

**NETWORK FOR
WOMEN'S RIGHTS
IN GHANA
(NETRIGHT)**

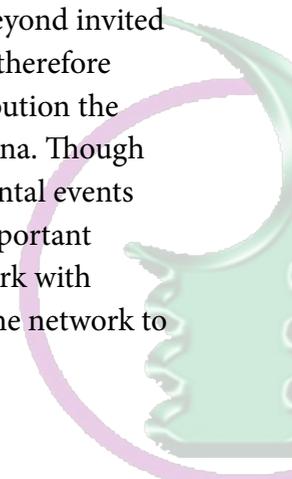
(Mobilising For Women's Rights In Ghana)

YEARLY REVIEW ON THE STATUS OF
WOMEN IN GHANA
(2009 - 2014)

PREFACE

This publication is a collection of NETRIGHT's End of Year Review Reports from 2009 to 2014. A significant contribution of NETRIGHT to women's rights and gender equality work in Ghana is the annual review event held as the year draws to a close. Instituted in 2003 with the mandate of members, NETRIGHT has used the public End of Year Review Event to share its work, highlighting achievements and acknowledging challenges with a wider audience beyond its membership. In addition to the review paper the End of Year Event includes awards to individuals and organisations for their outstanding contributions to the promotion of women's rights.

As a key event the annual review report provides an "Assessment of Issues of Concern to Women" in the year. All overview reports cover achievements, challenges and prospects and offer recommendations for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights work in the ensuing year. Reviewers are women playing key roles in the struggle for women's rights and gender equality in Ghana with a clear conceptual and political understanding of the issues they address. The rich information in the reviews enjoins NETRIGHT to offer them in a publication that can reach a wider reading audience beyond invited guests at the public end of year events. This publication therefore offers a rare opportunity to document for further distribution the rich store of information on the status of women in Ghana. Though the focus is Ghana reviewers capture global and continental events shaping women's status in Ghana. This connection is important because it offers the opportunity to reach out and network with struggles beyond our national borders and also allows the network to



feed into global events that inform the policy landscape in Ghana. NETRIGHT is grateful to all the reviewers, partners, the media, public and the entire membership and secretariat for their diverse contributions in sustaining the successful celebration of the annual End of Year Events.

It is NETRIGHT's pledge to continue to mobilise women cross the country to promote gender equality nd women's rights and advocate policy change.

Akua O. Britwum (PhD)
Convenor

Profile of Reviewers

Agnes Atia Apusigah holds a Ph.D from Queen's University at Kingston Canada with a major in Cultural Studies and minor in Curriculum Studies. She is currently an Associate Professor in Cultural and Gender Studies and the Dean of the Faculty of Education of the University for Development Studies, Tamale. Her research is in the areas of the political economy of development, educational reforms and policies, gender issues and indigenous knowledge systems. She is also a gender activist and member of the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) and the Association for Women in Development (AWID). Her work in the area of gender includes providing programming support to women's rights and gender equality organisations.

Akosua Keseboa Darkwah is currently the Director at the Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA) based at the University of Ghana as well as a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the same institution. She has served as a board member of the Ark Foundation, and is currently a steering committee member of NETRIGHT.

Angela Dwamena-Aboagye is a lawyer, a Christian theologian and the Executive Director of The Ark Foundation, Ghana. The Ark is a non-profit organization that provides psycho-social services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and runs a battered women's shelter, the first of its kind in Ghana.

Chris Dadzie is a senior lawyer, human rights and gender advocate, educator and a mediator. She is currently a Policy Analyst with

oversight for human rights and gender in the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC). She previously worked as an Army officer and Assistant Director of Legal Services in the Ghana Armed Forces, Director of the Legal and Investigations Department and later of Public Education and Anti-Corruption in the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ). She is a member of NETRIGHT, FIDA-Ghana, WiLDAF, Actionaid, and Ghana Association of Chartered Mediators and Arbitrators.

Hilary Gbedemah is a Lawyer, Gender Consultant, and Training Specialist – with thirty-seven years’ legal experience comprising private legal practice, lecturing in law, administration and advocacy. She is currently an Expert on the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) and has extensive experience in its thematic areas. She works as Rector of Ghana’s premier vocational law training institute, The Law Institute which provides training in Paralegal Studies, Corporate Governance, Entrepreneurship, Human Rights Law, and capacity-building for a wide range of organisations. Her work also involves advocacy, policy development, training, and mentoring. She is a member of several advocacy groups including NETRIGHT, Women’s Manifesto Coalition and the Domestic Violence Coalition.

Hamida Harrison has been a University lecturer as well as worked for many years in the areas of building and promoting a human rights culture and gender equality. She is the Resouce Mobilisation and Sustainability Manager for ABANTU for Development, a women’s rights policy advocacy group and a founding member organization of NETRIGHT. She holds Masters Degrees from the USA and Ghana in development administration and development communication. She

is very interested in governance issues and the gendered implications of Foreign Aid and Direct Foreign Investments. She currently serves as the Convenor of the Women’s Manifesto Coalition for Ghana, an advocacy platform for the political non-partisan document that outlines broad women’s rights issues of concern demanding redress.



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Since the year 2003, The Network for Women's Rights In Ghana (NETRIGHT) organises an End of Year Event to assess the extent to which women's concerns have gained attention in the public space during the year.

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Year 2009 in Perspective: Critical National Issues and their Implications for Gender Justice

– *Agnes Atia Apusigah*

INTRODUCTION

This year 2009, has been quiet an eventful one both, locally (national) and globally. For us as NETRIGHT and a women's rights group, 2009 has been special in our history of struggle. 2009 is a landmark year for us as we mark our 10th anniversary. We share this landmark with many others. Those relevant to us are the 10th anniversary of the 16 Days of Activism on Violence against Women, which we share with the Global Women's Leadership Centre of Rutgers University and the violence against women (VAW) movement, globally. Again, we celebrate 30 years of CEDAW; the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. There are probably many more global landmarks of interest. Locally, we join one of our network partners, Women in Self Empowerment (WISE), to celebrate their 10th anniversary this year. Yet another big celebration of relevance for us is the marking of the 100th anniversary of the birth of the first president of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. During his presidency, Dr. Nkrumah, sought to include women by, among other things, initiating and implementing what we now call affirmative action. He expanded legislative representation by introducing and enforcing the women member's bill which led to the election of 10 women representatives to the then legislature.



As we celebrate these landmarks and reflect on the roads that have been travelled, we are reminded of the hills and valleys but also the plains. We are reminded of our triumphs and setbacks but also our allies and detractors. All these have shaped the path on which we have travelled and should determine our maturity. Undoubtedly, NETRIGHT has matured in the last 10 years. Starting as a small network it has blossomed into a nationally and internationally recognized movement and activist platform of Ghanaian women working to demand and increase their rights and those of the disadvantaged many.

Indeed, we live in a period of great and grave turmoil. We carry with us in this landmark year huge economic burdens in the form of the global economic meltdown, as defined in the financial, oil and food crises. The triple whammy! While the worse of the food and oil crisis seem to be over at this point, that for finance lingers on, although with considerable reduction. These have implications on the form of development partnerships, programming support and project interventions for the many deprived communities and groups, especially women and their rights infringements.

The rise in religious fundamentalism, ethnic conflicts and civil wars and, lately the gradual creeping back of militarism and despotism in countries such as Somalia, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Guinea and Mali, all work to promote patrimonial and patriarchal leadership and ideologies that are not only detrimental to women's causes but also national, regional and global progress towards sustainable and equitable development. Yet, all is not lost as the challenges of the time have also unleashed activism that serve to clarify and intensify the resolve to demand socio-economic options that can result in dignifying living and sustainable livelihoods. The mobilization and exhibition of resistances around the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) of the European Union (EU) and recent climate change talks confirm the heightening of counter-insurgency on the



part of civil society organizations, activist movements and even Third World nations.

When I was invited to conduct the review, I gladly agreed but when I began to think of it, I shuddered as I became unsure what I could really say. I became alarmed when the guide arrived. It was a rather tall order. I wondered how much I could cover and the extent of depth expected of me. I hope you are not too disappointed. I can however assure you that I have tried to follow the guide as much as possible. I know however that there is a lot more that could have been included but pardon me to share this as food for thought only. In this review, I look at a couple of things. I start with an examination of the critical global, regional and national events that have been of relevance to us and women's rights advocacy during the year 2009. I then move on to focus on specific events that have promoted or undermined gender equality and women's rights work in Ghana. This is followed by a review of NETRIGHT @10, under which I look at our triumphs and challenges and continue with a celebration of our 'sheroes.' The review ends with proposals for 2010.

CRITICAL INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ISSUES

I will like to start off my proposing that as eventful as the year has been, in the general scheme of things we have not really shifted goal posts. We still have to contend with the same old regime, patriarchal machinery and architecture, which persist in undermining and retarding progress on social justice and gender equality. What we can say also, however, is that after 10 years and the specific experiences of the year, what has changed is our need and recognition to remain resolute in our commitment and strategies to keep the struggle afloat. This is not intended to minimize our gains and achievements or deny progress but to suggest that the struggle has become more and more sophisticated requiring sharper and more strategic tools.



We still live in a world where neo-liberal economics continue to dominate development thinking with the market place (in spite of its demonstrated deficiencies) and might of nations overruling any sense of justice and rights. While there is the general appreciation of justice and rights for all as provided for under global, regional and national frameworks such as the UN Charter, African Charter and national constitutions, these remain superficial. The same tokenism and lip service continue to characterize practice and to slow down progress. What has changed however is perhaps the resolve and agency of deprived and vulnerable constituencies in their resistance and challenge of domination as they intensify their demands for dignifying lives and rights to life and safe livelihoods. These are observable in the many events that occurred during the year, some of which I share next.

In April this year, in London, the United Kingdom, where the G20 Leaders Summit took place, reference was made to the effect that growth should be shared and not concentrated on a few. The third point of the Statement communicated to the rest of the world states that:

We start from the belief that prosperity is indivisible; that growth, to be sustained, has to be shared; and that our global plan for recovery must have at its heart the needs and jobs of hard-working families, not just in developed countries but in emerging markets and the poorest countries of the world too; and must reflect the interests, not just of today's population, but of future generations too. We believe that the only sure foundation for sustainable globalisation and rising prosperity for all is an open world economy based on market principles, effective regulation, and strong global institutions.

While the point is forthright at its opening on the need to take social justice and equity and sustainable development more seriously it downplays its own role in creating social inequalities and injustice. Indeed, social justice and equity are key issues that underpin our



struggle for women's rights and gender equality. Our advocacy and claims are staked on grounds of long but varying histories of discrimination and non-distributive benefits sharing, hence we should be lending total support to the G20 for speaking right. However, in that same opening statement one finds grim revelations. Basically, the G20 suggests that the rest of the world is a market place. Just after such honest and heartwarming tribute, the G20 soon puts on its traditional neo-liberal cloak to make prescriptions that centre on the same old globalizing and market principles, which purport to be free, open and equitable. In truth, those principles favour the industrialized world to the detriment of industrializing countries or emerged economies and the rich compared to under industrialized countries, stagnating economies and the poor. In fact they create and exploit the conditions of the poor to the benefit of the rich and affluent.

The same old paternalism is upheld as poor nations and peoples are left at the mercy of the handouts and cut-throat trade relations such as those offered under the EPAs. In spite of the unpleasant example of the yet-to-recover financial crisis and stark evidence that non-capitalists economies have held up better compared to capitalist ones in the face of the current economic failures and financial crises, the G20 persists in proposing the same old recipe. Their favorite admonition not to protect the market cannot be missed. Yet, it was to China that the USA turned to when it resorted to social financing to manage its economic crisis. It has been social financing that has shown indication of managing the grim situation and getting the USA economy on the path of recovery. Suddenly, socialist values have become viable and useful alternative to such a rabid capitalist economy.

A few months ago, the newly appointed British High Commissioner proffered similar agenda when on a familiarization tour to the University for Development Studies, Wa campus, Ghana he suggested



that we marketize our economy and liberalize our values, as if that was not the case already. Well, more is often better! It makes one wonder whether any lessons have been learned from the exposures of the weaknesses of the market model, which had appeared to be solid and unsinkable a few years back! Media reports show that China and Mozambique are holding up while huge economies and spenders such as the USA and UK are crumbling. That the USA had to adopt socialist strategies in the period of austerity speaks volumes not just to the resilience of the social justice model but also to the weaknesses of its competitor and dominator; the capitalist, neoliberal model. The collapse of the neoliberal model, which has been long criticized by anti-globalization and public interest groups such as the Green Movement, Social Watch and Corporate Watch was given impetus especially in the case of Africa with the publication of *Dead Aid* early this year by a Zambian and just exited UN system economist, Dambisa Moyo. Moyo's strong criticism of the inefficacy of aid in Africa's development, which she says damages rather than promotes progress, end in the suggestion to end aid to Africa. This has been met with mixed reviews. Her strongest critiques have been African development economists and civil society organizations, many of who condemn the weaknesses in her thesis and simplicity of her proposal. Yet, for the many African countries including Ghana who are dangerously aid dependent, the year-on-year anxieties over budget shortfalls, struggles with donors over controls and the continual trade-offs in national sovereignty and the disregard for human dignity continue to raise concerns for pro-poor development activists. Here in Ghana, the hiking fuel and food costs as well as the inflationary and exchange rate volatility issues are just a few of the spill-overs and spin-offs from the global crisis. The hiking interest rates and growing exchange rates have not only served to skew the national budget but also distorted the national growth path. Both CEPA (2009) and ISODEC (2009), in their analysis have expressed



concern, among other things, on the implications for social spending and programming. Both CEPA and ISODEC have been concerned about the implications for the pro-poor development agenda in terms of employment and incomes but also social spending, typically in education and health. Even the World Bank and IMF have been concerned about the slow-down of Ghana's growth and ability to meet its targets in the coming year.

Also, Ghana's much celebrated election success has been marked with expectations of stabilization and pro-poor deliveries that would benefit vulnerable and excluded groups. The election promises of infrastructural improvements, increased social spending, expanded equity targeting and the enhancement of practical benefits in terms of employment and incomes for the poor, enhanced living conditions and improved socio-economic circumstances are fast becoming a mirage. In place, the global economic meltdown has become an important explanation to the non-start of slowed-down responses to the critical livelihood support needs of the broader masses of the people.

Politically, we have witnessed political/ideological shifts in Ghana and USA although in principle it is the same agenda that drives both. The ascent to high office of Barak Obama, a democratic, as the 44th President of USA offered a lot of hope in anticipation of change in the role of USA in global politics. The bad taste and bitterness that characterised the latter Bush years gave many Americans and even non-Americans the motivation for change and expectations. The expectations of better appreciation of social justice, better global diplomacy and fairer trade relations especially with the Third World have been high on the wish list. Many non-West, especially Africans, had monitored the elections closely perhaps with the hopes Obama's USA, led by a person of partial African descent, will translate into direct interest in and fairness in its relations with Africa and its people. Obama's political ascendancy has thus marked a proud



moment and an era of hope for all nations and peoples of colour but especially so for Africa.

The Obama family visit to Ghana in July this year was thus well celebrated. The choice of Ghana over Kenya, the nation of Barack Obama's African ancestry and Nigeria the next biggest African economy after South Africa has been severally interpreted. Ghana's commitments to democracy: respect for ballot box elections, rule of law and human dignity as well as modest successes in socio-economic liberalization and track record of peace in an ocean of civil strife and mass conflicts, have been cited, among others, as motivating President Obama's choice of Ghana over others. The understanding that his life and experiences will guide his interpretation and appreciation of the realities of African peoples and their development as well as those of the rest of the Third World is suggestive of the expected sympathies to the causes and voices of liberation and struggle for inclusion and square-dealing in global politics and economics.

Similar expectations have been made of the Atta Mills administration, which came to office on the promise and appeal of improved politics and economics. The campaign promise to improve the plight of the deprived through the broadening and equitable sharing of national wealth remains high on the wish list of the masses of the people who bought into that appeal. For the women's movements and civil society who followed, monitored and participated actively in the processes of change, expectations are still high amid widespread criticism of lack of rapid response to pressing issues. For the women's movement, the promise of greater equity in terms of socio-economic benefits in the areas of health, education and trade but also policy and political participation are being keenly watched in anticipation that those promises can be fulfilled.

Climate Change



Another important happening is the just ended Copenhagen, Denmark conference on climate change. The tug of war and battle of lords and servants was brought to its peak at that meeting with much anxiety and uncertainty as well as promise and hope. I believe we have all followed closely the tussle between industrialized and industrializing countries. The controversial stances of emergent powers such as China and India and the role of Africa in resisting the dismissive and dominating positions of the industrialized economies as well as the special role of USA, under Obama in the negotiations and the resulting settlements. From Kyoto to Doha and now Copenhagen, the one clear thing has been the reluctance of industrialized nations to take responsibility for their role in global warming and climate change by acting responsibly to mitigate change by cutting emissions. Yet, the reckless materialism and consumerism and their implications for waste production, irresponsible disposal and deforestation remain important reasons for Third World interest in the climate change debate. The disappearance of forests and loss of agrarian livelihoods and the implications for farm families, pastoral peoples and poor women remain grave concerns motivating interest in the climate change debate and negotiations.

Although Ghana as a nation was duly represented by the president and his team and civil society as well, so was the women's movement in Ghana and elsewhere. Abantu for Development, a leading NETRIGHT member was part of the process and has come back hopefully to share and work locally to keep the gender factor in the discussion. The implications in terms of food security, environmental safety, fuel energy and bio-cultural diversity all have gender implications that the women's movement in Ghana and elsewhere cannot afford to gloss over. Our experiences in mining, logging, real estate development and commercial farming all have implications for the subsistent livelihoods of our constituents.

In this time that Ghana's Oil and Gas industry is emerging in



addition to the already grave concerns about the wanton exploration of our mineral sources through surface mining and the resulting loss, destruction and pollution of farmlands and water bodies by concessionaries must be watched. The erosions and losses attributable to this new and emerging extractive industry must be the concern of all but especially the women's right movement and our advocacy on sustainable livelihoods, human security and ecological balance.

Conflict, Peace and Security

Widespread conflicts and wars or rumours of them and the arising insecurities of the peoples who live in such areas across Africa should raise concern for us of the women's movement. The loss of life and wanton destruction of property and livelihoods are the plight of many generations of families growing up without any sense of peace time living. In Eastern Europe, Asia, South America and especially Africa conflicts and wars are widespread. Resource, ethnic and civil conflicts and wars abound on the Africa continent and in all regions; northern, southern, west, eastern and central Africa. The preponderant ones such as those of Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia and Congo DRC have made their mark in the annals of the continent. The now contained ones of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote D'Ivoire as well as the pockets of conflicts and wars in Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroun need to be still watched closely.

For us as a women's rights movement our concerns go beyond the material losses. The abuses that women suffer in terms of sexual violence and violations of the body extend our interests in peace and concerns about conflicts and war. The UN Security Council's 2009 Report on Women and Conflict captured the increasing and widespread use of violence against women and girls in the conflict areas of nations such as Rwanda, Congo DRC, Sudan, Somalia and Uganda. Not only are the affected and survived women citizens of



Africa living through the insecurities, material and physical losses as well as humanitarian crises, they are also likely to suffer additional violations such as rape and related sexual abuses from armed combatants, security forces, relief workers and fellow refugees. Here in Ghana, we live through our own share of conflicts and wars and their attendant violence. Even though Ghana has been celebrated as an island of peace in the highly unstable and volatile West African sub-region, it has its own share especially in the north regions and in the Dagbon and Bawku areas, specifically. This is not to discount the many others in the rest of the regions especially in the Volta, Brong Ahafo, Western and Greater Accra. These unstable conditions among already poor people, explain, among others, the continued impoverishment of the people even in times when the nation seems to be making significant progress economically. The violations of women and their bodies had hit news waves recently with incidences such as the witch camps of Gambaga and elsewhere. Yet such violations are not new.

Taken together, I can only say that the year 2009 has been one of struggle with implications for women's rights and gender equality.

IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

As already noted the implications are mixed, positive and negative. A number of precise and decisive actions and interventions have been witnessed throughout the year, that are worth celebrating even as we celebrate NETRIGHT and all the others that we celebrate today. Globally, we have witnessed decisive actions on the part of the UN and its agencies to respond to women's rights and development issues as well as gender commitments. For instance, in July this year, the head the UN, Ban Ki Moon recognized rape as genocide. The cases in Rwanda, Uganda and elsewhere were informative. This is good news even for us in Ghana, especially as we deal with the case of witch



camps but also the many other conflict-related violence and even beyond such as the day light rape earlier this year and the rampant raping of women and girls, lately. The Media, our key allies in the process, have helped surface such violation with reports involving even children as young as four years. NETRIGHT and some of its network members as well as MOWAC moved swiftly to condemn such actions through press releases and conferences. The Media have also been very instrumental in publicising such interventions.

On the 10th anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women and 16th Days of Activism, an initiative dubbed Men Leaders against Violence was inaugurated comprising influential men in politics, commerce and industry, media and high society, who have committed to champion the cause. Here in Ghana, the Domestic Violence Coalition, under a male leadership, has continued to lead and press for improvement in the handling of domestic violence among other forms of violence. This initiative extends growing recognition of the role of men or women's partnership with men to stop domestic violence and violence against women. Groups such as Men's Network against Domestic Violence, Seattle, Washington, USA; Men for Gender Equality Now, Kenya; MenEngage Alliance Africa and Ghana Network of Men against Domestic Violence are some examples of male leadership and work with women to end violence against women. This initiative dates back to the Beijing 1995 Global Women's Forum and the Platform of Action, which is up for the 3rd term review next year. In her recent book, Olivia A.T.F. Kwapong (2009) details the genesis, need and framework for men and women to work together for gender equality. Also, for us in Africa some key appointments should broaden our hope. An African woman, Rashida Manjoo, a South African Legal practitioner has been appointed UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. This adds to the earlier appointment of yet another African woman, Navanathen Pillay, as Commissioner of the Office



of Human Rights. Women in North Africa, the magreb, like others elsewhere, have also intensified their activism on citizenship and bodily integrity. Aminatou Haidar of the Saharoui Arab Republic's hunger strike to protest her return to her home country is one epoch experience.

Also, this year, the UN has hosted a webinar on the finalization of Women's Empowerment Principles. These principles are expected to guide the UN and its systems in their work toward greater gender equality. While we embrace such global efforts, we in Africa are already ahead on two counts. One is the African Feminist Charter and the various country chapters which set out regional and socio-culturally specific adaptations, respectively. The other is the Women's Manifesto Movement of Ghana, Namibia and elsewhere, which already make available such principles and more. During the 2008, electioneering campaign, the Women's Manifesto of Ghana was brought alive and cited by campaigners and promises were made. We will be tracking progress as the years roll on.

Also, as part of the preparation for Beijing Plus 15, African Ministers of Women/Gender have met in Banjul, the Gambia, to access and strategize for the global conference. This moment of accountability pushes the ministries as representatives of government and women to take stock but also align with the larger body to push the women's rights agenda forward. The flagship publication, the African Women's Report by the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) is revealing of the extent to which, African governments and institutions have been committed or not to women's rights expansion. This year's Report revealed among others "the difficulties countries are having with respect to the full realization of women's rights due to the persistence of negative cultural and religious beliefs and attitudes toward women" (ECA, 2009). This unhappy picture is an indictment on the commitments of our governments and leaders but more importantly vindicates our struggle for women's rights and gender equality.



Locally, some significant happenings are worth crediting this year. These include the appointments of women into public office following the change of government in 2008. While we continue to forge ahead in our advocacy for broader women's presentation and inclusion of women's needs, interests and aspirations in national development planning, it is worth acknowledging the progress that we have made lately in the form of the appointment of four women into Cabinet positions, namely, the ministers of Women and Children, Environment, Justice and Attorney General and, Trade and Industry. Although short of the 40% promised during the electioneering campaign, this has been an increase by 50% over the last Cabinet. Overall, however the trend remains the same. Women remain woefully under-represented in the ministries and public boards. In spite of that, we cannot afford not to celebrate the breakthrough in getting the first woman Speaker of Parliament.

Another important happening is the renewal of efforts to promote gender budgeting in Ghana. In 2005, the then Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, the late Kwadwo Baah-Wiredu of Blessed memory, adopted the gender budgeting approach. Efforts were made to pilot the process under the joint leadership of MOWAC and MOFEP in the Education and Health sectors. Capacities were built and plans set to roll out. With the current change of political leadership, an announcement has been made to scale up the process. We can only hope that government will tap into existing expertise within the women's movement and CSOs such as ISODEC in order to expedite action. NETRIGHT has already, under its Economic Justice Capacity Building Programme built the capacities of its members for organizational practice and programming support while awaiting the national level initiative which, we know, would benefit from our network expertise.

It also appears that the gap between the women's movement and the national machinery is closing up. Starting from the last



administration when collaboration between the two parties were invigorated we are seeing even closer collaboration. This augers well for the two parties in their harmonization and alignment of plans and agenda. It also aids the push for support and complementary in our pursuits. Indeed, as in the previous administration, the women's movement, with its strong belief in the indivisibility of the rights of women, strives to maintain a non-partisan stance. The movement has continued to take proactive steps to engage with government and the Ministry in attempts to influence and set common and/or complementary agenda. This year NETRIGHT, the Coalition on Domestic Violence and Coalition on the Women's Manifesto, did not only congratulate the minister but also issued a joined statement outlining their interests and agenda for the attention of MOWAC. The minister and her Ministry have since reached out in a number of ways to involve the Movement.

The continuous reaching out to build bridges from both sides is a well deserved effort. It places high the need to build on and work with institutions rather than parties and politicians whose terms are limited and who in their usual conquering posture and partisan enthusiasm are likely to throw out initiatives, even if laudable. It is a mark of our learning from experience of the uncompromising nature of women's rights advocacy and the need to sustain such commitments by building formidable links that can stand the test of time. A much earlier recognition and reciprocity would have saved us the setbacks encountered with the Affirmative Action Framework of 1998, which is currently being reviewed.

