMPA, on Facebook since 2012),[145] the *Union of Muslim Professionals* (UMP-GH, founded in 2014, on Facebook since 2016),[146] the *Muslim Health Workers' Association of Ghana* (MHWAG, established in 2015, on Facebook since 2018),[147] the *Islamic Medical Association of Ghana* (IMAGH, incorporated 2016, on Facebook since 2017),[148] the *Ghana Muslim Journalist Association* and the Muslim female teachers' association *Muslim Women in Teaching*, both formed in 2020 and on Facebook since then,[149] and the *Ghana Association of Muslim Accountants* (GAMA), formed in 2021.[150]

The *Muslim Health Workers' Association* (MHWAG) and the *Islamic Medical Association* are vivid examples of CSOs combining professional and humanitarian causes. Both organisations have organised medical outreach programmes alongside mobile health screening activities targeting inhabitants in deprived communities. Both organisations underscore the need to integrate an Islamic perspective on medical ethics. MHWAG's objective is youth empowerment through education, mentoring, career guidance, and counselling. In addition, MHWAG runs special projects for vulnerable groups, including children, women, the disabled and orphans in Ashanti Region, most notably the 'Zongo Annual Health Check'.[151] In 2020, MHWAG launched an ambitious campaign

144 See further https://www.facebook.com/Ghana-Muslim-Nurses-and-Midwives-Association-Gmnma-3287894771966o9/. GMNMA was championing for the right of Muslim nurses to wear the veil at work in 2015. It is unclear if the association is still active as its Facebook account has not been updated since 2017.

145 See further https://www.facebook.com/MMPATVGHANA/?ref=page_internal.

146 UMP-GH defines itself as a non-profit, non-political organization of Muslim professionals and business people aiming at promoting Islamic consciousness and impact "through appropriate projects, programs and activities by partnering with other related Islamic organizations, development partners and organizations." UMP-GH puts special focus on capacity building programs, including social, business, entrepreneurial and professional training. See further https://www.facebook.com/ump.ghana/, accessed 27.9.2021.

147 The MHWAG consists of professional and non-professional health workers, including doctors, pharmacists, midwifes, laboratory scientists, optometrists, administrators and supporting staff.

148 See further https://imaghana.com/, and https://www.facebook.com/IMAGH101/.

149 See further https://www.facebook.com/Ghana-Muslim-Journalists-Association-102169398402170/, and https://www.facebook.com/MuswitGh/.

150 https://www.facebook.com/gama.ghana/.

151 "Zongo Annual Health Check" (poster), 29.5.2022, https://www.facebook.com/mhwaghana/, accessed 5.12.2022; "A/R: Muslim health workers screen inhabitants in Zongo communities," 12.6.2022, https://citinewsroom.com/2022/06/a-r-muslim-health-workers-screen-inhabitants-in-zongo-communities/, accessed 5.12.2022.

to raise funds to renovate, equip and operate the Kumasi Central Mosque Clinic.[152] Apart from the two aforementioned organisations, the *Muslim Health Students Association of Ghana* (MUHSAG) serves as a unifying body for Muslim health students at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Apart from organizing socialisation programmes of its members, MUHSAG has organised so-called mini-clinics or health screening events in Zongo communities in Kumasi.[153]

Apart from Muslim professional associations, urban-based Muslim advocacy groups and think tanks were established in the last two decades. The urban-based Muslim advocacy groups include a variety of CSOs and centres that focus on promoting political stability, such as the *Friends Against Global Terrorism* (FAGLAT), the *Community Development and Youth Advisory Centre*, the *Northerners and Zongos Concerned Youth Association of Ghana*, and the *Center for Muslim Youth in Peace and Development*.

The *Friends Against Global Terrorism* (FAGLAT) was established in 2001 by Muslim leaders in the aftermath of 9/11 in solidarity with the global war on terrorism. Among its most prominent members were the National Chief Imam Sheikh Dr Osman Nuhu Sharubutu and the National Imam of the Ahlus-Sunna Wal-Jamaʿa Sheikh Umar Ibrahim Imam. FAGLAT was an active CSO for a decade and collaborated closely with the US Embassy in Accra, the latter using FAGLAT to distribute the embassy's Ramadan food donations. In addition, FAGLAT and the US embassy organised cultural exchange programmes with Muslims in the USA and lecture series, workshops and roundtable discussions with Muslim leaders in Ghana.[154] Its pro-American stance was outspoken, and the organisation repeatedly demanded that Muslim activists abstain from pro-

152 MHWAG Fundraising durbar under auspices of Sarkin Zongo of Ashanti Region and in collaboration with Alpha Radio, posted 13.2020, https://www.facebook.com/341974059650439/photos/a.410701716111006/873284689852704/?type=3&theater, accessed 27.9.2021; MHWAG Fundraising campaign Ramadan 2020, posted 17.2.2020, https://www.facebook.com/341974059650439/photos/a.410701716111006/659448534569655/?type=3&theater, accessed 27.9.2021.

153 https://www.facebook.com/KnustMuhsag, 7.6.2021, 9.8.2022, accessed 24.8.2022.

154 "US Gov't Observes Ramadan With Ghanaian Muslims," 7.11.2002, https://www.modernghana.com/news/27744/1/us-govt-observes-ramadan-with-ghanaian-muslims.html; "True Islam is religion of tolerance—Lanier," 2.11.2003, https://www.modernghana.com/news/43766/1/true-islam-is-religion-of-tolerance-lanier.html; "US Extends Hand of Friendship to U/E Muslims," 19.10.2006, https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/US-Extends-Hand-of-Friendship-to-U-E-Muslims-112441, all accessed 18.8.2021. Also Scott Ticknor, "Reaching Out—Way Out—to Muslims in Ghana," *State Magazine* (March 2006): 22–23.

moting anti-American sentiments.[155] However, the activities of FAGLAT abated after a few years, and the organisation has been dormant since 2010.

In contrast to FAGLAT, the Tamale-based *Community Development and Youth Advisory Centre* (CODYAC) remained active for two decades. Founded by Sheikh Dr Alhaji Al-Hussein Zakariya in the early 2000s, his centre has evolved into a key propagator on youth development, adolescent reproductive health and interfaith dialogue.[156] Alhaji Al-Hussein received the Martin Luther King Award for Peace and Social Justice for his timeless efforts in 2008, and was nominated among the 100 most influential personalities from Northern Ghana in 2022.[157]

The Accra-based *Northerners and Zongos Concerned Youth Association of Ghana* (NAZYAG) ranks among the oldest still active Muslim CSOs. Established as a national youth group with members in 240 Zongo communities in 2001, the organisation has since then transformed into a recognised pressure group.[158] In 2017, for example, NAZYAG, together with the Ghana Muslim Broadcast Journalists Association and Ghana Hajj Research, critically commented on the handling of hajj affairs in Ghana.[159] In 2018, the two organisations vehemently opposed the proposal by the Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Prof. Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng, to Muslim leaders to use text messages to call for prayer.[160]

NAZYAG, together with Zongo Broadcasters Live, Ghana Hajj Research, ZongoPeople.com and Hajj Media Voice, are members of *Muslim Groups Ghana*. The organisations made headlines as organisers of the Ghana Muslim

155 "Ghana: Don't Fan Anti-American Sentiments," Accra Daily Mail 25.1.2007, https://allafrica.com/stories/200701250888.html, accessed 18.8.2021. The establishment, activities and impact of FAGLAT is outlined and discussed in extenso by Dumbe, Transnational Contacts and Muslim Religious Orientation in Ghana, 277–320.

156 Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950*, 228–229.

157 "2020 Edition of The 100 MIPs From Northern Ghana Project Launched," 17.7.2020, https://wundef.com/2020-edition-of-the-100-mips-from-northern-ghana-project-launched/, accessed 13.12.2022.

158 "Zongo communities urge political parties to include them in their manifestos," 17.8.2012, https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Zongo-communities-urge-political-parties-to-include-them-in-their-manifestos-247984, accessed 5.1.2022.

159 "Muslim Associations Comment Hajj Board," 24.10.2017, https://www.ghananews247.com/2017/10/24/muslim-associations-comment-hajj-board/, accessed 9.10.2021.

160 Muhammed Faisal Mustapha, "Muslim groups demand removal of Prof. Frimpong Boateng for 'call to prayer' comment," 13.4.2018, https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Muslim-groups-demand-removal-of-Prof-Frimpong-Boateng-for-call-to-prayer-comment-642864, 16.1.2022.

Excellence Awards, although, in early 2021, they turned into a political platform when they called—in vain, as it turned out—on President Akufo-Addo not to scrap the Ministry of Inner-City and Zongo Development as he embarked on forming a new government after winning the 2020 elections.[161]

The *Center for Muslim Youth in Peace and Development* (CMYPD) spearheads peace and capacity building programmes alongside anti-corruption and anti-drug campaigns in urban Zongo communities.[162] Established in 2020, the Accra-based centre partners other Muslim NGOs and CSOs with similar agenda such as the Kumasi-based Muslim youth and community development incubator *Volunteers for Muslim Youth Empowerment and Development* (VOMYED). VOMYED's public interventions include the Ghana Muslim Youth Camp, an annual event organised by VOMYED since 2012 (but cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19). In recent years, the event has included digital skills training (phone, graphic design, social media, digital tools usage, and management), pastry skills training (pies, spring rolls, pizzas), as well as beads and accessories making.[163]

The third segment of Ghana's contemporary Muslim NGO landscape consists of the numerous Zongo community associations and groups (see further Chapter 2.3 below). Most of them resemble secular Muslim NGOs and restrict their activity to a specific Zongo community, albeit some claim or indicate translocal ambitions. For example, the *Voice of Zongo Communities in Ghana* (VOZ) aspires to address development issues in Zongo communities by working in partnership with community leaders, government agencies as well as local and international NGOs, although it hitherto restricted its activities to Koforidua Zongo.[164] The *Zongo Civic Foundation* (ZCF), in turn, claims to be a non-partisan, non-profit organisation "established to empower the people of the Zongo through effective civic engagements and vocational skills." However, apart from disseminating general information on the 2019 referendum introducing a multi-partisan system at local level elections and allowing political

161 "Don't scrap Ministry of Inner Cities and Zongo Development—Muslim groups begs Akufo-Addo," 13.1.2021, https://www.modernghana.com/news/1054941/dont-scrap-ministry-of-inner-cities-and-zongo.html, accessed 16.1.2022.

162 See further https://www.facebook.com/Centre-for-Muslim-Youth-in-Peace-and-Development-100494001577432/.

163 https://www.facebook.com/vomyed/, 21.5.2015, 17.4.2016, accessed 16.1.2022.

164 https://www.facebook.com/vozgh/. Among others, VOZ launched a peace campaign after the December 2020 elections as well as fundraising campaigns for its 'Menstrual Cup' and 'One Child One School Uniform' projects in Koforidua Zongo, see postings on Facebook 20.8.2020, 27.11.2020, and 24.1.2021, accessed 30.12.2021.

parties to participate in decentralised local governance, the ZCF has left no other traces on the internet.[165]

The Kumasi-based *Voice of the Zongo International* (VOZI) is an example of the few trans- and internationally operating Ghanaian Zongo and Muslim NGOs. Starting as a CSO in Kumasi to boost sanitary and economic activities in local Zongo communities, it hosted the Ashanti Muslim Business Executives Dinner in September 2019[166] and soon established an international network. It listed at its official inauguration on 31 July 2021 branches in Belgium, Canada, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Nigeria, Spain, the UAE, the UK, and the USA. VOZI appears to be the brainchild of Muslim business tycoon Alhaji Abdullahi Usman, CEO of Karima Enterprise and founder of the Karima Foundation. VOZI's medium and long-term project plans are ambitious, ranging from organising extra classes for double-track students and vocational training courses alongside running *daʿwa* programmes on social media and radio to financing water projects (the first ones were completed already in 2020) and building a hospital.[167]

The fourth segment comprises of NGOs and political pressure groups, sometimes attached to or established by political parties such as the NPP Zongo Pioneers and the Zongo Nasara Club (i.e., the Zongo wing of the NPP). Some of them also embrace a social welfare and community development dimension on their agenda. For example, the *Zongo Democrats Ghana*, defining itself as an NGO and thinktank to champion the course of Zongo people and voiceless Ghanaians,[168] bashes the marginalisation and stigmatisation of Zongo inhabitants in similar outcries as many Zongo youth groups:

> POLITICAL EXPLOITATION OF ZONGO PEOPLE.
> I think, therefore I am human.
> The best you think, the closer you get to humanity.
> The worst you think, the farther you are from humanity.
> Human beings and animals are all technically animals, what differentiates us is our thinking capacity, so if a person lacks thinking capacity, then he is less of a human being and more of an animal....

