
RESEARCH BRIEF 6/2022

Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa

[SIGLA @ Stellenbosch](#)

Author: Dr G. vanDyck
(Regional Maritime University)

Series Editor: Professor F. Vreÿ (SIGLA)

Pathway to a Maritime Strategy for Ghana: Insights and Lessons

Introduction

Ghana has an abundance of marine resources, including fisheries, hydrocarbon reserves, inland waterways and ports that are located along important international shipping lanes. These present Ghana with a wide range of opportunities for ensuring food security, bridging income inequalities, attracting foreign direct investment, increasing domestic productivity, and enhancing trading conditions; underscoring the imperative need to harness and safeguard this natural resource wisely for present and future generations. About 7.5 million people in Ghana live in coastal areas and double that number live about 50 km away from the coast. Like many other coastal African countries, Ghana significantly relies on its blue economy for income, employment and food. The oil and gas sector has generated over \$4 billion in revenue since commercial operations began in 2010 and about 10 percent of Ghana's workforce is employed in the fishing sector, which also accounts for 4.5 percent of the country's GDP. Seventy (70) percent of Ghana's trade is carried by sea through its ports in Tema and Takoradi. The Port of Tema is currently the largest container port in West Africa and Ghana is only second to South Africa in terms of [Liner Shipping Connectivity](#) in Sub-Saharan Africa.

However, Ghana's coastal areas also face significant challenges in the form of [blue crimes](#). These include ocean dumping, piracy, stowing away, drug and human trafficking, smuggling of arms, blue cyber threats and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing among others. Although piracy has taken the centre-stage in Ghana and other Gulf of Guinea countries, all the other crimes have a significant impact on the trade, government revenue and the potential developments that can accrue from the blue economy.

Therefore, Ghana's prospects of creating a strong and viable blue economy are reliant on a safe and secure maritime domain. Certainly, Ghana cannot afford the consequences of ignoring its maritime domain and taking this into consideration, embarked on a journey towards the development of a comprehensive maritime strategy, known as the National Integrated Maritime Strategy (NIMS).

An Integrated national [maritime strategy](#) must offer a vision for the future of the maritime sector while focusing on suppressing undesired activities. For sustainable management, growth and

utilization of blue economy resources, in addition to addressing maritime challenges, what is needed is effective spatial planning and governance strategies. The NIMS of Ghana has a clear focus: security and national development for all Ghanaians.

The National Integrated Maritime Strategy of Ghana

The origins of the NIMS in Ghana can be traced to the work of the [Security Governance Initiative](#) (SGI), an international security initiative signed in 2016 between the United States and five partner African countries, namely - Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Tunisia. The objective of the SGI is to facilitate the development of expertise on national security issues to assist with key reforms of security sector institutional structures, policies, systems and processes specifically in Cyber, Maritime, Border Security and Administration of Justice for Ghana. In Ghana, SGI activities are coordinated by the SGI Secretariat, and it operates through three working groups, one of which is the National Maritime Security Technical Working Group (NMSTWG) with representation from government agencies and ministries. With an initial focus on maritime security threats and transnational blue crimes, Ghana's NIMS development was assigned to the NMSTWG. In 2019, Denmark, one of Ghana's significant international maritime partners, through the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) came on board to support the NIMS development process through the provision of funds. The funds allowed the Centre for Maritime Law and Security Africa (CEMLAWS Africa) to offer technical support for the NIMS development process. [The NIMS](#) seeks to strengthen the framework for maritime governance, ensure the safety and security of Ghana's maritime domain, develop a thriving blue economy as well as protect the marine and coastal environment.

Stakeholder Engagement

At the core of the development of any national governance document is stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder engagement is important because it secures legitimacy and credibility, which are usually achieved through well-balanced and built-for-purpose stakeholder engagement, with simultaneous independent expertise driving and shaping the process. The main consideration in the stakeholder engagement process is for the Secretariat or technical working group to determine who all [relevant stakeholders](#) are; that is, who must consider the NIMS to be legitimate and credible particularly at each level of engagement. Stakeholders selected at the beginning of the process will work with the lead secretariat on the agenda for the rest of the process; and help galvanize potential conflict that may arise during drafting, review and validation into consensus.

Stakeholder engagement was central to the NIMS development process for Ghana. By the time the draft document had been submitted to cabinet, a series of engagements with state agencies and departments, local private entities including fisheries and environmental interests, commercial and non-commercial maritime actors, experts and practitioners including academics, think tanks, consultants, and international partners among others, had ensued. The NIMS stakeholder engagement process included:

- Mind Mapping. To establish the key ideas and components of the strategy, a [mind-mapping](#) exercise was conducted. A mind map is a visual representation of ideas and concepts. It is a visual thinking tool that aids in information structuring, enhancing the capacity for analysis, comprehension, synthesizing, memory, and idea generation. The NMSTWG and consultants used the results of the mind-mapping exercise as a guide to create the first draft.

