

25 YEARS OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

**GENDER AND YOUTH IN GHANA'S
DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION**

~ Professor Emerita Takyiwaa Manuh ~

15th 'Kronti ne Akwamu' (Democracy and Governance) Lecture



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About the *Kronti ne Akwamu* Lecture

The *Kronti ne Akwamu* Lecture is the Center's flagship annual public lecture on democracy and governance. It is one of the Center's initiatives aimed towards bridging the gap between reflection, research and analysis on one hand, and prodemocracy and good governance advocacy on the other.

Therefore, it is aimed at enriching the quality of public discourse on democratic and governance reforms. The lectures feature prominent scholars and/or activists of local and international repute whose work focus on democracy building and fostering good governance. Speakers are invited to share knowledge and insights on these issues, in the hope of stimulating vibrant public debate.

The lectures have been dubbed '*Kronti ne Akwamu*' after the Akan *adinkra* symbol that best represents democracy, duality of the essence of life, and interdependence. The symbol encapsulates a system of decentralized political authority with different branches of government complementing and also checking each other.

The *maiden* lecture was delivered in March 2005. It featured an internationally renowned scholar and activist of democratic development - Prof. Larry Diamond, a senior fellow of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University (USA). He spoke on the topic: **Democracy and Development – A Case for Mutual Dependency**. The then Chief Justice of Ghana, His Lordship Justice George Kingsley Acquah was the chairman for that occasion.

The *second Kronti ne Akwamu* lecture was delivered by the distinguished Ghanaian lawyer, statesman and former Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana, the Rt. Hon Peter Ala Adjetey. He spoke on the topic: **Reflections on the Effectiveness of the Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana**. The distinguished chairman of that event was The Very Reverend Professor S. K. Adjepong, Chairman of the National African Peer Review Mechanism Governing Council.

The *third Kronti ne Akwamu* lecture, the Golden Jubilee edition, was delivered by Professor Richard Joseph, a distinguished political scientist, former head of the Program of African Studies at the Northwestern University (USA), and former head of Africa programs at the Carter Center. He spoke on the topic: **Ghana and Democratic Development in Africa: Back to the Future**. It was chaired by the Hon. J. H. Mensah, then MP for Sunyani, and Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission.

The *fourth Kronti ne Akwamu* lecture was delivered by Dr. K.Y. Amoako, founder and president of the African Center for Economic Transformation on the topic: **The Future of Civil Society in Democratic Governance and Development in Africa**. The chairperson was Mrs. Mary Chinery Hesse, chief advisor to the former President, John Agyekum Kufuor.

The *fifth* lecture was organized in partnership with KPMG Ghana and was delivered by Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan, Chairman of the Electoral Commission on the topic: **The Challenges to Conducting Free**

and Fair Elections in Emerging African Democracies: The Case of Ghana. The late Justice V. C. R. A. C. Crabbe (Statute Law Revision Commissioner, Ministry of Justice) chaired the lecture.

The *sixth* lecture was delivered by Dr. Jendayi Frazer, a former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and a distinguished service professor at Carnegie Mellon University, USA. She spoke on the topic: **Enhancing the Conflict Prevention Role of Elections in Africa.** The chairperson was Archbishop Charles Gabriel A. N. O. Palmer-Buckle, Metropolitan Archbishop of Accra.

The *seventh* lecture was on the topic: **Democratization and Women in Africa – Progress, Stagnation or Retreat** and it was delivered by Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, Executive Director of the Africa Women Development Fund (AWDF). The chairperson for the lecture was Justice Vida Akoto Banfo.

The *eighth* lecture which was delivered by Justice (Rtd.) Emile Francis Short, the first Commissioner of Ghana’s Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), was on the topic: **The Quest for Governmental Accountability and Responsiveness in Ghana: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward.** It was chaired by Rev. Dr. Joyce Aryee, the former CEO of the Ghana Chamber of Mines.

The *ninth* lecture was delivered by the late Justice V. C. R. A. C. Crabbe, a Statute Law Revision Commissioner & Rtd. Supreme Court Judge. The topic was **Democratic Governance in Ghana: How Political Polarization may be Abated.** It was chaired by Mrs. Elizabeth Joyce Villars, Board Chairman, Camelot Ghana Ltd. & Former President, Association of Ghana Industries.

The *tenth Kronti ne Akwamu* lecture was delivered by Prof. Kwame Karikari, former Executive Director, Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) on the topic: **The Paradox of Voice without Accountability in Ghana.** This program was chaired by Mr. Nii Amanor Doodoo, Senior Partner, KPMG, Ghana.

The *eleventh* lecture was on the topic, **“Promoting Inclusion in African Democracies”**, it was delivered by Prof. Naomi Chazan, Former Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Israel. Prof. Atsu Aryee, Former Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of KwaZuluNatal, South Africa; and Former Rector, Mount Crest University College, Accra chaired this lecture.

The *twelfth* lecture was delivered by the late Busumuru Kofi Annan, Ghana’s only Nobel Peace Prize laureate, a former Secretary-General of the United Nations and the then chairman of the Kofi Annan Foundation, on **“Credible and Peaceful Elections: A Prerequisite for Africa’s Progress”**. This was chaired by H. E. Prof. Akua Kuenyehia, President of the Mountcrest University College in Accra & President of the Appeals Division of the International Criminal Court.

The *thirteenth* lecture was on the topic, **“The Search for Accountable Governance in the 4th Republic”**. This was delivered by Mr. Abdul Malik Kweku Baako, Editor-in-Chief, New Crusading

Guide. Prof. Audrey Gadzekpo, Dean, School of Information and Communication Studies, UG, chaired this lecture.

To mark the Center's 20th anniversary, Prof. Gyimah-Boadi, Executive Director for the Afrobarometer Network and former Executive Director for CDD-Ghana delivered the fourteenth lecture on **"Making Democracy Work for the People: Reflections on Ghana's 25-year journey towards democratic development"**. Ms. Estelle Akofio-Sowah, Country Manager, CSquared Ghana chaired this 20th anniversary edition of the lecture.

Mr. Chairman,
Executive Director and Staff of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development,
Invited Guests,
Members of the media,

I am honoured and delighted to have been asked to deliver this lecture as I join the distinguished cast of eminent persons who have delivered lectures in the CDD-Ghana's flagship series.

The *Kronti and Akwamu* Lecture Series aim to deepen reflection and public conversation and inspire fresh insights on the prospects for democracy, governance and development in Ghana and Africa.

This year's lecture is particularly significant as it closes the circle on the series of lectures that have marked the 20th anniversary of the CDD-Ghana and the concurrent examination of Ghana's 25-year democratic journey under the Fourth Republic.

Let me also join, albeit belatedly, in congratulating CDD-Ghana on 20 years of continuous dedication to public service and debate and dogged and fearless pursuit of entrenching a democratic culture in Ghana and Africa through its several activities and publications. CDD-Ghana, ayekoo!