On policy, work is also ongoing regarding the Spousal Rights to Property Bill, which has been in the works for a while and currently waiting to be considered by Parliament. I have been impressed by the non-partisan approach of the Committee on Women and Children, the Women's Caucus and other institutions of the House and Legislature as well as civil society who are not only building



capacities and creating awareness but are also lobbying support for the Bill when eventually laid. A related effort to review the Intestate Succession Law would help improve women's rights to inheritance and property and thus serve to protect women's interests and improve their economic situation in and after relationships.

These and many more have and will continue to shape discourse and advocacy on women's rights.

NETRIGHT @ 10

It has been 10 years since NETRIGHT came into being. The well meaning and thoughtful women who conceived of and worked to bring it to being shared the vision of enhancing women's rights. Today as we look back, there is a lot to see. We can see the chequered road travelled filled with the trials and tribulations but also triumphs and inspiration. We could choose to focus on the pain, sweat and hurts. But, we could also choose to look at the positive aspects that call for celebration. Yet we cannot afford to forget the not-so-positive, for in them lie our learning. Ten years of NETRIGHT also means 10 years of the hard work that has been paid off with remarkable successes. NETRIGHT has matured into a responsive women's rights network that moves with clout. Its visibility and respectability, nationally and internationally, are attributable to its committed and persistent leadership and followship as well as sustained interest in national and international issues and the ability to participate effectively at both levels.

Our Triumphs

Through its movement building activities, NETRIGHT has over the 10 years championed gender equality and women's right causes in



critical global and national platforms, which would have otherwise been set by mainstream and/or patriarchal agenda. Significant among these have been NETRIGHT's leadership roles in the Aid Effectiveness discourse and actions. Not only has NETRIGHT lead the women's front in informing and mobilizing support for gender inputs in the country and the continent, it has worked side by side civil society actors and policy think tanks at the national, regional and globally to push agenda intended to serve the social justice and gender interests and needs.

Another area of tremendous triumph is NETRIGHT's involvement in the Oil and Gas discussions, which again, took off on the wrong footing by excluding the interests of the commons including women and local communities. While donors and government assumed leadership in setting the agenda, NETRIGHT, but also its CSO collaborators, worked on an alternative agenda which aimed at infusing gender concerns and social justice needs and interests in the industry. In addition to its campaigns, NETRIGHT is currently conducting a study on Gender and Oil and Gas Industry, which will be published for membership and broader sharing.

As a member of Social Watch Global and convener of Social Watch Ghana, NETRIGHT has been at the forefront of social justice advocacy in its generality. It therefore comes as no surprise when it naturally aligned with the recent Aid Effectiveness and Oil and Gas initiatives. Through research and publications, organizing, facilitating and participating in meetings, exchanging experiences on policies and programmes nationally and globally, NETRIGHT and its partners have not only challenged globalization policies and programmes but also articulated the specific histories and experiences of Ghana and of women. It has provided in particular alternative perspectives on the impacts of the much-toasted yet failing Bretton Woods programmes in Ghana. What is now considered the reality of the Ghanaian economy, the challenges of aid and donor partners,



had been known and articulated by NETRIGHT and its partners over a period in their country/global reports on gender, aid and the economic reforms, among others.

NETRIGHT has also established itself as an important lobby and advocacy group through its leadership, participation and communication of gender equality and women's rights causes. Its participation in international fora with other players, sharing of critical resources and information through its member listserv, outreach programmes and media encounters continue to draw attention to gender equality commitments, inform its constituents and challenge political actors on the issues.

Another major triumph for NETRIGHT has been its ability to work with and influence donors to put money into gender equality and women's rights work. A typical case is its encounter with the Ghana Advocacy and Research Programme, which now offers core and special grants for independent pro-poor development policy influencing and development. From a glaringly gender-blind programming start, G-rap has not only grown to respond to gender equality and women's rights organizations but also encourages its grantees to incorporate gender work in their support programmes. It took the mobilizing and resistance to Netright to get G-rap to that point. This is a major achievement which is not only benefiting NETRIGHT and its network members but also the pro-poor movement. Netright has been successful in mobilizing funds to support its programmes (research, publications, meetings, outreach and lobbies) but also partner with others and participate in critical international fora such as the Beijing Plus series, Committee on the Status of Women meetings, and Aid Effectiveness Fora with the support of loyal and trusting benefactors such as the African Women's Fund, Third World Network, Action Aid, UNIFEM and Global Green Grants.

In fact, the one area that NETRIGHT has experienced the most growth in the area of research and documentation. Our Newsletter,



Akobon, is a regular feature, which brings to the Ghanaian public gender discussions on national and global policy issues, women's experiences and network activities. NETRIGHT also as convenor of Social Watch Ghana publishes the Social Watch Report as well as the Status of Ghanaian Women reports. It also makes documentaries for trainings and sharing. Its resources unit stocks various research for member and public use.

While we celebrate our triumphs we cannot afford to forget our setbacks. I turn now to some such.

Our Setbacks/challenges

A couple of issues continue to impede our progress. These include our inability to keep up with the multiple demands on our advocacy work. The severely challenged context in which we work demands the full compliments of resources, human and material, for not only the rapid responses often needed but also the long term programming initiatives that can mitigate the inhibitors and transform our systems and structures toward the monitoring and support for women rights and gender equality. The NETRIGHT Secretariat remains very thin (two permanent staff) and depends on the generosity of network members and partners; so far Abantu and TWN. Space for growing and expanding to address the spatial needs for a rapidly growing network and the functional needs of staff, network members and women remain key challenges.

Also, in spite of improvements in tools, statistics and documentation on women's conditions, status and gender equality, there are still major gaps in practice. The tools are not widely used and effectively mainstreamed in national and organizational/institutional assessments. This will for sometime continue to pose a challenge for the effective monitoring of the situation as well as our process.

The political environment remains somehow ad hoc with



administrative changes tending to take a huge toll on agreements and plans. This situation does not auger well for progress. The entrenched partisanism, in fact what Ninsin has called absolute majoritarianism, and the tendency to start all over or wait-and-see tactics will continue to set back the clock and thus retard progress. As women's rights interest group, Netright has not got the time, energy or resources to engage in such perverse politics. Until such time that our democracy is institutionalized and nationalized with public or civil servants maintaining their neutrality and professionalism, the country will remain in this never-ending game of musical chairs. Unless such is done with rationality and technicality taking centrality in setting the pace of progress, the two steps forward one step backwards rhythm will continue to interfere with our progress and erode gains.

The growing incidence of religious fundamentalism: Christian, Muslim and Traditional, serves to block efforts to initiate discourse or engage meaningfully in negotiated change. This situation demands that we design sharper tools and convincing strategies that would help our partners who work in the area and in this growing unsafe context to mobilize women for their rights for effectively and safely. We will actually need to recreate ourselves in ways that would enable us to engage with progressive forces and support our partners in their advocacy and programming.

CELEBRATING OUR SHEROES

As already noted, there is a lot to celebrate this year and for the 10years of NETRIGHT's existence. We could celebrate our collective gains and individual achievements. We could actually honour the many silent sheroes but also the men and women who work together to increase gender equality and women's rights.

Collectively we would celebrate our gains in Cabinet, ministerial and public sector appointments. We could celebrate NETRIGHT's



triumphs as discussed above. We could also celebrate the Gender Budgeting initiative and the collaboration with MOWAC and CSOs. But would also celebrate individual women such as Her Excellency Justice Joyce Banful-Addo for being Ghana's first woman Speaker of Parliament, Justice Mrs. Georgina Wood for being the first woman Chief Justice and Mrs. Georgina Baiden for being the first Woman President of the Ghana Association of Teachers (GNAT). After over 50 years of independence women are yet counting our firsts. We could also celebrate the late Dr. Mrs Esther Ocloo for her pioneering role in indigenous industry and the founding of the Association of Ghana Industries, the late Madam Hawa Yakubu for being the sole opposition member of Parliament, 1992 to 1996, who represented the minority and kept hopes alive at the inception of our return to democratic rule. We should celebrate Dr. Grace Bediako, the Government Statistician for the transformation that we find in the Ghana Statistical Service toward the provision of gender disaggregated data, Miss Elizabeth Ohene for daring to challenge the excesses of the 31st December Revolution when all chose to hold their tongues. She tried her tongue! ACP Rose Atinga and Mrs Mills – Robertson for the exemplary roles in the Ghana Police Service, Madam Elizabeth Adjei for rising to the headship of the Ghana Immigration Service and Prof. Naana Jane Opoku Agyeman and Prof. Florence Dolphyne their pioneering roles in university administration in Ghana. Many such women might not stand up for women's rights but still justify our advocacy for women's rights; the right to education, employment, incomes and health. They will forever serve as role models for the many women in their professions, female students and the broader masses of women.

Yet still, we could celebrate the many women and their collectives who work silently under the most trying circumstances to improve their conditions and those of others, who depend on them even as they contribute to community and national development. They



include:

The Women of Bawku who are not relenting in their efforts to stop the conflict and violence and build peace in their families and communities

The many and varied market women who continue to demonstrate against ad hoc measures that throw them out of business and macro-economic policies that persistently fail to address the domestic food situation and the basic needs of citizens to decent work and wages. Assembly Women of the Northern Region who have already started their lobby through traditional authorities for the increase in appointments of women into next year's reconstituted assemblies Madam Adwoa Afra (alias I go to farm) of Dormaa who continues to show hospitality to the sick and often the neglected patients of Dormaa Hospital

The 2004 National Best Farmer who seems to have passed to oblivion Women along the borders of Ghana who understand the dynamics of cross-border trader and find ways to promote regional integration while our political leaders wallow in their egoistic defensive gradualism.

The Single Mothers Association of the Bolga area who process healthy local rice for the local market, which gives jobs to poor rice farmers, incomes to their members and markets for rice sellers

Women of Liberia whose role in the film "Pray the Devil Back to Hell" won them a JFK Profile in Courage Award (Leymah Gbowee, Vaiba Flomala, Janet Johnson Bryant and all the women)

Clitoraid and the Pleasure Hospital of Burkina but especially the women who are brave enough to go through the procedure. In this category are also those providing shelter for abuse, estranged or homeless women and children such as the Ark Foundation and the Widows and Orphans Movement.

ISSUES FOR 2010

The coming year promises to be yet another exciting year. While



NETRIGHT should be continuing to play its many roles there are some highlights must be keep in constant view. These include:

Gender Budgeting Initiative: NETRIGHT and its network members and collaborators will need to work closely to ensure that the scaling up is well informed but especially lend expertise to its implementation. We will need to work with the various ministries through and with MOWAC and the gender desk offices to ensure the smooth roll out of the programme and tracking and documentation of progress.

Legal Reforms: We will have to maintain our lobby and monitor developments regarding the Spousal Property Bill as well as support our members who are working on the Affirmative Action Framework and the Interstate Succession Law.t

Constitutional Review: The Constitutional Review process has begun slowly. We need to take interest in and participate in the process and/or sponsor our interested network members and partners to influence and make inputs. In particular the Article on women rights, which remains an apology needs to be completely revised. NETRIGHT's knowledge and expertise will be crucial

Local Government Elections: Early next year, ground works will begin and heat up as the year unfolds, as aspirants lobby and campaign for votes and appointments. NETRIGHT will need to keep its eye on the elections but especially make the necessary entries early enough so that aspiring women can be prepared ahead of their campaigns. The pattern of last minute support often becomes a weapon against aspiring women. Communities have tended to



capitalize of such to make excessive demands even as some male competitors manipulate voters to their favour by accusing the women aspirants as for being stingy and deceitful. May be we can consider making foot soldiers of students and national service personnel who can sensitize communities on women's political interests. For aspirants, we will need to spend some more time in their own political socialization which can guide their understanding, analysis and articulation of their agenda.

Engaging with Culture: The African Women's report is clear on the cultural inhibitions that limit progress on women's rights and gender equality. This signals a need to spend more time in that area. We need to conduct research that would help us understand the issue better whether they relate to land, economic justice or human rights in order to be able to engage more effectively with custodians such as chiefs, queenmothers and magazia, landlords, priests and household/ clan heads. Often due to our knowledge gaps we are unable to counter many of the lame reasons put out in defence of practices and ideologies that harm women. Indeed, it has become smart practice for Ghanaians to jump on the culture and tradition bandwagon when challenged on the rationality of harmful practices and ideologies. We should focus, this time round, on understanding those elements that support women's rights and use them to define and defend instead of continuing to concentrate on those that inhibit. The cue is that many traditions have been misinterpreted and misrepresented to deny women their rights.

Global Women's Forum: The Beijing Plus 15 is already here and preparations are already well advanced toward the forum. What I would ask is that we focus on our communalities more than our



differences so that quality time can be spent on jointly strategizing to increase women's rights. As women of Ghana and Africa, we know too well that such global agenda have helped push our local agenda more effectively than we would have been able to do alone.

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2

The Year 2010 in Review: Triumphs, Challenges and the Task Ahead

Akosua K. Darkwah

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am deeply honoured to have been invited to do the annual review for the year 2010. I am not a founding member of NETRIGHT and though I have been a fairly active member of NETRIGHT for the last couple of years, I have not been through the trenches so to speak. To have been asked when there are many women in this room more qualified than me to do this review felt exhilarating initially until I took a look at the reviews of the past and began to wonder if I could live up to the standards set by my predecessors. The guidelines NETRIGHT sent were little consolation. It made it quite clear to me just how tall the task was if I had any prior illusions or should I say delusions. What I am going to do in the next half hour or so is to provide an account from my perspective of the year's highs and lows so far as women globally, on the continent and in our dear nation Ghana are concerned as well as my sense of what we need to focus on in the year ahead. In so doing, I hope that I do justice to the task I was assigned.

1.0 Stories/Events of Hope and Disappointment globally

Three major international events of significance to women occurred this year. First was the official creation on the 2nd of July 2010 of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women also known as UN women, an umbrella organization that incorporates four organizations (the Division for the Advancement



of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Under the able leadership of the ex-president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, this organization will work to accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls worldwide by providing coherent and timely support to the UN Member States that request it. The importance attached to this new initiative is evident in the fact that Member States recognize that the organization requires at least US \$500 million, double the current combined budget of the four organizations it replaces.

As women's rights organizations, we should be indeed proud that the long struggle on the part of women's rights advocates for an international organization with the requisite structure and funding to serve our needs as women has finally come to fruition. In the years ahead, we can hopefully look forward to great policies and programming coming out of this new organization. The Executive Director has stated on the official website of the organization that "UN Women will significantly boost UN efforts to expand opportunities for women and girls and tackle discrimination around the globe." We hope that this will indeed be true.

The second international event of significance to women globally was the Beijing plus 15 review. At the Beijing conference in 1995, a consensus was reached to develop 12 critical areas of concern that would ensure an acceleration of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. At this meeting, each country assigned themselves a series of tasks that they were going to carry out in their respective countries. Every half decade, there was to be an international review to assess how each country was faring. This year marked the third of such reviews. Although this review process had long been in the making,



it was overshadowed by the mid-term review of the Millennium Development Goals, the third internationally significant event that took place this year. In the year 2000, the international community, both developing and developed, committed themselves to the attainment of eight goals by the year 2015. Of these eight goals, three impact directly on women: goal number 2 on universal primary education, goal number 3 on gender equality and empowerment and goal number 5 on improved maternal health.

Three others that seek to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (goal 1), a halving and reversal of the spread of HIV/AIDS (goal 6) and halving the proportion without access to safe water and basic sanitation (goal 7) impact women as well because the first incorporates the provision of decent employment for women and men, the second will impact women the greatest since they are more likely to be infected than men and the third will reduce the burdens women have in their attempts to secure water for their households. More than halfway towards the deadline, however, it is clear that while we have made progress on some of these goals, our achievements on others are pretty abysmal. Overall, the assessment is that unless donor countries and international businesses put in much more money, we cannot hope to achieve the goals set in the year 2000. Yet another international event that offers us a glimmer of hope for better things to come is the recently ended Cancun meetings on climate change. Unlike the case in Copenhagen last year where it was quite clear that the industrialized world was unwilling to make the changes required to ensure that we protect our shared resource, the environment, this year we finally have a situation where both industrialized and industrializing countries have come to some agreements on the changes that we need to make collectively to protect our environment for future generations. Agreements were also reached on official methods of monitoring, reporting and verifying the progress that individual countries are making towards



their respective targets.

A lot of progress has also been made on funding to make these collaborative changes possible as well as the mechanisms that will ensure that commitments to provide these funds are upheld as well as the appropriate structures and governance processes that will make disbursement possible. This includes a \$30 billion 'fast start fund' to be distributed by the end of 2012 as well as the more long-term fund, the Green Climate Fund of 100 billion dollars per year to be delivered starting by 2020. Other unique features of the Cancun Agreements include the formal recognition of the necessity of a date for the peak of global emissions and a long – term emissions target for 2050, as well as an admission that initial pledges by developed countries are not yet sufficient. While we now have the sense that multinational agreements on climate change is possible, it is important to keep in mind that this is not good enough. We need legally binding agreements which we as yet do not have. As Mark Kenber, the deputy CEO of the Climate Group, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping build clean energy industry internationally through both public and private sectors, put it, international climate change agreements are no longer on life support, but not necessarily completely healthy either.

Still on the global landscape, the increase in the retirement age in France from 60-62, the tripling of university tuition fees for British citizens and the huge cuts in social welfare as well as public sector employment evident in the Irish budget make it clear to us that the repercussions of the global financial crisis of 2008/2009 is far from over. Clearly the neoliberal model of economic development long held as the only path to development is showing cracks that should make it possible for alternative voices on development, voices that call for a development model that focuses on social justice. As African women who have borne the brunt of neoliberal reform, the ongoing unraveling of the neoliberal model of development should offer us



hope as we seek alternative models of economic development that deliver the goods to both women and men.

Finally, in spite of the poor representation of women in politics worldwide, every so often, citizens around the world, particularly in 'developing' nations such as ours register their belief in the ability of women to lead by voting them in as presidents. The newest group of people to do so is the Brazilians who joined the ranks of countries with forward thinking citizens when they elected their first Female President, Dilma Rousseff On October 31st, 2010 who won with 56% of the vote in a runoff election.

2.0 Stories/Events of Hope and Disappointment on the continent

At the continental level, perhaps the greatest news this year is the declaration of 2010-2020 as the African Union Decade for African Women. Spearheaded by the Women and Gender Development Directorate of the African Union, the goal of the AU Decade for African Women in the words of the Director of the Directorate is to rescue gender issues from getting dropped from the budgets of member states in a post-financial crisis world. Setting aside a decade for the continent's women will focus attention on accelerating the implementation and attainment of the goals stated in the various, declarations, protocols and conventions the AU has adopted.

Among them are four key documents which define the AU "gender architecture: Section 4/L of the AU Constitutive Act; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality; and the African Union Gender Policy – as well as the African Fund for Women. The African Women's Decade was launched on Oct. 15, which is World Rural Women's Day in accordance with the belief that, about 80 per cent of women in rural Africa will benefit from the



policies and programmes that will be developed over the course of the decade.

Over the decade, special emphasis will be placed on ten areas. These include women's economic empowerment; increased access to agricultural land, farm inputs, credit, technology, market and water access to achieve food security; improved women's health to reduce maternal mortality and address HIV/AIDS; as well as parity in education at all levels and in political and electoral processes. If this is not just about lip service and rhetoric, the African Women's Decade should signal a significant change in the quality of life of women across the length and breadth of the continent.

Conflict, sadly, continues to be a commonplace feature on our continent. It seems as if we are in a revolving door so far as conflict is concerned; each year, conflicts are resolved in one place only for it to erupt in another. In the last month, our neighbours in Cote d'Ivoire have joined the ranks of African citizens living in a state of fear and uncertainty. In the last week of November, the Election Commission announced Alassane Ouattara as winner of the run-off elections held a week prior. A couple of days later, the Constitutional Court, the country's highest court led by an ally of Laurent Gbagbo, cited irregularities in some areas particularly the opposition-led north and overturned the results of the Election Commission. The two men have gone ahead to swear themselves in as President of one country hours apart, despite the fact that only Alassane Ouattara is accepted by both the African Union and the larger international community (the UN Mission in the country, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, the United States, France) as the legitimate winner of the election. A week after the election had been held, people had already died in clashes. Thabo Mbeki, who had mediated a peace deal in the Ivory Coast when he was President of South Africa was sent in unsuccessfully to negotiate an agreement. The 16 member countries of ECOWAS then held an emergency meeting in Abuja, Nigeria to de-



liberate on how to proceed next even as Laurent Gbagbo went ahead to name a new government of 33 members. In spite of both ECOWAS and the AU suspending La Cote d'Ivoire as a member of both organizations, the European Union and United States imposing sanctions, the IMF/World Bank and the African Development Bank freezing financial assistance, Europe freezing Laurent Gbagbo's assets, nothing has changed as both parties dig in their heels refusing to give up the Presidency. As we speak, there is no sign of the ten year old conflict abating and already thousands are fleeing the country. As the country teeters on the brink of yet more chaos, we can only begin to imagine the impact this will have as families are torn apart and women are saddled with bearing the brunt of the responsibility of putting soul and body together in a society where chaos reigns.

3.0 Stories/Events of Hope and Disappointment nationally

At the national level, we have had many achievements and challenges. Let me start with the good news first. NETRIGHT as usual had a busy year engaging both local and international processes of various kinds. Locally, we continued with our outreach programmes focusing this year on women's labour rights and social security in view of the social security reforms currently under way. To build our capacity as members of the network, we also held our first and very successful Economic Justice Capacity Building Programme.

In continuation of our Gender, Oil and Gas project, along with our partner organisations such as ABANTU, ATWAAR, the Gender Centre and WISE, we carried out advocacy to engender the policies and legislative frameworks for the country's emerging oil and gas industry. Among other things, we disseminated information about the gender implications of the oil industry around the world as well as within our existing bills to various groupings including media personnel. We also have shared our concerns with the Parliamentary Select Committee on Gender and Children for onward submission to the house. Internationally, we continued with our work of the past



such as participating in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women meetings and as Convenor of Social Watch Ghana, we coordinated the production of the Social Watch Ghana 2010 report as well as hosted regular Social Watch Ghana meetings. In addition, we coordinated the NGO version of the Beijing plus 15 report. Campaign for Female Education (Camfed-Ghana) also represented NETRIGHT at the Africa launch of the Working Group on Education where a roadmap of how to advocate and influence education policy to make it more responsive to girls/women's needs and interests was drawn. This year, our status as a firmly established and credible, non-partisan organization that works for women's rights has been widely acknowledged both in the country and across the continent. Thus, at the national level, we led the engagement of women's rights organisations in the constitutional review process. On the regional level, FEMNET partnered with us to hold a West Africa wide meeting that allowed women's groups from across the sub-region to discuss the Beijing plus 15 reviews and strategise on how to make sure that the African Women's Decade makes a difference in women's lives.

3.1 Assessing our record with respect to the MDGs¹

Since the MDG targets are set for 2015, this year marks more than the halfway point and achievements at this stage determines largely the extent to which the goals will be met by 2015. Overall, Africa's record is not great. An assessment of Ghana's record shows the following:

On Goal 1, Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger, Ghana is largely on track in achieving the target of reducing by half the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty. The overall poverty rate has declined substantially over the past two decades from 51.7% in 1991/92 to 28.5% in 2005/2006, indicating that the target of 26%

¹ This section draws heavily on Kofi Ahovi's blog.



could be achieved well ahead of the 2015 deadline. Similarly, the proportion of the population living below the extreme poverty line declined from 36.5% to 18.2% over the same period, already below the target of 19% expected by 2015. The report, however, notes that the high economic growth that has led to the decreases in the percentage of the population living in extreme poverty has not necessarily been consistent with improved human development indicators as the country continues to face challenges with health and other social services. In addition, disparities in regional and district poverty levels remain. On child malnutrition, Ghana has made progress with respect to the prevalence of children suffering from wasting and stunting. The incidence of wasting has declined from a peak level of 11.4% in 1993 to 5.3% in 2008, while the percentage of underweight children has declined from about 31% in 1988 to 13.9% in 2008, thereby achieving the MDG 1, target 3 of reducing by half the proportion of children under-five who are underweight. Even though the proportion of children aged 0-35 months, suffering from stunting, reduced further from 29.9% in 2003 to 28% in 2008, extra effort will be required in order to achieve the national target of 15% by 2015.

With respect to the second Goal which is to achieve Universal Primary Education, Ghana has made significant improvements particularly in the areas of basic school enrolment and the country is on track to achieving both the gross and net enrolment targets of 100% by 2015. At the kindergarten (KG) level, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) increased from 55.6% in 1991 to 89.9% in 2008, while at the Primary level GER increased from 74% in 1991 to 95.20% in 2008. At the Junior High School level, however, there has only been a marginal increase in GER from 70.2% in 1991 to 78.80% in 2008. The Upper West and Upper East Regions registered the most significant increase in the GER for the period 1998 to 2008, for primary level, while Ashanti and Volta regions recorded the least in improvements in GER over the same period.



Similar to the GER, the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) recorded increases across the country from 69.2% in 2005/06 and further to 83.7% in 2007/08 at the primary level. The case was, however, different at the Junior High School level with NER increasing from 52.4% in 2006/07 to only 53.4% in 2007/08 indicating a slow progress in relation to the 2015 target of 58.4%. Male NER has always been higher than the female NER at all levels. The NER in the deprived districts also increased from 74.51% in 2006/07 to 77.9% in 2007/08 at the primary level and 41.6% to 43.8% at the Junior High School level during the same period.

Despite the increasing GER and NER, survival/completion rate at the primary level declined from 83.2% in 2003/04 to 75.6% in 2005/06, even though it recovered to 88.0% in 2007/08. At the Junior High School (JHS) level, the survival rate also declined from 86% in 2003/04 to 64.9% in 2006/07 but increased to 67.7% in 2007/08. The survival rate among female pupils is lower than male pupils at both the primary and JHS levels. While the survival rate increased from 85.1% in 2003/04 to 88.9% in 2007/08 among male pupils at the primary school level, it increased from 81.1% to only 82.4% among female pupils over the same period. At the JHS level, between 2003/2004 and 2007/2008, the survival rate among male pupils declined from 88% to 72.4% in 2007/08 and from 83.7% to 62.9% over the same period among the female pupils.

