

WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN THE POLITICS OF GHANA

Dr. Ashutosh Trivedi
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
Satyawati College, University of Delhi, Delhi, India.

Abstract

Women (political) representation in Ghana seems pyramidal with the vast majority of women at the bottom. The political representation and the presence of women in Ghana reflects that although women are moving forward but the process is very slow. Infact, the assessment of available data reveals that women political representation has been stagnated under a particular percentage. My attempt in this paper will be to investigate the political representation of women in Ghana. At the same time, I would try to draw some suggestions or possible way forward.

Keywords: Political Participation, Women Parliamentarian, 31st DWM, Democracy, Asante.

Abbreviations: Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), Federation of Ghana Women (FGW), National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW), National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW), Convention People's Party (CPP), Federation of Ghanaian Women (FEGAWO), the 31st December Women's Movement (31st DWM),

Introduction

It is very unfortunate that the presence and representation of approximately half of the worlds' population (i.e. women) is not satisfactory around the world. There are very few women in the higher level of political and decision making positions. Except in some stances, this statement is applicable for Ghana as well. Women representation in politics has been continuously restricted within a particular percentage in Ghana. Infact, women representation never reached up to the required satisfactory level in comparison to their population ratio.

Area of Study: Ghana

It is important to explain why Africa and especially Ghana is important for such case study. First of all, the perception about Africa as 'Dark' or 'Black' continent has changed since last few decades. It is not a continent of disasters, tragedies, floods, hunger, malnutrition etc. These problems could be seen everywhere. Yes, there could be problems, but the problems cannot degrade one's abilities and positivity. It is a beautiful continent with rich and diverse culture. It has a good amount of natural and human resources.

Secondly, Africa as continent has marked its importance in all aspect of international politics and international relations. Africa as a continent is also important for the scholars and experts of international politics and or international relations. Infact, scholars and experts of such fields must know at least something about a continent having more than fifty four countries.

Thirdly, after the establishment of European Union, countries of Asian continent are still thinking of forming an Asian Union, but people in Africa have already formed African Union. Therefore, it is 'the continent of future'.

In the case of Ghana, first of all it is important to remember that Ghana shares the same colonial legacy like many other African, Asian and Latin American countries. The historical importance and the results of colonial rule in terms of gold cost, slave trade and later the development of a peripheral economy makes Ghana a unique country in Africa.

Secondly, like in other colonies, the colonial powers also destroyed the traditional institutions in Ghana. With the spread of education and Christian religion they influenced the entire traditional African religion and other traditional institutions. As a result, today one could see a mixture of both (traditional and modern institutionalizations) in Ghana.

Thirdly, Ghana has some unique features. Ghana received independence during the 'decade of independence'. We should always remember that at the time of independence Ghana's economy was much better than the economy of many other African and Asian countries.

Last but not the least, it was among the few African countries (at the time of independence) where women were encouraged and as a result women representation appeared in the parliament under the First Republic spearheaded by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.

Women Representation in Politics of Ghana

It should be noted that the representation of women in the entire continent of Africa is not same. In this regard it is important to highlight the fact that in October 2003 a tiny East African country of Rwanda elected thirty nine women to its eighty members Chamber of Deputies. Overnight Rwanda replaced Sweden as the country with the highest percentage (48.8 percent) of women in its national legislature. South Africa and Mozambique paved the way with elections in 1994 that saw significant numbers of women (25 percent) elected to their respective parliaments. In 2004 elections both countries achieved a better than 32 percent representation of women in their national legislatures. In early 2005 three other African countries (Seychelles, Namibia, and Uganda) had women in at least 24 percent of seats in their lower or single houses of parliaments.¹ Additionally, in mid 2005, Mozambique having 35 percent women in its national assembly had one of the highest percent of women in parliament with ranking second in Africa and ninth in the world.²

However, the women representation in the parliament of Ghana was around 11 percent for the same period. Infact, against the expectations, women representation in parliament never crossed 11 percent from year 1995 to 2014 in Ghana. In the year 2017 with an improvement it was estimated 12.7 percent.³ Actually, women representation was expected to be more from a country like Ghana because of various reasons.

The most important reason is that newly independent Ghana was considered as a black star of Africa having a sound economy and few women appointed in the first parliament. But further, women representation in Ghana was continuously estimated low in comparison to their male counterparts. The possible reason may be that women were excluded from political and decision-making positions due to many internal or external reasons. This could be because of women's own negligence like the case of Ghanaian market women. The Ghanaian market women having considerable wealth hardly participated in the post-independent Ghanaian state.⁴

Now let us discuss women representation in pre-independent and independent Ghana with the help of available data.