165 https://www.facebook.com/Zongo-Civic-Foundation-Ghana-110783200286069/.
166 https://www.facebook.com/VOZIWorld, 17.9.2019, accessed 30.12.2021.
167 https://www.facebook.com/VOZIWorld, 2.11.2021, accessed 30.12.2021.
168 Vision of Zongo Democrats, 6.10.2021, Zongo Democrats Ghana, https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100081453124517, accessed 29.12.2022.

> ZONGO PEOPLE THINK, HENCE WE ARE ALSO HUMANS, ENOUGH IS ENOUGH, NO MORE OIL, RICE, SHEEP, AND SMALL ENVELOPES DURING EID AND THE MONTH OF RAMADAN....WE NEED DEVELOPMENT IN THE ZONGOS...
> ZONGO DEVELOPMENT NOW...[169]

Similar to other Zongo youth groups, the Zongo Democrats have reacted vehemently against police brutality and what they describe as systemic profiling and social injustice against vulnerable and voiceless persons in Muslim dominated communities.[170]

A fifth phenomenon marking the contemporary Muslim landscape in Ghana is the establishment of Islamic think tanks. Most of them are CSOs, the majority of their offices being located in Accra, including the *Africa Center for the Advancement of Islamic Law and Policy* (ACAILP), the *Baraka Policy Institute* (BPI), the *Ghana International Hajj Research Foundation*, the *Islamic Finance Research Institute of Ghana* (IFRIG), the *Progressive Muslims Forum* (PMF), the *Zango Research Institute* (ZRI), and the *Centre for Islamic Thought and Civilisation* (CITC).

The BPI has been operating since 2014, spearheading improvements in education and capacity building, and aiming to promote social justice and empowerment of marginalized and vulnerable segments in Ghanaian society via social policy research, lecture series and workshop for policy makers and institutional leaders (Figure 5).[171] The ACAILP, on the other hand, is a more recent establishment that defines itself more narrowly as an Islamic policy think tank in areas of law, policy, social and developmental advocacy, and intra- and interfaith dialogue.[172] The Hajj Research Foundation serves as a watchdog of the Ghana Hajj Board and the annual hajj operations,[173] whereas the IFRIG and its defunct predecessor, the Tamale-based *Africa Islamic Economic Foundation* (AFRIEF), propagate for the introduction of Islamic banking in Ghana.[174]

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169 Political exploitation of Zongo people, 20.10.2021, Zongo Democrats Ghana, https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100081453124517, accessed 29.12.2022.

170 "Pressure group condemns state security of discrimination in law enforcement," 23.7.2021, https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/pressure-group-condemns-state-security-of-discrimination-in-law-enforcement.html, accessed 29.12.2022.

171 See further http://barakapolicy.org/, and https://www.facebook.com/barakapolicy/.

172 See further https://www.facebook.com/Africa-Center-for-the-Advancement-of-Islamic-Law-and-Policy-105780171067989/.

173 See further https://www.facebook.com/hajjresearch2017/.

174 The activities of the AFRIEF and IFRIG are discussed in Chapter 6.1.

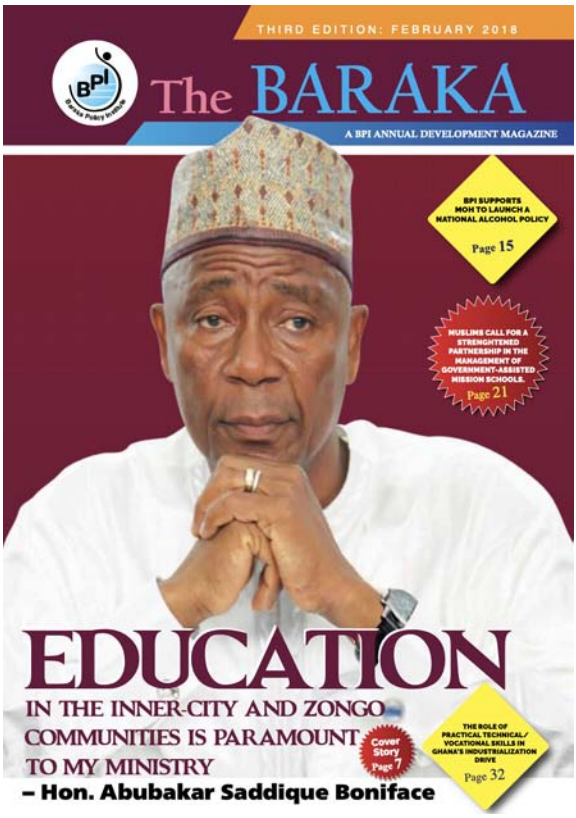


FIGURE 5
*The Baraka*. The magazine is an annual publication of The Baraka Policy Institute.
AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

The *Progressive Muslims Forum* (PMF), by organising its Debate Forum, depicts itself as the Ghanaian similitude to the Doha Debate in Qatar, the Pew Research Centre in the USA and the Dispatches Debates in the UK. Its vision is to become the leading Muslim research think-tank institution in Ghana, focusing on peace, tolerance, religious co-existence, and national development. The Debate Forum started as a Muslim youth forum where PMF members engaged in roundtable discussions in 2016. Since then, the Debate Forum and its main avenue, the Futa Square lecture series, have evolved as an intellectual platform for a cross-sectional representation of Muslims in Ghana to discuss dispassionately critical issues ranging from socio-political and sectarian differences affecting Muslims.[175]

175 See postings on the Debate Forum and Futa Square Lectures, https://www.facebook.com/Progressive-Muslims-Forum-107229746616751o/?ref=page_internal, 20.1.2016, 13.7.2016, 2.11.2017, 23.1.2018, 10.5.2019, 23.5.2019, accessed 5.1.2022.

The *Zango Research Institute* (ZRI), in turn, addresses drug addiction in urban Zongo communities, as well as capacity building through offering vocational training.[176] As part of the latter objective, the ZRI arranged courses in entrepreneurship training in Nsawam Adoagyiri in September 2020.[177] Dr Salah Muhammad Salis and his *Centre for Islamic Thought and Civilisation* have articulated in recent (online) newspaper articles a critical standpoint on violent extremism,[178] and promoted a multi-dimensional Islamic perspective on Human Rights and gender equality.[179]

A few Muslim think tanks are located in Kumasi, including the *Muslim Executive Foundation* (MEF; Figure 6). Founded by the late Sheikh Dr Osman Bawa Hafiz Orlando in 2012,[180] MEF promotes social development and welfare by organising a seminar on tackling the challenges of entrepreneurship in January 2016.[181] A special focus has been the empowerment of women, starting with a special seminar on the topic of divorce and the rights of women in Islam in March 2016.[182] Reacting to increasing reports about sexual harass-

176 Zango Research Institute, "The Effect Of Sports Facilities, And Drug Abuse in Zango," 4.9.2020, https://www.modernghana.com/news/1027377/the-effect-of-sports-facilities-and-drug-abuse.html, accessed 5.1.2022.

177 https://www.facebook.com/Zango-Research-Institute-107348394425049/?ref=page_internal, 1.9.2020, accesed 30.12.2021.

178 "Rethinking violent extremism through the Islamic lens (I)," 15.10.2022, https://www.theghanareport.com/rethinking-violent-extremism-through-the-islamic-lens-i/; "Rethinking violent extremism through the Islamic lens (II)," 23.10.2022, https://www.theghanareport.com/rethinking-violent-extremism-through-the-islamic-lens-ii/; both accessed 13.12.2022.

179 "Islamic Conception of Human Rights," 25.9.2022, https://www.graphic.com.gh/features/opinion/islamic-conception-of-human-rights.html; "Islam grants men, women equal status," 11.11.2022, https://www.graphic.com.gh/features/opinion/islam-grants-men-women-equal-status.html, both accessed 13.12.2022.

180 The 63-years old Sheikh Orlando died unexpectedly 7 October 2021. Mahmud Mohammed-Nurudeen, "Chairman of Islamic Education Unit Council, Dr. Sheikh Osman has passed on," https://www.myjoyonline.com/chairman-of-islamic-education-unit-council-dr-sheikh-osman-has-passed-on/, 9.10.2021, accessed 3.8.2022. He was succeeded as imam for the MEF by his brother Sheikh Abdul Razaq Bawa Aransa, see "Sheikh Abdul Razak takes over as Muslim Executive Foundation Imam," 13.2.2022, https://www.myjoyonline.com/sheikh-abdul-razak-takes-over-as-muslim-executive-foundation-imam/, accessed 27.5.2024.

181 Invitation to seminar, dated 3.1.2016, https://www.facebook.com/Muslim-Executive-Foundation-2879309345948 28/photos/pcb.978439525543962/978439472210634/, accessed 25.8.2021.

182 Photo/banderol, 21.3.2016, https://www.facebook.com/Muslim-Executive-Foundation-287930934594828/, accessed 25.8.2021.


FIGURE 6 Muslim Executives Foundation. Banner in front of MEF's office in Kumasi
PHOTO: HOLGER WEISS/2017

ment in senior high schools, MEF organised a workshop on sexual hygiene and harassment for female students of Nurul Ameen Secondary High School at Asawase, Kumasi metropolitan area, in December 2018.[183] In a video broadcast publicised after the workshop, the representative of the women's wing of the MEF strongly came out and condemned any form of sexual harassment and domestic violence, "irrespective [of] who did it, even [if] it is a policeman, a Malam, their uncle or whoever."[184]

However, most Muslim centres and institutes that resemble think tanks, such as the Accra-based *Centre for Islamic Worldview and Development*, *Islamic Centre for Community Affairs* or *Mercy Center for Family Development*, are, in essence, Islamic propagation centres and institutes. For example, the Accra-based *Islamic Supreme Council of Ghana* is a non-sectarian *da'wa* and advocacy body founded by Sheikh Hussain Zachariah in 2017. Its key objectives are to promote human fraternity regardless of race, religion, and creed and enhance

183 "Speak up against sexual harassment—Muslim Executive Foundation urges ladies," 5.12.2018, https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/religion/Speak-up-against-sexual-harassment-Muslim-Executive-Foundation-urges-ladies-706199, accessed 25.8.2021.

