

### Background

Ghana's constitutional democracy is often pointed to as an exemplary democracy in Africa. However, Ghana is facing the challenge of low participation of women in political office, in conjunction with other forms of gender inequality and discrimination. In the 2016 elections, only 12.7% the parliamentary seats were won by women, which represented only a modest increase since 2008, when 8.3% of the parliamentary seats were won by women and 2010, when 10.2% of the seats were won by women. Ghana currently ranks 150th out of 185 countries in the Inter-Parliamentary Union ranking for representation of women in parliament.

### Gains

- Ghana's 1992 Constitution provides for the protection of gender equality and prohibits gender discrimination
- In 2016, a proposed law aimed to provide legal structures and policies to advance equal participation of women in decision-making positions and to institute a 40% quota for women in public service and governance was introduced by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (Ministry) as part of the Affirmative Action Bill. The bill currently awaits a vote
- Gender dialogues, such as on "Promoting Gender Equality and Non Discrimination Through Affirmative Action," have been promoted by the Ministry
- Establishment of 28 Coalitions of Women in Governance with over 500 members, which provided political decision making training programs across Ghana to approximately 600 women in 5 years
- Lowered filing fees for women to enter primary elections by the National Democratic Congress (NDC)
- Established goals to increase representation of women in the NDC to increase representation in the party to 40% (a political party quota)
- Non-profit organizations such as the African Women Lawyers Association are organizing and working to combat gender inequality

### Challenges

- Constitutional protections are not sufficient to counter the myriad of challenges that prevent women from participating in politics in Ghana
- Lack of affirmative action or quotas to increase political opportunities for women
- Monetary barriers that women face being less economically advantaged compared to men. Women cannot afford the financial costs of elections and vote buying practices
- Cultural barriers such as societal norms that consider women to be politically inferior to men and not suited for leadership roles
- Insufficient civil and political rights education to promote an awareness of women's rights and its contributions to society and development
- Discouragement by political parties which dissuade women from running against long-time male incumbents
- Exclusion of women's issues in government processes and programs

### Key Takeaway

Ghana's Constitution protects gender equality and prohibits discrimination. Ghana has taken steps to analyze the causes of low participation of women and to remedy the financial, traditional and cultural barriers that prevent women's increased participation. In recent years, Ghana has started adopting strategies to increase its representation of women, including coalition building and mobilization of women, organizational/non-profit advocacy efforts for gender equality, and a quota policy that would legally mandate inclusion of women in political office. Ghana has implemented many of the strategies deemed "best practices" to promote greater inclusion.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Increasing Women's Political Participation*, Gender Studies & Human Rights Documentation Centre, last accessed October 20, 2017 <http://gendercentreghana.org/?p=26>

*Ghana, Woman Kind Worldwide Equal Respected Proud*, last accessed October 20, 2017 <https://www.womankind.org.uk/where-we-work/ghana>

*Why Are There So Few Women in Ghana's Parliament*, by Stacey Knott, produced for Pulse.com.gh, dated March 8, 2016 <http://pulse.com.gh/features/gender-inequality-why-are-there-so-few-women-in-ghanas-parliament-id4774663.html>

*Women's Political Participation – A Catalyst for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Ghana*, by Jennifer Asuako, produced for the United Nations Development Programme, dated January 23, 2017 <http://www.gh.undp.org/content/ghana/en/home/ourperspective/ourperspectivearticles/2017/01/23/women-s-political-participation-a-catalyst-for-gender-equality-and-women-empowerment-in-ghana.html>;

Ghana Ranked 150<sup>th</sup> in Women Representation, GhanaWeb, dated November 11, 2016 <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Ghana-ranked-150th-in-women-representation-485800>

*Quota Database for Ghana*, Quota Project, last accessed October 20, 2017 <http://www.quotaproject.org/index.cfm>

*Push for Affirmative Action Bill Heightens as World Marks International Women's Day*, Joy Online, dated August 3, 2017, <http://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2017/March-8th/push-for-affirmative-action-bill-heightens-as-world-marks-intl-womens-day.php>