



THE WOMEN'S MANIFESTO FOR GHANA



The Women's Manifesto for Ghana
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(Hosted by ABANTU for Development)

ISBN No: 9988-8212-8-x

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Design and Layout: The Design Workshop, Accra, Ghana.
Tel.: +233-21-229181
Printing: Combort Impressions, Accra, Ghana. Tel.: +233-21-240557

Published in Ghana
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Friedrich Egbert Stiftung (FES) funded the printing of this publication



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The Women's Manifesto for Ghana



PREFACE

A Political Document

The Women's Manifesto is a political document. It sets out critical issues of concern to women in Ghana and makes demands for addressing them.

The Manifesto is a direct result of concern about the insufficient attention given to critical issues affecting women. It is also a result of concern about the under-representation of women in politics, policy and decision-making levels and in public life in general. Given the challenges that women are confronted with, it is important to put in place mechanisms that would progressively draw attention to their needs and concerns and enable them to participate actively in public affairs.

The Manifesto therefore provides a platform of a common set of demands for the achievement of gender equality and equity and sustainable national development. It allows women to articulate their concerns in the 2004 Elections and beyond. Women are thereby empowered to use their votes as a bargaining tool and recruit others to do the same. The Manifesto provides female and male candidates with an agenda once they are elected to parliament and the District Assemblies. Finally, it would ensure political party accountability as they would ultimately be assessed on the basis of where they stand in relation to issues that concern women as outlined in the Women's Manifesto.

Initiated by ABANTU for Development, the Manifesto brings together various demands made by Ghanaian women over the years as part of their struggles for national development and women's rights. The process of developing and promoting the Manifesto also built upon the experiences of other countries in Africa that have embarked upon similar processes. These include Uganda, Botswana, Tanzania, South Africa, Zambia and Nigeria. Lessons drawn from those efforts pointed to the need to ensure:

- ◆ that the Manifesto is one of several interconnected efforts;
- ◆ that it is owned by a broad constituency of women;
- ◆ it is non-partisan;
- ◆ but takes positions on broad national issues, policies and the political system as a whole.

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Issues in Manifesto

The issues tackled in the Manifesto range from women's low participation in governance, their poor access to resources critical for making a living, their predominance among people living in poverty and women's health, particularly, the unacceptably high rates of maternal mortality. Other concerns in the manifesto are the harmful and discriminatory social practices against women often justified in the name of culture and violence against women. The special problems of disabled, widowed and aged women and single mothers are addressed as are the issues of insecurity, disruption and violence experienced by women in conflict situations. The media, the law and institutions mandated to tackle women's rights issues are assessed and demands made to reform them and improve their effectiveness.

Process to Ensure Broad Constituency

To ensure that a broad constituency participated in the drawing up of the Manifesto, a series of consultations with different groups were organised to seek their mandate and solicit their ideas and views on critical issues of concern to women. This took place from June to December 2003.

Among these were consultations with women's groups, NGOs and other civil society organisations from across the country; District Assemblywomen (180 in number) from the then 110 District Assemblies in the country; Media women and men and representatives of Political Parties. After these consultations, Drafting and Steering Committees were set up to draft and make decisions on the process of developing and promoting the Manifesto.

Information generated through the various consultations served as the basis for the production of a pre-draft Manifesto. From February 2004 to April 2004 three (3) meetings were held to draft the manifesto. In April-May 2004 the draft was used to organise broader regional consultations throughout the country for additional comments and suggestions about how the document could be improved and finalised for publication and wider dissemination. Further consultations were organised with different constituencies including the media, senior female executives in the various Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Parliamentarians in June and July, 2004.

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The processes involved in the production and dissemination of the Women's Manifesto has culminated in the formation of a broad coalition of NGOs and other civil society organisations. The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, as it has been named, is working collaboratively to promote the acceptance and use of the Manifesto by NGOs themselves, the government and its MDAs, political parties, constitutional bodies, the legislature, the judiciary and law enforcement agencies.

Themes of Manifesto

The Women's Manifesto is made up of a preamble and ten (10) sections on the following themes:

- ◆ Women's Economic Empowerment
- ◆ Women and Land
- ◆ Women, Social Policy and Social Development
- ◆ Women in Politics, Decision-making and Public Life
- ◆ Women, Human Rights and the Law
- ◆ Discriminatory Cultural Practices
- ◆ Women and Media
- ◆ Women, Conflict and Peace
- ◆ Women with Special Needs
- ◆ Institutions with a Mandate to promote Women's Rights

Each section begins with a gender analysis of the problem. Following the analysis is a section containing concrete demands on the government, political parties and MDAs meant to address the situation within a specified time-frame. In addition, there is an 11th section which is a call to action directed mainly at women and men who hope to use the Manifesto for their advocacy work. Given the broad consultations, the advocacy and lobbying strategy being adopted and the sheer commitment of individual men and women, women's NGOs and organisations such as the TUC, GNAT and the GRNA in the process of producing the Manifesto, there is a lot of optimism about its ability to contribute to the process of enhancing women's participation in public affairs in the country.

Preamble

We, women from the ten regions of Ghana, of diverse backgrounds, religions, occupations, ages, resource endowments, abilities and challenges,

Having participated in a series of meetings from June 2003 to July 2004 to deliberate on the situation of women in Ghana,

Concerned about the negative impacts of economic globalisation on Ghana and other African countries,

Unhappy about the continuing economic decline, rising levels of poverty, aid dependency and foreign domination of economic decision-making after two decades of structural adjustment programmes in Africa,

Horrified by the scourge of conflicts, wars, disease and famine across Africa and the West African sub-region in particular, and the growing threat of militarisation and intolerance the world over,

Appalled by the conditions of extreme poverty and hardship, deprivation and exclusion of the rural and urban poor, the majority of whom are women,

Alarmed by the unacceptably high incidence of maternal and infant mortality and deaths from illegal and unsafe abortions as a consequence of inadequacies in reproductive health rights, facilities and practices,

Dismayed by the inability of our health and social security systems to cope with the threat to life, life-expectancy levels, livelihoods and national development of the HIV/AIDs pandemic sweeping across Africa,

Aggrieved by undemocratic political cultures and processes and the fact that although women constitute more than 50% of the population and make fundamental contributions to society, their voices are not sufficiently heard,

Outraged by the continued monopoly of national decision making by some middle class men which undermines the development of an all-inclusive, parity democracy and just society promoting values of women's rights and citizenship,

Concerned by the failure of the Ghanaian State to honour its obligations under the 1992 Constitution, the Convention on the Elimination

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of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its Outcome Document (Beijing + 5) and other international instruments to promote gender equality, with the result that decades of efforts at achieving gender equality and equity have yielded very little,

Dissatisfied that women are over-burdened by the heavy responsibilities they bear in the face of economic crises and the retreat of the state from its social development mandate,

Believing that the solutions to our deep seated crises lie with women and men of Ghana and Africa, harnessing and utilising the resources at our disposal in an equitable manner,

Acknowledging the contributions of women the world over and the efforts of Ghanaian women and their organisations to improve their own lives and the development of their societies,

Aware that while we come from diverse backgrounds and are not a uniform group, all women in Ghana share the experience of gender inequalities in their different manifestations,

Confident that with organisation and fortitude we can make a difference to the situation of women, men, and children and achieve gender equality in all aspects of life,

Determined to support self-reliant national development initiatives as a basis for effective political and economic change in Ghana,

Convinced that a Women's Manifesto which provides a common platform for action is necessary for effective advocacy for gender equality and national development,

Rededicating ourselves to the struggle for a just, independent, democratic, peaceful and gender equitable society,

Hereby adopt this Women's Manifesto as an affirmation of our commitment to collective action and as an agenda of minimum demands for action on gender equality and equity in Ghana.

We call upon the government and its institutions, political parties and civil society to also commit to adopting and implementing the demands of this Manifesto.

1. Women's Economic Empowerment



Colonial Domination and Poor Post-Independence Policies

Years of colonial domination and poor economic policies since independence have made Ghana underdeveloped and poor. The economy continues to be in a state of almost permanent crises because of the dependence on cocoa and gold for export and the low levels of indus-

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trialisation and technological development. The periodic collapse of the prices of primary commodities such as cocoa and gold on the world market means that the strategy of relying on them for developing Ghana will not work.

A small local elite and foreign interests control the profits and benefits from local production to the detriment of the majority of the population in both urban and rural areas. Economic policies over the years have failed to change these characteristics of the economy. Also, policy-makers see the problem of the Ghanaian economy as merely how to maintain economic growth without changing how the benefits are distributed.

Those who control economic policy in Ghana ignore the development needs of the majority of the people even as they pay lip-service to poverty alleviation. The slogan that "the government alone cannot do it all" has become the excuse for not addressing critical social development needs of people. This attitude to government responsibility for social development is reflected in various economic policies – the imposition of flat consumption taxes such as VAT, the withdrawal of the government from economic activity, the provision of social services and changes in the patterns and levels of state expenditure.

Economic Growth through Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)

Since the 1980s, economic policy in Ghana has been dominated by the pursuit of economic growth through a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) also known locally as the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP), defined and controlled by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The ERP was made up of short-term economic stabilisation measures and longer-term market reforms and liberalisation of all the key sectors of the economy. Ghana's ERP achieved some measure of economic growth, infrastructural rehabilitation and some institutional reforms. However the reforms have been accompanied by labour retrenchment, decline in industrialisation, informalisation of work, removal of subsidies and the institution of user fees in basic services: water, electricity, education and health.

Thus after close to two decades of reforms in which various sectors of the economy have been extensively liberalised and subjected to market principles, there is widespread poverty and insecurity. Certain eco-

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logical zones and social groups such as women, children and the disabled have suffered particular forms of hardship. Women have suffered from labour retrenchments of themselves and their husbands, the removal of subsidies from agricultural inputs, the bias towards cocoa and export crop production, the neglect of the food crop sector and the removal of subsidies from social services for purposes of full-cost recovery. The expansion of the extractive sector activities, specifically surface mining and logging has resulted in environmental degradation and the loss of farmlands with adverse consequences for rural livelihoods.

The ERP failed to address poverty, create jobs, secure livelihoods and social security and improve human development. Instead, it has led to the retreat of the State from its social responsibilities. The over-dependence on foreign aid, capital and expertise has led to the loss of national initiative and capacity, the progressive loss of national sovereignty over economic decision-making and the erosion of government accountability to Ghanaian citizens. Civil society organisations have not been successful in their efforts to demand accountability from government.

HIPC Initiative and Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS)

The government's decision to join the HIPC initiative and the subsequent adoption of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) is an admission of the failure of SAP to address the deep-seated problems of the economy. However, instead of rethinking the SAP, the GPRS is continuing the approach of the ERP. Biases against women, under the SAP remain within the GPRS framework. In spite of the fact that women have been identified as one of the groups suffering disproportionately from poverty, the sectors where women are in the majority are not the priority areas and GPRS measures do not address gender issues systematically.

An Alternative Approach –Key Policy Issues

From the foregoing, it is clear that an alternative approach is needed to promote sustainable and equitable economic development for women and men. This new approach needs to recognise the importance of mobilising local productive resources, promoting and guaranteeing security in livelihoods, and upholding democratic principles.

