

2024

REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE GENDER-BASED ISSUES IN GHANA

EMERGING PUBLIC LEADERS OF
GHANA

MAY 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report offers a thorough desk review of gender-related outcomes in Ghana, identifying programme bottlenecks and opportunities for improvement. It examines key areas, including education, health, economic participation, political representation, and social norms, from academic literature, government reports, and data from international organisations.

Despite some progress, the findings reveal persistent gender disparities across these sectors. In education, gender gaps in enrollment and retention rates remain, particularly in rural areas. Health outcomes show that women face significant challenges in accessing quality care, with high maternal mortality rates being a major concern. Economic participation is hindered by limited access to finance and entrepreneurial opportunities for women. Political representation of women is low, reflecting broader systemic barriers. Social norms continue to perpetuate gender inequality, affecting women's empowerment and participation in all spheres of life.

The review underscores the need for targeted interventions to address these systemic challenges and leverage areas with significant potential for transformative change, such as policy reforms, increased funding for gender-focused programmes, and community-driven initiatives to shift social norms.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY0

1.0 BACKGROUND3

 1.1 Objective4

 1.2 Methodology.....4

2.0 KEY AREAS OF FOCUS5

 2.1 Education5

 2.1.1 Achievements5

 2.1.2 Challenges6

 2.1.3 Opportunities6

 2.2 Health7

 2.2.1 Achievements7

 2.2.2 Challenges8

 2.2.3 Opportunities9

 2.3 Economic Participation9

 2.3.1 Achievements9

 2.3.2 Challenges10

 2.3.3 Opportunities11

 2.4 Political Representation11

 2.4.1 Achievements11

 2.4.2 Challenges12

 2.4.3 Opportunities13

 2.5 Security and Safety13

 2.5.1 Achievements13

 2.5.2 Challenges13

 2.5.3 Opportunities14

 2.6 Social Norms15

 2.6.1 Achievements15

 2.6.2 Challenges18

 2.6.3 Opportunities19

3.0 CONCLUSION19

1.0 BACKGROUND

Gender equality is critical for sustainable development and social cohesion. In Ghana, significant strides have been made towards gender equality, particularly in education and political representation. However, disparities remain in economic participation, health outcomes, and social norms. Understanding these outcomes is crucial for designing effective programmes and policies.

The 68th Annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) underscored the imperative of addressing global gender inequalities and empowering women and girls. Despite advancements, women still encounter disproportionate poverty and marginalisation. CSW68 stressed the need for concerted efforts to combat poverty and enhance institutions with a gender lens. Key concerns include gender-based violence, economic empowerment, participation in decision-making, resource access, and safe workplaces. Addressing women's economic vulnerability necessitates multifaceted action to tackle systemic global gender disparities.

Globally, 383 million women and girls are estimated to live on less than \$1.90 a day, compared with 368 million men and boys. The vast majority live in just two regions: sub-Saharan Africa (63%) and Central and Southern Asia (21%)¹. From the World Bank, women constitute about 50 percent of the world's extremely poor². UN Women also estimated that 1 in every ten women in the world lives in extreme poverty.³ Further review indicated that, globally, there are 122 women aged 25-34 living in extreme poverty for every one hundred men of the same age group.⁴ Extreme poverty numbers are slightly higher for the sub-Saharan Africa region, where there are 127 women aged 25-34 living in extreme poverty for every 100 men. In nearly two-thirds of countries, women are more likely than men to report food insecurity.⁵ Women, affected by economic shifts, are a focus of global poverty alleviation efforts outlined in MDGs and SDGs. Progress in poverty reduction is notable, yet disparities persist, particularly in rural areas. The fight against poverty and inequality continues in various regions. In Ghana, almost half (48.2%) of females in rural areas were multi-dimensionally poor and almost 20 percentage points higher than the national average (29.7%) for all females.⁶

Worldwide, 10.3 percent more women than men live in extreme poverty, underscoring the need for accelerated poverty reduction to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Gender equality and women's empowerment across key global goals require a \$360 billion yearly investment. Amid pivotal moments like elections, advocating for increased investment in gender equality is imperative.