184 https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/religion/Speak-up-against-sexual-harassment-Muslim-Executive-Foundation-urges-ladies-706199?video=1, accessed 25.8.2021.

social development through education, health, and sanitation "by serving Allah." Moreover, the Council aims to be the voice of the voiceless and, similar to many other Muslim NGOs, to advocate for peaceful coexistence between Muslims and adherents of other faiths.[185] In collaboration with the *Shaikh Hussain Zachariah Foundation Ghana* and the *Islam for Humanity International*,[186] the Shaykh Hussain Zachariah's centre focuses predominantly on *da'wa* although it occasionally has addressed sanitation and environmental problems of the Zongo communities, as it did in early January 2020:

> It is time for religious organizations, groups and mosque congregations to come out to help solve the Sanitation menace in the Zongo communities in Ghana. The Islamic Supreme Council of Ghana has set the pace, join the working team … clean the Zongos.[187]

Like many similar Muslim bodies, the centre calls for donations to feed poor, destitute and hungry persons in the Zongos but with one distinction: Muslim and non-Muslim poor are its target group. For example, after its Ramadan *tafsir* lecture in March 2020, the Council noted on Facebook:

> We currently have 35 needy people who contacted us after the 25th March 2020 presentation on how to support the needy … They need food during this lockdown season; one person also needs support to get accommodation for his family during this lockdown season and beyond … Kindly donate through mobile money number 0240598190 to support these needy Muslims and Christians to survive.[188]

Another think tank-cum-Islamic centre is the Accra-based *Al-Islaah Center*. The Al-Islaah Center is the brainchild of Abdul-Hamid Bashir Yandu, known as Kishk, the imam of the Rahman Mosque in Accra. Imam Abdul-Hamid has also been the director of Islamic Ummah of Ghana (IUG) since 2014. As director of the centre, he mostly deals with violent extremism, motivation, education,

185 Core mandates and objectives, https://business.facebook.com/Iscgha-105979480927753, posted 3.1.2020, accessed 27.9.2021. See also: https://business.facebook.com/The-Islamic-Supreme-Council-of-Ghana-102770731396862/?business_id=398756003643216.

186 See https://www.facebook.com/Shaikh-Hussain-Zachariah-Foundation-Ghana-100511318851616/; https://business.facebook.com/ISLAM-for-Humanity-Intl-117560636250479 9/.

187 "Its time to clean the Zongos," https://business.facebook.com/Iscgha-105979480927753, 3.1.2020, accessed 27.9.2021.

188 https://business.facebook.com/Iscgha-105979480927753, 29.3.2020, accessed 27.9.2021.

capacity building, religious tolerance and philanthropy.[189] According to the policy declaration on its homepage, Al-Islaah Center aims "to use the soft power of religion to initiate positive social change in our communities through education and capacity building and philanthropy."[190]

The numerous *daʿwa* and Islamic propaganda centres are an intimate part of the Muslim landscape in Ghana. A comprehensive list of these centres requires an entire research project to survey, analyse, and map their activities to inform future investigations. Many of these centres are old establishments established by Muslim scholars for the spiritual and religious development of Muslims. A few of them have gained a national and international reputation. Others are 'modern' masjid-type establishments consisting of an educational complex, boarding houses for the pupils, administrative buildings, and—always—a mosque; sometimes, they have a health post. Such centres are mainly run as NGOs. A few of them actively engage with or at least comment on the political and societal conditions of local Muslim communities. Nevertheless, the common nominator of these organisations is their institutionalisation and 'modern', sometimes even 'western' appearance in contrast to the traditional non-institutionalised and informal associations, networks of imams and scholars, local *makarantas*, *madrasas* and mosque communities.

### 3.2 *Three Generations of Muslim NGOs in Ghana*

At least three generations of Muslim NGOs operate in contemporary Ghana, see Appendix. The first generation stems back to the 1980s and refers (mainly) to organisations established as intermediaries for foreign donors. NGOs belonging to the first generation are, among others, *Muslim Relief Association of Ghana*, *Muslim Family Counselling Service* (see Chapter 4.2), *Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services* (see Chapter 2.4), *Bureau of Social Services*, *al-Hudaibiyya Relief Services*, and *Aldiaa Society*. Unlike the second and third generation NGOs, academic research has documented some of the first generation NGOs and their activities.[191]

189 https://alislaahcenter.home.blog/2019/07/10/introducing-our-executives/, accessed 25.7.2021; Michael Odour, "Ghana's cool Imam crossed faith boundaries in interest of peaceful polls," 16.12.2020, https://www.africanews.com/2020/12/16/ghana-s-cool-imam-crossed-faith-boundaries-in-interest-of-peaceful-polls/, accessed 25.7.2021.

190 https://alislaahcenter.home.blog/2019/07/09/welcome-to-my-blog/, accessed 25.7.2021.

191 Mark Sey, "Muslim Community in Ghana: The Contemporary Scene," *Jurnal Syariah* 5, no. 2 (1997): 249–258; Samwini, *The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana since 1950*, 141–145; Ammah, "Islam and Poverty Reduction Strategies;" Dumbe, *Islamic Revivalism in Contemporary Ghana*; Muhammed Haron, "Africa's Muslim Non-Governmental Organizations: Competitive Charities, Altruistic Allies?," in *Religion and Development in Africa*, eds. Ezra

Some local first-generation Muslim NGOs, Mumuni underscores, are "… in name and not in structure," defining them as "letterhead", "signboard", and "mosque inscription" organisations. In fact, he stresses that they do not exist as NGOs at all but as intermediary organisations for soliciting financial and material assistance for building mosques, clinics, schools, and catering for orphans and indigent Muslims from the Middle East. Based on his observations from the early 1990s, Mumuni criticises them for blatant mismanagement and corruption: "When they receive these funds, they are then put to private use."[192]

Mumuni further notes that other Muslim NGOs are non-African organisations, such as those established by the Lebanese community in Ghana (i.e., the *Ghana Islamic Society for Education and Reformation*, see Chapter 2.2.5). Others are branches of various Middle Eastern and North African international Muslim NGOs and charitable organisations. Examples include the (now defunct) Libyan World Islamic Call Service and the Kuwaiti African Muslim Agency (Direct Aid, see Chapter 2.4). A distinct group of Muslim NGOs are organisations established by returnee Muslim students from Middle Eastern universities, such as the *Islamic Research and Reformation Centre* (IRRC, established in 1972; being an arm of the Saudi organisation, Darul-Ifta, as well as being the Ghanaian representative of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, WAMY, of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations and of the Islamic Development Bank Scholarship Scheme) or the *Imam Hasayn Foundation* (being the representative of an Iranian foundation).[193]

In contrast to the different NGOs listed above, Muslim youth organisations emerged as peer groups during the 1960s. Initially, they began as student organisations, and they addressed the neglect of Islamic institutions and organisations toward the special needs of Muslim students in secondary and tertiary educational institutions. According to Mumuni, during the early 1990s, the most active of them were the Ghana Muslim Youth Movement, the Progressive Muslim Youth Movement and the Ghana Muslim Students' Association. Muslim Women organisations also emerged during the post-colonial period,[194] climaxing in the inauguration of the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Ghana (FOMWAG) in 1997.[195]

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Chitano, Masiiwa Ragies Gunda, and Lovemore Togarasei (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2020), 139–163.

192 Mumuni, Islamic Organisation in Accra, 74–75.

193 Mumuni, Islamic Organisation in Accra, 75–79.

194 Deborah Pellow, "Solidarity among Muslim Women in Accra, Ghana," *Anthropos* 82, no. 4 (1987): 489–506.

195 Mumuni, Islamic Organisation in Accra, 79–81. On FOMWAG, see further Sulemanu, Lead-

The second generation of Muslim NGOs refers to independent NGOs collaborating with foreign Muslim charities. The oldest of these organisations were founded during the 1990s, others during the 2000s. Among these organisations are capacity-building NGOs with a large voluntary membership as its basis of existence (e.g. *The Light Foundation*), and organisations with a more restricted outreach and/or membership such as *Firdaus Foundation for Social Services*, *Abdul-Aziz Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation*, *Iqra Foundation for Education and Development*, *El-Ehsan Charitable Relief Foundation*, and *Ghana Charity Association for Development*, to mention a few.

Both the first and the second generation of Muslim organisations are *da'wat-ist* NGOs. They (generally) combine *da'wa* with humanitarian relief and social welfare projects directed to improve the (usually local) Muslim community. However, a few of them such as *The Light Foundation* have since their establishment transformed themselves into inclusive organisations, targeting both Muslims and non-Muslims in their programmes, see further Chapter 4.3. Another feature of (some) first-generation Muslim activists and NGOs was their ambition to launch Muslim magazines and newspapers where they started to articulate new approaches to Muslim self-empowerment. Sheikh Mustapha Ibrahim's NGO *Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services* (ICODEHS) published *The Humanitarian—A Charitable Monthly Newspaper* during the latter half of the 1990s. Commenting the need to combat the marginalisation and pauperisation of Muslims, the ICODEHS-magazine stressed the need to provide schools, counselling services, vocational institutions alongside setting up industries and commercial farms in predominantly Muslim areas. "The Government in consultation with the Islamic Council and other NGO need to set up a committee to go into the problems besetting the Zongos."[196] Yunus Fawaz argued in the ASWAJ-sponsored newspaper *The Muslim Searchlight* (Figure 7) that "[…] we Muslims have been growling and crying over our lack of our own doctors, teachers, strong representation of our people in the government and other areas of infinite importance; but we seem not to recognize the

ership in the Ghaniaan Muslim Community; Ammah, "Islam, Gender and Leadership in Ghana"; and Fatimatu N. Sulemanu, "Mitigating Violence Against Women in the Ghanaian Muslim Community: The Role of the Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Ghana (FOMWAG)," in *Religion and Gender-Based Violence: West African Experience*, eds. R.M. Amenga-Etego and M.A. Oduyoye (Accra: TLSS and Asempa Publishers, 2013): 405–434.

196 "Muslims and Development in Ghana," *The Humanitarian—A Charitable Monthly Newspaper* 2, no. 3 (1997): 5–7.


FIGURE 7 Two Muslim newspapers: *The Muslim Searchlight* and *The Fountain*. The ASWAJ Islamic Media Network, headquarters in Nima (Accra), published *The Muslim Searchlight*. The Kauthar Foundation in Accra, in turn, published *The Fountain*. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

need to send our children to school."[197] Z.M. Seebaway, editor of *The Fountain* (Figure 7), similarly, urged his readers to rethink their position: "Do Muslims not feel marginalized by their lack of education, unity and organization? Our major occupation should be to forge a unified front and deal a crashing blow on ignorance. We must educate our children like mad to make them active and respected members of the Ghanaian society."[198]

In contrast to the first and second generations, the third generation of Muslim NGOs includes both *dawatist*, solidarity-based and secular ones. Founded during the 2010s, all of them are distinct NGOs of the 'internet era' and 'Facebook generation'. Most importantly, their existence is a vivid indication of the emergence of Muslim middle-classes in Ghana, a phenomena hitherto not studied or discussed in academic research. A distinct marker of theirs is their independent position viz-a-viz foreign donors. They conduct mobilisation, visibility, networking, fundraising campaigns/crowdfunding and outreach through social media, most importantly Facebook, but to an increasing extent

197 Yunus Fawaz, "Educating the Muslim Child," *The Muslim Searchlight* 1, no. 1 (Aug 20–Sept 2, 1999).

198 Z.M. Seebaway, "What to fight!" *The Fountain* no. 2 (May, 1998).

Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube. The Accra-based *Save Aid Project*, for example, spurs its members by at the start of its annual campaigns by repeating postings of its mission statement:

> We are up on this task
> Few things we will like to ask
> Help the cause with just a spread
> Se we will get a lot of people fed
> Allow us a space on your status
> Your most liked media apparatus
> Your hub of information
> You will definitively see our appreciation.[199]

Many of them are interlinked and forward their campaigns and calls to other Facebook groups. Some Muslim youth groups, who started as open communities on Facebook in the 2010s, have since then established closed communities on social media, especially WhatsApp; an illuminating case is the Kasoa-based dawatist NGO *Islam The Way To Paradise Foundation*, who declared on Facebook:

> Our mission is to build up and achieve best quality: Islamic education, Islamic hospitals, create jobs to employ our youth, take care of the orphans and the poor etc. If you want to join our WhatApp Platform kindly pick our WhatApp Line on the Screen.[200]

A novelty of the internet age is the mushrooming of Muslim online TV and radio stations; they operate on Facebook and serve as vehicles for *daʿwa* and community development. For example, *Sharubutu TV* launched the "Remember Me" and "Charity Doesn't Hurt" campaigns in April 2020, after "some brothers and sisters" (in the Accra Zongo communities) had appealed to the TV station to address their challenges. "Most of them earn daily and therefore cannot provide for their basic necessities after seven days of inactivity," Sharubutu TV reminded its listeners on Facebook.[201] The call yielded immediate responses, and Sharubutu TV distributed 25 bags of 5kg rice and 25 one-litre bottles of

199 Campaign slogan posted on Facebook 11.7.2021 and 6.2.2022, https://www.facebook.com/SaveAidProject/, accessed 2.8.2022.