Women in Politics: Pre-Independence

Women have played key roles in the political development of their respective societies in Ghana. Here it is important to talk about the traditional arrangements of some of the societies in Ghana. In pre-colonial Africa among the 'Ewe' society of Ghana an elected 'Queen Mother', like male chiefs, had a council of elderly women as advisers and a linguist to speak for her. The queen mother was so powerful that the women could only speak to the council of male elders through her. It means she was the representative of women. Additionally, women (especially from powerful lineages) also had a representative who could seek to influence male councils.⁵

In the pre-colonial 'Asante' state structure, the only political office open to women was of the 'ohemaa' (queen mother). She was considered as co-ruler with the king in all state affairs. Although, writers such as Agnes Aidoo pointed out that the queen mother's position should not be regarded as a general index to female political activity. The very existence of the queen mother at the highest level of state organization signifies the perceived complementary power as both male and female. The unique quality of the queen mother was her role as the Kings' Counsel. The queen mother's main attribute is the moral qualities of knowledge, wisdom, compassion, emotions and all that pertains to her as a woman and are not bestowed by other male officials.⁶ But, one should not forget that many of such indicated qualities are same which the feminist make a critique of while defining gender division and discrimination.

While showing the importance of women an Asante proverb describes - it's a woman who gave birth to a man, it is woman who gave birth to a chief. In other words it is the women who gave birth to the king ('*Obaa na owoo ohene*').⁷ Meanwhile, in the case of 'Akan' in Ghana, the 'Ohemaa' (female ruler) occupied the senior of two stools, a visible repository of political authority. She advised the chief and had jurisdiction over domestic matters and those of the royal family. So, the position of women as female rulers or royal women in traditional Akan society of Ghana seems strong.

In 1820, when Joseph Dupuis visited Kumase during the height of Asante state, the Asante people had experienced a recent palace coup of 1818-1819 which was engineered by royal women.⁸ There are many examples where we can see women participating in state affairs and their involvement in the societies. But, it is also a reality that there were no ordinary women in power, or if there were some, then they were very few.

If we talk of women in politics before 1960s or in anti colonial struggle it is very important to name 'Yaa Asantewa' of Ghana (1840-1921). She organized and led the struggle for freedom of the Ashante state against the British colonial power. Yaa Asantewaa was a member of the important royal clan (Asona) of Edweso. Therefore, in 1887, when the female stool of Edweso became vacant, she was appointed as Edwesohemaa. Indeed, during the entire second half of the nineteenth century, when the Britishers were struggling to colonize the area, women were practically in charge of the Ashante political scene. The British determination to procure the Golden Stool resulted in the war of 1900. Therefore, in 1900 Yaa Asantewa inspired the indomitable Asante to take up arms in defense of their sovereignty. This was at a time when the ruler of Asante had been abducted together with members of his family and advisors, and was sent into forced exile.⁹

At that crucial moment of national crises Yaa Asantewaa took charge, encouraged people and said, "*How can proud and brave people like the Asante sit back and look while the white men took away their king and chiefs and humiliated them with a demand for the Golden Stool. The Golden Stool only means money to the white men, and they have searched and dug everywhere for it. I shall even not pay one predwan [pound 8.2] to the governor.*"¹⁰ These words are not just words of anger but also the words of revolt by a great women of Ghana.

She was not just symbolic head, but she also fought very bravely. Although finally she was defeated, but the gender consideration certainly colored the proceedings and the consequences of the Yaa Asantewaa war and the defeat was blamed on male cowardice. Some male elders of the Afranie lineage in Edweso have tried retroactively to revise this gender script of the 1900 war and they claim that Yaa Asantewaa was a man in female disguise (mask).¹¹ She may be considered as an anti-colonial guerilla fighter, African feminist, Ghanaian heroine, Asante nationalist par excellence and a role model for black women everywhere.¹²

There are various examples of women participation from other African and Asian countries as well.¹³ Infact, the struggle of Yaa Asantewaa can also be compared with the struggle of an Indian royal women, the queen of Jhansi Laxmi Bai. She played an important role in the revolt of 1857 against the Britishers (when they tried to capture her state). Therefore, in this regard 19th century is as important in Ghananian history as in Indian history in terms of women representation. But, in both of these cases, identifying such women as powerful male or comparing them with males is not justified. It is a question of women identity. It reflects the male dominant ideology which considers women as inferior and symbolizes extraordinary women as male.