¹ Ginette Azcona, Antra Bhatt, Poverty is not gender-neutral, SDG Action 2023. Retrieved from [Link](#)

² Carolina Sánchez-Páramo Ana Maria Munoz-Boudet, no, 70% of the world's poor aren't women, but that doesn't mean poverty isn't sexist, Lets's Talk Development, 2018. Retrieved from [Link](#)

³ UN women, 2024. Retrieved from [Link](#)

⁴ UN Women, Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved from [Link](#)

⁵ UN Women, Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved from [Link](#)

⁶ Ghana Statistical Service, 2021 Population and Housing Census, 2021

The profile of consumption poverty based on surveys (2005/06, 2012/13, and 2016/17) estimated that the number of poor persons living in Ghana has increased by close to 400,000⁷. In 2016/17, Ghana's poverty rate stood at 23.4 percent using the upper poverty line of GH¢1,314, with an increasing Gini coefficient indicating unequal growth distribution. Poverty incidence among male-headed households was higher at 25.8 percent compared to 17.6 percent among female-headed households, though both declined from 2012/13. The labour force, comprising 58.1 percent of those aged 15 and older, faces a 13.4 percent unemployment rate, disproportionately affecting females (15.5%) and youth (19.7%, with 32.8 percent for ages 15-24).

These challenges in achieving gender quality are further worsened by institutional weaknesses that hinder effective policy implementation and perpetuate gender inequality. Factors such as gender disparities in laws, policies, and institutional practices, as well as traditional norms, perpetuate violations of the rights of women and girls⁸, necessitating a stronger commitment to strengthening gender equality. Limited financial resources hinder initiatives for gender equality, impacting women's empowerment globally. Women in sub-Saharan Africa face financial access gaps, obstructing Sustainable Development Goals. Addressing these gaps necessitates holistic strategies and collaboration for inclusive development and closing the gender gap, as per the World Economic Forum's report.

1.1 Objective

The main objective is to evaluate gender outcomes in Ghana, identify barriers to gender equality, and highlight opportunities for effective interventions and policy enhancements.

The specific objectives of this desk review;

1. To assess the current state of gender-related outcomes in Ghana.
2. To identify key bottlenecks hindering progress towards gender equality.
3. To highlight opportunities for intervention and policy enhancement.

1.2 Methodology

This desk review utilised secondary data from a variety of sources, including:

- Government publications and reports
- Academic articles and research papers
- Data from international organisations such as the World Bank, UNDP, and WHO
- Reports from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working on gender issues in Ghana.

⁷ Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Living Standards Survey, 2018

⁸ UNODC, Gender-Based Discrimination and Women in Conflict with the Law. Retrieved from [Link](#)

2.0 KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

2.1 Education

Education contributes significantly to both human and economic development. It fuels productivity, creativity, entrepreneurship, and technological advancements. A relationship exists between education, human resource development and economic growth⁹.

2.1.1 Achievements

- **Free Senior High School (SHS) Initiative:** In September 2017, the Free Senior High School programme by the Ministry of Education boosted enrolment by 11%, setting a record with over 470,000 students in the 2017/18 academic year. Introducing Free Senior High School (SHS) in Ghana has significantly enhanced educational access and equity by eliminating tuition fees for all SHS students. This reform reduces financial barriers, lowers dropout rates, and bridges educational inequality. It benefits students, parents, and administrators by providing improved facilities, smaller class sizes, and better accommodations, ultimately supporting a more inclusive educational environment. This initiative reduces financial barriers, decreases dropout rates, and bridges educational inequality, particularly benefiting girls from low-income families. Promoting equal educational opportunities empowers young women and fosters gender equality.
- **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Reforms:** Since 2017, Ghana's TVET sector has seen substantial reforms aimed at transformation. Notably, the Ghana TVET Voucher Project (GTVP), supported by Ghanaian-German financial cooperation with €10 million, enhances vocational education through the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) and the Ghana Skills Development Initiative. This initiative strengthens the TVET sector, promoting skill development and employment opportunities. This initiative empowers women by offering them opportunities to acquire marketable skills, promoting economic independence and gender equality in the workforce.
- **Improvement in Gender Parity Index (GPI):** Female enrollment rates have significantly improved at the primary and secondary levels. Ghana has made notable progress in improving the Gender Parity Index (GPI) across various educational levels. Junior high schools achieved a GPI of 0.98 in 2021, while senior high schools increased to a GPI of 0.87. Tertiary education saw a rise in GPI from 0.80 in 2017 to 0.90 in 2021. These improvements reflect the government's efforts to address gender disparities in education. However, continued efforts are necessary to improve GPI at higher education levels, reduce

⁹ Gulshan Kumar and Shallu Batra, Interrelationship Between Human Development, Financial Development and Economic Growth: Empirical Evidence from Indian Economy, 2023. [Link](#)

maternal mortality rates, and address broader gender-based issues, enhancing women's empowerment and societal well-being.

- **Higher Education and STEM:** Female enrollment in tertiary education is increasing, though disparities persist in STEM fields. The Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation (MoCD), in partnership with the Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications, has launched the Seats for Ladies in STEM Initiative (S4LIS) to close further the gender gap within the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) ecosystem in Ghana.

According to the UNESCO Science Report 2021, 30% of science professionals in Africa are women, but only 14% of university students and 26% of PhD graduates are female in Ghana. Prominent Ghanaian women scientists like Prof. Esi Ewuah and Quakyi Isabella Akyinbah demonstrate significant contributions, yet more efforts are needed to bridge the gender gap.