Mr. Chairman, it is indeed fitting that the Center has devoted attention and resources to examining the promises and challenges of Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution through the focus on inclusive and democratic development. I have had the good fortune of being furnished with and reading the excellent lectures in that series, beginning with my brother Professor Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi's magisterial, erudite and trenchant overview on the topic 'Making Democracy Work for the People: Reflections on Ghana's 25-year journey towards democratic development,' that opened the series and constituted the 14th *Kronti ne Akwamu* Lecture.

I have also read the lecture delivered by Dr. Charles Abugre that explored the spatial and class-based dimensions of persistent inequality in a democratic Ghana, and that of Dr. Stephen Manteaw on the political management of Ghana's natural resource wealth in the 4th Republic and its distributive and developmental impacts. All these lectures have educated me immensely and made my task this evening considerably easier.

Indeed, both Professor Gyimah-Boadi and Dr. Charles Abugre devoted some attention to aspects of the topic that I hope to examine in some detail today, as any comprehensive assessment of Ghana's quest towards inclusive democratic development must necessarily pay attention to the huge topic of gender and youth, the two largest demographic groups who also constitute the basis and condition for success in that endeavor. It is to call attention to some of the twin challenges of gender and generation that I address in this lecture on gender and youth in Ghana's democratic consolidation. This is a large topic that I can hardly do justice to this evening. But I have a recommendation at the end of the lecture that I hope CDD-Ghana can take up to explore the issues in depth.

Mr. Chairman, before proceeding further and for the avoidance of doubt, I wish to define the terms I am using in this lecture.

Gender is the socially assigned descriptor for men and women or biological sex. In many societies around the world, gender functions as a central organizing principle in the allocation of roles, resources and rewards, determining life chances and outcomes to a large extent, although variations based on age, class, and location also matter within and across gender. While gender has become a shorthand term for women, it is important to note that the experience of being male is also gendered, and rests on socially accepted and learned ways of what it means to inhabit a male body and to act and behave 'as a man.' Gender relations refer to the relations of power between women and men, among women themselves and among men, which are often hierarchical. Gender relations in Ghana are still marked by patriarchal and even misogynistic norms ideologized as “our culture,” with assumptions about the place of women in society continuing to be restrictive.

Almost synonymous with gender is the call for gender equality, enshrined in the African Union Agenda 2063, The Africa We Want, and the UN Agenda 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 5 calls for achieving gender equality and empowering all girls through targets such as ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls and ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. But it is important to note that gender is cross-cutting and all the other 16 SDGs are relevant and critical to achieving gender equality. Gender Equality means that girls and boys, and women and men, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections, with their pay-offs for individuals, communities and nations.

Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the chronological and psychological dependence of childhood to the legal and social independence of adulthood. The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24, while the African Union expands the age category to between 15-35 years. But definitions vary, and some UN agencies—including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)—as well as the World Health Organization (WHO) define the youth as persons between 10 and 24 years¹. The World Bank maintains the upper age limit of 24, but puts the starting age at 12 years.

Without a doubt, youthhood is a socially constructed life stage. Honwana (2012) suggests that youth-hood on the African continent is best explained by the concept of **waithood**, which describes an in-between or liminal phase between childhood and adulthood. The idea of **waithood** suggests delays in the experiences and resources that young people need to become 'social adults and full-fledged citizens' as a result of 'endemic poverty and chronic unemployment resulting from failed neoliberal economic policies, bad governance, and political crises.' Youthhood is a time of both possibilities and constraints, and there is a diversity of experiences among the youth, and opportunities and challenges related to schooling, work and family life. While references to youth usually connote the experiences of young men, it is important to understand that this is also gendered, with different expectations, roles and rewards for young men and women.

Democratic consolidation may be defined as the process of making a newly found democracy secure, ensuring the deepening and sustainability of that democracy and moving away from the possibility of becoming or returning to an authoritarian system of governance. Some important conditions of democratic consolidation include popular participation in decision making, the diffusion of democratic values, popular legitimation, neutralisation of antisystem actors, the stabilization of electoral rules, judicial reform, the introduction of mechanisms of direct democracy, the reduction of poverty and inequality, and economic stabilization.

1 Three categories of youth are identified within this age range: adolescents (10-19 years); youth (15-24 years); and young people (10-24 years). The WHO's World Report on Violence and Health: Youth Violence, defines youth as between 10 and 29 years.

In my opinion, Mr. Chairman, the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) Indices that The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) has developed linking 8 of the 17 SDGs (SDG 1 on ending poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 3 on good health and well-being for all, 4 on quality education and eliminating gender disparities, 5 on gender equality, 8 on decent jobs and economic growth, 10 on reduced inequalities (within and between countries), 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions) provides a substantive base to citizens to gauge the workings of democracy in their everyday lives. The GSoD enables a framework to measure the progress of countries on civil and political rights, social and economic rights, democratic governance and the rule of law, all critical components of democratic consolidation.

Gender and Youth in perspective

As we are aware, Ghana has received praise around Africa and globally for its democratic credentials and progress towards democratic consolidation, and this is to be applauded. However in order to deepen this progress and also advance towards achievement of the UN Agenda 2030 and the more ambitious African Union Agenda 2063, it is necessary to step back and assess how well issues around gender and youth have been integrated and what accountabilities there have been to the largest components of Ghana's population. According to the Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana's population was 27,670,174 in 2015. Out of this, 14,108,081 or approximately 51%, was female. Similarly, the proportion of the population aged 15-35% (the youth) was 35.1%, with a slight preponderance of female over male youth (35.8% to 34.5%). These high proportions mean that there can be no sustainable or inclusive development in Ghana without intentional policies and actions that take into account and address the needs and concerns of women and the youth and enlarge their capacities and abilities at self-actualization.

But it would appear that gender and youth are the two categories that receive little mention or attention in Ghana as we tussle over our founders and leaders, who are represented as mostly male and gerontocratic. Who and where are our founding mmerantie (young men) and mbabawaa (young women), and our founding mothers, and how do we celebrate them? As the Trinidadian historian, C. L.R. James noted in his book, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (1977), 'In the struggle for independence, one market woman ...was worth any dozen Achimota graduates'.

In an earlier publication, I noted how together with workers, young men educated in primary schools and the unemployed, women became some of Nkrumah's ablest and most devoted and fearless supporters as they worked to achieve a new Ghana that would open up opportunities and the fruits of citizenship to them (Manuh 1991). And yet it would be taxing to have many proponents of who our founders are mention the names of a few of such women, beyond Mrs. Theodosia Okoh, who has been appropriately honoured for designing Ghana's national flag in 1957.