These are some of the extraordinary and exceptional examples. But, in case of the colonial Africa and even Ghana, the colonial period was characterized by degrading the power and authority of women (with the exception of some urban women). Even the colonial officials accepted western gender stereotypes. Women were assigned domestic domain and economic and political matters were left for men. As a result of this, major opportunities flourished for men, while women's economic and political rights were diminished. In addition to this, colonial officials ignored potential female candidates for chief-ships, scholarships and other benefits. Many female institutions were destroyed, often more out of ignorance than malice. Similar reductions in female political power occurred all over Africa during the colonial period.¹⁴

Earlier the political power was fairly diffusive, divided as it was among priests, elders, male and female heads representing the lineage groupings. But during the colonial era the political role of women was undermined.¹⁵ There were various reasons responsible for women's low representation and backwardness during the colonial era. Here we can take one example of colonial education system, which influenced women in a more negative way. Most interestingly, the early colonial governments put very little efforts for public education especially for girls.¹⁶ Infact, the missionaries established formal schools mainly for the education of boys in order to assist them in obtaining formal sector jobs. There were very few schools established for girls, which focused on domestic chores, such as sewing or cooking etc. Basically, the western domestic value of housewife roles was taught in these schools. Such instructions promoted the belief in Ghanaians that girls would eventually become housewives, so there is no reason for them to attend academically oriented schools. This colonial implementation of education disadvantaged women a lot.¹⁷ Therefore, during the colonial Ghana, the education and other institutions were gender biased, which had a negative impact on the political representation and development of women.

Infact, scholars like Leacock, Rodney and Boserup have asserted that colonialism resulted in the worsening of the status of women in comparison to that of men.¹⁸ They even argued that women's rights to productive resources were seriously affected under colonialism as colonial governments introduced new legal systems, which were harmful to the colonized people as a whole and to the women in particular. Under this system market features of land tenure and property ownership were introduced to facilitate the governing of the colonized people. Nationalist movements drew initially from the educated, urbanized World War II veterans and from the wage-earners population, most of whom were men. As mobilization extended in the 1950s, African women became active participants, both in protests activity and in guerrilla movements. African nationalist leaders of other countries such as Modiko Keita of Mali and Sekou Toure of Guinea publicly praised women's participation in

militant action.¹⁹ In case of Ghana, women were also actively involved in the nationalist struggle, providing financial support and organizing trade boycotts in the country.²⁰

Therefore, in the pre-independent Ghana, there was a mixed response of women in the political sphere. In the pre-colonial Ghana, women were politically visible, whereas during the colonial era, the participation of women in politics is not clearly visible. If there were some, then they may have been excluded from the historical writings. This is not just the case of Ghana but in many other countries also the historical writings are approximately gender biased.

Women in Politics: Post-Independence

It seems that since independence, women have been excluded from most of the important political positions in African states. Africa's male political leaders rarely speak out against the culture of male dominance, most of them believe that gender arrangements are 'natural' or 'traditional' and must not be changed. A very good example is Daniel A. Moi (President of Kenya) who exemplified this view, when Kenyan women at the International Conference on Women in Nairobi (1985) recommended that women should be given more equitable representation in parliament. But, Daniel A. Moi responded that, "God made man the head of the family and challenging that is tantamount to criticizing god."²¹

It is very important to discuss here that it was not the case of Ghana. Fortunately, under the First Republic and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the potential of women was given a boost. In the first republic few women were appointed in the parliament. Nkrumah accepted the importance of women, made his vision clear and emphasized that in all spheres of life, Ghanaian woman must make their presence felt.²² To centralize voluntary associations and subordinate them to the ruling, Nkrumah replaced the 'Federation of Ghana Women' (FGW) with the 'National Council of Ghana Women' (NCGW). Political parties following Nkrumah have also had women's party wings. But, some scholars feel that they were like on paper organizations during election.²³

The successive constitutions since independence have provided for the formal equality of men and women and have given protection against discrimination to all. The suspended 1979 constitution of the Third Republic stated in its directive principles of state policy that - the government shall ensure by legislation that every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations and opportunities before the law. The constitution further provided that where assistance, special care and facilities necessary for the maintenance, safety and development of women as mothers were provided by the state, they should be available to all mothers without discrimination. It also provided that no spouse was to be deprived of a reasonable provision out of the estate of a spouse, whether the estate was testate or intestate.²⁴

The 1992 constitution also makes similar provisions. For example, Article 17, Sections (1) and (2) of the 1992 constitution states in part that, "All persons shall be equal before the law and a person shall not be discriminated against on ground of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status."²⁵ All post-independence constitutions of Ghana have equality and freedom from discrimination enshrined in them. Article 21 Section (1) of the 1992 Constitution states that, "All persons shall have the right to - (a) freedom of speech and expression... (b) freedom of thought, conscience and belief, which shall include academic freedom;... (c) freedom to practise any religion... (d) freedom of assembly including freedom to take part in processions and demonstrations... (e) freedom of association... (f) information, subject to such qualifications and laws as are necessary in a democratic society;... (g) freedom of movement which means the right to move freely in Ghana..."²⁶ These provisions have been strengthened by the 'Provisional National Defence Council' (PNDC) Law on Intestate Succession.²⁷ But still, one could hardly find powerful role or equal representation of women in politics for a long time in Ghana. Though women have the chance to participate in politics but they do not play an effective and direct role in it.

