



# PROJECT PROPOSAL

## INFORMED TO DECIDE (I2D)

*Election 2024 Edition*

**2023-2024**

# A Civic Education Project for First-Time Voters In Ghana



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## ABOUT ORGANISATION

AHOY is a Ghana-based and Africa-focused youth-inspired non-profit established in 2023. Like its literal meaning, 'ahoy' is a call to find sustainable solutions to the myriad problems facing young Africans. It is our bond to engage, develop, and empower the African youth who will be educated, entrepreneurial, skills-oriented, innovative and decently working to achieve 'The Africa We Want.' The Africa we want is a transformed continent built through the realisation and reliance on the full potential of the youth for shared prosperity and unity. We work within institutional and legal frameworks of the continent and the countries we are present in, guided by our core principles of active advocacy; holistic development; optimistic outlook; and youth-inspired projects to deliver the human capital for Africa's transformation. Our objectives include conducting research on issues that relate to the youth and other marginalized groups, planning and executing youth development programmes, leading advocacy on issues that pertain to the well-being and proper social orientation of the youth, and training and capacity building for youth-led businesses in Africa grounded in empirical market data and evidence. At AHOY, we go the extra mile to ensure that our programmes and projects transform the lives of young people on the continent. We believe it is the transformed youth that can transform Africa.



Advancing and Harnessing  
Opportunities for the Youth



## I2D PROJECT SUMMARY

On 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024, more than 2 million first-time voters are expected to vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana. First-time voters, according to the Electoral Commission of Ghana, are young people between the ages of 18 and 21 who are eligible to vote in an upcoming election. Characteristically, these first-time voters are enthusiastic about elections, yet they lack political information, are inexperienced in decision-making, and are ill-formed about policies and policy implications. Additionally, they lack the understanding that the politico-economic consequence of their voter choice may last for the term ahead, and if dire, may have far-reaching consequences exceeding term limits. The Informed to Decide (I2D) project is designed, in line with SDG 16.<sup>71</sup> and the related topic of “Information for Integrated Decision-Making and Participation”, for first-time voters in Ghanaian Senior High Schools and Undergraduate studies to process and assess the political, economic, and social policies of political parties through series of stakeholder engagements and personal assessment toolkit to inform their decisions and choice on election day, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024. The Informed to Decide (I2D) project, for which AHOY is seeking funding, includes pre-election and post-election surveys to determine project impact. The I2D Project is expected to be implemented for every election cycle.



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<sup>1</sup> The Sustainable Development Goal 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions – urges countries to; promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development; provide access to justice for all; and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Target 16.7 is to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Many citizens, according to Milbrath (1965), and more recently Wratil and Wackerl (2023) believe that a decision made by a majority of the population is preferable to one reached by a select few. Governments may go against the interests of those who do not participate when only a portion of the population participates in decision-making. In popular participation, there is a need to ensure the representation of all citizens to enhance fairness and equity in democratic practices. Disinterest and indifference must be discouraged because, should they spread, they could lead to major declines in the quality of governance and easy usurpations of authority. Therefore, there is a need for having a social norm that declares it to be a duty for all eligible citizens, especially younger voters, to be interested, informed, and active as an important preventive measure.

The roles that young citizens play in democratic societies have been enhanced by the principle of universal adult suffrage. For many of these young people, the principle allows them to contribute to decision-making and the governing processes of their nation through voting. However, young voters report having less political information and knowledge than older voters, and they frequently blame their lack of political understanding for not voting (Kaid et. Al 2007).

According to the Electoral Commission of Ghana, the total number of first-time voters (18-21 years old) registered for the 2020 General Elections was 2,635,050. This number represented 15.5% of the total number of valid voters, which was 17, 027,641. Similarly, the total number of 18-35 years old (voting youth) registered was 9,375,515 representing 55.1% of the entire voter population. This affirms that the majority of the voter population in Ghana are the youth, including first-time voters.

Young individuals in Ghana have historically voted at a lower rate than older age groups. For instance, according to the Electoral Commission of Ghana, only 28% of voters between the ages of 18 and 24 participated in the 2016 general elections, compared to 62% among those 45 and older.