With Goal 3, efforts have been made with respect to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment so far as education is concerned. The trends show that Ghana is on track in achieving the targets of gender parity especially at the Primary and Junior High school (JHS) levels although primary level parity has stagnated at 0.96 since 2006/07, while parity at the JHS level increased slightly from 0.91 in 2006/07 to 0.92 in 2007/08. On the other hand, the parity at kindergarten level declined slightly from 0.99 in 2006/07 to 0.98 in 2007/08. Considering the trend, there is a very high possibility



that the 2015 target of ensuring gender parity especially at the kindergarten and primary school level can be attained. For the junior high school level, however, it is doubtful that gender parity will be achieved considering how slowly the numbers are inching forward on that one. Gender parity at the secondary and tertiary levels are also unlikely to be achieved by the target date of 2015.

While fairly good progress has been made with regards to gender parity in basic education, the same cannot be said for women in public life. The progress towards increasing the number of women in public life, particularly in the house of parliament suffered a setback with the reduction of the number of women elected into Parliament during the 2008 elections. The proportion of seats held by women in Parliament in 2009 was 8.7% (20). This was an almost twenty percent decline from the figure of 10.9% (25) which represented the percentage of female parliamentarians in 2005. Ghana ratified the African Charter on Elections, Democracy and Governance on the 22nd of July 2010 becoming one of seven countries on the continent to have signed on to ensure gender parity in our governance structures. This, in addition to our commitments during the African Women's Decade may be what it finally takes to get us to move these numbers upwards substantially.

Ministry of Health Records in 2008 shows that there has been significant reduction in both infant and under-five mortality rates with respect to Goal 4. The under-five mortality rate declined from 111 per 1000 live births in 2003 to 80 per 1000 live births in 2008. However, Ghana is unlikely to meet the 2015 target of reducing the child mortality rates to 53 deaths per 1000 live births unless coverage of effective child survival interventions is increased. The infant mortality rate dropped from 64 per 1000 live births in 2003 to 50 per 1000 live births in 2008. The neonatal mortality rate has also seen a decrease from 43 per 1000 live births in 2003 to 30 per 1000 live births in 2008. According to Ministry of Health Records The proportion of children



aged 12-23 months who received the measles vaccine increased from 83% in 2003 to 90% in 2008 showing an improvement of the coverage of one of the key child survival interventions.

With respect to goal 5, reductions in the maternal mortality rate, survey and institutional data show progress over the last two decades. However, the pace has been slow. Between 1990 and 2005, the maternal mortality rate reduced from 740 per 100,000 live births to 503 per 100,000 live births. It declined further to 451 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008. If the current trends continue, maternal mortality will be reduced to only 340 per 100,000 by 2015 instead of the MDG target of 185 per 100,000 by 2015. Unless extreme efforts are made by all stakeholders, Ghana is unlikely to meet the target. That we may very well not achieve this target is worrisome considering that maternal health-related issues are the second most common cause of death among Ghanaian women within the reproductive age (Sedgh 2010) with hemorrhage and unsafe abortions accounting for 24% and 15% respectively of these deaths in some accounts and as much as 30% of these deaths related to unsafe abortions in other accounts (Baiden et al 2006).

Goal 6 aims at halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS. In Ghana, females are the most infected accounting for 147,958 out of the 250,829 people infected. The prevalence rate is high amongst pregnant women. Annual deaths as a result of HIV/AIDS dropped to 17,244 in 2008 from 18,396 in 2007, though females still account for the largest portion of people dying from HIV/AIDS. The age groups 24-29 years also recorded the highest prevalence rate although this declined from 4.2% in 2006 to 3.0% in 2008. HIV prevalence rate is highest in the Eastern region recording 4.2% in 2008 as against 1.1% in the Northern region. With respect to prevalence rates, the National Aids Control Programme has documented that the HIV prevalence rate slowed down after peaking at 3.6% in 2003. It then declined to 3.2% in 2006 and further dropped to 2.2% in 2008 but increased



to 2.9% in 2009. Given this trend, Ghana has to sustain the various efforts already underway to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in order to meet the targets we have set for ourselves by the year 2015, the target deadline for the MDGs.

Ghana is not on course to achieve MDG 7 in full. Ghana is on track of achieving the target on halving the proportion without access to safe water. The proportion of the Ghanaian population that uses improved drinking water has increased significantly from 56% in 1990 to 83.8% in 2008. The proportion of Ghanaians without access to improved water sources was thus reduced from 44% in 1990 to 16.2% in 2008. Ghana has therefore already met its goal of 22% ahead of the 2015 target.

Critical challenges, however, exist in achieving the target of reducing the proportion of people without access to improved sanitation. Even though national coverage for improved sanitation has increased from 4% in 1993 to 12.4% in 2008, reducing the proportion of the population without access to improved sanitation will reach 21.2% by 2015 instead of 52%, while the proportion of the urban population with access to improved sanitation will be 23.4% instead of 55% by 2015. In the rural areas, only 20.6% would have access to improved sanitation instead of 50.5%. In summary then, as shown in table 1 below, of 14 expanded goals based on the 8 MDGs, Ghana has achieved 5 so far, is on course to achieve 2 others but unlikely to achieve 7. In other words, we would have done half of what we set out to do in the year 2000. This record, a mixed bag of successes on some fronts and failures on an equal number of fronts, is disappointing.

**Table 1: Summary of Ghana's attainment of the MDGS by 2015**

Goal	Achieved as at 2010	Achievable by 2015	Achievable by 2015
Halving proportion of people living in extreme poverty	X		
Halving proportion of children under 5 who are wasting	X		
Halving proportion of children under 5 who are underweight	X		
Halving proportion of children under 5 who are stunting			X
Gross enrolment targets of 100% at primary level	X		
Gross enrolment targets of 100% at junior high school level			X
Gender parity ratio of 1.0 at primary level			X



Gender parity ratio of 1.0 at junior high school level and above		X	X
Gender parity in public life			X
Halving of under five mortality rate			X
Halving the maternal mortality rate			X
Halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS			
Halving proportion of population without access to safe drinking water	X		
Halving proportion of population without access to safe drinking water			X



3.2 The Oil Industry

In the year 2007, when our fiftieth anniversary as an independent state coincided with the discovery of oil in the country, then President J. A. Kufuor noted with great optimism: 'oil is money and we need money to do the schools, the roads, the hospitals...Even without oil we are doing so well already. Now, with oil as a shot in the arm, we're going to fly' (Gary 2009:5).

The extent to which our euphoria in 2007 upon the discovery of viable oil fields is warranted is going to be tested in the years ahead. Exactly a week ago today, on the 15th of December, we celebrated the first barrel of oil drilled from Ghana. Sale on the international market is going to begin soon. The words of optimism from ex-President Kufuor have been continued under the current administration. Next year, according to President Atta-Mills, is going to be an action year and we, female and male, rural and urban dwellers alike are all going to see visible signs of development. All these pronouncements about pro-poor programmes and services that would benefit our vulnerable and excluded groups better be true. Our oil discovery coupled with the contestation over whether or not we are truly a middle income country will mean dwindling economic resources from our development partners both at the state and civil society level. If the resource gap left by our partners is not adequately filled by the Ghanaian state, resources used to improve the lives of Ghanaian women will be sorely lacking. This will be worsened by the inability for CSOs and NGOs that work on women's rights to find the resources they need to run their various projects.

Secondly, as we develop our oil industry, it is also imperative that we keep harping on the need to ensure that in drilling this resource, adequate measures are taken to prevent environmental destruction and that when this destruction takes place, the relevant agencies (the guilty companies, the Environmental Protection Agency and



any other relevant agencies) will respond quickly to remedy the situation. Work done by Akabzaa (2001) on the Wassa West District of Ghana shows very clearly that being a mineral rich district has its disadvantages; among other things, this district has the highest rates of tuberculosis and malaria in the country. Clearly, our record on mining leaves a lot to be desired and it is important that we learn lessons from this sector to improve our oil sector.

Third, The Western Region is set to be transformed greatly in the coming years. This year, there has been talk about tearing down market circle to build a storey building more befitting of an oil city; the building of an airport and of a mall, the construction of high rise buildings and so on. Little has, however, been heard of the potential for loss of livelihoods of a whole range of workers: not just fishermen who can no longer fish near where the oil rigs are located but also fishmongers who can no longer sell the fish that the fishermen catch, traders at Market Circle and so on.

3.3 Celebrating our heroes

This year, there were many opportunities to celebrate our achievements and successes as individuals and organizations. Individual women both in and out of our networks achieved milestones that will ensure that their names go down in history both internationally and nationally. Two such figures are Mary Chinery-Hesse and Yaa Ntiamoah-Baidu. Mary Chinery-Hesse has been appointed as the West African representative on the African Union (AU) Panel of the Wise and will serve a three year term beginning in August of this year. In addition, she won what has been referred to as Asia's version of the Nobel Prize, the Gusi Peace Prize for International Diplomacy and Humanitarianism in November 2010 for her exemplary contributions to human rights, scientific discoveries, performing arts, medicine, economics, and



internationalism. Yaa Ntiamoah Baidu, became the Pro-Vice Chancellor in charge of Organisation, Research, Innovation and Development (ORID) at the University of Ghana. In addition to being the first person to hold that position, it makes her the second female pro-vice chancellor in the history of tertiary education in Ghana. Many of us in this room as NETRIGHT members also chalked individual successes this year. I celebrate all of you but would like to mention specifically 2 steering committee members who have achieved milestones in their academic careers this year. The convenor finished her doctorate this year and one other steering committee member joined the select few of Ghanaian women professors. Although several congratulatory messages have already gone round, I want to put our congratulations on record officially. So Ayekoo once again to Dr. Britwum and Prof. Tsikata.

One institution also marked a decade of exemplary work this year. The African Women's Development Fund celebrated a decade of success with well deserved pomp and pageantry including an address by her Excellency Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf at Ghana's only five star hotel, the La Palm Beach Hotel. Why ever not?; it marked a decade of women's lives improved in many different ways because of targeted funding made available to them. Many other NGOs and CSOs that work on women's rights may not necessarily have reached a milestone in terms of years of existence. Nonetheless, they deserve celebration too. These organizations either provide services for vulnerable women of all walks of life as well or work to ensure women's rights in the country. These include the more well known ones like ABANTU for Development, Gender Centre, WISE, the Ark Foundation and so on operating from the capital city as well as the many smaller ones dotted all around the country who may not be heard of often but nonetheless plod along day in, day out to ensure that women's lives are improved in one way or the other. I celebrate each one of these organizations today for in working this year, shelter was provided to



survivors of domestic violence who would have had nowhere else to go, financial support offered others who had nowhere else to turn and various policy makers in this country sensitized to the importance of remembering that our population includes both women and men and that much of what happens at the state level ignores the differential impact on these two groups of citizens.

3.4 The Stories of Sadness

This year, we lost one female MP, decreasing our abysmal 8.7% of women in parliament even lower to 8.3 and landing us in the 110th position out of 186 countries ranked by the Inter Parliamentary Union. In addition, Theresa Tagoe, a two time MP also passed away in the last week of November, 2010. Like Hawa Yakubu of blessed memory, these women who stood and won parliamentary election seats more than once were a storehouse of information vital to our understanding of women in politics that we have as yet not tapped. As happens ever so often in this country, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly, in their continuing bid to ‘modernise’ the city evicted hawkers in Accra from parts of the central business district. And as usual, NETRIGHT responded reminding the AMA to treat the traders as citizens with rights to a decent living and not as a nuisance. While some traders faced eviction this year, other traders suffered huge financial losses due to fire outbreaks. Fire gutted the Makola market No. 2 leading to losses affecting 800 traders. This points to the need to develop our market infrastructure in a way that makes it possible to reduce the incidence of fires and when they develop to curb its devastating effects.

The precarious nature of women’s livelihoods in Ghana was not the only thing evident this year in the evictions and fire outbreaks. The livelihood struggles and decision-making battles that take place in households across the country as women negotiate successfully or



unsuccessfully with their partners to see to it that the needs of their children are met was also apparent in the many stories making the headlines this year. One such story reported how women in Nadowli district openly accused their husbands of spending too much on alcohol and too little on their children’s needs, especially their daughters’ education. A third set of stories this year highlighted the just how pervasive violence against women and children is in this country. Stories of violence against women abounded in our major newspapers with alleged perpetrators including leaders of both educational and religious institutions. Even more disturbing is the realization that social norms are stacked so heavily in favor of alleged perpetrators that victims are doubly victimized such that they end up supporting the perpetrators and calling for their release instead of standing firm to ensure that the justice due them is delivered. Last, but by no means least of all, this year we were reminded of just how little progress we have made in erasing traditional practices that harm women. The harm that witchcraft accusations cause is clearly not limited to the witchcamps in Northern Ghana. Lest we sit comfortably in the South thinking that we are safe, the story of Madam Ama Hemmah, a woman whose only crime was to go in search of her son in a town she was unfamiliar with should wake us up. In 21st century Ghana, witchcraft accusations can lead to death in the most heinous of manners.

3.5 Our agenda in the year ahead

To end, I would like to focus on a variety of areas that I think we should pay attention to in the coming year. I start with the Western Region. We need to keep our eyes and ears to the ground, particularly our partner organizations in the Western Region, to ensure that the oil boom reflects in the pockets of both men and women; that compensation if delivered for loss of livelihoods will be delivered



as equally to fishermen as to fishmongers, that in pulling down market circle to rebuild it to suit our modernist aspirations, the impact it will have on women's economic livelihoods will be taken into consideration; that the committees set up as part of the bills on petroleum will include substantial numbers of women and so on and so forth.

Our second major area of concern should be about ensuring that our numbers of women in Parliament are substantially improved in the 2012 elections. I know that next year is 2011 but I believe that we need to start early and to sustain our efforts to ensure that in 2012, the percentage of women in parliament is substantially higher than the 8.3% we currently have. I know that WILDAF and the IEA in partnership with the European Union are working on this issue, but I believe that many more of us have to talk about it so that the powers that be realize that this is indeed the concern of the women of Ghana in general and not just a section of them. Drawing from the experiences of our sister countries such as South Africa and Mozambique, we need to advocate for some changes in our electoral system or party politics (such as affirmative action policies, proportional representation or the reservation of safe seats for women at party level) to ensure that substantial change occurs in parliament with respect to the numbers of women. In our own small ways as well, let's support females who put themselves up for the parliamentary elections; help paste flyers, if you have the resources, donate fifty cedis here and there, encourage a candidate to keep keeping on no matter who her detractors are, do whatever it takes to show solidarity with these women especially those of them who have demonstrated in their past that they are committed to women's rights and gender justice.

Secondly, in the 2008 elections, the PNC, DFP and RPD parties chose females as their running mates, but we all know that in the grand scheme of things, the fortunes of these parties matter little when it



comes to determining who runs this country. Thus, while the choice of females as running mates showed the progressive politics of these parties, it did little to change the reality on the ground. Dare we dream that next year we are going to hear talk not just about fielding a female vice-presidential candidate in the two main parties but the actual fielding of women as presidential candidates. And will the women who are chosen as presidential candidates be women that we as a women's rights organization will be happy to support knowing that they will be supportive of women's rights not just in speech but also in their actions?

Next year, the Property Rights of Spouses Bill which among other things recognizes the unpaid work of women in the distribution of property at divorce may very well be laid before parliament. We have to work to ensure that it passes without any hitch and that women around the country are made aware of the protections it provides them so they can take advantage of the bill if the need arises.

The AU Decade will officially be under way next year and we need to ensure that it is not just lip service; monies should start getting devoted to it and modalities put in place to make it possible for us to access the monies and work with it to improve the lives of women in the country. Issues such as reduction in the rate of maternal mortality are incorporated in both the Millennium Development Goals and the ten areas of emphasis in the AU Decade for Women. We need to keep our governments on their toes to ensure that the needed resources go towards improving maternal and child health in this country.

NETRIGHT is also a decade old but we have not yet celebrated our decade of existence in a significant way that reminds the nation of our presence and the important work we have done over the decade. I hope that next year, we will get round to partying for a good reason. Finally, next year, we have to take on advocacy work around some of our cultural practices that are harmful to women more vigorously. It is clear from the case of Ama Hemmah that we are still very far from



a world where a woman need not fear that old age and confusion can get her lynched in the name of religion!

My list, I must admit is tall and demanding, but I have no doubt that we are up to the task. The holidays are here and it should hopefully be a relaxing, restful holiday season where many of us will get a week or two to take time off work to spend quality time with family and friends. I wish every one here and their families' joy and good health as well as renewed energy in the coming year for the many tasks ahead as we continue the struggle for gender justice. Afehyia Pa!!! Afi o Afi. Thank you.

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3

Review of the Status of Women in The Year 2011

Angela Dwamena-Aboagye

INTRODUCTION

It is necessary to review the status of women for various reasons. Key amongst these are the fact that it helps to measure the extent to which the gender equity/equality gap is being bridged through state and non – state intervention as well as pave the way for an unambiguous framework for future policy-making. To this end, it is hoped that this review of the status of women in Ghana in the year 2011 will present an overview of the successes chalked in efforts to enhance women's rights, empowerment and gender equality in Ghana, to serve as a benchmark for identifying existing strengths and weaknesses; as well as serve as a means of directing future policy interventions. Several things happened that are of significance this year for women's equality and advancement; one cannot do much but to take snapshots and some broad scans to give a picture of what 2011 has been with respect to the status of women.

Critical International, Regional and National Issues in 2011

UN/INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

We received as good news the inauguration of the entity known as UN Women, at an event held in New York on February 24, 2011. The UN women's bodies, DAW, INSTRAW, OSAGI and UNIFEM were merged, after a number of years of advocacy, negotiation and hard



work by women primarily, in order to harness and integrate resources for greater impact. Headed by the indefatigable Michelle Bachelet, there is hope that the UN will get a better grasp in handling the myriad of women and gender equality issues requiring attention and direction at international, regional and State levels.

2011 also saw the review of thirty years of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), fifteen years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), ten years of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the International Women's Day.

It is reported by international media networks that women in Afghanistan are very nervous pending the withdrawal of the US-led coalition from the country. Foreign intervention and occupation is a very contentious issue, but in repressive states, do they offer hope for the expansion of women's autonomy and rights? The women of Afghanistan are forcing the world to confront this issue with the possible entrenchment of Taliban values and repressive anti-women regulations. In a country in which women who are raped face jail terms, there is a lot to reflect on.

Arab springs, a revolutionary wave of demonstrations, marches, rallies and strikes rocked the Arab world and affected countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria, Yemen and Algeria and others; Over 4000 people have been killed in the Syria uprising alone this year; the world does not know exactly what to do, in the face of the NATO intervention in Libya and its aftermath. Strategic political and economic interests are at play here. But for our purposes, what are the prospects that women's rights will receive any attention or expansion in these areas of turmoil, or even with new regimes? We are all witness to young male Egyptians demonstrating against Egyptian women asking for their rights after the fall of; shouting on the women to go back home and to the kitchen as good wives and mothers. Was



that whole struggle a lost cause for women? We wait a bit more to see. Bangladesh does not seem to fairing any better, as Bangladeshi women were vehemently opposed by Islamic groups in their bid to get full inheritance rights for women and girls.

In the United States the OCCUPY Wall Street Campaign took a grip on the world's imagination, spread to other western nations and is at the dying embers stage. For poor people, many of whom are the minority – women, homeless, and people in the developing world etc., we ask what significance this campaign has made on their lives. What changes have been wrought on Wall Street that may have rippling effects on the single mother living in an airless apartment at the outskirts of Bronx in New York, or the greasy doughnut seller at Kodobeda Junction in the Eastern Region of Ghana? It is still too early to tell, but I do not have much hope in the Wall Street pundits about their willingness to change their hard-nosed economic approaches that is sending more than half the world reeling in recession, only managing to pick the pieces of capital gone awry. It is reported this year that one out of two Americans have fallen into poverty or low income status because of rising costs and the holes in their social safety nets. About 97.3 million Americans have been affected. What is the lesson? Africa must seriously look to its own, and move beyond the rhetoric of south-south cooperation in a more meaningful way. Now, more than ever, there is a feeling that economic cooperation between African states is fast evaporating as ever becoming a reality. Africa seems to be content with loans, foreign aid and trade terms from the EU, North America and recently China; terms that glitter like gold but may end with us chasing dreams and making myths...

Environment-wise, the world is facing crises of epic proportions. Media images of the Tsunami and earthquake in Japan – a force majeure phenomenon – shocked the world. The 9.1 magnitude earthquake and subsequent tsunami hit the east of Japan, killing



15,840 and leaving another 3,926 missing; Rising sea-levels, unexpected storms, floods, displacements, nuclear accidents, loss of forests and bio-diversity, etc., across the world, many of which have their genesis in human-made activities have grave implications for women's rights and empowerment. Vanishing forests for instance, means less access to food, arable lands, water sources, medicines and all kinds of resources indigenous people and women depend on for they and their families' sustenance. Who suffers the most from the negative impacts of climate change? Why are rich and industrialized countries refusing to take strong measures about the reduction of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere when the world knows that countries in Africa and other developing regions are the least culpable in greenhouse gas emissions? The answer is obvious; and the 2011 UNDP report on Human Development paints a stark picture of how gender and social equality gaps are being created or widened by the ecological and environmental crisis, especially because women and gender concerns are almost absent from all the very important policy making spaces in environmental issues.

In 2011, Osama Bin Ladin was killed, so was Libyan leader Muammar Q'athafi. One Israeli soldier, Gilad Shilat was released in exchange for 1,027 Palestinian and Israeli-Arab prisoners held in Israel, and the world's population hit the 7 billion mark.

Of course the world loves a fairy tale, especially in the context of unsettling events; about 2 billion people watched the royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton in Great Britain, and the nostalgia for old family based values returned, but I wager it did not stay around for too long. People are back to their business as usual...

AFRICA REGIONAL

Of course the Arab Springs uprisings which I mentioned earlier cannot go without mention when it comes to Africa and the varied impacts on women's rights in the affected countries. Have we gained or lost?

The new nation of South Sudan came into being in the middle of



2011 with a 25% women's representation in the New Parliament through a constitutional affirmative provision.

The 2010 – 2011 Ivorian crises and civil war ended with the arrest of former Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo. No one knows exactly what happened regarding the allegation made by his first wife that she was raped by soldiers of the Ouatarra camp. The rampaging armies of both sides are reported to have committed human rights atrocities, including rape and sexual assaults against women and girls. The paradoxical situation of having the International Criminal Court (ICC) indict African leaders when Truth and Reconciliation processes are set in motion in the post conflict countries, as well as the fact that both sides in the conflict commit crimes, still remains unresolved. Many women activist groups supported the creation of the ICC as a way of ending impunity and gaining redress for rights violations, but now we are not sure what stance to take as African women about the ICC especially in relation to Africa. Is it not time to engage, get more facts about the perceived slant of the ICC towards arresting African leaders for crimes which leaders of other countries also commit, reflect, and state what it is we expect of international bodies acting on our behalf?

Wangari Maathai's death in September 2011 came as a big blow to the women's movement, the peace and democracy movements and to environmental activists across the world. I describe Maathai as a woman of faith and works, words and action. If 11 billion trees were planted across the world under her watch with the mass involvement of simple women and peasants, then one cannot ignore a woman of such stature and her impact on women's empowerment and the world generally. She is worthy of not just admiration but emulation.

Two of the three women 2011 Nobel Prize winners came from one country in West Africa – Liberia – President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and our own Ghana resident Leymah Gbowee, both strong women's rights advocates. That is certainly something to celebrate!



On the whole, the Africa continental bodies and regional institutions – the AU, ECOWAS, SADC, etc., seemed to have been overshadowed, side-lined or ignored in the play of events on the continent, while western led interventionist efforts took centre stage. Is this the demonstrated evidence of the failure of African leadership, a crisis of integrity in African leadership or plain old neo-colonialism by western imperial forces showing muscle and cowing African leaders into passivity and submission? Or a combination of the above? IDEA's 2011 Data sheet on the world's women and girls shows that improvement in gender equity and women's empowerment has been uneven around the world and slow in many regions. There is also evidence that fertility rates remain high in sub-Saharan African countries where use of family planning is low. Generally, women and men in Africa hold different views about the ideal number of children for their families. This has implications for programming to target men specifically on sexual and reproductive health matters. Another not so surprising fact is that wife-beating is still acceptable in many sub-Saharan African countries. In Ghana, data shows that 25% of women think it is acceptable, as against 11% of men. No surprise here – only the need to double our efforts in the women's empowerment component of achieving gender equality, or we will continue to mark time.

The general lack of data from many African countries regarding the informal sector, which has majority women, is worrying, as it undermines planning and policy for improvement in that sector. Disregarding this sector is tantamount to cutting your own nose to spite your face, since the potential of economic expansion and growth in this area, if organized and harnessed could prove to be quite significant.

Cuts in HIV/AIDS funding should seriously engage the attention of our governments. 2011 figures estimate that 68% of people infected with HIV/AIDS worldwide live in sub-Saharan Africa, where the



virus disproportionately affects women; the significant driver of the infection being gender-based violence. In these abusive relationships, women are unable to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies, and are susceptible to mental distresses or disorders.

GHANA

According to the NDPC/UNDP Report 2008, released this year, progress has been made on MDGs, but still fallen short of expectations. Ghana is on track regarding MDG 2 on gross enrolment at primary level improving steadily from 85.7% in 2004/5 to 93.7% in 2006/7, and 95.2% in 2007/8. Also, Ghana's primary level completion rate is 88.0%, far ahead of Africa's average level of 63.8%. However, it is a different story with MDG 3 on gender parity in lower education. Retention of girls is still a major challenge. Also, maternal mortality currently stands at 350 maternal deaths for every 1000,000 births, a significant reduction from earlier years, but still far short of the 80 to 100,000 live births target.

