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### Gana'daki Kilit Sektörlerde Cinsiyet Eşitsizliği: Mevcut Gidişat, Sebepler ve Müdahaleler

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#### ÖZ

Cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin her iki politika ve Akademi çok önem kazanmış sorunlarından biridir. Soruna verilen dikkatin artması, hem kısa hem de uzun vadeli gelişime etkilerinin kitlesel olarak kabul edilmesinin bir sonucu olmuştur. Kadınları dezavantajlı durumlara yerleştirmiş ve böylece büyümelerini ve gelişimlerini azaltmış olsa da, çeşitli ülkelerde insan sermayesinin optimal kullanımını da tehlikeye atmıştır. Gana'da, kadınların genellikle ikinci sınıf vatandaşlar olarak ele alındığı cinsiyet eşitsizliği ataerkilliğe kadar izlenebilir. Gana'daki kadınlar çeşitli yaşam alanlarında yetersiz kalırken, üç ana alan eğitim, ekonomi ve politik katılımıdır. Bu makale, yukarıda belirtilen üç alanda cinsiyet eşitsizliğindeki mevcut eğilimleri tartışmaktadır. Aynı zamanda eşitsizliklerin nedenlerini de sorguluyor. Makale, Gana'daki cinsiyet eşitsizliğini çözmek için kabul edilen müdahaleleri keşfederek sona eriyor.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eğitim, Ekonomi, Eşitsizlik, Güçlendirme, Siyasi Katılım.

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## **Gender Inequality in Key Sectors in Ghana: Current Trends, Causes and Interventions**

### **ABSTRACT**

Gender inequality is one of the problems that has gained much attention in both policy and academia. The increased attention paid to the problem has been as a result of the mass acknowledgment of both its short and long term effects on development. While it has placed females in disadvantaged situations and thereby curtailed their growth and development, it has also compromised the optimal utilization of human capital in various countries. In Ghana, gender inequality in which females have usually been treated as second-class citizens can be traced back to patriarchy. While females in Ghana are underprivileged in various arenas of life, the three main areas are education, economy and political participation. This paper discusses the current trends in gender inequality in the three above-stated areas. It also interrogates the causes of the inequalities. The paper concludes by exploring interventions that have been adopted to resolve gender inequality in Ghana.

**Keywords:** Economy, Education, Empowerment, Inequality, Political Participation.

## Introduction

Gender inequality is a problem in Ghana that has gained much attention in recent years, as an impediment to the development of the country. The increased attention on the problem has been as a result of the realization that the holistic development of the country requires utilizing the human capital of both genders. Gender inequality has usually rendered many women disadvantaged in efforts to develop and harness their human capital. While various reasons have been cited for the existence of gender inequality in the country, the most widely cited reason is culture, specifically the patriarchal system in the country<sup>1</sup>. Patriarchy has placed men in a position of authority and reverence over their female counterparts in various facets of life<sup>2</sup>. The revered position occupied by men in the traditional Ghanaian society means they decide what happens in the home, workplace and other places<sup>3</sup>.

Other key factors that have been stated by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) are the absence of protective apparatuses for women and belief systems in the country<sup>4</sup>. To a large extent, men influence the reproductive health and rights of women who are their wives, sisters or mothers<sup>5,6</sup>. Gender inequality in Ghana, like in other countries have been maintained through generations, through the agencies of socialization such as the family, school, media, peer groups and society as a whole<sup>7</sup>.

According to IFAD, an organization that is invested in promoting growth in the rural communities in countries such as Ghana, Ghana is ranked 70<sup>th</sup> out of 135 countries in the Global Gender Index, scoring 0.6811. In considering key individual facets of life used in this ranking, the country ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in economic participation, 91<sup>st</sup> in political participation and empowerment, 104<sup>th</sup> in health and survival and 111<sup>th</sup> in educational achievement (IFAD, 2017)<sup>8</sup>. This shows that although its rank in economic participation is appreciable, there remains high gender inequality in the country. This paper focuses on gender inequality in Ghana specifically in education, economy and political participation.