In similar manner to James, the Senegalese historian, Mamadou Diouf (2003), asserts that youth were the 'hope of African nations under construction' and perhaps by extension, the hope of the world,and became the chief actors in Africa's struggle against underdevelopment, poverty, misery and illiteracy'.

In the case of Ghana, with the recruitment of Kwame Nkrumah at age 38 as a full-time secretary of the existing UGCC, his mass-based youth-centred mobilization completely changed the tone and direction of the anti-colonial struggle. He and his team around him expanded the support base of the UGCC by mobilising the youth through already existing local youth societies in the Colony and the Ashanti Confederacy as they travelled extensively and organised mass meetings, thereby creating political consciousness of the need to assert for independence. Within six months, hundreds of branches of the UGCC had been established throughout present-day Ghana, and later metamorphosed into the CPP in 1949. Several of the activists in the CPP such as Kojo Botsio, K. A. Gbedemah, Kofi Baako and Akua Asabea Ayisi, were youth by any definition when they joined the CPP and some, like Kwesi Plange, were elected to political office at young ages- Plange was elected to the Legislative Council in June 1950, just before his 25th birthday². But the retelling of our political history in popular accounts gives little space or credit to the relative youth and gender balance especially of our anti colonial struggles not only in Ghana, but indeed around West Africa and most of Africa.

However by and large, the nationalist construction of gender and youth as both representations of a new African modernity as well as a return to the sources of African culture to restore identities that had been crushed under colonialism (Diouf, op cit), meant that women and youth in particular became increasingly instrumentalized. While

² Cf. Gyampo (2013). The lowest age he gives of an MP is 28 years. More recently in 2016, Francisca Mensah Oteng was elected an MP at age 23 years.

they were called upon to assume new roles and to promote and respect the political and moral obligations of citizenship with a view to constructing African democracies, this was usually to be under the guidance of the male founding leader and the one party that emerged in several countries. They were exhorted to work hard, to be patriotic, to maintain the highest standards of health, decency and morality in the society, and be devoted to the unity of Africa (Manuh 1991). According to President Nkrumah (1962), 'a strong and reliable womanhood is a firm and worthy foundation for the building of any nation.' And while he noted that women were being asked to do what he called 'men's jobs' and to consider themselves equal to men, they were to remain 'women' as they were 'still the mothers of the nation, the beauty that graced the homes and the gentleness that soothed men's tempers' (Nkrumah 1960).

Thus, there was to be little questioning of patriarchy and of gender and generational relations, even as more opportunities for education, employment and social and political advancement opened, especially for urban and politically well-connected young men and women. While a bill on the Maintenance of Children was passed in 1965³ to deal with issues of paternity and maintenance of children, other long-standing issues of concern to Ghanaian women such as bills on uniform marriage and divorce, and property rights and succession were deferred as being too controversial. But employment opportunities that opened in factories and the government bureaucracy, together with state farms, workers brigades and other establishments enlarged the options for young persons and women as educational facilities and enrolments also expanded.



Ghana is noted as one of the first African countries to introduce a quota system for women with the passage of the Representation of the People (Women Members') Act in 1959. Ten women were subsequently nominated and elected to the National Assembly in 1960. But there was little space and tolerance for independent women's organizations which were bullied into submission and forced into the then National Council of Ghana Women.

3 Now consolidated in the Children's Act, Act 560 of 1998

Conscious policies were also put in place to enhance the participation of women in politics and public life, albeit in service of the party, and a few women held high political office as members of parliament, deputy ministers and district commissioners. Ghana is noted as one of the first African countries to introduce a quota system for women with the passage of the Representation of the People (Women Members') Act in 1959. Ten women were subsequently nominated and elected to the National Assembly in 1960. But there was little space and tolerance for independent women's organizations which were bullied into submission and forced into the then National Council of Ghana Women.

Overall, production systems and social relations did not change much, particularly in small towns, rural areas and agrarian production systems around Ghana and in several African countries in the decade or so after independence. This cemented the dependence of usually uneducated and poorer women and male and female youth on older male relatives and husbands as their land and production rights rested on men's goodwill and their concomitant labour supply obligations, supplemented with limited off-farm employment and internal migration (Okali 1983; Mikell 1986, 1997; Kotey and Tsikata 1998; Bortei-Doku Aryeetey 2002).

The failure of the nationalist enterprise of rapid economic development and social justice occurred at different points in African states, with Ghana's among the first ones by the mid-1960s. The long period of the militarization of politics and social life and continued economic decline, heavy reliance on the Bretton Woods institutions and their adjustment packages resulted in mass discontent and protests that were embraced by a large cross-section of the population, including students, professional groups, civil society organizations, workers, women and unemployed youth, who demanded a return to constitutional and democratic governance. Women, who constituted the bulk of petty traders, were subjected to campaigns of vilification and physical abuse as they were blamed for high prices and shortages of consumer goods. In her inimitable style, the veteran journalist and social commentator, Ms. Elizabeth Ohene, describes kalabule as an 'all-purpose word that covered everything that was wrong with our lives then,' like what the term 'galamsey' has now become. Market women were said to be engaged in "kalabule," and generally seen as villains as they were accused of hoarding goods to create artificial shortages to make excessive profits (Letter from Africa: Why a new word in Ghana spells trouble- 1 June 2017).



Military regimes severely curtailed civil liberties and the participation of broad segments of the population in civic and political life. In particular, they seemed allergic to women's political participation and contribution to public life and inhibited women's full contribution to the development of politics and administration.

Military regimes severely curtailed civil liberties and the participation of broad segments of the population in civic and political life. In particular, they seemed allergic to women's political participation and contribution to public life and inhibited women's full contribution to the development of politics and administration. But under the influence of UN advocacy of attention to gender issues and the declaration of International Women's Year in 1975, Ghana, like several African country, set up a national machinery on women, the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) as an advisory body to government, under which women were to be integrated into development. Regional offices were set up and several income-generating projects for women were embarked upon. The adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), by the UN General Assembly in 1979 set the frame for state action on gender, while scholars especially in tertiary institutions begun to work on gender issues not only as they pertained to the academy but across society.

Under the PNDC regime, 1981-1992, there was an initial period of extreme hostility towards women, continuing from the AFRC days. But this became tampered over time. The critiques of the economic policies initiated by government as part of the Economic Recovery Programme/Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were to lead to the discovery and language of vulnerable groups and to programmes to mitigate the social costs of adjustment.

A strategy of co-optation, organized around the 31st December Women's Movement, led by the then First Lady, Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, emerged. The DWM actively mobilized women in support of the regime while its closeness to the state enabled access to economic resources and funds some of which were used to establish farms, day-care centers for children and economic enterprises. However, there was a crowding out of independent women's organizations, and this led many women to move into the relatively non-politicized and non-membership based NGO space.