200 https://www.facebook.com/Islam-The-Way-To-Paradise-Foundation-101527148163765/, 9.10.2020, accessed 2.8.2022.

201 https://www.facebook.com/SharubutuTV/, 3.4.2020, accessed 24.7.2021.

oil to needy families in Shukura, Fadama, Abeka, Achimota, Abelemkpe, Nima and New Town.[202]

*Shabaniyya TV*, in turn, informed its listeners that the office of the Tijaniyya Ibrahimiyya Council of Ghana had made "… a profound donation to the poor and less-privileged communities of Amomorley (Madinatu-Shabaniyya), Afienya, and Ashalaja Obaakuro in the Greater Accra Region." In addition, the TV station issued a reminder from the Council mentioned above that it "admonishes all who can join in these kinds of charity activities to channel their resources to help the poor and needy in this fasting season."[203]

*Iqra Show*, alongside numerous other initiatives, has posted over the years several requests for donations to fund medical surgeries, hospital bills or emergency assistance of needy individuals and communities. For example, the team received a *zakat* donation of GHS 2,000 from one of its members for distribution among needy recipients on 9 January 2022; two days later, it used half of the sum to buy a wheelchair and donated it to an eight-year old girl.[204]

Solidarity-based Muslim NGOs such as the Kumasi-based *Seed of Hope Foundation* or the Tamale-based *BALNISA Foundation*, in turn, target both Muslims and non-Muslims in their outreach programmes. Their postings on Facebook (usually) contain little if any religious language and seldom address any aspects of *da'wa*. The latter organisation, for example, claims its (main) objective to be the promotion of quality education on all levels, capacity building of all Ghanaians, and to collaborate with key stakeholders "in formulating policies and programs that will help reduce poverty in deprived communities towards a better Ghana."[205] Nevertheless, apart from constructing and rehabilitating schools, boreholes and clinics alongside promoting girl-child education, capacity building and youth entrepreneurship as well as rendering support to orphans and needy, the BALNISA Foundation also builds mosques and supports "advocacy, education and sensitization", in other words: *da'wa*.[206]

Secular Muslim NGOs, who similar to solidarity-based ones have increased manifold during the 2010s and early 2020s, do not address *da'wa* at all. Several of them have been founded by Muslim female activists, such as Hajia Zainabu Salifu's *Sung Bie'la Foundation*, or Nadiyatu Abdul Rahman's *Humanitarian*

202 https://www.facebook.com/SharubutuTV/, 5.4.2020, accessed 24.7.2021.

203 https://www.facebook.com/ShabaniyyaTv/, 18.4.2020, accessed 24.7.2021.

204 https://www.facebook.com/IqrashowGh/, 9.1.2022, 12.1.2022, accessed 2.8.2022.

205 BALNISA Foundation, Objective, https://m.facebook.com/Balnisa-Foundation-153773005231641/?ref=page_internal&mt_nav=0, accessed 2.8.2022.

206 BALNISA Foundation, strategies, https://www.facebook.com/Balnisa-Foundation-153773005231641/, accessed 25.8.2022.

*Headway*, and address community development at large although they would run special campaigns to feed "the poor and needy" during the Eid festivals. The *Star Creative Life Foundation Ghana*, on the other hand, focuses on health care alongside health and first aid education and training. The NGO organised in June 2021 the First Annual Health Forum in Nima-Maamobi Community Learning Centre in downtown Accra. Nevertheless, as the foundation organised two months earlier organised a Ramadan seminar, one can identify it as a secular Muslim NGO.[207]

Dawatist NGOs are easy to identify as their name include the words 'Muslim' or 'Islamic', or Arabic words implying a religious message, such as 'umma', 'jihad', 'sadaqa', or 'tarbiyya'.[208] Their activities is restricted to the empowerment of Muslim communities and they never target non-Muslim recipients. For example, the Muslim women group *Ummah Initiative* organised in 2022 the Muslim Female Health Professional Programme "to increase the number of Muslim students especially females in our Medical Schools through a mentorship program."[209] Sometimes, a group decides to change its name from a militant to a more neutral one, as was the case in 2021 when the Cape Coast-based Ghana Islamic Jihad Foundation (GIJF) changed its name to *Ghana Islamic Sadaqqa Foundation* (GISF).[210]

Zongo associations, on the other hand, are sometimes difficult to identify as being a local Muslim CSO, NGO or youth group by their name only. While many of them target or engage Muslims in their livelihoods, some even declare themselves a Muslim group; others have a distinct secular if not denominational outlook and agenda. Many of the Zongo youth groups combine an activist and inclusive approach in critically addressing the lack of investment in deprived inner-city communities by state and local governments, the negative image of its inhabitants, and the lack of opportunities for the Zongo youth irrespectively of their religious background.

> AT A TIME WE WERE TOLD WE CAN'T, THAT WE ARE A SOCIETY OF RASCALS AND HOOLIGANS, WE REFUSED TO BE DEFINED BY THAT, WE REFUSED TO BE SHAPED BY THAT: THAT'S WHY WE TOOK THE NECES-

207 https://www.facebook.com/Starcreativelifefoundationgh/, 14.4.2021, 8.6.2021, 24.6.2021, accessed 2.8.2022.

208 "To cause something to develop from stage to stage until reaching its completion."

209 https://www.facebook.com/Ummah-Initiative-Page-100671381778585/, 29.4.2022, accessed 2.8.2022.

210 https://m.facebook.com/GISF-Ghana-Islamic-sadaqqa-foundation-106248791427932/, 1.8.2021, accessed 2.8.2022.

> SARY ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY TO RESHAPE OUR COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY AT LARGE. WE ARE ZANGOS AND PROUD OF IT, WHETHER YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN AND FROM ZANGO, YOU ARE ALSO A ZANGO PERSON: WHETHER YOU ARE A MUSLIM AND FROM ZANGO YOU ARE ALSO A ZANGO PERSON.. TOGETHER WE BUILD. THE FOUNDATION AND COALITION OF THE MOMENT. JOIN US, LETS BUILD TOGETHER AND HEAL TOGETHER.[211]

Thus expressed the *Zango Youth Volunteers Association* its frustration and call for unified action by the Zongo youth.

Other NGOs founded by Muslim activists hare more difficult to define or to identify as secular Muslim NGOs. This is especially the case with the numerous grassroots and civil society organisations that have evolved during the last decades in the northern parts of the country. Some of the have been engaged in rural development, food security, poverty alleviation and capacity building alongside girl child and women empowerment, education and rights for decades, such as Hajia Lamnatu Adam's *Songtaba*[212] since 2005, the *Net Organization for Youth Empowerment and Development* (NOYED-Ghana)[213] since 2005, or Hajia Alima Sagito-Saeed's *SWIDA* (Savannah Women Integrated Development Agency) *Ghana*[214] since 2006. All of them have their head offices in Tamale. Hajia Nadia Alhassan's *Nadisco Foundation*, on the other hand, belongs to those NGOs established more recently.[215] None of the aforementioned organisations makes a standpoint of the religious background of their founders. Rather, they underscore in public their humanitarian, denominational credo, as was the case when *Songtaba* participated in the formulation of by-laws to prevent witchcraft accusations and the inhumane treatment of alleged witches and wizards camped at isolated places in the northern parts of the country.[216]

Most importantly, however, is the definition by Ghanaian Muslims themselves of which organisation counts as a Muslim NGO. In 2015, four organisations were nominated as 'Muslim NGO of the Year' at the first-ever *Ghana Muslim Achievers' Awards*. They were the Ghana Muslim Academy, the Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services, the Federation of Mus-

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211 Posting 12.5.2022, https://www.facebook.com/Zangoyouthvolunteers, accessed 20.9.2022.
212 See https://www.songtaba.org/; https://www.facebook.com/songtaba/.
213 See https://www.facebook.com/people/NOYED-Ghana/100069948805560/.
214 See https://swidagh.org/.
215 See https://nadiscofoundation.org/.
216 "NGO formulates by-laws to protect alleged witches," 30.11.2018, https://citinewsroom.com/2018/11/ngo-formulates-by-laws-to-protect-alleged-witches/, checked 12.11.2023.

lim Women Associations Ghana, and Paragon Foundation.[217] In 2020, seven were nominated, namely Achievers Ghana, Birin Charity Organisation, Islamic Ummah Relief, ZongoVation Hub, Young Leaders Women Network, Zongo Inspiration Team, Zurak Cancer Foundation.[218] The spectrum of nominated Muslim NGOs is appalling. Nominations covered *da'watist* as well as secular NGOs (Achievers Ghana; Young Leaders Women Network), foundations, venture philanthropy (Zongo Inspiration Team) and social entrepreneurship (ZongoVation Hub).

A milestone in the identification of Muslim NGOs in Ghana will be, in hindsight, the *Coalition for Islamic Humanitarian Organisations—Ghana* (CIHOG). The aim of CIHOG is to facilitate and coordinate the work of Islamic humanitarian NGOs in Ghana. Furthermore, CIHOG is to serve as an interface body between Islamic humanitarian NGOs and other charities working among Zongo communities and governmental institutions such as the Secretariat of the Zongo Development Fund.[219] CIHOG constitutes of member organisations divided into three sectors. Zone One comprises NGOs working in the southern regions, of which 42 attended the consulting meeting in September 2022 in Accra. 52 NGOs in Zone Two or the middle regions attended a similar meeting in October 2022 whereas about 30–40 NGOs were expected to arrive in Tamale for a meeting of Zone Three in November 2022.[220] At a press briefing after its maiden meeting in Kumasi in March 2023, CIHOG administrator Suleiman Al-Hassan Atakpo informed about the election of interim executives, among others acting chair Sheikh Hadir Adams Iddris. Presidential Coordinator for Zongo and Inner Cities Development Ben Abdallah Banda, who participated at the meeting, pledged his full support for the Coalition and called for a partnership to collectively push for the recognition and support from government for its activities.[221]

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217 "Metro TV Nominated at Ghana Muslims Achievers Awards 2015," 16.11.2015, https://www.modernghana.com/entertainment/34104/metro-tv-nominated-at-ghana-muslims-achievers-awar.html, accessed 29.12.2021.

218 Final nominees of the 2nd edition of Ghana Muslim Achievers' Awards, 26.2.2017, https://www.facebook.com/gmaa2017/, accessed 29.12.2021.

219 Information on CIHOG provided on the Facebook account of Hon. Alhaj Ben Abdallah Banda, posted 22.9.2022, https://www.facebook.com/honbbanda1, accessed 13.12.2022.

220 Interview with Suleiman Al-Hassan Atakpo, Administrator of CIHOG, Kumasi, 11.10.2022.

221 I.F. Joe Awuah Jnr., "Islamic Coalition Makes Strides To Function Effectively," 7.3.2923, https://press1news.com/islamic-coalition-makes-strides-to-function-effectively/; Muyid Deen Suleman, "Zongo Development Fund to strengthen partnerships for development," 7.3.2023, https://gna.org.gh/2023/03/zongo-development-fund-to-strengthen-partnerships-for-development/, both accessed 13.11.2023.