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Economic policy must be based on equality in economic opportunities and rewards. Policy would need to start from the household level. That is where women perform unpaid labour. This unpaid labour is a critical factor in livelihoods. It involves repetitive and time consuming tasks such as collecting fuel wood, fetching water, childcare, sweeping, garbage disposal and cooking as well as the reproduction of social relations in the household and the community. Ghanaian women spend more than two times as much time on domestic work as men. The issue of housework is critical because it defines women's subordinate position in social relations and affects their work in the wider economy.

Policy must also address women's specific disadvantages in all sectors of the economy. In agriculture, while the majority of independent cash crop farmers are men, most women farmers grow food crops which do not have guaranteed prices or inputs. Women are also disadvantaged in access to land, labour, credit and agricultural technologies such as bullock ploughs, fertilizer and extension. Often, they also have more limited access to family labour and lack the resources to hire labour for their farming and other economic activities. In addition, their time constraints make it difficult for them to benefit from skills training, health programmes and other development activities.

In urban areas, men occupy the majority of positions in the shrinking public and private formal sector wage jobs, with a smaller proportion of them working in the private informal sector. Women are mostly found in the informal sector where they engage in trade and other service activities. Generally, incomes and conditions of work in the informal sector are far less secure and stable, relative to formal sector employment. Workers in the informal sector are usually not protected by labour laws and conventions and have no basic rights such as the minimum wage or health care.

In addition to their lower levels of involvement in wage work, women as a group occupy lower positions in the formal labour sector and therefore earn much less money than men in waged work. In the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) established since the Structural Adjustment Programme, some employment opportunities have been opened up for women. However, EPZs typically offer less rights and protection for their workers, especially the women, who often are in poor paying jobs.

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Even in the formal sector of the economy, with its better established norms of minimum labour rights and protections, women suffer disadvantages in spite of existing labour laws and Ghana's ratification of ILO Conventions on women. Equal work for equal pay, maternity protection and the right to combine domestic work with paid work are not always available for women workers. All these disadvantages heighten women's vulnerability especially under the changing labour conditions resulting from the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP).

Therefore we demand the following:

- 1.1. That government undertake a fundamental review of economic policies to promote the wellbeing and security of women and men and ensure a reversal of past economic policy failures.
- 1.2. That government take steps to reverse economic policies which discriminate against women and ensure their active involvement in economic decision-making at all levels.
- 1.3. That government reverse practices which have given control of national economic decision making to the international financial institutions and foreign governments and to ensure the full participation of citizens in economic policy making.
- 1.4. That government undertake a comprehensive review of the GPRS to ensure that its policies result in improved livelihood conditions of women and men.
- 1.5. That government promote policies, to reverse the trends of de-industrialisation and the informalisation of work which have been inimical to the well being of Ghanaian women and men.
- 1.6. That the government implement the provisions in the Beijing Platform for Action which relate to valuing and accounting for unpaid work in order to ensure that the disadvantages women suffer because they are disproportionately involved in unpaid labour are removed.
- 1.7. The government must ensure that budgets and appropriations take cognisance of the unequal impacts and

benefits to women and men in different social groups and occupations.

- 1.8. That government promote the economic rights of women by providing them with opportunities to improve their livelihoods. Such opportunities, which should specifically target poverty, should include access to the banking sector, land, technology and markets.
- 1.9. That government strengthen its agricultural policies particularly in the food crop sector to reverse decades of bias in favour of cash crop production.
- 1.10. That the government and relevant agencies work together to institute and implement measures to protect children from trafficking and onerous child labour which interferes with their development. Girls in particular need protection from excessive housework and should be treated equally with boys in the sharing of household responsibilities.
- 1.11. That the executive, the legislature, the Ministry of Employment and Manpower Development, the TUC, SSNIT and employers should ensure that social security arrangements are put in place to cover all working women and men in the formal and informal sectors and in rural and urban areas by the year 2015.
- 1.12. That the government should restructure the banking system to ensure that women benefit equally with men from mainstream loans and other financial and business assistance. Micro-credit schemes should become additional and not the main source for financing women's businesses.
- 1.13. That government institute and implement a policy of providing child care in all work-places both formal and informal in rural and urban areas and promotes the training and recruitment of both men and women as care givers. In this connection, pre-school education has to become an integral part of basic education.
- 1.14. That the executive, the legislature, the Ministry of Employment and Manpower Development, the TUC, SSNIT

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and employers should as a matter of urgency work together to pass and implement legislation to extend and enforce paid maternity leave of four months after child birth and flexible working hours for nursing to all women in Ghana.

- 1.15. That the executive, legislature, Ministry of Employment and Manpower Development, TUC, and employers take steps to institute and implement policies that will drastically reduce gender inequalities in economic opportunities and employment.
- 1.16. That the executive, the legislature, the judiciary and the Ministries of Employment and Manpower Development, Education, Food and Agriculture, Science and Technology and Health as well as the District Assemblies work together to create a safe and healthy environment for work particularly in the informal sector where occupational and environmental health are poor.
- 1.17. That the government ratify ILO Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for men and women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities, Convention 156 of 1981 and enacts a law to support the convention and ensure its adequate implementation.
- 1.18. That the government should establish local community guidance and counselling units and resource existing ones to provide career guidance and social services especially to young people.

2. Women and Land



Land Tenure, Administration System and Women's Rights

Land relations are critical for women's rights in Ghana. This is because of the centrality of land as a resource for the livelihoods of the majority of our population. Land is also an important source of food, water, fuel and medicinal plants. Those who control land and its resources also gain social and political power and authority. As such, women's unequal land rights affect their access to other resources and their economic, social and political status.

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There are constitutional provisions which protect women's land rights in Ghana. Article 35 (1) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, enjoins the State to promote the integration of all the peoples of Ghana and prohibit discrimination and prejudice on grounds of origin, circumstances of birth, ethnicity, gender, religion and other beliefs. The constitution also requires that the State guarantee the ownership of property and the right of inheritance of all (Article 36 (7)). However, the land tenure and administration system in Ghana faces serious problems, which undermine these constitutional guarantees.

Land problems include growing land scarcity, competition over land use and environmental and land degradation. There is general indiscipline in land markets, indeterminate boundaries of customarily held lands, a weak land administration system, and the lack of equity in land tenure systems. Additionally, legal pluralism, which is a legacy of colonial rule, and which has been characterised by the co-existence of British derived land interests and customary land tenure interests, has reduced women's secondary land interests.

There are also land tenure problems specific to different locations and conditions which require attention. These locations and conditions include rural, peri-urban and urban areas; Northern and Southern Ghana and patrilineal and matrilineal inheritance systems. Areas of the country where there are mining and logging activities and large projects such as commercial plantations and dams also have urgent problems of land tenure.

Policies under the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAPs) have resulted in a massive expansion of large-scale surface gold mining and an increase in the activities of small scale local miners. There is an increased interest in the acquisition of large tracts of land by locals and foreigners for commercial farming, industry and real estate. In urban areas, the expansion of private and state housing has created many problems in the buying and selling of land resulting in many land conflicts and litigation. These have exposed the inadequacies of the land administration system in Ghana and raised concerns about the ability of existing land tenure systems to promote development in Ghana.

There are different categories of land users who face problems of access and control. Women are an especially vulnerable group in this regard. As female family members and wives, women experience dis-

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crimatory customary practices. Particularly in agriculture, women's contributions are devalued. Their interests in family lands are limited by marital residence. They often are given land of poor quality and size. The clearing of land is customarily assigned to men. As this establishes the most important individual interest in land, it affords them the use and control of land. This has prevented the majority of women from securing control over virgin land belonging to their lineage.

Marriage and Land Rights

Marriage is probably the most important source of farming land for women because it is within this context that women work and live. The interests of spouses in each other's lineage land are quite well established and offer some measure of security of tenure. However, the interest in land acquired through marriage is inferior to that acquired through family membership.

In addition, access to a husband's land depends on marital residence, the continued existence of the marriage, the goodwill of the spouse and the size of land he is entitled to. A wife's duty to work on her husband's farm affects women's attempts at farming for themselves, and therefore their ability to use available land. Men do not have similar responsibility to their wives and therefore have more freedom to concentrate on their own farming.

In situations of marital conflict or divorce, the insecurity of a wife's interest in land belonging to her husband becomes quite clear. When such women return to their family compounds, they lose out on land they farmed and developed during the marriage. This is because customary law does not recognise marital property or non-monetary contributions to the acquisition of property during marriage. Even though widows might benefit from their children's inheritance, the fact that they cannot inherit property from their husbands increases their social vulnerability and poverty.

Parliament is required by the Constitution to enact legislation regulating the property rights of spouses. This is to ensure equal access to property acquired jointly in marriage and to ensure equitable distribution of such property at the dissolution of marriage (Articles 22 (2 and 3). However, twelve years after the adoption of the Constitution, this has not happened.

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Renting land for farming is an option. However, customary tenancies, which are mostly share cropping arrangements (abusa and abunu), have several disadvantages for tenants. Paying a third or half the produce as rent is too expensive. The fact that they are verbal arrangements can encourage disputes about their terms. Women tenants are particularly vulnerable because their relationships with landlords are often mediated through men who assume control over their lands and crops.

Land Tenure Reform

A land tenure reform programme, which is in its pilot phase, has been instituted to address the problems of land tenure and administration. The reforms date back to 1999, with the publication of a National Land Policy. Since 2000, a World Bank sponsored Land Administration Programme (LAP) has been instituted. The LAP seeks through a series of pilot programmes to demarcate, title and register the land interests of groups and individuals. As well, it aims to streamline, strengthen and decentralise land administration.

Concerns have been raised about the reforms. They could worsen the tenure uncertainties experienced by women, tenants, pastoralists and young people whose interests in land are already not very secure. Moreover, the LAP has not fully addressed the issues affecting women's access to land. The weaknesses of the consultative processes of the LAP have further marginalised disadvantaged groups. To change women's situation, a fundamental transformation in customary tenure systems and land administration practices which goes beyond the LAP is necessary.