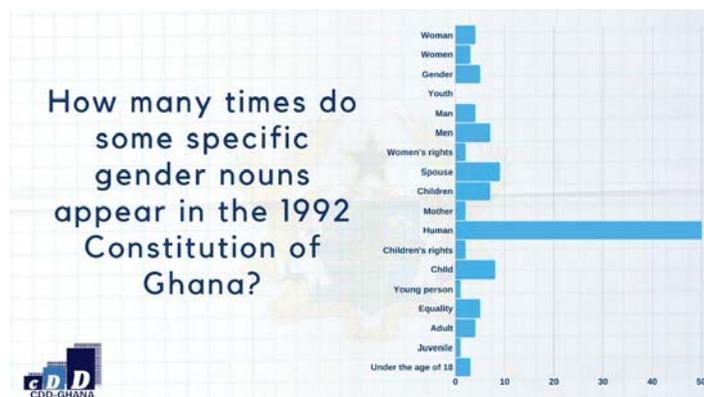
The broad and sustained popular struggles for a return to constitutional rule and democratic governance culminated in the establishment of a consultative assembly in 1991, charged with drawing up a new constitution. It is instructive that the 9- member Committee of Experts that drew up the report for the Consultative Assembly had only 2 women (the venerable Justice Annie Jigge, and Mrs. Sabina Ofori-Boateng who was member/secretary). To its credit, as Allah-Mensah (2005) notes, the Report of the Committee of Experts also laid emphasis on the promotion and protection of women's rights to cover debilitating customary practices, maternity issues, property rights, guaranteed equal conditions of work and equal representation and participation of women and men on boards and in appointments to public positions. However, the comprehensive expositions on the rights of women were ironically cut down in the 1992 Constitution, which was debated, by a Consultative Assembly with more women than in the Committee of Experts⁴.



The Committee of Experts laid emphasis on the promotion and protection of women's rights to cover debilitating customary practices, maternity issues, property rights, guaranteed equal conditions of work and equal representation and participation of women and men on boards and in appointments to public positions. However, the comprehensive expositions on the rights of women were ironically cut down in the 1992 Constitution, which was debated, by a Consultative Assembly with more women than in the Committee of Experts.

4 Allah-Mensah notes that the NCWD, dominated by the DWM, had 10 representatives, in addition to representatives of hairdressers, fishmongers and other occupational groups, while groups like the Ghana Bar Association (GBA), National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS), Christian Council (CC) and the Catholic Bishops Conference (CBC) and the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG), were allocated one seat each.

Mr. Chairman, I did an online search of the 1992 Constitution with amendments, to find how many times the terms 'woman', 'women', 'gender' and 'youth' are mentioned. 'Woman' appears 4 times, all under Art. 6 on Citizenship, stating how a woman married to a citizen of Ghana may acquire or lose citizenship. 'Women' appears 6 times, mostly in Article 27 on 'Women's Rights', (3x), where women are synonymous with 'mothers,' and once in Art. 36 (6), under the economic objectives in the Directive Principles of State Policy, where women are to be integrated into the mainstream of economic development in Ghana. 'Gender' is mentioned 5 times, in Art. 12 (2) under the Protection of Fundamental Human Rights, Art. 17 (2), freedom from discrimination, Art. 17 (3) in the definition of discrimination, Art. 35 (5) in the political objectives of the Directive Principles of State Policy, to promote integration and prohibit discrimination on grounds of inter alia, gender, and Art. 35 (6) on achieving reasonable gender and regional balance in recruitment and appointments to public office. The gender-neutral term 'spouse' is mentioned 9 times, seven of which appear in Art. 22 under the Property Rights of Spouses, under which a surviving spouse is not to be deprived of a reasonable provision out of the estate of a deceased spouse.



In Art. 22 (2), Parliament was enjoined, as soon as practicable after the coming into force of the Constitution, to enact legislation regulating the property rights of spouses. The Constitution was promulgated in 1993, and we are still waiting for the legislation!

I found no mention of 'youth' in the Constitution, although children turned up 7 times. For good measure and to show my even-handedness, I also did a search for 'man', 'men', and 'men's rights.' Mr. Chairman, can you guess what I found? The term 'man' appears 5 times. The term 'men' appears 7 times! When I searched for 'men's rights,' I found 2 references to 'women's rights.'

Gender and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana

Mr. Chairman, the return to constitutional rule in 1993 did not only lead to the formation of several political parties with their women's wings, but importantly for gender work, to the beginnings of the establishment and flourishing of civil society organizations focused on various aspects of women's rights work, particularly as the new dispensation appeared to promise more of the same for women. I have detailed some of this in my 2007 publication 'Doing Gender Work in Ghana', as have several other scholars and practitioners (Coker-Appiah and Cusack 1999; Prah 2004; Adomako Ampofo 2008; Apusigah et. 2011; Tsikata 2009; Mensah-Kutin 2010; Manuh and Anyidoho 2015).

These CSOs became an increasingly strong voice, rooted in their work in communities around Ghana and the failures of state policy to address the economic and social conditions of poor and disadvantaged women in urban and rural areas. This was aided by global developments and the realization of the severe economic and social crises engulfing many low income countries such as Ghana. This helped to catalyze the work of organizations such as WILDAF, ABANTU for Development, The Ark Foundation. The Gender and Human Rights Documentation Center, among others. The preparations towards the 1995 Beijing Conference connected organizations in Ghana to other African women's groups and organizations as they worked to formulate a common African Platform for Action. The list of themes agreed on reflected long-standing unresolved issues for women around Africa that had been exacerbated by years of poor governance and economic crises. The relative generous support from donor agencies then assisted greatly in the work of CSOs, although it also fostered dependence and depoliticization.

The subsequent transfer of political power to a new government in 2001, and the establishment of a Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs (MOWAC, now MGCSP), did not lead to fundamental policy changes and in the conditions of women.

Mr. Chairman, the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, formulated by a broad coalition of civil society groups in 2004, spearheaded by ABANTU for Development, succinctly set out a far-reaching agenda and programme of work and advocacy to advance women's rights and gender equality and promote inclusion in Ghana, after careful analysis of each subset of critical issues facing Ghanaian women, and addressed specific demands to government, institutional actors and political parties (Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004).

Chief among these issues were and are women's low participation in governance, their poor access to economic resources critical for making a living, their predominance among people living in poverty, their poor health, including unacceptably high rates of maternal mortality⁵. Other concerns in the manifesto are the harmful and discriminatory social practices against women often justified in the name of culture, and violence against women. The special problems of disabled, widowed and aged women and single mothers are addressed as are the issues of insecurity, disruption and violence experienced by women in conflict situations.