## Gender Inequality in Education

Gender inequality is experienced in Ghana's educational system although efforts are being made to resolve the situation. Although the population of females in Ghana is almost at par with that of men as shown by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS)<sup>9</sup>, the educational system is dominated by males<sup>10</sup>. In the various mixed sex educational institutions in Ghana, with the exception of courses culturally ascribed for women such as home economics, the other courses

<sup>1</sup> Jayachandran, S. (2015). The roots of gender inequality in developing countries. *Economics*, 7(1), 63-88.

<sup>2</sup> Akita, E. M. (2010). *Hegemony, patriarchy and human rights: The representation of Ghanaian women in politics* (Doctoral dissertation, Ohio University). Retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 from [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send\\_file%3Faccession%3Dohiou1273265823%26disposition%3Dinline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file%3Faccession%3Dohiou1273265823%26disposition%3Dinline)

<sup>3</sup> Fallon, K. M. (1999). Education and perceptions of social status and power among women in Larteh, Ghana. *Africa Today*, 67-91.

<sup>4</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development (2017). What works for gender equality and women's empowerment – A review of practices and results. Retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 from [https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714182/39721405/gender\\_synthesis\\_fullreport.pdf/229358bf-f165-4dcd-9c4a-1af4f09ab065](https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714182/39721405/gender_synthesis_fullreport.pdf/229358bf-f165-4dcd-9c4a-1af4f09ab065)

<sup>5</sup> DeRose, L. F., Doodoo, F. N. A., & Patil, V. (2002). Fertility desires and perceptions of power in reproductive conflict in Ghana. *Gender & Society*, 16(1), 53-73.

<sup>6</sup> Schwandt, H. M., Creanga, A. A., Adanu, R. M., Danso, K. A., Agbenyega, T., & Hindin, M. J. (2013). Pathways to unsafe abortion in Ghana: The role of male partners, women and health care providers. *Contraception*, 88(4), 509-517.

<sup>7</sup> Jayachandran, S. (2015).

<sup>8</sup> IFAD (2017).

<sup>9</sup> Ghana Statistical Service (2012). *2010 Population and Housing Census (PHC)*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.

<sup>10</sup> Atta, G. P. (2015). Education inequality: How patriarchy and policy collide in Ghana. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 57(1), 11-19.

are dominated by males<sup>11</sup>. According to Jones and Chant, gender gap in Ghana's educational system has been there since independence, although the level of inequality has reduced now<sup>12</sup>.

At the basic school level, the gender gap is minute as most children in Ghana are taken to school due to some state policies. However, the gap increases as boys and girls advance through the educational levels. This is shown in Osei-Assibey's assertion that although there is gender parity among boys and girls at the basic school is perfect (95 girls to every 100 boys), it reduces as they go higher on the educational ladder. At the secondary school level, there are 88 girls to 100 males, which changes to 71 girls to 100 boys at the tertiary level<sup>13</sup>. However, the statistics below shows an improvement in the situation in the past which was worse than the current figures. For example, at the tertiary level, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) which was 0.58 (58 girls to every 100 boys) in 2000 increased to 0.71 in 2010<sup>14</sup>.

### Causative Factors for Gender Inequality in Education

Common factors cited for the gender gap in education in Ghana are culture, poverty and pregnancy. According to Tanye, the education of girls has not been paid much attention or encouraged in some Ghanaian communities because of the cultural belief that the education of girls is not as important as that of boys. This perception is dominant especially in the rural areas where the primitive traditional values, customs and belief system of the Ghanaian society still prevail. The little attachment of importance to girl child education has been born out of the belief that she does not require book knowledge to play her traditional roles<sup>15</sup>. Examples of such roles include giving birth, raising children, cooking, cleaning the home and working on the farm. With such mindset, the girl child's education is seen as a waste of time and resources by some people. However, this is changing over the years upon seeing the importance of education in the lives of girls and women, with many accomplished women emerging and demonstrating the importance of education.