## 4 Detecting and Analysing the Spectrum of Muslim NGOs

The exact number of former and existing Muslim faith-based organisations in Ghana is unknown. The 2011 directory on Muslim societies and associations compiled by Said Ibrahim Kreidieh lists 167 organisations, many of which are Islamic educational complexes and *makarantu* (Hausa: schools); about 130 can be identified as NGOs.[222] Most of the NGOs included in Kreidieh's directory are difficult to identify, perhaps as the directory lists them by their names given in English translation of their original Arabic ones. Others perhaps never went online and left few traces (and will require extensive fieldwork to identify), including the *Anglogold Ashanti Muslims Workers Association* in Obuasi. In their assessment of the about 2,000 individual NGO registration files for 2013 to 2015 archived in the Ghana NPO Secretariat, Sandy Zook and Cassidy Arndt counted 650 NGOs that used Islamic words or phrases and identified 63 of them as Islamic NGOs.[223]

The Zongo Climate Change Agenda for Sustainable Development (ZCCASD), in turn, notes the existence of 1,080 Zongo communities in Ghana,[224] and it is not farfetched to assume that the number of Muslim and/or Zongo NGOs runs into several hundreds. Based on their information on Facebook, I assume that few of the Zongo youth associations and groups are registered or have a certificate for operation; obviously, many of the local Muslim NGOs do not have certificates either. Any official lists of Muslim or Islamic organisations in Ghana are therefore tentative and largely embrace only those visible to an outsider. For example, *Islamicfinder.org* lists only eleven organisations,[225] while

222 Said Ibrahim Kreidieh (comp.), *Muslim Societies & Associations in Africa—Asia—Australia—Europe—The Pacific—South & Central America* (Beiruth: Said Ibrahim Kreidieh, 2011), 186–196, available at: https://archive.org/stream/MuslimSocietiesAssociationsInAfricaAsiaAustraliaEuropeThePacificSouthCentralAmer/Muslim%20societies%20%26%20associations%20in%20Africa%20-%20Asia%20-Australia%20-%20Europe%20-%20The%20Pacific%20-%20South%20%26%20Central%20America%20-%20Compiled%20by%20Said%20Kreidieh_djvu.txt, accessed 31.12.2021.

223 Zook and Arndt, "Islamic NGOs in Education in Ghana," 64.

224 Zongo Climate Change Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Goals Partnerships Platform, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=35300, accessed 5.10.2021.

225 The organisations listed by *islamicfinder.org* are Al-Furqan Foundation, Bureau for the Disable and Humanitarian Services, Bushara Zakat Foundation, Centre for Islamic Affairs & Humanitarian Services, Concern Society for Muslim Environment, Educational Development Fund for Muslim Youth, Firdaus Foundation for Social Services, Ghana Muslim Academy, Ibn Khaldoun Islamic Studies Foundation, Infaq Charitable Society, Islamic Relief for Social Work. I downloaded the entries in November 2012. However, when I

the Ghana Muslim Directory provided by *esinislam.com* lists only seventeen organisations,[226] some defunct for more than a decade such as the Al-Furqan Foundation in Tamale.[227] Interestingly, some well-known and influential first-generation Muslim NGOs such as the *Muslim Family Counselling Service* (MFCS) and the *Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services* (ICODEHS) are missing from both lists, and the African Muslim Agency (Direct Aid) is not a Ghanaian Muslim charity! The *Muslim Relief Association of Ghana* (MURAG), established already in 1985, and listed as an "NGO in good standing" on the homepage of the former Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment in 2006,[228] has become dormant since then. Although someone established an account on Facebook for MURAG in September 2019, indicating the organisation was in operation. An analysis of its Facebook postings clearly demonstrates this is not the case. Available on Facebook are old photographs depicting venues MURAG organised in 2000 and 2001, the last posting being in October 2019. Besides, its Facebook account has only 60 followers, indicating the organisation to be inactive.[229]

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resumed my research on Muslim NGOs in Ghana in 2017, the list was not anymore available. Some of the NGOs are listed on esinislam.com, see footnote below. A few of those organisations listed have left some traces on the Internet. For example, when Sheikh Issakh Abass, President of the *Ibn Khaldoun Islamic Studies Foundation* posted requests for donation of Qur'ans in Arabic language to the Quran Distribution Organization in Saudi Arabia in April 2013, and the Holy Quran Care Society in the Kingdom of Bahrain in July 2014, see https://themuslimtimes.info/2012/02/10/250m-copies-of-quran-distributed/, and https://www.bahrain-companies.com/t/mttialx, both accessed 31.10.2021 (the Bahrain-link is not available anymore, checked May 2024). The *Educational Development Fund for Muslim Youth*, in turn, made headlines in 2010 when it sponsored workshops on promoting Islamic education ("Teachers in Islamic schools asked to revive Islamic education," 17.5.2010, https://www.modernghana.com/news/276078/teachers-in-islamic-schools-asked-to-revive-isla.html, accessed 31.12.2021.)

226 See http://www.esinislam.com/African_Muslim_Directories/All_African_Muslim_Directories/African_Muslim_Directories_Ghana.htm#AllahIsGreat, accessed 13.8.2021. The seventeen organisations included are: Africa Muslim Agency, Al-Ansar Foundation, Al-Huda Islamic Society, Al-Furqan Foundation, Al-Hak Muslims Association, Ansaruddeen Islamic Foundation, Bushara Zakat Foundation, Centre for Islamic Call and Research, Concerned Society for Muslim Environment, Council for Islamic New Approach, Ghana Muslim Student Association, Infaq Charitable Society, Islamic Bureau for the Disabled and Service to Islamic Institutions, Mallam Ayub Foundation, Muslim Relief Association of Ghana, Organisation for Humanitarian and Charity, and Islamic Shelter for Young Generations.

227 Interview with Sheikh Issah, Islamic Education Unit Manager, Tamale, 9.4.2019.

228 http://www.mmde.gov.gh/gov_corp.cfm?GovCorpID=11, accessed 11.4.2006.

229 https://www.facebook.com/Muslim-Relief-Association-of-Ghana-111316636934057/, accessed 18.8.2021.

MURAG's lifespan is indicative for that of many other Muslim NGOs, CSOs or FBOs in Ghana. Founded and run by the first generation of activists, any organisation that manages to exist for several decades faces a risk of running out of steam if it fails to engage a new generation of activists. This was perhaps the fate of MURAG, being active for over thirty years. MURAG was, in several aspects, a forerunner among Muslim NGOs in Ghana, as it did not focus on *da'wa* but rather on socio-economic welfare and poverty alleviation in Muslim communities. Its main areas of operation were health, HIV/AIDS/STDs, reproductive health, including high birth rate, female genital mutilation, drug and substance abuse, tuberculosis and malaria, poverty reduction through microcredit schemes and income-generating activities, as well as education, including the promotion of integrated Islamic secular education, girl-child and early childhood development.[230]

### 4.1 *The NPO Secretariat and Its Online Directory*

All the directories mentioned above and lists refer to registered NGOs. Ghanaian law, such as the Companies Act of 1963 and the Companies Act of 2019 (Act 992), requires companies by limited guarantee (i.e., not-for-profit or non-governmental organisations, including clubs, co-operatives, social enterprises, community projects, membership organisations and charities), to register at the Registrar General's Department. The statutory cost for registering a company limited by guarantee is GHS 270 (ca. 44 USD),[231] payable directly to the Registrar General's Department, as well as additional costs for purchasing a set of prescribed regulatory documents and forms (up to GHS 50 [ca. 8 USD). Further, the applicants are required to provide the Tax Payer Identification Number (TIN) of the organisation's board members.[232]

Until 2020, registration with the Registrar General's Department had been a prerequisite by the Department of Social Welfare to apply for NGO status. The applicant organisation has to pay an official fee of GHS 1,200 (USD 194) if it is a local one and USD 1,200 if it is a branch of a foreign one. Once registered, companies limited by guarantee are exempted from paying corporate taxes and

230 MURAG: About, https://www.islamicfinder.org/world/view-place/25977/, accessed 18.8.2021.

231 GHS is the currency code of the current Ghana cedi; GHC is used when referring to the previous so-called 'new cedi'. The 'new cedi' was phased out in 2007 in favour of the 'Ghana cedi' at an exchange rate of 1:10,000. GHS conversions to USD are given for 31 December 2021.

232 Non-Profit Organisation Secretariat of the Republic of Ghana, How To Register A Non-Profit Organization (NPO) In Ghana, 16.2.2021, https://npos.mogcsp.gov.gh/how-to-register-a-not-for-profit-or-ngo-in-ghana/, accessed 4.10.2021.

Value Added Tax (VAT) in Ghana. Nevertheless, a company limited by guarantee is mandated to pay income taxes on the earnings of its employees.[233]

Starting in December 2020, the Non-Profit Organisations Secretariat (NPO Secretariat) took over the registration role of the Department of Social Welfare, and a total of 10,300 registered NPOs were transferred to the new state agency. According to the Non-Profit Organisation Policy 2020 and the Non-Profit Organisations Directives 2020, the NPO Secretariat is responsible for regulating and empowering the non-profit organisation sector in Ghana.[234]

The NPO Secretariat provides access to its online directory of about 4,200 regional, national and international registered organisations as of September/October 2021,[235] of which at least 164 can be identified as Muslim CBOs or NGOs (see Appendix). A few organisations listed in the NPO Online Directory are included in the Directory of Social Service Providers in Ghana but were not identified in the NPO Online Directory, for example, the *Dar Al Haq Charitable Society*, the *Salah Foundation*, the *Muslim Family Counselling Services*, the *Zongo Inspiration Team*, and the *Hajj Abdulai Yaro Memorial Clinic and Maternity*. The first two afore-mentioned organisations cannot be traced (perhaps indicating them to be defunct or inactive), but the remaining ones are still operative. Moreover, twenty-two organisations listed in the NPO Online Directory are Ghanaian branches or offices of international Muslim charities. These include *Al-Maktoum Foundation* (Dubai/UAE charity) and *African Islamic Heritage Foundation* (US charity), both based in Tamale, alongside the Kumasi offices of the US Muslim charity *Zakat Foundation of America* and the Saudi charity *Al-Qimmah Foundation*, the Ghana chapter of the US Muslim charity *Mercy for Mankind* in Nsawam, and the Ghana office of the US Muslim charity *Islamic Ummah Relief* in Kasoa. The remaining ones are Ghana offices/branches located in the Greater Accra Region, such as *Qatar Charity* as well as the Saudi Arabian *International Islamic Relief Organisation*, the Kuwaiti organisations *Care and Social Development Organisation* as well as *Direct Aid*, the Moroccan *Mohammad VI Foundation for African Oulama* alongside the Turkish organisations *Human Development Assistance Interna-*

233 Non-Profit Organisation Secretariat of the Republic of Ghana, How To Register A Non-Profit Organization (NPO) In Ghana, 16.2.2021, https://npos.mogcsp.gov.gh/how-to-register-a-not-for-profit-or-ngo-in-ghana/, accessed 4.10.2021.

234 Non-Profit Organisation Secretariat of the Republic of Ghana, Who we are, https://npos.mogcsp.gov.gh/profile/, accessed 4.10.2021.

235 The online directory lists registered Community NPOs, National NPOs and International NPOs, available at https://npos.mogcsp.gov.gh/regional-npos/ (1,823 entries), https://npos.mogcsp.gov.gh/national-npos/ (2,304 entries), and (159 entries), accessed 29.9.–1.10.2021.

