

**SUBMISSION BY THE UNITED NATIONS ENTITY for EQUALITY & EMPOWERMENT of WOMEN
(UNWOMEN) TO
THE OFFICE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ON
THE UNVIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

In this brief, UN Women attempts to report on the progress made in Ghana towards the rights of children and girls as stipulated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international protocols.

1. Background

i. Scope of International Obligations

- The Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)
- The UN Commission on the Status of Women
- African Women's Decade (AWD) African Union Day of the Child
- The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs ;)
- International Women's Day Celebration

ii. Constitutional and Legal Framework

Ghana ratified the **Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** on 2nd February 1986 and has made progress in creating awareness on gender issues and the societal perception and concept for women and girls and development is changing. The Government has demonstrated its commitment to the tenets of the Convention by ensuring that the Constitution, new legislation and policies are consistent with CEDAW. Fundamentally, the Constitution of Ghana commits the country to the elimination of gender discrimination. It also provides the constitutional basis for gender mainstreaming and equality. The government of Ghana has continued to vigorously pursue institutional, administrative and legal reforms as well as formulated and implemented various policies to address issues of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

Amended Criminal Code Act of 1998 (Act 554) criminalizing harmful widowhood rites, ritual servitude and FGM; Children's Act (Act 560) including focus on the girl child; Human Trafficking Act; Disability Act; and the Domestic Violence Bill now in Parliament is expected to be passed this year. The Labour Law has been reviewed and the new law provides equal opportunity for training and working in the mining industry. It also for the first time criminalizes harassment at the work place.

iii. INSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The creation of a Cabinet-level Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) in 2001 was a demonstration of political will to address the problem of women's marginalization and raise the issues of women's rights and empowerment to a higher national level. The designation of MOWAC as a Central Management Agency (CMA) with Cabinet status provides it with a comparative advantage with the role and responsibility to monitor policy implementation and programmes in the sector areas, coordinate cross sector issues and evaluate the impact of sector policies on women and children. MOWAC brings together the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) and the Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC) under one coordinated national institutional framework to coordinate

national efforts in promoting and advancing the rights of women and children in Ghana. The laws governing NCWD and the GNCC have been repealed. The two entities now operate as decentralized departments of women and children under the Ministry, and thus derive their orientation and guiding principles of operation from MOWAC.

Furthermore, the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU): of the Ghana Police Service: to promote protection of women and children from domestic violence, abuse and neglect. The Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) is a constitutional body monitoring human rights, dealing with violations and educating the public on human rights; Also the establishment of Legal.

iv. POLICIES

Various policies have been formulated and are being implemented to redress social, economic or educational imbalance in the Ghanaian Society. Examples are a Gender and Children Policy 2004, Affirmative Action Policy 1998, Gender Policy in Agriculture, National Health Insurance Policy, Reproductive and Health Policy, Adolescent Reproductive Health Policy, Educational Reform Policy. The National Gender and Children Policy is currently being revised, considering the differences which exist between children and gender issues as well as emerging issues confronting gender equality and equity. The National Gender Policy will provide the broad operational strategies and institutional arrangements for achieving gender equity and ultimately gender equality. It is also guided by principles of human rights, human-centered sustainable development, partnership and accountability, amongst others.

2. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE GROUND

i. Cooperation with international human rights mechanism

Ghana was among the first nations in Africa to ratify CEDAW in 1986 and has made strides in advancing the cause for women.

ii. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

a. Non Discrimination

Women and Disability

Women with disabilities comprise a group whose rights are often violated: they are often subjected to neglect, discrimination, and even abuse, and they are often denied the right to an education. It is widely assumed that, among virtually all socio-economic groups in Ghana, there are families and communities who customarily conceal or otherwise deny the existence of the disabled among them, and thus the foremost challenge in implementing both national legislation and community-based action on disabilities must be first to locate the disabled and then to ensure access to rehabilitation services and inclusive programmes for those with disabilities.

Data on disabilities among Ghana's adults and children are limited and diffuse. In 2000, when a new National Disability Policy was being developed, it was estimated that 10 per cent of the population was disabled; at least half of whom (approximately 1 million) were women. A 1997 survey by the Ghana

National Commission on Children (GNCC) found that hearing, vision, speech, and limb impairment were the most prevalent disabilities among children. Not surprisingly, women with disabilities from poor homes and rural areas are the most at risk of discrimination and of lacking care and attention.