With regard to poverty, the lack of resources in some families has led to the situation where some girls are not taken to school against the backdrop of the less importance given to girls' education. With such low reverence in some families, the education of girls is sacrificed so that boys can advance their education in instances where there is not enough funds to educate both sexes<sup>16</sup>. Beside the perception based on the little reverence given to the education of the girl child, this phenomenon is justified by the idea that the boy child is traditionally expected to take care of his wife and family in future.<sup>17</sup> Such socially ascribed responsibility therefore calls for boys to be educated and put in a situation where they can succeed and be able to shoulder such responsibility. For the girl child, it is expected that her husband will take care of her and her children in the future.

The pregnancy of girls and women has also contributed to the gender gap between the males and females in education in Ghana. This is one of the main factors that has widened gender gap between males and females at the secondary and tertiary levels. The education of many girls has been jeopardised due to pregnancy which impeded their ability to further their

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<sup>11</sup> Atta, G. P. (2015).

<sup>12</sup> Jones, G. A., & Chant, S. (2009). Globalizing initiatives for gender equality and poverty reduction: Exploring 'failure' with reference to education and work among urban youth in The Gambia and Ghana. *Geoforum*, 40(2), 184-196.

<sup>13</sup> Osei-Assibey, E. (2014). Nature and dynamics of inequalities in Ghana. *Development*, 57(3-4), 521-530.

<sup>14</sup> Ghana Statistical Service (2013). *2010 population and housing census report: Millennium development goals in Ghana*. Retrieved on 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 from <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010phc/Mono/MDG%20report.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Tanye, M. (2008). Access and barriers to education for Ghanaian women and girls. *Interchange*, 39(2), 167-184.

<sup>16</sup> Senadza, B. (2012). Education inequality in Ghana: Gender and spatial dimensions. *Journal of Economic Studies*, 39(6), 724-739.

<sup>17</sup> Murillo, B. (2009). Ideal homes and the gender politics of consumerism in postcolonial Ghana, 1960-70. *Gender & History*, 21(3), 560-575.

education. Although some girls are able to resume schooling after giving birth, others stop schooling completely due to the stigma related to being pregnant at young ages, lack of financial support and loss of interest in education.<sup>18</sup>

## Interventions

In their efforts to resolve gender inequality in education in Ghana, successive governments have adopted some interventions. The first of such policies is the Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education. Under this policy, every child in Ghana is supposed to attend school free of charge. This policy applies to only the government basic schools in the country. This policy compels parents to take all their children to school as it criminalizes parents' failure to educate their children at the basic level.<sup>19</sup> It also deals with poverty as a challenge because fees are not charged. However, there are other minor charges such as examination fee which parents are supposed to pay. Through this policy, there has been increased school enrollment among both sexes, and also breached the gender gap at the basic level<sup>20</sup>.

At the tertiary level, two key mechanisms that have been adopted are the quota scheme and affirmative action. With regard to the quota scheme, females are given predetermined quota of admission which is increased periodically.<sup>21</sup> This means that at least a certain percentage of students to be admitted into the universities and other higher learning institutions in Ghana is pre-apportioned for females to ensure that their number continues to grow, but not drop.<sup>22</sup> With the affirmative action, a deliberate attempt to correct the gender inequality in students' enrollment, special favors are granted to female applicants to enable them gain admission. Under this policy, males and females do not have the same grade point threshold.<sup>23</sup> For example if the cut off point for males' admission is aggregate 14, that of the females would be 15. These mechanisms are being employed to increase the enrollment of females, and over the years, they have paid dividend as female enrollment keeps growing.

Finally, although it is not a policy, mentorship has been useful in helping bridge the gender gap in Ghana's educational system. Under this, workshops and seminars are organized in the various schools where accomplished women and female celebrities inspire the female students to work hard in their education. These programs are usually carried out in the secondary and tertiary educational institutions in the country. Through these mentorship, female students are inspired to remain in school with the belief in the positive role education can play in their lives as it has done for the accomplished female mentors.<sup>24</sup> Mentorship has been crucial especially in ensuring the retention of females in schools, as the drop out of girls and women from school was rampant in Ghana.