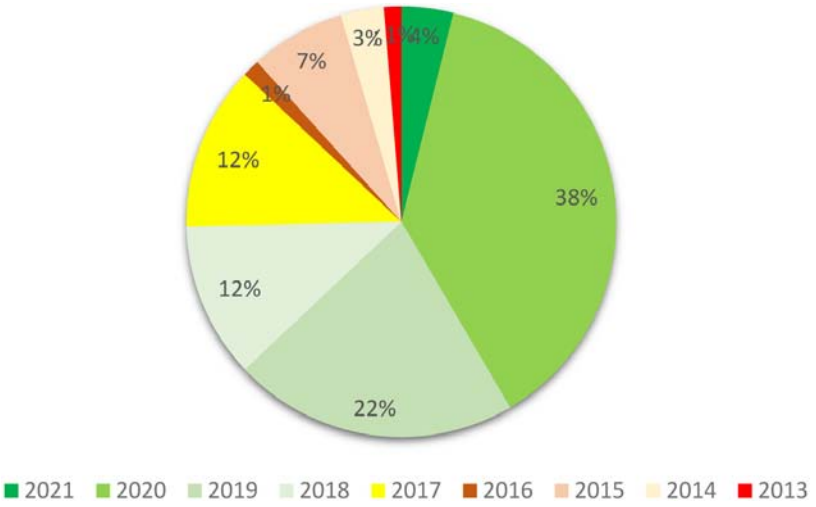
*tional, Cansuyu Charity and Solidarity Association, Ghana-Turkey Co-operation and Development Association* and *Insana Deger Veren Dernekler Federasyonu*. Moreover, several Western Muslim international NGOs have branch offices in Accra, including the US charities *Life for Relief and Development* and *Mercy Without Limits*, the UK charities *Human Relief Foundation* and *Caravan of Mercy*, and the German charity *Ansaar International*. Furthermore, the *International Islamic Youth League* is the Ghana office of the International Islamic Youth League—African Youth Development Centre based in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

### 4.2 *Registered and Unregistered Muslim Associations and Organisations*

The NPO Online Directory provides information on the status of an NGO, including the registration number and date of its (last) registration. About three-quarters of the Muslim NGOs were registered in 2018 or later, and one quarter (39 organisations) in 2017 or earlier (see Graph 1). These latter organisations may be speculated to be defunct or inactive as the registration is only valid for one year. Presumably, organisations registered in 2018 or 2019 are still in the process of renewing their registration.

An assumption that some of the listed Muslim NGOs are defunct or inactive seems valid for those registered in 2013, 2014 or 2015, although with a few notable exceptions. The *Shia Mission* and the *Madina Islamic Center*, for example, have not disappeared. The *Zakat Foundation of America*, the *Insana Deger Veren Dernekler Federasyonu*, the *Zakat and Sadaqa Fund of Ghana* and the *Nuuru Usmaniyyah Foundation for Humanitarian Services* as well as *Caravan of Mercy* and *Al-Huda Islamic Society*, in turn, are active in their respective fields of operations. The *El-Mamun Centre* in Kumasi, on the other hand, seems to be defunct as its 2013-established Facebook account is empty. The *Ibadul Hanan Humanitarian Organisation* opened in 2020 a Facebook account but with no content or postings. The *Orphans and Needy Helpline*, the *Noor-Ul-Alam Mission of Ghana*, the *Bachey Jiwa Foundation*, and the *Ghana Muslims Education Concern* have left no traces in cyberspace. The last active postings of the *Peace Project Foundation* on its Facebook account are from October 2018.[236] The pre-2017-registered Muslim NGOs include the *Ansaar International Ghana*. Its Facebook account indicates the organisation to be defunct as it only lists postings in 2013 when it launched a fundraising campaign for building an orphanage in conjunc-

236 See posting 7.10.2018, https://www.facebook.com/Peace-Project-Foundation-PPF-1773659456008426/, accessed 4.10.2021.




GRAPH 1 Year of last registration of Muslim NGOs listed in the NPO Online Directory
SOURCE: *DIRECTORY.MOGESP.GOV.GH*, ACCESSED 30.9.2021

tion with the Taqwa school.[237] The *Northern Childcare Voluntary Organisation*, whose homepage (http://www.nocvo.org) has been defunct since 2021.

Another example is the *Al-Hayat Foundation*, established in 2011 with the last registration date in 2015. It made the headlines in 2015 when the Foundation organised a cervical cancer sensitisation seminar in Accra in November 2015.[238] The founder and CEO of Al-Hayat Foundation, Hajia Hanatu Abubakar, was nominated 'Muslimah of the Month' by the Professional Muslimah's Network in February 2017,[239] indicating the Foundation had been operational and active by then. However, the last posting on the Foundation's Facebook account regarding its cancer sensitisation programme was on 26 September 2017. Those appearing thereafter are about motion detectors and alarm systems, indicating that the Foundation became inactive or defunct by the end of the year.

237 Last posting 22.9.2013, https://www.facebook.com/Ansaar-International-Accra-Ghana-233429190145018/, accessed 4.10.2021.

238 "Women! Beware of cervical cancer—Al-Hayat Foundation," 28.11.2015, https://newsghana.com.gh/women-beware-of-cervical-cancer-al-hayat-foundation/, accessed 4.10.2021.

239 See https://www.facebook.com/ThePMNetwork/photos/muslima-of-the-month-february-hajia-hanatu-abubakarin-most-of-the-muslim-communi/640821862775871/, accessed 4.11.2021.

Most of the Muslim NGOs listed in the NPO Online Directory are still active. For example, the *International Unique Human Welfare Institution*, a local Muslim NGO in Accra run by Sheikh Abdul Karim Zakaria, received a donation from the German-based Turkish humanitarian organisation Hasene International in 2020 to provide COVID-19 relief food packages.[240] Furthermore, it inaugurated its new flagship project, the Bustan Rashidun Project, in 2020 being an education complex comprising of a kindergarten, nursery, basic and junior high school, masjid and conference hall, medical centre and a hostel for orphans and needy students to be built in Insahina, Greater Accra Region.[241]

Some of the NGOs in the NPO Online Directory have been difficult to trace. For example, apart from being listed among the supporters of the World Association of Non-Governmental Organisations' Code of Ethics,[242] alongside a reference in a 2019 report on persons with disabilities and their challenges in Suhum,[243] no further information on the Suhum-based *Muslim Development Organization* could be traced. The *Noorur Rahma Social Organisation* in Old Tafo, Kumasi metropolitan area, in turn, might be linked to the Noorur Rahma Medical Center in Old Tafo Zongo.[244]

Likewise, there has been no trace of the Accra-based *Annur Organisation for Humanitarian Services* (Figure 8). Interestingly, however, at least two Muslim NGOs with similar names existed: the *An-Nur al-Islamiyya* and the *An-Nur Foundation*. Neither of them was listed in the NPO Online Directory.

The *An-Nur al-Islamiyya* is a *da'wa* organisation established by Muslim students enrolled at the University of Ghana in 2003.[245] It has been present on Facebook since 2009 and has a homepage. The Accra-based youth organisation focuses mainly on *da'wa* and educational projects. Most of its activities, including its lecture and seminar series as well as the Sisters Entrepreneurship Dialogue, the An-Nur E-learning Centre of Excellence, and its 2018-launched

240 "Food Packages Distributed to the Needy," 9.8.2020, http://iuhwighana.org/index.php/component/k2/item/2-prevent-disease-in-communities, 4.10.2021. The homepage was defunct in 2024. Hasene International has been a partner of IUHWI since 2013.

241 See further http://iuhwighana.org/index.php/our-projects/the-bustan-raashideen-project, accessed 4.10.2021.

242 https://wango.org/codeofethics.aspx?page=13&country=Ghana, accessed 4.10.2021.

243 Efua Esaaba Agyire-Tettey, Augustina Naani, Lars Wissenbach, Johannes Schädler, *Challenges of Inclusion: Local Support Systems and Social Service Arrangements for Persons with Disabilities in Ghana* (Siegen: Universitätsverlag Siegen, 2019).

244 https://www.facebook.com/Noorur-Rahmah-Medical-Centre-102574718293594/, accessed 18.8.2021.

245 http://annuralislam.com/en/about-us/


FIGURE 8 Annur Organisation for Humanitarian Services. Signboard at the organisation's office in Tamale
PHOTO: HOLGER WEISS/2017

mentoring programme, are organised through internal fundraising. For specific projects, such as soliciting financial support for members in need, the group calls on social media and on its homepage. Some initiatives are funded by foreign donors, such as its SHS scholarship project launched in partnership with the Turkish INGO Human Development and Relief Organization in 2015.[246] Its main social welfare project is the Ummah Support Fund, launched in 2016. The homepage does not give any information on the Ummah Support Fund apart from displaying a poster with a call to make a monthly donation of GHS 10 (USD 1,60) to the fund, "to support the sick, new reverts, students in need, and Muslims in urgent financial need."[247] It is not clear, however, if the support fund has been formalised or if it exists more on an ad hoc basis. The only published

246 "SHS Scholarship Project 2015," https://www.facebook.com/annuralislamgh/posts/10156047575225333, checked 20.10.2020.

247 Ummah Support Fund, http://annuralislam.com/en/2016/01/ummah-support-fund/, accessed 17.8.2021.

financial report of the support fund covers the first quarter of 2017, listing contributions amounting to GHS 1.534,06 (USD 248) and educational support of GHS 970 (USD 157) as the main expenditure.[248]

*An-Nur Foundation*, in turn, is a Kumasi-based *da'wa* organisation linked to the An-Nur Quranic Institute, launched perhaps as late as 2019 (or at least it established its Facebook account in that year). Several other local Muslim youth movements were initiated during the 2010s, including the *Islamic Ummah of Ghana* and *Sadaqa Train*, both established in 2013, and the *Ghana Islamic Youth Sadaqa Association*, established in 2015. An-Nur Foundation stems from the Salafi youth network *Muslim Youth Movement*. An-Nur Foundation runs a rural *madrasa* project in Agona District, Ashanti Region, i.e., touring villages and organising Islamic education classes,[249] alongside a rural Iftar programme, the latter one in collaboration with *Sadaqa Train* and *The Striving Muslimah* in May 2021.[250]

### 4.3 *Muslim NGOs on Facebook: A Quantitative Analysis*

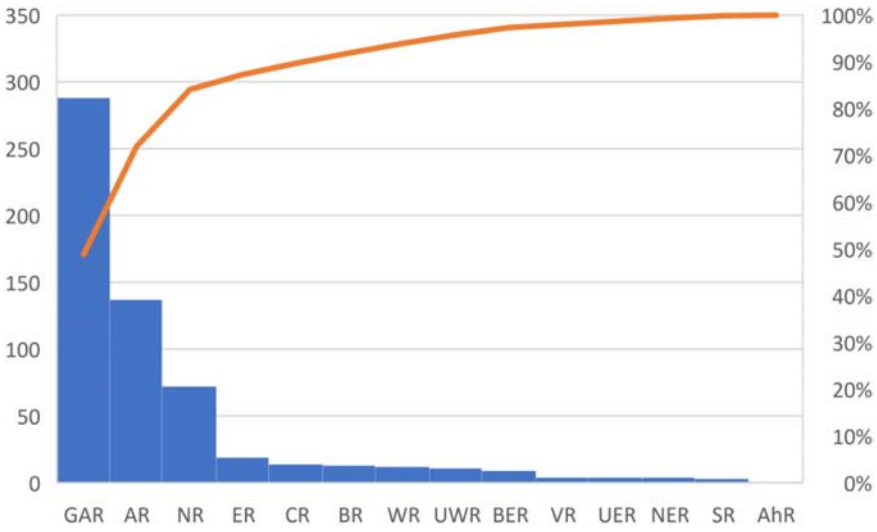
What is remarkable with the aforementioned Muslim NGOs is that the NPO Online Directory contains only a few of them. Based on information gathered from Ghanaian newspapers and internet sources (homepages and Facebook), Kreidieh's 2011 Directory and the NPO Online Directory, 683 Muslim associations, foundations, groups and organisations have so far been identified. They constitute the database—hereinafter 2022 GMNGO Database—for a quantitative analysis of the Muslim NGO landscape in Ghana during the 2010s, listing information on their headquarters, their entry/membership requirements and the duration of their activities on Facebook. Information on the location of their headquarters indicates a heavy southern bias of its operation, as is summarised in Graph 2.