2.1.2 Challenges

- **Adult Literacy:** Lower literacy rates among women limit their access to information, economic opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes, perpetuating gender inequalities and hindering women's empowerment.
- **Retention and Completion:** High dropout rates for girls, driven by economic pressures, early marriage, and pregnancy, impede their educational and professional advancement, reinforcing gender disparities and limiting their potential for economic independence and empowerment.
- **TVET Sector:** Challenges in the TVET sector restrict women's access to technical and vocational education, essential for industrialisation and economic development. Addressing these challenges is crucial to ensuring that women can equally contribute to and benefit from the country's growth.

2.1.3 Opportunities

- **Policy Environment:** Developed and enforced comprehensive policies that support implementing gender equality programmes across all educational levels, ensuring sustained commitment and resources.
- **Scholarship Programmes:** Scholarships and mentorship programmes targeting girls, with a special focus on STEM fields, to encourage higher female participation and success in traditionally male-dominated areas. In April 2024, MTN Ghana, in partnership with Mobile-Web Ghana, held a mentorship programme for over 70 girls in selected Junior and

Senior High Schools (SHS) in Accra. The mentorship programme dubbed: "Girls in ICT" was held to commemorate International Girls in ICT Day 2024 on the theme: "Leadership", which underscores the critical need for strong female role models in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) careers.

- **School Environment:** Improved the safety, accessibility, and inclusivity of school environments by implementing anti-bullying policies, providing sanitary facilities, and ensuring safe transportation to increase retention rates for girls.
- **Advocacy:** Enhanced advocacy efforts by the government and NGOs to emphasise the importance of higher education for girls and promote gender equality through public campaigns and community engagement. In 2013, STAR-Ghana commissioned a Policy Brief on Gender and Education, "Gender, Social Inclusion (Gesi) and Education in Ghana", for their Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) programming. The brief is to support STAR-Ghana in addressing GP GESI constraints and serve as reference material for GPs and other stakeholders seeking to strengthen their GESI engagement through targeted advocacy. The document briefly details key gender and social inclusion issues and priorities that STAR-Ghana programmes may consider targeting.

2.2 Health

According to the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, healthcare provision is the government's responsibility, recognising its crucial role in socio-economic development. However, insufficient improvements in healthcare hinder economic progress by depleting human resources. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights underscores the right to adequate healthcare.

2.2.1 Achievements

- **Maternal Health:** Reduction in maternal mortality rates due to improved healthcare services and increased skilled birth attendance. Maternal mortality includes deaths of women during pregnancy, delivery, and 42 days post-delivery, excluding deaths due to accidents or violence. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) improved from 580 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2007 to 310 in 2017¹⁰, with 263 maternal deaths in 2020. Despite improvements, Ghana's MMR remains lower than the sub-Saharan Africa average of 536. Household deaths due to maternal causes are higher in rural (15.4%) than urban (13.1%) areas. The 2017 National Population Policy aims for an MMR of 100 by 2024 and 70 by 2030. Enhanced efforts by the government and stakeholders are essential to meet these targets.
- **Child Health:** Ghana's childhood mortality rates have decreased over the past thirty years due to efforts to enhance gender equality and empowerment. Neonatal mortality declined

¹⁰ Ghana Statistical Service, 2017 Ghana Maternal Health Survey, 2018

from 52 to 14 in 2017, rising slightly to 17 in 2022¹¹. Infant mortality decreased from 77 to 28, and under-five mortality rapidly declined from 115 to 40. These improvements reflect enhanced healthcare access and quality, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

- **Immunisation Coverage:** The improvement in immunisation coverage from 97.8 percent to 99.4 percent¹² suggests successful efforts to reach more individuals with vaccination programmes. This positive increase indicates progress in public health initiatives to prevent communicable diseases.
- **Health Equity:** To mitigate women's vulnerability, especially those impacted by HIV/AIDS, UN Women introduced the Property and Inheritance Rights intervention. Aimed at safeguarding women's property and inheritance rights, particularly for those living with HIV/AIDS, the initiative ensures economic security and legal protection, fostering empowerment and resilience.
- During the past five years, Ghana focused on Fistula repairs and family reintegration with a coverage of 575 surgeries and repairs nationwide.

