



RETHINKING COMMUNITY RESPONSE AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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RETHINKING COMMUNITY RESPONSE AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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Abstract: Governments of coastal states of West Africa have responded with military and non-military approaches to stem the southward drift of violent extremist groups (VEGs). However, the extent to which citizens in frontier communities are ready to engage in actions to prevent, pre-empt, protect and respond to attacks by violent extremists and terrorists (VET) in their communities remains an open question. Based on data from primary mixed methods research – in frontier communities in two administrative districts of the Upper West Region of Ghana – this paper argues that citizens' awareness of the threats of VEGs and their preparedness to prevent, pre-empt, protect and respond to attacks by violent extremists and terrorists (VET¹) in their communities is a mirage, as the findings from the use of the *See Something, Say Something* campaign is an ineffective tool for mobilizing citizens for anti-VET engagement. To engage citizens, anti-VET actors must compete with and beat the sophisticated propaganda machinery of VETs in both the traditional and non-traditional media. Critically, it is not enough to communicate facts and figures. Anti-VET messaging must move beyond the cognitive into the affective realm through incorporating the concerns, needs, and interests of citizens in the non-kinetic approaches. For communities along the frontiers, anti-VET activism must address their human and livelihood security concerns of food, income, health, and other livelihood security needs that drive their local political economy. Without this, citizens have little interest in participating in anti-VET actions that may be disruptive to their livelihood systems without the provision of alternatives.

Introduction

Countering or preventing violent extremism and terrorism (CPVET) is no longer the preserve of security actors. The active vigilance and response of citizens is critical step in stemming the territorial expansion of violent extremism.² This need is urgent in West Africa, as VETs have dug roots in Niger, Mali, and Burki-

na Faso to launch attacks in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo since 2015. The expansionist drive of Macina Liberation Front (FLM)³, which targets more densely populated centers in coastal countries, has resulted in fourteen attacks in Côte d'Ivoire, nine in Benin, and at least two in Togo since 2020.⁴

Although Ghana has all the conditions that could attract or facilitate attacks from surrounding countries, the country has thus far escaped any major incident within its frontiers. Ghana is extremely exposed to infiltration by VET groups because of its very porous and minimally protected 2,444 kilometers of borders. The multiplicity of unofficial transit routes between Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire and along its northwestern frontiers onward to Mali, Niger, and further into the Sahel, create unsecured entry points traversing many communities along the borders. Similar challenges exist along the border with Togo to the east, with transit routes into Benin and Nigeria. Deepening poverty, high rates of youth unemployment, and the presence of multiple violent, protracted intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts, especially along frontier communities in northern Ghana, create conditions for VETs to graft their agendas onto local grievances. An increased influx of migrants from neighboring countries fleeing VET attacks or seeking economic opportunities has spurred speculation about the potential infiltration of these migrant movements by VET groups seeking to attack Ghana.

To preempt VET attacks, the government of Ghana (GoG) formulated the National Framework for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Ghana with its four pillars to prevent, preempt, protect, and respond. As a follow-up, Ghana rallied the establishment of the Accra Initiative in 2017 to mobilize a multicountry security response to halt the advancement of VETs towards coastal countries. In 2021, the government launched the *See Something, Say Something* campaign as a complement to the Accra Initiative to encourage “the public to be vigilant of the activities of suspicious characters and report such activities and characters to the security agencies.”⁵ However, Ghana’s effort to mobilize community engagement to match the military-centered Accra Initiative has experienced some snags.⁶ A cardinal presumption of the *See Something, Say Something* campaign is that citizens know what constitutes “suspicious characters” and how they should look out for them. On the contrary, a study in 2021 on the risk/threat of VETs in Ghana established that “the term ‘violent extremism’ was not clearly understood by the majority of the primary respondents.”⁷ This raises concerns about whether citizens, especially those in frontier communities outside the national and regional capitals, are prepared to take action as suggested in the *See Something, Say Something* campaign.

This research aimed to establish how prepared communities on Ghana's northwestern frontiers with Burkina Faso are to contribute to the country's CPVET

strategy. Based on primary data from key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys at the Nandom municipal and Lambusie-Karni district assemblies carried out in October and November 2022, the study finds that although frontier communities form the first line of response to VET infiltration, they are unprepared to play effective first-responder roles in identifying, reporting, or taking action on suspicious VET activities. While some respondents understood the threat of VETs and were willing to support security actors, there exists a high level of social distrust in the security sector actors' readiness to engage with VETs. Study participants also did not see how the government's CPVET strategy included their economic interests. In particular, transborder transport service providers (truck drivers, Okada, and tricycle operators,⁸ canoe transporter service providers), as well as itinerant economic actors (market women, traders, hunters, etc.), saw costs rather than benefits to engaging with the *See Something, Say Something* campaign, as anti-VET activism could threaten their livelihoods.

The lethargy in engagement is, in part, because Ghana's efforts at nurturing civic engagement in CPVET have not specifically targeted frontier territorial and interest groups. Furthermore, the messaging in the *See Something, Say Something* campaign is vague regarding the specific actions that it requests of citizens, therefore lacking the power to stimulate citizens along the borders to look out for, report on, and act to counter or prevent VETs coming into their communities. The sources and quality of the information received also play into the limited community response. Citizens rely largely on the unverified content of radio broadcasts and social media content for information on VETs, who joins them, and how they operate. However, the content of radio and social media on VETs tends to prioritize the sensationalist value they bring to attract audiences, rather than providing factual CPVET education. Consequently, stereotypes and misconceptions perpetuate ignorance about the nature and operations of VETs, and thereby blunt any urge of communities to be active agents of CPVET.

The study recommends a critical rethinking of Ghana's approach to engaging citizens, especially those living along the country's borders. Customized and targeted messages must use evidence and experience-based content that drives frontier communities from being hazily aware of VETs to being concerned, and feeling affected enough, to take action against VET infiltration. To achieve this, CPVET information and education must move away from unmoderated radio and social media-based information, communication, and engagement approaches, to community-based processes that leverage the local knowledge, structures, and networks of different categories of community actors to create webs of first responders against VET infiltration. Multi-stakeholder and cross-community/border approaches to citizen engagement will foster collaboration between the security sector and community-level actors to ensure effective coordination of

actions to counter or prevent the advance of VETs.

Research Context

Poverty is often cited as a driver for the radicalization and recruitment of young people by violent extremist groups (VEGs).⁹ In that theoretical frame, endemic poverty in the Nandom and Lambusie local government areas predisposes present communities to infiltration and attacks by violent extremists. The Nandom Municipality and Lambusie-Karni District, the two local government areas where this research was conducted, are in the northwestern corner of Ghana, with a poverty rate of 71 percent—about thrice the national average of 24 percent.¹⁰ The two are among the most poverty-endemic local government areas of the Upper West Region. More than 95 percent of the population in these areas depend on unimodal rain-fed subsistent agriculture for their livelihood. Most of the area's young people are not in school and rely on seasonal migration to farming or illegal mining communities in the south, in search of off-season supplementary incomes. Both districts have communities on the border between Ghana and Burkina Faso. Those living along the border have some opportunities to earn supplementary income year-round through participation in or facilitation of cross-border trade and other services.

High levels of food insecurity in these predominantly agrarian communities, due to low food production and limited off-farm income generation, coupled with high rates of unemployment, (especially among the youth), are major causal factors of the endemic poverty in the two administrative units' communities. Unfortunately, change in the region's poverty rates have been slow and minimal across almost a generation, merely reducing from 88 percent in 1991 to 70.9 percent in 2018.¹¹

Frontier communities along Ghana's borders with the Sahelian countries are security flash points, particularly because the porous security infrastructure, meant to detect and prevent the movement of violent extremists, exposes them to VE infiltration and attack. Although the risk of infiltration of VEs in northern Ghana has been rated as moderate, the experiences of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo, where VE attacks have penetrated deeper beyond their northern borders, is cited as indicative of how the porous nature of Ghana's borders makes it vulnerable to the southward movement of VEGs. Since 2015, VEGs have been pushing southward from the Sahelian countries of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso toward the coastal countries of West Africa. Ghana's minimally protected 2,444-kilometer border with Togo, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire, all of which have experienced violent extremist and terrorist (VET) activity, makes it vulnerable to infiltration by VEGs.¹²

VET activity and other socioeconomic challenges in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Togo have also led to increased migration of young people (some with criminal records) into Ghana in search of income-earning opportunities. Daily, busloads of citizens from these countries travel beyond frontier towns as they head to more lucrative economic enclaves in the middle and coastal regions of Ghana. They head into the open and poorly regulated informal sector, where they operate as undocumented immigrants. The petty trading and informal mining sectors are particularly important magnets for such migration. The association of such economic migrant movements with the potential of VET activities is best captured as follows:

The northern Ghanaian town of Dollar Power has many West African illegal miners, including Ivorian former rebels and Burkinabe nationals, and is known for armed robbery. In eastern Burkina Faso, gold from some mining sites controlled by violent extremist groups is purchased by buyers from Benin and Togo. This may provide valuable funding to terror groups, although the scale is unclear.¹³

Issah Baddianaah, Bernard Nuoleyeng Baatuuwie, and Raymond Adongo report the increasing proliferation of similar illegal mining sites across multiple districts in the Upper West Region.¹⁴ The Nandom and Lambusie-Karni local government areas are among the sites where illegal mining is taking root, drawing in youth from different communities within and outside the country. The Regional Security Council of the Upper West Region has cautioned that “if we allow them [illegal miners] to continue then that will serve as a security threat to the people of the region and Ghana.”¹⁵

Besides the economic migrants, the influx of persons fleeing attacks from VETs into communities within Ghana's borders is another source of worry for VET infiltration.¹⁶ In December 2022, at least 796 Burkinabès fled into communities in the Upper West Region of Ghana following VET attacks.¹⁷ As of February 2023, an estimated 4,000 Burkinabès who fled from jihadist attacks are now seeking asylum in border communities in the Upper East and Upper West Regions of Ghana.¹⁸ Many of the refugees maintain links with their communities of origin and frequently travel back and forth between their host and home countries, often bringing more people to join them in the safer, more fertile, and better-drained lands of Ghana, where they feel secure to farm and graze their cattle.

Although persons fleeing VET attacks have a right to safe havens in neighboring countries under international law, the influx and free movement of Burkinabè and Nigerien nationals within northern Ghana make it difficult for security agencies to isolate genuine refugees from extremists intending to infil-

trate the country. Hence, Ghana's Ministry of Interior is worried that:

"The increasing number of migrants from conflict areas seeking refuge in the country ... has raised security threats, particularly due to the porous nature of many land borders, making both the migrants and border residents susceptible to various risks such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, the proliferation of small arms, and terrorism."¹⁹

The Government of Ghana (GoG) is also concerned that the ease with which:

"All manner of persons who engage in both legal and illegal activities, including drug trafficking, arms trafficking, trafficking in persons and goods enter the country and collaborate with Ghanaians to engage in all sorts of crime shows how vulnerable Ghana would be to illegal entry for terrorist attacks."²⁰

There are also concerns that potential contact with extremists through the immigration of people from VET zones, and the high incidence of poverty in the host communities, expose young people to radicalization and recruitment into VEGs. As the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Insecurity has noted:

"Border communities in northern Ghana are particularly vulnerable to potential infiltration and exploitation by violent extremist groups owing to their economic insecurity, including persistent multidimensional poverty and youth unemployment; health insecurity, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; and community and personal insecurities due to lack of social services and the rule of law."²¹

The foregoing state and human security contexts make the study area a prime candidate for the infiltration of violent extremists from the Sahel, especially since Burkina Faso, Ghana's neighbor to the north, has been experiencing attacks from Islamist groups that have infiltrated from Niger and Mali. Despite anticipated differences in the nature, scope, and depth of livelihood systems in other communities along Ghana's borders, the two represent typical frontier districts with high exposure to VET activity. This pilot study is therefore well situated in the two districts.

