



# Political and Ethnic Conflicts in Agbogbloshie/Old Fadama- Executive Summary

Dagna Rams, David Aladago

---

On behalf of the Environmentally Sound Disposal and Recycling of Electronic Waste Programme (E-Waste Programme)

March, 2021

---



As a federally owned enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development.

**Published by:**

Deutsche Gesellschaft für  
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH  
Registered offices  
Bonn and Eschborn

GIZ Country Office Accra  
7 Volta Street | Airport Residential Area  
P.O. Box KIA 9698  
Accra | Ghana  
F +233 302 760 448  
E [giz-ghana@giz.de](mailto:giz-ghana@giz.de)  
I [www.giz.de/ghana](http://www.giz.de/ghana)  
I [www.giz.de](http://www.giz.de)

**Programme/project description:**

Environmentally Sound Disposal and Recycling of E-Waste in Ghana (E-Waste Programme)  
Airport Residential Area  
Accra – Ghana  
Head of Programme: Markus Spitzbart  
<https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/63039.html>

**Authors:**

GIZ E-Waste Programme, Accra, Ghana  
MESTI-PIU, Accra, Ghana

**Photo credits/sources:**

Cover Pager: GIZ/ E-Waste Programme

**URL links:**

This publication contains links to external websites. Responsibility for the content of the listed external sites always lies with their respective publishers. When the links to these sites were first posted, GIZ checked the third-party content to establish whether it could give rise to civil or criminal liability. However, the constant review of the links to external sites cannot reasonably be expected without concrete indication of a violation of rights. If GIZ itself becomes aware or is notified by a third party that an external site it has provided a link to gives rise to civil or criminal liability, it will remove the link to this site immediately. GIZ expressly dissociates itself from such content.

**Maps:**

The maps printed here are intended only for information purposes and in no way constitute recognition under international law of boundaries and territories. GIZ accepts no responsibility for these maps being entirely up to date, correct or complete. All liability for any damage, direct or indirect, resulting from their use is excluded.

On behalf of  
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)  
Division 203 West Africa II  
Contact person at the ministry: Lars Willcke  
Bonn

GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

Accra, April 2022

Lausanne, March 2021

## **Table of Contents**

|                              |          |
|------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Executive Summary</b>     | <b>3</b> |
| <b>List of Abbreviations</b> | <b>6</b> |
| <b>List of references</b>    | <b>7</b> |

## Executive Summary

This report identifies sources of conflict in Agbogbloshie/Old Fadama and paths forward for ameliorating relations within the scrapyard, especially with regards to the GIZ's positioning and sustainability of its programs.

The conflict within Agbogbloshie/Old Fadama affects mostly migrants from Ghana's north, who control the scrapyard's political institutions, have an informal hold on land, and depend on scrap's economy in the context of socio-economic constraints in the region of origin (Northern region) and in Ghana. In the colonial times, Ghana's north was subject to explicit policies of non-development that cut its population from opportunities. In Independent Ghana, the newly demarcated Northern region has seen the greatest number of people defined as 'poor' and one of the lowest levels of access to education in the country.

Since 1990s, the Dagomba migrants from the north – in particular – have dominated sectors of scrap economy such as collection and iron scrap trade. They are also the principal demographic in scrapyards. The combination of economic specialisation and inter-regional dynamics meant that urban scrapyards have become akin to development banks for the agricultural north. The rural families depend on cash from urban centres to purchase fertilisers, agricultural labour, and to replenish depleting food stocks.

The Dagomba Kingdom in the north has been experiencing outbursts of an intra-ethnic conflict throughout 2000s. The conflict is between two clans (Abudu/Andani), each associated with an open gate to the throne of the Kingdom of Dagbon. While the beginning of the conflict was in 1900s, it was initially mostly limited to royal disputes. In March 2002, it spread to the wider population following the killing of Ya-Na (=King) Yakubu Andani. In the aftermath, Dagombas have become aware of their clan identity and its consequence for everyday life. The conflict also maps onto Ghana's bipartisan political divide, which means political party preference correlates with a clan belonging.