The demand for 'affirmative action' appears 8 times in Manifesto, to give legal backing to ensuring inclusion and gender equality in Ghana through equal enrolment and retention of girls in primary and secondary schools, and tertiary institutions; women's political participation and their full integration of women in all spheres of public life (The Manifesto had demanded 30% representation of women by the year 2008 and 50% representation by the year 2012 cf. to the current 13.7%), achieve gender equality in the appointment of members of public media boards and heads of media institutions, and ensure that women with disabilities are given equal access to opportunities. Here it is pertinent to note that Article 17 (4) d) of the 1992 Constitution justifies affirmative action for addressing imbalances in the Ghanaian society, and indeed it has been so used to redress educational imbalances in the Ghanaian society.

5 The estimated maternal mortality rate during the 7 years preceding the Ghana Maternal Health Survey (GMHS) was 310 per 100,000 live births, exceeding the target of 322 in 2018. This rate however far exceeds the target under SDG 3 which seeks to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.

Since 2004, ABANTU, in concert with several other CSOs and gender advocacy groups, have continued the advocacy for an affirmative action law in the country which will provide the legal backing for inclusion and equality.

Ladies and gentlemen, the importance of women's participation in public life and national governance has been established at the highest level of international policy on human rights, equality and equity.



The equal participation of women and men in public life and decision making provides a more balanced reflection of the composition of society, while strengthening democracy and ensuring that women's interests and perspectives are incorporated into government policies.

The Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, recognised that the equal participation of women and men in public life and decision making provides a more balanced reflection of the composition of society, while strengthening democracy and ensuring that women's interests and perspectives are incorporated into government policies.

As democracy has gained ground around Africa, the case for women's participation has gained further momentum, with women's enhanced participation in politics and governance recognized as an indicator of democratic and good governance. Yet overall, the West African sub-region lags behind other regions in Africa in the percentage of women in national governance, which remains below the minimum target of 30%⁶.

⁶ A UNIFEM Report (2008) suggested that at the rate of progress of women's representation in legislatures across the world, gender parity will be reached only in 2047!

However a few countries in our sub-region, including Liberia (Equal Representation and Participation Act of 2016)⁷ and Senegal (2010)⁸, have passed affirmative action legislation in this decade, while other countries in Eastern and Southern Africa like Rwanda, Uganda (1989), Kenya and South Africa⁹, passed affirmative action legislation resulting in enhanced progression in women's participation and a corresponding positive impact in national development.

As we know well, Ghanaian women have been active in public life and politics in our different societal formations, including in the anti-colonial and independence struggles¹⁰, and have contributed immensely to social, economic and political life in Ghana. Increasingly, they have also participated in policy making towards women's issues and gender equity at both the national, regional and international levels.

Yet, women have been largely absent from mainstream political decision-making processes in Ghana. This is attributable to a number of reasons including deep seated patriarchal norms which result in stereotypes and influence perceptions of women's capabilities and roles.

7 Equal Representation and Participation Act of 2016, establishing seven 'Special Constituencies', among which five seats would be reserved for women, one for youth and one for the disabled.

8 In 2010, Senegal adopted a 50/50 gender quota law called 'The Law on Parity,' which led to a dramatic increase in the number of women elected to the National Assembly in the following legislative election from 22,7% to 42,7%. Scholars often attribute quota adoption to post-conflict societies, where women can influence policies in a more women-friendly direction. However, Senegal has never experienced such a conflict. Furthermore, Senegal has become the Muslim-majority country in the world with the highest proportion of women in the National Assembly 

9 Rwanda, Uganda, Seychelles, Namibia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Angola, South Africa, Burundi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Sudan, Algeria, Tunisia and Senegal all have more than 30% women in their legislatures (16+ Liberia)

10 Several studies exist of the active and determining roles of women and youth and their organizations in the struggles to resist oppressive rule, slavery and colonization, and to establish democratic and inclusive governance in Ghana (for example Aidoo 1985, Allman 1993, Arhin 1983, Manuh 1991).



Research indicates that women's under representation in governance and decision making positions and in other areas of the economy, is not only a violation of their rights and equality clauses in the Constitution, but also hampers growth and sustainable development as the talents and energy of more than half of the population are under-utilized

Research indicates that women's under representation in governance and decision making positions and in other areas of the economy, is not only a violation of their rights and equality clauses in the Constitution, but also hampers growth and sustainable development as the talents and energy of more than half of the population are under-utilized¹¹.

The political and decision-making domain is one area where gender disparities are most visible and persistent and have proved hard to tackle. Women's poor showing in political and public life is a reflection of the pervasiveness of gender inequalities and is a barrier to promoting sustainable development.

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. 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 in legislatures.

10 Cf. the numbers of girls offering science in SHS; the Deputy Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, Ms. Patricia Appiagyei, stated recently in 2019, that the total enrolments of girls in science education at senior high school level from 2013 to 2015 was 44, 963, compared to 118,645 for boys. Not therefore surprising that females constitute only 25.7% of enrolments in the Sciences at tertiary level, and 17% in enrolments in Engineering.



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Since 1998, the country has made several attempts at enacting an Affirmative Action Law, starting with a Cabinet Statement of Policy on Affirmative Action that gave administrative instructions regarding affirmative action in local government and in appointments to boards of public corporations and other areas of public life, but these have not been properly implemented and lacked legal backing.

And though generally unimpressive, consistent efforts have resulted in marginal improvements in gender parity in governance and other sectors, with recent records of two female Chief Justice (2008;2017), a female Speaker of Parliament (2008-2012), and appointments of women to key institutions of state such as the Electoral Commission (2016, 2018), and as Cabinet Ministers or Ministers of State, but these have rested on the goodwill of appointing authorities, rather than women's lack of commitment or dynamism, and still fall short of the goal of gender equality.

Currently, an Affirmative Action Bill has been drafted. However, the process of getting the Bill passed into Law has been very slow. The Bill has gone through a chequered history with each ruling government restarting the process. It is also pertinent to note that government declared commitment to affirmative action in its White Paper on the Constitutional Review process in June 2012; however, this commitment is yet to be fulfilled.



The government declared commitment to affirmative action in its White Paper on the Constitutional Review process in June 2012; but this commitment is yet to be fulfilled.

Given our experiences with the enactment of legislation that protect the rights of women and girls in the country such as the Domestic Violence Act and the Spousal and Property Rights Bill, it is critical that 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 possible¹². Unlike other legislation in the country, both Bills have been subjected to unending nationwide consultations – it took more than five years to get the Domestic Violence Bill passed to law in 2007¹³. The passage of the Spousal and Property Rights Bill is stalled, with no clear update on its status. Women's groups, led by NETRIGHT, are also working to ensure that the Land Bill, currently under consideration, that will consolidate the laws on land in Ghana, will have provisions to protect the interests of women, youth and other vulnerable groups, and incorporate international best practices on gender and land rights, land administration and management, as well as prohibiting discriminatory practices in relation to land as stipulated in Art. 17 of the Constitution¹⁴.