Theoretical Frame of Intervention

The efforts of governments around the world to counter or prevent violent extremism have shifted from purely militarized approaches, adopted during the War on Terror in 2001, to include citizen-led engagement that recognizes the importance of a "whole-of-society approach [as] game-changers in the global fight against terrorism."²² Bob McDonald and Yaser Mir have recalled

how, in the aftermath of the London bombings in 2005, the UK government complemented its kinetic approaches to combating and preventing the recurrence of violent extremist acts by calling on citizens to disrupt the ideological propaganda and sympathy among exposed communities.²³ On the global plane, Rohan Gunaratna observes that while kinetic approaches to countering VET are important, in the long run, “success in this fight depends on the ability and willingness of governments to work in partnership with a range of actors, particularly civil society organizations and the private sector, to build a capacity to deliver a full-spectrum counter-terrorism response.”²⁴ In particular, the use of non-kinetic approaches that “dismantle the entire infrastructure which serves to produce and sustain a terrorist group” includes the ability to disrupt propaganda and other communication networks, now including their capacity to “use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and other online platforms to spread their ideologies as well as identify potential recruits.”²⁵

Relative to US President George W. Bush’s Global War on Terror, Barack Obama’s Countering Violent Extremism policies shifted toward emphasizing the prevention of violent extremism. This move attempted to balance the kinetic approaches of the former with the non-kinetic approaches of the latter, which saw the engagement of unarmed groups and communities as vital forces for securing the defeat of violent extremists worldwide.²⁶ Since then, “Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) has grown into a global phenomenon that hinges on the participation of communities in the promotion and enactment of their own security.”²⁷ However, as Elizabeth Mesok observes, the dearth of ethnographic research risks obscuring how “the P/CVE agenda compels the participation of civil society organizations—and community-based organizations in particular—whose work is geared toward engaging individuals or communities considered vulnerable to violent extremism.”²⁸

The use of the media is central to the mobilization and engagement of citizens in countering or preventing violent extremism and terrorism (CPVET) initiatives. However, the media plays a double-edged role in the fight against VETs, as how the media constructs or deconstructs the narratives around VETs affects “how the general public perceives and experiences terrorism and how it affects their personal lives.”²⁹ The media’s stereotypical reportage on the origins and perpetrators of VET acts can create and perpetuate the homogenized labeling and collective accusation of identity groups as VET agents.³⁰ Media reportage can also contribute to distrust in the media outlets and a backlash entrenchment of support for VETs in communities that share demographic identities, cultural and religious beliefs, and other traits with the alleged VETs.

The liberalization of media outlets through the proliferation of radio and television stations, and the advent of social media alongside the phenomenon of

citizen-journalism, has further placed the control of media content beyond the scope of regulatory authorities. Consequently, regulators are helpless, in most instances, to control the “proliferation of multiple, contextual and dynamic meanings.”³¹

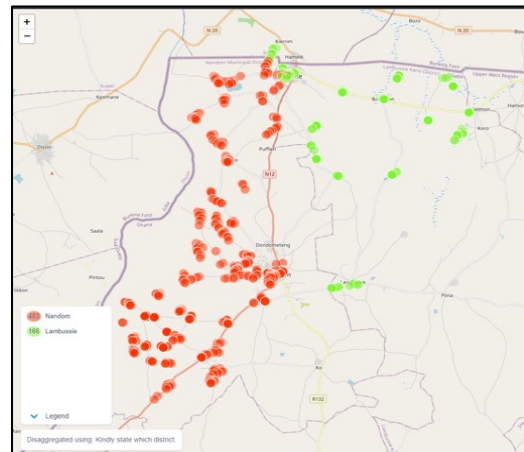
While governments must learn to operate within this media landscape,³² the content, channel, and format of anti-VET messaging must match, if not exceed, the scope and penetration of messaging capabilities of VETs. Terrorists communicate in multiple ways—verbally and non-verbally—as even their graphic brutalities constitute forms of communication to governments and citizens who contemplate opposing them. Hence, the counter-messaging used in enlisting citizen engagement must match or surpass the emotive force of VET messaging to create the impetus for community action against VETs.

Purpose and Methodology

Given the multiple roles of frontier communities as transit points, hosts, witting or unwitting service providers, and targets in the spread of VET, the Community Response to Violent Extremism and Peace (CRAVE4Peace) seeks to ascertain the level of awareness and preparedness of frontier communities to engage in actions to prevent or counter VET entry and actions in Ghana.

Using a mixed methods approach comprising desk reviews, surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) with persons aged eighteen years and above, the study assessed the level and quality of knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and practices that promote or hinder active community engagement in the prevention of VET infiltration into Ghana. Designed as a pilot study, the research focused on the Nandom Municipal and Lambusie-Karni District Assemblies—the two local government territories along Ghana’s border, with Burkina Faso to the northwest and a major transit corridor into Côte d’Ivoire.

Figure 1
Distribution of Study Communities per GPS Coordinates



GPS located frontier communities in Nandom Municipal (red dots) and Lambusie-Karni district (green dots) where data was collected.

Source: This Study

The research recruited, trained, and deployed twenty-two data collection agents to conduct 649 individual surveys, ninety-three KIIs, and fifty-one FGDs in sixty-seven frontier communities in the Nandom Municipality and Lambusie-Karni District over a period of sixteen working days in October 2022. The study engaged a broad range of community actors encompassing itinerant traders, market women, hunters, and cross-border transport services operators (bus and haulage truck drivers, motorcycle and tricycle transport services providers, canoe taxi operators on the Black Volta, etc.). The purpose was to learn what they knew about VET, and how prepared they were to take action to avert incidences or mitigate the impact of VET activities in and through the communities.

Of the 520 participants who indicated their age and gender categories, 42.9 percent were thirty-five years old or younger, with another 22.5 percent falling between thirty-six and forty-five years old. This means that 65.4 percent of respondents were within the youthful age range of forty-five years or younger. Respondents were fairly evenly spread across gender lines, with 53.8 percent (280 of 520) men and 46.2 percent (240 of 520) women. Female respondents tended to be younger, with 71.2 percent (171 of 240) forty-five years or younger, compared to 60.4 percent (169 of 280) of their male counterparts within the same age category (see Table 1).

Table 1
Age and Gender Distribution of Survey Respondents

Age Category of Respondents	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
17 and below	1	1	2
	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
18–35	99	122	221
	35.4%	50.8%	42.5%
36–45	69	48	117
	24.6%	20.0%	22.5%
46–55	42	42	84
	15.0%	17.5%	16.2%
56–65	42	20	62
	15.0%	8.3%	11.9%
66–75	19	3	22
	6.8%	1.2%	4.2%
75 and above	8	4	12
	2.9%	1.7%	2.3%
Total	280	240	520
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: This Study

Summary of Research Findings

Box 1 Concern for VET Presence

“We believe some are already here, and with the recent killing in Wa, we believe some are the ones doing it, but they can't operate the way they are doing in other countries. With time, however, if things do not change, they will get a good number and things will become too bad.”³³

Box 2 Uncontrolled Access Points Increase Vulnerability

“Entering into Ghana is not a major problem; you can enter through the main border or pass any path—it is easy, because security men don't usually insist on checking people's identity cards very well before allowing them to enter; [also] our very own Ghanaians or community members often facilitate and pick these foreigners to cross over and they will collect money from them. Yes, what she said is true, because it is our very own people that usually show these foreigners the illegal routes and paths leading into Ghana.”³⁴

Perceived Risk of VET Infiltration Is High

Participants were concerned about the potential spillover of VETs from neighboring countries into Ghana. Many worried that VETs may already be present elsewhere in Ghana, even living in their communities unnoticed. 79.4 percent of survey respondents (n = 649) said they worried that persons intending to cause violent acts may already be present in Ghana, and 72.9 percent said they were concerned VETs were already living in or close to their communities. As one FGD participant observed, “The main issue is that we are very close to Burkina and whatever happens over there can happen to us here also.”³⁵ Respondents attributed the perceived risk to Ghana's long, unprotected frontiers, dotted with unofficial crossing points. They pointed out that given the very porous nature of the boundaries, “The foreigners are always moving in and out of the country, so these violent people could just easily mix up with them under [the] pretense of being good people.”³⁶

FGD and KII participants pointed out that entry of VETs into Ghana through the official and unauthorized border crossing points is equally very easy because of the complicity of Ghanaians working or living in frontier communities. Box 2 summarizes respondents' views on security lapses at official border crossings, and the facilitating roles that members of frontier communities play.

Limited Quality of Knowledge on VETs

The study established that most study participants had some awareness of the existence of VETs. At least 60.9 percent (395 of 649) in the survey and 88.17 percent (82 of 93) of KII respondents said they had heard about VETs. However, the quality of information they had on VETs was very limited. For instance, what respondents knew about VETs and their activities varied widely. Many externalized and abstracted the concept of VETs and their recruitment and operation. For most respondents, VET was something that happens elsewhere outside Ghana. For instance, 67.8 percent of survey respondents (n = 649) said VET activities happen in neighboring countries, while 72.4 percent said VETs come from outside Ghana. In other words, responses posed VETs as external entities and downplayed the potential for local self- or institutionalized radicalization and recruitment of VETs.

Participants also had limited knowledge of what CPVET initiatives expected them to do. The quality of information from the GoG and citizen engagement drive through the *See Something, Say Something* campaign was perceived as superficial; incapable of inciting active engagement in CPVET by members from frontier communities. For instance, 56.7 percent of survey respondents said they had no idea of the existence of GoG's *See Something, Say Something*, compared to 31.5 percent who said they had heard of the campaign.

Informational Gaps in Frontier Communities

The mode of VET information, education, and communication (IEC) was a contributory factor to the limited knowledge on VETs. Radio and television IEC platforms reach only those within broadcast range, possessing the means to tune into their frequencies.

IEC on VET via social media reaches only people with access to smartphones, data, and the know-how to access social media platforms or social networks with the relevant information. Media content, especially from broadcast sources, may be in a language that is not easily accessible, or so broad and untargeted as to leave too much space for multiple interpretations. Not all frontier communities receive reliable broadcast signals from national radio and television broadcasts, and cellphone connectivity seldom exists. Either the signals do not reach them or they are too weak to allow for sustained network connection. In other words, radio, television, and cellphone companies and other electronic communication services are not effectively using their respective spectrums to provide adequate and stable service coverage to peripheral frontier communities.

It is not surprising that the study encountered respondents in KIIs and FGDs

who said they were unaware of any messaging on the risk of VET activities in Ghana. As one KII respondent put it: "I sincerely have not heard of it. It might be in the system, but I have not heard of it."³⁷ A FGD participant echoed the same information void, stating that "We cannot say anything because we have not heard of it."³⁸ While information on VET might saturate television and radio airwaves as well as social media outlets, it may not be reaching all communities or persons, especially those in frontier communities who need the information to be active frontline CPVET agents.

Not All Knowledge Translates Automatically into Action

The GoG's effort to enlist citizen engagement in CPVET are lacking because the effort is not effectively instrumentalized. When asked how effective the *See Something, Say Something* campaign was in encouraging citizens to be vigilant and engaged in the prevention of VET activities, 45.5 percent of survey respondents said they did not know whether the campaign was effective or not, while 15.5 percent said it was not effective. In other words, 61.0 percent of respondents doubted the effectiveness of the campaign to engage citizens in CPVET. Only 26.8 percent said it was effective. From a crosstabulation of responses by gender, the chi square p-value of 7.215, with a significance level of 0.301, indicating no significant differences between the opinions of men and women regarding the effectiveness of the government's campaign to get citizens involved in the fight against violent extremism.

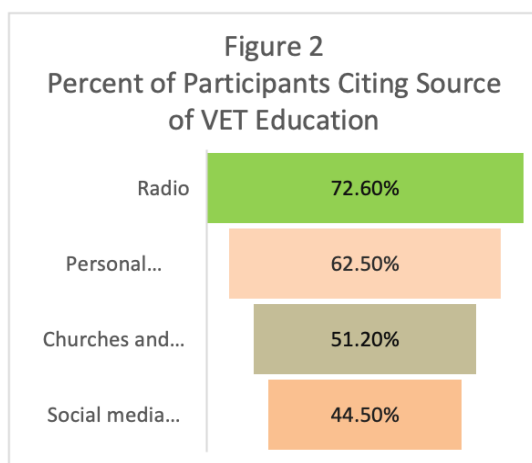
Participants in various FGDs echoed similar mixed responses on the effectiveness of the campaign. While some acknowledged that the campaign has helped them to be more alert to their environment, the majority expressed ignorance of the campaign. Some groups said they had "never heard of something of that nature" or that "we don't understand anything about that campaign."⁴⁰

One Message, Multiple Interpretations

Part of the community indifference, or the non-engagement in the *See Something, Say Something* campaign stems from the lack of differentiation in the targeting of the message. Different categories of people with different interests make up a community. The campaign's generalized targeting of the content of the message leads to different interpretations of its "ask" request from members of frontier communities. When asked what the *See Something, Say Something* campaign meant to them and their communities, KII respondents gave a wide range of responses, suggesting a lack of clarity in what the campaign specifically wants citizens to know, including how they should engage in CPVET initiatives. While some said the campaign is very useful because it alerts them to the possible dangers of VETs and calls on them to "report anyone who acts

suspiciously to the police or community leaders,"⁴¹ others questioned its usefulness, noting that although the campaign "is very important for us close to Burkina, it is not put into use,"⁴² or that "it is a nice initiative but it's currently not yielding results because they came here once and that was all."⁴³ A third category of respondents said the campaign meant "nothing, once we have not heard of it yet,"⁴⁴ or "I don't know because I have not heard about the campaign."⁴⁵ Others said "I cannot say anything since I have never heard about it"⁴⁶ "I don't know because I have not heard about the campaign"⁴⁷ or "I have never heard anything like that so I cannot say anything concerning it."⁴⁸

When asked to indicate their access to information on VETs from different media outlets, 72.6 percent of survey participants mentioned radio as one of their sources of information, 62.5 percent cited personal conversations, and 51.2 percent identified churches and mosques. Furthermore, 44.5 percent of respondents said they accessed their information on VETs from social media, with WhatsApp and Facebook as the most active social media access points for VET information. No statistically significant differences existed between men and women in their sources for information on VET activity.