Not surprisingly, more than half of the Muslim NGOs have their headquarters in the Greater Accra Region, almost all of them in Accra apart from *Al-Aman Humanitarian Development*, *International Voice of Islam*, *Caravan of Mercy*, *Grain of Hope Foundation*, *Maarif Foundation* and *Sheikh Alhaji Umar Karki Memorial Foundation* in Tema, *Orphans and Needy Helpline* in Amasa-

248 Annur Ummah Support Fund, Financial Report for the 1st Quarter ended 2017, http://annuralislam.com/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Annur-Support-Fund-Financial-Report-for-1st-Quarter-2017.pdf, accessed 17.8.2021.

249 Video on rural madrasa project, posted 6.7.2021, https://www.facebook.com/annurfoundation101/videos/531015754993521, accessed 4.10.2021.

250 Posting 9.5.2021, https://www.facebook.com/annurfoundation101/, accessed 4.10.2021.




GRAPH 2 Location of headquarters of Muslim NGOs. Abbreviations: GAR = Greater Accra Region; AR = Ashanti Region; NR = Northern Region; ER = Eastern Region; WR = Western Region; CR = Central Region; UWR = Upper West Region; BER = Bono East Region; UER = Upper East Region; BR = Bono Region; NER = North East Region; SR = Savannah Region; AhR = Ahafo Region; VR = Volta Region
SOURCE: 2022 GMNGO DATABASE; N = 591

man, *Al-Abrar Foundation* in Ashaiman, and *Act Right Foundation* in Weija. The concentration of Muslim NGOs in Accra reflects the city containing the largest concentration of Muslims, especially in Accra's many Zongo communities and the city being the political and economic centre of the country.

Some interesting changes can be identified if the information provided in the 2022 GMNGO Database is compared to those in Kreidieh's 2011 Directory and Zook's and Cassidy's analysis of Muslim NGOs in 2013–2015. The southern dominance prevailed already in Kreidieh's 2011 Directory, listing seventy Muslim NGOs in the Greater Accra Region alone. About 83% of the total 129 Muslim NGOs listed in the 2011 Directory had their headquarters in the southern regions, all of them being urban-based. Even more marked was the southern dominance among the sixty-three Muslim NGOs identified by Zook and Cassidy—93%. Figures from the 2022 GMNGO Database reveal that 84% of the 591 Muslim NGOs had their headquarters in the southern parts of the country; almost half of them located in the Greater Accra Region and almost a quarter in Ashanti Region alone. Only 16% have their headquarters in one of the five northern regions, predominantly located in the Northern Region. However, the datasets of 2011, 2013–2015 and 2022 cannot be compared as their composition differs greatly. Not least as Zook's and Cassidy's data only includes a limited

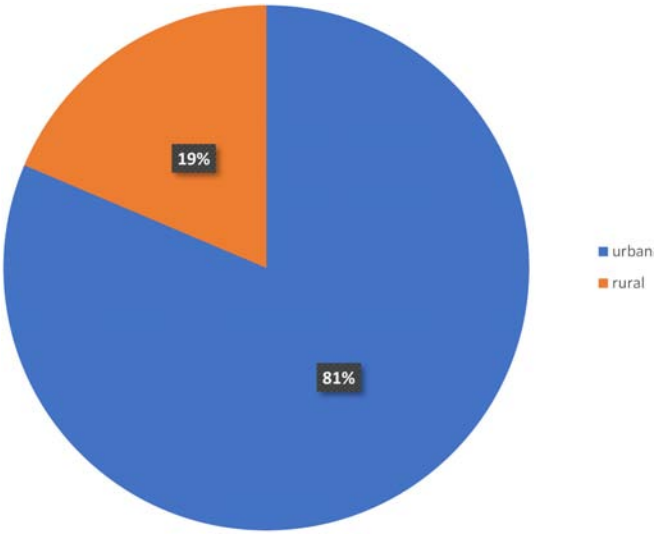
number of registered Muslim NGOs in contrast to the narrowly and broadly defined and registered and unregistered ones included in the 2022 GMNGO Database.

On the other hand, a comparison between the 2011 and the 2022 datasets indicates a multiplication of locations. Kreidieh's 2011 Directory listed the headquarters of Muslim NGOs in sixteen urban locations in nine of the then ten regions (none registered in the former Volta Region), of which about 40% are in Accra, 20% in Kumasi and 10% in Tamale. The 2022 GMNGO Database, in turn, lists 67 locations in all sixteen regions apart from Oti and Western North Regions. About 46% of them are located in Accra, 19% in Kumasi and 11% in Tamale. Eight locations listed between four and ten headquarters, namely Wa and Sunyani (both 9 NGOs), Tema and Kasoa (both 8), Ejura and Nsawam (both 7), Takoradi (6), Ashaiman (5), as well as Yendi and Koforidua (both 4). Furthermore, the three metropolitan regions (Accra, Kumasi and Tamale) dominate the landscape of Muslim NGOs as about 84% have their headquarters or main office here. What is striking is the lack of Muslim NGOs in Oti and the North East Region, most probably due to the low numbers of Muslims living in the two regions.

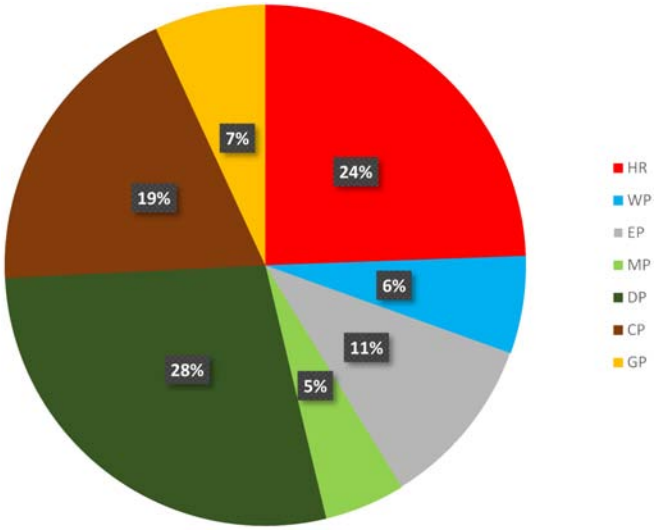
Further, the 2022 GMNGO Database underscores the urban and regional bias of Muslim NGOs, as 81% of them have a sole or predominantly urban bias of their activities, see Graph 3. Nevertheless, an analysis of their activities reveals a wide spectrum of engagement, including local urban and rural ad hoc projects, annual humanitarian relief programmes during Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha to both urban and rural communities, and rural community outreach campaigns.

Moreover, the activities of Muslim NGOs can be divided into seven categories, namely humanitarian relief, water projects, education projects, mosque projects, *daʿwa* projects, community projects, and gender projects, see Graph 4.

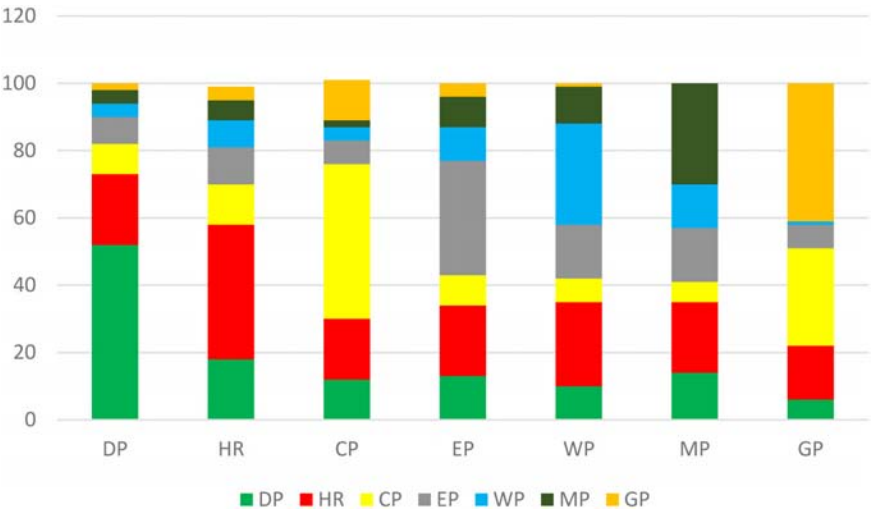
Not surprisingly, *daʿwa* projects (DP) and humanitarian relief (HR) are the two dominating fields of activities of the Muslim NGOs listed in the 2022 GMNGO Database. Moreover, an analysis of information collected from 516 NGOs reveals some interesting patterns and combinations in their engagements and programmes. The most striking one is the difference between NGOs engaged in *daʿwa* programmes and those engaging in community projects (CP), see Graph 5. As indicated in the figure, half of the DP-NGOs run *daʿwa* projects only, in addition to a quarter of them combine *daʿwa* and humanitarian relief. Similarly, half of the CP-NGOs run community projects only, in addition to one third of them combining community and gender projects. Similar patterns seem to prevail for the other fields of activities; the main field of activity predominates although with some noticeable differences when the second field of




GRAPH 3 Location of operation of Muslim NGOs
SOURCE: 2022 GMNGO DATABASE; N = 516




GRAPH 4 Fields of activities of Muslim NGOs. Abbreviations: HR = humanitarian relief (Iftar, Qurban; orphans; widows); WP = water projects (boreholes etc); EP = education projects (schools/madrasas, classrooms, book donations etc); MP = mosque projects (incl. masjids); DP = *da'wa* projects; CP = community projects (incl. sanitation, health centres/clinics, community centres, libraries); GP = gender projects (girls/women)
SOURCE: 2022 GMNGO DATABASE; N = 953; TOT NGOS = 515

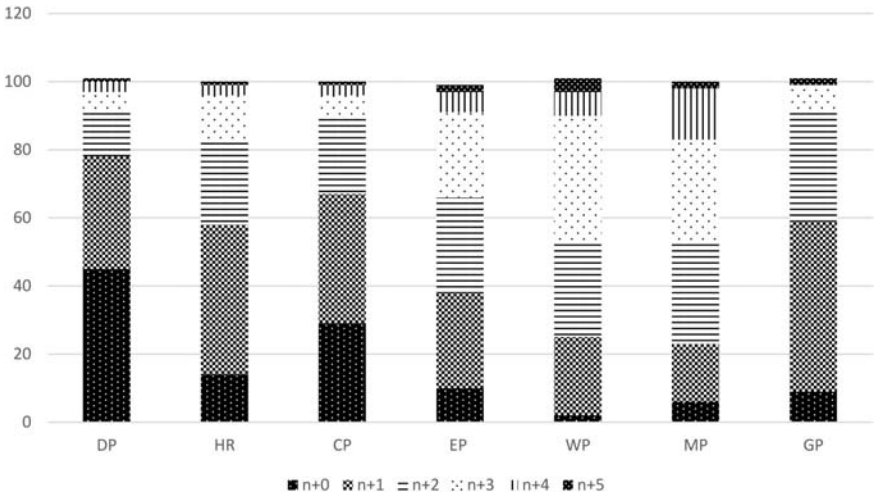



GRAPH 5 Correlation of activities of Muslim NGOs. Abbreviations: HR = humanitarian relief; WP = water projects; EP = education projects; MP = mosque projects; DP = *da'wa* projects; CP = community projects; GP = gender projects
SOURCE: 2022 GMNGO DATABASE; N = 953; TOT NGOS = 515

activity is included in the analysis. Namely: HR-NGOs add *da'wa* projects; EP-NGOs add humanitarian relief; WP-NGOs add humanitarian relief; MP-NGOs add humanitarian relief; GP-NGOs add community projects. While the dominance of humanitarian relief is not surprising, that of the correlation between community and gender projects indicates either a shift in the fields of activities of NGOs or the advent and expansion of secular Muslim NGOs.

Similar variations can be observed in the range of activities of the analysed 516 NGOs, see Graph 6. Whereas most of the DP-, HR-, CP- and GP-NGOs engage in one or two fields of activity (and, as noted above, this would be either DP+HR/HR+DP or CP+GP/GP+CP), NGOs running education, water and mosque projects are likely to engage in at least two other fields of activity.