The passage of the Disability Act in 2006 has not resulted in enough concrete positive action in favour of children and others with disabilities. However, as in every culture, the true elimination of prejudice requires pro-active socialization and awareness-raising, even within families.

b. RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY AND SECURITY OF THE PERSON

Maternal and infant mortality

According to national data (DHS and GMHS), between 1990 and 2008, maternal mortality reduced from 740 to 451 deaths per 100,000 live births, although there are wide geographic disparities in maternal mortality. There are rural-urban disparities in health care services – 43 per cent of births in rural areas as opposed to 84 per cent of births in urban areas are likely to occur in a health facility. Modern contraceptive use also declined from 19 per cent in 2003 to 17 per cent in 2008, while there is a high unmet need for family planning (36%). There is also fragmented health information system and service delivery is poor. In 2009, Government spent 9.6 per cent of its budget on the health sector, out of which 94% was for the wage bill. Malnutrition in pregnant women resulting from poverty and ignorance also contributes heavily to high maternal mortality and constitutes a major challenge. Progress in reducing maternal death has overall been slow: Ghana's maternal mortality stands at 350 deaths per 100,000 live births, while the MDG target is 185 per 100,000. Other concerns include the inadequate reproductive health services and the lack of mental health services for adolescents and limited access by HIV/AIDS-infected children and mothers to antiretroviral medication.

Violence against women and girls

While it is not as common in Ghana as in some other African countries, female genital mutilation (FGM) is practiced among some ethnic groups in northern Ghana. About 9 to 15 per cent of Ghana's population belongs to groups who practice FGM, mostly concentrated in the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions (but also found in parts of the Brong Ahafo region and among migrants from the north who have relocated to southern Ghana). FGM is outlawed under both the 1992 Constitution and by amendment of the Criminal Offences Act of 2007. Existing legislation calls for sentences of three years for those found committing the practice. Some traditional leaders have banned the practice and in recent years a growing number of FGM practitioners in the Upper East and Upper West regions have been jailed.

c. RIGHT TO SOCIAL SECURITY AND ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING

Social security

Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) has been reviewed and we now have in place the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS2). Vulnerability and exclusion is one of the key themes, and social protection programmes are within the framework of this document. Furthermore gender perspectives have been incorporated into all the themes. Ghana has reached the HIPC completion point and savings from the HIPC initiative has been directed at education and training, health, potable water, sanitation and other facilities – all critical areas for child development and empowerment of the vulnerable. Women Development Fund, a micro credit initiative for women was established with funds allocated

from the HIPC savings. Furthermore, the Government of Ghana has over the years put in place several social protection interventions to address inequity with various levels of successes. These include the National Health Insurance, the Livelihood against Poverty (LEAP).

3. ACHIEVEMENT, BEST-PRACTICES AND CONSTRAINTS

Ghana is recognized as a model of political stability, good governance and democratic openness. Ghanaians enjoy political rights, civil liberties and a free press. Ghana has started oil production and achieved the status of (lower) middle income country in 2010. Ghana is on track to achieve many of the Millennium Development Goals, especially the MDGs targets on poverty reduction, gender parity and access to education and safe drinking water. However, these averages mask stark disparities by location and among population groups (by gender, wealth quintile, level of education) which need to be addressed for Ghana to be able to achieve the MDGs with equity. Ghana has also made considerable efforts over the past years to involve children in the development and review of major policies.

d. Key Priorities, Initiatives and Commitments

MOWAC, in its Sector Medium Term Development Plan (2010-2013) has outlined some key interventions to address the respective gender issues earlier mentioned:

- Enhancing the human resource capacity of MOWAC to carry out its mandate;
- Enhancing the economic empowerment of women;
- Coordinating gender sensitivity in sector policies, plans, budgeting, resource allocation, business promotion, programmes and projects.
- Formulating policy, coordinating, executing and monitoring of programmes and activities relating to the welfare of women and children
- Embarking on outreach and sensitization programmes to ensure that gender equity and equality is mainstreamed in all sectors of the economy.
- Providing the requisite platform and mechanism to implement government's commitments expressed at international fora towards improving the status of women and children
- Collaborating with Development Partners (DPs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other relevant organizations/stakeholders to facilitate the integration of women and children issues into national development.
- Ensuring compliance with Ghana's International Obligations that relate to women and children.

4. Capacity building and technical assistance provided by UN WOMEN

UN Women and the government, through the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) have a shared objective of attaining equality, equity and social justice and enjoyment of rights by all citizenry, especially women and girls. Further assistance is provided through the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS), Ministry of Finance of Economic Planning (MoFEP) and the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) to incorporate gender concerns in national development processes.

UN Women is part of the Africa UNITE, a regional component of the United Nations Secretary General's Global UNITE Campaign on Violence Against women, launched in 2010 during the week of Africa Union Heads of State summit. As part of the efforts to end gender-based violence in African countries, an initiative under the theme 'Speak Out, Climb Up', has been planned to take place from 5 to 9 March

2012, to symbolically coincide with International Women's Day on 8 March, and will involve a series of activities and events. Ghana is being represented by Salamatu Musah, an award winning athlete.