2.2.2 Challenges

- **Healthcare Access:** Despite efforts to improve healthcare access, persistently high maternal mortality rates in Ghana spotlight significant gaps, especially in rural areas, demanding urgent reforms and investments in maternal healthcare services.
- **Adolescent Fertility:** Ghana's stagnant adolescent fertility rate, with 64 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 giving birth in 2021¹³ and 63 births per 1000 girls in 2022¹⁴, underscores systemic challenges. This rate, consistently high since 2010, surpasses the average for its income group, necessitating targeted interventions to address underlying factors contributing to early pregnancies.
- **Access to Services:** Overcoming geographic and economic obstacles remains an ongoing struggle for accessing healthcare services, disproportionately affecting rural women. Addressing these barriers is imperative to ensure equitable access to essential healthcare.
- **Reproductive Health:** Persistent gaps in accessing comprehensive reproductive health services and education underscore the urgent need for broader outreach efforts and enhanced support

¹¹ Ghana Statistical Service, 2017 Ghana Maternal Health Survey, 2018

¹² Ghana Health Service, 2021 Holistic Assessment Report, 2021

¹³ World Bank Data Portal, 2024

¹⁴ Ghana Statistical Service, 2022 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, 2022

systems to empower individuals, particularly women, in making informed decisions about their reproductive health.

2.2.3 Opportunities

- **Mobile Health Services:** Scaling up mobile health clinics to extend coverage to remote and underserved regions, ensuring equitable access to healthcare services regardless of geographical barriers.
- **Health Education:** Strengthening reproductive health education and services with targeted interventions empowers young women and adolescents with comprehensive knowledge and resources to make informed decisions about their reproductive health and well-being.

2.3 Economic Participation

Investing in Ghana's economy and leveraging its youthful population across agriculture, technology, and infrastructure offers avenues for advancing gender equality. Empowering women in these sectors through access to resources and opportunities fosters inclusive growth, driving long-term prosperity and societal advancement through innovation and sustainability.

2.3.1 Achievements

- The PHC 2021 report reveals a significant milestone: Ghana's economically active labour force now reaches 11,541,355 individuals, comprising 58.1% of the total population. Notably, 50.2% are employed, signaling progress from 2010's labour force participation rate of 43.9%, with 41.1% employed and 5.3% unemployed.
- In 2023, the World Bank reported a labour force participation rate of 65.3% for females and 72.4% for males in Ghana. However, since 1990, female participation has declined. Vulnerable employment among females has improved since 1991 but remains high at 77.3%, compared to 62.4% for males in 2022. Despite progress, women lag in asset ownership, with only 18.9% owning dwellings alone or jointly in 2014. However, female account ownership in Ghana is relatively high at 62.6%, with a smaller gender gap than in sub-Saharan Africa. However, women's mobile and internet usage for bill payments trails behind men, impacting financial inclusion and empowerment.
- Substantial women (56%) and households have benefited from the livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty.
- Economic marginalisation of women smallholder farmers coupled with high post-harvest losses significantly impacts their livelihoods. UN Women endeavours to empower women economically by collaborating with them to adopt Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and mitigate post-harvest losses. This initiative aims to boost the economic empowerment of

women farmers through GAP adoption and post-harvest loss reduction, thereby augmenting their income and ensuring food security.

- UNFPA is actively engaged in implementing skills programmes tailored for girls. These initiatives target marginalised girls, providing them with comprehensive health, social, and economic asset-building programmes. By enhancing their autonomy and expanding future opportunities, these interventions contribute to fostering a more empowered and resilient female demographic.
- In accordance with SDG8, approximately 1,062 disadvantaged women received instruction in livelihood and pre-employment skills, enabling them to secure decent employment, sustainable productive work, and contribute to economic growth.
- The Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) is a cash transfer programme initiated by the Government of Ghana in 2008. It targets extremely poor and vulnerable households, including orphaned and vulnerable children, persons with severe disabilities, and elderly individuals aged 65 and above. The programme aims to alleviate poverty by improving consumption levels and facilitating access to services and opportunities for the most disadvantaged. A substantial increase in beneficiary households, reaching 146,074 by 2015. Regular payments have been ensured since October 2013. Impact assessments indicate positive effects on the well-being of targeted families, demonstrating LEAP's effectiveness in addressing extreme poverty in Ghana.
- The Helpline of Hope Call Centre is part of Ghana's Single Window Citizen Engagement Service (SWCES), led by the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection. It enhances transparency and accountability across five flagship Social Protection Programmes, addressing issues like disability, child abuse, and human trafficking. Over 11,000 elderly individuals have been registered for health insurance since 2014.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Growing number of women entrepreneurs and increasing access to microfinance.

Commented [ET1]: Add details

2.3.2 Challenges

- Unemployment remains a significant challenge in Ghana, especially among the youth aged 15-35, with a rate of 19.7% and a peak of 32.8% for those aged 15-24. Gender disparities are evident, with higher rates among females (22.3%) compared to males (17.4%) in the same age group.