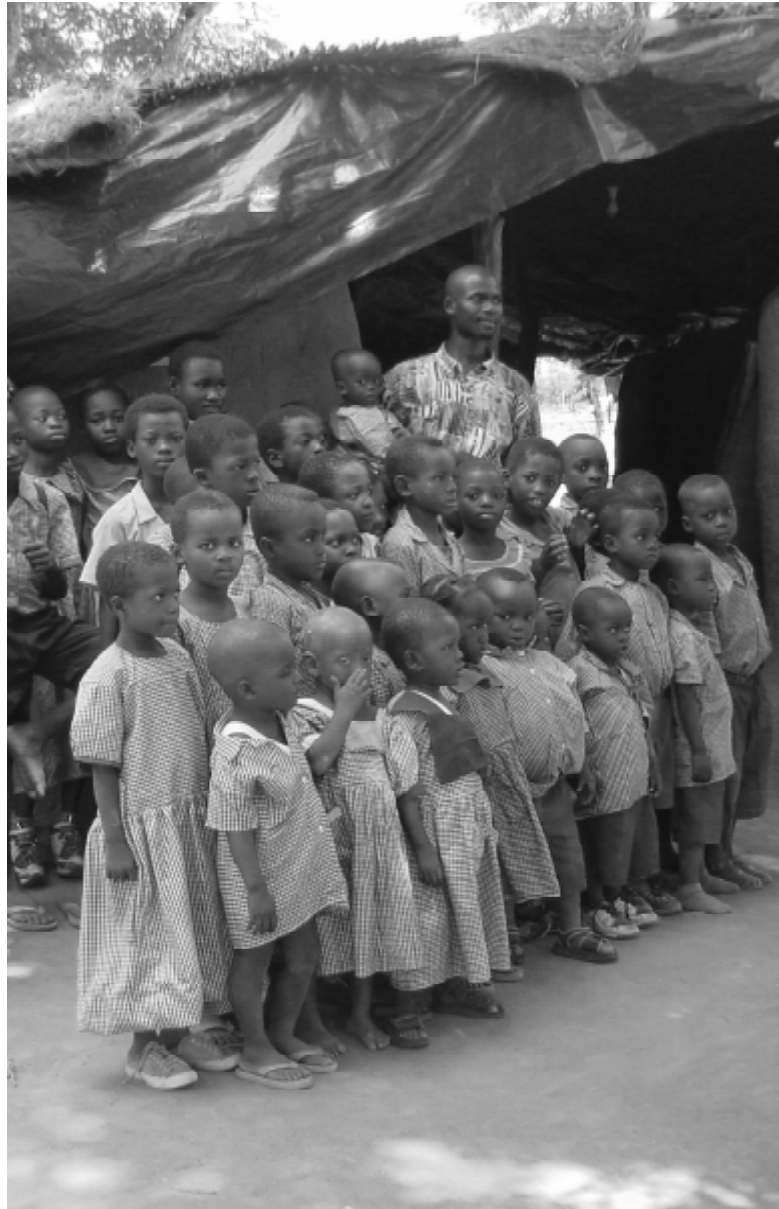
Therefore we demand the following:

- 2.1 That the State ensure that achieving equity in access to and control of land becomes an integral component of the Land Administration Project (LAP).
- 2.2 That the LAP is reviewed by the end of 2006 to ensure the tenure security of social groups such as women, young persons, tenants and pastoralists.
- 2.3 That as part of land tenure reform, customary laws of

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- access to land and inheritance which are discriminatory and unconstitutional be reformed by 2015.
- 2.4 That women's contributions to the development of farms be recognised and compensated at divorce and on the death of their spouses.
 - 2.5 That the LAP should take immediate steps to ensure that disadvantaged social groups have equal and effective representation in consultative and decision making processes to enable the Project address their concerns.
 - 2.6 That women participate equally with men in land administration at national, regional and local levels. With immediate effect, the Lands Commission be reconstituted to achieve the equal representation of women and men. By 2008, the constitutional provisions governing the establishment of the Lands Commission be reformed to ensure that they do not breach constitutional principles of gender balance.
 - 2.7 That customary and other tenancies, be reformed to ensure that rents are affordable and accessible to both women and men.
 - 2.8 That measures be put in place by the end of 2006 to ensure that land registration and titling processes promote joint registration of conjugal family farmlands to enhance women's tenure security.
 - 2.9 That women's customary interests in land be recognised, re-valued and strengthened by the end of 2006 to ensure that holders of such interests can use them in official transactions and be compensated for their loss.
 - 2.10 That the rights of migrants and so-called strangers be reformed to accord them equal rights as locals on the basis of citizenship.

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3. Women, Social Policy and Development

A Universal Basket of Social Provision

Social Development refers to the social and political conditions and the institutions which permit self-sustained growth in human welfare to take place, in a given society, especially among the disadvantaged sections of that society. Social development therefore requires the universal and equitable access to social services and public resources and the democratisation of social policy formulation and implementation.

Without social policy, it is impossible to achieve long-term improvement in the living standards of all members of society. In Ghana, there is a recognised universal basket of social provision. Access to water and sanitation; basic education and universal tuition-free education for citizens; and, primary health care, are among the constitutionally guaranteed minimum.

Other elements of social development include food security, social security (such as pensions), housing and economic services such as transport infrastructure. In any case, a more comprehensive approach to social policy and social development must also include access to a minimum level of income for all citizens of working age and all families. In Ghana and elsewhere, the ability to earn an income is the defining feature of each individual. Those who are unable to do so find themselves at an enormous disadvantage and have some of the lowest status in society. As the majority of people in this situation are women, no comprehensive, progressive social programme can exclude the provision of minimum levels of income for all citizens and for women in particular.

Macro-economic Stability at the Expense of Systematic Social Policies

The preoccupation with macro-economic stability has relegated social welfare, social security, and human development issues to the background in official thinking and action. As a matter of fact, Ghana has no social policy and no systematic social policies and programmes to deliver the accepted minimum level of service provision.

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This has resulted in very few improvements in the lives of women and men over the years. Even periods of economic growth have been characterised by increased levels of poverty, disease and insecurity. Social development indicators have either stagnated or deteriorated over the last decade with women being disproportionately affected by these negative trends.

This is because under the ERP, Ghana's SAP, economic policies such as privatisation and cost-recovery measures have turned all public or social goods into commodities that are bought and sold on the market. This has meant that access depends on income, rather than need. Women and girls are forced to take responsibility for the provision of what were or ought to be socially provided services and resources.

Water and Sanitation

Lack of good access to water and sanitation has implications for women's experience of poverty. The provision of water for households is the primary duty of women in Ghana as it is in most parts of the world. Women usually spend hours walking long distances to fetch and carry heavy loads of water every day. This has negative consequences for their time and health. Because of its association with women, the provision of water for households is not considered a critical decision-making area by policy-makers.

Under the World Bank development framework, there is an on-going policy to privatise water in Ghana to ensure full cost recovery. Such policies are likely to limit access further and make water, which is a basic need, accessible to only those who can afford it. As such, entire households suffer from the poor quantity and quality of water available to them. In such a situation, women are at a disadvantage because they are mainly in insecure jobs with low pay and are often unable to pay for the cost of such basic services. As well, women are not sufficiently consulted in the decision-making processes of such initiatives even though they are providers and the main users of water.

Health

Since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, the government has paid some attention to the gender dimensions of health in Ghana. In 1999, the Ministry of Health prepared a policy document as a framework for action on promoting

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gender equity in health. The Demographic and Health Surveys suggest that chronic malnutrition, low weight and under-five mortality are higher in boys than in girls and women have a higher life expectancy than men (60.3 years to 56.6 in 2000). However, poor women's access to health is not guaranteed. Thus the reduction in health spending under structural adjustment affects women, especially the poorest, even more.

Declining fertility rates have not changed the fact that women in Ghana are at high risk of dying from pregnancy related causes. Maternal mortality ratios (MMR) in Ghana are estimated at 214 per 100,000 live births compared with 10 per 100,000 live births in developed countries. This figure could be higher given the number of cases that go unrecorded. The picture is even grimmer for certain parts of Ghana. In areas of the Northern Region for example, MMR range between 500 and 800 per 100,000 live births.

The social and economic costs to the children left behind, the larger family and to Ghana as a whole are enormous, as women who die from childbirth are often in their most active periods of economic activity. While there is international consensus that maternal mortality is preventable with certain low cost interventions, policies in Ghana have not yet succeeded in reducing maternal mortality.

The prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS in Ghana throw gender inequalities into sharper relief. In Ghana, more than 90% of all AIDS cases are found in people between the ages of 15-49 and three out of five or 61% of reported cases between 1986 and 2002 are females. While the gender differentials have been reducing from 64.9% between 1986-1997 to 59.4% in 2002, it is still the case that women are at much higher risk from being infected than men.

Apart from the fact that HIV is spread more easily from male to female than from female to male for physiological reasons, socio-economic factors including gender inequalities are central to women's generally greater vulnerability to the virus than men. Gender differences in educational levels and women's poorer access to economic opportunities, resources and knowledge and familiarity with sexual and reproductive health information put women at a disadvantage.

A manifestation of gender inequalities is women's poor ability to protect themselves from infections, negotiate safe sex and say no to

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unprotected sex, particularly when they are economically or socially dependent on their partners. This problem is compounded by the fact that sex is routinely demanded from women as payment for access to basic needs such as work and education. Women without skills and resources often resort to prostitution in its different forms. That makes them even more vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV.

Male behaviours arising from their social superiority such as their ability to have multiple sexual partners across a wide range of age groups without serious consequences and their ability to demand unprotected sex from their spouses make them vectors in the spread of HIV/AIDS. One result is the high mother-to-child transmission of HIV, which accounts for about 15% of all modes of transmission. This situation is not helped by the fact that having children is very important in our societies. Women's need to have children to consolidate their status within marriage and in society at large is often incompatible with safe sex methods such as condom use. All these factors have made HIV/AIDs a woman's disease in much of Africa.

Education

On the question of education levels, there are big differences between men and women. According to The Ghana Living Standards Survey in 2000 (GLSS 4), 44.1% of women as opposed to 21.1% of men have no formal education. Given that formal sector employment now requires secondary or higher levels of education, it follows that women are disadvantaged in terms of access to work in this sector.

Current enrolment figures do not give room for optimism. Average enrolment rates at the basic school for males are 66.2% and 58.4% for females. More girls than boys drop out of school at all levels of education. Factors such as poverty, early marriage and teenage pregnancy prevent females from continuing their education to the tertiary level. Even where dropouts enter apprenticeships, females have a narrower range of opportunities- mainly sewing, hair dressing and catering, while boys have a much wider range. Furthermore, male dominated occupations pay better on the job market. Beyond jobs, education is very important for social development in general.

Social Development Trends and the Question of Social Policy for Ghana

It can be said that social development trends in Ghana are not moving in the right direction with serious consequences for women, other disadvantaged social groups and for society at large. In the end, social policy must answer certain fundamental questions. What does 'social development' mean for the young woman from Walewale who is forced to contemplate migrating to Obuasi to become a prostitute? What are the prospects for 'social development' for the single mother from Amedzofe clinging to her very small harvest of cassava on top of a pile of produce at the back of an articulated lorry driving at top speed on the dangerous road to Accra at midnight, in the hope of earning some money to enable her daughter to go to the clinic?

What of the pregnant woman on the shop floor of the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) factory, working through the threat of miscarriage, handling deadly-sharp food cleaning tools, without the minimum protection-wear and with her mind far away at home where her three young children are left unfed and uncared for? And what about the domestic servant, overworked and physically abused during the day, and raped at night by the adult-males of her employing family?

Where are these women to turn to? A dimension of the state's marginalisation and abandonment of social provision is the increasing role of under-resourced district and local authorities, private companies, NGOs and donors. Social development is being approached in ways that erode the rights and security of citizens.