During elections, many of these first-time voters, who are challenged by naivety due to lack of political information, peer pressure, and a lack of understanding of the political and economic implications of their voting choices, fall victim to politicians' 'use-and-dump' schemes to vote them into power and thereafter dismiss their needs. Successive rounds of the Afrobarometer survey show that many young Ghanaians are dissatisfied with how successive governments handle youth needs. The attention deficit towards youth problems has resulted in record low levels of trust and performance of government institutions and leadership among the younger population as suggested by survey rounds 7 and 8. Furthermore, the overwhelming demand for democracy

among younger Ghanaians, 18-25 years (78.1%), is set against the supply of democracy (47.4%), according to data from the Afrobarometer (2022) Survey.

One major setback in governance and civic participation, as highlighted in subsequent national youth policies, is that the youth are unable to access institutional systems and structures of governance. As a result, they are unable to participate effectively in public policy or on platforms that would serve their needs. Since they are mostly excluded from many facets of democratic governance, the involvement of young people in governance and other decision-making processes has not yet been fully realized. Considering this, there must be an open flow of accurate and trustworthy information for the youth to make decisions and engage fully in governance and other decision-making processes. Unfortunately, this is often absent, and in a few instances, the information is given in an unbalanced manner.

To provide specialized answers to young people's concerns, opportunities for civic engagement and transparent policymaking are essential. Participation and collaboration are important in an era of open government because they give young people, youth groups, and society at large the chance to produce value for the public. This process of creating public value involves a wide range of stakeholders, including communities and community leaders, local development organisations, local business entities and others.

## **PROJECT TARGET POPULATION/GROUP**

The target group for this project is first-time voters. Generally, first-time voters may be understood as people voting for the first time in their lives. In the State of Arkansas, a first-time voter is a registered voter who has never voted in a federal election in the state<sup>2</sup>. The application of this definition is irrespective of age. However, in a 2012 study by Bhatti and Hansen on turnout among first-time voters using data from the 2009 Danish Municipal elections, they categorised first-time voters as those under the age of 22. The above explanations show that defining 'first-time voters' differ among countries and states. But more definitely, first-time voters are young people who have reached voting age and are eligible to vote in an upcoming election.

In Ghana, the Electoral Commission categorises first-time voters as those who are 18 to 21 years old and registered to vote in a forthcoming election. Statistics suggest that this category of voters is mostly students. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census data by the Ghana

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<sup>2</sup> See Arkansas' Voting Machines and Electronic Voting Amendment Bill, 2005. House Bill 2748.

Statistical Service, the population 18 years and older<sup>3</sup> attending school is 2,090,401<sup>4</sup>. Out of this number, the majority, 843,091 representing 40.3% are in Senior High Schools. Additionally, 7,583 representing 36% are undergraduate students in various higher national diploma and bachelor's degree programmes of study.

For this project, we define first-time voters in Ghana, as anyone 22 years or younger who has never voted in a national election, specifically in a presidential and parliamentary election. This project targets this category of the population in formal education institutions, precisely, those in senior high schools and undergraduate students in universities.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this project is to assist first-time voters to make informed decisions regarding their electoral choice and behaviour. To this end, the following are the specific objectives of this project.

1. Provide an avenue for youth mainstreaming and create a safe space where first-time voters can have access to and engage with political party officials and relevant stakeholders including civil society, religious leaders, and traditional authorities to discuss youth policies in political party manifestoes to inform their decisions.
2. Provide an avenue for discussing youth needs for the coproduction of a comprehensive national youth policy that can address youth needs.
3. Educate first-time voters on their suffrage, the electoral process, and the prevention of electoral violence.

## MAIN PROJECT ACTIVITIES

1. Create project awareness in major print and electronic media.
2. Organise regional forums for first-time voters in Senior High Schools and Undergraduate studies to engage with party officials and relevant stakeholders.