Accra's scrapyard of Agbogbloshie/Old Fadama is a principal place, where the conflict has been erupting around election times since 2002. Agbogbloshie/Old Fadama is a platform for numerous political associations such as the

Greater Accra Scrap Dealers Association (GASDA), grassroots organisations for political parties, informal political gatherings, traditional institutions, and patrimonial ties. These associations have been shaped by the conflict. It has influenced the membership composition of these associations, impelled them to take sides within the conflict, and

in result diminished their capacity to represent people across political divides. The fracturing of the political scene has meant that, while the vast majority of stakeholders voice their wish for the conflict to end, they do not feel they can influence, control, or sanction the various parties to the conflict. Due to the conflict's length, there is also a growing group of individuals that have been directly affected by the conflict's currents over the years. They struggle to obtain redress in other ways than through partaking in the dynamics of the conflict.

The most consequential eruptions of the conflict were in 2009 and 2016. Each time they coincided with a change of a political party in power. They resulted in: people leaving the scrapyards around election time to go to vote in the north and wait out the results, violent confrontations (resulting in deaths and casualties) around the election time; evictions of political opponents from Agbogbloshie/Old Fadama; takeovers of business assets and land from opponents; changes of GASDA's leadership; periodic intimidation of politically neutral scrap dealers by people associated with the party in power; formation of new scrapyards around Accra that are composed of "refugees" of Agbogbloshie; a rapid social mobility or degradation of individuals associated with winning/losing parties of the conflict.

The GIZ has worked to strengthen the GASDA. This is important due the centrality of the Association in Agbogbloshie/Old Fadama and its potential as a representative of the scrapyards to state and international institutions. However, the GASDA has had problems with positioning itself in the otherwise fractured political scene and its leaders voice frustration with challenges to their power.

The report encourages the GIZ to consider its modes of engagement with various stakeholders to includes *inter alia* "refugees of Agbogbloshie/Old Fadama", who have established other scrapyards. This is advised in order to avoid the charge of being seen as privileging or engaging with only one side of the conflict.

## Political and Ethnic Conflicts in Agbogbloshie/Old Fadama

---

The GIZ has a range of possible tools to pursue: ensuring that GIZ meetings are attended by scrap leaders across political divides; creating a social media group (e.g. on WhatsApp) to distribute GIZ messages across scrapyards; drafting clear rules of engagement that emphasise the GIZ's neutrality and disagreement with the harassment of political opponents or extortions of money; organising workshops for stakeholders with representatives of trade unions and labour protection organisations to inspire new paths for representing the profession. The paths forward for political representation beyond the parameters of the conflict would include representation of the interests of scrap dealers vis-à-vis smelting and export companies (e.g. with regards to pricing); creation of platforms for dialogue across political divides; collaboration with other scrap dealers' associations in the country to increase advocacy; protection of different members of the economy against exploitation and negotiation of conflicts of interest; brokerage of improved relations with state institutions (e.g., the police). The report details such paths and assesses their various risks.

## **List of Abbreviations**

GASDA- Greater Accra Scrap Dealers Association

## List of references

Anamzoya S. A. 2008. "Politicization, Elite Manipulation, or Institutional Weaknesses? The Search for Alternative Explanations to the Chieftaincy Disputes in Dagbon, Northern Ghana" *Research Review NS* Vol. 24. No 1 Pp. 1-25

--. 2009. "Chieftaincy Conflicts in Northern Ghana: A Challenge to National Stability", in Tonah. S. (Ed.,) *Contemporary Social Problems in Ghana*. Yemens. Pp. 179-208

Pellow, Deborah. 2011. "Internal transmigrants: A Dagomba diaspora". *American Ethnologist*, 38: 132-47.

— —. 2016. *Logics of Violence Among the Dagomba in Northern Ghana*" In Steve Tonah and A. S.

Anamzoya, eds. *The Management of Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Ghana: Complementary Pathways and Competing Institutions*. Accra: Woeli Pubs.

Staniland, Martin. 1975. *Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.