The country has worked at providing the legal and policy frameworks for the promotion and protection of women's rights at all levels, including a recent National Gender Policy (2015) that aimed to mainstream gender equality concerns into the national development processes for equitable livelihoods for women and men by improving the social, legal, civic, political, economic and sociocultural conditions of persons, particularly women and children.

12 I am pleased to note that a march is planned for tomorrow, August 30th 2019, in Accra, to demand action on the Affirmative Action Law

13 As some of you may remember, attempts to get government to pass the Domestic Violence Law faced strong resistance from some sections of the public and parliamentarians, including the then Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs.

14 Interestingly, advocates, including CSOs and male land experts caution against Parliament attempting to water down the gender provisions in the Bill when it comes for consideration, as 'they may come under attack.' (Dr. Benjamin Armah Quaye, a land administration consultant).

However, there are still serious challenges due to lack of implementation of these policies arising from the lack of political will, insufficient directives to the relevant agencies, logistical and human resource challenges among several other reasons. The continued marginalisation of women, points to the fact that the measures put in place have not been commensurate with the serious nature of the inequalities being addressed. The lack of voice, power, and control, which expose the poor, in particular women, to exploitation, discrimination, exclusion, vulnerability and humiliation by state and non-state actors, are critical gender issues that require radical reforms to change the status quo.



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Ladies and gentlemen, the push for the passage of affirmative action legislation in Ghana is supported by SDG Goal 5 that aims to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” Under this broad goal, the resolution also proposes specific targets, including “...full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership [for women] at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”. One of the most direct legislative or policy intervention that can be made by States to achieve Goal 5 of the SDG is affirmative action (AA)– positive discrimination in favour of women in leadership positions either through reserved quotas or through institutional preferences.

In spite of the limitation of the 1992 Constitution observed by the CEDAW Committee, “the guarantees of equality and freedom from discrimination expressed in Article 17 are an important legal basis for affirmative action¹⁵.”

15 Tsikata, Dzodzi (2009) 'Affirmative Action and The Prospects for Gender Equality in Ghanaian Politics.' Accra: ABANTU, Women in Broadcasting and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Moreover, Article 17 (4) justifies affirmative action for addressing imbalances in Ghanaian society, making the point that the guarantees of equality should not be taken to imply that Parliament cannot pass legislation for the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at redressing social, economic or educational imbalances in the Ghanaian society.

Mr. Chairman, 62 years after independence, and 25 years since the 4th Republican Constitution, Ghanaian women are still under-represented in all sectors¹⁶ and the country woefully trails on the percentage of women's representation in public life as compared to other countries on the African continent. (IPU rankings- September 2018: Ghana 143/190; Senegal 12/190; Rwanda 1/190). Allah-Mensah has detailed the participation of women in political and public life in a 2004 publication. Unfortunately, the statistics she provides have not changed much in the 15 years since.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is quite clear that in spite of all the international conventions Ghana has signed, our trailblazing record as a country, the 1998 Cabinet Statement of Policy on Affirmative Action, the equal voice and representation sought will not happen without legal intervention. The 2016 elections which resulted in a 13% female representation in parliament gives credence to this. Only 2 women are part of the leadership of Parliament- the Deputy Majority Leader, and second deputy minority leader.

The weak representation is reflected in the gender composition of the 14 Standing Committees of Parliament which have a range of 4%-25% female membership; overall women are 15% of committee members, up from 10% in 2001-2004. It is only the Gender and Children's Committee, chaired by a man, that has 40% female membership. No female chairs any of the committees, although women are vice-chairs of 3 committees (Appointments, Business, Gender), with a female deputy ranking member in two other committees.

16 Even though females constitute a higher percentage than males in the population, education rates are 10 percent higher for males. And based on household populations, about 50% of men and only 29% of women have attained [secondary schooling or higher. In public universities, females constitute only 36% of enrolments, with wide variations across subject areas.](#)



Only the Gender and Children's Committee, which is chaired by a man, that has 40% female membership. No female chairs any of the committees, although women are vice-chairs of 3 committees (Appointments, Business, Gender), with a female deputy ranking member in two other committees.

Table 1: Gender Composition of Standing Committees of Parliament*: 2001-4 and 2017-

| Committee | 2001-2004 | | | | | 2017- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----|----|----|-------|-------|-----|----|----|-------|
| | M | % | F | % | Total | M | % | F | % | Total |
| Government Assurances | 23 | 92 | 2 | 8 | 25 | 22 | 88 | 3 | 12 | 25 |
| Business | 17 | 85 | 3 | 15 | 20 | 15 | 75 | 5 | 25 | 20 |
| Finance | 23 | 92 | 2 | 8 | 25 | 24 | 96 | 1 | 4 | 25 |
| Appointments | 24 | 92 | 2 | 8 | 26 | 21 | 81 | 5 | 19 | 26 |
| Public Accounts | 24 | 96 | 1 | 4 | 25 | 24 | 96 | 1 | 4 | 25 |
| Selection | 18 | 90 | 2 | 10 | 20 | 14 | 74 | 5 | 26 | 19 |
| Subsidiary Legislation | 23 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 23 | 25 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| House | 22 | 85 | 4 | 15 | 26 | 22 | 88 | 4 | 12 | 26 |
| Members Holding Office of Profit | 22 | 88 | 3 | 12 | 25 | 23 | 92 | 2 | 8 | 25 |
| Privileges | 30 | 97 | 1 | 3 | 31 | 28 | 90 | 3 | 10 | 31 |
| Gender and Children | 18 | 75 | 6 | 25 | 24 | 15 | 60 | 10 | 40 | 25 |
| Judiciary | 18 | 86 | 3 | 14 | 21 | 17 | 94 | 1 | 16 | 18 |
| Special Budget | 19 | 90 | 3 | 10 | 22 | 19 | 90 | 2 | 10 | 21 |
| Standing Orders | 23 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 23 | 14 | 70 | 6 | 30 | 20 |
| Total | 280 | 90 | 32 | 10 | 312 | 283 | 85 | 48 | 15 | 331 |

*NB: An MP can be a member of more than 1 committee

Source: Allah-Mensah (2005) and Author's own compilation from the website of Ghana's Parliament. <https://www.parliament.gh/committees>

Mr. Chairman, successive governments in Ghana have not exercised strong political will or shown clear commitment for transformational change in terms of promoting women in politics and in decision-making even within the context of greater global momentum for gender equality. Women's equal political participation and representation is a key pre-requisite for women to be enabled to effectively contribute to the decisions that affect their lives and those of their families. There is the need for political will and a concerted effort to ensure that adequate resources are provided for gender equality and women's empowerment in the country.



There is the need for political will and a concerted effort to ensure that adequate resources are provided for gender equality and women's empowerment in the country.