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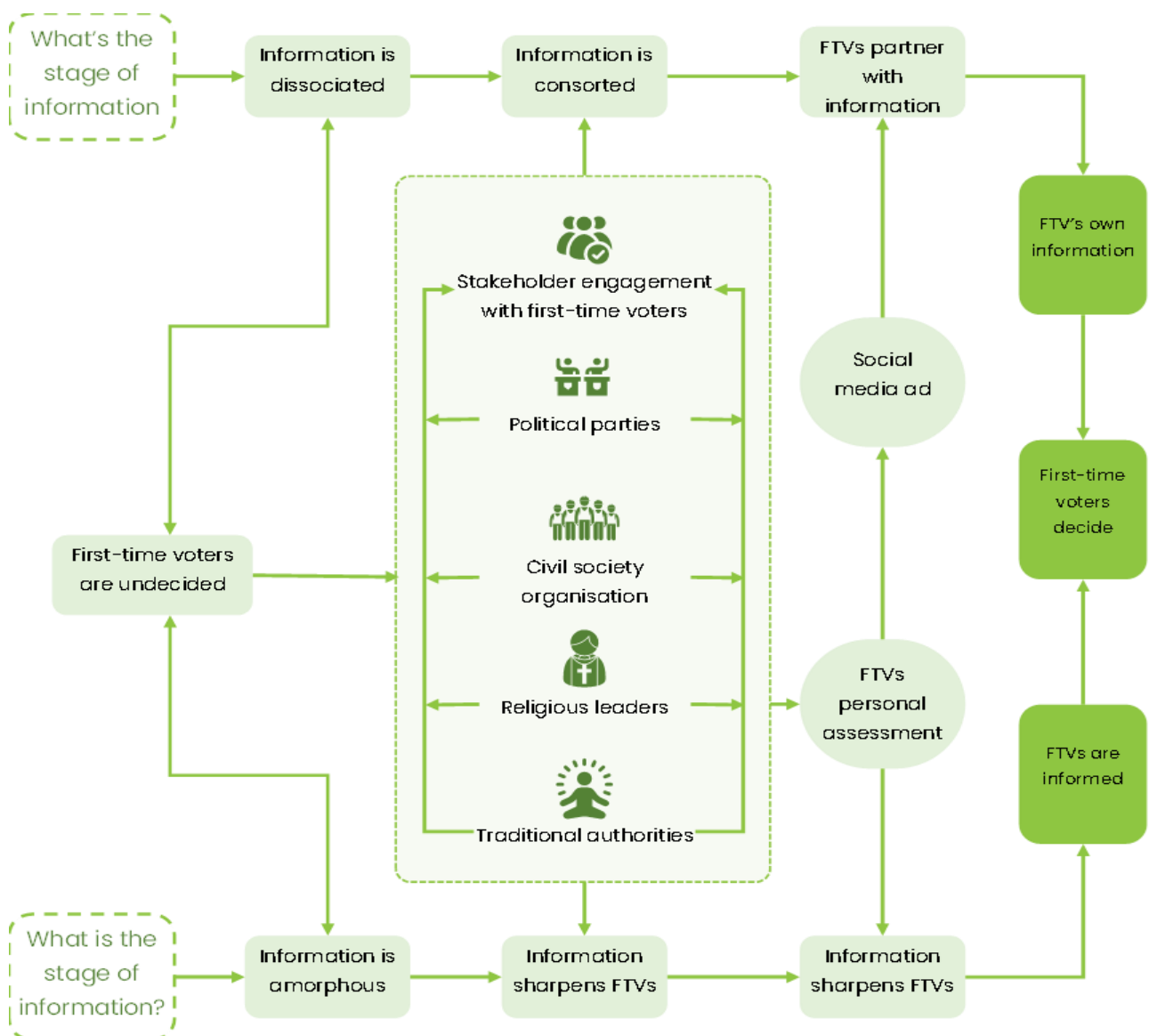
<sup>3</sup> 2021 PHC data on population 18 years and older is 17,931,673.

<sup>4</sup> The breakdown includes JSS/JHS – 234,032 (11.2%); SSS/SHS – 843,091 (40.3%); Secondary – 13,832 (0.7%); Voc./Tech/Commercial – 49,055 (2.3%); Post Middle/Sec. Cert. – 34,961 (1.7%); Post Middle/Sec. Dip. – 62,326 (3.0%); Tertiary HND – 241,830 (11.6%); Tertiary bachelor's degree – 510,753 (24.4%); Tertiary Postgrad Cert/Dip. – 58,104 (2.8%); Tertiary Master's – 32,918 (1.6%); Tertiary Doctoral – 6,670 (0.3%); Other – 2,828 (0.1%).



3. Develop and conduct surveys for research on how first-time voters' engagement with electoral stakeholders and interaction with a personal assessment tool for political party messages inform their decision, and publication of findings and reports to inform youth mainstreaming policy implementation and impact.
4. Develop a simple yet powerful personal assessment tool for first-time voters to analyse political party promises/programmes/policies.
5. Run social media adverts on how first-time voters can use the personal assessment tool to analyse political party promises/programmes/policies.