- Draft Development. After the completion of the mind-mapping exercise, a draft document was developed covering the overarching themes. The draft was shared with stakeholders who would take part in the review and implementation plan development process.
- Implementation Plan Development. Stakeholders convened to discuss and suggest a collaborative approach for attaining the strategic goals and guiding principles contained in the NIMS framework.
- Implementation Plan Validation. For a two-day period, a workshop was arranged with participation from all stakeholders to validate the implementation plan's actions.

Insights and Lessons: A stakeholder's Perspective

Lack / unavailability of Base Data

Although the mind-mapping exercise was useful to highlight maritime domain issues, there was an evident lack or unavailability of specific maritime domain data during the strategy development. The strategy is meant to support the economy and security of the state and it is crucial that the state understands its actual, as opposed to perceived, maritime economic potential. Therefore, a [domain assessment](#) is necessary. A three horizons approach is key to developing a strategy; that is, identifying the “Now” which represents unbiased and accurate data on the state of the maritime domain; knowing the “Next” which represents what the country wants to achieve in the short, medium and long term and identifying the “Needs” which are indicative of the resources and actions needed to achieve such set objectives. Data on maritime safety and security in Ghana is more easily available due to the focus on security issues in the Gulf of Guinea by local and international organisations. Some maritime domain economic data is also available. A good approach would be to make available consolidated national maritime data and statistics to facilitate the strategy development process.

Driver and Scope of the Strategy

Maritime security and the growth of the blue economy are intrinsically linked and mutually supportive. The selection of stakeholders for dialogue or engagement can be heavily influenced by the driver of the process. The question is, “what is the driver for planning and development of the strategy; security, development or both”? This should adequately reflect in the strategy.

The initial drivers of the NIMS were both maritime security and blue economy development as evidenced by its origins in Ghana. Yet at the implementation workshop, some stakeholders were of the view that the NIMS seemed to be a maritime security strategy that attempts to integrate other sectors of the blue economy. When the initial draft of the NIMS was being reviewed by stakeholders, this resulted in heated debates by breakout teams about the prioritization of activities. At the heart of this is the extent to which development-related stakeholders were initially involved. Stakeholder representation is crucial, particularly when there is unavailability or little use of national maritime data.

In Ghana, some stakeholders also argue that the driver for the maritime strategy must be economic in nature and not security-focused because safety and security play a cross-sectional role in the marine space. They further argue that economic issues including oil and gas activities, fishing, tourism, port expansion, coastal erosion and flooding due to climate change directly affect livelihoods. Therefore, the stakeholders assert that development should have been the focus and driver of the NIMS from the onset and security strategies developed from threat assessments linked to the economic issues.

Stakeholder Conflicts and Consensus Building

Stakeholder engagement frequently involves [conflict](#), which can arise between people, groups, or organizations. Conflict must be managed; a properly handled conflict can be productive resulting in fresh perspectives and creative solutions while conflicts that are not handled well can degenerate into dysfunction, which can ruin communication and relationships.

Structural conflicts were most common during the NIMS development. They applied to relative position, power and mandate of stakeholders within the same or different groupings within the maritime domain. The conflicts were particularly focused on the responsibility and mandate of different organisations (particularly government MDAs), capability and capacity of organisations to carry out their mandates, and the focus and prioritization of activities and plan of actions by stakeholders.

Conflicts could further be delineated by security versus development focus of organisations. There were conflicts between security-related organisations, conflicts between security and development-oriented organisations and conflicts between development-related organisations. The dialogue was healthy and helped to further zone-in on actions needed for the NIMS to be well developed.

Notwithstanding the considerable and inevitable conflicts, ample room emerged for consensus. This was partly because of the leadership style of the process managers, as well as the use of consensus-building norms such as closed-session meetings with divergent groups. A lot of behind-the-scenes work was done by leadership through engaging with stakeholders privately to offer more detailed explanations, collect views, give assurances, and offer encouragement. The NIMS therefore included consensus-based action plans that ensured a more holistic approach to maritime governance.

Conclusions

Ghana is a relatively young maritime nation. Traditionally, the ocean has been used for fishing but there is now increased multiple use of the marine space. Hence the NIMS is crucial to the development, safety and security of the blue economy. The SGI, working with its partners and stakeholders, has put together a strong strategy for Ghana as a first step to holistic maritime governance. One thing is certainly clear: the NIMS is destined for failure without adequate political will from the highest echelons of Government and without the necessary resources (financial, human resources, equipment, and technology) to support strategies and action plans.

Dr George vanDyck is the Dean of the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Senior Lecturer of Ports, Shipping and Logistics at the Regional Maritime University, Ghana.

E-mail: vandyck.george@rmu.edu.gh