

UPR REVIEW OF GHANA

NGO Submission by
on

Women's Political Rights

Submitted by

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Women's Participation in Politics

1. Introduction

Ghana attained independence from Britain on March 6, 1957, and became a republic on July 1, 1960. Since then, Ghana's political history has been checkered, with periods of democratic rule interspersed by periods of military rule.¹ From 1993 to date, Ghana has been under a democratic government.² Like many military regimes across Africa and elsewhere, Ghana has endured periods of massive violations of human rights. Civil, political, social and economic abuses were particularly abundant during the periods of authoritarian rule.³ In recognition of such abuses, the 1992 Constitution includes provisions dedicated to fundamental human rights and freedoms.⁴ It also establishes very important state mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights, including the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice and the National Commission on Civic Education.⁵ It is generally accepted that protection of human rights since Ghana's return to constitutional rule in 1992 has been extraordinarily successful. This is seen as a departure from the military days when violations of human rights by the state and its agencies were common.⁶

Throughout this difficult history, women suffered dramatically from abuses of their human rights. From independence, through the authoritarian regimes, and to the present constitutional dispensation, the women's human rights agenda has not attained the level of success achieved by other areas of human rights.

2. Commitments to Promoting Women's Participation in Politics

UN Commitments

Ghana has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Ghana has also endorsed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the Millennium Development Goals.

¹ Ghana has suffered five major *coup d'états* since independence, the last of which, in 1981, led to eleven years of rule under the Provisional National Defence Party (PNDC).

² The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana is operational to date.

³ African Peer Review Mechanism, *Country Review Report of the Republic of Ghana*, June 2005, 14. <http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/aprm/APRMGhanareport.pdf>. (accessed Nov. 07, 2007).

⁴ 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, Chapter 5. <http://www.ghanareview.com/Gconst.html>. (accessed Nov. 07, 2007).

⁵ 1992 Constitution the Republic of Ghana, Chapters 18 and 19. <http://www.ghanareview.com/Gconst.html>. (accessed Nov. 07, 2007).

⁶ African Peer Review Mechanism, *Country Review Report of the Republic of Ghana*, June 2005, 27. <http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/aprm/APRMGhanareport.pdf>. (accessed Nov. 07, 2007).

African Union Commitments

At the African Union level, Ghana has adopted the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality 2003; and also the African Charter Protocol on Women's Rights (2003). [www.genderismyagenda.org]

National Level Commitments

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana (Article 17) prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. An Affirmative Action Policy of 1998 provides for a 40% quota of women's representation on all government and public boards, commissions, councils, committees and official bodies, including Cabinet and the Council of State.

3. Gaps in meeting Commitments

In 2005, a report submitted by NGOs at the Beijing +10 Review pointed that despite progress made in some of the 12 critical areas such on the girl-child, there was still widespread violence against women, majority of poor people are women and there are few women in decision-making positions. [Beijing Betrayed, Women Worldwide Report that Governments have failed to turn the Platform into Action, 1995, p. 48. published by Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) URL www.wedo.org]

In 2006, at the review of Ghana's 3rd, 4th and 5th Periodic Report to CEDAW, the Government of Ghana acknowledged that it had not done enough to increase women's participation in politics. The fact was endorsed in the NGO Shadow Report coordinated by WiLDAF Ghana. In the Concluding Comments, CEDAW recommended that the affirmative action policy should be implemented in a way that addresses the apparent gender gap in political participation and decision making. [Concluding Comments of CEDAW][See also www.IWRAW-ap.org]

In 2006, a survey carried out by WiLDAF on the implementation of the Solemn Declaration in 11 West African countries, pointed that despite efforts made by the Government of Ghana to promote women's rights, low representation of women in political life and decision making was still a concern. [Implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality – Shadow Report of West African Civil Society Organizations, 2007 p. 2]

4. Situation on the Ground

Although there is no law in Ghana that prevents women from participating in politics or in areas of Ghana's economic or social life, women are generally under-represented in politics and in public life. There seems to be no long-term strategic framework put in place to address this failure. This failure has been

attributed to a lack of political will and a deficient commitment to gender equality among political parties.⁷ The excuse has been the lack of a pool of eminent women. A databank has accordingly been established. It remains inchoate, however, owing to weak capacity and ineffective coordination of data collection, collation and analysis by the Women’s Ministry.

i. Women in Parliament

- First Republic (1960) - 10
- Second Republic (1969) - 2
- Third Republic (1979) - 5
- First Parliament of the Fourth Republic (1992) - 16
- Second Parliament of the Fourth Republic (1996) - 19
- Third Parliament of the Fourth Republic (2000) - 19 women, 181 men
- Fourth Parliament of the Fourth Republic (2004) - 25 women, 205 men

Activists reacted to the disturbing politics of the 2004 elections by bringing out a nonpartisan document, ‘The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana.’ It outlines broad issues of national concern to women that need to be addressed by government and other relevant agencies within set time frames.⁸ Seeking to address these challenges in the 2004 parliamentary elections, activists relied on government’s affirmative action policy of 40% representation of women in decision-making structures. This seeming trump card did not help.

ii. Women in the Decentralized Government Structures

The introduction in 1988 of district assemblies as part of a strategy to decentralize governance also provided an opportunity for women to become more involved in politics. Two entry points into the district assemblies were available: as part of the 70% elected members into the assemblies or as part of the 30% appointed by government. Government policy on the latter was to ensure that at least half of the government appointees would be women. Since this was a non-partisan system, any woman ready to serve the district could contest. As the figures below show, the Affirmative Action Policy has not worked.

Year	Total of Members	Total of Men	Total of Women	Percentage of men	Percentage of Women
1998	4,820	4,624	196	95%	5%

⁷ African Peer Review Mechanism, *Country Review Report of the Republic of Ghana*, June 2005, 24. <http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/aprm/APRMGhanareport.pdf>. (accessed Nov. 07, 2007).

⁸ The Women’s Manifesto is an initiative of ABANTU for Development, an NGO, accessible at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ghana/02983.pdf>.

2002	4,583	4,242	341	93%	7%
2006	4,691	4,248	443	90.6%	9.4%

5. Recommendations

- Government of Ghana should implement the Affirmative Action Policy to increase the number of women in politics and decision-making positions
- Government should urge political parties to agree to implementation of a Quota System as a means of having more women in politics.
- Appointment of Ministers of State in the next government (2008 - 2012) should reflect government's commitment to bridging the gender gap through a 50/50 policy.