- Employment quality poses another challenge, particularly for women. They are often relegated to low-paying, informal sector jobs, which limit their economic opportunities and financial security.
- Persistent workplace discrimination exacerbates the issue, with gender bias leading to unequal pay and limited advancement opportunities for women, hindering efforts to achieve gender equality in the workforce.
- Although women in Ghana dominate the agricultural sector, female staff constitute just 2% of the Agriculture Extension officers. This resultant effect is the prioritisation of male farmers who are mostly into commercial farming to the disadvantage of their female counterparts. This affects efforts at improving nutrition, promoting food security and reducing poverty amongst extremely poor households, especially in deprived or poor communities in Ghana¹⁵.

2.3.3 Opportunities

- The Ghana National Household Registry (GNHR), operating under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), presents an opportunity to advance gender equality and empowerment. Launched in October 2015, it aims to consolidate poverty reduction efforts by directing social protection benefits to the most vulnerable.
- Opportunities for gender equality and empowerment include targeted skill development programmes for women to access higher-paying sectors. Additionally, policy reforms can strengthen labour laws to ensure equal pay and address workplace discrimination, fostering a more inclusive and equitable workforce.

2.4 Political Representation

Governance in Ghana, characterised by democratic principles and periodic elections, plays a crucial role in facilitating development and harnessing the demographic dividend. Stable governance fosters an enabling environment for economic growth, social progress, and sustainable development initiatives. Effective policies targeting education, healthcare, and job creation bolster human capital development, particularly among the youth.

2.4.1 Achievements

- In senior and middle management, women represented 26.6% in 2017, positioning Ghana in the second quintile globally. This data highlights progress towards gender equality in leadership roles, indicating the potential for further empowerment and inclusivity in decision-making processes and organisational structures.

¹⁵ UN Women and Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ghana's Report Progress on Implementation of The Beijing Platform for Action, 2019

- Ghana has been able to mobilise political commitment and action for girls' and women's empowerment, with the President as the Lead Champion. Through this effort, the country has extended the campaign to all regions nationwide under the HeForShe Campaign.
- Strengthen the Capacity of Gender Focal Persons, Planning, and Desk officers of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) on Gender-responsive budgeting and gender mainstreaming to ensure gender responsiveness at the local level through the Regional, Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs).
- **Leadership Roles:** More women are in senior and higher management leadership positions. Gender representation in the judiciary shows 29.4% women in the Judicial Council; however, at ministerial levels in 2018, only 17.2% were females. While parliamentary engagement improved by 2021, disparities persist. Efforts to increase female representation in decision-making are crucial for balanced governance and equitable policymaking. Examples include the introduction of gender quotas in political parties and increasing female representation in local government.
- Empowerment programmes targeting rural young women lack leadership skills, hindering their leadership opportunities. Initiatives like the UN's leadership development in Nkwanta North and South Districts aim to address this gap. By fostering leadership skills, young women become advocates for their rights, contributing to gender equality and community development.
- West African women's organisations have historically had limited representation in global gender policy discussions. Training initiatives, such as those for the Commission on the Status of Women participation, are pivotal achievements. By empowering these organisations with skills and knowledge, they can effectively advocate for gender equality on the international stage, amplifying their impact and influence.

2.4.2 Challenges

- **National Representation:** Women are significantly underrepresented in national parliament, executive positions, and decision-making processes, which challenges gender equality in governance.
- **Political Participation:** Cultural norms and gender biases serve as barriers, restricting women's active engagement in politics and decision-making, impeding progress towards gender equality.

2.4.3 Opportunities

- **Capacity Building:** Tailored leadership training for women, encompassing essential skills, mentorship, and resources, enhances their confidence and effectiveness in leadership roles and fosters gender equality and empowerment.
- **Advocacy Campaigns:** Strengthening advocacy to challenge cultural norms and promote gender equality in politics amplifies women's voices and drives policy changes for inclusive governance.

2.5 Security and Safety

Despite being known for relative peace, Ghana faces sporadic conflicts, often linked to chieftaincy, ethnicity, land, and politics, impacting women's security. Ghana's commitment to international Frameworks like the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform of Action (BPfA), and the United Nations Security Council Resolution on Women Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) aim to safeguard women and girls amidst these challenges and promote peace and security.

2.5.1 Achievements

- Ghana's second National Action Plan (GHANAP2) for implementing UNSCR1325 spans from 2020 to 2024. Developed by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection with support from UNDP Ghana, GHANAP 2 succeeds GHANAP 1, which ended in 2015. Active peacekeeping and conflict resolution involvement underscores Ghana's pivotal role in global peace efforts. GHANAP II is instrumental in tackling intra-state conflicts, particularly those impacting women and children, and fostering international collaboration in peacekeeping endeavours.