We therefore demand the following:

- 3.1 That government put in place a National Social Policy that addresses issues of inequality and equity and specifically targets women and other disadvantaged groups in society such as the aged and people with disabilities.
- 3.2 That the National Social Policy must guarantee a minimum threshold of universal access to water and sanitation, health, education, child-care and incomes especially for disadvantaged social groups.
- 3.3 That government immediately put in place statutory measures to ensure minimum life-line provision of basic utilities for poor urban and rural communities and for households living in poverty.
- 3.4 That government immediately abandon its plans for water privatisation and initiate instead, policies and programmes for universal access to safe water by the year 2010.
- 3.5 That the government take steps to implement the measures needed to secure the reproductive rights of women as agreed in the ICPD, the Beijing Platform for Action and their Outcome Documents. These include but are not limited to:
 - a. Recognising and promoting the right of women to attain the highest standards of sexual and reproductive health.
 - b. Promoting women's ability to make decisions about their reproduction without discrimination, coercion and violence.
 - c. Access to safe, effective and affordable methods of family planning of women's own choice.
 - d. Access to information, counselling and care related to reproductive health, including family planning and safe abortion.
- 3.6 That government commit adequate resources to, and strengthen its capacity to ensure comprehensive implementation of existing programmes to reduce maternal

- and infant mortality by 50% in 2008 and eradicate such occurrences by 2020. Workable and sustainable targets must also be set to tackle child morbidity, stunting and malnutrition.
- 3.7 That a comprehensive programme of minimum nutrition standards is implemented through schools and local authority structures for all lower-income households.
 - 3.8 That government announce immediately and implement a programme towards a socially agreed package of affordable quality health care, including antenatal and post-natal care by 2010.
 - 3.9 That the government take immediate steps to address women's vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS. Specifically, the government should adopt the following measures and incorporate them into the National Health Insurance Policy (NHIP):
 - a. Promote the economic empowerment of women.
 - b. Discourage all practices which disable women from negotiating safe sex and protecting themselves from infection.
 - c. Decriminalise prostitution and put in place measures to provide alternative means of livelihood for commercial sex workers.
 - d. Support initiatives to remove the stigmatisation of sufferers of HIV/AIDs.
 - e. Implement vigorously its policy of offering anti-retroviral drugs to sufferers of HIV/AIDs across the country to prevent HIV patients from progressively developing full-blown AIDs.
 - 3.10 That the government ensure the full and pro-active implementation of strategies and targets, including affirmative action policies at all levels, to achieve equal enrolment and retention of girls in schools in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. The strategies should also increase the proportion of female students selecting science in senior secondary schools from 17 percent currently to 50 percent by 2010. This is not to privilege

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science subjects but to ensure that girls have equal opportunities in all fields of endeavour.

- 3.11 That government remove cost-sharing fees at primary and secondary school levels. Basic education is a fundamental human right and its costs should be met by means of taxes and resources provided by central and local government, the private sector and communities.
- 3.12 That the government take steps to expand the range of apprenticeship opportunities open to women in order to reduce occupational segregation in artisanal professions.
- 3.13 That good quality child-care facilities are provided from public funds at the unit committee level of local government and at workplaces in the private or cooperative employment which employ at least ten persons. This should be mandatory for all public sector places of employment.
- 3.14 That the Government must enforce the policy guaranteeing the return to school of teenage girls who get pregnant and become mothers.

4. Women in Politics and Decision-making



The Pivotal Role of Women in Ghanaian Society and History

At all historical junctures, women in Ghana have contributed immensely towards Ghana's political life. From the period of independence to date, women have contributed resources and actively articulated their concerns and issues within both their households and in the public arena.

In spite of the pivotal role Ghanaian women play within the family, community and society at large, they do not occupy key decision-making positions in any of the sectors of economic, political and social life. They are relegated to the background as far as public decision-making is con-

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cerned. This is because no concrete policy measures are in place to ensure that the structural inequalities between women and men are taken into account in promoting participation in policy decisions.

Women's Participation in Politics and Decision Making

The ratio of female/male membership of both Parliament and District Assemblies, public/private sectors and in corporate organisations does not reflect a population composed of over 51 per cent women. Women account for less than 10 per cent of people in public office. There are only 19 women in the 200-member Parliament, making up only 9 per cent. Women make up 16 per cent in the Council of State, a body that advises the President on the critical challenges facing the nation.

Traditional prejudices, beliefs and perceptions, gender discrimination and low levels of literacy have contributed to the low level of women's participation in the policy-making process. There is also evidence of the lack of political will and commitment by political parties and the executive arm of various governments to facilitate women's effective participation in politics and decision-making.

Low Representation in Local Government

Ghana's decentralisation programme has sought to create administrative and developmental decision-making structures in the Districts. This is to democratise the system of government to achieve a more equitable allocation of power and wealth in the development process. It is also intended to unearth and develop local talent and initiative and train people for participation in other levels of national decision-making. Under Ghana's decentralisation process, it is envisaged that decision-making would begin from the local to the national and back to the local level. Therefore, local government is the sphere of government that is nearer to the people and their everyday concerns.

Yet, women have not been able to take advantage of their potential to shape decisions because of low representation. Thus in the 1998 district assembly elections, out of an overall total of 4820 elected candidates, only 196 were women while 4624 were men. There has been no significant increase in women's participation in district assemblies in the 2002 elections, as we find that out of a total of 4,583 candidates elected only 341 are women, while 4,241 are men. Though there has

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been an increase in the number of women elected to District Assemblies from 3 per cent in 1994 to 5 per cent in 1998 and to 7 per cent in 2002, their participation continues to be extremely low. A similar case exists in Parliament, where there are only 19 women out of a total of 200 members. Since there is no affirmative action policy or any other system to promote women's political participation, individual women, largely working through their political parties, are left on their own to compete to obtain entry into the District Assemblies and Parliament.

Ghanaian women remain on the fringes of national affairs and are confronted by limited options and formidable social, economic and cultural barriers that place them at a great disadvantage. Power and influence in the management of political and economic processes for development has continued to be exercised in favour of men.

Given the United Nations (UN) assessment that a threshold of at least 30 per cent representation is needed for women's participation in decision-making to be meaningful, greater effort is needed to achieve gender equality in Ghana. Real change requires genuine transformative measures that will allow both men and women to participate equally in politics and decision-making processes at all levels. As well, there is the need for a transformation of the political culture to make it more transparent, accountable and sensitive to the needs and concerns of women.

Therefore we demand the following:

- 4.1 That all arms of government and political parties take action to promote the transformation of the political culture to make it more transparent, accountable and sensitive to the needs and concerns of women.
- 4.2 That political parties ensure that by the year 2008, there is at least 50% representation of women in party executive and other decision-making structures.
- 4.3 That all political parties promote affirmative action to progressively increase the number of women candidates for parliamentary elections in order that there is at least 30% representation of women by the year 2008 and 50% representation by the year 2012.

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- 4.4 That the government ensure that by 2008, 50% of appointees to district assemblies and to the offices of district chief executive and district co-ordinating director are women.
- 4.5 That by the year 2008 at least 50% of appointees to public offices, such as boards of corporations and institutions and the higher echelons of the bureaucracies, are women.
- 4.6 That constitutional provisions and the sections of the CEDAW and Platform for Action regarding women's participation in decision making are implemented by the government of Ghana.
- 4.7 That the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) and the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) be charged to put concrete measures in place to support women to participate in political processes at all levels and take leadership positions and responsibilities.
- 4.8 That until gender parity is achieved, women accepted as parliamentary and district assembly candidates should be supported financially from a special independent fund created by the government by the year 2005.
- 4.9 That regular budgetary provision is made for capacity building of District Assembly members, especially the women.
- 4.10 That women and men in district assemblies should have equal access to the resources and funds for development work.
- 4.11 That government should institute measures which promote shared responsibilities of life for both women and men as a means of creating balance in family and work responsibilities thus facilitating women's active participation in public life.
- 4.12 That the NCCE, CHRAJ and the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs increase their efforts to sensitise the general public in order to enhance understanding and support for gender equality policies.

5. Women, Human Rights and the Law



Laws are meant to regulate society and protect the human rights of all citizens. The 1992 Constitution has clear provisions guaranteeing the fundamental human rights of all citizens. Article 12 of the Constitution guarantees every person in Ghana's fundamental rights and freedoms and Article 17 provides protection against discrimination and enjoins the state to take steps to end all forms of discrimination on grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnicity, religion and creed, social and economic status. Article 35 (5 and 6) enjoins the state to end all forms of discrimination through law reform and affirmative action. In addition to the Constitution, there are national laws which address the issues affecting particular segments of the population. For example, the Labour Act 2003 (Act 651) and the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560) protect the rights of workers and children respectively.

Laws, Instruments and Conventions to Improve Women's Status and Promote Gender Equality

In relation to women, laws have been passed over the years to improve their situation. These include the Marriage Laws, Intestate Succession Law PNDC Law 111 (1985), Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law PNDC Law 112 (1985) and the Labour Act 651 (2003). Amendments of the criminal law, now contained in the consolidated Criminal Code have provisions to protect women from harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation. These provisions have also broadened protection against sexual violence. The Children's Act protects children from early marriage and the Matrimonial Causes Act supports women seeking divorce under both customary and ordinance marriages.

Ghana also has obligations under international human rights instruments such as the UN Charter of 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979. Ghana also has obligations under regional instruments such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights. The State is required to incorporate the provisions of these instruments into national laws.

In addition, there are commitments arising from various UN conferences on women. The 1985 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (NFLS), the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (PfA) and the 2000 review of Beijing commitments, known as Beijing +5. As well, UN conferences such as the Vienna Human Rights Conference, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (1994), the Social Summit (1994), and more recently, the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have clear provisions for improving the status of women and promoting gender equality.

Women Continue to Live with Discrimination and Biases

In spite of these laws, instruments and commitments, women continue to suffer bias and discrimination in Ghana. International human rights instruments are not fully integrated and enforced within national

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laws. In addition, national laws do not go far enough and fail to address the requirement of a comprehensive review of all national laws to ensure the repeal of discriminatory laws. Certain laws such as the Bill on Property Rights are yet to become law although twelve years have passed since the 1992 Constitution called for their passage.

As a result, women continue to contend with discriminatory laws and practices in employment, marriage, divorce, and in access to resources such as land, labour, capital and technology. For example, only a minority of women in formal sector employment enjoy protection from labour laws. Women continue to live with discrimination in relation to their rights and obligations in marriage and the grounds for divorce. While women can be divorced under customary law on grounds of witchcraft, stealing and adultery, these are not grounds for divorcing a man.

Practices such as polygyny, though lawful under customary and religious laws, are discriminatory and unconstitutional and increase women's insecurity and vulnerability in married life. Several men who are involved in acts of bigamy are not made to account for their actions even though the criminal code makes such acts unlawful. Court decisions show that the laws governing the distribution of marital property at divorce do not sufficiently take into account women's non-monetary contributions to the acquisition of such property.

There are also critical issues of poor implementation of the laws due to bias against poor women and men, lack of resources, low capacity, undue delays in court processes, entrenched patriarchal attitudes and systemic gender inequalities. Furthermore, there is limited or no access to legal processes as a result of problems of cost and availability of services. The few women who are able to access the legal system find themselves dealing with an unduly formal and alienating environment. Very few women and men are fully aware of women's rights under the law partly because of the poor performance of institutions tasked with legal education.