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<sup>18</sup> Gyan, C. (2013). The effects of teenage pregnancy on the educational attainment of girls at Chorkor, a suburb of Accra. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 3(3), 53.

<sup>19</sup> Nudzor, H. P. (2013). Exploring the policy implementation paradox: Using the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) policy in Ghana as an exemplar. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(8), 933-952.

<sup>20</sup> Agbenyega, J. S. (2006). Corporal punishment in the schools of Ghana: Does inclusive education suffer?. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 33(3), 107-122.

<sup>21</sup> Atuahene, F., & Owusu-Ansah, A. (2013). A descriptive assessment of higher education access, participation, equity, and disparity in Ghana. *Sage Open*, 3(3), 1-16.

<sup>22</sup> Maanu, P. (2008). *Gender gap in access to Higher Education in Ghana* (Master's thesis). Retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 from <https://www.duo.uio.no/bitstream/handle/10852/31074/maanu.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>23</sup> Atuahene, F., & Owusu-Ansah, A. (2013).

<sup>24</sup> Boateng, F., & Nyarko, K. (2016). An exploration of the experiential perceptions of STEM women in Ghana about empowerment. *American Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 7(2), 42-55.

## Gender Inequality in Economy

Another arena in national life in Ghana in which high gender inequality exist is the economy. Gender inequality in economic activities has placed women in a disadvantaged population, as men have access to and control over more wealth than women. Dividing Ghana's population in quintiles based on wealth, 72% of the property in the fifth quintile is owned by men<sup>25</sup>. According OXFAM International, only 6% of richest people in Ghana are women.<sup>26</sup> This shows that the majority of wealth in the country are owned by men, at the expense of the majority of women. Considering that women constitute 49% of Ghana's population<sup>27</sup>, the aforementioned statistic on wealth distribution is disturbing. According to the Ghana Household Asset Survey (2010) (Cited in Oduro & Boakye-Yiadom<sup>28</sup>), beside men dominating wealth ownership in the fifth and highest quintile of Ghana's wealth population structure, they also dominate the other quintiles except the lowest one which owns the minutest wealth in the country. According to the survey, the lowest quintile consist of 40.7% males and 59.3% females; the second quintile consist of 53.3% males and 46.7 females; the third quintile has 50.4% males and 49. 6% females; whiles the fourth quintile consists of 58.5% males and 41.5% females.

Although many women in Ghana are engaged in some economic ventures, they are likely to engage in part-time or seasonal jobs which usually pay low wages<sup>29</sup>. Considering the three major economic sectors in Ghana, namely, agriculture, manufacturing and service, the agricultural sector happens to employ many women in the country<sup>30</sup>. Unfortunately for women and the entire nation, certain challenges encountered by women in the agricultural sector, mostly related to land ownership rights, compromise their production and income earning opportunities. This automatically means that many of the women working in this sector do not own much wealth. Women's access to low wages and incomes has undermined the efforts made to attain gender equality and women empowerment in the country, although there has been an improvement in the situation.

## Causative Factors for Gender Inequality in Economy

One of the main reasons for the gender inequality in income is that many of the chores performed by women are normally considered as unpaid jobs<sup>31</sup>. Within a day, women spend hours performing socially ascribed roles such as cooking, cleaning the house, bathing and caring for children. However, by virtue of such chores being domestic chores, women are not paid for executing them although it takes as much energy to perform such chores as it takes men to work in their payable capacities<sup>32</sup>. This means that although women in Ghana work for long hours, they end up earning little or no income for their efforts, rendering them poor.

Another reason is that culturally, many women are not entitled to family inheritance where there are males in the family. This has been a major factor for women's inability to own

<sup>25</sup> Osei-Assibey, E. (2014).

<sup>26</sup> OXFAM International (2018). *Ghana: extreme inequality in numbers*. Retrieved on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 from <https://www.oxfam.org/en/even-it/ghana-extreme-inequality-numbers>

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018). *Ghana Population*. Retrieved on 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 from <https://countrymeters.info/en/Ghana>

<sup>28</sup> Oduro, B, W. & Boakye-Yiadom, L. (2011). *Measuring the gender asset gap in Ghana*. Accra: University of Ghana and Woeli Publishing Services.