2.5.2 Challenges

- **Coordination and Funding Issues:** The absence of an interministerial steering committee hampers the coordinated implementation of GHANAP II. A lack of a dedicated budget and fundraising strategy also leads to insufficient funding spread thinly across multiple competing activities, weakening the overall impact and progress of gender equality initiatives.
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Awareness:** Competing priorities and limited resources in various implementing sector ministries reduce their interest in GHANAP. Moreover, poor coordination among stakeholders makes implementation haphazard and difficult to monitor. Minimal awareness of the NAP among security institutions and the public further diminishes its effectiveness.

Capacity Building for Women's Leadership: There is a notable shortage of women with Women's Peace and Security (WPS) expertise to lead implementation efforts. This challenge is exacerbated by weak commitment and support for gender issues by state agencies, reflected in low budget allocations and limited parliamentary advocacy for gender-related issues.

- **Gender-Based Violence and Human Trafficking:** High levels of gender-based violence, including child marriages, female genital mutilation, and sexual abuse in schools and workplaces, persist. Reports of rape and defilement are frequent, yet data is not disaggregated to show conflict-related incidents. Human trafficking remains a severe issue, with many young women lured into exploitation.
- **Women in Peacekeeping:** While Ghana contributes significantly to international peacekeeping with female personnel, domestic peacekeeping lacks female representation. This absence is particularly notable in internal conflict zones and areas affected by activities of nomadic headsmen and highway robbers, where women's security is severely compromised. Enhanced female participation in local peacekeeping efforts is essential for protecting women's interests and ensuring their safety.
- Women in the security services continue to face gender-based discrimination. This is evident in the 2018 Ghana Fire Service Case involving two female employees whose appointments were terminated for getting pregnant.
- **Natural and Man-made Disasters:** When natural disasters occur, the most vulnerable groups in society suffer, i.e., women, children, the aged, and PWDs. Disasters often include drought, earthquakes, epidemics, extreme temperatures, floods, insect infestations, volcanoes, storms, and wild/bushfires. Such disasters negatively impact the national financial resources and consolidation of gains made through programming interventions.

2.5.3 Opportunities

- **Establish an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee:** Creating a dedicated inter-ministerial steering committee can ensure coordinated implementation of GHANAP II. This committee should include representatives from key ministries, NGOs, and international partners to streamline efforts, share resources, and align activities for greater impact on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- **Develop and Secure Dedicated Funding:** Implement a robust fundraising strategy to secure dedicated funding for GHANAP II. This could involve partnerships with international organisations, private sector sponsorships, and government budget

allocations. Dedicated funding will ensure sustained support for gender equality initiatives and comprehensive implementation of action plans.

- **Enhance Stakeholder Coordination and Awareness Campaigns:** Strengthen stakeholder coordination through regular meetings, shared platforms, and collaborative projects. Additionally, increase awareness of GHANAP II among security institutions and the public through targeted campaigns, workshops, and media engagement. This will promote understanding and support for gender equality measures across all levels of society.
- **Build Capacity for Women's Leadership in Peace and Security:** Invest in training programmes to develop a pool of women leaders in Women's Peace and Security (WPS). These programmes should focus on skill development in conflict resolution, mediation, and peacebuilding. Establish mentorship schemes and create networks to support women in leadership roles, enhancing their participation in national and international peace efforts.
- **Strengthen Legal Frameworks and Support Services for Gender-Based Violence and Human Trafficking:** Enhance the enforcement of existing laws and introduce new policies to combat gender-based violence and human trafficking effectively. Increase support services such as shelters, counselling, and legal aid for victims. Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate communities on the signs of trafficking and violence and encourage reporting and intervention.

2.6 Social Norms

Social norms, the unwritten rules of behaviour in a society, significantly influence gender equality and empowerment. They shape attitudes and expectations regarding gender roles, often perpetuating inequalities. Challenging these norms is crucial for advancing women's and girls' rights, ensuring equal opportunities, and fostering inclusive, sustainable development.

2.6.1 Achievements

- Established in 2013, Ghana's Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MoGCSP) tackles gender inequality and social disparities. It promotes gender equality, empowers women and girls, protects children's rights, and aids vulnerable groups. Collaborating with UN agencies, it advances gender-related initiatives for sustainable development, aligning with constitutional and international commitments.¹⁶
- UN Women supports the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection in addressing systemic gender inequalities in Ghana. Efforts include reviewing the National Gender Policy, promoting an Affirmative Action Bill, and implementing Gender-Responsive

¹⁶ UNFPA, 8th Country Programme Document for Ghana, 2022

Budgeting. These initiatives aim to enhance the Ministry's capacity to implement gender-responsive policies effectively.