To ensure that the law becomes an effective instrument for gender justice, we demand the following:

- 5.1 That the government initiate a constitutional review process to be completed by the year 2010 to ensure that all constitutional provisions promote the principles of fundamental human rights and freedoms and economic and social rights for all women and men on an equal basis.
- 5.2 That by 2010, the government complete a review of the entire body of laws in Ghana to ensure their conformity with the 1992 Constitution and obligations under International and Regional Human Rights Instruments. In relation to marriage and divorce laws, specific reforms include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Discriminatory provisions regarding the rights and duties of the parties to a marriage are reformed.
 - b. While recognising the validity of polygynous marriages under customary and religious laws, the government and law enforcement agencies should ensure that the laws against bigamy are properly enforced.
 - c. That government should put in place policies and programmes which discourage polygyny and encourage monogamy, with the view to abolishing polygyny as a form of marriage in Ghana in the future.
 - d. The grounds for divorce under customary law should be amended to make them uniform for both men and women.
 - e. Women's non-monetary contributions to their households should be recognised and valued through equal distribution of property acquired during marriage in divorce and inheritance proceedings.
 - f. The Customary Marriage Registration Law should be reformed to enable either party to register a

marriage if it is established that the other party is obstructing registration without justification in order to protect the rights of persons in customary law marriages.

- 5.3 That by 2015, the government complete reforms of the entire social security system to expand its scope and coverage to ensure the meaningful protection for all citizens. Specifically, we demand the following:
- a. That the conception and scope of social security be expanded to enable all citizens of Ghana to enjoy unemployment benefits and pensions as taxpayers. This also implies a fundamental reform of the tax system to broaden and strengthen the revenue base.
 - b. That the coverage of social security benefits is expanded to include medical care, sickness insurance, family and maternity benefits and unemployment benefits.
 - c. That the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) vigorously implements the changes in the current Social Security laws to extend coverage to all citizens irrespective of the nature and place of their work. By the year 2008, at least 50% of employees and self employed workers within rural and urban informal sectors should become contributors to the scheme and enjoy its coverage.
- 5.4 That the government by the year 2008, make and implement an affirmative action policy with legal backing to ensure the full integration of women in all spheres of public life.
- 5.5 That law enforcement institutions vigorously implement laws passed to protect women's rights, including the prosecution of violations of such laws.
- 5.6 That the government by the year 2012 enact and fully implement specific laws and measures to promote and protect the rights of women and girls in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and

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all other International and Regional Instruments regarding women's rights.

- 5.7 That government take steps to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW to enable women in Ghana to benefit from its provisions.
- 5.8 That by 2006, the NCCE develops and implements a comprehensive programme to create awareness about the provisions of international, regional and national women's rights laws and instruments and inculcate in the general public respect for the rights of women.
- 5.9 That the Ministry of Education should activate Human Rights Education from primary to tertiary levels of education.

6. Discriminatory Cultural Practices



Ghanaian Culture and Its Positive Elements

Ghana has a rich and vibrant culture with many positive elements such as diversity, respect and consideration for others irrespective of age and status, and a preference for consensus instead of conflict. It is these elements which have helped the country to survive in the face of adversity.

However, like all cultures, Ghanaian culture is dynamic and an important element of this dynamism is the ability to change. Cultures which are not able to respond to new challenges and leave behind practices which are no longer appropriate become backward and negative instead of being a source of positive values. Cultural practices which discriminate against women and prevent them from fulfilling themselves as full citizens of Ghana are an example of those practices which must change. Unfortunately, there are certain people who use culture to justify discriminatory practices against women and other social groups.

The Use and Abuse of Culture in Relation to Women

This is an abuse of culture which is unconstitutional and does not promote social development. Article 26 (2) of the 1992 Constitution prohibits customary practices which dehumanise or are injurious to the physical and mental well being of all persons. The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and its Women's Protocol have provisions outlawing cultural practices which discriminate against any persons, including women. Ghana's commitments under International Human Rights Instruments include the encouragement of cultural practices which promote the rights and development of women and the abolition of those which discriminate against them.

However, at all levels of Ghanaian society, many forms of discrimination against women are practised in the name of culture. Although culture belongs to the whole society, women are often held to a higher standard of cultural compliance than men. There are situations when women become the enforcers of negative customs against fellow women in their capacity as custodians of practices such as female genital mutilation and widowhood rights. While this makes them open to criticism, their activities are for the benefit of men.

Marriage, family and community life

Some Ghanaian proverbs which are passed off as conventional wisdom express gender biases and reinforce discrimination against women. Ghanaian societies expect all men and women to marry and have children by a certain age. Women feel the weight of these expectations more heavily as they are expected to marry much earlier than men and are often blamed for the breakdown of marriage and the absence of children within marriage. In situations where men do not contribute to the upbringing of children, women are left to carry the burden unaided and stigmatised, and are often vulnerable to exploitation.

Customary law rules, beliefs, ideologies and practices of marriage discriminate against women. In Ghana, 23% of currently married women are in a polygynous union, representing a decline from 28% in 1993. Differences in the status, rights and responsibilities of a husband and wife, and inheritance rules that favour the extended family over the nuclear family result in power imbalances and weaken women's voices within their households.

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Women are expected to submit to their husbands irrespective of the issues at stake and their submission is reinforced by religious doctrines. Various forms of discrimination such as the imbalance in unpaid labour and housework leave women with less time to pursue their paid work, social activities and social development programmes. The time constraints women experience within their households also affects girls who are socialised to do more housework than boys.

In terms of decision-making within marriage, women are disadvantaged by the norms which designate men as heads of households and therefore the principal decision-makers in matters concerning household resource control and use, and the number of children to be born and their maintenance. These hierarchies in decision-making within the household have an adverse impact on children, especially girls.

There is limited spousal communication on reproductive health issues. Women are expected to seek the consent of their partners before using contraception although this is against Ghana's population policy which stresses individual voluntarism in family planning. The situation is compounded by the prejudice against women's use of contraception. The result is that some men refuse to allow their partners to use contraception for fear that it would encourage them to be promiscuous.

The picture however, is not uniform. Apart from rural-urban differences, it has been observed that women in matrilineal areas have more autonomy in reproductive health decision making than those in patrilineal areas. Not surprisingly, reported contraception use among married women in Ghana is low. While awareness of contraception is over 90% in Ghana, only 22% of married women use contraception as compared with 32% of men. The figure is even lower among the poor. This leaves many women without protection from unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

In spite of this, fertility rates for women in Ghana are falling and there is no agreement among population experts as to the explanation for this, although it is seen as a desirable trend. There is concern that this may be as a result of abortions, many of which take place under unsafe circumstances.

Some norms in society establish double standards about male and female sexual behaviour. While men are allowed and encouraged in certain cases to have multiple sexual partners, women are severely

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sanctioned even if they are only suspected of such behaviour. Women are discouraged from expressing their sexuality in a manner not prescribed by their societies and encouraged to be sexually submissive to men. This has contributed to their inability to negotiate safe sex and thereby protect themselves from sexual violence and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDs.

Within communities, there are several norms and practices which are for the purposes of social control. Apart from defining the roles of women and men, they also determine the space within which women and men operate. Often, the space women occupy is constrained by norms which control their presence in the public sphere.

In community decision-making, women's voices are muted. In some situations, they are either not allowed to speak in public when men are present or are expected to express their views privately or through men. Socialisation practises and proverbs such as "women are to be seen and not to be heard" reinforce these practices which automatically strengthens the community decision making powers of men.

On the other hand, women are charged with community management and support functions which are unpaid, tedious and time-consuming. These and other practices work to ensure the maintenance of women's subordination and discrimination. Women who do not conform to these rules find themselves accused of immorality or witchcraft and have to face sanctions and humiliation.

Institutional Cultures and Gender Inequality

The cultures, systems and practices of major state, private and civil society institutions are sources of gender inequalities. In spite of the appearance of gender neutrality in institutional norms, written and unwritten codes of practice result in gender biases within these institutions which are also male dominated.

State institutions charged with protecting citizens such as the courts, correctional institutions, the police and military consider certain matters affecting household and marital relations as private and therefore inappropriate for state action. As these matters often affect women's rights, it limits the State's ability to protect them from abuses which occur within the home. This is in contravention of Article 16 of the CEDAW.

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In addition women are seen primarily as wives and mothers whose domain is the home while men are seen in terms of their role as workers and professionals. Women's contributions to their homes are not properly recognised as their activities are considered to be outside the formal business of national development. These views about women and men's work affect the way many institutions treat women and issues concerning them and perpetuate stereotypical perceptions of the roles of women and men.

These biases also affect the career prospects of women working within state, private and civil society institutions. These institutions are constrained by practices which fail to recognise their particular needs and assume that male careers are more worthy of promotion. Women clients of such institutions also have to operate in predominantly male environments.

Education is expected to promote socially acceptable behaviour and values of democracy, social justice and development. And yet, the cultures of educational institutions are not gender neutral. Teacher and textbook biases and the channelling of girls into conventional training in areas such as home management, humanities and vocational skills, strengthen gender differentials in educational attainment.

In addition, school environments have certain features which are unfriendly to women. These include inadequate toilet, leisure and residential facilities for girls, the encouragement of different roles for boys and girls in school activities, the promotion of boys as prefects and leaders, sexism in language use and peer pressure. These reinforce gender discrimination in schools and threaten the achievements of policies to improve women's access to education.

Some of the teachings of religious institutions are not helpful in promoting women's rights. Often, in teaching religious doctrines, they have adopted interpretations of texts without consideration for the contexts in which these doctrines were espoused. In certain religious institutions, progressive developments have improved the status of women, enriched the culture of these institutions and ensured their relevance for future generations.

Unfortunately, many religious institutions in Ghana have not fully embraced these positive developments. As such they continue to espouse doctrines which discriminate against women who in most cases

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are the majority of their membership and their main financial support.

Because of their limitations, state and religious institutions and communities have not been able to tackle the numerous harmful practices which discriminate against women. Some of these negative practices include, but are not limited to: the practice of bride price, polygyny, forced marriage and abduction, child betrothal and marriage, widowhood rites, wife inheritance, sexual relations among close relations to produce children for families and female slave marriage. Others are child labour practices, food taboos, unequal inheritance rights, dehumanising puberty rites, the banishment of women declared as witches, the ritual servitude practices (trokosi), female genital mutilation and domestic violence.

Women have learned to confront such situations by finding alternative ways of expressing themselves and protecting their interests. However, gender ideologies trivialise these efforts by perpetuating perceptions of women as petty, engaged in trivialities and working against their own self interest. This has resulted in the commonly held view that women are their own enemies and the authors of their misfortunes. While this view has no serious basis in reality, it has become a powerful advocacy tool for those who do not want to address fundamental issues of gender inequalities.

Even more fundamental, are the gender ideologies which justify gender inequalities by rendering them as natural, commonsensical and unchanging. These ideologies force women and men to conform to gender stereotypes for fear of social sanctions. They have population and reproductive health implications and are a factor in the impoverishment of many women.