Source: This Study

Despite their popularity as a source of IEC on VET, there are no mechanisms in place to monitor and moderate the quality of information on VETs that these channels deliver to the public. Consequently, the accuracy, currency, completeness, and pertinence of information distributed through these channels are subject to unregulated shoehorning by culling and fitting bits and pieces of events, especially sensational and fearful occurrences elsewhere, into unrelated situations. Persons accessing information from these sources are open to disinformation, misinformation, and sensational news that distort the

reality about VETs. In particular, social media is often flooded with stills and video images of heavily armed VETs arriving in undisclosed locations, with voiceovers that geolocate them with specific names of places, dates, and times to create maximum fear for those living very close to their location. Invariably, radio stations competing for audiences gleefully pick up and spread such sensational news, focusing on selling their airwaves rather than providing factual IEC to their audiences. Quality news has been sacrificed for the competition to be heard by reporting news of sensational value. Consequently, sensational news tends to generate more fear and panic, rather than reasoned engagements which could prevent the entry of VETs into their communities. As one KII participant captured it, "such reports put fear and panics among people in the community."⁴⁹ In the words of another, "there is a lot of fear when we hear about these group of persons because we even see some videos of people being beheaded."⁵⁰ Such fearmongering causes social paralysis, as "sometimes people stop going to farms because of such news for the fear of being attacked."⁵¹ Likewise, "women in the community who used to go across to trade had to stop because they. . .fear they might get killed, just in case they go there."⁵²

Witting and Unwitting Accomplices

Participants acknowledged the possibility of wittingly, or unwittingly, assisting VET elements by using river crossings and push paths from their communities to other parts of Ghana or neighboring communities. At least 76.7 percent of respondents were concerned that truck drivers, commercial motorcycle (Okada) transport operators, and tricycle (motorking⁵³) owners could knowingly or unknowingly help violent extremists move between Ghana and neighboring countries. Additionally, 74.4 percent of participants said they worried that owners of boats and canoes along the Black Volta could knowingly or unknowingly help violent extremists move between Ghana and neighboring countries. More than 90 percent of survey respondents identified unregulated footpaths as the most likely routes for VETs to enter their communities. KII respondents also expressed concern about transborder transport service providers who could wittingly or unwittingly facilitate the movement of unknown persons across Ghana's borders in all directions. One respondent said, "I am very much concerned because they do that for their money and by so doing, any kind of human being can be transported unknowingly."⁵⁴

Other respondents believed economic actors may knowingly prioritize their business interests over community and national security. As one respondent noted, "you know, because of money, such things can happen in a sense that, if these drivers are influenced with some sum of monies knowingly or unknowingly, our country would experience such harm."⁵⁵ Another respondent observed that "because the canoe and boats drivers are working for money, and if such people pay for the fares needed before they could cross, the drivers can definitely bring them."⁵⁶

Box 3

The Watonloge Story: Putting Economic Survival before Security

“That is a major source of concern. In Hamile here, we have a group of people call the Watonloge, which literally means ‘let us go.’ Their job is to carry foreigner passengers across the border, be it from Ghana or Burkina. Their life totally depends on that job. They are only interested in the money they will get after carrying you across the border; they don’t care about your identity. Should anything bad happen, these Watonloge people will play a crucial role. These guys can easily facilitate or carry extremists across the border as long as they are going to be paid.”⁵⁷

Motorcycle-taxi (Okada) and canoe transport service providers in the study acknowledged that they regularly provided services to people traveling across Ghana’s borders without asking any questions. In the view of another respondent, supporting VEGs could be more intentional than unwitting. As one participant observed, “the Okada or Watonloge boys can go to every mile to take people across at all costs just because of money, and these can carry both good and bad people across.”⁵⁸ The intentionality of such actions is detailed in Box 3 above and in the next section.

Political Economics and Enablers of VET

The Watonloge story in Box 3 above epitomizes the choices that frontier community members must often make between public security, their own economic survival, and livelihood security concerns. Study participants recalled the conflict between the economic interests of transborder transport services providers and the call to engage in anti-VET activities advocated in the *See Something, Say Something* campaign. As various KII participants noted, “current [economic] hardship can let some prioritize money over peace [even though] that might cost him his life at the end.”⁵⁹ Another participant explained the willingness of cross-border service providers and traders to take such risks:

[“This] is possible because it is a business to them. If I have my motorking, and a person says I should transport his goods from here to Hamile border for an amount of GHS 1,000,⁶⁰ I would go because from here to Hamile is not far. And we do have a lot of illegal routes into Ghana. I might not know what they are doing, but the fact that the money is tantalizing means I will go. Anyway, the border checkpoints are very porous.”⁶¹

Figure 3: Canoe Taxi Service On Black Volta



A canoe transport service operator from the Burkina Side of the Black Volta comes over to ferry a trader with his wares across the Black Volta during the course of field work. **Source:**

In the view of another participant, economic survival took precedence over personal and collective security concerns “due to the amount of money that will be given to these canoe drivers—they will be willing to bring them in, even if they know that they are strangers that may or may not cause harm to the country.”⁶² As another respondent noted, “because of unemployment, they [service providers] will easily accept money from VETs, or even rise up with the violent extremists to cause anarchy for their wishes to fulfilled.”⁶³

Acting for reasons of economic self-interest is not limited to transport service providers. Economic motivations for condoning acts of VETs are rampant among other groups of people living or working along Ghana’s frontiers. In particular, respondents cited “corruption on the part of the Security Officers” as a major economic factor undermining the ability of the security agencies at border entry points to prevent the entry of VETs into Ghana.⁶⁴ For this reason, respondents believed the security services “aren’t prepared [to prevent the entry of VETs into Ghana because] they are very corrupt; they only concentrate on money.”⁶⁵ In the view of another, “their irresponsible and corrupt acts can lead this country into something if care is not taken.”⁶⁶

Respondents also cited the high rates of unemployment among youth as an economic enabler for VET groups to recruit young people. In the view of one respondent, as a result of “unemployment, there are no economic activities available here for youth to engage in, and with that, robbery is very high here.”⁶⁷ Participants were “worried that due to the unemployment rate in the community,”⁶⁸ the youth “may easily be influenced into joining these groups should the violent extremists approach them with very good proposals.”⁶⁹ A

participant in a FGD echoed this view in response to a question on how easily people from other countries could travel into Ghana with weapons meant to cause violent extremism. Putting it more emphatically, another respondent said:

Oh, don't even go there, our borders are very porous. Secondly, the foot paths that lead from Burkina to Ghana are so many that the immigration official cannot guard all. Also, the "Watonloge" people are so clever and ready to maneuver with foreigners into Ghana "for cash."⁷⁰

Another participant pointed out that "due to unemployment it can happen, depending on the deal, if someone promise me GHC 5,000 I can use my private car to cross with them."⁷¹

Institutional and Social Distrust Hampers Civic Engagement

The survey asked respondents how much they trusted different actors to protect them against VET attacks.⁷² While 78.6 percent of respondents expressed high levels of trust in the military and 61.9 percent trust immigration services, respondents placed their trust next in the youth (60.1 percent) and the chiefs (59.9 percent) in their communities, ahead of the police (59.6 percent). Respondents trusted the regional security council and the municipal or district assemblies, all of which have direct and constitutionally mandated responsibility for security oversight at the local government levels, less than youth groups and community chiefs. Confirming the survey results, KII and FDG respondents indicated they "trust the military but. . .somewhat doubt the immigration and police officers."⁷³

Participants in KIIs and FGDs distinguished between trust in the technical competence of security agents to defend them, and social trust in their moral integrity to face their responsibilities. The limitations on social trust stem from perceptions of low levels of honesty, integrity, and reliability of security service actors in performing their duties. In their view, "we are very vulnerable if such things should happen because we do not have anything, and we can't trust our security agencies."⁷⁴ In the words of another, "the soldiers are serious, but the immigration and police people are not serious."⁷⁵ Participants believed "the police service is a security threat themselves because they are more concerned [about] money than security. The immigration [service] has barriers, but they don't do the work; they are focused more particularly on making money."⁷⁶ In the view of one FGD participant, "our security men are so corrupt and lazy, I don't think they are prepared";⁷⁷ "we only pray nothing happens, otherwise these people cannot be relied upon."⁷⁸ Another respondent doubted the capabilities or willingness of officers of the immigration service to apprehend VETs coming across the borders into Ghana with the statement that "we don't trust them [immigration officers] because the immigration [officers] cannot apprehend smugglers how much to talk of violent extremist."⁷⁹ Even trust in the military is conditional. As one respondent summarized, "I trust our security service to some extent, especially the mili-

tary, but the government need[s] to increase the number of security personnel in border communities, and supply them with the necessary logistics to combat crime.”⁸⁰

The communities' social distrust in the ability of security agencies to defend them has diverted their trust to indigenous institutions and actors for protection. Survey responses illustrated how communities were more willing to trust their local leaders, over security agencies, to keep them safe from VET attacks. One KII participant commented: “I trust my assemblyman and the chief; they are the people who can protect us.”⁸¹ In the words of another, “the local groups will be the first people to trust. Like the hunters and fishermen, they encounter things in the bush that many people don't know.”⁸² Another confirmed that “I trust the local groups to protect us because they are always available in the communities.”⁸³

Similarly, other KII and FDG participants expressed their willingness to engage in CPVET initiatives but said that they were “not well prepared [to do so] because of trust issues between we the community and the police.”⁸⁴ Community members wanted security actors to “be serious and stop the overt corruption and love for money over human lives.”⁸⁵ Otherwise, they would withhold their cooperation in CPVET activities. As one respondent put it, “we don't have any mind to support them. The president or government should let them stop their corruption.”⁸⁶ Another colleague explained that community members were even willing to withhold information from security sector actors due to distrust. One participant expressed that “there are routes [across the borders] that the security agencies are not aware of, but because of their corruption, the community members wouldn't also tell them.”⁸⁷

Technical Challenges with Communication

Despite this social distrust, some participants expressed their readiness to work with the security agencies to counter or prevent VET entry into Ghana—if their protection is guaranteed. As market women in the Kokoligu community noted in a focus group discussion, “We are very prepared and ready to help the security men with anything they want.”⁸⁸ A colleague added: “You know, we the women are talkative; whatever we see, we will say it; we are ready to provide security information to the police.”⁸⁹ A third woman continued: “Everything that the security agencies want us to do in order to help the situation, we are ready to offer a helping hand.”⁹⁰ To buttress the level of community preparedness to work with security sector actors, a KII respondent recounted: “We are very prepared. Recently, when some young men committed crimes in Burkina Faso and escaped into Ghana, they were arrested by some youth in Suke and handed over to the police.”⁹¹

Despite these reassurances of willingness to collaborate with security sector actors, participants observed that willingness to work with security services are not enough; there are important communication challenges to address to make collaboration possible and effective. As they noted, some communities face technical challenges with communication due to the very weak, if not absent, cell phone networks or signals in their areas. Our research team frequently found that cell phone signals from Burkina Faso took over our phones when attempting to make calls from border communities.⁹² Statements below provide excerpts of how participants articulated their frustrations with the limited or total absence of cell phone service coverage in their areas. One participant commented: “Even the communication network in this community is bad; by the time we even see these bad people and want to call the police, they might have committed their crimes.”⁹³ Others indicated that due to the “poor network connection . . . one can hardly report a suspected case of violence in the community”⁹⁴ and “community members cannot contact security agencies immediately.”⁹⁵ Discussing their communication challenges, members of a focus group requested the provision of “stable network connection to help in effective and rapid communication between frontier communities and security services.”⁹⁶

Discussion of Findings

VETs are unconventional armies fighting unconventionally. Since the collapse of the ISIS-conceived caliphate, VETs have understood that while conquering and retaining territorial spaces is a daunting proposition, it is much easier to win and retain virtual territories in people’s minds and imaginations by projecting an aura of power, brutality, and invincibility. Keeping a ubiquitous presence in the public view by carrying out daring and gory acts of violence, wherever and whenever they can, is a much more effective way to imprint their presence, relevance, and claim to legitimacy, ensuring their physical and ideological survival. Their non-discrimination between combatants and non-combatants is a deliberate communication strategy, designed to instill the highest levels of fear and panic with wide, lasting psychological effects on governments and communities within their sight of conquest. The use of unconventional routes and modes of travel heightens anxieties about where and when they will strike, keeping conventional armies guessing their next moves and targets. They also thrive on propaganda and sensational news that project their ability to strike high-profile targets in different locations. This serves to demonstrate the extent of their territorial spheres of operations and influence. In this way, they—not the state armies—dictate the nature, space, and pace of war.