Apart from constitution another mechanism working for the cause of women was various women's organizations. Some of these organizations were formed during the latter stages of the nationalist movement and some in the early years of independence. In 1960, important organizations (the Ghana Federation of Women and the All African Women's League) were merged to form the National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW), which subsequently became the women's wing of the ruling Convention People's Party (CPP). Branches of the NCGW were established in all the regions of the country to facilitate effective mobilization of women. As a result of this, the NCGW lost its autonomy and its leaders were appointed from the CPP Central Committee. Other wings of the party (i.e. the Trades Union Congress; the young Pioneers) had more autonomy and greater access to resources than the NCGW. Infact, Both Pre and post-independence mobilization of women in Ghana has mainly addressed the needs of urban women. The major activities of the Council were setting up day care centre in a few big towns and organizing party rallies. However, the NCGW did consistently pressure the government to resolve the growing problem of parallel and diametrically opposed traditional and ordinance marriage systems.²⁸

Other policies of the CPP government led to increase women's access to education and employment, particularly with the expansion of school facilities, the introduction of compulsory primary education and the removal of overtly discriminatory employment practices. Infact, the appointment of some women as ministers, members of parliament, district commissioners and councilors may have hastened the promulgation of laws in the interests of women under the CPP government.²⁹

Simultaneously, the active involvement of few women in political movements (like the June 4th Movement and the New Democratic Movement) created the necessary momentum for mobilizing women. Three prominent organizations emerged during this period. The Federation of Ghanaian Women (FEGAWO), the 31st December Women's Movement (31st DWM) were formed in 1982, and the All Women's Association of Ghana (AWAG) in 1984. All three organizations had similar agendas, i.e. to improve the overall situation of women and to facilitate women's active participation in political process. Their major areas of activity were on political education, literacy campaigns, economic ventures, social services and other educational programmes.

These organisations were all initially affiliated to the 'Provisional National Defence Council' (PNDC), the then ruling government. Both FEGAWO and AWAG were sponsored by a PNDC female member, while the President of 31st DWM, Mrs. Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings was the wife of the PNDC chairman (President of Ghana's Fourth Republic). Attempts to merge FEGAWO and the 31st DWM failed because of political differences between the two, with the former adopting a more autonomous position than the later. Since FEGAWO (at least up to 1988), was autonomous and more critical of government, therefore had greater involvement in operational activities.

There are various other organizations which are committed for women in Ghana. For example 'African Women Lawyers Association' (AWLA)³⁰ 'International Federation of Women Lawyers' (FIDA) etc.³¹

In Ghana Jerry Rawlings came to power through a military takeover and headed up a populist government under the 'Provisional National Defence Council' (PNDC) from 1981 to 2000. The PNDC reformed laws affecting women, including inheritance law and the banning of degrading widowhood rites etc. During this the national machinery charged with coordinating women's activities and the 'National Council for Women and Development' (NCWD) was active in promoting such legislations. However, during these years, women's movement in Ghana was constrained by the government both in terms of growth, vitality, width of its agenda and capacity to bring about major changes in the status of women. It was also tried to include the entire women's movement within the PNDC by creating the 31st DWM in 1982 as one of its 'revolutionary organizations'. But, with this the regime crippled the women's movement and limited it to publicizing and promoting government policies. Therefore, some scholars like Tsikata feel that the relationship between women's group and the regime has been maintained at the expense of the women's struggle. While doing so the women's issues have been put on hold or received very casual attention. The close ties between the 31st DWM and the government ruling party have basically kept the organization from exerting pressure on the government to adopt policies that would promote the welfare and interests of women. As 31st DWM absorbed many independent women's organizations at the grass roots level, women were left with quiet little representation.³²

But, still women are active through some of these women organisations, which are contributing a lot to increase women's political participation. Today, even after the above critique, 31st DWM is still an important and a large organization with more than 2.5 million members of all social sections. The organization is dedicated to the empowerment and liberation of the Ghanaian woman. The movement has made every effort to achieve its objectives, by addressing the concerns of women and responding to their needs.³³ The founder of 31st DWM, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings has been instrumental in lobbying for legislation and in bringing about changes in government policies that defend their interests. According to her, "*It was clear that there was a problem with women in the country not because Ghanaian women did not know their rights, but they were just not organized into any serious group or in any formidable way that could make them actually stand up to the test.*"³⁴