Gender inequalities cannot be justified in the name of Ghanaian culture. Culture is a dynamic force for good when it changes in response to the concerns and values of the times. We believe that Ghanaian culture is strong and resilient enough to withstand the questioning and abolition of harmful practices. Indeed, there are elements of Ghanaian culture which form a strong basis for promoting gender equality and highlighting these will only strengthen the developmental potential of our culture.

We therefore demand the following:

- 6.1 That the executive and legislature take steps to pass, strengthen or extend existing laws and their enforcement to achieve the following:
 - a. The reform of customary marriage to eliminate substantial payments in money and in kind to ensure that only token payments are made, if at all.
 - b. The abolition of compulsory widowhood rights.
 - c. The abolition of wife inheritance.
 - d. The reform of the intestate succession law to ensure equal rights of inheritance of male and female children.
 - e. The prohibition of forced marriages and abductions and child marriages.
 - f. The prohibition of practices which encourage sexual relations between close relations for the purpose of providing children for their birth families.
 - g. The strengthening of laws on defilement
 - h. The complete eradication of female Genital Mutilation
 - i. The prohibition of the practice of banishment to witches villages
 - j. The abolition of ritual servitude
 - k. The prohibition of child labour and fostering practices which threaten the healthy development of children.
 - l. The abolition of food taboos.
- 6.2 That the government ensure that the Domestic Violence Bill is laid before parliament and passed without amendments which compromise its spirit, intent and purpose before the end of 2004.
- 6.3 Government should with all urgency, enforce existing legislation and sanctions against perpetrators of any cul-

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tural or religious practice that negatively affects the welfare, health, dignity or rights of women.

- 6.4 That all political parties, the judiciary, the police and media take a principled and firm stance against violence against women and work hard to eliminate it from the society.
- 6.5 That the government, District Assemblies, funding agencies and NGOs provide support and financial resources to support survivors of gender violence and the institutions which support them.
- 6.6 Government should urgently kick-start the process of working with the National House of Chiefs to undertake an evaluation of traditional customs and practices, as required by the Constitution of Ghana.
- 6.7 Government and civil society organisations should collect evidence in the form of testimonies, case studies, statistics and documentaries of discriminatory and harmful practices justified in the name of tradition and culture. Such evidence should be presented to government and other development agencies to support the work of abolishing these practices.
- 6.8 Girls who have been forced into marriage and who wish to pursue their education should be supported to continue with their education.

7. Women and Media



The Media in the Fight for a just and Equitable Society

The media are universally acknowledged as essential for democratic governance. In Ghana, the media have made an important contribution to the country's socio-political development. However, in spite of women's immense contributions to the development of democratic space, the media continue to marginalise women's concerns and issues.

Ghana's transition to democracy therefore opens up new challenges for the media and how it can contribute to a just and equitable society for both women and men. Indeed, safe-guarding and monitoring democracy through the media is in and of itself, important to the overall achievement of gender equality strategies to address issues of content, participation and access, as outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action.

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The role of the media and other communication and information providers in society, and the link between women's rights and democracy, raises several questions that must be addressed by government. These include making institutional arrangements that enable the media promote democracy and women's empowerment, being a positive influence for reducing gender, class and ethnic discrimination in society and providing access, space and voice to citizens, especially women.

Of key concern are the media's sexist and stereotypical representations of women, the neglect of issues concerning women and the nature of reporting of stories about women especially those relating to sex crimes against them that fail to make the link between violence and power relationships.

A Liberalised Media, Commercial Pressures and the Representation of Women

Research has shown that a liberalised media environment, with its commercial pressures, often produces news and programmes that do not empower women or promote gender equity. The underlying commercial interests that govern the media world wide and perpetuate the axiom that "sex sells" are responsible for some of the common problems of women's representation. With the growth of local advertising firms and the expansion of the music and film industries, there was optimism that their outputs would be more gender sensitive and respectful of women. However, the objectification of women and their portrayal in stereotypical roles and images persist within these industries.

Developments in the media brought on by technological advances also pose new challenges. Many of the policies formulated around technological innovations fail to consider women's concerns. Just as the Internet is perceived as the foremost information source for the future, so also must we see it as the foremost source for the potential perpetuation of inherited hegemonic tendencies that must be addressed at the local level.

The Beijing Platform for Action notes the advances in information technology as a site for action, research and monitoring. This is because the vast technology driven information superhighway has the potential for good as well as evil. The Internet, for example, allows women's groups to set up their own web pages and networks more

effectively. But it can also be a source of women's denigration and exploitation, as demonstrated by the exploitation of Ghanaian women on pornographic web sites.

Structural Challenges in the Media Sector and the Issue of Gender Equity

It has been suggested that because women, particularly gender-sensitised women, have been excluded from decision-making positions within the media, negative representations of women abound and the media fail to reflect the issues and perspectives that are important to women. In Ghana, women make up less than 20% of the formal workforce and less than 10% of top management in the media. Thus the media like other institutions in Ghana are male dominated.

The situation has not been helped by decades of authoritarian control of the media and the victimisation of journalists. The expanding media environment resulting from Ghana's return to constitutional democracy in 1992 has only slightly improved the status quo for women. There has also been little improvement in the number of women on the boards of state-owned media organisations, and little improvement in the numbers of women employed in the Government's information apparatus.

The media's performance is also related to the ways in which governments inform citizens to enable them participate in decision-making and how governments respond to issues of concern raised by and about the media. For democracy to function not only do women need adequate information to make choices at the ballot box, but they also need adequate information to make decisions about their lives and to monitor and evaluate government policies and actions. Yet information gaps persist between women's civil society organisations and government agencies, including the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, and between government organisations and the media.

While acknowledging the value of the newly liberalised channels of communication and information flow for fostering democracy, we believe that government and media institutions must address structural challenges relating to gender equity issues in the media.

Therefore, we demand the following:

- 7.1 That government formulate and adopt a comprehensive communication and information policy that would address issues of denigrating media representation and content, and clarify issues relating to access, control, and information flow.
- 7.2 That government, through Parliament, passes into law a gender-responsive Freedom of Information Bill to enhance access to information and ultimately benefit women and the marginalised in society by 2005.
- 7.3 That government enact legislation, regulations and guidelines that address concerns such as pornography and the exploitation of women, raised by new information and communication technologies such as the Internet.
- 7.4 That government strengthen the institutions set up to regulate media content by providing adequate human and financial resources to enable them perform their functions in a manner which does not jeopardize press freedom while promoting the goals of gender sensitivity and fairness.
- 7.5 That the National Media Commission (NMC) formulate media policies that promote the adequate representation of women and children in programming and ensures that all programmes are gender sensitive.
- 7.6 That the National Media Commission ensure that advertisements in electronic and other media portray women positively as creative beings, key actors and contributors to the process of development.
- 7.7 That the National Media Commission implement affirmative action policies to achieve gender equality in the appointment of members of Public Media Boards and heads of media institutions by 2008.
- 7.8 That government alters the power dynamics in media institutions by encouraging and supporting (through scholarships and affirmative action policies) the training of more women for professional level jobs in the industry.
- 7.9 That government and District Assemblies champion community radio, television, newspapers and other media and

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information forms that give women and rural dwellers the opportunity to participate actively in programmes that improve their well being.

- 7.10 That both government and private media houses should establish self-regulatory mechanisms to ensure that the music, film and advertising they use in their programmes are gender sensitive and respectful of women.
- 7.11 That the private media take cognisance of all the demands being made of the state media and voluntarily adopt a code of practice that promotes gender sensitivity in programming and in the training and employment of women to responsible positions as its contribution to national development.
- 7.12 That government help to raise awareness about some of the critical areas of concern regarding women's rights and gender equity and the media through the speeches of officials and discussions.
- 7.13 That government strengthens the information links between itself, women's civil society organisations and the media.

8. Women, Conflict and Peace



The Endemic Nature of Communal Conflict in Ghana and West Africa

Nationally, Ghanaian society has been characterised by various long-standing communal conflicts, some of which periodically flare into serious armed confrontations with the resultant loss of lives and property. It has been reported that there are about 250 conflict situations, latent and active in the country. These conflicts are happening against the backdrop of deteriorating standards of living and abject poverty, hard-

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ship and deprivation especially among women and children.

The bases of Ghana's conflicts are steeped in history. Colonialism with its policies that promoted inequality and exclusiveness played a role in the instability that plagues the nation today. However, many of these conflicts also have their roots in territorial expansionism, land boundary and land ownership disputes, traditional leadership succession, political and inter-religious rivalries as well as age-old enmities and grievances.

The causes and nature of conflict have changed in more ways than one. The advent of globalisation has widened the economic gap between the rich and the poor creating mass unemployment and dependency. World Bank and the International Monetary Fund conditionalities which have resulted in the withdrawal of subsidies in service delivery have added to the already harsh economic condition of citizens especially of women and children.

In politics, despite multi-party constitutional rule and good governance conditionalities, corruption, lack of accountability and denial of access to decision-making continue to exclude the majority of the people, thus creating fertile grounds for discontent and conflict. The nature of conflict has also changed. No longer are wars limited to the battlefields, but they have now been extended to cities, towns and villages where unarmed civilians, especially women and children, have become easy targets of violence and revenge attacks.

The conflict situation across the West Africa sub-region has security implications for people in the various countries. The proliferation of small arms in the region is fuelling even more conflicts and violence. The use of child soldiers, for instance, is a phenomenon whose impact on social development is yet to be measured.

In addition to the various forms of conflicts in the sub-region, there is a rise in cross border crimes and armed robbery. The instability created by conflicts has diverted massive resources from long-term development objectives, setting the region many years back. There is a lack of total commitment and political will to implement various UN protocols and the ECOWAS Moratorium on importing, exporting and banning the manufacture of small arms and light weapons by countries of the sub-region.

Women and Men Experience Conflict Differently

Women and men have different experiences of conflict whether as combatants or civilians because of pre-existing gender inequalities. Articles 12 and 13 of the 1992 Constitution contain measures for protecting citizens in times of conflict. In spite of this, women are the most vulnerable and the most threatened in the event of conflict, and have to contend with social dislocation, abductions, sexual violation, intimidation, sexual slavery, sexual infections and added responsibilities in the face of the resultant economic instability. Yet, those who dominate policy-making and decide on wars are the same people who want to dictate terms of peace exclusive of the input of women.

Conflict and peace are opposing issues that determine the development of a country. As an endemic social phenomenon, conflict is about competition for power, resources and interests. In recognition of the role that women can play in peace building and reconstruction and the fact that they suffer the most during conflict, the UN has called for women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security as well as the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Involving women this way and addressing the underlying political and socio-economic causes of conflicts will go a long way to creating a just and peaceful society.