However, information in the 2022 GMNGO Database indicates that most NGOs only engage in one (277 or 45%) or two (168 or 33%) fields of activities. Twenty percent or 105 NGOs engage in three or four activities while a mere two percent or 10 NGOs run programmes that include five or six activities. The latter organisations include: Abdul-Aziz Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation, Aliu Mahama Foundation, East Legon Muslim Youth, Eyes of Light Foundation, Ghana Muslim Mission (GMM), Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services (ICODEHS), Islamic Organisation for Humanity and Development, Make Zongo Great Again, Markaz Aleawn Alyaqin Humanitarian Services, and Tinkong Zongo Development. Some of them have a long history in

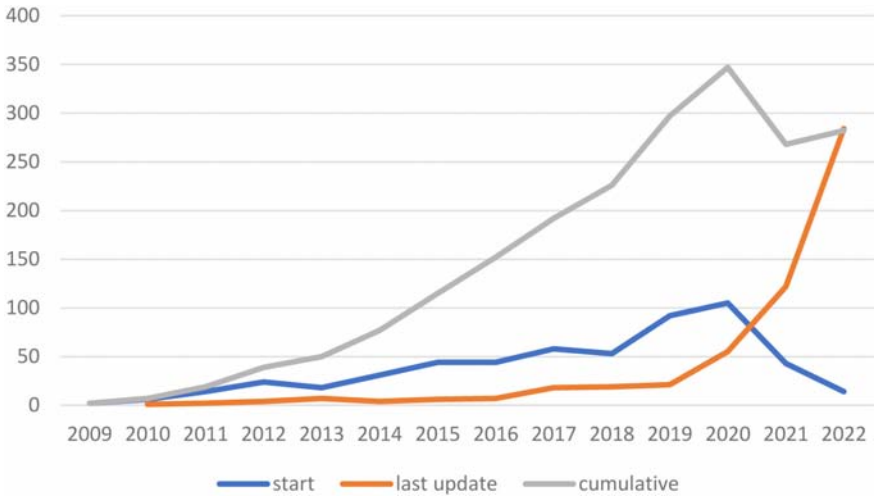



GRAPH 6 Range of activity of Muslim NGOs. Abbreviations: n + 0 = only one activity; n + 1 = two activities; n + 2 = three activities; n + 3 = four activities; n + 4 = five activities; n + 5 = six activities
SOURCE: 2022 GMNGO DATABASE; N = 953; TOT NGOS = 515

empowering Muslim communities such as the GMM and the ICODEHS, others belong to the wide segment of third-generation Muslim initiatives, ranging from foundations established by Muslim politicians (Aliu Mahama Foundation), NGOs established by Muslim scholars active both in Ghana and abroad (Eyes of Light Foundation), and the wide spectrum of Zongo and youth movements.

The change in the composition of the Muslim NGO landscape in Ghana during the age of the internet is visible on social media. Graph 7 highlights the rapid expansion of Muslim NGOs in Ghana during the last decade; the launching of their Facebook accounts indicates their respective ambitions to publicise their existence and broaden their network by using social media.

Two trends can be discerned from Graph 7. One is the first peak in 2012, largely due to the early establishment of Facebook accounts by Zongo and Muslim youth groups. The second peak started in 2019 and continued in 2020. A large part of the new Facebook accounts were those of Muslim *daʿwa* groups and institutions, reflecting their ambition to extensively use social media in disseminating their lectures as part of their outreach campaigns. Although it already peaked in 2019, COVID-19 further spurred them to move their activities on social media. Information provided in the 2022 GMNGO Database further indicate that 284 NGOs have an active Facebook account in 2022 (status: September 2022). The phenomenon of some accounts established in 2019 not




GRAPH 7 Start and last update on Facebook of Ghanaian Muslim NGOs
SOURCE: 2022 GMNGO DATABASE; TOTAL ENTRIES: 548

being updated in 2020 and 2021 seem to indicate that COVID-19 had postponed or nullified the ambitions of the affected organisations/groups, although it is more likely that they may have moved their communication to closed/non-public groups on WhatsApp, or transferred their public communication to Twitter and Instagram.

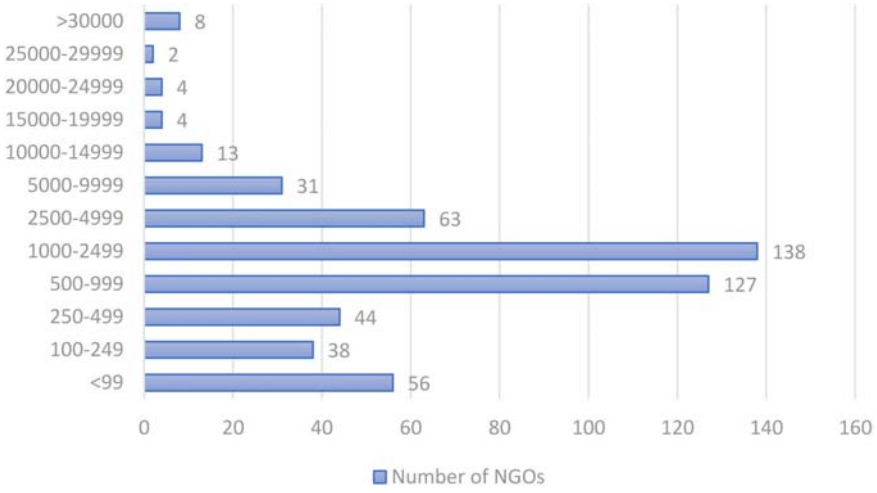
Graph 7, on the other hand, indicates the institutional and structural challenges many NGOs are facing, especially if they are loose social networks and movements with a thin or even non-existing organisational structure. The lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, for sure, halted the physical activities of many NGOs and many started online programmes and campaigns, as the peak in the cumulative curve of NGOs active on Facebook reveals. Nevertheless, as soon as physical activities were possible, at least some of them ceased in using Facebook. Another reason for the slump in 2021 and the (relatively) debilitating activities of Muslim NGOs on Facebook thereafter is that many NGOs have moved their notifications and updates to members to closed social media platforms, especially WhatsApp.

Most of the NGOs seem to be active on Facebook between for about three to four years, with less than half of them being active for between one to three years, as indicated in the information gathered in the 2022 GMNGO Database. However, an organisation's short Facebook active phase does not necessarily correlate with its past and future activities, especially as most of them established their Facebook accounts in recent years and are still active. On the other hand, what stands out are those NGOs with activity on Facebook spanning

over ten years, indicating them having achieved a well-established position within the Muslim NGO landscape. Not surprisingly, the most long-lived one is a Muslim youth organisation, the *An-Nur Islamiyya* (14 years), followed by *Community Redemption Foundation*, *Faata Africa/Final Point Foundation*, *Federation of Muslim Youth Groups—Ghana*, *Ga-Mashie Muslim Youth Organisation*, *Hohoe Zongo Development Foundation*, *Muslim Youth Alliance for Development*, *Taskar Zango*, and *Yendi Moslem Youth Research Foundation* (all 12 years).

The number of followers on Facebook, in turn, indicates the impact and capabilities of an NGO. Associations, foundations, groups, movements and organisations with thousands of followers have a larger target group they can motivate to volunteer and participate in campaigns and ad hoc projects, including fundraising campaigns. Although the figures of followers on Facebook do not distinguish between domestic and foreign ones, one can assume that most of the local, youth and Zongo NGOs attract the majority of their followers from their peer groups. As demonstrated in Graph 8, most Muslim NGOs have less than 1,000 followers, and only a few of them count above 10,000 (31 or 6% as of September 2022). One of them stands out, namely the Ghanaian transnational Muslim media platform *Peace Dawah Media* (PDW) with over one million followers, operated by Muslim influencer Khalifa Faith who lives part of his life in the USA. Presumably, the main bulk of PDW's followers not reside in Ghana. Other accounts with more than 25,000 followers as per September 2022 include those of *Al-Rayaan International School* (34,071 followers), *Al-Waajid Foundation for Islamic Dawah* (38,582) *Ghana Islamic Youth Sadaqa Association* (38,058), *Ghana Muslim Mission* (58,780), *Islamic Daawah Village* (31,792), *Make Zongo Great Again* (217,316), *Office of the National Chief Imam of Ghana* (25,706), *The Life Foundation* (29,256) and *Tijaniyya Muslim Council of Ghana Youth Association* (37,600).

In sum, what Graphs 4 to 8 reveal is nothing else than a remarkable change in the landscape of Ghanaian Muslim NGOs during the 2010s. One noticeable feature is their movement from narrow-target projects of constructing mosques and schools as well as drilling boreholes and running Ramadan, Iftar, Eid and Udhiya/Qurban programmes, to branching out into new ambitious terrains. Many Muslim NGOs are mainly *da'wa* platforms, and social media has enabled local imams and scholars to reach a manifold audience. Such narrow-target projects and programmes continue to be the backbone and identifier of many Muslim NGOs. However, some of the new generations of Muslim NGOs initiated during the 2010s have fully embraced the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and put themselves as spearheads to achieve Agenda 2030 and improve climate change. For example, the Tamale-based




GRAPH 8 Muslim NGOs: Number of followers on Facebook (per September 2022)
SOURCE: 2022 GMNGO DATABASE; N = 528

youth group *Aid Global Organization* participated in the walk for the passage of the Affirmative Action Bill and the call to accelerate the development of women in Ghana[251] and called on its members to plant trees in February 2020.[252] Other groups soon followed in suit, among them the *Tijaniyya Ibrahimiyya Council of Ghana* who called upon its members to join its "Barhama Goes Green" and "Muslim Action on Climate Change" campaign to plant trees along the Ablekuma-Amormorley-Pokuase Highway in June 2022.[253] As one commentator of the NGO/Muslim community, *Jamatul-huda Adabraka* in Kumasi announced and indirectly heavily criticised the established narrow-targeted programmes already in 2013: "Why do all Malams in Ghana always build mosques without thinking of a hospital? Please help us to solve it."[254] Interestingly, there are currently (2022) at least twelve hospital projects initiated by local Muslim NGOs, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.4.

251 https://www.facebook.com/AID-Global-organization-317898138837862/, 8.9.2019, accessed 5.10.2021.

252 "Tree Planting!!! Tree Planing!!!," https://aidglobalooganization.wordpress.com/2020/02/07/tree-planting-tree-planting/, 7.2.2020, accessed 5.10.2021.

253 During the campaign, some 1000 tree plants were planted on a 5 km stretch of the highway. See further photographs and updates on the June 2022 tree planting venue on Barhama Goes Green, 31.5.2022, 4.6.2022, 6.6.2022, 7.6.2022, 8.6.2022, 9.6.2022, https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100080440364049, accessed 31.3.2024.

254 https://www.facebook.com/JamatulHudaAdabraka, 21.11.2013, accessed 5.10.2021.

Another remarkable feature of the changing landscape and spectrum of Ghanaian Muslim NGOs is their capacity to mobilise funding from their members near and far away. Social media, in a sense, has revolutionised traditional forms of almsgiving and donating. Earlier generations of Muslim NGOs, among them the 'forerunners' ICODEHS and MFCS, were facilitators and intermediaries between foreign donors and local benefactors. This is still typical for many local Muslim NGOs whose objective is to commission narrow-target projects and Ramadan/Iftar/Eid programmes. The implementation of the former does not require a large staff of functionaries as local constructors do the construction or drilling paid by the NGO through funds received from donors. The implementation of Ramadan and other outreach programmes, in turn, is usually carried out by the volunteers of an NGO, the food items or monetary donations being covered by funds the NGO has received from a foreign donor. Social media, however, has empowered local NGOs, especially with regards to crowdfunding or reaching followers outside Ghana who are willing to support a specific cause or project.