Their investment in publicity stunts highlighting the goriest details of their ac-

tions are designed to communicate their readiness and ruthlessness in dealing with those who dare to challenge them. Their mastery of both traditional and newer communication media outlets is critical to sustaining their mission. The choice of widespread low-tech but high-impact communication channels, such as social media and rapidly shareable audiovisuals clips, ensure they create and retain an image of their omnipresence and power among their target populations. Causing and perpetuating fear and panic are tools to portray their ubiquity and invincibility. They also distract and pressure security actors to be on constant alert for an enemy whose frontlines and attack targets are unknown. In their game plan, any news that distracts and diverts attention from their planned operations are important instruments of warfare. Moreover, winning and retaining hearts and minds sympathetic to their cause is part of their strategy to exploit all means of communication to bring their messages directly into the homes of people. This also aids their recruitment of fighters. Consequently, they find success when traditional such as media such as newspapers, television, and radio and social media platforms spread such images through repeat broadcasting and peer-to-peer sharing across multiple portals.

In this theater of warfare, conventional military strategies and tactics alone cannot effectively counter the unconventional strategies of VETs. In part, the military approach “has proved insufficient [because] groups act as insurgents, blending in with local communities and rendering useless conventional military responses.”⁹⁷ Consequently, non-kinetic approaches are taking precedence over military ones, as the “role of non-military means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and in many cases. . . have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness.”⁹⁸ Particularly, in the fight against VETs, different, whole-community approaches are needed, from intelligence gathering to effective leadership of community-level actors in preempting, preventing, protecting against, and mitigating the impact of VET attacks. This requires “good collaboration between the security agencies and all stakeholders to help protect our borders. The security agencies alone cannot do it without support from civilians, and civilians cannot also do it without the security agencies.”⁹⁹ This brings into play the critical role of frontier communities, as both frontline victims and responders to VET attacks.

Although no attacks have yet happened on their side of the frontier, communities living on Ghana’s frontiers with Burkina Faso are keenly aware of the potential for VET attacks. However, participants in this study experienced different levels of violent conflicts in general, and none had directly experienced any VET attacks. Several participants shared the view that “violent conflict has never affected my life directly, or my family.”¹⁰⁰ Others had only felt indirect effects due to the fears and restrictions on their movement and trade, which VET attacks in other countries had generated. Participants with vicarious experiences of VET attacks cited how it affected their economic livelihoods and

income security by their curtailing access to markets, farms they had in Burkina Faso, or fertilizer. Without direct experience, there is no urgency to mobilize and engage in actions to protect their communities. Much of their preoccupation was confined to hopes and prayers that VETs do not come to their communities.

The hopes and prayers of participants hang on a thin thread of faith, regarding the capacity of the security forces to keep VETs out of the country. This is because the deterrence and response capabilities of Ghana's security sector have remained untested, as the country has not yet had to repel any VET attacks. Even then, respondents in this study expressed different levels of confidence in the ability of security services to protect and defend the country against VETs. While they acknowledged the technical and professional preparedness of the military, they hesitated to equate that to moral competence. They cited pervasive corruption, deficient patriotism, and laziness as the basis of the high levels of social distrust in security sector actors' altruistic willingness to protect citizens from VET attacks. Indeed, some respondents had more trust in their local leaders and indigenous security systems to protect them rather than the state security services. One participant summed up the sense of helplessness in the event of a VET attack: "What else can I do apart from praying, and committing myself and community members into the hands of our creator? We do not have the capacity to do anything."¹⁰¹

Beyond hopes and prayers, participants in the study understood that they have roles as frontline actors against the incursions of trans-frontier VET groups. They realized that their active engagement in monitoring and reporting movements on VET activities is critical to the early response initiatives of security sector actors. However, as the findings in this study highlight, there is a disconnect between GoG security actors, civic engagement agencies, and the frontline communities whose active participation in CPVET is critical to averting VET attacks in Ghana. The effort of the GoG to enlist community engagement through the *See Something, Say Something* campaign has not triggered the needed enthusiasm and engagement of frontier communities in anti-VET initiatives. Community members are either unaware of the campaign, or do not see how their participation directly concerns and affects them. Therefore, they go about their business of earning a living from their farms, trade, transport, and fishing businesses, paying no attention to the campaign.

The non-engagement of communities highlights an often-overlooked dimension in the discourse on citizen engagement in CPVET: the dissonance between the interests and objectives of the government's CPVET engagement strategies, and those of communities living on the frontlines of VET activity. State-led citizen engagement initiatives often ignore the fact that their purposes and desired

outcomes may be at odds with the enlightened self-interest actions of community-level actors. The *See Something, Say Something* campaign requests community members to look out for and report suspicious activities, without considering the economic security needs and costs that community members stand to incur through engagement. Transborder transport services providers, for instance, live off the trafficking of goods and persons across borders, irrespective of who the clients are. Traders, hunters, herders, and market women encounter, or even do business with, strangers when they travel; they see customers and business partners in the people they meet. Therefore, they have no reason to question their identities and motives. Study participants have suggested that even state-paid security actors have economic interests in the rent they extract from persons crossing the frontiers for business, both licit and illicit. State-led anti-VET policies and programs do not account for the realities of these webs of interests.

The foregoing suggests that to trigger citizens' engagement in anti-VET activities in frontier communities, it is not enough to simply project information into the public space, as the *See Something, Say Something* campaign has done. Fighting and winning the war against VETs cannot be left to a wish and a prayer while exhorting citizens to report what they see. More ingenious strategies to counter dis/misinformation are needed. It is essential, therefore, that policy-makers and implementors first understand the dynamics of the political economy that govern relationships between state and non-state actors around the frontiers, comprehend the specific interests and needs of the different economic groups living by and operating across the borders, and integrate them into the design of the interventions to allow community members to see that the interventions reflect their interests, even feeling motivated to engage. Next, policy and program communicators must carefully identify information outlets, targeting different population segments with information that reflects their cognitive and affective experiences, speaks to their interests, and jolts their motivation to act to preempt, protect against, prevent, or respond to the imminent risks of VET attacks.

Otherwise, the exhortation—saying something when they see something—will not translate into effective community engagement against VET.

Doubtlessly, frontier communities are important strategic partners in the collection and usage of intelligence on VET movements and activities. Failure to effectively mobilize and engage them constitutes an important missing piece of a successful war plan. Mobilizing communities for engagement in CPVET activities, however, goes beyond the dissemination of information on VETs. People do not engage in actions because of what they hear. To evoke active engagement in CPVET initiatives, the mobilization effort must meet certain minimum

communication and organizational criteria that we discuss below.

Need to Recalibrate the Link between Poverty, Security, and the Youth

The link between poverty, youth, unemployment, and violent extremism with its attendant security challenges, has triggered multiple kinetic and non-kinetic responses from both national governments and international actors, such as the United Nations and regional intergovernmental agencies. The non-kinetic interventions are founded on the argument that “young people [need] jobs, opportunities, and education to expand their horizons” to prevent the rise of violent extremist ideologies among the youth.¹⁰² This is in spite of the dearth of evidence that young people in frontier communities are poorer, and therefore more likely to join VETs than their counterparts further inland. On the contrary, while young people in frontier communities in northern Ghana have year-round income-earning opportunities through trade, cross-border transport, and other services, their counterparts in the hinterlands must contend with the limited off-farm income generation opportunities.

Box 4

-Voices of Youth in VET Territories: - A Case of State-Community Priority Disconnects

“You’ve asked me many questions about violent extremists, but nothing was asked about unemployment. If the project can have some ways in which unemployment rate can reduce, it will be good.”¹⁰³

“We need an income generating business for the youths and employment.”¹⁰⁴ Creating opportunities for “employment for the unemployed youths, and skill acquisition training for them, would go a long way in promoting the peace in the community.”¹⁰⁵

“Lack of something to do; when youths do not go to school, do not have any skill, they can easily be deceived to joining Boko Haram, drug abuse and robbery—when they are working, they will not have time to go and plant a bomb anywhere.”¹⁰⁶

Second, the focus on the connection between violent extremism and youth unemployment masks the wider challenges of the continent’s youth bulge. As this study’s findings suggest, the link between youth unemployment and radicalization, or potential recruitment into VEGs, is not a settled question. Instead, there are multiple nuances that security actors must factor into their policies and

policies and programs aimed at combatting youth unemployment and radicalization. Essentially, the peace and security risk of youth unemployment is not about droves of young people seeking to join VEGs. Indeed, there is scant evidence that youth are eager and willing to join VEGs to escape poverty. On the contrary, plentiful evidence suggests that youth of the continent tiptoe around VEGs to cross VET terrain in the deserts on their migratory trails to escape poverty.¹⁰⁷ Many more, trapped in inland communities, often in zones where VET activities are present, are seeking ways to eke out a living without joining VETs.

Similarly, the contention that poverty is, in and of itself, a driver for the recruitment of locals into VET groups requires further scrutiny. As field studies from other settings have shown, poor people seldom have the time, energy, resources, and motivation to engage in acts of violence; they just want to be left in peace to manage their poverty. As one participant in a recent study in Niger observed, “A hungry person has no energy to fight or engage in futile arguments.”¹⁰⁸

Fieldwork and project evaluations in Borno and Yobe States in Nigeria, both battling Boko Hara and other VEGs, underscore that rather than hiring themselves out to VEGs for a living, young people in these VET theaters of operation are seeking peaceful ventures to earn an income, as exemplified in Box 4.¹⁰⁹ They do not pick up cudgels, bows, and arrows to fight because of a desire to escape poverty. Instead, the risk of youth engaging in violence lies in their lack of opportunities and freedom they have to earn their bread. Young, poor people are pushed to violence when the state squeezes them out of ways to make a living, taking their bread out of their mouths. In Liberia, for instance, the “youth have scant professional training or employable skills for the job market, but they do have extensive military experience and skills with weapons of war [and constitute] a pool of war-ready idle young people who can be rapidly mobilized.”¹¹⁰ However, instead of working for VEGs, many of the unemployed youth resort to providing motorcycle taxi services—the only economic space that enables them to earn a living. They have only resorted to violence when the state tried to push them out of that space because their activities were considered a nuisance to public safety and order.

The youth mobilizing to defend their economic interests should not be misconstrued as having a propensity to violence, or susceptibility to recruitment into violent extremism. As Olawale Ismail cautions, while it is possible to exploit local grievances and networks to advance VET activities, local grievances and citizen mobilization for political engagement should not be mischaracterized as acts of extremism, or exposure to recruitment into extremist and terrorist groups.¹¹¹ Instead, greater attention should be paid to unravel the the structural and systemic causes of youth poverty that predispose them to violence to protect their economic turf.

Anti-VET Campaigns Must Move Beyond Creating Awareness to Invoking Action

Ghana has adopted a whole-community CPVET strategy. The kinetic prong has two parts: the internal and the external. The internal approach depends on internal security measures involving the mobilization and deployment of security actors in strategic locations close to, or along, borders. The external strategy seeks to mobilize neighboring countries under the Accra Initiative to create a security ringfence to prevent the southward drift of VETs.

The non-kinetic approach revolves around the *See Something, Say Something* campaign, which aims to mobilize broader citizen engagement in preventing, preempting, responding to, and mitigating the impact of potential VET attacks. By raising citizens' awareness of the reality of VETs, the campaign hopes to elicit their participation in intelligence gathering and transmission, in hopes of aiding the response of security actors in tracking VET movement and activities in the country. Frontier communities in the transition zones from neighboring countries are critically important strategic partners in the collection and transmission of intelligence on VET movement and activities. However, the current set of interventions has not fully developed this aspect.

A critical missing link in anti-VET education is how to move people beyond awareness to action. Effective mobilization and engagement of citizens, especially those in outlier frontier areas, as active agents of CPVET engagements goes beyond the dissemination of information, or even the provision of technical expertise and capacities. A crucial but neglected piece in the information-action chain is that information by itself is not knowledge; it becomes knowledge only when it leads to changes in perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, practices, values, etc. Hence, it is only when information becomes knowledge that it can trigger and sustain action. To be useful with essential knowledge that stimulates new insights and motivates people to take action, the substance (nature, quantum, source, and relevance) and the quality (accuracy, completeness, and timeliness) of the information must correspond to and reinforce the lived experiences of recipients. This demands the careful customization of campaign messages to target different audiences with tailored, specific calls to action.