<sup>29</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization. (2012). *Gender inequalities in rural employment in Ghana: An overview*. Prepared by the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division of FAO.

<sup>30</sup> Amu, N. J. (2005). *The role of women in Ghana's economy*. Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

<sup>31</sup> Ferrant, G., Pesando, L. M., & Nowacka, K. (2014). *Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes*. Issues Paper, OECD Development Centre, [www.oecd.org/dev/developmentgender/unpaid\\_care\\_work.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dev/developmentgender/unpaid_care_work.pdf) (accessed 12 October 2017).

<sup>32</sup> Dako-Gyeke, M., & Owusu, P. (2013). A qualitative study exploring factors contributing to gender inequality in rural Ghana. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 481-489.

properties in a patriarchal society like Ghana. This is captured in Osei-Assibey's and Oxfam International's assertion that women are more likely to own few assets compared to men<sup>33,34</sup>. The male-inclined inheritance pattern and resultant little property ownership by women in Ghana has hugely affected their participation in agriculture. Although more women are engaged in agriculture, their lack of ownership means that their farm produce is limited compared to that of men<sup>35</sup>.

The few women in leadership positions in the corporate sector have also contributed to many of them being paid low compared to their male counterparts. Due to factors such as the women's low educational attainment and glass ceiling, the executive management level of many corporations in Ghana is dominated by men.<sup>36</sup> This means that the salaries and working conditions of many women in such corporations are determined by the male-dominated executive boards, which usually puts many of them in lower income brackets. Also, the payment structures in many organizations especially with regards to the bonuses are skewed in favor of the top managers. This means that the majority of the bonuses are paid to the male-dominated top managers, and hence perpetuating income inequality among the genders.

## Interventions

In order to rectify the gender inequality among males and females in Ghana with regards to income and ownership of wealth, some interventions have been adopted. The first to be discussed is the loan scheme that has been introduced by various development-oriented organizations and financial institutions in the country. Many women in Ghana have not been able to start their own business due to the lack or difficulty in accessing capital. Their access to loan facilities in recent times has therefore been crucial to their engagement in economic activities<sup>37</sup>. With such loan facilities available to them, some have capitalized on the opportunity to start their own businesses such as petty trading and engagement in the hairdressing and dressmaking businesses which are popular in Ghana's informal sector.

Beside the loan schemes, savings groups have also been formed in various communities in the country, to help women acquire lump sum capital through savings. In this venture, women are assisted to form groups in which they contribute agreed upon amounts of money for a stipulated period<sup>38</sup>. The contributions are then saved in savings and loans financial institutions in the country. This venture has been spearheaded by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work with these women usually in the poverty-stricken communities such as slums<sup>39</sup>. Such NGOs facilitate the formation of the group, group meetings, collection of the contributions and creation of accounts in the financial institutions involved. With their accumulated money, the women are able to secure loan from the institutions. This money then serves as capital with which they start trade or expand their already existing businesses<sup>40</sup>. Beside the deposition of the contributions in an account with a financial institution, some savings groups resort to give the

<sup>33</sup> Osei-Assibey, E. (2014).

<sup>34</sup> OXFAM International (2018).

<sup>35</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization. (2012).

<sup>36</sup> Gyekye, D. (2013). *Women at Work: A Study of the Glass Ceiling Phenomenon among Managerial Women in Ghana* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Ghana).

<sup>37</sup> Wrigley-Asante, C. (2008). Men are poor but women are poorer: Gendered poverty and survival strategies in the Dangme West District of Ghana. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift-Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 62(3), 161-170.

<sup>38</sup> Adjei, J. K., Arun, T., & Hossain, F. (2009). *The role of microfinance in asset-building and poverty reduction: The case of Sinapi Aba Trust of Ghana*. University of Manchester.