Here it is very important that the 31st DWM and some other organizations have encouraged women to participate in daily political events. It is assumed that these events will help as a primary level exercise of learning for women. Therefore, encouraging women's political participation can also be considered as an important effort to increase women in politics. In this regard it is relevant to mention the role of 31st DWM in local government in Ghana. Women were encouraged in local government and according to Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, "*As soon as the district assembly concept was launched. I went to the ministry of local government and collected the data and we called meeting of all the regional organizers. I thought that this was the first opportunity to enter the lowest level to make a change and i went from district to district, from area to area. What we were telling them was that you live in your communities, you know how many miles you have to walk to fetch your water, you know where your children go to school, so you must find someone who lives here and feels that pinch and would make a change to bring the water to your doorstep.*"³⁵

In totality, the above organizations managed to mobilize women. There is even some evidence of women voting for the interests of their specific occupational interests, such as women traders, bread bakers, butchers, and fishmongers in Ghana.³⁶ But, women's low representation in politics suggests that a lot is required to be done. Infact, there is a need to increase women representation from the bottom or grassroots and convert them in participatory and actual equality. But, while doing so, male dominated culture seems to be a barrier which leads to minute representation of women. Women activists play pluralist politics but often lose pluralist political games being late joiners or inferiors.

In the context of 'modern' politics in Ghana, women have a low representation at all levels. Some legislative changes have been brought about through the lobbying of women's organizations. Most women's organizations, and notably the 31st DWM, which has now become the dominant women's organization, are closely tied to the then ruling party and government (as already said). In the first, second and third republics, some women held political office at national and local levels. Under the first republic special provisions were made for the election of women candidates to the national assembly, guaranteeing them a certain number of seats. The '*Representation of the People (Women Members) Act of 1959*' (Act no.72) has provided for the election of ten women to parliament. With the implementation of this act, women came to represent 10 percent of the 104 member's general assembly. Even when Nkrumah declared Ghana a one-party state in 1964, women representatives were still voted into the assembly. If we look back in 1965, there were 19 women representatives.³⁷

On the whole, women have been under-represented in the post-Independent democratic governments. In 1969, two out of 140 MPs were women and in 1979 the figure increased to 5 out of 140. Under-representation at the local level was just as pronounced. Few women were found in the city, district or town councils set up under local government legislation. Infact, no women chairpersons was found and in some council (out of up to 18 total members) there was little representation of women (more than two). In many cases, there were no women councilors at all. The village and town development committees also had low level of female participation.³⁸

In the contemporary period, various political concessions have been made in the interests of women, but past governments had failed to enact or implement them. The main actions were the laws on intestacy, succession and on the registration of customary marriages and divorce. Additionally, the government ratified the '*UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*'. Many of such achievements were due to the combined efforts of the NCWD, the 31st DWM and few high female figures in the government. However, failure to set up effective structures for implementation of these laws has limited their impact on the lives of ordinary Ghanaian women. Other major political changes which may have had significance for women are the de-centralization programmes and the district assembly elections (1988/89), the introduction of a new multiparty constitution, and the contemporary presidential and national assembly elections building up to the inauguration of the fourth republic in early 1993.

Infact, the district assembly elections held in Ghana in 1988/89 were the first stage of a wider democratization process which culminated in the presidential and national assembly elections in late 1992 and the inauguration of the fourth republic in January 1993. This process of democratization at local level was not new, as there is a long history of attempts to establish and reform local government. The district assembly elections involved the election of two thirds of the representatives to the assemblies in 110 districts nationally, with the remaining one third of seats being appointees of the ruling PNDC. The elections were conducted on a non-partisan basis and were highly managed by the government. However, voter turnout was high in comparison with previous elections at local level. The official figures of the voter's turnout were estimated 59 per cent and 89 percent respectively for the two rounds. Although turnout was higher in rural areas. Ayee has noted that the turnout of women voters was high, and that 112 women were elected as assembly members as opposed to 17 during the 1978 elections. This is clearly a major advancement for women's representation at local level. Still it is not know what proportion of local representatives are women, nor what is the geographical distribution of the women representatives.³⁹

Infact, the participation of women in the democratization process is also very important. The double role women play in society as wage earners and as mothers hinders their active participation in the democratization process. The traditional roles of women as child bearers, housekeepers, and managers of the home combined with income-generating activities, leave them little time to participate actively in the political fields. Women traditionally have been discouraged from taking major decisions affecting the family through socialization process. The men as the head of the family have been responsible for taking the major decision affecting the family.⁴⁰

As discussed above, the '*democratisation process*' at national level began with a referendum on a '*new multi-party Constitution*' in April 1992, helped to alter the situations and with this women got more chance to participate in politics. This change was also somehow an effort of empowered women and women based organizations, as they were actively working for women empowerment and to increase women's political participation.