- Persistent gender inequality and the need for a strategic approach to integrate gender perspectives into all aspects of UNFPA's work. UNFPA has developed the UNFPA Gender Strategy (2022-2025). To develop and implement a gender strategy that guides the operationalisation of gender and rights-related aspects of UNFPA's work, ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
- UNFPA supports communities in developing advocacy platforms to eliminate discriminatory gender and sociocultural norms. Increased awareness and advocacy efforts addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices. Advocacy groups have been established to campaign for and highlight issues of women and poverty. Women groups have been linked to financial institutions to access credit facilities. However, government agencies, the private sector and other service providers must enhance their strategies to address bottlenecks that continue to impoverish women.
- Ghana is working to strengthen legal frameworks for gender, children, and social protection issues in national development. Bills such as the Affirmative Action Bill, Aged Bill, and Foster Care and Adoption Regulations were approved by Cabinet in 2016, but with a change in Government, the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection needs to be resubmitted for approval following further consultations to reflect public and government priorities.
- The Ministry developed various programmes and interventions to eradicate the Kayayei phenomenon. These are: • A five-year Strategic Plan¹ to eradicate 'kayayei' is being developed through the support of UNFPA. • The Ministry has developed a Porterage Module to link women in rural communities to Government's initiatives such as the one Village, One Dam and One District, one Factory to make them economically independent. • Developing a strategy to mainstream gender in climate change programme
- To ensure the achievement of the Ministry's mandate, a number of Boards have been constituted in line with Acts of Parliament to advise and provide technical support to the Ministry. These include: - The Ministerial Advisory Board, - The Human Trafficking Management Board, - Domestic Violence Management Board, - The Cancer Board, - Adoption Board and - The National Council on Persons with Disability Board
- **Orange Support Center:** In response to a projected 0.3% rise in domestic violence cases during COVID-19 in Ghana, the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection geared up to address gender inequalities. To meet the demand for assistance, a functional

centre was established. UNFPA Ghana, in collaboration with the Domestic Violence Secretariat, launched the Orange Support Centre and Boame Mobile app on March 11, 2021, during International Women's Day celebrations. The innovative centre combines technology with human support, offering a toll-free hotline (0800 111 222), a mobile app, and a volunteer platform, BoameApp, providing comprehensive assistance, including psychosocial, legal, medical, and physical support for SGBV victims and survivors.

- **Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS):** In 2015, Ghana's Child and Family Welfare Policy emphasised the need to improve child protection information management for better data and evidence of reform impact. The Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS), a web-based platform developed by the Government of Ghana, documents and reports on social welfare services, including child protection, social protection, and gender-based violence. Using standard national data collection forms, workflows, referral pathways, and SOPs, its primary users will be MMDA staff responsible for social protection, child protection, justice for children, and gender-based violence services. NGOs, CSOs, and Residential Care Facilities will also use the system. [Click the link to access SWIMS.](#)
- Ghana's Integrated Social Services (ISS) initiative aims to enhance collaboration among social welfare, social protection, and health sectors at decentralised and national levels. It addresses multidimensional poverty and vulnerability by promoting linkages between health, child protection, sexual and gender-based violence, and social protection services. Aligned with Ghana's decentralisation efforts and the National Medium-Term Development Policy Framework 2018-2021, ISS ensures administrative guidance and funding support local social services, reducing poverty and vulnerability among children and families through improved access to integrated social services, thus preventing the exclusion of the most vulnerable populations.
- Country-level diagnostic survey conducted to assess the incidence, attitude, determinants and consequences of domestic violence in Ghana.
- Ghana continues to observe international commemorative days to sustain awareness of current and emerging issues related to Gender equality and women's empowerment, with a specific focus on vulnerable groups.
- At the country level, various strategies, including mentorship programmes, have been implemented using safe space approaches to empower and build girls' agencies. To date, approximately 7,278 girls and boys have been engaged.

