

# SAFEGUARDING GHANA'S PETROLEUM FUNDS AND ENSURING A RESILIENT RECOVERY

Before the coronavirus pandemic struck Ghana, the country's economy was relatively strong. A month after the country's first recorded coronavirus case, the IMF revised its growth forecast down to 1.5 percent. A significant drop in oil prices reduced expected oil revenues, on which Ghana's 2020 budget forecasts were built. With aims to reduce dependence on foreign funds, the government turned its attention to oil revenues to fund the pandemic response. The two funds holding these revenues were established to benefit future generations and balance the budget.

NRGI supported an active and informed national debate of the proposals, with analysis highlighting important concerns, including the lack of significant public consultation. NRGI also recommended that the funds' objective of inter-generational equity should be safeguarded through mechanisms to balance the budget. NRGI and a broader coalition of civil society and other actors raised concerns over the minister's plans to draw on the petroleum funds, and members of the coalition disseminated advocacy through the media following the minister's announcement and before a crucial parliamentary vote. Close coordination with the Public Interest and Accountability Commission was also key for NRGI's strategy. A PIAC position statement broadly supported and amplified the concerns shared by NRGI and civil society partners.

While officials tapped one of the funds, they decided not to use the other. The minister of finance acknowledged the need for "a national dialogue on withdrawal of moneys from the Ghana Heritage Fund." The issue has not been raised in national debates since. NRGI and civil society organizations' quick and united action led to this outcome.