The Constitutional Review Commission's activities to review the 1992 Constitution provided an opportunity for women's rights organizations and activists to make inputs to the process. Recommendations made included establishment of a Gender Equality Commission, adoption of a quota of at least 30 per cent representation of women in political and public office, and elimination of discrimination against women in the fields of employment and education. We wait with bated breath to find out what the CRC report has to say about these recommendations.

A Gender Responsive Budgeting Monitoring (GRB – MU) Unit was established under MOWAC; however the process of getting national consensus and capacity on gender budgeting is proceeding too slowly for comfort. The Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda Progress Report 2010 states that Ghana has exceeded its target in the number of MDAs and MMDAs implementing Gender Responsive Budgeting; that, 14 out of 23 MDAs and 10 out of 25 MMDAs are do-



ing GRB. I believe this calls for monitoring by NETRIGHT and other civil society groups. What is actually on the ground in terms of GRB, and how has it changed anything in gender empowerment indicators in those areas?

After years of strident calls for Affirmative action legislation to advance gender equality and redress historical discrimination against women, MOWAC has initiated actions to bring this into reality. A series of governmental and non-governmental forums have been held to discuss research findings, prospects and implications of such a law for Ghana's constitutional, legislative and electoral landscape. The likelihood that there would be further reduction of the abysmal number of women in parliament come 2013 is very real, and this would serve to catapult Ghana to almost bottom of the list of countries in Africa with bad records on women's representation. It is doubtful how effective any attempts to increase women's representation in Parliament in 2013 will be; but there is hope that 2016 could be a different story if an Affirmative Action law is successfully pushed through. We should not wait to see how the incoming Government will fare on women's inclusion in appointive positions – making this an elections advocacy issue from now is the way to go. It is interesting to note, that 2011 was the year when for the first time, a woman campaigned for her party's presidential candidature slot – Nana Konadu Agyeman of the NDC – who lost her bid; and for the first time a woman, Samia Nkrumah, campaigned for chairmanship of a major political party and won. Very interesting year!

Events which were positive for women

These include:

1. Capacity building by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Ghana Statistical Service on the



collection, compilation and dissemination of gender-related statistics to help measure progress in efforts at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. It is envisaged that such efforts are important as it targets two critical issues of gender and data which demanded major attention for the attainment of Millennium Development Goal three (3).

2. Events targeting men and boys for gender equality, for example, the ***National Annual Boys' Camp*** instituted by ACTIONAID Ghana to educate boys between 11 and 16. The expectation is that within the next ten years a significant cadre of boys and young men with a women-positive perspective will be built to lead the fight against attitude change towards girls' education and women in general. Also ***the National Male Conference*** organized by FIDA-Ghana this year aimed at mobilizing male awareness and commitment to engage women rights, elimination of abuse and violence, and improving the delivery of services for women in maternal health.
3. The launch of the Gender Responsive Skills and Community Development Project (GRSCDP), by the Government of Ghana to address gender inequalities and promote equitable socio-economic development.
4. Ghana launched the African Women's Decade (2010-2020) at the national level as required by the African Union (AU) with the theme "*Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*" Activities of the Decade are expected to advance gender equality and women's empowerment by accelerating the implementation of Dakar, Beijing and AU Assembly decisions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.
5. The process of drafting a legislative instrument for more effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act was initiated this year with the inauguration of a Committee. The proposals have been completed and submitted to MOWAC for onward



transmission to the Attorney General's office.

6. Across the country, women's rights organizations continued to work wearing their many hats – as advocates, educators, counselors, researchers, shelter and crisis intervention service providers, proposal drafters, disseminators of laws and policies and community developers – all with little pay, little rest and no insurance or retirement packages. 'How for do', as Ghanaians would say? For many of us, women's rights work is more of a part of our existence and calling. It is part of our lived consciousness. I am sure many of you identify strongly with what I am saying.

Challenges

It is still the case, as it was some five years ago, that many states have failed to eliminate discrimination against women and to ensure women's equality; that no society treats its women as well as its men. This is evident in the challenges faced by Ghanaian women despite the perceived strides in gender equality.

Some of these arise from cultural and traditional practices, poverty, agriculture and food security, trafficking of women, workplace issues, violence against women, lack of governmental will to ensure the implementation of mechanisms for the promotion of women's advancement, the continued inequalities in women's representation in decision making and politics and the effects of climate change.

Specific critical areas of concern in Ghana also include:

1. The protracted Abudu-Andani conflict; the pockets of inter-ethnic conflicts and chieftaincy succession matters as they affect socio-economic development and undermine gender equality and empowerment targets and goals in the endemic areas
2. Inheritance and property rights issues – two important legislative bills are outstanding; the Intestate Succession Amendment Bill



and the Property Rights of Spouses bill.

3. Inadequate police prosecution of sexual violence cases undermining protection of women and girls. Statistics show that only 15% of crimes reported on children are prosecuted.
4. The phenomenon of mob sexual violence on campuses – The Amina case and the Ho school incidents are cases in point. Sexual violence on You Tube is also becoming a phenomenon in which young women in tertiary institutions are drugged and filmed in compromising shots which are then placed on You Tube or other social networking sites. The inadequacy of Ghana's legal regime on sexual harassment and the near absence of enforcement are fuelling impunity in this area.
5. Sex for jobs; "sexually transmitted grades", are all different shades of the phenomenon of sexual harassment, which calls for new thinking about response, programming, policy and legislative advocacy.
6. The increase of fire outbreaks, especially this year, in areas congregated mostly by women – shopping centres and markets. Is it not time to consider a national insurance policy measure that takes the peculiar nature of this issue into consideration?
7. Women's rights CSOs funding issues – In 2011, two WiLDAF offices providing legal aid and other services have been closed; FIDA is contemplating closing its Bolgatanga and Tamale offices, The Ark is considering cuts in service provision programs to women and children. These are but a few of the organizations caught in this rut. In view of inadequate state response to women and girls, and nature and quality of services at State institutional level, what are the implications of these cuts with respect to advancement of women's rights?

Broad policy issues in 2011 with implications for promoting or undermining gender equality and women's rights:

Women in Public Life: The Ghana Shared Growth and Development



Agenda 2010 reports the following figures for women's representation: Ministers – 21%; Deputy Ministers – 20%; MPs – 9%; MMDCs – 7%; Chief Directors – 24%; Chief Justice – 100% (of course); Supreme Court Judges – 29%; High Court Judges – 25%; District Assembly appointees – 7.3%; District Assembly elected – 11%. With these figures, what is there to celebrate? This is described as slow progress. The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs also launched a re-engineering project and plan in 2010. Since our governments are enamoured with the idea of a ministry for women and children, it may be important to engage on what is different with the Ministry a year after the launch, and how any measures undertaken have translated into gains for women and children.

Contentious issues that reared their heads in 2011 requiring national consensus building and critical engagement include:

1. Ethnocentrism, especially involving the Nomadic Fulanis of Ghana and other West African nations, the current internal refugee crisis and security implications
2. Queens in the National House of Chiefs
3. Sexual orientation and constitutional rights issues
4. Education policy in Ghana, especially teacher training, infrastructure development in depressed areas and duration of the second cycle phase of education
5. National response to disasters – prevention, management and resources
6. Expanding National Health Insurance to cover some sexual and reproductive health services, especially family planning and also payments for doctors' reports in Sexual and Gender-Based Violence cases
7. Urban development and with a focus on women's security and livelihoods
8. The Western Region development agenda as a special measure deriving from the oil industry, again with a focus on ameliorating



negative social impacts

Areas that need more focused attention by the women's movement going forward – these are areas in which women and girls find themselves in especially difficult circumstances, for which research, intense advocacy and services should be considered:

- Human Trafficking, with Ghana being cited by recent research reports by EPAWA and other international organizations as being a recipient, transit and a participant in trafficking of women and children,
- Women facing mental health problems
- Girls being forced into marriages
- Women accused of witchcraft in traditional camps
- Women with disabilities
- Widows and poverty

Creative Engagements

It is also suggested that those of us in the 'defined and visible' women's rights movement in Ghana should craft creative ways of engaging and building relations and partnerships with women in the following areas:

- Women in faith-based groups – a growing force to reckon with in gender equity, socio-economic empowerment, peace initiatives and community based development. E.g, GHACOE, AGLOW, MUSLIM WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS
- Women in the academia, as critical partners in research and evidence-based advocacy
- Women in the Arts – Music, film advertising and theatre: For their great potential for changing social behavior that re-inforces gender inequality and disempowerment and promoting positive images about women
- Young Women – especially in active Inter-generational organizing



- Women who need to be celebrated for lifting the image of women during the year
- Abena P.A. Busia, Rutgers University for Uniquely blending feminist activism with creativity and Academia.
- Ama Ata Aidoo, Author/Mbaasem (Women's Words), Production of outstanding African feminist literature
- Boakyewaa Glover, Writer, Contribution to a renaissance of African women's writing
- Professor Takyiwaah Manuh, University of Ghana, for Dynamic social activism and contributions to academia especially relating to women's rights
- Yaba Badoe, Film Maker/Writer – Directing and producing 'The Witches of Gambaga' Documentary, a powerful visual account of the abuse, and exploitation of women accused of witchcraft
- Becky Nana Ayebea Clarke, Ghanaian-born Oxfordshire publisher and Member of the Order of the British Empire for promoting African and Caribbean writers
- Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, President, African Women's Development Fund, for continuing contribution to development of African philanthropy and commitment to protecting democracy in Ekiti State, Nigeria
- Ethel MacHarrison of Women in the Lord's Vineyard, for tirelessly promoting rural women's rights, especially those caught in customary servitude
- Lucy Mensah, Women United Against Aids in Ghana, for Establishing the first HIV& AIDS women only support group
- Dr Rose Mensah Kutin, Abantu for Development, for demonstrating stalwart leadership on women's issues.
- Leymah Gbowee, Liberian born, Ghanaian resident Women's rights and peace activist, Director Of WIPSEN, and for co-winning 2011 Nobel Peace Prize
- Mothers of premature Babies Movement (Big little souls)



- Nana Yaa Memorial Trust, for selfless community services in reproductive rights and health
 - Betty Ayagiba, for her untiring efforts to give widows in the North of Ghana a voice and hope
 - Breast Care International, for consistent campaigning on Breast cancer and providing women services for early detection, etc.
 - CEGENSA, for pioneering efforts on gender integration into policy and practice of higher institutions of learning, specifically, University of Ghana
 - Sheila Menka Premo, lawyer and president of LAWA Ghana, as an important contributor to the development of policy documents and legal reform papers for women's rights, including Domestic Violence legislation and policy, Domestic Workers draft regulations, inheritance and property rights, codification of customary law processes, etc.
 - Franseca Pobe Hayford of CIDA, formerly of Dept. of Women, MOWAC, whose absence from the Ministry is sorely missed by Civil society women
 - Rev. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, feminist theologian of Trinity College for her erudite work on women's empowerment within theological discourse and ministry.
 - Rebecca Duho Quaicoo of Daily Graphic for promoting women's rights in the print media
 - The millions of women we meet in our work and on the field who are working tirelessly to maintain their families on a daily basis, who stand for social justice and their community's development
- Men who have shown consistency and dedication to the promotion of women's rights for year 2011
- There must be more men for gender equality and women's empowerment than captured here, but the challenge is that the converted do not often take a public stance for women's rights, and therefore it is a bit difficult to identify them. The ones mentioned



here stick out like a sore thumb in their spirited and public defence of women's rights for a long time:

Professor Kenneth Attafuah – Human Rights Defender, lawyer, lecturer and former Director at CHRAJ

- Mr. Andrews Tetteh – Volunteer Lawyer who has handled hundreds of women's legal aid issues at The Ark Foundation's legal Centre, Maamobi at no cost
- Adolf Awuku Bekoe – National Coordinator, DV Bill Coalition
- Frank Bodza, Program officer of WiLDAF-Ghana for consistent advocacy on women's empowerment
- Dr. James Clayman, Ga West Municipal Hospital, Amasaman for his sensitive care and counselling for women patients and serving on many women's causes
- Alhaji Mahmoud Yahaya Kutia of Amasachina Self-Help Association for long years of campaigning for women's rights
- Nortey Duah, Clinical Psychologist and lecturer, a women's rights and anti-violence advocate

Media's Role in Promoting Gender Equality

The print and electronic media carried stories on issues and content relating to gender equality. It appears that Media institutions have also moved from just talking about women's issues by host presenters and are using more women advocates as panelists and resource persons to comment on human rights, social justice and development issues. However trivialization, stereotyping and sensationalism still continue especially on some FM Broadcast stations. E.g., newscasters snickering while reporting a defilement case; or blaming women who have been sexually abused by a church leader from whom they sought help. All male panels on programs deemed to be political are still a fact of life on some popular radio and TV stations.

Activities were also carried out by CSOs to build the capacity of the



media. For instance the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) under its programme, Media Capacity Building for Democratisation and Human rights has for the past 11 months built the capacity of 12 radio stations across the country to promote women's rights. The project titled "Using Radio to Promote Women's Rights in Ghana," is to help the media in awareness creation and sensitization and also to ensure closer bonds between the community, (especially women), radio stations and the authorities. The stations targeted have now introduced a specific weekly program addressing women's rights and these programs have resulted in the formation of clubs to promote women's rights in some communities, abolition of proverbs and songs that denigrate women while in some cases, the project radio stations have helped report cases of women's rights violations to DOVVSU and CHRAJ.

Some other highly commendable programs that continue to raise gender and other social justice issues and promote public awareness and action:

- Joy FM's Thursday morning documentaries
- Gifty Anti's Standpoint on GTV
- Afia Ansa Ampene's Mmaankomo
- TV Africa's Obaa Mbo

CONCLUSION

2011 has been a challenging but interesting year; 2012 is elections year for Ghana, and government business will drop in volume for politicking to begin – very soon. The women's movement has many issues to confront persons seeking political office with, and we should be ready to go all out. It will take commitment, time, resources, a high level of organization, creative and cost effective programming and on the spot advocacy. We must also do all we can to guard the peace God has blessed us with. As women's rights organizations, especially



in Africa, we are very much aware of what vulnerabilities women and girls are exposed to in any kind of unrest, and therefore, we must dedicate some serious time to peace initiatives from the grassroots to the national level. Many of the issues I raised I did without much comment or analysis – it is for us to reflect, chew on and bring out our thoughts and contributions to those issues wherever we find ourselves.

Finally, as a budding theologian I cannot but pray that we continue to strengthen our friendships and networking relationships, jealously guard the gains we have made, eschew complacency, but also make time to play, rest, recuperate, re-strategise, regroup and come back stronger. As the organized and visible women’s movement, we will depend very much on our conveners and coordinators to keep us motivated and working. In this wise I commend the efforts of the three conveners of the three women’s coalitions, Adolf Awuku Bekoe of the DV Coalition, Hamida Harrison of the Women’s Manifesto Coalition and Akua Britwum of NETRIGHT for keeping us on our toes during the year, but I am sure they are going to see to it that we feel the stretch and the strain in our ankles in the coming year. I also salute all the hardworking leaders and directors of women’s rights organizations and their staff for their hard work and dedication. Long live NETRIGHT, long live the three women’s coalitions, long live the women and men of Ghana working for women’s rights and equality, and long live Ghana. Thank you and God bless you in this season and beyond.



4

2012 END OF YEAR REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Chris Dadzie

Focus On The Elimination And Prevention Of Violence Against Women And Girls

INTRODUCTION

“Our challenge is not only to protect hard won gains, but to advance the rights of women.” (Michelle Bachelet, 2012)

This review is aimed at making time for reflection, learning and sharing about critical national issues in order to elicit their gendered dimensions to help us chart a better course in future. After the last two days of deliberations by NETRIGHT members and collaborators, my duty is only to add to the scope of learning by highlighting a few instances of the varied ways in which international, regional and national issues in 2012 have affected the promotion of gender equality and equity, the rights of women and girls in Ghana, and whether NETRIGHT’s networking among its members and with other organisations has proved effective for maximising resources and achieving results.

The UN’s theme for this year’s International Women’s Day was “Empower Rural Women – End Hunger and Poverty”; Ghana placed an emphasis on the girl child in its theme of: ‘Connecting Girls; Inspiring Futures, Reducing Rural Poverty’. NETRIGHT’s



focus on elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls is appropriate since it is acknowledged that gender disparities are inextricably linked to poverty as women make up the largest proportion of the poor. Thus there is a definite connection between poverty and violence since large gender disparities take their most direct toll on women and girls.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

This year, the International Women’s Day sees 101 years; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is 32 years old; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) is 16 years and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is 11 years and due for a review. In September, over 60 member States of the UN Human Rights Council affirmed that eradicating extreme poverty is both a moral duty as well as a legal obligation under international human rights law. The Council accordingly adopted guiding principles focused on applying a human rights-based approach as a powerful tool for poverty reduction and eradication. The Guiding Principles compose a standard to ensure that Governments’ economic and other policies do not disproportionately affect people in poverty, particularly women. The Principles will also underlie deliberations for evolving a more comprehensive and effective agenda as a post-2015 successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The indefatigable Michelle Bachelet continued with her zealous attitude to her work. UN Apprehensions that the new entity would not be able to serve its purpose may be said to have been allayed after this short period. Ms Bachelet had wisely set the top priority for 2012 as a renewed push for women’s economic empowerment and political participation for as she said “*unleashing women’s economic potential will make economic growth and recovery faster and more equitable.*” Other priorities included ending violence against women and girls; expanding women’s role in global peace agenda; making



budgets and plans benefit women and men equally and increasing coordination and accountability across the UN system for gender equality.

With a presence in 75 countries, UN Women’s efforts included speedy responses of support to enable women’s participation in constitutional reform, elections and political transition in the Arab world. In several other countries, UN Women supported electoral laws reforms and legislative measures to facilitate the inclusion of women in elections as voters and candidates.

Globally, there are still a lot of seemingly impossible hurdles to be overcome as far as gender inequalities are concerned. It has been observed that gender based violence is now the leading cause of disability of girls and women between the ages of 16 and 44 in all parts of the world! Climate change and environmental degradation still impact adversely on women and girls, increasing poverty that still wears the face of a woman.

NETRIGHT’s Participation in International Initiatives

ECOSOC Status: The Network has applied for a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): The 56th Session of the United Nation Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was held under the theme “The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges”.

NETRIGHT was ably at the CSW organised a side event under the theme: ‘Empowering Rural Women as Constructive Intermediaries in Poverty Reduction’. Topics discussed included “Land Rights as an Empowered Tool to Alleviate Poverty among Rural Women” “Empowering rural women through ICT” and “The role of rural women in natural resource management and climate change

adaptation”.

AWID International Forum: NETRIGHT was represented at the largest global summit on gender equality outside the UN System and one of the most important on women’s rights and advancing the goals of gender equality and social justice. This year’s forum provided a platform for participants, mainly activists and donors, to debate, share experiences and knowledge and network to ensure ‘how economic power can be transformed to advance women’s rights and justice.’

Climate Change: The Network’s involvement in international deliberations on climate change has also persisted with much zeal, especially by the coalition for Gender Action on Climate Change for Equality and Sustainability (GACCES).

3.0 THE STATE OF NETRIGHT

Challenges

Directly for NETRIGHT, accessing funds has been the year’s greatest challenge. Operations were negatively impacted by the financial constraints that have affected many of its members and other NGOs. Even though NETRIGHT managed to keep afloat, it still has to deal with the extra burdens of a network, and will therefore have to carefully strategise in order to for maintain its excellent standards throughout 2013.

In spite of the challenges, the Network worked hard to fulfil its goal of promoting gender equality through its core areas of economic justice, land rights and movement building.



Administration

This year, Akua Britwum and Dorcas Coker-Appiah continued as the convenor and deputy convenor respectively of the Steering Committee. Together with the other SC members, several major decisions were taken after consultative meetings with NETRIGHT t members.

NETRIGHT’s attention to networking paid off in many ways. TWN graciously provided within its own premises for NETRIGHT’s new and larger offices. Further, TWN Africa and Ghana TUC facilitated the construction of NETRIGHT’s website (*www.NETRIGHTghana.org*). A debt of gratitude is owed to TWN, TUC and others who helped improve our working facilities.

2012 Highlights

Climate Change

Three quarters of Ghanaians depend on agriculture and with desertification increasing at an alarming rate, food insecurity is worsening. The brunt of the severe impact of climate change is borne by women who are responsible for household cooking and other chores.

NETRIGHT continued to be represented on the National Climate Change Committee and thus helped to develop the relevant national policy framework.

Further, the UN Women’s Fund for Gender Equality is supporting GACCES and ABANTU for Development in implementing projects to address the adverse impact of climate change in the northern and coastal areas. This involves provision of women with green equipment to limit the use of trees and to improve cooking conditions. Health will be impacted positively through elimination of exposure to smoke



from traditional cook stoves and open fires which causes two million premature deaths annually, with women and young children being the most affected. The World Health Organization has reported that harmful cook stove smoke is among the top five threats to public health in low-income countries.

Social Watch Ghana – Coalition

NETRIGHT continued to host the Coalition and led the writing of the 2012 global report in Ghana which was launched by the Minister of Environment, Hon. Ms. Shirley Aryitey; handouts included a gender index.

Collaboration with Ghana TUC and Affiliates

NETRIGHT collaborated with the Ghana TUC and its affiliates in several activities including the National Delegates Conferences of Health Services Workers’ Union, the General Agricultural Workers’ Union; the Public Utility Workers’ Union on ‘The Role of Women in the Efficient and Reliable Service Delivery in the Utility Sector’ and the First Quadrennial Women Delegates Congress. NETRIGHT urged delegates to demand the larger union to put women’s interests within its mainstream bargaining agenda through gender sensitive policies particularly for pursuing the economic rights of agricultural and rural women workers. It is noteworthy that a woman was elected as the Chairperson at the TUC’s main Congress.

Gender, Oil and Gas Project

NETRIGHT in partnership with ABANTU, WiLDAF-Ghana and FIDA-Ghana have developed a joint project titled ‘Women’s Agency Strengthened to Demand Accountability, Equity and Transparency from Industry Actors for Improved Livelihoods’. The project will



cover two districts in the Western Region (Ellembele and Jomoro) and also look at policy issues at the national level.

The broad objective of the project is to strengthen women’s agency to demand accountability, equity and transparency from industry actors to improve the livelihoods of local populations and women in particular. Specifically, the project will 1) improve gender sensitive legislative and institutional frameworks in the oil industry and 2) enhance the capacity of women and socially excluded groups on oil and gas issues to influence policies and programmes to protect their interest. The project will attempt to address issues relating to social, economic and environmental impact of oil exploration on coastal communities, district development plans, community engagement/ citizens participation and access to information and the overall national long term sustainable development plan.

Gender, Local Governance and Development Planning Project

With sponsorship from the Local Governance and Development Program (LOGODEP), NETRIGHT has initiated a project in the Juaboso and Bia Districts of the Western Region. This project is aimed at enhancing women’s livelihood issues, gender responsive budgeting, effective engagement of women in district assembly and development processes. Ultimately it is hoped to increase public sensitivity to women’s rights and gender equality in local governance.

Anti-Witchcraft Campaign Project

Following the launch of a “Witches of Gambaga” documentary by Yaba Badoe, NETRIGHT took up members’ suggestion to engage in the search for a solution to the issue of witchcraft allegations and banishment of women especially in the Northern regions of Ghana. With support from AWDF, NETRIGHT set up the “Anti-Witchcraft Campaign” Project to strengthen the capabilities of member organisations and revive their commitment to the struggle of eventual



eradication of this abusive phenomenon. The first capacity building workshop was coordinated by the Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation, NETRIGHT's Northern Regional Focal Point.

Markets Study

NETRIGHT coordinated a study tour for market women in Ghana which exposed market women from Malawi, Ghana and Liberia to the conditions of work of their colleagues and also provided an opportunity to dialogue about future cooperation.

Land Rights Project

NETRIGHT is discussing the possibility of collaborating with Landesa – a US-based organisation on women and land rights. The proposed project will review the Land Administration Project (LAP) to identify gender gaps in its processes and conduct educational campaign on how women can access and control land especially through land titling. It will have a focus on agriculture extension for women farmers.

CSW Project

In collaboration with the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) and the UN Women, NETRIGHT is coordinating processes at the country level and the sub-region in order to strengthen the participation and impact of West African women's organisations in CSW intergovernmental activities.

Constitution Review Process

The Network continued its engagement with the process; it studied and issued a statement on the government's responses to the Review



Commission's recommendations. NETRIGHT's representation is working with the IEA's Civil Society Coalition on the White Paper in order to ensure that women's concerns are appropriately dealt with in the country's legal framework.

Through its Constitutional Review Working Group, NETRIGHT actively participated in three of the IEA presidential debates. Unfortunately, the responses of the presidential candidates to the Network's questions showed that they were not adequately knowledgeable of, or sensitized about issues regarding gender equality and women's rights. This situation needs to be seriously addressed by the Network through concrete engagement with would be decision makers in the coming year.

4.0 ISSUES TO FOLLOW UP

- **Supporting State Actors**
- **MOWAC**

MOWAC is the state's lead agency on measures for promoting gender equality and realisation of women's rights. 2012 national budgetary allocation to MOWAC increased by 17.62% as compared to 2011. However, when compared to the number of programmes and activities to be implemented, this positive incidence is likely to be insufficient and may have the tendency to affect the quality of its programmes. Particular attention should therefore be paid to continued advocacy on ensuring government's commitment and duty to enhancing the capacity of a vital institution like MOWAC with adequate resources, both financial and technical, directly from GOG sources.

MOWAC is recommended for some dialogues with different CSOs. However, so many challenges have bedeviled attempts at building



effective, adequate inter-agency collaboration. It is therefore vital for CSOs to develop more organised and effective strategies for relating to MOWAC on several fronts. It is necessary for the Network to re-examine the scope of the Ministry mandate and operations with particular emphasis on dialoguing and supporting it to move from an emphasis on activities such as provision of microfinance for women to a greater attention to policy development on its core mandate.