<sup>39</sup> Appiah-Kubi, J. (2015). *Community development in slums: Approaches and impediments in Ashaiman* (Masters' dissertation, University of Ghana). Retrieved on from [http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh/bitstream/handle/123456789/21347/Community%20Development%20in%20Slums.%20Approaches%20and%20Impediments%20in%20Ashaiman\\_July%202015.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh/bitstream/handle/123456789/21347/Community%20Development%20in%20Slums.%20Approaches%20and%20Impediments%20in%20Ashaiman_July%202015.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>40</sup> Appiah-Kubi, J. (2015).

accumulated monies to members of the groups in turn, until everyone has benefited<sup>41</sup>. The cycle then starts again.

The Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) cash transfer program which is a state intervention to combat poverty in the country has also been instrumental in bridging the gap between men and women economically. Although it is a family-oriented, women represent a key target of this program. This can be seen in the inclusion of pregnant women or mothers with infants as one of the eligibility rules for families' inclusion into the beneficiaries of the program.<sup>42</sup> As a result, many women are being assisted to overcome abject poverty, as they are able to supplement their income with the money provided by the programs.

Another program which has boosted females' participation in economic activities and access to income is the enrollment of girls and women in technical and vocational training courses<sup>43</sup>. Both the government through the Department of Community Development, and NGOs execute such projects. In the training program, many girls and women in Ghana have been engaged in income-generating activities through which they have acquired skills in trades such as soap making and bead making<sup>44</sup>. Beside these trades, some women have been trained in trades such as masonry<sup>45</sup>. Their acquisition of these skills has helped them to engage in trades traditionally preserved for men, thereby bridging the inequality gap between men and women in economic activities and income earning opportunities.

### **Gender Inequality in Political Participation and Governance**

Gender inequality in Ghana's political system is very high with few women included in government. Although some improvement has been seen in the increase of women's participation in politics in the country, there is still more work to be done to ensure gender parity in politics, governance and decision making in Ghana. Taking the December 2008 election as a case study, 20 out of the 103 women who contested in the parliamentary elections were elected. This represents a 20% reduction in the number of female parliamentarians in the previous government which had 25 women elected out of the 104 that contested<sup>46</sup>. Although there was a reduction in the number of female contestants of 1 person (104 in 2004 to 103 in 2008), there was a significant reduction in the number of elected women.

Beside the parliamentarians, women were also poorly represented in the other political appointments made. According to Tsikata, out of the 35 ministers appointed in the 2009 government, there were eight women (23%) while there were six women out of the 39 deputy ministers representing 16 %<sup>47</sup>. In the most recent general elections in Ghana in December 2016, out of the 136 women who contested in the parliamentary elections, only 37 were elected<sup>48</sup>. In effect, there are only 37 (13.5%) women in Ghana's parliament out of a total of 275

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<sup>41</sup> Wrigley-Asante, C. (2008).

<sup>42</sup> Osei, R. D. (2011). Reducing poverty through a social grants programme: The case of Ghana. *ISSER research paper, Ghana Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana*.

<sup>43</sup> Palmer, R. (2007). Skills for work?: From skills development to decent livelihoods in Ghana's rural informal economy. *International journal of educational development*, 27(4), 397-420.

<sup>44</sup> Appiah-Kubi, J. (2015).

<sup>45</sup> Thenguzhali, T., & Veerachamy, P. (2015). Occupational health hazards of women construction workers: A critical survey of the literature. *Language in India*, 15(8).

<sup>46</sup> Tsikata, D. (2009). Affirmative action and the prospects for gender equality in Ghanaian politics. Retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 from <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ghana/10484.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Tsikata, D. (2009).

<sup>48</sup> EU Final Report (n.d.). EU EOM Ghana presidential and parliamentary elections 2016: Final Report. Retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 from [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/final\\_report\\_-\\_eu\\_eom\\_ghana\\_2016.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/final_report_-_eu_eom_ghana_2016.pdf)



parliamentary seats. Also, in 2017, out of the 216 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCE), there were 36 women<sup>49</sup>.