Contrary to this, the *See Something, Say Something* campaign has emitted a blanket message to all citizens, irrespective of their locations of residence and stations of life, under the assumption that all citizens would automatically spring into action—simply because they have heard of VET, including its southward march from the Sahel (or other places) toward their communities. This assumption goes against the fact that increased citizens' awareness of any issue does not automatically generate action to prevent or support a cause. People do not act because of what they hear. To prompt action, information must respond to their needs and have transactional value. What people hear must translate into concern about how the presented issues impact them or their groups. But it is not enough to feel concerned; the audience must feel currently or potentially affected by what they have heard to

of VET, including its southward march from the Sahel (or other places) toward their communities. This assumption goes against the fact that increased citizens' awareness of any issue does not automatically generate action to prevent or support a cause. People do not act because of what they hear. To prompt action, information must respond to their needs and have transactional value. What people hear must translate into concern about how the presented issues impact them or their groups. But it is not enough to *feel concerned*; the audience must feel currently or potentially *affected* by what they have heard to want to take action, in order to support or counter the anticipated acts or events.

In other words, citizens only mobilize and engage in actions against or in support of a cause when they feel directly or indirectly affected, now or in the future. What they hear must trigger affective reactions to motivate and energize them into self-organization and action.¹¹² Unless citizens in the border communities can see how VET activities have affected their lives and livelihoods, or potentially can, whether directly or indirectly, they are not likely to be driven to organize and engage in actions that prevent or avert the entry and operations of VET activists in their communities.

Consequently, to be effective in triggering citizens' mobilization and engagement, CPVET messaging must go beyond the cognitive and enter the affective realm. Beyond creating awareness, the messages must make citizens feel sufficiently concerned about the actual or potential impact of VET in their communities for them to contemplate action. The *See Something, Say Something* campaign fails in this capacity because it lacks specificity in its messaging, targeting, and emotive force. It does not clearly communicate what signs of VET activities citizens should look out for; is unspecific on how, where, and why certain categories of citizens need to be particularly vigilant; and does not make a compelling case for why citizens or communities must feel affected enough to want to look out for, and report signs, of VETs. It also lacks specificity on the agential role of community members (i.e., what responsibilities they have and how to act on that responsibility).

The weak links in that conceptualization are the assumption of homogeneity in the composition of citizens; their ability to understand the anti-VET broadcast message in the same way; their perception of the need to act because they feel concerned or affected; and their ability and willingness to act. In its current form, the *See Something, Say Something* campaign treats all communities (rural or urban, young, or old, frontier or interior, different trades, etc.) not only as passive consumers of information from the media, but also as reactive, information-harvesting tools, who will merely collect and pass on information to security agencies about VET movements in their communities. They are not seen as real or potentially proactive agents, owners, and managers of CPVET engagement processes. In this conceptualization of the anti-VET citizen, power rests in security service agencies (military, police, immigration, customs, etc.), not in the communities' ability to initiate and carry out CPVET actions. The campaign message

is, accordingly, perceived “as a hypodermic needle or a magic bullet that [would trigger] direct, immediate, and powerful effects on people’s behavior.”

Contrary to this homogenized view of society, perceptions of VET attacks in urban and rural areas are different. Even within the same communities, “various sub-groups make up the community. Each sub-group has its way of perceiving a problem and its solution, and its way of taking actions.” Hence, “addressing a general audience, such as ‘the community’ or ‘the farmers,’ does not really help involve people in communication.”¹¹⁴

Anti-VET Efforts Must Overcome the Paradox of Plenty and the Information Curse

Information is an indispensable weapon of any army. Nonetheless, the abundance of information from multiple platforms, thanks to the advancement in information and communication technologies, does not necessarily translate into effective communication and education of citizens in the fight against VET. Access to complete, accurate, timely, and actionable information from trustworthy sources is crucial to effective anti-VET activism. Above all, hearing is not knowing, as the excerpt of a conversation with an Uber driver in Accra, captured in the Appendix, indicates. This conversation underscores the fact that blanket broadcasting of anti-VET information does not guarantee consistent comprehension of the messages, nor of the actions required from frontline actors, such as public transport service providers. Aside from differences in understanding the *See Something, Say Something* campaign, there is increasing skepticism of the traditional and newer information and communication platforms, including social media. Intentional and unintentional disinformation, misinformation, information starvation, and information voids, among other issues, have bred cynicism among citizens on what they see or hear. Hence, citizens are generally hesitant to act on unsolicited information from traditional and social media outlets.

Need to Address the Crisis of Credibility of VET Information Sources

The increasing weaponization of traditional media spaces for partisan politics has created credibility challenges for traditional news outlets in Ghana. There is considerable perception of partisanship and bias of certain media houses in Ghana, to toe predictable lines of reportage in pursuit of their agendas of shaping opinions and policies. Specifically, there is a perception that the Ghanaian media has often used “fabricated content and false headline without connection to content” to pander to the political interests of their audiences.¹¹⁵ Thus, traditional print and electronic media (newspapers, radio stations, television stations, etc.) are prone to accusations of spreading biased news. Such perceptions serve as perfect excuses for people to label and discard any information discordant to their political views, especially if originating from sources they already do not trust.

Social media is a powerful tool for liberalizing access to information, enabling people

in otherwise unreachable enclaves to share information where technology permits. Participants in this research noted that social media was an alternate source of information on VET for them, even though most participants are in a predominantly rural research area, meaning they have limited access to internet services and, by extension, to social media platforms. Nonetheless, participants indicated that they obtained information on VET on social media outlets, ranging from 31.5 percent for WhatsApp, 20.2 percent for Facebook, 10.5 percent for TikTok, and less than 10 percent for Instagram and Twitter. While the scale of use of these outlets in the study area is currently low, the availability of these services has enabled residents of the research area, who have limited access to traditional news outlets, to receive information on VET activities in other countries.

Social media, however, comes with its own crisis of confidence in the information it delivers on VET. As a highly contested public space, social media's decentralized, unregulated, and uncensored content production, coupled with its capacity for very wide and instantaneous dissemination, makes it an increasingly uncontrollable channel for dis/misinformation constructed and customized to mislead, misguide, and create fear and panic. Viral, sensational posts detract the attention of security services from intended actions using different media outlets.¹¹⁶ It has been used for deepfakes and dis/misinformation meant to perpetuate or escalate violent conflicts.¹¹⁷

The Institute for Peace and Development had reason to draw attention to how the public can be unwilling accomplices of the propaganda machinery of violent extremists. A prime example is when it warned against the sharing of heavily doctored video, audio, and text messages with voiceover translations in major local languages. Widely distributed WhatsApp messages passed off VET activities in other continents as recent happenings in the backyards of Ghanaian communities, which generated considerable panic and fear in those localities; this caused the rapid mobilization of security actors to attend to a nonexistent threat.¹¹⁸

However, the reluctance of media platforms to censure dis/misinformation through their channels compounds the challenge of dealing with dis/misinformation as a weapon of VET.¹¹⁹ It encourages the use of ambiguous warfare techniques that assume greater complexity, as VET groups leverage the increasing integration and ubiquity of traditional and social media platforms to push their agendas of fearmongering and distracting security actors. Further, it aids the use of dis/misinformation as a powerful tool for radicalization, especially in areas with low levels of information literacy, where distilling facts from fiction and misrepresentation can be a challenge.¹²⁰

The emergence and growth of artificial intelligence (AI) to create and disseminate information to “generate superficially perfect, yet wholly invented media content” (such as text, audio, still images, and videos) compound the increasing distrust of the media, both traditional and social, as sources of believable and actionable information.¹²¹ In particular, the emerging use of deepfake images, audios, and videos in the news foretells a more disruptive information space for the management of conflicts and VET threats. Of particular

concern is that AI research, deployment, and use are increasingly in private hands; this means control over its development and use is drifting beyond the reach of regulatory authorities. Indeed, the increasing potency of deepfake technologies makes social media a perfect tool for VETs seeking to shape favorable opinions of themselves, or distract attention from their activities. This intensifies a crisis of confidence in information on social media channels. Under the circumstances, no one knows what source of news and information to believe anymore.

It is clear, therefore, that the challenge with creating public awareness for citizens' engagement in anti-VET actions is not how much information is provided, but the legitimacy and credibility of the source of information. Ghana's See Something, Say Something campaign has been conducted largely through media outlets: television, radio, and social media. However, media outlets are not agenda- and value-neutral spaces. Corporate philosophies and mandates, editorial preferences, and staffing orientations influence what issues they focus on, how they frame and present them, and what audiences they target. Accordingly, the media plays a critical role in shaping opinions, perceptions, and agendas in ways that direct people in "not only. . . what to think about, but also how to think about it."¹²² As Bernard C. Cohen notes: "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."¹²³ The role of the media in framing issues in the public space is particularly worrisome in Ghana, where "media houses have been politicized and [are often] irresponsible in their reportage."¹²⁴ News and discussions quickly take on political twists in a game of equalization, where agents of political parties seek every opportunity to claim credit, or cast blame, on their opponents.

Journalistic Professionalism and the Crisis of Confidence in News

While fake news undermines the accuracy and credibility of information on VETs, other challenges to information credibility and acceptance are the low professional standards for journalists, including the ineffectiveness of the regulatory framework to keep journalists accountable. Journalism in Ghana is largely an open-access profession, given the absence of strict rules on who is a journalist. Not only are entry requirements in the profession very low,¹²⁵ journalists tend to display a level of professionalism on air that belittles and reduces issues to entertain their audiences, instead of educating them. Additionally, the intense competition for audiences allows media presenters to pick and present VET stories and events in languages, styles, and contexts that entertain, not educate, their audiences. This has created an ungoverned framing of VET issues, with each media house proceeding with what it deems best. As one veteran broadcaster noted, the situation is so bad that "some radio presenters make jokes and trivialize serious" events when discussing issues related to the nation's peace and security.¹²⁶

The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) does not seem to have the legal teeth to enforce its code of ethics and professional standards. It is unable to sanction errant members through suspension or the withdrawal of certificates, as other professional organizations

do. Consequently, the media houses and regulators are ill-equipped to deal with the spread of fake news because they do not have the technical know-how, the will, or the resources “to combat the menace of fake news.”¹²⁷

The lack of serious regulatory frameworks and professionalism in the media space provides an unguarded platform for anyone with access to a camera, a microphone in a radio studio, a newspaper, or access to an online news portal such as Ghanaweb.com to self-describe as a journalist. It has also led to the proliferation of a breed of all-knowing journalists and hosts of radio and television programs who give authoritative views on VET and security subjects they know little about. In tandem, intense competition between media houses for expert opinions on conflicts, peace, and security issues has generated a slew of self-proclaimed security experts whom, radio and television stations regularly call upon to comment on news items relating to the field. Many of these experts offer opinions that are not grounded in any researched evidence, merely repackaging, and presenting popular views that only deepen fear and panic. The instantaneous interconnectivity between radio, television, social media, and print or online news outlets amplifies the voices of such experts, making it difficult for security agencies to fact-check their views before they are broadcast.

Underexplored Alternate IEC Channels

Outside the media, religious leaders and occasions of worship were important sources of CPVET education in the research areas. However, despite its intent, the national CPVET strategy have harnessed these platforms poorly. There was no formal targeting and training of religious leaders on the content of CPVET messaging. There was also no intentional recruitment and use of sacred spaces (churches and mosques) as channels of CPVET education. Religious leaders provided what information they could without the benefit of talking points that ensured consistent messaging across churches and mosques. Consequently, CPVET education through churches and mosques constituted unmoderated sources of information on VET.

Need for Caution in Proving a Negative

The apparent ability of VETs to strike where they choose has created a perception of their invincibility. In turn, this has generated an industry of disinformation and misinformation of a different kind—gaslighting academic and media analyses that seek to explain why some countries have not witnessed attacks from VETs. For instance, Ghana’s vulnerability to attacks by VETs cannot be overstated, given its literal enclosure by countries that have suffered VET attacks, some in communities sharing frontiers with Ghana. Ghana’s kinetic approaches alone cannot explain why the country has escaped attacks. As noted in the findings, respondents in this study cast doubts on the ability of the security actors to keep them safe from VET attacks. At least 79.4 percent of survey respondents in this study said they were worried that persons intending to cause violent acts may already be present in Ghana. 72.9 percent said they were concerned VETs are already living in or close to their communities. Their fears align with views from other studies that suggest that VETs may

may already be present in Ghana. 72.9 percent said they were concerned VETs are already living in or close to their communities. Their fears align with views from other studies that suggest that VETs may already have penetrated Ghana, and are using it as a base for their operations.