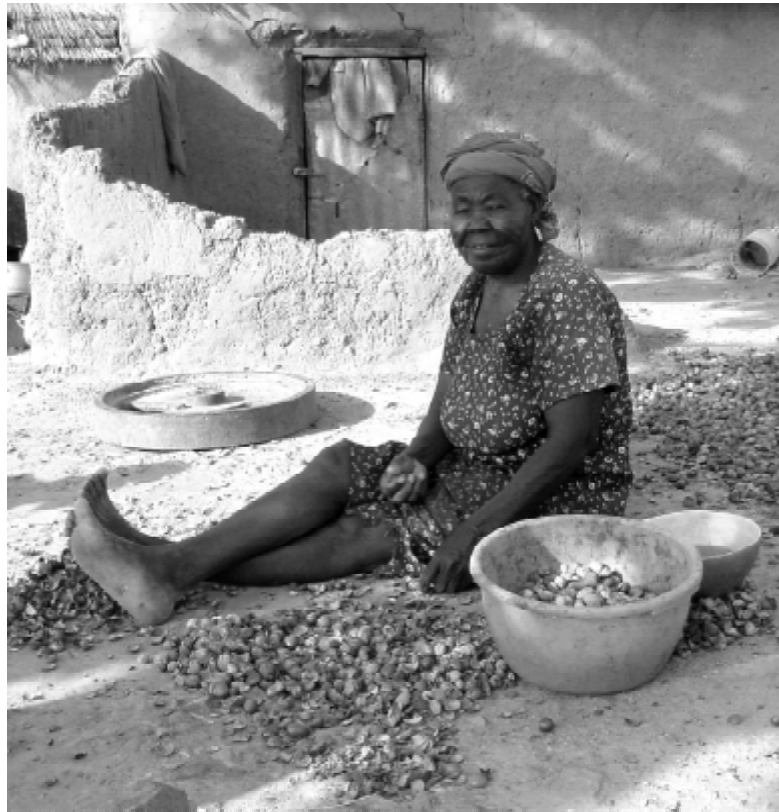
Therefore we demand the following:

- 8.1 That Government must practice democracy, inspire trust, promote openness and adhere to accountability, rule of law, transparency and respect the limits of its power and reach an adequate degree of consensus on key national issues.
- 8.2 That all relevant constitutional bodies and civil society should work to improve the culture of peace as a key condition for promoting human security and social justice.
- 8.3 That Government must minimise conflict through the judicious and equitable allocation of resources to regions and districts.

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- 8.4 That Government must prevent conflicts, and where there is conflict, take measures to protect citizens, especially women and children.
- 8.5 That Government must take steps to resolve internal conflicts within the shortest possible time. In resolving conflicts, the Government should show moral courage in addressing the injustices underlying many conflicts and not let considerations of political gain affect their decisions.
- 8.6 That Government must ratify the African Union and United Nations Conventions and Protocols on small arms and light weapons by the year 2005.
- 8.7 That Government must encourage ECOWAS heads of state to convert the ECOWAS Moratorium on Importing, Exporting, and Banning the manufacture of small arms and light weapons into a binding convention so that ECOWAS can hold member-states accountable for non-compliance by 2006.

9. Women with Special Needs



Constitution and Rights of Persons with Special Needs

Article 37 (2b) of The 1992 Constitution of Ghana guarantees the protection and promotion of all basic human rights and freedoms for the disabled, the aged, children and other vulnerable groups in society. Despite this provision, disabled women, widows, the aged and single mothers are denied basic rights and facilities in development proc-

esses. Society sees women as a homogeneous group, neglecting the fact that they are differentiated by age, social status, region, location, marital status and ability. As a result there is systematic insensitivity to the specific needs of different groups of women, causing further marginalisation and discrimination to the most vulnerable groups of women. Women with Special Needs suffer from a double disadvantage.

Discrimination Against Women with Disabilities

Women with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups in Ghanaian society. Although Article 29 of the constitution specifically guarantees and upholds the rights of persons with disabilities, they continue to experience oppression and violation of their basic human rights in all aspects of life. Persons who are disabled face difficulties in using or accessing physical structures, public spaces and social facilities. In addition, the disabled also have restricted access to health care, educational and employment opportunities and suffer discrimination in access to social security, welfare benefits and rights that are essential minimum conditions for a dignified life. Gender inequalities in Ghanaian society result in even greater suffering and discrimination for disabled women. They also suffer special discrimination in all manner of social and sexual relationships, including marriage. Disabled young women and girls are also particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse.

Disadvantaged Women and Equality

Other groups of women in particular social conditions such as the aged and widows have very low social status. In general, women who are seen to be outside the norm of being in good health, economically active, married, and with children - suffer some form of social stigmatising and discrimination. They often lack the minimum financial, emotional and social support available to women who fulfil the norm.

For gender equality to become meaningful to all women, the concerns of the most disadvantaged groups of women such as the disabled, the aged and widowed, must be given priority on the agenda of women's rights and the general development of the society.

We therefore demand the following:

- 9.1 That government formulate a policy that makes it mandatory for the state and other institutions- private and public, to comply with the relevant provisions of the Constitution addressing the special needs of women, especially the aged, widows and single mothers. Such policies should tackle issues of access to resources, participation in decision-making and opportunities for self-advancement and protection against all discriminatory practices.
- 9.2 That government must comply with its obligation under Article 29 (8) of the Constitution to pass the National Disability Bill before the end of 2004 and ensure its strict enforcement by 2010. Such a law should make provisions for addressing the special needs of women with disabilities and prevent gender discrimination.
- 9.3 That government by 2006 develop and implement a programme which establishes the right of women with special needs to social support, in the form of disability allowances, and special facilities such as accessible transport, physical structures and public spaces. This programme should be fully implemented by 2015.
- 9.4 That government formulate and implement laws and policies that will enable social workers to extend social services to women with special needs in their homes.
- 9.5 That government equip the Department of Social Welfare with the requisite human and material resources to enable it perform its functions efficiently and effectively.
- 9.6 That the government put in place and enforce policy and laws to protect widows, the aged and single mothers from harmful rituals, exclusion, poverty and physical insecurity.
- 9.7 That government establish community-based rehabilitation centres as a way of ensuring that disabled women are effectively integrated into their communities.

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- 9.8 That government ensure that all institutions of learning have peripatetic and resource teachers to assist students with special needs.
- 9.9 That government enforces compliance with Article 29 (4) which guarantees the protection of disabled persons against exploitation and all treatment of a discriminatory, abusive or degrading nature.
- 9.10 That special concessions such as reduced fares and the allocation of seats should be given to the aged and disabled in all transport services.
- 9.11 That women with disabilities should be given equal access to opportunities and should benefit from affirmative action. The government should formulate policies that will implement existing recommendations and laws that give equal employment opportunities for disabled women at all levels.
- 9.12 That government formulate and implement policies, which guarantee equal access to education and training opportunities for disabled women.
- 9.13 That the government should take measures to sanction men who deliberately neglect to contribute towards the upkeep of their children leaving them solely in the care of single mothers.

10. Institutions with the Mandate to Promote Women's Rights



National Machinery for the Advancement of Women in Ghana

There are several public institutions tasked with the promotion of women's rights and gender equity. These include the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD), The Commission on Human Rights

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and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), the Department of Social Welfare and the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the Ghana Police Service. These institutions have different histories and characteristics which have a bearing on how they have approached the issue of women's rights.

National governments were requested by the United Nations in 1975 to establish national machineries for the advancement of women. In Africa, different types of institutions- ministries, departments of ministries, councils and commissions were established in response to this mandate. Ghana set up the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) in 1975 to advise government on policy issues relating to the enhancement of the status of women. The NCWD promoted income generation activities and training for women and was active in promoting law reform. Its efforts culminated in the passing of the Intestate Succession Law in 1985, and the laws criminalising the harsh treatment of widows and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

In spite of its achievements, there was dissatisfaction with the NCWD's failure to provide policy leadership to build a strong foundation for gender equity work in Ghana. The institution was hampered by the lack of political influence and legitimacy, inadequate resources and donor dependence, the inability of its structures and powers to support its numerous functions and its preoccupation with income generation activities. After several years of instability, a change of government has resulted in the establishment of a Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) in 2001.

Using Ministries as National Machinery for Women's Advancement : Some Lessons

Women's rights advocates have been concerned that the government does not appear to have learned from the experience of other countries that had chosen Ministries as their form of national machinery. In several countries, this approach has resulted in the marginalisation of issues of concern to women.

This has been partly because the establishment of Ministries was taken to imply that they had to address all issues concerning women, thus absolving other state actors from having to deal with such issues. In the case of Ghana, the Ministry's mandate to address issues of concern to both women and children point to the government's lack of

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sufficient understanding of the nature of gender issues and their separate bases from children's issues.

MOWAC has not been sufficiently involved in mainstream economic policy decision making, a situation compounded by inadequate staffing and its low capacity for gender analysis and policy development. In its day to day activities, the Ministry has become an implementing body, providing credit and technical training, undertaking to sensitise the general public about gender, and organising topical forums on areas such as safe motherhood, sexual abuse and STDs. While these initiatives are important, the narrow focus of the Ministry has resulted in a vital gap in its work. It has not taken up the important role of influencing, formulating or analysing policy, nor is it representing women and gender equality concerns in policy making. As women are substantially under-represented in the key levels of decision making, this gap is all the more serious.

The Need for a National Gender Policy Framework for Ghana

Part of the problem is the absence of a national gender policy framework in Ghana. Efforts to draft such a document since the late 1990s have not been participatory or transparent.

The draft gender policy that is said to exist has not been made public. The problem is made worse by the lack of a gender policy in the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the 'umbrella' Ministry of the local government structures in the Districts.

The importance of a policy framework cannot be understated. Certain policy directives from the central government or sector Ministries receive consideration at the District level. These include an affirmative action administrative directive requiring that 50% of government appointees to the District Assemblies be women and a decision that 20% of the District Assembly Common Fund be directed towards poverty spending which, in part, targets women. As well, there is a directive from the Ministry of Education on girl child education initiatives including the Science, Technology and Math Education (STME) Clinics for girls in the Districts. All of these require an effective policy framework to guide effective implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

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From the days of the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) the promotion of actions to improve the situation of women has not been supported in any significant way by budgetary allocations from government. This state of affairs has continued with the establishment of MOWAC. The budget, as a statement of political commitment and an indication of government priorities, in 2003, allotted 9.7 billion cedis for MOWAC, representing 0.1% of the entire budget. These funds were to be augmented by HIPC funds and Women's Development Funds, but the additional amounts from these sources were unclear. Having adopted a dual focus of women and children, these funds must now be shared between the needs, priorities and interests of women and children.

While 9.7 billion cedis is an increase from the 2002 allocation of 6.7 billion cedis, no funds were earmarked for all of the MOWAC's intended work integrating a gender policy into the plans and work of the line Ministries, or for operationalising the intended new gender officer positions across the 110 districts. For the 2004 budget 20,563 billion cedis has been allocated for MOWAC, representing 0.09% of the entire budget. While a significant increase in nominal terms, this represents a proportional decrease in the funds allotted to the Ministry and the amount is not commensurate with the work expected from MOWAC. Nor will this allotment change the Ministry's donor dependent status, a problem which was experienced by its predecessor, the NCWD.

In the process of identifying the core staff needs of the Ministry, MOWAC was given a ceiling of 41 new positions for the national office. Many of these positions are yet to be filled. At the national level, the MOWAC is staffed with core personnel with expertise in planning, administration and gender and development, but overall, the Ministry requires more staff with capacity in gender analysis, policy formulation and analysis and economic rights issues.