The data in table 2.1 indicates that in 1996 parliamentary elections, 59 women participated and 19 were elected. But, in 2000 parliamentary elections, 102 women contested and 18 were elected. It shows that although women's political participation has been increased in terms of contesting elections, but still the number of women elected is very low. In 1996 the highest number of women contested election were from Greater Accra (10 women) and Ashanti regions (10 women) and the highest number of females were elected from Central (4 women) and Great Accra regions (4 women). In 2000 the highest number of women contested election were from Greater Accra (20 women) and Ashanti regions (17 women). But, the highest number of females elected from western region (4 women). Therefore, there are differences in the regional representation of women. There are some regions from where fewer women are contesting elections. But, still the number of women contestants has increased in the election of 2000 (in comparison to the election of 1996). In 1996, 59 women contested elections whereas in 2000 the number reached 102.

Table: 1.1
Women's Participation and Performance in
Parliamentary Elections, 1996 and 2000 (Ghana)

Reg	Dist.	Constituency	Women in 1996 Parliamentary Elections			Women in 2000 Parliamentary Elections		
			Contested	Elected	% Elected	Contested	Elected	% Elected
1	13	19	7	1	14.3	9	4	44.44
2	12	17	8	4	50	12	2	33.33
3	10	22	10	4	40	20	2	10
4	12	19	4	0	0	8	1	12.5
5	15	26	7	1	13.3	9	0	0
6	21	33	10	2	20	17	2	11.77
7	13	21	5	3	60	6	2	33.3
8	13	23	3	2	66.7	7	1	14.28
9	6	--	4	1	25	10	1	10
10	5	8	1	1	100	4	1	25
total	120	200	59	19	32.2	102	18	17.2

[Note: Different Regions 1 = West, 2 = Central, 3 = Greater Accra, 4 = Volta, 5 = Eastern, 6 = Ashanti, 7 = Brong Ahofo, 8 = Northern, 9 = Upper East, 10 = Upper West].
Source: United Nations, "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 18 April 2005, CEDAW/C/GHA/3-5, p.28 ; Citing Research and Monitoring Department, National Electoral Commission, 2003.

The Table: 2.2, shows that the women's role in decision making positions is still very low. There were only 10 percent women as Cabinet Ministers, 6.1 percent Ministers of State, 16.1 percent Deputy Ministers, 20 percent Deputy Regional Ministers, 10 percent Members of Parliament, 9 percent Ambassadors, 18 percent Chief Directors of Ministries, 6 percent District Chief Executives, 18 percent Heads of Police Forces, 20 percent Justices of the Supreme Court. It is also important to note that there were no women Heads of Armed Forces and Regional Ministers. It seems that the power structure is still pyramidal with women at the bottom, although their numbers in these decision making positions is slowly increasing.

Table: 1.2
Appointments to Key Positions in Ghana

Sector	Total	Female	%	Male	%
Cabinet Ministers	20	2	10	18	90
Ministers of State	33	2	6.1	31	93.9
Deputy Ministers	31	5	16.1	26	83.9
Regional Ministers	10	0	0	10	100
Deputy Regional Ministers	5	1	20	4	80
Council of State	24	4	17	20	83
Members of Parliament	200	19	10	181	90
Ambassadors	45	4	9	41	91
Chief Directors of Ministries	11	2	18	9	82

District Chief Executives	110	7	6	103	94
Regional Coordinating Directors	10	0	0	10	100
District Assembly Appointees	1843	655	35.5	1188	64.5
Heads of Armed Forces	4	0	0	4	100
Heads of Police Forces	11	2	18	9	82
Heads of Leading Banking Institutions	15	2	13	13	87
Supreme Court Justices	10	2	20	8	80

Source: United Nations, "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women," Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 18 April 2005, CEDAW/C/GHA/3-5, p.30; Citing Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, 2003.

According to the table 2.3, in 1954 women received right to vote and right to stand for elections in Ghana. The first woman was appointed to parliament in 1960. In 1995, 10% of the members of legislative bodies were women and the figure increased and reached around 11% in 1999. In the year 2000 and 2003, 9.0% (as % of total) seats were held by women in the parliament. It was estimated 10.9% (an increase of 1.9 percent) for the year 2005. But, in 2009 even with the established quota systems for women the number has decreased and is estimated only 8 percent (decrease of 2.9 percent). Whereas, according to the Human Development Report of 2013, women percentage in parliament was estimated 8.3 percent (increase of 0.3 percent). Recently, according to the data (up to January 2014) of Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN women (Women in Politics 2014) Ghana ranked 113 with 10.9 percent women in the parliament. In 2017 women representation in parliament was estimated 12.7 (according to Human Development Report 2018), a good increase after 2016, which reflects that women representation in Ghana has finally started improving.

