



# Ethnic Power Relations and Conflict in Fragile States Research

## Introduction: Global Research Agenda

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The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) is a member of a group of international research centers undertaking studies on *Ethnic Power Relations and Conflict in Fragile States*. These studies are being conducted in Ghana, Egypt, Guatemala, India and Zambia. The research project aims at understanding the dynamics of political inclusion and exclusion. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that, economic and political inequality appears to be a major contributing factor to political instability and conflicts. This research project focuses on the link between group-level political inequality and ethnic conflict in fragile states. The goal is to improve governance by reducing exclusion and discrimination of ethnic groups and to mitigate the adverse consequences of such policies, especially with respect to conflict and political instability. This project is coordinated at the international level by researchers in ETH Zurich and University of Geneva, both based in Switzerland, and it is being funded from the Swiss Program for Research on Global Issues for Development (R4D), a joint initiative of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss National Science Foundation. As noted above, the CDD-Ghana is implementing the Ghana case study.

### Ghana Research Agenda: Ethnicity and Democratic Stability in Ghana's Fourth Republic

The Fourth Republic of Ghana has been the most resilient in the post independence political history of the country. The first (1960), second (1969) and third (1979) republican constitutional dispensations were all aborted by coup d'etats. Even though the Fourth Republic has survived potentially disruptive political shocks, and hence Ghana can not be characterized as a fragile state, electoral politics, and associated competitive nature in the quest for power by political parties occasionally brings to fore ethnic tensions and threat to political stability. Perceptions that when parties form governments after elections, they skew access to political power in favor of their ethnic support base remain. This perception of discrimination may present potential danger to the stability of the Fourth Republic. The Ghana research agenda seeks to uncover and understand the logic feeding these perceptions, and to understand the patterns of ethnic inclusion/exclusion since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1992.

### Project Goals/Objectives

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There are two broad objectives of this research project. The first is towards a better understanding of the nature of the nexus between ethnic groups, national political power and democratic stability. The second is to draw on the findings to inform policies that will enhance positive outcomes and advocacy measures to contain and redress any potential future dangers.

## Expected Project Impact

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The research project will have a broad societal impact and set the stage for inclusive approaches to ethnic politics through two distinct channels, which we refer to as the political change scenario, and the educational change scenario. The political change scenario is expected to operate through direct dissemination and discussion of research results with social and political stakeholders, with the aim of raising awareness of the problems associated with ethnically exclusive policies. By drawing on “good practices” of ethnic inclusion developed in our research project and the experiences in other countries, we hope to increase the likelihood that evidence-informed policies will be implemented. It is also our conviction that the educational change scenario will foster change indirectly by strengthening local research and education in the area of ethnic politics through the transfer of knowledge from previous research conducted at the global level to the local level in Ghana. This change scenario will work primarily by building expertise in the area of ethnic politics among students and researchers, in order to foster knowledge translation into the political and development arenas.

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