The NCWD is now MOWAC's representative in the regions, responsible for implementing MOWAC programmes. The NCWD operates at the regional level as one of two departments of MOWAC. NCWD officers sit on the Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs), but generally not on other regional committees. There is no formal representation of MOWAC at the district level. However, some Districts have in collaboration with bilateral agencies created gender desk officer (GDO)

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positions to ensure the integration of gender equality perspectives and strategies throughout the organisation, cycle of work and the internal arrangements of the District.

There have been a number of problems in relation to the GDOs. These include the lack of clarity about their functions, how they fit into the structure of the District, the legal basis of their establishment, their expertise and capacity, and job and salary insecurities. The lack of a system for promoting gender equality within the District Assemblies is not helpful.

CHRAJ is a constitutional body which deals with administrative justice and has a mandate to investigate human rights violations and promote human rights generally. The rights of women therefore are a critical component of CHRAJ's mandate. Its availability in all the 10 regions and even some districts has served to open up more spaces for women's access to justice and protection of their human rights. CHRAJ however has problems of understaffing, inadequate logistics and knowledge gaps in gender issues.

The Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the police now has offices in all the ten regions of Ghana. This has helped to open up access to the police. WAJU has made the issue of violence against women more visible and has given a bite to advocacy on the issue. However, WAJU faces challenges of capacity and a heavy workload which undermine its effectiveness. The Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, which is part of the Ministry of Employment and Manpower Development, focuses on family welfare issues which concern women. However, it also faces challenges in relation to its orientation, staffing, resources and workload.

Civil Society Institutions and Women's Rights

Apart from government and the state institutions, NGOs and civil society institutions have been engaged in the promotion and protection of women's rights over the years. They have done this through the delivery of services, education and training and advocacy. In many ways, NGOs are filling some of the gaps in policy implementation. In relation to the field of gender equality advocacy however, NGOs have been less effective as most of them are working on a fairly new terrain, having began life as service providers.

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This is even more so as years of political instability and state repressive practices have had adverse impacts on the NGO terrain as a whole, leaving it with a weak democratic culture and timidity in its relationship with the State and its institutions. This is not helped by the donor dependency of NGOs and the perception that they are competing with the state and with each other for scarce donor funds. Their financial insecurity hampers programme autonomy and independent action and leaves them open for co-option into donor priorities and donor led initiatives. This has not been positive for women's rights activism in that much of it has become depoliticised.

The most influential civil society organisations are established and led by men. It is such organisations which participate in economic policy decision making in the limited situations where civil society organisations get involved. As their work is often not informed by a gender perspective, issues concerning women get left off the agenda. This situation is made even more difficult by the specialization of many women's NGOs in issues such as violence, legal rights literacy, gender awareness sensitisation, political participation, credit, numeracy and literacy and organisational development. What this implies is the near absence of women's voices on a wide range of economic and social policy discussions, thereby depriving them of the opportunity to influence policies for the advancement of women. As well, it prevents work on the underlying and multi-dimensional aspects of gender inequalities and weakens the abilities of NGOs to cooperate on cross-cutting issues.

Women's NGOs, the National Machinery for Women and Government

The relationship between women's NGOs on the one hand and the national machinery for women and the government on the other hand, has been difficult since the days of the National Council on Women and Development. Since the establishment of MOWAC in 2001, relations between the Ministry and advocacy NGOs have not been particularly strong.

Several NGOs have expressed concerns about the new structure and the Ministry's priorities and programmes. Apart from the absence of a gender policy framework, the Ministry's support for the work of women's NGOs has been minimal, particularly in relation to advocacy around

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the Domestic Violence Bill. The Ministry's expressed reservations about certain provisions of the Bill have made the work of the Domestic Violence Bill Coalition even more difficult.

Therefore, we demand the following:

- 10.1. That the government develop a comprehensive National Gender Policy by the year 2006 and publicise and fully implement its provisions by the year 2012.
- 10.2. The Ministry of Local Government together with District Assemblies should develop a gender policy for the District Assemblies to guide their work by the year 2006.
- 10.3. The executive should ensure that by the end of 2006, all MDAs should have structures, policies and programmes in place to address gender inequalities.
- 10.4. MOWAC should focus on its core work of generating policy, policy coordination, monitoring and evaluation of gender issues and work in all sectors and move away from project implementation.
- 10.5. The Government should ensure that the capacity of MOWAC for gender and policy analysis is strengthened through increasing its staffing levels and training core staff members by the year 2006.
- 10.6. That the executive recognises and treats MOWAC as a key Ministry with cross-cutting responsibilities and this should be reflected in national budgetary allocations and the policy influence of the Ministry across government.
- 10.7. That in the spirit of decentralisation, MOWAC be institutionally represented in the regional and district levels by the year 2006. Such offices should have adequate powers and resources to enable them to execute their mandates effectively.
- 10.8. The government should take concrete measures to insulate MOWAC from political partisanship and this should be represented in the character and composition of its board and executive positions.

- 10.9. That by 2005, the relationships between MOWAC and the NCWD and MOWAC and the GNCC be clarified and regularised to enhance their working relations and improve their effectiveness.
- 10.10. The National Gender Policy should clarify the relationships and division of labour between MOWAC and other state institutions and constitutional bodies working to promote women's rights in order to promote the effective coordination of such work and avoid duplication.
- 10.11. The government should clarify the status and functions of GDOs and their place in the District Assembly and Administration structures by the year 2006.
- 10.12. MOWAC should create a co-ordination and monitoring structure for GDOs by 2006.
- 10.13. MOWAC in partnership with the ILGS should institute an intensive training programme and continuous learning for GDOs by 2006 to enable them perform their functions effectively.
- 10.14. The government should reform institutions of State such as the courts, the police and strengthen their capacity and effectiveness for promoting gender equity through training and capacity building, adequate resource allocation by 2010.
- 10.15. MOWAC should take steps to improve its relations with women's NGOs as a matter of urgency and in the spirit of mutual co-operation.
- 10.16. NGOs and other civil society organisations should reform their organisational and work practices to promote gender equity and women's rights.
- 10.17. Mainstream NGOs and civil society organisations should improve their understanding of gender issues and involve women's NGOs more systematically in their advocacy work especially around issues of economic policy.

11. A Call to Action.



The Women's Manifesto's main demands have been directed at the executive, policy makers, politicians and political parties, parliament, the judiciary and civil society. This is because these bodies are mandated by the constitution to ensure that women's rights are respected and that they become full citizens with the same opportunities and protections as men.

However, the Women's Manifesto belongs to all women and men in Ghana who can identify with its demands. Until such women and men from every hamlet, village and town across Ghana adopt the manifesto and demand its implementation, bodies charged with ensuring that women can look after themselves and their families without destroying their health, dignity and their very lives in the process will not take this document seriously. We therefore must take full ownership of the manifesto and ensure its implementation. How each of us does this depends on our circumstances and situation in life. Therefore we should see ourselves as part of a larger movement made up of people with different opportunities and capabilities but with a common goal.

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First, we have to study the Manifesto, commit ourselves to its aims and objectives and then disseminate it in all our local self-help, social, development and religious groups. We have to discuss it in our workplaces, our homes and in our communities. We have to ask our friends on the way to fetch water at the river or borehole, in the markets, at our hairdresser's, after Friday's prayers or the Sunday service whether they know about the Women's Manifesto and whether they are planning to demand from their prospective MP what he or she plans to do regarding the demands of the Women's Manifesto.

We then need to ensure that our organisations put their weight behind the Manifesto. Local women's groups, women's NGOs, women's sections of labour organisations, political parties and religious organisations need to endorse the Women's Manifesto. We should each take responsibility for ensuring that our organisations endorse the Manifesto and begin to demand its implementation.

The most important task ahead of us in the coming years is to strengthen our coalitions and networks to ensure that they are up to the tasks of promoting, monitoring and assessing progress in the implementation of the Manifesto. Success comes to those who are organised and make demands. This is a task no one can take up on our behalf. It requires that we engage in sober reflection, learn from the experiences of others and develop a new organisational culture in a difficult terrain. Women in Ghana have a rich history of organisation and effective campaigning. We should tap into these traditions to strengthen our organisations.

To become credible ambassadors of the manifesto, we also need to change those aspects of our lives which challenge our credibility as women's rights advocates. It is wrong to initiate, participate in or condone acts of violence against others in the name of discipline, punishment or custom, and we condemn such acts in no uncertain terms even when they are done by women. The only time violence is justifiable is when it is in response to a threat to life. We are more effective in demanding rights for ourselves and for all other women when we also respect the rights of all other citizens of Ghana, irrespective of their position in society, their relationship with us and whatever problems we may have with them.

We should find positive ways of dealing with competition and contradictions amongst ourselves and not let differences degenerate into time



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consuming and unproductive conflict, fragmentation and duplication of efforts. We are stronger when we organise together and cooperate around our common goals. We are better when we protect the weak and less able amongst us, comfort and solidarise with those who have been hurt by the actions of fellow women. We are enriched by our openness and ability to maximise our diverse experiences. Apart from the obvious principles at stake here, it also disarms those who are against women's progress and who hide behind slogans such as "women are their own enemies". We reject these accusations and insist that gender inequalities cannot be blamed on its primary victims.

We have the commitment and determination to surmount all our difficulties and organise and forge ahead with the Women's Manifesto. The process has already begun. We can do it! We must do it!!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Manifesto owes its appearance to us women of Ghana, who at different points in time have shared our frustrations and pain, our humanity and optimism, our time and insights with different researchers and other categories of people. What is contained in this document is our story and we hope the perspectives and demands will result in real changes in the years ahead.

We wish to thank ABANTU for Development for initiating the Manifesto idea and for hosting the secretariat of the Coalition on the Women's Manifesto. We would also like to thank all the organisations and individuals in all the ten regions of the country who within the period from June 2003 to August 2004, worked tirelessly to contribute to the production of this document. The convenors and members of the Manifesto Steering and Drafting committees deserve special commendation for their commitment, many contributions, editorial advice and support. Special thanks to all those committed women and men who painstakingly edited earlier drafts into the final document.

This work has received financial support from a number of organisations for which we are grateful. The Ford Foundation provided core funding while the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) supported monthly press conferences to discuss the contents of the Manifesto. The FES also provided institutional support to the secretariat, paid for the cost of publishing the Manifesto, and contributed to its launch and dissemination. Actionaid-Ghana actively participated and supported consultative meetings and contributed to the launch. Third World Network-Africa (TWN-Af) and Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) supported drafting meetings, and contributed to the launch and dissemination processes. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the UN System Support for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Ghana funded consultations in the ten regions of the country. Other funders are IBIS-Ghana, the Shaler Adams Foundation, the Global Fund for Women and the African Women Development Fund (AWDF) who supported public awareness initiatives.



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Finally, we wish to thank Design Workshop Limited for the artwork and layout, undertaken free of charge as a demonstration of commitment to the initiative.

The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto has done its best to put together issues of major concern to women in Ghana. If there are any oversights, the Coalition takes full responsibility.