Although the figures presented above appear small which they truly are, this shows an overall improvement in women's participation in politics and governance in the country. One historical decision that was made in the formation of the 2009 government was the appointment of a woman (Justice Joyce Bamford Addo) as the speaker of parliament, the first woman to preside over the house. However, although she occupied one of the highest positions in the country with regard to politics and governance, the value of her appointment was overemphasized by some commentators who believed this appointment offset the imbalance between the genders in the government, considering that the country also had a female chief justice<sup>50</sup>. Currently, Ghana's parliament is being led by a man although there is a female deputy attached to the leadership. This means that the earlier argument on gender parity cannot be made although it was not warranted during the time it was being made. The bottom line is that women are not well represented in the political arena. It is worthy of mention however, that the Electoral commission of Ghana is currently headed by a woman, who succeeded another woman.

### Causative Factors for Gender Inequality in Political Participation and Governance

There are few women in Ghana's politics and government because few women contest in the elections (out of the 1158 parliamentary candidates in the 2016 general elections, there were only 136 women)<sup>51</sup>. While this view is true, it is because women are not given the adequate support within their political parties to contest for political positions<sup>52</sup>. This support is in the form of finance, emotional toughness and protection of public ridicule and defamation of character which have become common practice in Ghanaian politics.<sup>53</sup>

Within the various political parties in Ghana, women have to contest with men for the various portfolios with the exception of those that deal exclusively with female groups such as women's organizer portfolio. While there are many qualified women to compete with the men for such positions, financial constraint has been one of the main issues that compromise their chances of winning.<sup>54</sup> This is against the background that Ghana's politics in recent years has been based on the show of wealth and vote-buying, and the fact that there are more wealthy men than women in Ghana.

Additionally, although some women although are qualified to occupy top positions settle for deputy roles in order to escape the spotlight. The fear of the spotlight has been nurtured by the insults and defamation comments made about women who are in leadership positions (International Republican Institute (IRI) (cited in GhanaWeb<sup>55</sup>). While such unwarranted derogatory comments have had no bounds, they usually challenge their morality as women, mothers and wives, as well as their competence on the job, a scrutiny which many men are rarely subjected to.

<sup>49</sup> Nyabor, J. (April, 2017). *Akufo-Addo names 36 women out of 216 for MMDCE positions*. Retrieved on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 from <http://citifmonline.com/2017/04/26/akufo-addo-names-36-women-for-mmdce-position/>

<sup>50</sup> Tsikata, D. (2009).

<sup>51</sup> EU Final Report (n.d.).

<sup>52</sup> Bawa, S., & Sanyare, F. (2013). Women's participation and representation in politics: Perspectives from Ghana. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 36(4), 282-291.

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## Interventions

Affirmative action is a key intervention adopted to promote women's participation in politics and governance in Ghana. In this effort, pro-women groups such as gender activists have championed the discourse on the anomaly over the years, and this has earned the public's attention<sup>56</sup>. As a result of the awareness created through such political action, some women have been appointed to top positions in the country. Such top positions include the office of the Chairman of the Electoral Commission, the office of the Chief Justice, the leadership of parliament and the Chief of Staff at the presidency.

Another effort that has been made to encourage the participation of women in politics and governance in Ghana is the reservation of certain parliamentary seats to female candidates. This has been done within the political parties. With this, women are encouraged to contest for parliamentary elections in the stronghold constituencies of their parties, where there is high certainty that such political parties will win. Through this effort, some women have been given the opportunity to contest in elections, win and be part of the governance of the country.

## Conclusion

Gender inequality has been one of the main problems that has impeded Ghana's development. This is because it has prevented the utilization of the fullest potential of human capital of the population, especially the female group. While women have been disadvantaged in various facets of life in the country such as cultural and religious organizations, its prevalence in education, economy and politics has prevented their development. In essence, this has impeded national development.

Although many factors have been cited by various studies to be the cause of women's disadvantaged situation in the country, the root cause is patriarchy which has permeated various aspects of society. This calls for the reconstruction of people's mindset with regard to the status of women which has been perpetuated by patriarchy. The government and civil society also have to encourage more women to rise up to the challenge of developing themselves and their country as a whole. This can be done by giving them more opportunities in leadership, decision making, education and participation in economic activities. Finally, the government should improve upon its commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of females in Ghana.



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