To prove the negative, several theories have been proffered to explain the absence of VET attacks on Ghana. In recent times, some analysts have argued that VETs have refrained from attacking Ghana because (1) Ghana is a safe haven into which they retreat for safety and protection after attacking neighboring countries; (2) Ghana is a safe source or corridor to trade or transport arms to supply VETOs operating in neighboring countries; and (3) Ghana is a destination market for war booty, especially cattle, that VETs rustle or plunder from the communities in the Sahel that they attack.¹²⁸ Flore Berger joins the chorus of analysts who portray Ghana as a preserved safe haven and market for VETs, linking increased incidents in cattle rustling in Mali and Niger to increased violence in Sahelian countries, as well as to the movement of cattle into coastal markets across West Africa, including Ghana.¹²⁹ The argument is that Ghana provides a safe market for the war booty of the VETs, and therefore is spared any destabilizing attacks.

It is unclear how Berger's map of the illicit trade in rustled cattle differs from the trade and transhumance routes that predated the advent of VETs in the Sahel. Ghana has always been a destination market for cattle and other livestock from its neighbors to the north; thus, the trade in cattle and other ruminants between Ghana and its Sahelian neighbors has increased historically. Criminal gangs looting and selling cattle in Ghanaian markets did not spur the expansion in Ghana's cattle movement and trade. There have been spikes in the influx of cattle from the Sahelian countries into Ghana before the advent of VET activism in the subregion. Steve Tonah has documented the increased southward movement of cattle from the Sahel into coastal countries since the 1970s, after the successful control of tsetse flies and improved availability of veterinary services.¹³⁰ Indeed, these inflows of cattle were so large and persistent that various governments in Ghana have since had to organize militarized operations to drive out large herds of cattle that had "invaded" parts of the country. Such large movements of cattle into Ghana continued into the 1990s. For instance, total live cattle imports into Ghana jumped from 16,105 in 1996 to 71,377 in 1998—a 343.2 percent increase across two years.¹³¹

Ghana has always been a destination market for cattle import from the Sahelian countries, providing an estimated market share of up to 40 percent of Burkina Faso's cattle export destination.¹³² The total cattle import from Burkina Faso and, to a lesser extent, Niger rose from 7,192 in 1993 to 47,176 in 1994 before slightly declining to 35,946 by 1998.¹³³ Recognizing this import market, in 2003, the government of Burkina Faso spent 92 million francs from a Canadian government grant to build a cattle market; one that aimed to transition 3,000 cattle and other ruminants daily into Ghana. At the opening of the market, government representatives from both Burkina Faso and Ghana emphasized the need to fully operationalize the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocols

for the free movement of people and goods, because “we are one people separated by an artificial boundary.”

The association of these phenomena with potential VET attacks requires further and better evidence to convince citizens in frontier communities, who have lived through decades of transborder cattle rustling and trade. Cattle rustling, for instance, has existed for a long time, and its weaponization has followed the trajectory of the development and availability of weapons of war or protection.¹³⁵ Such communities have witnessed how rudimentary guns replaced cudgels, bows, and arrows, just as newer, more potent weaponry is now edging out their ancestral cousins. Just as changes in technology affect the scale and dynamics of any form of engagement, it should be expected that access to more sophisticated weapons will increase the nature and scale of violence, including criminal violence that extends to armed robbery and cattle rustling. Cattle rustlers' use of more complex weapons therefore does not directly connote increased risks of VET attacks. Attributing increases in cattle trade or incidents of violence to VETs, without robust empirical evidence, risks raising red herrings whose only effect is to exacerbate fears of VET attacks and detract the attention of security sector actors from pursuing more grounded leads to prevent attacks.

VETs often adopt parasitic behaviors in capturing and utilizing local opportunities to further their agenda. VETs rustling and selling cattle is a reality in other countries. However, unless alternate evidence can be adduced to substantiate the reports, it is inconceivable that VETs can systematically traffic large herds of cattle through Ghana's borders, deep into the interior of the country, without any detection and response from the security actors, given Ghana's nervousness about VET attacks on its soil. Beyond speculation, there is no empirical evidence of (1) the actual presence of VETs and their use of Ghana as a safe haven from the Sahel; (2) the volumes and value of arms that VETs in the Sahel obtain from and through Ghana; and (3) the value of the trade-in war booty that VETs can gain in Ghana. There are neither reported cases of arrests nor evidence of military activation to counter VET incursions into Ghana, or abnormal spikes in cattle trade beyond known cycles. On the contrary, large episodic movements of cattle into Ghana are not new to frontier communities, and recently observed spikes in cattle markets may just be one such periodic incident.

In contrast to the safe haven theory, it is trite knowledge that VETs court and thrive on visibility, publicity, and symbolic victories. Ghana is “globally renowned as an oasis of peace and security.”¹³⁶ It has not had a major civil war. It has also escaped attacks from VETs. The country has significant foreign interests in different economic sectors, especially in oil and mining. Any successful attack on Ghana, however small, would generate considerable visibility and publicity for VETs, especially as a symbolic victory completing the loop of conquest in the Sahel to claim an extension of their spheres of operations across a continuous stretch of coastal countries in West Africa. There is currently no solid evidence on why VETOs would preserve Ghana as a purported security, political, and economic safe haven over the symbolic triumph that they would get from a successful

attack on the country. Indeed, the available data suggest there is no lack of VETs trying to target Ghana. In 2021, the West Africa Centre for Counter-Extremism reported that “there is already significant intelligence revealing details of a reconnaissance by extremists to attack Ghana [and] it is now only a matter of time before extremist violence extends into Ghana.”¹³⁷

Additionally, reports of local radicalization and recruitment efforts in some communities in Ghana contradicts the desires of VETs to create a safe haven. Hence, in the absence of robust empirical evidence to ground the assertions that Ghana is a protected safe haven, the speculative assertions about VET presence and operations in Ghana not only feed into the fearmongering propaganda machinery of VETs, but also create anxieties about the inadequacies of the kinetic approaches to CPVET and detracting the attention of appropriate agencies from promoting effective CPVET initiatives. In sum, while VET activities may have created environments enabling increases in the number, frequency, and level of violence in crimes, there is a need for caution in estimating increased risks of VET activities in Ghana because of the perceived incidence of opportunistic criminality. Ungrounded extrapolations of realities from different contexts to explain the negative not only pose a risk to the effective mobilization of communities for CPVET, but also undermine and detract attention from fully appreciating the existence and operation of local capacities that preempt, prevent, and protect vulnerable communities from VET attacks. It weakens the cardinal nodes in the information-to-action model, because getting people to engage in anti-VET action is less likely when the information provided does not match the lived experiences of the audience.

Figure 4
The Unmapped and Unguarded Trade Routes



A Burkinabè trader waiting to cross the Black Volta at Dabagteng with goods purchased from Ghana during fieldwork.

Source: This Study, Dabagteng, 12 Nov 2022

Recentering Political Economy Considerations in CPVET

The discussion of cross-border trade, whether in cattle or other goods, calls into question the extent to which CPVET intervention policies, activity planning, and management take the realities and interests at play in local political economies into account. Citizens along frontier communities depend on symbiotic relationships with different categories of actors, within and across borders, to sustain their livelihood. The ability to freely cross boundaries to farm, hunt, or access each other's markets are critical pieces of their livelihood systems. Hence, from a political economy perspective, it is not enough to ask frontier communities to engage in anti-VET activities without considering how that engagement serves or constrains their economic and livelihood interests. In particular, it is naïve to expect communities to participate in actions that threaten their economic interests, be they legitimate or illicit,¹³⁹ without providing an alternate, positive incentive to cancel the perceived loss of income or livelihood opportunities.

To incorporate the interests of frontier communities in CPVET strategies, it is essential to rethink the concept of security and define it more inclusively, away from the current conceptions that focus on the security of the state rather than the security of the people. In other words, discussion of border security (state-centered) must give way to focus on security in border regions (people-centered). Inclusivity also means exploring all thematic dimensions of security. Ordinary citizens do not define their security in only physical terms; their concept of security extends to human and livelihood securities that include food, shelter, income, health, and other forms of social security systems, such as the ability to maintain and benefit from families, friendships, businesses, and other relationships within and across national boundaries.

Findings in this research have underscored how the emphasis on state security to the exclusion of food, income, human, and livelihood securities can cloud their perceptions of the risks of VET attacks. Farmers worried about their household food security and ability to cross into Burkina Faso "because most of our farms are in Burkina Faso."¹⁴⁰ The security concerns of women traders were not about the security of national frontiers; they were preoccupied with household food and income security. As one of them observed, "women in the community who used to go across to trade had to stop because some of these countries had closed their borders."¹⁴¹ Similarly, transborder hunters were preoccupied with their loss of income from hunting because of the curtailment of their hunting ranges.¹⁴² The necessities of survival in the multi-livelihood systems (farmers, herders,

traders, state employees, etc.) along frontier communities generate and sustain a web of necessary, mutually beneficial relationships between different stakeholders that extend in different directions, align in constantly changing ways, and create multiple official and unofficial spheres of influence. Hence, for communities living along frontiers, an expansive and more inclusive perception of the security challenges are essential to crafting mutually beneficial interventions that secure the livelihoods (and participation in CPVET) of a multiplicity of actors, while preventing the entry of VETs.

In sum, unless frontier communities see their interests embedded in state-led CPVET initiatives, they are not likely to engage in anti-VET activities. Such interests need not be material in form. They can be as intangible as the identification, recognition, and incorporation of different associations into the local security architecture, allowing trade groups and communities to see value in setting up and running vigilance systems to provide complementary policing services that protect their interests.

Community interests could also be as intangible as observed attitudinal changes of security actors to foster trust and collaboration through eliminating situations where citizens “are afraid of the security because they easily arrest us for things that we are even innocent of.” Others want witness and whistleblower protection guarantees to prevent citizens, who report observed infractions or untoward behaviors to the security agencies, from being called “in front of the person [reported] and [making] them know you reported him.” Instead, “they should safeguard the people that report cases.”¹⁴⁵

Recognizing and Harvesting Positive Deviance in CPVET

Gaslighting analyses and reportage undermine the development of local capacities for CPVET because they question the presence and ability of local non-military systems to thwart the advance of VETs. Similar to the apocalyptic predictions predicated on Africa's helplessness and hopelessness in the face of global threats such as HIV/AIDS, the Ebola virus, COVID-19, and now VET, such theories reinforce the stereotyped incapacity of Africa to avert catastrophic events. When the prediction predicated on Africa's helplessness and hopelessness in the face of global threats such as HIV/AIDS, the Ebola virus, COVID-19, and now VET, such theories reinforce the stereotyped incapacity of Africa to avert catastrophic events. When the predictions of doom fail to materialize, new theories emerge, citing internal systems' weaknesses, to prove the negative. For instance, under-reporting has been blamed for the lower-than-predicted death rates for HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, often to the exclusion of any other sociodemographic factors that could have contributed to the resilience of populations to such diseases.

With respect to VET, a detrimental effect of this kind of informational gaslighting is that it diverts the attention of researchers and policymakers from what Ghana could be doing right to prevent VET attacks. For instance, it deflects attention from the existence of local systems of response and resilience against VETs, as the surveillance of citizens to avert attacks in Ghana have evidenced. On May 12, 2019, terrorists attacked worshippers at a

attacks in Ghana have evidenced. On May 12, 2019, terrorists attacked worshippers at a Catholic church in Dablo, Burkina Faso, killing six people. Approximately three weeks later, on June 6, 2019, a replicated incident in a Catholic church in Hamile, on the border with Burkina Faso, was averted when the vigilance of churchgoers led to the arrest of a Burkinabè national with a loaded gun among the congregation. Similarly, residents of Zabzugu apprehended and handed over to the security agencies, on their own initiative, six “unknown persons [with suspicious characters who could not] speak any of the local languages in the area.”¹⁴⁸

The greatest danger in misattributing why Ghana has escaped VET attacks is that it creates the perception that Ghana must be doing something wrong (i.e., abetting the VET activity) to avert attacks on its soil. In other words, Ghana has managed to stay safe from VET attacks because its authorities have secretly bartered its freedom from VET attacks by hosting, protecting, and even promoting VET activities within its territories. Not only is Ghana’s territory a safe haven for VETOs, the country is providing them undisturbed access to Ghanaian markets to sell their looted goods to generate money to fund their activities, such as sourcing and transporting arms and ammunition through its territory. This effectively creates the impression that the GoG is being hypocritical, at best, in its championing of the Accra Initiative and in its critique of Burkina Faso for harboring Wagner mercenaries.¹⁴⁹ It also posits that Ghana’s VET prevention and security architecture is dysfunctional and irrelevant, or a mere charade since it has failed to detect, preempt, prevent, or respond to VET presence and operation in the country.