Mr. Chairman, a working paper by Spichiger and Stacey (2014) that relies extensively on the work of Ghanaian scholars noted as follows: 'Ghana has made limited progress towards gender equality. There is a general lack of recognition of gender equality “as a critical development issue”, and women fare badly in several areas. Even though there has been some progress in women's access to education, women's access to other services such as health and water remains challenging. Moreover, women's access to assets is weak, and the national level study by Abena Oduro and others (2011) on the 'Gender Assets Gap' revealed that the gender distribution of wealth in Ghana is biased in favour of males, both in urban and rural areas. The Working Paper also observed that while legislation aiming to protect and promote women's rights exists, this has been weakly implemented, also due to “strong cultural impediments,” while participation in national processes is limited, with women under-represented in public life and decision making.

Women continue to be denied access to productive resources from land to non-land-based avenues. While the numbers of women in formal sector employment have increased, it is still the informal economy now enlarged to include not only the traditional

informal sector, but the increasing casualization of work and employment relationships, that provide the mainstay for women and men as economic policies and growth fail to translate into the promised jobs in the formal economy. Unemployment, under-employment and casualization relegate women mostly to petty trading as they seek to eke out a living with little public intervention and support that render them susceptible to ponzi schemes that promise high returns but rob them of their meagre savings. The precariousness of daily life leads many such women to seek transcendental support where they become vulnerable to often not-so-holy, invariably men of God, who may also take advantage of their situation and sometimes also of their bodily integrity.

Mr. Chairman, a result and driver of the skewed gendered access to resources and employment is the structure of the educational system. From a combination of the colonial divide between male and female intellectual fields, and in keeping with a deeply entrenched notion of what women can do and cannot do, science and technology in Ghana remain male-dominated. Recently the Deputy Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, Ms. Patricia Appiagyei, stated that the total enrolments of girls in science education at senior high school level from 2013 to 2015 was 44, 963, compared to 118,645 for boys. It is therefore not surprising that females constitute only 25.7% of enrolments in the Sciences at tertiary level, and 17% in enrolments in Engineering (NCTE 2018).

But while it may appear that individual women make choices about the fields that they go into, a closer examination of the determinants of individual choice will reveal social structure and popularised stereotypes. Socialization often channels the ambitions of young girls into fields that are deemed doable for a female intellect, whatever that means. Given global trends and the emergence of opportunities within more technologically driven fields, more intentional effort is needed to ensure that we break these cycles and enable girls and the women they will become to take advantage of the jobs of the future, to truly fulfil the aspiration in Art. 36 (6) of the Constitution to ensure the integration of women into the mainstream of the economic development of Ghana.

The Youth and Democratic Consolidation

Mr. Chairman, in the remaining time available to me, I now turn to the issues around youth and democratic consolidation.

I have already noted the youthful tilt of Ghana's demography, in common with much of the rest of the continent. As several commentators have noted, this represents an opportunity for a dividend if well harnessed, while a laissez-faire approach portends several challenges. Also noticeable is the alarmist tendency in discourse on youth to portray them as a problem to be managed or dangerous., while discarding their own agencies and views and instrumentalizing them.

Over the last decade, Africa's economic growth has been robust at an average of 6%. Infrastructure and technology are improving across the continent and boosting economic opportunities. Despite this positive outlook, economic growth in Africa has not translated into improved outcomes, especially for young people. Instead, young people face numerous and varied challenges in the areas of education, health and well-being, housing, safety, social protection, exposure to violence, employment and political participation, with marginalised groups (females, those with disability, and those in rural areas, etc.) particularly affected. The African continent is also experiencing unprecedented urban growth, with projections that more than half of Africa's population will live in its cities by 2040.



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Mr. Chairman, a few days ago, on Monday, 26th August, 2019, the UNICEF Representative in Ghana, Ms. Duffay, at a summit on Promoting Social Inclusion: Leave No one behind' organized with the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection called for addressing challenges



that hold Ghana back from achieving the SDGs, and specifically for women and children in Ghana to be liberated from poverty and injustice. She made specific reference to the findings from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) Ghana 2017/2018, conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service with the support and collaboration of international partners (GSS 2018). While it is focused on women and children, the MICS offers us useful insights to understand the situation of youth in Ghana, who after all passed through childhood to become youth, and whose upper echelons (up to age 17) are part of the youth. The Report uses a life course approach to present its results, starting with childhood, through adolescence, to young persons and then to women and focuses in inequalities in access to different resources and opportunities to explain results. Thus in assessing the worrying rates of child marriage and teenage pregnancies and births, the Report notes the very different results by region, education and wealth quintiles. Thus while 1 in every 5 women aged 20-24 years was married before age 18, the rate increases with less wealth and education, and for rural residents. The report also notes persistent gender inequalities in completion rates at different levels of education, attainment levels of pupils and issues with the quality of education. Quite worryingly, the Report notes inequalities in child functioning, with about 1 in 5 children aged 2-17 years having a functioning difficulty, with differences by region, education, and wealth quintile.

Mr. Chairman, it is many of these issues that set up many youth for lives marked by precarity and uncertain futures. I shall not dwell much on the well-known figures for the much higher rates of unemployment among the youth in Ghana and around Africa, at almost twice the rate for adults, and at higher rates for young females than males¹⁷ (Darkwah and Tsikata, 2014, p. 171; World Bank, 2014; ILO 2014; GSS 2013), nor the many reasons adduced for that state of affairs, including low job creation, poor quality of available jobs, limited career opportunities. But issues of under education, skills constraints and mismatches at the same time as over education is also salient.

The youth-focused interventions that have been embarked upon by successive governments appear to have made little dent in the problem as little targeting is done. It has been observed that not all youth need assistance nor does one form of assistance work for all youth, and there have been calls for a documented targeting criteria and mechanism for youth employment interventions (UNECA, n.d)

17 The labour force participation rate for Africa's young males (52%) was 10 percentage points higher than that of females (42%)- ECA, n.d.

Given also that it is in the informal economy that many poorly educated and unskilled youth find work, it is important that the productivity and employment conditions of informal employment improve. Thus policies aimed at enhancing formal employment creation should be coupled by policies aiming to increase the productivity and improve the labour conditions in the informal economy. It is suggested that improving the productivity of this sector with a well-balanced mix of economic and social policies will make a remarkable contribution to improve the labour and living conditions of a large number of citizens.



Policies aimed at enhancing formal employment creation should be coupled by policies aiming to increase the productivity and improve the labour conditions in the informal economy.

A recent study in this regard titled, *Rethinking Youth, Livelihoods and Fragility in West Africa; One Size doesn't Fit All*, based on examples from Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria and focused on Okada drivers, hairdressing/barbering, street trading, artisanal and small scale mining and drug traffickers- all livelihood activities engaged in by sections of the youth - examines how they can support or undermine peace, state-building and inclusive development (Fortune et al, 2015). The report notes the patchy nature of information on young people's livelihood activities in different contexts, but it concludes by highlighting a series of broad guidelines and recommendations for policy makers in West Africa. In addition to targeted interventions, it calls for reframing debate, policy and programming to acknowledge that youth are a national asset, with the majority nonviolent and work hard to provide for themselves and their families. It also calls for managing expectations about job creation and public acknowledgment of the medium and long-term structural reforms needed, mobilizing regional networks such as ECOWAS and other partners to negotiate regional support to manage the employment challenge, while pursuing immediate reforms to improve the prospects associated with current youth livelihoods.