## PROJECT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Source: AHOY's construct, 2023.

## OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

### Assumptions

1. First-time voters are significant deciders in the outcome of elections.
2. They are naïve and inexperienced in decision-making.
3. They report a lack of political information.
4. Lack of political information contributes to their low voter turnout.
5. They are susceptible to misinformation and disinformation.
6. They may make an uninformed decision.
7. The uninformed decision may have a lasting negative socio-economic impact.
8. Electoral stakeholders together form a consortium of information needed for decision-making.

### Preconditions

1. The need for youth engagement and participation exists.
2. Election enthusiasm among first-time voters and higher turn-out rate.
3. The existence and role of information in decision-making.
4. Readiness and availability of electoral stakeholders in engaging first-time voters.
5. First-time voters must be assisted with assessment tools.
6. Social media is a fast and reliable way to reach first-time voters.

### Output

1. Electoral stakeholders' engagement with first-time voters will help them partner and own the information to make their decisions.
2. The assessment tool will help first-time voters to personally assess political party promises/ programmes/ policies.
3. Social media advertising will educate first-time voters on how and the need to use the assessment tool.

### Intermediate Outcomes

1. First-time voters will appreciate the role and need for information.
2. First-time voters will make an informed decision.
3. First-time voters will accept the outcome of their decisions.

## Long-term Outcomes

1. Sustained interest in elections among first-time voters as major decision-making responsibility.
2. Increased participation in decision-making.
3. First-time voters will be empowered to be critical or analytical of political party promises/ programmes/ policies.
4. Paradigm shift to politics of consensus building and participation of all citizens for the common good.

## LIMITATIONS ON SCOPE OF WORK

The first limitation of this project is the focus policy/ campaign message factor of influence on voter decisions. The project acknowledges the multiple factors, intrinsic and extrinsic, influencing/affecting voter decisions. Nonetheless, policy dialogue and coproduction culture must be pursued, and decision-making based on sufficient information must be instilled in the younger generation.

Again, like many political and civic education events, there is a risk of tension that may arise as rival factions meet. For this reason, it is important to emphasize that the purpose of this project is to explicitly inform the choices that first-time and young voters will make during the 2024 elections and beyond. Moreover, we recognize the fact that there may be misinformation and disinformation, which can negatively influence young people's choices. In response, this naïve and vulnerable group of voters will not be left to the convincing of party officials. Hence, the inclusion of relevant stakeholders to provide independent, and scholarly opinions on the assessment of party promises/ programmes/ policies and the electoral process.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

### 1. Mr Isaac Gwumah

Proposed Position Project Director/Principal Investigator  
Name of Organisation AHOY Africa  
Position in Organisation Executive Director  
Profession Market and Social Researcher  
Research Experience >10 years  
Key Qualification PhD Candidate  
Nationality Ghanaian

### 2. Dr. John Osae-Kwapong

Proposed Position Project Lead Consultant  
Name of Organisation Ghana Centre for Democracy and Development  
Position in Organisation Fellow  
Profession Political Scientist  
Research Experience >20 years  
Key Qualification PhD Political Science  
Nationality Ghanaian/USA

### 3. Mr Ransford Brobbey

Proposed Position Assistant Principal Investigator  
Name of Organisation AHOY Africa  
Position in Organisation General Manager  
Profession Political Risk Analyst  
Research Experience 5 years  
Key Qualification MPhil Political Science Candidate  
Nationality Ghanaian

### 4. Mr Bright Addo

Proposed Position Project Manager  
Name of Organisation AHOY Africa  
Position in Organisation Social Researcher  
Profession Political Risk Analyst  
Research Experience >5 years  
Key Qualification PhD Candidate  
Nationality Ghanaian

## **PROJECT ACTIVITY TIMELINES**

Contact Ransford Brobbey – [r.brobbey@ahoyafrika.org](mailto:r.brobbey@ahoyafrika.org)

## **FINANCIAL PROPOSAL**

Contact Ransford Brobbey – [r.brobbey@ahoyafrika.org](mailto:r.brobbey@ahoyafrika.org)



# Contact us...

 +233 30 254 2607/+233 59 497 0144

 [www.ahoyafrika.org](http://www.ahoyafrika.org)

 P.O Box GP 21250, Accra, Ghana

 112 Haatso Atomic Rd.| Haatso, Accra, Ghana  
Ghana GPS: GE2958748

 [enquiries@ahoyafrika.org](mailto:enquiries@ahoyafrika.org)

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