Critically, the safe haven and safe markets theories of why VETs have not attacked Ghana shift the attention of researchers, policymakers, and security actors from what Ghana might be doing right to prevent and preempt attacks on its soil. Hence, there is little consideration of how existing systems of resilience and social cohesion may have contributed to keeping VETs from operating in the country. Consequently, much less attention is given to the actual or potential ability of communities to reactivate community-based local and indigenous kinetic and non-kinetic structures of security and resilience to preempt VET attacks. It distracts researchers from exploring what alternative factors, structures, and systems outside the state-led kinetic approaches may have contributed to preempting, preventing, and protecting citizens from VET attacks. What roles, for instance, could indigenous community security management systems, such as the Asafo companies and their equivalents in other ethnopolitical traditions, play in the anti-VET architecture?

Addressing Structural Alienation and Citizens’ Disengagement

Precolonial communities (of all sizes) and political organizations developed varying mechanisms of self-defense against external aggressors. For example, colonists in British West Africa recognized the importance of indigenized security structures. They used

the colonial policing approach to effect a system of indirect rule that vested local chiefs and their institutions of elders with the space and authority to provide security services, with the support of the colonial police.¹⁵⁰ However, the postcolonial state usurped and, indeed, effectively destroyed these localized security mechanisms in exchange for centralized ones that have alienated and absolved indigenous actors and institutions from any obligation to protect their backyards. Instead, state agencies have arrogated to themselves the exclusive rights and responsibilities for defending territorial boundaries, which exist only in the minds of officialdom but mean nothing to the people straddling them. Their overstretched resources (human, material, and financial) make it impossible for state armies to live up to their self-assigned roles as defenders of the people. They presume to protect landmasses whose nooks and crannies they often know little about. This failure has become manifestly obvious in the wake of VET activity.

1. The struggles of even the most sophisticated armies to contain VETs have exposed the gaps in the state-centered security systems designed to protect the state, not the people. In contrast, indigenous security architecture, created and led by citizens, offers greater spaces of participation and collective responsibility for protecting communities against external aggression. In Ghana, the Asafo Companies¹⁵¹ of the Akans, the Nachimbos of Dagbon, and similar traditional warrior units of other ethnic groups have provided security to their communities. The Ashanti military organization had structural parallels with any modern army, complete with its scouts (akwansrafo), advance guard (twafo), main body (adonten), personal bodyguard (gyase), rear-guard (kyidom), and two wings—left (benkum) and right (nifa)—with each wing having two formations: right and right-half (nifa nnaase) or left and left-half (benkum nnaase). Not only were these indigenous security infrastructures ubiquitous in nearly every village within the wider ethnopolitical structure, they also knew the terrain they were dealing with much better than current state-centered security actors. However, the arrogation of the rights, duties, and responsibilities for security to state agencies alienated ordinary citizens in the indigenous security architecture from security spaces. The business of providing security became the business of the state, and that security was defined only in reference to the security of the state, not the people.

Respondents in this study affirmed their commitment to take on roles in the security architecture by invoking some of the traditional structures in place. Hunters, in particular, are ready and willing to self-activate to protect their communities. As some KII participants noted: “We have a few brave hunters with bows and arrows that we can rely on; aside from that, we do not have any resources to protect ourselves;”¹⁵² “Some of us are hunters so we have guns, too. We also talk to one another to be vigilant;”¹⁵³ or “As a hunter, I will show them [state security actors] the illegal routes to our communities.”¹⁵⁴ There are also contemporary youth organizations prepared to engage and defend their communities against VET attacks. As a youth in a FGD indicated, they are ready to “mobilize ourselves and interrogate them, if possible, and arrest and hand them over to the police.”¹⁵⁵

Despite this assurance, having the will to support the prevention of VET is not enough. It is trite knowledge that a traditional army wielding bows, poisoned arrows, spears, and cudgels is no match in any military engagement to VETs wielding AK-47 assault rifles, grenades, and weapons. Similarly, citizen vigilante groups are least prepared to police their communities or take preemptive actions against VETOs along the lines of community policing. It would take more than the *See Something, Say Something* campaign to convince, activate, and deploy these structures as effective CPVET instruments. Technically, they lack training in reconnaissance skills to readily recognize potential VETs; organizationally, they do not have leadership and command structures to guide and ensure coordinated actions within and across communities; and psychologically, there is no demonstrable incentive or motivation for them to engage, knowing that the provision of security is under the purview of state-paid security agencies.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognize the untapped potential of these vestigial local structures, networks, and indigenous actors to provide community safety and security services against VETs. Various groups in frontier communities are willing to engage in actions for CPVET because “we see it as a duty” to protect the country.¹⁵⁶ So, even though they “have not undergone any training,”¹⁵⁷ they have self-organized and “in our own way, we protect ourselves.”¹⁵⁸ However, they need more than a VET awareness campaign to be effective participants in the anti-VET security architecture. As one participant in an FGD in this study put it, “we have to give some training to the youth just like they give to the security” for them to play a meaningful role in CPVET.¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, no security agency (immigration, customs, police, or the military) has engaged their community or group to work with them to prevent the entry of violent extremists into Ghana. This lack of constructive engagement between the state security actors and community security guarantors calls for a rethinking of how to solicit community engagement in CPVET.

Social Cohesion, a Possible Source of Ghana's Resilience to VETs

Attempts to explain Ghana's continuous escape from VET attacks overlook or underestimate the threads and stitches that weave together Ghana's social fabric of people, communities, structures, systems, and local networks, which creates self-protection and defense mechanisms against external attacks. For instance, VET activities in West Africa come with a religious quality. Matthias Basedau asserts that “countries with mixed religious populations are prone to interreligious conflicts, which has materialized in cases such as the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and Côte d'Ivoire.”¹⁶⁰ Religion is a divider because an adherent to a “religion lay[s] proprietary claim to certain specific revelations or myths as its genesis, which it defends against all challengers.”¹⁶¹ In Ghana, this assertion is not applicable. To the contrary, most ethnic groups in Ghana hold a polyroute monotheistic view of religion,¹⁶² in which no particular faith exclusively appropriates

God. Instead, most citizens of all faiths believe that there is only one God, who devotees can reach through many covalent ways. Hence, religion is a unifier rather than a divider.

The interfaith harmony in Ghana, especially between Christians and Muslims, counters the situation in other settings where strict lines of separation between religions are enforced, to the point that adherents of “Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion. . .do not consider each other as friends but rivals.”¹⁶³ Muslims “see Christians as polytheists because of their doctrine of the Trinity [while] Christians. . .have viewed the Qur’an as fraudulent and Muhammad as an imposter.”¹⁶⁴ Christian, Muslim, and traditional ways of worship are coequal and covalent in Ghana. This view permits the freedom of religion that allows members of the same family to choose what faiths they want to follow, intermarriages across religious lines, and leaders of different faith traditions to lead joint prayer services during state functions. This freedom of religion contributes to a high level of social and cultural accommodation and assimilation across ethnic and geographical lines. Intermarriages between people of different religions, ethnicity, and geographical places of origin is very common in Ghana.

Multilateral permutations of relationships between members of different ethnic groups, especially those in the north and into the Sahel, create layers of commingling of blood, ethnicities, faith, social bonds, and regional identities. These relationships reinforce a sense of oneness and help to diffuse tensions where they arise. There is a freedom of internal migration, settlement, and cultural incorporation and assimilation across Ghana. One can literally live anywhere in Ghana and carry out one’s business of choice with no problems, as long as they do so within the confines of the law and respect the decency of local customs and traditions. People of migrant origins are known to run for office to represent their host communities in local and national assemblies.

The freedom of migration and settlement also creates high levels of economic entente, integration, and interdependency. These open up avenues for economic symbiosis through systems of cooperation and collaboration for mutually beneficial interests. Cocoa farm owners would not thrive without migrant labor from other parts of the country. At the same time, migrant laborers have evolved into cocoa farm owners. In contrast, despite decades of economic relationships between owners of cocoa farmers in Côte d’Ivoire and migrant labor from other parts of the country, the concept of Ivoirité redefined belongingness and citizenship in ways that drew boundaries between citizens, reinforcing the historical perception of Muslims as adherents of a religion of a minority people of “disparate local communities of migrants and traders [whose citizenship is] of doubtful or circumstantial Ivorian pedigree.”¹⁶⁵

Similarly, high levels of cross-cultural appropriation, accommodation, and assimilation also smooth out identity differences, creating room for greater levels of cultural tolerance and acceptance. This is evident in everyday actions, such as language usage, dress codes, and dietary preferences. The northern *fugu* (smock) has become a nation-

al dress without any conscious promotion or promulgation; *koko* and *waakye* from the north are delicacies everywhere,¹⁶⁶ just as *kenkey* and *fufu* are favorites on domestic and public menus throughout Ghana.¹⁶⁷ Twi and Hausa are lingua franca in most parts of Ghana, especially among trading communities.

In emphasizing how strong social relationships are the first line of defense against external intrusion, destabilization, and violent conflicts within families and communities, the Dagaaba of the Nandom area, which includes this study's research area, have a saying that goes "*dang-kyin mi pur k nang tu kp*" (to wit, the scorpion can only get into the room through a cracked wall). In other words, an external enemy can only create havoc within families or communities through broken relationships. The factors cited above weave a web of strong cross-identity relationships that promote a sense of unity and shared destiny within and between the different identity groups in Ghana. In such a space, where various threads weave strong social bonds, there is little tolerance for preaching sectarian violence and radicalization that support extremism of any kind. However, these elements of social cohesion that could explain Ghana's escape from VET attacks remain under-researched and, therefore, inadequately harnessed to enhance Ghana's resilience to VET attacks. How much this web of cross-identity relationships helps Ghana to keep out external enemies has not been fully explored. What lessons can be learned from their structure and operations to support local capacity building against VET attacks have received little consideration.

Conclusion

The presence and spread of VEGs competing for a foothold in the Sahel have triggered kinetic and non-kinetic responses across coastal countries seeking to stem their southward movement. The non-kinetic approaches aim to leverage citizens' vigilance and actions to counter or prevent VET attacks. The *See Something, Say Something* campaign in Ghana is one such attempt to mobilize and engage citizens in anti-VET initiatives. The success of such campaigns to enlist the participation of citizens, however, depends on the ability to provide complete, accurate, timely, and actionable information on the nature and operations of VEGs. This is particularly important because states no longer have monopolies over the information space, unlike when national newspapers, radio broadcast houses, and television stations were the only outlets for disseminating public information to citizens.

The proliferation of non-state, citizen-managed print, and audiovisual physical and digital outlets, thanks to the ubiquity of information technology, not only puts the media space beyond the state's control, but also requires that governments compete with VETs in the use of communication to construct narratives attracting sympathy or support. In particular, social media has placed the creation of content for news and IEC in the hands of citizens, and the competition between genuine and fake news is so intense that it is impossible to control meaning-making from the multiple sources of information that bombard citizens each second. Leveraging

access to both simple and sophisticated technologies, VEGs have mastered the art and science of using liberalized media spaces to court sympathy and recruit fighters where they operate.

Hence, countering the activities of violent extremism requires fundamental paradigm shifts that decenter the security architecture from state-centric to people-centered approaches. This calls for the expansion of the intersection between state and human security to define confluent, rather than contradictory, interests across the two. State security concerns of protecting boundaries, institutions, values, and populations at large must incorporate human security concerns focused on protecting the individuals' lives and livelihoods. This includes guaranteeing the ability of citizens to move and operate their legitimate businesses freely within and across borders, without threat or fear of harm of any kind to their persons, families, and businesses.

For communities earning their living from cross-border activities, what constitutes legitimate businesses in their political economy is open to debate. As this study has established, citizens see the border as an unwanted obstruction to their ability to do business with their transborder neighbors. They see communities and markets across the border as legitimate extensions of their economic and social terrain. The concept that smuggling or ferrying people between transborder communities and markets is illegal is foreign to their conceptualization of legitimate spaces of business because people in these transborder communities interacted and did business with each other before the imposition of those boundaries. Complicating the matter are security services officers posted to protect the borders who undermine their own legitimacy, integrity, and civic trust as defenders of the people when citizens see that some security officers "take bribes from the smugglers and allow them free passage,"¹⁶⁸ while others who refused to indulge them are harassed for simply trying to earn their living.

The paradigm shift required to secure the frontiers of Ghana against VET infiltration requires the redefinition of national and territorial security to embed human and livelihood security for citizens, especially those who earn their living through legitimate cross-border economic activities. Citizens will only take an interest in protecting national frontiers when they see that the actions they are asked to undertake serve their interests. To achieve this, several policy and program level actions are required, as outlined below.