Information, Statistics and Gender Responsive Budgets

There are a number of databases such as the Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS 5) and the Rural Income Generating Activities. *There were also a number of programmes that were initiated or continued this year in attempts to address this situation. Examples include the Gender Statistics Working Group by the Ghana Statistical Service; in May, following inputs from civil organizations among others, the FAO launched the Ghana Profile on Gender Inequalities in Rural Employment.*²

However, especially in rural areas, there is still inadequate information on the varied dimensions of gender inequalities. Statistical data for enabling efficient dealing with gender disparities is still not comprehensive and readily accessible.

Accordingly, there should be applause as well as encouragement for the expansion of such initiatives as the Gender Statistics Working Group for involvement of a larger audience. This would also enhance the commitment to gender responsive budgeting programme already initiated by government through MOWAC. Further, GRB initiatives would help to create enabling policy frameworks, build capacity and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to support accountability to women.

Apart from MOWAC's Gender Responsive Budgeting Monitoring, the Network should institute a comprehensive programme of monitoring the actual progress of this vital concept.

² *Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division of FAO, 2012*



Gender Mainstreaming

Studies have shown that many CSOs have lost faith in the process of gender mainstreaming in Ghana. It has been observed that this otherwise vital concept has somehow become an entity in itself and has thus undermined the focus for effectively addressing gender disparities. The Network must therefore literally revert to initial movement focus of directing attention to women's specific empowerment measures.

The Constitution Review Process

In spite of the negative responses received from government's responses to our submissions on gender and women's rights provisions in the constitution, the Network has continued to engage government and work with other institutions such as IEA, to ensure a proper review of the White Paper's positions on women's rights and gender equality issues. The Network is focused on this work as a fundamental method for attacking gender loaded issues involved in all aspects of life – cultural and traditional practices, poverty, agriculture and food security, trafficking of women, workplace harassment and discrimination that affect the realisation of women's rights.

Media gender discourse

The implications of the media's influence on the realisation of the rights of women and girls needs are obvious. Either we tackle this issue with all the best practices available or most of our work simply gets undone. Some progress has been made with quite a number of publications given specific space to relevant articles, yet many features, adverts and filmmaking still manifest a negative perspective of women and girls.

**Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)****Poverty** – (Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger)

Statistics showed a fall in poverty from 52% in 1991 to 28% in 2005, almost sufficient to achieve the goal of halving poverty by 2015.

However, there are still disturbing realities: 28% of the population lives with less than a dollar a day. Women in Ghana continue to be the heavily represented among the poor especially in the rural areas. Low productivity and poorly functioning markets for agricultural outputs are among the main causes of rural poverty, particularly in the Northern regions³.

Education – (Goal 2: Universal Primary Education)

Ghana continues to invest heavily in education and literacy. In 2005, the Capitation Grant and the School Feeding Programme were introduced to encourage enrollment and attendance in primary schools. Consequently, the gender parity index for primary school level showed some improvement from 0.96% in 2009/10 to 0.97% in 2010/11 and JHS levels went up from 0.92% to 0.93%. However, there is still the challenge of retention, especially of girls throughout the educational system.

Participation in decision making – (Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women)

It is unlikely this goal will be met. In the just ended government, women held only 16% of the ministerial positions and 10% of the deputy ministers. This was in spite of the government's declared assurance to achieve a 40% women's representation in appointments to public office.

At the local government level, there are about 28% women appointees in spite of an affirmative action policy of appointing one-third or 30%

³ Ghana Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) 2006-2009 report



of district assembly members/appointees as women. There is a non-adherence and District Chief Executives are not held accountable for implementing this policy since it remains unwritten.

After having held constant at 9.5% between 1992 and 2004, the number of seats held by women in Parliament increased to almost 11% in 2007, then dropped to 8.3% in 2009. This year's elections have raised the numbers to 30 women, but out of an increased number of 275 seats. This works out to about 10.8% women's participation in Parliament which is still far below acceptable levels for the nation's balanced development.

Without special measures, Ghana will miss the MDGs 3 target of minimum threshold of 30% representation of women by 2015.

Health – (Goals 4-6: Reduce Child Mortality and Improve Maternal Mortality; Combat HIV and AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases)

Almost a decade after the introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme not all health providers cover all drugs for the treatment of common ailments. Thus, health costs can still be prohibitive for the vulnerable. Stigma concerning HIV/AIDS continues to impact negatively on efforts at eradication and prevention of infection, thus increasing problems with accessing needed medication. Cultural barriers persist to affect many women's inability to negotiate safe sex. Women remain the most infected, especially pregnant women, and thus account for the highest number of deaths from HIV/AIDS.

Overall maternal mortality ratios fell from 540 per 100,000 live births to 450 per 100,000 live births between 1992 and 2008. The Free Maternal Health Care Policy introduced in 2008, offers attention to pregnant women to reduce maternal and child mortality, and to encourage ante and post natal supervision. Despite this cost-free facility, maternal mortality continues to be high. Only 24% of women in the lowest quintile of income attend a health facility



during childbirth. Many of them are poor women in rural areas, with large families and cannot avail themselves of the free health services particularly because of the challenge of long distances to a proper medical facility. Other obstacles include the lack of skilled health care personnel especially in the rural areas. Thus, the MDG target of 185 per 100,000 live births is unlikely to be met by 2015.

Water and Sanitation – (Goal 7 Ensure Environment Sustainability)

Access to improved water sources has increased generally. Yet, WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (2010) statistics show that there has not been a worthwhile increment in water piped to households. Apart from exposure to waterborne diseases, this does not auger well for the attainment of MDG goals on water and on gender parity because, in the absence of pipes in households, the burden falls on women and girls to fill in the gaps to ensure water provision to household.

Although there are statistics showing some improvement, sanitation is still a major challenge especially in Accra. The Mayor has indicated that the solution would be to take up the abandoned plan which goes beyond dumping waste, to using various types of recycling such as converting waste into energy. Large resource outlays are needed to meet this MDG particularly for rural water supply and sanitation. This situation can only be achieved with firm political will and consequent adequate budgetary resource allocation.

Response to gender and domestic violence

All the above mentioned concerns eventually link to issues of discrimination and violence against women in all areas of life. But specific mention has to be made of particular measures for addressing immediate and prevalent instances of “physical/ obvious violence. Issues to be addressed include MOWAC’s 10 year DV plan of action and increasing the GOC seed money input in the fund to acceptable levels. For example, shelters are being developed for abused children



but funding is inadequate so that they may not be viable even after being set up. The Legislative Instrument for the Domestic Violence Act is still pending. The effectiveness of the DV Management Board is in question; the composition of the Board which has been suggested to account for part of its perceived inability to meet its mandate.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Network should increase its advocacy push on these issues:

MOWAC

While advocating for a separate independent institution for handling gender issues, NETRIGHT has to continue fighting for the enhancement of MOWAC’s capacity. Indeed, the women’s movement has to sustain an engagement with government towards resourcing MOWAC adequately.

In particular, the Network should closely follow and support MOWAC’s review towards the development of a proper Gender Policy.

Gender Violence

- Appointments of representatives onto the DV Board should not be just from named institutions, but should be people who are in the women’s movement and thereby or otherwise recognised as knowledgeable and sensitized about such matters.
- The Legislative Instrument required for activating the Domestic Violence Act should be passed as soon as possible.
- Crisis response time to “physical” violence is an issue; the ability to respond quickly and efficiently should be seriously addressed from an inter agency collaborative approach.
- CSOs should
- Increase the monitoring of violence cases and support for women



and girls involved in court processes.

- Involve more men and boys in combating violence against women and girls in all their forms.
- Monitor relevant programmes and require the whole government the Executive, Judiciary and Parliament – to give account of their commitments to implementation of provisions and government decisions for combating violence against women and girls.

Economic Justice

Markets – As in the previous year, traders suffered huge financial losses due to fire outbreaks in markets all over the country. There is the need to restructure our markets to address such incidences and improve the environment for market women and the public’s general access to food stores.

The care economy – Women and girls should be freed from unpaid family work by addressing gender disparities in domestic work allocation. Child labour should be reduced through advocating for support of households incomes and promoting time-saving technologies particularly in agriculture for rural women and girls.

Access to land and credit – Emphasis must be placed on the issue of women’s access to land and credit to liberate female farmers from the heavy reliance on the informal networks (family, friends, other farmers, and moneylenders) that tend to create further dependencies for women.

Local Content Policy – In relation to the oil and other natural minerals sector, it is necessary for women’s movements to pay attention to implementation of the nation’s local content policy in order to enhance employment of women who are the majority in food processing, marketing and tourism and allied services.



Training for empowerment – Vocational training for women often consists of adaptation of domestic activities and not in increased access to initiatives that improve their literacy and marketing skills. Vocational training should be appropriately reviewed. Considering that only 29% of women in rural areas are literate compared to 52% of men, more effort needs to be made to ensure a high level of commitment to programmes for enhancing education processes at all levels.

Participation in governance

The government should be commended for its declared commitment to affirmative action in the White Paper on Constitution Review. However, with hindsight on government’s inability to fulfil its promises on such issues, the proposed affirmative action legislation should be followed up with strong and persistent advocacy activities to ensure that the law is passed as soon as possible.

Some measures have been taken by CSO’s to deal with the government’s excuse that the women could not be found for appointment to high public positions. More effort should be made to demand a fulfilment of government’s declaration as well as its commitment to constitutional, international and regional obligations like the African Charter on Elections, Democracy and Governance. This demand should be made as a matter of right for gender parity in governance structures through the visible and substantive representation of women in decision making spaces. Accordingly, government should be held to strict account for its statements in the NDC’s 2012 Better Ghana Manifesto to attain 40% women’s representation in all public appointments.

Generally, the Network should doggedly pursue its advocacy programmes on procuring a more developmental constitution through enhanced provisions on gender equality and specific



guarantees of substantive rights for women. Additionally, our advocacy measures on other issues not strictly termed “women’s rights” must continue unabated to ensure a comprehensive constitutional and legislative framework as a basis for dealing effectively with gender disparities that adversely affect all our developmental processes.

Collaboration

NETRIGHT must of necessity improve its targeting of the media as collaborators, through specific engagement in capacity building and other programmes for the media in order to access their great potential for positive influence on promoting gender parity in Ghana. Indeed, NETRIGHT has no option but to continue its efforts at collaborating with its own members as well as with other institutions to pursue its agenda for the promotion and protection of the rights of women. Emphasis should be placed on reverting to basic empowerment programmes towards building women’s capacity for better participation in governance and other areas of national development.

5. CELEBRATING OUR VICTORIES AND SHEROS

We acknowledge the significance of the paradigm shift that the African Union is making in the nomination of leaders: Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma became the African Union’s first female leader as the elected Chair of the African Union Commission. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Nigeria’s Finance Minister was unanimously nominated by the African Union for the Presidency of the World Bank. This trend should signal a cue to national African governments.

Back home, commendation should be given to the valiant women who have made it into the next Parliament. We also acknowledge the



grandmothers and all the other women’s groups that worked so hard to promote peace this year especially during the elections period. Finally, we acclaim all of us, unsung sheros who have simply kept on working in the face of all challenges, to improve the situation of gender and women’s rights in Ghana.

6. CONCLUSION

In the light of the many challenges and yet available opportunities for impacting gender equality and the rights of women and girls, I reiterate the call in the 2011 NETRIGHT report by Angela Dwamena-Aboagye, we need to “*pave the way for an unambiguous framework for future policy-making*”. And I call for an agreement on the recognition that the best way forward is to employ the human rights approach to our entire advocacy efforts.

Based on our constitutional provisions, the women and girls of Ghana have the right as citizens to be a substantive part of decision making in development, especially in matters that affect them directly. Our citizenship right also places an obligation on us to demand an accountability of the State for the promotion and protection of our rights and welfare.

For, in whatever form discrimination and violence manifests whether as feminised or “violence of extreme poverty,”⁴ hunger and malnutrition, exclusion and banishment, domestic violence or formal workplace sexual and other harassment, it is only a fundamental change in the way the most affected social groups are included in decision making⁵ that can result speedily in the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. The sure way to enable women lift themselves up is by empowering them with the

4 The UN Human Rights Council; ATD Fourth World: <http://bit.ly/SgqbRv>

5 Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2012: Democracy against hunger; 5th annual global report <http://bit.ly/T6w1jp>



ability to claim their rights.⁶

Accordingly, in order to effectively address the adverse impact of gender violence and other disparities in any form, we need to focus on accessing political space at all levels of decision making by fighting for the primacy of human rights. Surely this would fit us into the next year's vision with the theme of "The Gender Agenda: Gaining Momentum."⁷

⁶ ATD Fourth World: <http://bit.ly/SgqbRv> 2012

⁷ our internationalwomensday.com website



5

Gender Justice, National Policy and Discourse Spaces: 2013 in Retrospect *Hilary Gbedemah*

INTRODUCTION

The year under review, 2013 was significant for Ghana in many respects. It represented the first year of a newly elected government which in turn generated novel issues around an eight-month election petition hearing testing Ghana's ability to preserve its national stability. As a result, the dialogue for alternative and more inclusive governance systems was re-opened. On the women's front, we witnessed the restructuring and expansion of the mandate of the National Machinery. The Ghanaian economic landscape faced, the realities of becoming a middle income country, and its fallout on civil society activity.

Regionally – for Africa, 2013 was the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the Maputo Protocol. Questions continue to be raised on the impact of international conventions on the rights of Africa's women, our ability to move beyond signature appending to domestication and effective utilization, to raise Africa's human rights bar.



2013 Review Outline

The first part of the Review will examine the Background and International Normative Framework which preceded the Post-2015 process. Particular reference will be made to the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000 – 2015, and their alignment with the African Women’s Decade (2010 – 2020) Priority Areas.

The Review’s second part will pick on highlights of the Post 2015 process, identifying emerging issues worldwide and their impact on Ghana. It will examine features that should inform the formulation of Post-2015 sustainable development goals (SDGs). Following this, the paper will discuss the UN Women’s proposal for a transformative stand-alone goal which is intended to supplement other development goals into which gender should be mainstreamed. This stand-alone goal proposes three components – Protection against Violence; Capabilities and Resources; and Voice, Leadership and Participation. Each of these components contain targets for attaining gender equality.

Ghana’s performance in the year under review will be synchronized into the UN Women’s proposed stand-alone goal’s **components** and **targets**.

Using this process, NETRIGHT’s focus areas⁸ for the 2013 Review will be addressed within this framework.

These focus areas include

- Critical international, regional and national Issues in 2013
- The Post 2015 Agenda and UN CSW 2013 theme
- Critical events for furthering women’s rights in Ghana: positive and negative (including The Constitutional Review, Affirmative Action and Spousal Property Bill processes)

⁸ NETRIGHT has three main focus areas namely, Movement Building, Economic Justice and Land Rights.



- NETRIGHT’s efforts at providing leadership for the promotion of gender equality – successes, setbacks, challenges
- Celebrating our ‘sheroes’ – women who made us proud in 2013
- Women and men working to promote women’s rights
- Media gender discourse and its implications for women’s rights

This approach will achieve the dual purpose of undertaking the end-of-year review, *and* benchmarking Ghana’s performance against the UN Women’s targets. I have deliberately excluded the proposed indicators, because Ghana has achieved some of them. Furthermore, my preferred approach is that Ghana should assess her performance and position herself to propose her own country-specific indicators for the Post 2015 process.

Finally the Review will examine the way forward to bring about concrete changes for the year 2014.

BACKGROUND AND NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK: FROM THE GLOBAL TO THE LOCAL

1.1 The Millennium Development Goals (2000 – 2015): Ghana’s Compliance Status

2015 marks the end of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) period, so the elaboration of the post-MDG process has begun. At the time of formulation, the MDGs were landmark targets considering that the groundbreaking critical areas of concern and comprehensive elaboration of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) did not contain time-bound targets.

Because the MDGs re-echo salient points in the BPfA, it is useful to align them to the 2010 African Women’s Decade’s (AWD) 10 thematic areas, which will be reviewed in 2015 and 2020 respectively⁹. The targets the 8 MDGs aim to achieve by 2015 and the corresponding

⁹ The targets likely to be achieved are those in bold font.



targets in the BfPA and AWD are

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (BPfA 1; AWD, 1)
2. **Achieve universal primary education (BPfA 2; AWD, 4)**
3. **Promote gender equality and empower women (women in decision-making BPfA 7; AWD, 9)**
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health (BPfA 3; AWD, 3)
6. Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental Sustainability (BPfA 11; AWD 2010 5)
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Ghana is likely to attain MDGs 1, 2, 3, and 6 which respectively address the eradication of extreme poverty, universal primary education, promotion of gender equality, empowerment of women, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Although the country has been classified by the World Bank as a low middle-income country since 2010, its development indicators compare poorly with those of most countries in this category. In spite of the significant progress made towards attaining the MDGs, Ghana is challenged by slow progress on reduction of under-5 mortality, improvement of maternal health and environmental sustainability .

a. **Gaps in the MDGs:**

To achieve the MDGs, it will be necessary to review the gaps in the formulation of the targets, as well as Ghana's implementation gaps. Some of these gaps pertain to

- **The inability to deal adequately with the underlying structural inequalities:** It has been posited that the "MDGs may have contributed to a relative neglect of marginalized groups and to widening social and economic inequalities."



The BPfA addressed these underlying structural inequalities by expanding and dealing separately with violence against women, inequality in women's access and participation in the definition of the economic structures, inequality between men and women in decision making *at all levels*, mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women, and the lack of awareness of and commitment to internationally recognised women's rights.¹⁰ Not only are they expounded in detail; they contain action points for governments, international organizations and CSOs.

- **The MDGs' targets and indicators;** not all are fully aligned to the broader principles outlined in the Millennium Declaration, leading to some gaps e.g.
 1. MDG3, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, is tracked through targets on gender parity in education, and the proportion of seats held by women in to National Parliament, thereby side-tracking the local Assemblies which provide a valuable training ground for entry into the national Parliaments and where important grassroots developmental decisions are taken.
 2. MDG 1 on the eradication of extreme poverty targets the quantitative indicator of the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day. Other qualitative aspects of poverty, manifested through multiple discriminations and the lack of voice, power, and independence do not feature in the indicators.
- Other considerations absent from the MDGs include indicators to address
 1. overcoming gender-specific discrimination such as violence against women
 2. gender-based wage discrimination
 3. women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work
 4. women's limited asset and property ownership

¹⁰ *These are the Critical Areas of Concern 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 respectively.*



5. unequal participation in private and public decision-making at all levels
6. the range of women and adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights issues

“Without attention to these issues, the risk is that gender-based differences in power and resources that block the realization of women’s rights are rendered invisible: the structural causes of discrimination, substantive inequality, women’s disempowerment and other harms to women on the grounds of gender [which were addressed by the BPfA] are left unchanged”.

The gaps in the MDGs provide an opportunity to feed into the Post-2015 process, and the CSW priority theme for 2014: *Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls*.

THE POST 2015 PROCESS

The objectives of the Post-2015 Development Agenda¹¹ build on the foundations laid by the MDGs, the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, (Rio+20), the Monterrey Consensus, the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development and its outcomes, and the values and principles enshrined in all the major UN conferences and summits in the economic, social, and environmental fields. Because the Post-2015 Agenda focuses on completing the unfinished business and responding to new challenges, concerns and priorities of people worldwide, Ghanaian gender activists should take advantage of the discourse space to make inputs into the formulation of sustainable goals for Post-2015. By so doing, they will be determining which priority issues should engage

¹¹ *Heads of State and Government, and Heads of Delegation, Special Event at the United Nations Headquarters in New York 25 September 2012: Outcome Document*



us locally and internationally.

2.1 Heads of State and UN Secretary-General’s Processes

Launching the Special Event on Achieving the Millennium Development Goals New York, on 25 September 2013, the Heads of State and UN Secretary-General recommitted among others to

- Reinforcing the international community’s commitment to the eradication of poverty and hunger
- Recognizing the intrinsic inter-linkage between poverty eradication and promotion of sustainable development “enabled by the integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship ...” They stated that “the transition to sustainable development must be based on a commitment to eradicate poverty.”¹²
- Adopting a coherent approach which integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development and produces a single framework and set of goals – universal and applicable to all countries, which promotes
 1. peace and security
 2. democratic governance, the rule of law
 3. **gender equality,**
 4. and human rights for all
- Protecting the planet’s resources, emphasize sustainable consumption and production and support action to address climate change.
- Rights-based approach, with particular emphasis on women, young people and marginalized groups.
- Opening new and innovative partnerships, pioneering approaches to data and rigorous accountability mechanisms.

¹² *Secretary-General’s remarks at Special Event on Achieving the Millennium Development Goals New York, 25 September 2013*



2.2. Emerging Issues for the Post-2015 Discourse

Between 2000 and 2015, the world has undergone far-reaching changes that will have to influence the Post-2015 landscape, necessitating introspection on the effect of global trends and events on local policy. These include

- The global financial meltdown, its effect on employment, rise in food and fuel prices; additionally for Ghana, availability of aid, and the knock-on effect on NGO/CSO activities. Ghana's response should lie in appropriate economic models and interventions.
- The emergence of new economic powers and geopolitics: The new paradigm raises questions about Ghana's clear positioning in the cotemporary world economic order.
- Security issues involving intra and inter-state conflicts and tensions; Ghana still grapples with the ability to control the trade, manufacture and proliferation of small arms¹³. Small arms pose security threats for women whether in the context of communal violence, or personalized violence in the form of robberies, threats, murders, gender and sexually-based violence at gunpoint. Ghana needs to expeditiously incorporate the agreement into national law and implement it.
- Regional instabilities, the continuing effects of the Arab Spring, terrorism, militarism. For Ghana, the effects of terrorism brought home so tragically as we lost our Professor Awonor in the Westgate Mall bombing in what seemed to be far away Kenya: What is Ghana's state of national readiness?
- Two global issues that have not sufficiently caught national "gender" attention are Climate change and the Environment; and the changing Urban Patterns. They are examined in more detail below.

¹³ Arms Trade Treaty agreed in April 2013



2.2.1 Climate Change and the Environment

Climate change and environmental degradation are yet further manifestations of global changes in respect of which we must demand gender justice, national policy and discourse spaces. Not one month goes by without a news item on coastline erosion occasioned by climate change in some part of the country.

Coastline erosion, has given rise to an attempt at novel jurisprudence of climate change refugees in New Zealand's High Court. The action was brought on November 26, 2013, by a national of Kiribati, which is among a number of island states which the UN Human Rights Commission is concerned could become "stateless" due to climate change. The claim for refugee status recounted how high tides breached seawalls and rising ocean levels were contaminating drinking water, killing crops and flooding homes.

However, the judge ruled that the claim fell short of the legal criteria namely, fear of persecution or threats to his life, and rejected the legal team's argument of "passive persecution" by the environment that the Kiribati government was powerless to control. The judge acknowledged the veracity of environmental degradation attributable to climate change as described by the plaintiff, but held that "Novel and optimistic though these submissions are, they are unconvincing and must fail"... "were they to succeed and be adopted in other jurisdictions, at a stroke, millions of people who are facing medium-term economic deprivation, or the immediate consequences of natural disasters or warfare, or indeed presumptive hardships caused by climate change, would be entitled to protection under the Refugee Convention."

Ghana too, is now contending with the degradation of the environment in several ways – be it as a result of human activity as in the Nsawam-Larte District Assembly where sale of land to stone quarry has raised contentious concerns, including threats from armed



land guards leading to the flight of women from the community; non-sustainable mining, galamsey¹⁴ and the pollution of water sources. The plastic waste menace has hardly created waves on the women's front as a gender justice issue. Policies emerged, premised on "the polluter pays" principle, but how many of us followed the polluter? We continue to live through the pollution. The "paper or plastic" debate must take place forthwith, loudly, visibly and women's voices must be heard.

Only a fortnight ago, the front page banner of the Mirror newspaper (November 23, 2013) screamed at us "Who cares about the fish?" Dr Rose Enstua-Mensah's question bemoaned the impact of pollution and land degradation, and the destruction of spawning grounds for fish with the potential of extinction of fish species. The causes were identified as illegal mining, overfishing and aquatic weeds. One of the ministries MOGSCP intends to collaborate with is Fisheries and Agriculture. Has this Policy and Discourse space been opened? How much has been allocated in the budget for pursuing gender justice in the context of the environment?

Ghana has also borne the consequences of climate change seen in tension-related migration occasioned by the transhumant activity of cattle herders from neighbouring arid Sahel countries and the resultant reports of rapes, murders and the flight of local communities as the herders migrate, grazing their herds. Women have borne the brunt of this conflict. The line between xenophobia on the one hand and respect for sub-regional conventions on free movement become tenuous and complex.

2.2.2 Changing Urban Patterns

The phenomenon of changing settlement and urban patterns is owed in part to climate change leading to the loss of livelihoods,

¹⁴ *Small-scale mining, usually unregulated*



and internal migration. At the beginning of 1900's only 13 cities predominately in the Europe, led by London had a population of over one million inhabitants: by 2007, there were 336, Accra is the 156th: half the world's population now lives in cities. These mass movements of populations have an impact on the safety of cities, economic activities and habitations. Megacities, unmatched by corresponding infrastructure have resulted in sanitation deficits, road congestion giving rise to stress-related health conditions the ripple effect on women who experience or ultimately have to manage these conditions.

Where are women's voices, their perspectives and their leverage in town and city planning? Can we not plan our cities to respond to women's peculiar needs? How do they fare in informal settlements? What about the sporadic raids by city authorities and destruction of temporary business operations and structures? What about access – physical and especially financial – to permanent trading structures in the face of astronomical demands for rent advance and "goodwill"? What is our disaster risk readiness? What plans for disaster risk reduction? How do the changing demographics affect the target groups we work with and definitions of vulnerabilities or responsive engagement trends?