Mr. Chairman, it is also important that youth policies take into account different dimensions of the lived experience of youth, including political inclusion and civic engagement, and reflect the diversities among youth, instead of the tendency to homogenize them, and the non-linear and extended transitions that many of them experience.

Mr. Chairman, there is much I wish to say, but I can't keep you here forever. But I cannot leave without touching on an aspect of youth lives that also reflect their own views. The creative arts or what some call the creative economy, serve as an example of the creativity and dynamism of the youth in a context of perceived hopelessness and limited opportunities, both central issues to deepening democracy and its consolidation.



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Last week, I woke up early one morning to watch a documentary on Ghana that aired on Al Jazeera Witness. It was a satirical documentary titled 'Ghana Controversial' that an older friend had watched and had been deeply perplexed by. Early on in the documentary, there is a voice over of President Akufo-Addo praising the courage and resilience of young people who are prepared to brave the hazards of the Sahara to reach brighter shores in Europe; he urges them to stay home and harness their energies towards building a better life in Ghana. Beyond this, there is no adult voice or perspective in the documentary which features various hip-hop artistes (Wanlov, Mensa of FOKN Bois, Akan and Adomaa) and their take on the mentalities of Ghanaians, the influence of religion, politics and politicians, and life on and off the street in Ghana. The documentary is in the mold of youth cultures of protest and articulation of aspirations via music, where music is simultaneously a source of entertainment, tool of protest and social critique and creativity. Through their music, the young artistes in the documentary critique the social order and its attendant poverty of thought and action, redundant cultural practices, corruption, and lack of access to basic necessities by ordinary people.

Mr. Chairman, I submit that the views of such artistes are an important qualitative complement to the perceptions that are presented in the Afrobarometer surveys that CDD-Ghana conducts regularly. These artistes are influential local heroes and role models who reflect many of the aspirations of their constituents. The youth culture that they espouse is central to charting the future they want, as was on stage at a recent Ephraim Amu Memorial Lecture delivered by the artiste, M.anifest, on the topic Re-imagining us: the role of popular music in self-actualization at the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences in May, 2019. In my view, it served as a step  bridge the gap between the formalised and institutionalised intellectual work that the Academy does, and the kind of popular intellectualism that contemporary creative arts represent.

Mr. Chairman, what should democratic consolidation mean to our youth? But immediately I am confronted by the thought of which youth I am directing the question to:

-Is it to the new graduate from one of our public or private universities?

-The Okada rider in Techiman?

-The young lady working at the bank?

-Is it to the kayayo in Nima Market, balancing the baby on her back as she balances her load?

-Or is it to the young people who come to the Saturday market at Texpo on the Spintex Road, large deep plastic bowl on head, to earn some few cedis for their upkeep and school meals during the week?

-Or is it to my gardener's boy who I fortuitously discovered in November 2018 had been offered admission to the  university of Ghana in 2016 to read Economics, Mathematics and philosophy, but could not accept the offer as he had no hope of support? And now that he has been enrolled in the university, thanks to the generosity of some of those who responded to my crowdfunding effort, what would he say?

Mr. Chairman, these are not idle questions. In my opinion, they speak to the need to address the existential issues facing significant proportions in our population as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) Report makes clear.

How do we foster inclusion and effective connection of youth to our social and political processes? How do we encourage volunteerism in an environment of underemployment so that party foot soldiers work for the love and good of their parties?

I am aware of work done by Gyampo (2013), Tagoe (2014), Bob-Millar (2014), among others, on youth and political representation, with or without their gendered dimensions. What is needed to embolden youthful Parliamentarians to represent youth interests rather than narrow party interests? How much scope is there for this when we learn of the high costs involved to secure the coveted candidate ticket, as has been revealed by some recently elected and defeated party candidates? What kind of affirmative action should we be embarking upon to ensure representation of youth, gender and other interests in our body politic? What guidance can we seek from other African jurisdictions, including Kenya and South Africa, and introduce proportional representation in our electoral systems?

Obviously, more conversations and studies are in order, and I cannot pretend to have done justice to the full dimensions of the rather large topic I chose for myself.

My recommendation to CDD-Ghana is to commission a volume or studies on gender and youth in Ghana's democratic consolidation that will bring together varied perspectives to further enrich the topic.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, gender has emerged as a category of social analysis and a basis of social and political action that also needs policy attention. Ghana has subscribed to important policy documents, conventions and protocols at the continental and global levels on gender equality and women's and youth rights. The 1992 Constitution as amended, with other relevant legislation, promise equal rights and opportunities for men and women.

But as I hope the lecture has demonstrated, there is a gulf between the lofty aspirations in the Constitution and other documents, and the stark realities on the ground of continued and entrenched gender and youth disparities and inequalities in almost all areas of our national life. The statistics in the recent MICS Report makes for sober reading and challenge the complacencies in our assessments of national progress.



There is a gulf between the lofty aspirations in the Constitution and other documents, and the stark realities on the ground of continued and entrenched gender and youth disparities and inequalities in almost all areas of our national life.

The conclusion in the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) publication that Ghana has made limited progress towards gender equality and that there is a general lack of recognition of gender equality “as a critical development issue”, with women faring badly in several areas, is not one that can be swept away with words, but combatted with evidence to the contrary.

Mr. Chairman, there are several other relevant studies and data such as the ISSER Ghana Development Outlook and data from the NDPC's Annual Progress Reports, among others, that could guide more effective and evidence-driven policy formulation and initiatives and more use should be made of these especially by state actors, policy-makers and the private sector.

Mr. Chairman, in recent times, challenges have also been posed by seemingly impatient young women activists who have questioned the limits in inclusiveness in gender activism and in state policy. The dominant reading of the Pepper Dem movement for example, is of a group of wayward girls who are disrupting timeless cultural arrangements. But another reading of their activism is that they are pushing the limit of what we have achieved in our activism so far and tackling headlong practices that we have also confronted and pushed back against.

To achieve the vision of leaving no one behind in the pursuit of inclusive and sustainable development as propounded in Agenda 2030 and accepted by Ghana as a signatory state, more decisive action is needed at state and other levels to ensure inclusive, effective and democratic participation for citizens. By widening the scope and providing opportunities for varied and effective representation by women and youth in governance and decision-making, we can hope to contribute to the task of deepening Ghana's democratic consolidation.

I thank you for all your patience.

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