2.6.2 Challenges

- **Presence of Domestic Violence:** According to the World Bank, in 2014, 61.6% of women participated in making major household decisions, according to the World Bank. This includes decisions on major purchases, their own healthcare, and visiting family and friends. In Ghana, less than 27% of women have experienced intimate partner violence, below the global average. Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence against women, affecting those aged 15-49. In Ghana, 18.8% of women have faced any sexual violence, and 24% have experienced intimate partner violence. In 2022, women held 14.5% of parliamentary seats in Ghana, a rate lower than the average in lower-middle-income economies.
- Domestic violence, including abuse in intimate relationships and family, is a prevalent form of gender-based violence globally. The 2016 Domestic Violence Report examined violence across different population groups in Ghana, regardless of whether it was domestic. It found that 71.5% of women and 71.4% of men experienced at least one form of violence in their lifetime, with 42.9% of women and 43.6% of men experiencing violence in the past year. In the last 12 months, the most common violence for women was psychological (22.5%), followed by social (20.8%), economic (14.4%), sexual (10.6%), and physical (8.9%). Men also most experienced psychological violence (28%), followed by social (18.7%), economic (12.2%), physical (10.2%), and sexual (9.5%). Domestic relations perpetrated most violence against women, while men experienced more violence from non-domestic relations.
- **Cultural Practices:** Despite advancements, entrenched customs like early marriage and gender-based violence persist in Ghana, perpetuating inequalities and jeopardising the well-being of women and girls. Efforts to eradicate harmful practices such as FGM and trokosi are crucial for the full participation of all individuals, including women, children, and PWDs, in national development. Victims of sexual and gender-based violence lack essential support services, exacerbating their vulnerability, while PWDs and persons living with HIV face social exclusion and discrimination due to insufficient institutional support.
- **Norm Change:** Transformation of deeply ingrained gender norms and attitudes faces significant hurdles. Progressing at a sluggish pace impedes societal evolution towards gender equality and inclusivity. Overcoming inertia demands comprehensive strategies addressing education, advocacy, and policy interventions to foster positive behavioural shifts and dismantle entrenched biases.

2.6.3 Opportunities

- **Engaging Men and Boys:** Initiatives involving men and boys as advocates for gender equality, fostering understanding and active participation in challenging traditional gender norms and behaviours.
- **Media Campaigns:** Utilising various media platforms to reshape public perceptions, combat stereotypes, and promote diverse representations of gender roles and identities.
- **UN Women Ghana's Support:** Collaborating with Ghanaian government bodies such as Parliament, MOGCSP, NDPC, MoFEP, and GSS to integrate gender perspectives into national development frameworks. UN Women also assists private sector entities, civil society organisations, and media in addressing gender-responsive issues and empowers women through partnerships with the UN Country Team. Operating across four key domains: operations, research and analysis, advocacy, and programme implementation, UN Women Ghana aims to achieve impactful outcomes in its priority areas¹⁷.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The assessment of gender-related outcomes in Ghana highlights significant progress, particularly in education and political representation. However, persistent challenges remain, particularly in economic participation, health access, and social norms. Addressing these bottlenecks requires comprehensive and multi-faceted approaches, including policy reforms, targeted programmes, and cultural change initiatives. The opportunities identified in this review provide a roadmap for stakeholders to enhance gender equality efforts in Ghana.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Policy and Legislation:** The government of Ghana and its stakeholders should strengthen gender-responsive policies and enforce existing laws on gender equality and non-discrimination. They should also ensure thorough implementation and monitoring mechanisms. They should allocate resources for training law enforcement and judiciary personnel to handle gender-related cases effectively and foster a legal environment that supports women's rights.
- **Education:** The Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service should expand scholarship programmes, improve school environments, and integrate gender-sensitive curricula. Promote girls' enrollment and retention in schools, provide mentorship programmes, and address barriers such as gender-based violence. Encourage STEM education for girls to diversify future career opportunities and reduce gender disparities in various fields.

¹⁷ UN Women, UN Women in Ghana. Retrieved from [Link](#).

- **Health:** The Ministry of Health and Ghana Health Service should increase access to reproductive health services and comprehensive health education, especially in rural areas. Implement community health programmes, improve maternal healthcare, and ensure the availability of contraceptives. Educate women on health rights and services to empower them to make informed health decisions, enhancing overall well-being.
- **Economic Empowerment:** The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations should develop targeted skills training programmes for women in diverse industries. Equal pay legislation should be enforced to close the gender wage gap. Women's entrepreneurship should be supported through financial literacy programmes, access to credit, and market opportunities, ensuring women's economic participation and financial independence.
- **Political Participation:** The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection should implement capacity-building initiatives to prepare women for political roles. Promote gender quotas in political positions to ensure equitable representation. Provide leadership training, mentorship, and networking opportunities for women, fostering an environment where women's voices and perspectives are integral in policymaking.
- **Eradicate Harmful Practices:** Implement comprehensive campaigns to eliminate harmful customs like early marriage, FGM, and trokosi. Engage local leaders and educate communities about the negative impacts of these practices. Strengthen and enforce laws protecting women's and girls' rights to ensure their safety and full participation in society.
- **Coordinated Support Services:** Establish integrated and well-coordinated support systems for victims of sexual and gender-based violence, including policing, justice, healthcare, and psychosocial services. Ensure that PWDs receive the necessary institutional support and reduce stigma and discrimination against persons living with HIV in public spaces such as schools and workplaces.

This report underscores the importance of sustained efforts and collaboration among government, civil society, and international partners to achieve gender equality in Ghana.

Resources:

1. [Rapid Gender Assessment by the Office of the Head of Civil Service, April 2024](#)
2. [Brief Report on the Review of the 2015 National Gender Policy, Emerging Public Leaders, May 2024.](#)