2.3 UN Women's Stand-Alone Transformative Goal on Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Empowerment – Components and Targets: Ghana's Performance

For Post-2015, the UN Women's call for a stand-alone goal provides a model for gender justice, honing national policy and creating discourse spaces. As indicated, the transformative stand-alone goal has three components: Freedom from Violence, Capabilities and Resources, and Voice, Leadership and Participation; each component has its targets and indicators.



UN Women also takes their reference point for the Post 2015 goals from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It is guided by the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which called for a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development and to leverage the inter-linkages between them.

Rio+20's framework included a dedicated section on gender equality and women's empowerment as a priority area; it further identified cross-cutting issues and explicit references to women's empowerment and gender equality in 12 thematic areas namely

- poverty eradication;
- food security,
- nutrition and sustainable agriculture;
- energy;
- water and sanitation;
- sustainable cities and human settlements;
- health and population;
- promoting full and productive employment,
- decent work for all and social protection;
- oceans and seas;
- Small Island Developing States (SIDS);
- disaster-risk reduction;
- desertification;
- land degradation and drought;
- education

In the discourse on the Post-2015 Agenda, Madam Chair, I propose using UN Women's stand-alone goal (which incorporates most of the Rio+20's themes) as a framework to benchmark how this End-of-Year Review of The Status of Women in Ghana under the theme, *Gender Justice, National Policy and Discourse Spaces: 2013 in Retrospect* fits



into the transformative stand-alone goal and its three components of Freedom from Violence, Capabilities and Resources, and Voice, Leadership and Participation. Under each component the respective targets provided will be discussed.

Protection against Violence: Targets

Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women and Girls

i. Violence against women is at the core of the UN CSW 2013

Priority theme which is:

The Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence against Women and Girls. In pursuance of this, the "agreed conclusions" adopted by the Commission at this session provided a comprehensive framework to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

Key points from this paper underscore the need to continue to condemn all forms of violence against women and girls as a violation of the enjoyment of human rights, to resist the invocation of custom, tradition or religious consideration to justify such violence, recognize that multiple forms of discrimination and other factors expose some women and girls to increased risk of violence, providing targeted responses and addressing violence in a comprehensive manner through prevention measures as well as support for victims and survivors. Emerging forms of cyber violence (manifested in the posting on-line – usually by men of intimate encounters with their partners) and the need for safety in public spaces were mentioned. To this end, the Commission urged governments and other stakeholders (paragraph 34) to take actions to strengthen legal and policy frameworks, prevention, response, and the evidence-base. These actions include

- Addressing the structural causes, social norms and gender stereotypes that perpetuate violence against women and girls;



- promoting and protecting the human rights of all women, including their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights;
- realizing women's empowerment and participation at all levels;
- Education, awareness-raising and community mobilization, including the engagement of **men and boys**¹⁵
- Engagement with the media.

The CSW document also includes actions aimed at accountability-ensuring mechanisms to end and punish perpetrators, and provide access to justice for survivors (similar provisions are also comprehensively set out in the Protocol to the African Charter, Article 4 (2) (a) to (f)). The CSW document calls for allocation of resources to achieve this end.

While we commend the engagement with men and boys who tend to be the perpetrators of violence, we caution that there should be vigilant surveillance of these programs to ensure the use of appropriate instructional methodology, monitoring of impact, and that resource allocation is not distorted to the detriment of the victims/survivors.

Ghana has a near-perfect legal, evidence-base and policy framework. Violence against women is dealt with in the wider context of the provisions of the Criminal Offences Act and more particularly under the Domestic Violence Act, 2007, where the parties share a domestic relationship. A Domestic Violence National Policy and Plan of Action (DV NPPA) is operational.

Since 2009, DOVVSU has improved its data collection by

¹⁵ *The engagement of men and boys is Ghana's theme this year for the 16 days of Activism against Gender Violence "Ending Sexual and Gender based Violence in Ghana: The Role of Men and Boys". It draws inspiration from the global theme: "From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let's Challenge Militarism and End Gender Based Violence!"*



disaggregating offenses that constitute Domestic Violence into eighteen categories including rape, defilement, assault through threatening, non-maintenance, incest, unlawful ejection and compulsory marriage. The four highest number of cases reported to the Unit are non-maintenance, followed by assault, defilement and threatening behaviour.

Between 2008 and 2010, there was an increase of between 100 to 400 percent in reporting in these top four categories, indicative of greater awareness, willingness to report and to access the services offered by DOVVSU. This is also borne out by the fact that compulsion of marriage (forced marriage) which accounted for no more than 10 cases between 2005 and 2009 suddenly shot up to 416 cases in 2010, with 318 females being the victims.

However, between 30 to 60 percent of the cases remain under investigation, a maximum of 10 percent in court, with no more than a five percent conviction rate. Overall, the total number of cases received by DOVVSU between 2005 and 2006 was around 13,500 with a spike to 17,315 in 2007; a drop to 3,876 in 2008; a rise back to 17,167 in 2009; and another drop to 13,809 in 2010. Thus an increasing number of cases are being reported and prosecuted, but cultural mores still constrain the lodging of more reports.

NETRIGHT identified implementation gaps which it presented to the Minister, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP) on February 21, 2013. They concerned:

- reactivation of the DV Management Board
- the adoption of the Legislative Instrument (LI) as provided for in the National Policy and Plan of Action (NPPA)
- implementation of the NPPA
- Ring-fenced budgetary allocation by state implementation partners to undertake their responsibilities under the Act
- Clear cut modalities for MoGCSP working relationship with the DV coalition



- Facilitating regional and district level mechanisms to respond to DV in Ghana

Responses from the Ministry indicate that the LI has been laid, and will be adopted by parliament as soon as possible; they also assure us that the NPPA DV will be reviewed and implemented, and a road map has been charted for three meetings a year to institutionalize MoGSCP's working relationship with the DV coalition but is not actualized fully yet. This year two meetings were held.

As regards allocation of resources, in 2013, MoGSCP was allocated GH¢37.5million Gh¢ 30 million of which went to Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) for 75,000 persons. Gh¢7.5 million was allocated to the Ministry. This year, 2014, GH¢91,038,708 has been allocated for the expanded mandate of the Ministry. We need to monitor as part of gender justice, how much of this will go to *women's* issues.

Under the Social Intervention Policies, an amount of GH¢38.0 million is earmarked to cover 150,000 households. Will this come out of MoGSCP's allocation, or is it a separate allocation? Where previously Gh¢30 million catered for 75,000 households, will Gh¢38 million cater adequately for twice that figure? What is the profile of the beneficiaries? Will they include women victims and survivors of DV?

I am personally encouraged by the launch of the DV fund; that notwithstanding, questions to be asked concerning its status, and level of operations. The inability to provide adequate resources has been the bane of an effective prevention and response to violence against women and girls; therefore the gender justice, national policy and discourse spaces demands that these enquiries should be vigorously followed.



- ii. ***Change perceptions, attitudes and behaviours that condone and justify violence against women and girls***

These perceptions range from general stereotypes about women, their socially ascribed roles and attributes which are mostly subordinate, grounded in patriarchy, generally predicated on the belief that women should be docile, not aspire too high, and remain within the boundaries set for them. The notions are then reinforced in songs, proverbs and folklore, and entrenched by custom and practice. Such practices – including FGM, widowhood rites, trokosi, levirate marriages, child betrothal and forced marriages,¹⁶ – which have been criminalized under Ghana's Criminal Offences Act have a negative disparate effect on women.

Situations of conflict, instability and militarized environments exacerbate child marriages. "Protective child marriages" are contracted and actually deemed to be in the interest of the child to afford her "protection" by preventing abuse from a wider range of perpetrators. There is the need for surveillance on these collateral consequences of conflict which are seemingly altruistic, but in fact "legitimize" sexual violence. A similar incident occurred in the course of the year in "reverse" fashion. A thirteen year-old girl offered of her own volition to marry her elder sister's fiancé when the elder sister escaped the day before the marriage ceremony. Not only did the 13 year old step in "to save the family honour", she missed school for at least two days to fulfil her nuptial obligations towards the groom.

As recently as in the week of 2nd December 2013, the media carried a story of a young school girl who was on the verge of being withdrawn from school in Adaklu to be sent to a trokosi shrine for an offence committed by her father.

When we speak of gender justice, why have there not been any prosecutions of these practices when we know they are very much alive?

¹⁶ see Graphic Friday December 6 2013, page 13



Other practices include accusations of and banishment on account of witchcraft, and lately the objectification and commoditization of women especially in advertisements and promotional in the media. With these violations, violence and degradation of women are normalized in the minds of women and the society's psyche. Then we must be wary about contemporary forms of violence. While we focussed on violence against women and intimate partner violence, another phenomenon was creeping up upon us quietly – unrestrained verbal violence in the public sphere against women who dared step out of their assigned roles to contest public office.

iii. Ensure security, support services and justice for women and girls

Who is ensuring that those whose responsibility it is to prosecute these offences are doing so? How is the security of a battered woman protected? Where are the shelters to take the trokosi in should her family not want her back for fear of a hex? What action are we taking over the imminent folding up of the only shelter in the country for lack of resources? Witness protection for the person who gives evidence? What about the provision of psycho-social, economic and physical health support? How well equipped is the Department of Social Welfare to provide services and access to justice for victims of abuse?

Access to Justice

What about the other actors who facilitate access to justice? How are the physical, economic, psychological, and procedural barriers to justice being addressed? The failure of the formal system highly compromises gender justice as women resort to alternative mechanisms that do not always work in their interest, or other non-



conventional detrimental coping strategies. It is no secret that NGOs which provide these services for which women are the main beneficiaries are cutting their services due to the drying-up of funding from donor sources. Can the national discourse about the state's responsibility to step in, happen?

2.3.2 Capabilities and Resources: Targets

i. Eradicate women's poverty

Women's poverty is a barrier to Ghana's developmental aspirations and we have heard countless times that poverty is the face of a woman. We have already spoken to the gender neutral nature of MDG1 and in discussions on poverty we should go beyond numbers – quantitative indicators – and also examine the lack of access to essentials for material well-being i.e. access to nutritional food, housing, land, and other assets; and tackling the psychological aspects of poverty which the MDG threshold of \$1 a day will not eliminate. We refer to the lack of voice, power, and independence, which expose the poor to exploitation, lack of basic infrastructure, exclusion, vulnerability and humiliation by state and non-state actors; and the geographical differentials. Targets under the third component of the proposed UN stand-alone goal address the lack of voice and power. Poverty measurements that include the above indicators provide a clearer situational picture. The Human Development Index (HDI) which measures health, education and income shows that in 2013 Ghana maintained its ranking at 135th out 186 countries captured in the report. 78 per cent of Ghanaians live on less than \$2 US a day, with 44 per cent living on less than \$1 US a day. Poverty also has its demographic implications. Seventy per cent of the country's poor people live in Ghana's rural areas, which are the northern/savannah zones of the country. Additionally, the poorest of the poor are food crop farmers, with women constituting 80% of



this figure. Rural poverty is characterized by limited access to land and basic social services, safe water, electricity, and roads (that will provide transportation to stem post-harvest losses, convey women to markets and health facilities). Therefore we need to ask where *our voices are in matters relating to roads: the utilization of the road fund, road design and live-saving road features such as ambulance lanes?* Creditably, though, the country's rate of life expectancy at birth has risen to 64.6 years from 64.2 years.¹⁷ . The flip side of this commendable statistic is that without a credible and responsive social security system and protective measures, women's longer life-span in old age will be lived in poverty, exclusion and voicelessness.

A. Interventions

Internationally, President Barack Obama pledged during his January 2013 State of the Union address that the United States would join with its allies to “eradicate” extreme poverty over the “next two decades” by connecting more people to the global economy and empowering women. He continued,

We also know that progress in the most impoverished parts of our world enriches us all – not only because it creates new markets, more stable order in certain regions of the world, but also because it's the right thing to do. In many places, people live on little more than a dollar a day. So the United States will join with our allies to eradicate such extreme poverty in the next two decades by connecting more people to the global economy; by empowering women ...

These statements should form the basis for initiating sustainable global partnership in trade and cooperation and leveraging international partnerships with strategic investors for development which takes account of the situation of women.

¹⁷ WHO Country Health Profile of Ghana, updated November 2012, life expectancy at birth m/f (years), 62/65



The 2014 Budget contained Social Intervention Policies already alluded to; the 2014 Budget's proposals on the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme which will see an increase to GH¢38.0 million to cover 150,000 households.

B. NETRIGHT's Interventions on Economic Policies

NETRIGHT expressed its concerns on the impact of economic policy on poverty to the Minister early this year. Beyond the LEAP allocations, are the wider economic consequences of the transition to a middle income country and the segue into an oil economy. NETRIGHT bemoaned the jobless economic growth, the unsustainable expansion of the informal sector, and the need to pursue and find an alternative approach to economic policy making that promotes sustainable and equitable development that benefits women, which does not stretch them to lower quality jobs and inelastic financial limits. In its communication, it called on MoGSCP to assist Government in three main policy areas set out below – creating gender responsive economic policies, managing the petroleum find to promote gender equitable development and ensuring the Land Administration Project (LAP) addresses problems of women's access to and control of land, and eradicates discriminatory land inheritance and distribution practices.

A. Ensure that Economic Policies address issues of concern to women:

- a. Clarify its economic policy framework and ensure that its conception, drafting and implementation are done in a transparent and democratic manner;
- b. Ensure that macro-economic policies are formulated with a consciousness about the need to create and promote decent employment particularly for women;
- c. Clarify the role of the National Development Planning



Commission (NDPC) and ensure that it is responsive to the demands and concerns of women;

- d. Ensure that responses to the global financial and food crises as well as Ghana's budget deficit do not worsen the economic conditions of women given their particular responsibilities for the production and distribution of food as well as social support to households.

B. Insist that government manages the Petroleum find to promote gender equitable development

- a. Works closely with all relevant sector Ministries to ensure women's active participation in policies on petroleum and gas.
- b. Ensure that petroleum revenues are applied in a manner which benefits local communities and disadvantaged social groups such as women.
- c. Advocate strongly to ensure that strong measures to address the adverse impacts of petroleum exploitation on local communities, and marginalised groups.
- d. Set up modalities to facilitate NETRIGHT's contribution to discussions and decisions on oil and gas issues from a perspective which promotes women's rights and gender justice.

Barely a week ago on 3rd December 2013, FIDA Ghana organized a forum to validate a document, *Gender-Sensitive Framework for the Oil and Gas Industry* under the Project *Strengthening Women's Agency to Demand Accountability, Transparency and Equity*. The outcome will be a Gender Document which will serve as a reference tool for the government in reviewing existing petroleum laws. This is an apt example of the pursuit and occupation of gender justice, national policy and discourse spaces. Gender activists should also create discourse spaces to enable women take advantage of the



upstream and downstream business and training opportunities using temporary special measures where necessary.

C. Ensure that the Land Administration Project (LAP) addresses problems of women's access to and control of land and discriminatory land inheritance and distribution practices.

- a. Ensure that the next phase of LAP
 - g. goes beyond studies and prioritises the protection of the interests of social groups such as women and tenant farmers.
 - 3. consistently involves women at all levels of consultations and decision-making in line with provisions of the constitution.
- b. Ensure that women are properly represented in land administration structures at all levels including the Lands Commission and in LAP.
- c. Work with LAP to organise consultations among civil society groups on the gender strategy document before it is finalised; Engage with the LAP to monitor the implementation of the gender strategy document;
- d. Demand from LAP the carrying out of comprehensive research into women's land rights in order to come to conclusive findings about areas in need of reform;
- e. Work towards the strengthening of women's customary law interests in land through a recognition and revaluation of these interests to ensure their use in official transactions and be compensation for their loss.

The issue of land is vital (regardless of the virtual economy) as we need land to stand on, to operate from in order to demand gender justice in, national policy and discourse spaces.



Promote decent work for women

The second target under the Capabilities and Resources goal is the promotion of decent work for women. This goal has engaged the women's front resulting in several studies over the years by LAWA, CEGENSA and other organisations.

A. The Informal Sector

I. Domestic Workers L.I. to the Labour Act 2003, Act 651

Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa, LAWA-Ghana spearheaded a the drafting of a Legislative Instrument to the Labour Act intended to protect Domestic workers who are currently not covered by the Labour Act's provisions which specify that the prescribed hours of work under the Act do not apply to "task workers or domestic workers in private homes"¹⁸.

Its provisions were to be tested among a population sample, but not much has been heard of it since 2008. The absence of such a law is an indictment on a large unregulated segment of the labour force, mainly young women. Women (mainly young) who work in banks under various forms of out-sourcing arrangements face similar work conditions characterized by short-term contracts, long hours which are not commensurately remunerated.

II. Markets

Our markets are a sorry sight. I recall the bewilderment I felt when a one-time Minister for Health chided women for our lack

¹⁸ s. 44 provides, "this sub-part [Sub-Part II dealing with Hours of Work], and sections 33 and 34 [Maximum Hours of Work & Different Hours of Work] do not apply to task workers or domestic workers in private homes"



of circumspection in dressing up daintily and stepping delicately through market filth to buy food for our families' consumption with reckless disregard for the associated health risks. What real choices did we have?

Why are our markets, in spite of the revenue they bring in, excluded from occupational health standards and inspections? Decent work implies a decent work environment and if our markets were subject to the same labour inspections that take place in the formal sector, they would have been closed down a long time ago. Seeing that they are mainly utilized by women, the situation is a glaring example of gender injustice, failure of national policy and it is a discourse spaces we should aggressively occupy forthwith.

We need a new paradigm in the heartbeat of the informal economy where women earn their living and provide indispensable financial support to their families. And women users, female entrepreneurs, architects, builders (from the GYEEDA) modules, health workers should be involved in making proposals for the design of the prototype as a matter of urgency Various business models can be explored for the building and operation of these markets. Again I am gratified that His Excellency has added his voice to this direction. He spoke of markets that should have Health Posts, Day Care Centres, Fire Posts, Communication Centres, Security, Sanitary Facilities as minimum standards for women to ply their trade in dignity; I will add Laundromats, decent and affordable canteens/eateries, back-up water and electricity systems, parking, and meeting places.

As part of this advocacy, an audit should be taken of current markets, to identify safety hazards and issue Standard Operating Procedures to arrest the spate of market fires.



III. Social Security Contributions

About 90% of women in the informal sector do not contribute to SSNIT. Considering that the traditional support systems – the extended family, family houses, and numerous children – have lost their relevance as social protection nets. Measures must be put in place to ensure compulsory enrolment and contribution to the scheme even if it means allocating a percentage of the Value Added Tax to provide coverage.

B. Labour Law Violations

Anecdotal evidence abounds of violations of maternity leave, and working hours provisions of the labour laws, wage disparity but those affected are apprehensive about lodging complaints for fear of the greater evil of losing their livelihoods. Our Labour Act still does not recognise the hostile environment aspect of sexual harassment.

We need greater engagement and dialogue to stem the wave of industrial unrest and agitations; and more effective labour inspections and monitoring of the unregulated sectors.

C. Prostitution and Child Prostitution – Worst Forms of Child Labour

Reports about child prostitution have increased, catalyzed by the oil city, commercial metropolises and border town dynamics. Sekondi-Takoradi has experienced a surge in child prostitution since the Jubilee oil find, with barely-pubescent girls as young as 12 being drawn in from Ghana and other West African countries charging GH¢3 per patron. Similar news items have been in the media since October 2013 about arrests of 10 to 12 year-olds engaged in prostitution in Kumasi. We are aware of the Minister's own



interventions in Tema. Several factors, including poverty, parental irresponsibility, predatory pedophiles, peer pressure and poor academic performance are said to be driving the practice. When contacted, Department of Social Welfare indicated that they lacked the necessary logistical and financial support to address the issue holistically, since the only reception centre for child labour, child prostitution and street children, is located in Accra and its facilities are overstretched. They in turn called for the “cooperation of other non-governmental organizations and philanthropic bodies” to address the practice.

Madam Chair, apart from the egregiousness of children being involved in the sex trade, discrimination and stereotypes are exhibited in reportage. In a recent newspaper publication, a picture of a group of commercial sex workers was published, and the accompanying caption contained their names. The news item indicated that *their* patrons were also arrested – but none of their pictures were published; it was only their names (generic) that were printed. It has been questioned whether the Criminal Offences Act provides direct sanctions for those who patronize the services of prostitutes. To bring Ghana's laws and practices in line with international conventions, it is recommended that Ghana follow the Nordic model of decriminalizing prostitution and instead making the *exploitation of prostitution*, and the *purchase of sex* an offence. This approach is what is prescribed in Article 6 of CEDAW, under which states are mandated to *take all appropriate action* to suppress all forms of traffic in women and the *exploitation of prostitution*. The French Parliament is currently debating this approach for adoption, and Ghana should follow suit.

Even though a redrafting of Ghana's laws will be necessary, several provisions exist within the Criminal Offences Act to address child prostitution and the exploitation of prostitution namely,

- **S. 273** Allowing persons under age to be in brothels



- Where a person responsible for a child below 16 permits that child to visit or reside in brothels, that person commits a misdemeanour.
- **S. 106** Householder Permitting Defilement of Child under 16 years
- Owners and occupiers, persons assisting in the management of premises who induce or knowingly permit a child of 16 years to be on the premises to be carnally known are liable to 7 – 25 years imprisonment
- **S. 274** Persons Trading in Prostitution (Pimps)
It is a misdemeanour to live off the proceeds of prostitution or to manage the prostitute-related activities of a prostitute.
- **275 – 7** Soliciting for Immoral Purposes, by Prostitutes, Keeping a Brothel

These should be used more robustly to prosecute offenders, pimps and those who rent out rooms for purposes of prostitution-related activities.

Madam Chair,

We commend the efforts by successive governments to provide employment for the youth. This is a matter that touches human security and economic development. We are informed that GYEEDA model is already being replicated in Nigeria and the Gambia; and Liberia, Sierra Leone and Senegal have shown interest in adopting it. The three highest ranked modules were the Youth-in-ICT, phone repairs and dressmaking.

The gendered dimensions and impacts of these programmes should be of interest to us, and should be part of the “export strategy”.

For example, has gender been taken into account in the statutory framework? What are the targets in the Legal Framework/Policy?

Did the Impact Analysis speak to what modules the young girls are pursuing (p34 ff.)? Or does it reinforce the gender divisions of labour?

Are there links to local and international markets?



NETRIGHT in petitioning MoGSCP over decent work, has asked that government

“Protect and Respond to the needs of Informal Workers, particularly market traders and domestic workers and Rural Women” by taking the following steps.

MoGSCP should liaise with the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare to ensure that Ghana ratifies and implements the tenets of

ILO Convention 186 on domestic workers;

- a. MoGSCP should liaise with the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare to ensure that Ghana ratifies the **new ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Protection which covers women in both formal and informal economy;**
- b. Ensure that, the government puts in place measures to ensure that rural women participate in and benefit from development projects, including the Savannah Development programme; (CEDAW Art. 14; Protocol 19)
- c. MoGSCP should work with women’s groups under the leadership of LAWAWA Ghana, who have already carried out studies on domestic work and engaged with domestic workers to promote local initiatives for improving the conditions of domestic workers and encouraging their self organisation and emancipation;
- d. MoGSCP should work closely with government to recognise the **contribution of market women and address decongestion and planning problems in cities in ways which do not threaten their right to make a living;**
- e. MoGSCP should ensure that government prioritises the creation of decent work to absorb the surplus labour in the informal economy and reduce unemployment and support private sector initiatives to do the same;
- f. MoGSCP should ensure that government prioritises the mandatory expansion of social security programmes to all workers in the informal economy to ensure their survival and dignity now and in their old age.

**iii. Build women's access to, and control over, productive assets**

“Control over, and ownership of, assets can provide women with greater protection and stronger fallback positions, enhancing their bargaining power within the household and their capacity for economic independence.” UN Women

A. Land

Madam Chair

I am not oblivious to the fact the old economic paradigm of land, capital and labour as means of production is becoming obsolete in the face of a knowledge economy. However, land is one of the most important productive assets in our agrarian economy, and real estate is an investment that appreciates in value; hence the high collateral value placed on land. Our wise sayings allude to the fact that “land is life”, and “power resides in land”. There are several concerns over the impact of land use on women. In the Western Region the oil find has pushed up prices and availability of land; mining with its attendant land degradation and water pollution has increased women's burdens; and the increasing acquisition of large tracts of land backed by National Energy Policy for bio fuels (over 1mil hectares for jatropha plantation by 2009), as against food production which has affected women's small holdings and their ability to gather shea nuts.

In all these undertakings, there is a clear absence of gender focus even though women are ultimately the most impacted¹⁹. There are concerns over the competing land use, the irresistible amounts offered land owners which results in the weakest – women who are usually smallholders – being pushed off the land. What is worse, expectations of alternative employment from the new land use do not materialize.

¹⁹ ActionAid Policy Brief



How are women being integrated into these – especially the downstream? What are the opportunities for access to and training in entrepreneurship, appropriate technology and equipment for agro and food processing?

We have already dealt with the structural dynamics of land administration under the LAP.²⁰

B. Property Rights of Spouses Bill 2013; the Intestate Succession Law Bill

These two Bills have gone through a chequered history in the last parliament. The passage of the Property Rights of Spouses Bill is both a Constitutional imperative (Article 22 (2)) and an international obligation. The Bill will ensure equal access by spouses to property jointly acquired during their marriage and fairness in the distribution of jointly acquired property when the marriage is dissolved. It will removing the potential for discrimination by ensuring substantive equality in titling and contracting, level out the power imbalances that occur on entry into marriage, facilitate access to credit, and promote no fault divorces.