Table: 2.3
Data on Women in Politics in Ghana

1.	Women Received Right To vote	1954	
2.	Women Received Right To stand for election	1954	
3.	First Women Elected or Appointed	1960	
4.	Seats in Parliament Held by Women (% of Total)	1995	10
		1999	11
		2000	09
		2003	09
		2005	10.9
		2009	08 g
		2012	8.3
		2014	10.9
		2015	10.9
		2017	12.7
5.	Women in Govt. at Ministerial Level (% of total)	2000	8.6
		2005	11.8
		2009	16
6.	Year a woman became Presiding Officer of parliament or of one of its houses or the first time	2009	

(Note: g refers to the Countries with established quota systems for women).

Source: See *Human Development Report 2000*, p.167; *Human Development Report 2003*, p.205; *Human Development Report 2005*, p.318; *Human Development Report 2006*, p.382; *Human Development Report 2009*, p.188; *Human Development Report 2013*, p. 158; *Human Development Report 2016*, p.216; *Human Development Report 2018*, p.40.

It is very important to discuss here, why even after implementing quota, women's number in parliament has decreased? Is it an indication that women are less interested in joining politics? Or they are not given equal opportunities to contest? Are they less popular or less in demand as a choice to parliament? There could be many such questions. But, there could be many answers as well. Like - May be because of male dominance, lack of political awareness, family atmosphere, traditional or societal restrictions, non-availability of resources etc. It is a little more difficult to answer, but one thing is for sure, that it might have happened because of combination of various above mentioned factors.

On the other hand, it seems that such demands followed by an established quota system for women, has increased the percentage of women in government at ministerial level. Infact, the percentage of women in government at ministerial level is increasing in a fantastic way. As shown in the table 2.3 it was estimated 8.6 percent

in the year 2000. With an increase of 3.2 percent it was estimated 11.8 percent in 2005. It further increased and reached at 16 percent in 2009, with an increase of 4.2 percent. This increase is really appreciable. It is another important issue that in 2009, even though the number of women parliamentarians has decreased, but still their number in government at ministerial level has increased. Is it only the influence of quota arrangement? Is it a sign of changing male dominating behavior? Is it an indication of women awareness? Is it the influence of women organizations dedicated for women empowerment? Well, it seems that it is surely the mixed influence of various such factors.

Now one may also ask why to talk about women political participation? Well, it is an assumption that there are a set of issues or interests that may be considered women's issues or interests, and once in office, women will seek to act upon these issues.⁴¹ Infact, when women achieve an equal share of political power, many things besides politics will be changed profoundly. In this respect, women's increasing political participation is both a source and a signal of social change. To understand the status of women in the society, an examination of their political status is necessary. Though the political status is interlinked with the socio-economic status, it has the capacity to influence the transformation of the socio-economic system.⁴² It seems that Dr. Maria Nzomo has rightly said, "*Only if women are well represented in the political and legislative bodies, they can influence the legal changes necessary for their empowerment on such key issues as property rights, inheritance, marriage and divorce, maintenance and custody of children etc., and their effective implementation.*"⁴³

In the case of Ghana, no law bar women from participating in politics or in other area of economic and social life. Unfortunately, the cultural perception of women (as inferior in comparison to men) has been a major hindrance to women's participation in politics and public life. In approximately all ethnic groups in Ghana, women are not considered equal to men. Child marriage, Polygamy, widow inheritance, poverty, illiteracy etc. all confirms the inferior status of women. Due to this notion, no consistent change had been achieved in women's participation or representation in politics.⁴⁴ This is infact true even in the present political environment in Ghana.

An Assessment and Conclusion

According to Jean O'Barr, "a survey of African women in politics indicated that their participation pattern has always been pyramidal, with the vast majority of women at the bottom, while only a few are able to penetrate the higher levels of power and central decision making. So, in most African countries women participate only marginally at the highest levels of decision-making."⁴⁵

In Ghana, both women and men have equal status under the law. All Ghana constitutions since Independence have guaranteed women equality under the law. Similarly, all legislations are generally gender neutral. In spite of these constitutional and legal guarantees, women still play subservient roles to men. Infact, women's tremendous capacity to organize, lead, innovate, produce and reproduce human and material resources for society have not necessarily translated into gender equity. There are various problems, which affects women as a whole. Some of them are – poverty, illiteracy, socio-political structure, unemployment, workload, crime against women etc. According to Rose Francine Rogombe, "*women do participate in political life. But their participation cannot simply be evaluated on the basis of the number of women represented in a particular political structure, or those representing their governments in international fora. While women are represented at high levels, their powers are so restricted that the value of their contribution is not recognized.*"⁴⁶

This restriction and unrecognised contribution leads towards exclusion from important public and private domain. Even women are excluded from developmental process and planning many times. Marian A Tackie has rightly said that this exclusion has a negative impact on the issue concern, which will definitely lead towards the failure of the policy itself. According to Marian, "*It is being realised that most previous development efforts failed to take roots because women were ignored in Ghana. The majority of women have been excluded from participating actively in politics generally and in democratization process specifically.*"⁴⁷ She examined and also accepted that the data related to women are not good enough. Thus, she emphasised that, "*there is an urgent need to increase political education and empowerment of women to enhance their wider participation in decision making process and resource allocation.*"⁴⁸ Therefore, the beneficiaries should be an important part of the entire policy planning and implementation process.