The Way Forward

The findings of this study highlight the fact that there is no automatic confluence between the security priorities of individuals and those of the state. What defines security for ordinary citizens, i.e. food, income, and health security and the ability

to earn one's livelihood without hindrance from state security operatives, are more important security concerns than what preoccupies the attention of State agencies. For this reason, the State's assessments of VET risks along its borders may not align with those of citizens who see the international frontiers as hubs of economic opportunities that the State cannot provide. In frontier communities that are considered potential transit points for VETs, the anti-VET security operations of State agents may in fact be counterproductive in enlisting their support, since such operations may be seen as obstructing the communities' ability to earn their living through transborder trade, or act as an unwanted impediment to transborder social activities. To assume that citizens in general and those earning a living through transborder engagements in particular will automatically heed to a message to engage in anti-VET activities is a long shot in the dark.

Policy makers and implementers must radically rethink strategies to effectively mobilize and motivate citizens' engagement in pre-empting, preventing, and protecting their communities and country against violent extremism. As a first step, anti-VET policy makers and implementers must decenter the conceptualization of safety and security from the State-centric perspectives to incorporate the mundane but important human and livelihood security needs of citizens, especially those who earn their living through leveraging opportunities for cross-border economic activities and social networks. As a second step, anti-VET policy makers and implementers must reimagine and realign state security-community interests, roles, and responsibilities for promoting and maintaining peace and security. The state must accept that it cannot provide security for all citizens in all communities by itself. It must divest and devolve some of the security sector roles and responsibilities, as well as resources, to prepare and position community-level actors to provide complementary security services that they are best suited to provide. In consonance with the principle of subsidiarity, the State must redirect some of the security sector resources to support the development of community-level structures and systems for effective CPVET engagement. This is because local people know the terrains that VETs are likely to use to circumvent security agents. They also have indigenous and contemporary organizations that can self-mobilize to provide reconnaissance and security in their vicinities. They often have relationships and networks with neighboring communities, even those across frontiers, that can offer a wider network than security sector actors could ever provide.

Further, local leaders, comprising traditional rulers (chiefs and queen mothers), faith leaders, leaders of political and economic groups often have permanency of presence, and more legitimacy, and authority within their jurisdictions than State actors. This study underscores that community members have more confidence in such local leaders to protect them against VE than State agents. To be effective, therefore, State agents and social promoters of anti-VET activism must work directly with the leadership of traditional and religious institutions, women and youth groups, and trade associations, among other entities to be able to elicit true community participation. Leveraging the knowledge, structures, systems, and en-

agement interfaces of these local leaders creates effective ways to mobilize broad networks of community-level CPVET actors at little cost. It creates the opportunity to enlist and build the leadership capacities of traditional authorities and local leaders, who have the presence, legitimacy, authority, and some control to urge people within their jurisdictions to be active partners in CPVET interventions.

Third, anti-VET agents must radically rethink communication strategies for citizens' engagement. The power of the *See Something Say Something* strategy for eliciting anti-VET mobilization and engagement is diffused because the message has no specific audience; it is not directed to a specific group of actors and provides no specific guidance on what concrete actions those who hear it must say or do. The communication is a random shot that hopes that somehow some citizens will catch an anti-VET fervor and spring into action to organize and engage in CPVET activities. To be effective, the current community engagement strategy must move away from the mass and generic information, education, and communication (IEC) format that relies on radio and social media to a more targeted community-led processes that leverage the local and indigenous knowledge, structures, and networks of communities to elicit community interests and create local leadership for actions. This would create frontiers of first responders against VET infiltration. Without this retooling, citizens, especially those in frontier communities will remain indifferent onlookers at best, or active noncooperators whose perceptions of their economic and livelihoods priorities from cross border engagements may dwarf their perceptions of VET risks in or through their communities. As they see little or no threats in VE activities, they would choose to ignore the exhortations of the engagement messages to pursue their economic livelihoods and social lives.

Finally, this study has highlighted the demands of the youth for job opportunities as a guarantor for peace and security. The State's exhortation of citizens to engage in anti-VET activism will fall on deaf ears if there is no perceived concrete quid pro quo for active citizens' participation in anti-VET activities. This is because there is already a high level of citizens' disenchantment, despondence, cynicism, and distrust in the ability to live up to its side of the bargain in social contracts. Multiple elections and transfers of power between political parties have not delivered the dividends of democratic governance and peace agreements have not delivered the dividends of development in post conflict countries. Not surprisingly, this study has recaptured the widely shared doubts about the ability of state agencies to protect them against VET attacks. Respondents were wary about what hope there is there that giving up their livelihoods to fight against VETs would deliver security dividends that includes their human and livelihood securities. This cynicism highlights the reality that until people see how VETs threaten their interests, they are not likely to invest in activities that counter or prevent VET entry into Ghana. Anti-VET sponsors have a task to ensure that the definition of security is comprehensive, inclusive, and above all demonstrate ability to deliver concrete dividends to citizens expected to support the fight against VETs.

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Appendix

A Conversation with My Uber Driver Radio discussion on violent extremism is going on my Joy FM

Driver: Sir, I beg, I want to ask you a question. This See Something, Say Something thing, what is it all about? I have been hearing it, but I don't know what it means.

Me: How long have you been hearing that?

Driver: Oh, I hear it all the time on the radio and TV, but I don't know what it means.

Me: From what you have been hearing, what do you think it means?

Driver: Boss, don't vex. I don't know the meaning. I don't know what they want me to see and how I should say it. That is why I am asking you; I beg.

Post-conversation Reflections

- The Uber driver was a very well-educated person, judging by his conversational frame, skills, and diction.
- He has always lived and worked in Accra and so has access to news from different traditional and new media sources.
- He is curious enough to want to know what See Something, Say Something means, but cannot seem to find the right sources of information.

Implications

Think now about rural populations living 850 kilometers away from Accra with limited access to television and internet and whose only non-interpersonal means of accessing information is the local FM station.

NOTES

1. The terms VEG AND VET are used to refer to two different concepts. VET refers to the individual persons involved violent extremism or terrorist activities while VEG refers to the identifiable organizations or groups they are organized around. It distinguishes the fact that VETs may not necessarily operate under the tutelage of organized groups, as lone actors can equally carry out extremely violent acts.
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34. Focus group participant, Nandom, November 12, 2022
35. Market Women Traders Focus Group, Kokoligu, November 12, 2022 .
36. Market women trader focus group participant, Naapaal, November 14, 2022
37. Male key informant interviewee, Gengengkpe, November 13, 2022
38. Market women focus group participant, Nandom, November 14, 2022
39. Trader focus group participant, Donkullo, November 14, 2022
40. Market women focus group participant, Haapaa, November 12, 2022
41. Male key informant interviewee, Nabaala, November 12, 2022
42. Male key informant interviewee, Hamile Muoteng, November 13, 2022
43. Male key informant interviewee, Bekyedegangn, November 12, 2022..
44. Female key informant interviewee, Lambusie, November 13, 2022..
45. Male key informant interviewee, Monyupelle, November 13, 2022 .
46. Male key informant interviewee, Hamile Muoteng, November 12, 2022 .
47. Male key informant interviewee, Monyupelle, November 13, 2022
48. Male key informant interviewee, Monyupelle, November 13, 2022 .
49. Male key informant interviewee, Lambusie Bangwon, November 12, 2022.
50. Male key informant interviewee, Kusele, November 13, 2022 .
51. Male key informant interviewee, Bekyedegang, November 12, 2022.
52. Female key informant interviewee, Bekyiirteng, November 13, 2022 .
53. Motorking is the brand name of the first set of tricycles with load-carrying buck-ets that was introduced into the Ghanaian market. That brand name has become the descriptive name for all tricycles with buckets in Ghana, irrespective of their brand.
54. Male key informant interviewee, Bekyedegang, November 12, 2022.
55. Male key informant interviewee, Donkullo, November 13, 2022
56. Male key informant interviewee, Donkullo, November 13, 2022 .
57. Male key informant interviewee, Hamile Muoteng, November 13, 2022
58. Male key informant interviewee, Hamile Muoteng, November 13, 2022
59. Male key informant interviewee, Zongo, November 15, 2022.
60. GHS (Ghanaian Cedi) 1,000 is equivalent to USD 92.59 as of April 5, 2023.
61. Male key informant interviewee, New Town, November 15, 2022

62. Male key informant interviewee, Betaglu, November 14, 2022 .
63. Male key informant interviewee, Baselbe, November 14, 2022
64. Female key informant interviewee, Dabagteng, November 17, 2022.
65. Political party youth focus group participant, Nandom, November 15, 2022.
66. Tricycle operators focus group participant, Nandom, November 14, 2022.
67. Male key informant interviewee, Kambaa, November 14, 2022. KII_BJ71
68. Male key informant interviewee, Kambaa, November 14, 2022 KII_BF31_
69. Male key informant interviewee, Nabaala, November 12, 2022.
70. Unemployed key informant interviewee, Hamile Muoteng, November 12, 2022.
71. Tricycle operators focus group participant, Nandom, November 14, 2022
72. Possible actors to contact for help included the military, police, immigration, and fire services; regional, municipal, or district security council; the community's chief or youth; the respondent's trade association; and other institutional actors.
73. Male key informant interviewee, Hamile Muoteng, November 12, 2022.
74. Tricycle operators focus group participant, Bekyedegang November 12, 2022.
75. Market women and traders focus group participant 1, Kokokigu, November 12, 2022 .
76. Male key informant interviewee from the Pentecostal Church, Nandom, November 14, 2022
77. Market women focus group participant 2, Kokokigu, November 12, 2022
78. Market women focus group participant 3, Kokokigu, November 12, 2022
79. Market women focus group participant 4, Kokokigu, November 12, 2022.
80. Male key informant interviewee, Hamile Muoteng, November 12, 2022.
81. Male key informant interviewee, Gengengkpe, November 14, 2022 .
82. Male key informant interviewee, Bekyedegang, November 12, 2022 .
83. Male key informant interviewee, Kusele, November 13, 2022 .
84. Male key informant interviewee, Panyan, November 14, 2022 .
85. Tricycle operators focus group participant, Nandom, November 14, 2022
86. Political party youth focus group participant, Nandom, November 14, 2022.
87. Tricycle operators focus group participant, Nandom, November 14, 2022
88. Market women and traders focus group participant 1, Kokokigu, November 12, 2022
89. Market women and traders focus group participant 2, Kokokigu, November 12, 2022 .
90. Market women and traders focus group participant 3, Kokokigu, November 12, 2022
91. Male key informant interviewee, Lambusie, November 13, 2022 .
92. In many instances, cellphone signals from Burkina Faso telephone companies were much stronger than those from the Ghanaian companies in the border communities in Ghana.
93. Fishermen and fishmongers focus group participant 6, Guri, November 11, 2022.
94. Male key informant interviewee, Donkullo November 13, 2022 .
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100. Male key informant interviewee, Ketuo, November 13, 2022; See also male key informant interviewee, Kambaa, November 13, 2022;; male key informant interviewee, Panyan, November 14, 2022 ; and male key informant interviewee, Baselbe, November 14, 2022, among others.
101. Male key informant interviewee, Nabaala, November 13, 2022; See also male key informant interviewee, Hamile Muoteng, November 12, 2022 ; male key informant interviewee, Banu, November 12, 2022 ; and female key informant interviewee, Nandom, November 14, 2022
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103. Key informant interviewee, LOCATION, DATE. (YB-PK-KII-007).
104. Key informant interviewee, LOCATION, DATE. (YB-PK-KII-003).
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 141. Female key informant interviewee, Bekyirteng, November 13, 2022 .
 142. Male key informant interviewee, Ketuo, November 16, 2022 ; male key informant interviewee, Tampele, November 17, 2022 . .
 143. Herders focus group participant, Banwon, November 12, 2022.

144. Tricycle operators focus group participant, Nandom, November 14, 2022
145. Market women's association focus group participant, Haapaa, November 12, 2022
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153. Female key informant interviewee, Kokoligu, November 14, 2022.
154. Male key informant interviewee, Dahile, November 13, 2022 .
155. Tricycle operators focus group participant, Nabaala, November 12, 2022
156. Truck drivers focus group participant, Lambussie, November 13, 2022 .
157. Fishermen and fishmongers focus group participant, Guri, November 12, 2022
158. Market women's association focus group participant, Bakiyellu, November 12, 2022
159. Fishermen focus group participant, Betaglu, November 13, 2022.
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to climate-related conflicts.
167. Kenkey is a southern maize (or, less commonly, millet) dish, almost like ugali in East Africa, usually eaten with hot pepper and fried fish. Fufu is a smooth-pounded cassava, plantain, yam, or other tuber crop dish served with soups, originating from the middle belt of Ghana.
168. Traders focus group participant, LOCATION, DATE. FGD_BM36_Traders.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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