Among the salient features are the recognition of unpaid work of spouses as contribution to the acquisition of matrimonial property, and the entitlement of cohabitees who meet the conditions prescribed under the law to matrimonial property on the same terms as spouses. After a first reading various consultations with several interest groups country-wide, spearheaded by members of the Constitutional Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee (CLPAC), LAWA-Ghana, AWLA and civil society were held on the Bill. Comments received

²⁰ See Sction 2.3.2., B NETRIGHT's Interventions on Economic Policies part III, titled *Ensure that the Land Administration Project (LAP) addresses problems of women's access to and control of land and discriminatory land inheritance and distribution practices.*



were collated and referred to the Government through the Office of the Attorney General to Parliament. Donor support came from development partners including Star Ghana (a multi-donor) facility and the United Nations Development Programme and GIZ. After the second Reading, progress on the bill stalled, illustrating the lack of urgency with which legislation perceived as “favouring women” is treated, and the nexus between having Voice, Leadership and Participation (through having greater women’s representation in parliament) could facilitate women’s access to, and control over, productive assets..

We are reliably informed that the Bill was re-laid and went through the first Reading on the 12th November 2013

C. Supreme Court, 2012 – Gladys Mensah v. Stephen Mensah

We believe the Bill will reinforce the Supreme Court’s February 2012 decision, in Gladys Mensah v. Stephen Mensah by giving judicial recognition to one of the important features of the PRSB, namely non-monetary contribution to matrimonial assets. The Court stated,

We believe that, common sense, and principles of general fundamental human rights requires that a person who is married to another, and performs various household chores for the other partner like keeping the home, washing and keeping the laundry generally clean, cooking and taking care of the partner’s catering needs as well as those of visitors, raising up of the children in a congenial atmosphere and generally supervising the home such that the other partner, has a free hand to engage in economic activities must not be discriminated against in the distribution of properties acquired during the marriage when the marriage is dissolved.



iv. Reduce women’s time burdens

A. Stereotypes in Respect of Care-giving

Care-giving is a one of the main areas which takes up women’s time, deeply entrenched notions ascribe this role to women. The Preamble to CEDAW issues a caveat that women’s care-giving roles should not be (a stereotype) used to discriminate against them

Bearing in mind the great contribution of women to the welfare of the family and to the development of society, so far not fully recognized, the social significance of maternity and the role of both parents in the family and in the upbringing of children, and aware that the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination but that the upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between men and women and society as a whole ...

and

... that a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women,

CEDAW places responsibilities on State Parties, in Article 5 (b), namely that

state parties should ensure a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

Article 11 (2) (c) specifies that the work environment should

... encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;



This provision is clearer than the potentially contentious provision in Article 27 (2) of the 1992 Constitution which states,

Facilities shall be provided for the care of children below school-going age to enable *women, who have the traditional care for children, realize their full potential.*

Whereas CEDAW calls for the provision of supporting social services to enable **parents** combine family with work responsibilities, Article 27 (2) of Ghana's 1992 Constitution states that facilities should be provided for the care of children to enable **women** "*who have the traditional care for children, realize their full potential*". While this could be read as describing the current factual situation (a descriptive stereotype), it could be criticized as a nuanced endorsement of the stereotyped roles ascribed to women (prescriptive/normative stereotypes).

Indeed, this stereotype has worked out to the disadvantage of a man in South Africa. In the case, *President of the Republic of South Africa v. Hugo*,²¹ President Mandela issued a pardon to some prisoners including mothers convicted of non-violent crimes who had children below the age of twelve. Hugo brought a legal challenge on the grounds that the pardon was unconstitutional as it was discriminatory on the grounds of sex. He argued that the pardon should equally apply to fathers, and as sole caregiver of his son he would have qualified had he been a mother. In the President's affidavit, he contended that he had

based the decision to remit the sentences of only mothers in the best interests of children. In doing so, he relied among other factors on the sex role stereotype that women are, or should be primary caregivers ... that women do or should play a 'special role' in the care and nurturing of young children.

²¹ 1997 (4) SA 1 (CC) (S. Afr., Constitutional Court), as discussed in Rebecca Cook and Simone Cusack, Gender Stereotyping; Transnational Legal perspectives at 44 et seq



The court held that the discrimination was justified, but Justice Krieglger, dissenting found that the act of denying fathers the opportunity for remission amounted to discrimination on the grounds of sex. His view was that the sex role stereotype of women as primary caregivers is both a result and a cause of prejudice; a societal attitude which relegates women into a subservient, occupationally inferior yet unceasingly onerous role. It is a relic and a feature of patriarchy which the Constitution so vehemently condemns.²²

In the view of the judge, "*the Constitution was a tool that should be used to deinstitutionalize the sex role stereotype that women are or should be mothers; it should not be used to perpetuate this prescriptive stereotype and the ideology of patriarchy upon which it rests.*"²³

It is commendable that the Women's Protocol to the African Charter Article 13 (l) has a provision similar to CEDAW's Article 5(b) which asks States Parties to recognize that both parents bear the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of children and that this is a social function for which the State and the private sector have secondary responsibility;²⁴

²² *Ibid.* at 56

²³ *Ibid.* at 56, authors' analysis of the case.

²⁴ General Recommendation No. 23 (16th session, 1997) on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life, paragraphs 10 and 11 states that "[in] all nations, the most significant factors inhibiting women's ability to participate in public life have been the cultural framework of values and religious beliefs, the lack of services and men's failure to share the tasks associated with the organization of the household and with the care and raising of children. In all nations, cultural traditions and religious beliefs have played a part in confining women to the private spheres of activity and excluding them from active participation in public life." It recommends that "Relieving



Not only should the facilities recommended by Ghana's 1992 Constitution be provided to enable parents realize their full potential, but men should be employed in these facilities as caregivers to eradicate the stereotype that care-giving is the sole responsibility of women.

To reduce women's time burdens, there should be more advocacy within the labour front to provide child-friendly work environments, flex – and part-time work options that will not prejudice levels of social security benefits, the availability of affordable labour saving devices and the use of technology.

v. Promote education and skills for women and girls

Education is an ideal launch pad for tackling and dismantling gender stereotypes. Not surprisingly, the only explicit mention of “girl” in CEDAW is in Article 10 (f), on Education. When girls complete the equivalent of secondary school, the effect is lower maternal and child mortality figures; better nutrition for their families; an assurance that their children will be educated; a high level of protection from harmful traditional practices including child marriages and slavery; and violence.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon²⁵ has said that investing in girls is a moral imperative — a matter of basic justice and equality, and an obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW. It is also critical for achieving the MDGs, advancing economic growth and building peaceful, cohesive societies.

Ghana has achieved remarkable successes with gender parity at the primary level, and the opening up of opportunities for tertiary

women of some of the burdens of domestic work would allow them to engage more fully in the life of their communities.”

²⁵ Statement issued on the International Day of the Girl Child 2013: *Let Girls be Girls, not Brides*



education with the increase in public and private tertiary institutions with flexible programmes thus affording opportunities for women who hitherto might not have been able to access tertiary education to upgrade their skills. Affirmative Action programmes have enabled girls subject to economic difficulties or from deprived areas to access education. The STEM Clinics and social intervention initiatives such as the School feeding Programme have positively impacted on enrolment with a knock-on effect for girls' education.

A. Factors Militating against Girls' Education

We should not overlook the fact that educational institutions can also become sites for ingraining disempowering practices and messages. As far as our gender justice, national policy and discourse spaces are concerned, we still have to address gendered horizontal segregation (in voluntary or involuntary subject selection) and vertical segregation (the attrition rate for girls as they go higher up the academic ladder), as these two factors entrench stereotypes and have a detrimental effect women's ability to earn decent wages later on. There are also performance differentials – geographical, and between public and private institutions especially at the basic level.

Other factors that specifically militate against girls' education include sexual harassment from teachers or peers and contemporary forms of bullying (cyber-bullying). Deficits in infrastructure i.e. long distances to schools; the absence of sanitary facilities which leads to absenteeism to avoid embarrassing accidents and the consequent teasing which leads to further stigma are additional inhibitors. These lead to safety and health consequences such as contracting infections and Urinary Tract Infections. We must advocate for a basic compulsory universal prototype of modern technologies for sanitary facilities that utilize the entire chain from rain-water harvesting, production of biogas from the waste and the conversion of the residue



into fertilizer. After all, this year's theme on International Day of the Girl Child on October 11 was "Innovating for Girls' Education".

For girls to enjoy the full benefit from education, the experience should be empowering. The Joint UN Statement issued on the 2013 International Day of the Girl Child observed,

Innovating to ensure gender equality to, within and through education requires reforms to improve the quality of education offered to girls at all levels. Innovative measures would include: breaking down the sex-segregation of school curricula and facilitating girls engagement in non-traditional areas such as mathematics, science and technology and non-feminised vocational skill areas; empowering girls through transforming the mode of delivery from didactic to constructivist approaches that allow girls to become active and confident, assertive learners; eliminating gender stereotypes that reproduce patriarchal norms from curricula, textbooks and teaching materials; and, instituting mandatory courses in teacher training programmes that expose teachers to awareness of the gender regime operating in schools and ways in which their classroom behaviours transmit and reproduce traditional gender socialisation of girls and boys. .

The requirement for an overhaul in the teacher training curriculum is crucial. Three examples will suffice. About three years ago, there was a media report about a Head of a co-educational school who asked the female students to fetch water for the male students' *personal* use during a water shortage.

During our consultations on the Affirmative Action Bill about two years ago, we were informed that in a particular co-educational institution, the girls had to routinely leave evening studies – prep – 15 minutes before the boys to avoid inappropriate contact if they closed at the same time. Apart from the quantifiable time the girls would lose through the truncation of study periods, i.e. 15 minutes x 5 days x 14 weeks per term; the qualitative cost in loss of image and self



esteem, feelings of subservience, (victim) blame for being the culprits who "lead the males into temptation ..." is incalculable.

Finally, we recall the overzealous statement made by barely 4 weeks ago by a Deputy Director of Education that school girls who get pregnant will be punished severely to serve as a deterrent to their peers since the government was investing so much in education of the girl-child. Therefore, any girl who decided to waste such resources through loose morals should be made to re-pay such investment. She explained that any girl who got pregnant outside of rape did it with consent and should therefore be punished.

A few comments: First, the non-recognition that if the sanction was based on the loss of investment, then the other party responsible for the pregnancy should be equally held responsible. Second, the directive did not take account of the power dynamics that accompanies such relationships. Third, the international human rights approach to the issue embodied in CEDAW, and ratified by Ghana mandates "the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely"²⁶.

In similar vein, the Protocol to the African Charter in Article 12 (c) calls for "sanctions against the perpetrators of such practices". This is so because in the international human rights discourse, adolescent pregnancies are considered barriers to education and therefore cannot be entirely situated within the context of egregious "loose" behaviour occasioned solely by the girls, thereby warranting punishment. Finally, CEDAW's first line recommendation to states parties to address the issue is for them to provide to adolescent boys and girls,

Age-appropriate education on sexuality and reproductive health and rights in school curricula, including issues of gender relations and

26 CEDAW Article 10 (f) *Consequently, States Parties' Reports have to indicate to the Committee the specific programmes they have put in place to achieve this re-integration*



*responsible sexual behaviour, focused on preventing early pregnancies*²⁷

Fortunately, we were later informed that the position espoused by the Deputy Director of Education was not the official GES policy. Pregnant female teacher-trainees in tertiary level training institutions have not been spared the normalization and justification of pregnancy-based discrimination. Recently, the controversial GES directive²⁸ asking pregnant teacher-trainees to withdraw from school evoked sharp comments from both sides in the ensuing public debate. Several arguments were raised by the education authorities to support their position. Among them was the moral argument that these trainees would be a bad influence on their peers. There was the patronizing argument that they should organize their lives better and set their priorities right. Then there was the appeal to stereotypes – they would not be able to stand the rigours of the course including physical education and the institution’s boarding system since they would have to grapple with morning sickness, the need for special diets; and the non-availability of the maternity version of the institution’s uniform.

These arguments did not take account of the adult female trainees’ human rights to privacy, their reproductive rights, or the fact that they were in a tertiary institution and their peers similarly situated in other tertiary institutions were not subject to similar rules. Neither was consideration had for the fact that once they graduated, they would be pregnant whilst teaching under the same circumstances (rigorous work schedule, potential for morning sickness) that were being canvassed against them as trainees.

The GES did not reflect that on their qualification as teachers, these

²⁷ This is the language CEDAW now uses in its Concluding Observations to replace “sex education” which does not necessarily take account of the gender and power dimensions of such education.

²⁸ The Directive apparently was based on the 1998 GES Code of Discipline for Teacher Trainees



same arguments would not avail the female teachers to entitle them to a total leave of absence from the classroom for the entire duration of their pregnancy (as was being imposed on them as trainees). Furthermore, Ghana’s current Labour Act does not accept the stereotype that every pregnant woman is automatically incapacitated at any particular stage of her pregnancy. As a result, the statutory twelve-week maternity leave is no longer mandatorily broken up into equal parts of six weeks pre and post partum; but a pregnant woman who is able to, may work right up to the time of her delivery. These incidents coming on the heels of each other over the past three years underscore the need to implement the 2013 UN International Day of the Girl-Child Recommendation for ***mandatory courses in teacher training programmes that expose teachers to awareness of the gender regime operating in schools and ways in which their classroom behaviours transmit and reproduce traditional gender socialisation of girls and boys ...***

The CEDAW Committee has issued Concluding Observation in similar vein requiring the State Party to ensure that gender issues and gender-sensitivity training be made an integral part of all teacher training.

This is where our voices should be in the pursuit of gender justice, national policy and discourse spaces as we review the status of women in Ghana in 2013. In addition, we should be concerned about the quality of education, the school feeding programme (quality of food and implementation) and the potential effect of withdrawal of allowances for teacher trainees as topical matters. We should track the monitoring and accountability mechanisms and evaluate the impact of these programmes.

The case of Malala Yousufzai, a 14 year old Pakistani school girl and education activist who was victim of an assassination attempt on 9 October 2012 is worth highlighting. Her case alerted the world over the manner in which girls’ education still remains an enormous



challenge. For her resolve, she was awarded EU human rights prize in October 2013, but to our disappointment the Nobel Peace Prize eluded her.

vi. Improve women's and girls' health

Madam Chair,

CEDAW's 1999 General Recommendation 24 (GR 24) on Women and Health articulates the importance of taking context-specific action to achieve the practical realization of women's right to health. International standards impose the obligation on states to provide adequate, affordable, adaptable and accessible health services and information on these facilities, especially to women in the rural areas, and to establish and strengthen service provision in respect of maternity.

Measures to eliminate discrimination against women are considered to be inappropriate if a health care system lacks services to prevent, detect and treat illnesses *specific to women*. Among illnesses specific to women to which much attention has not been paid in Ghana are menopause and post-partum depression.

States parties are therefore required to report on their understanding of how policies and measures on *health care* address the health rights of women from the perspective of women's needs and interests and how it addresses distinctive features and the biological, socio-economic and psychosocial factors which differ for women in comparison to men.

vii. Reduce maternal mortality and ensure women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights



Regrettably, Ghana will not be able to attain MDGs 4 and 5²⁹ in spite of interventions such as free delivery for pregnant women, free access to family planning services, free transportation for pregnant women to delivery facilities initiated by some communities and the scaling up of policy through the MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF) when Maternal Mortality was declared National emergency in July 2008. MDG 5 requires the reduction of maternal mortality by 75% from 1990 to 2015, i.e. to 185/100,000 live births. Our maternal mortality figures are currently 340/100,000.

Equatorial Guinea has achieved MDG 5, dropping its maternal death rate by 81 per cent, from 1200 to 240 per 100,000 live births between 1990 and 2010. Eritrea is on track to having dropped its rate by 73% from 880 to 240 per 100,000 live births, showing that this is possible.

Madam Chair,

We commend hospitals, health facilities and personnel under whose watch zero maternal mortality deaths have been recorded within the period under review – they show that these deaths are preventable. Life is the most fundamental human right.

The President's recent directive that maternal mortality interventions would form basis of the renewal of DCE's mandates is again highly commendable. But we need clarity as to the deliverables. Are they backed with facilities, access, motorable roads; nutrition to address anaemia as bleeding is one of the leading causes of maternal mortality; blood and the cold chain – electricity and back up; addressing traditional beliefs, engaging traditional authorities as they wield immense power? What roles have Queenmothers assumed? How are we addressing professionalism, and the attendant bureaucracy in health care facilities? – monitoring and audit systems; the proportion of health budget allocated to maternal mortality³⁰ how

²⁹ MDGs 4 and 5 target the Reduction of Child Mortality and the Improvement of Maternal Health respectively.

³⁰ CARMMA report puts the figure at 12%.



seriously do we take state responsibility under CEDAW's General Recommendations 28 and 14.

In a way, it is ironical that Africa is not leading the world in health delivery to women and girls. Africa's regional instrument, the Protocol to the African Charter on Women's Rights, contains comprehensive provisions, is the first international human rights treaty to articulate a woman's right to medical abortion including circumstances where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother, the life of the mother or the foetus. CEDAW enjoins States parties to take action to prevent violations of rights by private persons³¹ and organizations. States should also ensure that protocols and hospital procedures address violence against women, and that sanctions are imposed on health care professionals guilty of sexual abuse of women patients. Yet Ghanaian women seeking abortions, the second leading cause of maternal deaths – due to over-moralization – were abused verbally and sexually by the “Dr” within the “facility”.

The NHIS apparently has not actualized the policy of abortion coverage. Yesterday, 9th December 2013, JOY FM carried a feature on its midday news on lack of comprehensive abortion care on account of conscientious objection. The UN standard to which Ghana has subscribed is clearly outlined in CEDAW GR 24, Paragraph 11: where health service providers refuse to perform such services based on

31 In the case of Teixeira v Brazil, a patient died as a result of negligence in a private hospital. The CEDAW Committee found that Brazil had neglected its due diligence obligation to ensure appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, and had failed in its duty to regulate and monitor private health care institutions.

Also, CEDAW General Recommendation No. 19 on Violence against Women stipulates that State Parties may be held responsible for private acts of persons, organizations or enterprises, if they fail to act with due diligence to prevent violations of rights or to investigate and punish acts of violence and provide compensation.



conscientious objection, measures should be introduced to ensure that women are referred to alternative health providers.

A consequence of unplanned pregnancy is that young girls have to shoulder single parenthood unprepared. What alternatives do we have to offer in our national discourse? We need access to justice to bring dead-beat-dads to book, functional educational reintegration policies, social protection interventions including timely adoptions and fosterage models. In particular, we need to listen to the youth who whether we like it or not, now have an earlier sexual debut and do get pregnant. They need services – sexuality education, appropriate spiritual and psychological guidance, the availability of stigma-free services, open channels of communication between them and the adults, recreational spaces where they are safe and can build up their bodies instead of destroying them.

We are also concerned about the recent convoluted controversies over fake/sub-standard and/or unregistered drugs, and need to know that the medications we imbibe and administer to our families are efficacious and safe.

viii. Ensure women's sustainable access to energy

An increase in the cost of energy leads to cascading increases in other costs – running households, small scale and micro businesses, transport costs, etc. Recent increases in the price of liquefied gas (after it had been promoted in the 1990s accompanied by localised technology as the “clean way to go”) drive women to resort to cheaper or readily available alternatives, especially firewood and charcoal.³² The result is environmental degradation, an increase in women's and girls' reproductive roles and work burdens as they have to go further

32 A total of 84% of the population uses solid fuel (95% of the rural population, and 74.3% of the urban population); 50.8% of the population uses firewood, whilst 34.8% use charcoal. <http://www.cleancookstoves.org/country-profiles/18-ghana.html>



for firewood³³, and greater vulnerability and safety issues as women being are attacked and raped on remote farms, At the household level, there is greater exposure to fire-related risks. In addition, the resultant household smoke pollution results in upper respiratory tract infections and other ailments, thereby increasing health costs.

To reduce the risks associated with gathering fuel wood, women could form co-operatives to cultivate wood lots for domestic fuel needs, but embarking on these ventures bring women face to face with problems of acquiring secure titles to the land required.

ix. Ensure women’s sustainable access to water and sanitation

The quality of our water has been problematic for some time now, and many of us remember with nostalgia the days when the presence of a tap meant sterile water. Now even the quality of “pure” water is suspect.

Mining and galamsey have exacerbated pollution of water sources for urban and rural users, and added to this is the sachet water containers and plastic waste in our towns and waterways. The cost of producing potable water has escalated and it is largely a woman’s duty to find it for family use.

The menace of plastic and electronic waste, violations of the Montreal Convention on e-waste disposal and siting of dump sites close to

³³ It is estimated that women and children to spend up to 5 hours per day gathering fuel, or spend significant household income purchasing fuel. “Women provide 91% of households’ total efforts in collecting fuel and water, and women have an average working day of 11-14 hours, compared to 10 hours on average for men. A reduction in time spent collecting fuel and cooking enables women to spend more time with their children, tend to other responsibilities, enhance existing economic opportunities, pursue income-generating or educational opportunities and leisure activities and rest – all of which contribute to poverty alleviation.” <http://www.cleancookstoves.org/country-profiles/18-ghana.html>



human habitations is an issue that has remained unaddressed and which should be taken up in 2014. Sanitation in the markets has already been dealt with. World Toilet Day 2013 came and went as it has in the past three years. The same complaints have been rehashed, namely

- Absence of toilets in domestic dwellings; 70% of the population do not have toilets, with landlords even converting rooms and spaces that could be used for washrooms into rental units;
- The poor state of public sanitary facilities lead to cholera, UTIs, intestinal diseases and skin infections
- Blaming women traders for the insanitary conditions in our transport terminals and public places

2.3.3 Voice, Leadership and Participation: Targets

i. Promote participation in public institutions

Madam Chair,

Ghana ratified CEDAW in 1986, thereby committing internationally to substantive equality between men and women in all spheres. Article 8 governs equality in public life. The Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, Paragraph 90 (a) called for equal representation of women and men, if necessary through positive action, repeating the ECOSOC target of 30% women in decision-making levels by 1995. MDG 3 mandated a Gender Equality target of 50% in National Parliaments by 2015. The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality, targeted women’s representation at a minimum of 30% in parliament and local government by 2015.

At the African regional level, the Protocol to the African Charter on the Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa 9 (1) (b) calls for equal representation of women with men at all levels in all electoral processes, and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, 2007 prescribes gender parity in



representation at all levels including legislatures.

It was clear that in spite of all the international conventions Ghana had signed, our trailblazing record as a country, the 1998 Cabinet Statement of Policy on Affirmative Action, the equal voice and representation sought would not happen without legal intervention. The results of Election 2012 which returned a 10.8 % of female MPs, was the last straw.

Today we have an Affirmative Action Draft Bill which the Minister informed us at the 2013 launch of the 16 Days of Gender Activism is at the Attorney-General's. At this point may I salute and acknowledgement the women who spearheaded the fight for equal representation and all those who participated in the process. They include

- The Government of Ghana, and the women who stood and represented us in the 1st Republic, and subsequent parliaments
- NCWD, MOWAC, (now MOGCSP)
- The Pioneers – Mrs. Akpalu, Mrs. Dorcas Coker Appiah, Prof. Kuenyehia
- NGO/CSO Partners, Academia, who wrote and published articles etc.
- International and Regional Organisations and Community (as donors, providers of the platform for the elaboration of the Covenants)
- Individuals, female aspirants to representative positions
- Other Catalysts, the media, the men, and those who worked the trenches

When the Bill is passed, the realization of the other targets under this Goal on **Voice, Leadership and Participation** will be given a boost. I am referring to the targets: to **Promote Participation in Public Institutions, Promote Women's Leadership in the Private Sector**, all of which will be contained in the Affirmative Action Bill, and we trust



it its passage and dissemination will lead to the add-on acceptance of the target, to **promote equal decision making in households**.

Again we applaud His Excellency the President for his directive that Queenmothers should be included in the Regional Houses of Chiefs. His reason was that the current composition of the Chieftancy institutions is not gender-balanced, and gave his assurance that budgetary allocations will be made for this purpose. Their exclusion has been seen by activists as gender-based discrimination, in respect of which proposals were made to the Constitutional Review Commission. Recommendations were made in the Affirmative Action law drafting proposals for their equal inclusion in the Houses of Chiefs.

From this point, activists should also be focusing on:

- a. Reforms in Parliament itself to ensure gender equality in numbers and positions within the governing body. Parliament should produce gender-sensitive working policies and mainstreaming gender in all the work of parliament
- b. Monitoring the culture and infrastructure in Parliament to ensure a non-sexist environment. Confrontational debates should be tampered and sexist remarks should be discouraged and sanctioned. Continuous gender training should be institutionalized to address the lack of awareness of gender and women's issues.
- c. Training women parliamentarians on the written and unwritten rules to build their confidence
- d. Providing support to enable women cope with juggling political and family responsibilities.

To make this happen Madam Chair, we have to actualize the last target,



ii. Strengthen women's collective action

A. NETRIGHT

We recognize NETRIGHT's leadership role reflected in its diverse membership and the ability to mobilize a wide array of NGOs. NETRIGHT's input into gender justice, national policy and discourse spaces has been extensively discussed in this presentation. Funding challenges however have stalled capacity building and the robust collective action the body embarked on in the late '90s and early 2000s. We continue to be concerned about women who suffer multiple discriminations, especially in the three thematic areas of economic justice, land and movement building and continue to seek creative ways to address these issues.

B. CRC Process

There is the need to continue the re-engagement with the CRC Process and its Implementation Committee in order to take NETRIGHT's Recommendations forward. These concern the Gender Rights section and the Gender Equality Commissioner.

C. Media Gender Discourse and its implications for women

Women activists value the collaboration with the Media, and in particular their role in bringing matters impacting the gender discourse to the public's attention. They have been instrumental in exposing mistreatment of house-helpers, stories of violence, and statements by policy makers. Activists owe them recognition for kick-starting dialogue on these matters, and in many cases following through. We ought to strengthen this collaboration through mutual exchanges, workshops, and the donation of free air time and space to



put out women's issues on a regular basis.

However, many of the images and messages objectifying and commodifying women are transmitted through the media. Sometimes, the media's handling of programmes and stereotypical posturing, even by female presenters can be distressing. There are adverts that reinforce stereotypes – for example, that meals prepared by young wives must pass the external examination of their mothers-in-law; that there are particular tasks expected to be performed only by women, and so products related to them are advertised only by them. Given the power of these images, which have hardly changed since the advent of television we need to strategize over this matter, and probably revive SADA – Sisters against Discriminatory Advertisements – our pressure group formed in 2005 to monitor and draw attention to these stereotyped advertisements.