A report on a seminar 'Women in leadership and decision-making', organised by the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) and United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), identified and highlighted the factors impending political participation and grassroots leadership of women as follows⁴⁹:

- (a) Social Factors: the nature of the social structure and culture, centralised political system, nature of politics in Ghana, lack of educational and economic resources.

(b) Other Factors: personal factors such as lack of self confidence, double role of women, perceived roles by women themselves, lack of solidarity and encouragement among women.

In the light of these problems, it's important to discuss about the quota system as a mechanism to increase women representation in politics. As already discussed above that the quota system has a mixed impact on women political participation in Ghana. But, it is very important that countries which have historically had the highest representation of women in their national legislatures (i.e. Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark with 45.3, 38.2, 37.5, and 36.9 percent women respectively in early 2005) used a 'Proportional Representation' (PR) electoral system and (with the exception of Finland) some form of voluntary, party-based quota, now or in the past. In some countries gender-based electoral quotas are meant to bring more women into politics. Although some consider quotas to be a form of discrimination and a violation of the principal of fairness, others view them as compensation for structural barriers that prevent fair competition. In 1994 Sweden's Social Democratic Party took a more dramatic and a revolutionary step of introducing the principle of '*every second on the list a women*' for its party list.⁵⁰ These examples indicates that the quota system has a positive impact on women representation in the said countries. But, if in other countries, the quota system is not working effectively, this means the problem lie in the planning and implementation of this system rather than the quota system per se. It also needs to be understood that different countries have different social, political, economic structure and human behavior. Therefore, such mechanisms should be carefully made and implemented in the context of the said factors.

There are many problems which may directly or indirectly restrict women. Therefore, these direct and indirect barriers required to be continuously eradicated from the path of women. It means corrections, improvements and efforts will go together to increase women representation in the politics of Ghana. There is an urgent need to initiate various policies and programmes with effective implementation.

Conclusion

It is true that women play a key role in family, society and state, as mothers, sisters, daughters, housewives, friends, politicians etc. The important role of women cannot be neglected in any such field. In Ghana, it seems that women have started thinking for themselves and their sisters and are committed for gender equality. In the past few years women are also given opportunities to enter higher level of decision making positions. For example recently President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo nominated Jean Adukwei Mensah as Chairperson of Ghana Electoral Commission. After Charlotte Osei (the first female occupant under the 1992 Republican Constitution), Mensah has become the second successive woman to hold the post.⁵¹

Additionally, the President Nana Addo also administered the oath to the Chief Justice Sophia Abena Bofo Akuffo. She became the second female Chief Justice and fourth most powerful official in Ghana's governance structure.⁵² Earlier Georgina Theodora Wood was the first woman chief justice in Ghana. Justice Mrs. Joyce Adeline Bamford-Addo, became the first women Speaker of the Parliament in 2009. These are some of the steps towards gender equality, which need to be appreciated. These steps will definitely lead towards the development of a non-discriminatory and non-exploitative society, which will help in increasing women's political participation and achieving gender equality.⁵³

'The Agenda 2030: Women in Power and Decision Making', which emanated from UN Women Agenda 2030, is the road map for 2030 in Ghana. It highlights that women must occupy 60 per cent of ministerial portfolios (especially Finance, Energy, Education and Health). The agenda also aims that 60 per cent of Parliamentary seats, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives post, and Unit Committee members needs to be secured by women. Additionally, the agenda targets a female President or Vice President by 2030.⁵⁴

In the end, we can argue, that success of a government can be measured by analyzing its fairness and attitude towards the distribution of resources and opportunities. If a government is discriminating its citizens on any basis or if it promotes inequality, it means the government is a tool of exploitation. This exploitation leads to disharmony and conflicts in the society. We have so many examples in history where such discriminations were prevalent. Even today these discriminations can be seen on the basis of caste, class, creed, color, ethnicity, sex etc. Infact, a democracy is a 'half democracy', if women, who constitute approximately half of the population, are not actively participating in democratic process and decision making or if they are not given equal opportunities to participate. Therefore, a development based upon discriminatory participation will also be not a 'real development'.⁵⁵ Keeping into mind, the increase of women representation in Ghananian Parliament, especially since 2016 and appointment of women in higher decision making positions, we can sincerely hope that Ghana would definitely move forward in achieving 'substantive democracy' and 'real development'.

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