D. Change of MOWAC to MoGSCP Ministry

MoGSCP as the national machinery and policy setter is a critical ally, and we hope to build on the relationship we have hitherto cultivated. This is why we are concerned when the Ministry is under-resourced and over-burdened.

- We still concerned about the following:
- How do we ensure the core mandate is not lost in the expanded mandate?
- Will the allocated resources cover the other mandates?
- How will the budgetary allocations be distributed?
- How do we bring together the various policy initiatives, e.g.
 - » Reengineering
 - » Gender Policy
- How do we ensure and sustain continuous Dialogue on the new policy paper Agenda for Change with NETRIGHT



The 2014 Budget also presents an opportunity to monitor allocations and assess whether gender has been taken into account adequately.

E. Freedom of Information Law

We continue to press for the Right to Information Law, to give us the information we need to express our voice in order to review public policies, decisions and spending patterns, and promote effective implementation.

3. THE REGIONAL PROCESS: THE PROTOCOL TO AFRICAN CHARTER

The African Protocol presents opportunities for actualizing women's rights continent-wide. It contains novel provisions, among which are the provisions on reproductive rights, abortion, polygamy, the elimination of FGM, gender perspective in national development procedures and trade rules.

Regrettably, its ratification status is low. Only 36 out of 54 African countries have ratified it³⁴ as opposed to the full ratification status the African Charter enjoys, yet except for two countries, all of the non-ratifying countries have ratified the CEDAW. Culture, religion, paucity of resources, misinformation and the lack of awareness by civil society groups have been among reasons given for the non-ratification of specific articles. These are articles on the right to Health, and Reproductive Rights; marriage, and pegging the age marriage at 18; and the right to equal Inheritance.

In order to enhance the visibility of the Protocol, advocacy on

34 Countries that ratified the Protocol in 2012 are Congo-Brazzaville, Guinea, Swaziland and Cameroon. Those that have not ratified the Protocol are Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Niger, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sao Tome & Principe, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Tunisia.



it should be stepped up. Specifically, advocacy at the national level should be to raise awareness of the Protocol, and for its domestication. Greater use should be made of the reporting mechanisms, and the Commission should ensure that States' Reports include a reporting format in which article-specific Reports on compliance with the Protocol are submitted.

At the Africa level there should be greater engagement with the Rapporteur on Women's Rights to co-ordinate strategy and draw attention to patterns of violations, consistent with the Rapporteur's mandate. NGOs with observer status should participate in NGO fora, submit shadow reports, advocate for issues affecting women, and adequate budgetary allocations to address them.

Courts should be encouraged to cite such ratified instruments when interpreting the law especially where this would advance the case for women's rights. For example, in 2008 the High Court of Zambia noted the Zambian government's obligations under the Protocol even though it had not been formally incorporated into domestic law, and granted damages against a teacher who violated his female pupil. No case has yet been brought under the Protocol to the African Court. If the jurisprudence of the regional and national systems is to develop, cases need to be initiated.

It behoves on all actors – state and non-state to ensure the Protocol is implemented in its entirety. The role of the African Commission and the Special Rapporteur on Women to oversee implementation at the continental level is crucial, and this should be done through state and NGO shadow reporting, time-lines for ratifications, lifting of reservations and compliance.

4. THE INTERNATIONAL PROCESS

The major event on the international front affecting women's rights is Ghana's upcoming constructive dialogue with CEDAW scheduled



for October 2014. Ghana last engaged with the Committee in 2007 whereupon several areas of concern were pointed out and Recommendations made. NGOs should take advantage of the Concluding Observations in 2014 in their advocacy, drawing the state's attention to the need for compliance with the international conventions it has signed.

Many of the concerns expressed by the Committee have been discussed in the paper. They include **access to justice**;³⁵ the insufficient financial and human resources allocated to the National Women's Machinery;³⁶ the enactment of a **gender equality law** to contain provisions on **temporary special measures**³⁷ **modification** and the elimination of stereotypes **customs, cultural and harmful traditional practices** that discriminate against women,³⁸ and insufficient **support for victims of violence**.

These and other issues still to be fully addressed relate to: **education** – the gender gap between boys and girls in secondary and tertiary education and the high drop-out rates of girls from schools;³⁹ **employment** – discrimination faced by women the hiring process, the wage gap, occupational segregation and the apparent lack of monitoring mechanisms and enforcement of existing legislation;⁴⁰ **health** – women's lack of access of to adequate health-care services, including prenatal and post-natal services, high maternal mortality and teenage pregnancy rate, the number of deaths from unsafe abortions and the steady increase in the number of HIV/AIDS

35 Paragraph 16

36 Paragraph 17

37 Paragraph 20

38 Paragraph 21, The Committee mentioned practices such as widowhood rites, female genital mutilation, "Trokosi" (ritual slavery), and witchcraft allegations

39 Paragraph 27

40 Paragraph 29



infected women and girls.⁴¹

Specific concerns raised over rural women touched on their **access to health care, health – related services and information with regard to negative cultural beliefs, the** widespread poverty, especially female headed households,⁴² rural women's **access to health, education, clean water, electricity, land, and income – generating projects**.⁴³

To ensure equality in marriage and family relations, asked that Ghana **harmonize civil, religious and customary law** with article 16 of the Convention, implement measures aimed at **eliminating polygamy**,⁴⁴ and **prohibit child marriages**⁴⁵ in compliance with the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560).

Ghana, commendably, has addressed Recommendations made regarding provision of **data** on the prevalence of violence against women⁴⁶ and **the adoption of the Domestic Violence Bill**⁴⁷ Issues receiving attention include **citizenship** where proposals have been made to the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) on the Committee's concern about the discriminatory nature of article 7(6) of the 1992 Constitution and Section 10 (7) of the Citizenship Act, 2000 (Act 591). These provisions, which make it more difficult for foreign spouses of Ghanaian women to acquire Ghanaian citizenship than it is for foreign spouses of Ghanaian men to acquire citizenship

41 Paragraph 31

42 Paragraph 33 the Committee remarked that these high teenage pregnancy rates present a significant obstacle to girls' educational opportunities and economic empowerment.

43 Paragraph 34

44 Paragraph 36

45 Paragraph 35

46 Paragraph 23

47 Paragraph 24, The Bill has since been passed as The Domestic Violence Act, 2007, Act 732



are among the submissions NETRIGHT has made to the CRC.⁴⁸



5. CONCLUSIONS

At the national level, the year ahead should focus on intense advocacy for the passage of the outstanding Bills, and a re-doubling of efforts to raise awareness among stakeholders and gate-keepers on inimical cultural practices – polygamy, witchcraft allegations and confinements – with the aim of eliminating them. Activists must also be focused on crafting strategies that will promote implementation of Ghana's existing laws. Finally, we should keep abreast with the very progressive regional and international conventions and hold Ghana to accountability in domesticating and implementing them, in addition to adherence to the reporting regime and taking account of the concerns raised, and Recommendations made.

⁴⁸ Paragraph 25

6

Gender Justice, National Policy and Discourse Spaces: 2013 in Retrospect

Hamida Harrison

1. INTRODUCTION

Once again we are here on this watershed platform created by Network for Women's Right in Ghana (NETRIGHT) that affords us as women the opportunity to reflect, learn and share on critical global and national issues of the year gone by and how these issues have impacted on the struggle for gender equality and the promotion of gender justice. We meet here to take stock, examine responses, policies, actions and frameworks that address the imbalances in the relation between the sexes which have become the basis of dominance and power structures. We meet to ask the question, "How are we doing?" By doing so, we give ourselves the chance to re-strategise and strengthen ourselves to re-dedicate our commitment towards enhancing women's voices.

2. CRITICAL GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ISSUES WITH SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR WOMEN

The year 2014 is the fourth year of what the African Union (AU) has called the "African Women's Decade," but more critically is the year that ends just a few months before two defining events – the Beijing+20 Global Review adopted in 1995 in Beijing, China, and



the end of the life span of the 8 internationally-agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that came into being in the year 2000 meant to reduce poverty, hunger, maternal and child deaths, disease, gender inequality and environmental degradation by 2015.

In the last 20 years, Africa through the African Union and regional bodies, have placed emphasis on gender equality and women's economic empowerment through various legal instruments among which are the gender equality principle in the African Union's (AU) Constitutive Act; the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; AU's Gender Policy; African Women's Decade; the Fund for African women; and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. Nationally and regionally significant progress has been made and continues to be made in such critical areas as improving access to education and in promoting girls' education, gender-based laws, legislations and policies, adoption of action plans on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and others. Nonetheless, 20 year on, the Beijing+20 Global Review arrives within a social, political and economic environment in which many of the gains made in 1995 are facing serious dislocation. National bureaucracies have shown a less than enthusiastic inclination to be effective agents of social transformation.

In addition, gender equality and the empowerment of women are at the heart of the MDGs wherein much of the global development in the past decade and a half has been pegged and are preconditions for overcoming poverty, hunger and disease. As we study the implementation of the two frameworks both with agendas for the advancement of transformational gender relations and gender justice, it can be admitted that remarkable achievements have been recorded in many countries but so have reports of the inability of many more countries that are unlikely to achieve the laudable targets set by this mechanism within the time line of 2015. Ghana is facing the risk of not attaining MDGs 4 and 5, relating to the reduction in child



mortality and improving maternal health and have women's primary interest.

Poverty remains a widespread and towering challenge. While statistics from the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) are indicating a fall in poverty levels in Ghana, women still remain the largest group among the poor, experiencing the multidimensional nature of poverty. Scarcity, insufficient economic opportunities and lack of access to basic essential services and magnified by entrenched power differentials and harsh economic and social inequalities in our society. Economic policies anchoring our development process have stressed on self-regulating markets, reduced government involvement, greater focus on foreign investment for exports and less of developmental welfare and equitable social policies. There is also the absence of a well-integrated approach that will not focus on economic growth alone but will ensure the assimilation of the needs of the vulnerable and the most deprived.

The 2014 UNDP Human Development Report (HDR) – ***Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience***, launched in Accra in August, has ranked Ghana 138 out of 187 countries and territories, with a Human Development Index value of 0.573 in measure of achievements in key dimensions of human development such as reproductive health measured by maternal mortality ratio; women's empowerment in policy making; levels of education; and rate of female and male labour force participation. This latest ranking means Ghana has not progressed an inch from its 2013 ranking index.

By January 2014, Africa woke up with 3 female Presidents – Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was in her second term as President, Joyce Banda of Malawi who was a former Vice President in that country and took over when the sitting President died and the interim President Catherine Samba-Panza of the Central African Republic who was called in to take over in the most turbulent



political period of that country. This was an enviable and proud accomplishment in a continent where there is still a great deal of hesitation in allowing women to dare penetrate into historical leadership barriers.

Compared to decades past, Africa and its people are suffering from fewer conflicts and disputes today. However, just as we were celebrating the elevation of the 3 female Presidents, in January 2014, Africa was also embroiled in raging conflicts in the newly created country of South Sudan and the Central African Republic, veracious militia combats in Libya, street fighting in Egypt, as well as continued violence including mass raping of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo and militants' attacks in Somalia and Kenya. The death tolls are huge and the collective and individual incidents of violence gruesome. Estimates say nearly 10,000 people have been killed in South Sudan in a month of warfare, while in neighboring Central African Republic combatants in battles have inflicted unimaginable atrocities on the citizenry. There is very little doubt that women and children have formed the majority of victims with the degrading results of these situations. The brazen and daring abduction of over 230 girls taken from their school in the village of Chibok, Borno State, on the night of April 14, 2014 by members of the Nigerian militant group Boko Haram, was globally traumatic and more so for the West African sub-region. This episode was calous, inhuman, infringed on the rights of these innocent girls, posed a security threat in the sub-region and has a huge implication for the future of the African girl-child education and increased women's participation in public life. The resultant global movement formed: *#Bringbackourgirls*, has heightened awareness of the dangers posed by the emergence of religious fundamentalism to emancipation, gender equality concerns and sustainable development. The fact that Nigeria has not been able to locate and bring back the girls safely to their families, one can only imagine the resources that are being pumped into this venture rather



than into social interventions. Ghana's own communal flare-ups in Bawku, in the Upper East and Nkonya and Alavanyo in the Volta Region, in 2014, are a manifestation and reinforcement of festering tensions and of our own vulnerability.

As women's rights activists, we view these conflicts as aggravating factors to the de facto and de jure inequality where women and girls constitute the bulk of refugee colonies and displaced persons, and are increasingly targeted by combatants. We refuse to accept these conflicts as capable tools with the capacity to shape neither our human existence nor proficient to create new forms of social capital for transformational change. The socio-economic direction pursued vigorously by our countries breeds inequality, disaffection and alienation leading to such purposeless irrationalities. Inequality as a growing social problem hinders long-term national growth, equity, equality of outcome, equality of opportunity and too much of it is destructive. These conflicts contributed immensely to sustained economic crisis in the affected countries and impacted negatively on the national institutions' capacity to provide services and protection to the population. They also help re-entrench patriarchal hegemony and have repercussions on the extent and nature of development investments, support and social interventions for the many deprived beneficiaries and groups, especially women as funds that are already scarce are diverted and state institutions are weakened.

The latest virulent and deadly outbreak of Ebola in West Africa in March 2014, which has surpassed 16,000 infected persons to date, according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) report of December 2014, with nearly 7,000 deaths from those cases threatens to set back affected and surrounding countries by several years. There was heightened anxiety in Ghana concerning the possibility of a cross boarder infection and huge funds were expended to ready the country for any eventuality. Ghana's own outbreak of Cholera with close to 300 deaths has joined to expose Africa's neglect of the health systems



and lack of adequate investment into this critical sector. As a result the weak health systems of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, battered by war and neglect, were ill equipped when the Ebola disease struck in March and so were Ghanaian hospitals when inundated with overwhelming Cholera cases. It is reported that Sub-Saharan Africa is unlikely to meet the Millennium Development Goals of halving the share of the population without access to safe drinking water and sanitation by the year 2015. The challenges in providing safe water supply and improved sanitation shows the slowest pace of progress in Sub-Saharan Africa especially in the west-African sub-region, while decreasing worldwide. These challenges are directly reflecting in the high rate of outbreaks of diseases such as Ebola and Cholera and child mortality adding to the burden on women.

Economically, while developed countries that experienced a financial meltdown started recovering in 2014, our own situation suffered further challenges with rising inflationary movement coupled with the depreciation of the Cedi in relation to the major foreign currencies resulting in an unacceptably negative impact on the cost of goods and services. These increases in costs during the year are being felt especially by the poor, in relation to food items, housing, transportation, healthcare, energy with all its attendant irregularity in supply and other forms of life-support. The consequences have been reduction in demand in the market place with depressing effects on those in the informal, artisanal and smallholder entrepreneurs where the bulk of women's economic activity is intense. Without a National Social Policy that could identify and address the various differentials, the relative position of the vast majority of the poor and the vulnerable, especially women, economic conditions thus continue to decline even further. The economic challenges precipitated immediate government actions including a National Economic Forum organised in Senchi, in the Eastern Region, and a request for a financial bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). While we accept this



as government's option of finding solutions to the economic crisis, we must not exaggerate the optimism. As a country, we are not oblivious to the 1980s IMF prescriptions that included monetary austerity, increase in tax collections, privatisation, removal of subsidies and financial and trade liberalisation that up to date have deepened inequalities, increased poverty and has required the country to reduce social spending on health, education and development, while debt repayment and other dependency economic policies have been made the priority.

It is essential that the state responds to the widening inequalities, the increasing vulnerability of the growing army of the poor and the marginalised, especially women, and consider a more transformative economic agenda away from the free market economic growth models where women's equality and Africa's developmental transformation in Post-2015 can be guaranteed. The 2014 Human Development Report on Ghana also points out that while national policy space to enhance coping capabilities is becoming more constrained as globalisation deepens, public goods needed to build long-term coping capabilities and resilient societies are underprovided.

3. CRITICAL EVENTS FOR FURTHERING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

2014 marks the fourth year of African Union's (AU) "African Women's Decade," launched in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2010. The African Women's Decade (2010-2020) is a political initiative that aims to put women at the centre of development on the continent. It has initiated a new programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Mali, Rwanda, Somalia, and Uganda, as well as across West Africa, focusing on increasing women's participation in peacebuilding and constitution drafting processes, advancing women's land rights, and mitigating election-related violence.



The world community is in the process of developing an overarching Framework that is intended to focus attention on comprehensive global framework for a development agenda that will incorporate the visions of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) as well as the RIO+20 Outcomes and other debates. Much of the global development in the past fifteen years has been pegged on the Millennium Development Goals that came to being in 2000 with an expiry date of 2015. As 2015 approaches, efforts are underway to shape a global development agenda – the Post-2015 Agenda that is meant to be inclusive, consultative and participatory. Currently, the “UN Post-2015 Development Agenda” has synthesized the processes that have taken place in the last two years into 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that includes areas that were not included in the MDGs like the threat of climate change. Achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls is also included.

In the desire to shape the destiny of the Continent, African Union Commission, has continued with the development of a plan titled: “African Union Agenda 2063”, with the objective of charting a development trail for accelerated socio-economic development and integration for Africa for the next 50 years. Among the goals for a prosperous Africa in 2063, is the shared aspiration of achieving high life expectancy, high literacy rates, low infant mortality rate; and a continent where gender equality is the norm with equal opportunities and access for the common good. This move comes at an opportune time with the celebrations of 50+ years of independence, pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance.

A shocking and outrageous case of a maid in Uganda, Jolly Tumuhirwe, 22, who was secretly filmed and put on the Internet beating and kicking a toddler of 18 months left in her care by the toddler's working parents was a nightmare to parents, especially working mothers. This episode bring to fore the urgent need



concerning the provision of day-care for working parents in this country. The constitutional promise, Article 27 (2) of providing facilities for the care of children below school going age, to enable women to realise their full potential remains largely unfulfilled leaving parents with lasting anxiety about the safety and wellbeing of their toddlers when they leave for work. We consider this assurance a crucial element of government support for both formal and informal workers.

As part of preparations for Beijing+20, African Ministers gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in November to map out strategies for the global conference that will be held in New York in March 2015. This Ministerial meeting was preceded by a meeting of women's groups at the same venue. One hopes that there was a meeting of the minds between these two groups. At home once again, NETRIGHT established its leadership role as a network by mobilising women's groups across the country to input into the Africa Shadow Report for Beijing+20 and sensitise them on the Post-2015 processes and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Currently, two gender-based legislations are being processed. The **Spousal Property Bill** has already been passed by Cabinet and has the opportunity to be presented to the floor of Parliament, whereas the **Affirmative Action/Gender Equality Bill** is now in the final stages of drafting. While we should expect stiff contestation, these are landmark Bills that ought to have our full support. The Spousal Property Bill is aimed at resolving the ambiguities surrounding the existing Intestate Succession Act, 1985 (PNDC Law 111), while the Affirmative Action/Gender Equality Bill lays the demands for equality in participation and representation of the marginalised in public life. It will also give legal backing to the current Administrative Directive concerning the 30% government appointed membership in district assemblies which has remained ambiguous with no sanctions for those who infringe on its dictates.



We expected that district assembly election should have been conducted by now. The District Assemblies were introduced as the highest political authorities in the districts in 1988 with the overall stated objective to make local governments effective centres of self-governance, local participation, decision-making, planning and development. Women have a huge stake in these elections and they do deepen social legitimacy for women and help in bridging the grassroots-national gap. When there are delays and uncertainty as is happening now, women suffer in the confusion. It cost them seats in the last Election 2010 and we hope they do not suffer the same fate. In addition, we expect that the current policy harmonisation and consolidation that is underway within the local governance system will be centred on a rights-based approach, transparency, inclusiveness and accountability to all and be undertaken within the overall commitment to social differentiation,

The **Women's Manifesto Coalition** (WMC) celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the launch of the Manifesto in September 2014. The collective resolution in mobilising under the initiative of ABANTU for Development to produce this historic blueprint was to provide a mechanism that would progressively draw attention to the nature and magnitude of inequalities in Ghana and demonstrate how these barriers affect the various dimensions of women's productive lives as citizens. We have seen some of the time lines in many of the demands pass without being addressed but there has also been significant, encouraging and lasting progress made to enhance women's voices. The recognition of this document at the international level, by the national government and political parties as a significant and resolute advocacy document for gender equality worth their attention is a testimony that the energies we all spent have not been in vain.



4. NETRIGHT: Critical Events For Furthering Women's Rights

Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), has since its inception focused on social mobilisation and political empowerment initiatives to enable women to continuously examine, and challenge processes that perpetuate structural inequalities especially those that work to exclude and marginalise others, women in the majority. NETRIGHT has built a solid reputation from a small group of dedicated "founding mothers" to a national, regional and international group with a clout of its own. As a tool, the Network has worked with the objective of constantly demanding inclusion of the marginalised, for transparency, accountability and the provision of fair distribution of benefits, as well as remedies for inequity in national processes.

Taking a cue from Graça Machel's quote:

"There's not anything you achieve as individuals; you achieve within a context of building on strengths of other people around you".

NETRIGHT has recognised mobilisation as a powerful tool to create dialogue and activate awareness in issues of public interest. Over the years, their interest in important livelihood issues like land and economic justice is a mark of how they perceive their vision and mission. Recognising that the extractive industry presents the same heightened predicament for women's livelihoods, equality, sustenance and security aided by women's lack of information, knowledge and understanding of their basic rights, NETRIGHT initiated a programme in 2014 of building the capacity of women in the mining areas in the Western Region, in the districts of Jomoro and Ellembelle. This was part of a collaborative project that involved ABANTU for Development, FIDA-Ghana and WiLDAF undertaking different aspects of the mining sector. In this same year, NETRIGHT has up-scaled its role on the international stage by being elected as



Co-Chair of the CSOs Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE-ICSOs). CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness – an international grouping of CSOs that works to guarantee an expanded space of dialogue among governments, international institutions, development agencies and civil society as co-equals in deliberating on effective development. This is in recognition of the significant role NETRIGHT is playing within the CSO Aid Effectiveness movement by joining hands in upholding the principles of the Istanbul Principles and the Consensus framework for CSO development Effectiveness as core values for sustainable change in the world.

The hydra-headed demands on NETRIGHT have resulted in the necessity for new thinking about the nature and form of the Network as it exists. An institutional review was undertaken in 2014, taking into account the various challenges created by the functional growth and expansion of NETRIGHT’s mandate, the slow pace of poverty reduction, rising inequalities, the emerging economic issues such as the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and the priority of place given to the extractive industry. How would all these challenges affect the quality and quantity of NETRIGHT’s work in seeking the rights of women? These dynamics therefore set the stage for an institutional examination with NETRIGHT members to deliberate on strategies and measures that can be adopted to position the Network in a more strategic position to carry on its obligation more effectively in the years ahead. As members, we continue to believe in the work that NETRIGHT has set itself to do in promoting gender justice and gender equality.

5. OUR SHEROES WHO MADE US PROUD

Countless women across the continent have made indelible marks in what has been achieved in the year 2014 in spite of the tribulations. However, we are unable in this short space to mention them all. We



salute women who continue to provide us with food and sustain our lives; those who labour in care work without any remuneration; those who are working in appalling conditions in our markets and lost out in countless fire outbreaks during the year; those who with abundant courage face the adversities of competitive political activism and all those women and men who on daily basis lift the banner of women’s rights and gender equality.

We are noting the following few for the inspiration they have impacted upon us in this year under review:

Khadra Hussein Mohammad. We commend the 28-year-old who made history by becoming Somaliland’s first female National Deputy Prosecutor, dealing with a range of cases including theft, gang-related violence, and even murder in such a volatile country. As a role model, she was able to attract others that there are now 75 women working in the legal sector in Somaliland, compared to only five women in 2008.

Martha Bissah: We congratulate Ghana’s 17-year-old first ever gold medallist at any level after running a life time best and setting a new junior national record to obtain a victory in the 800m final at the Youth Olympics in Nanjing, China, in August 2014.

Thuli Madonsela: We acknowledge the first women to head South Africa’s Public Protector’s office established to guard democracy and sits outside of government. She has robustly defended the institution, both in principle and in practice, and has ensured its independence, making clear that nobody should feel above the law.



Mrs Augustina Narh: We recognise the 52-year old large scale poultry farmer of the Charis Farms in the Ga Central Municipal District was on December 6, 2014 adjudged the Best Farmer at the 30th National Farmers Day in the Municipality. She has been involved in farming for the past 12 years, and employs a large number of permanent as well as casual workers who assist her in her business.

Lupita Nyong'o: We celebrate this 31-year-old Kenyan who won the Academy Award for best supporting actress in 2014 for her harrowing portrayal of a slave who caught her sadistic master's eye in a movie titled: "12 Years a Slave". She made history by being the first black African woman to win this award elevating all the African women who have selected the Art as their vocation.

Dr. Ameyo Stella Adadevoh (Deceased): We mourn the loss of an experienced consultant physician and endocrinologist, a Lead Consultant with First Consultants Medical Centre, Obalende, Lagos, Nigeria. She was the first Nigerian to be diagnosed with Ebola and died in August 2014. The doctor's case gained a lot of support and triggered a campaign on social media that contributed to containing the disease in the most populous nation in Africa.

Maya Angelou (Deceased): We mark an epic life of an African-American woman who loved Ghana. She was respected as a spokesperson for black people and women in particular. Much of her work has been considered a defense of Black culture. April 4, 1928 – May 28, 2014) was an American author, poet, dancer, actress and singer.



Professor Marian Addy (Deceased): We remember with a mark of respect a Ghanaian Professor in Biochemistry at the University of Ghana and later in January 2008, was appointed President of the Anglican University College of Technology, a newly launched private initiative for higher technical education. Served in many Boards and very interested in women's issues.

I want to conclude by asking this question: Ten years from now would you like to see a dream fulfilled or a dream still deferred?

THANK YOU ALL