



## GHANA

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**Joint submission by Defence for Children International-Ghana (DCI-Ghana), Plan International-Ghana, Women Aspire Network, Gender Centre for Empowering Development (GENCED), Erudite Women Empowerment Foundation (EWEF) and Community Aid for Rural Development (CARD) with the technical support of Defence for Children International (DCI)**

#### **About Defence for Children International – Ghana (DCI-Ghana) / [www.dci-ghana.org](http://www.dci-ghana.org)**

Defence for Children International – Ghana (DCI-Ghana) was established in 1996. Its work focuses mainly on violence against children, child justice and empowering girls and young women.

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#### **About Plan International-Ghana / [www.plan-international.org/ghana](http://www.plan-international.org/ghana)**

Plan International-Ghana runs programmes on education, economic empowerment and child protection, specifically focusing on girls.

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#### **About African Women's Development and Communication Network ( FEMNET) / [FEMNET | The African Women's Development and Communication Network](http://FEMNET | The African Women's Development and Communication Network)**

A pan- African, feminist and membership-based network based in Nairobi with over 800 members across 49 African countries.

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**About Women Aspire Network** / [womenaspirenetwork2016@gmail.com](mailto:womenaspirenetwork2016@gmail.com)

Women Aspire Network is an NGO based in Accra and registered in 2017. It works with women's rights-focused organisations and individuals. Women Aspire Network aims to support, empower and advocate for girls' and women's rights in Ghana and across Africa through education, advocacy and policy reforms.

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**About Gender Centre for Empowering Development** / [www.genced.org](http://www.genced.org)

Gender Centre for Empowering Development (GenCED) was established in May 2011, and it aims at empowering women and youth for sustainable development in communities.

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**About Erudite Women's Empowerment Foundation** / [www.eruditewef.org](http://www.eruditewef.org)

EWEF is a women-centred nonprofit organisation established in 2017 to create a world full of opportunities for women and girls in underserved communities to thrive.

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**About Community Aid for Rural Development (CARD)**

Community Aid for Rural Development (CARD) is an NGO formed in 2007 with the vision of ensuring a Ghana where every human being enjoys the right to live a decent and prosperous life. Its core programme areas include; agriculture, education, health and sanitation, gender equality and child rights advocacy.

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***\*This report is submitted as part of the She Leads programme.***

## Executive Summary

1. This report is presented by Defence for Children International – Ghana (DCI-Ghana), Plan International – Ghana, Women Aspire Network, Gender Centre for Empowering Development, Erudite Women Empowerment Foundation (EWEF) and Community Aid for Rural Development (CARD) with the technical support of the international secretariat of Defence for Children International (DCI) based in Geneva and the African Women’s Development and Communications Network (FEMNET) based in Nairobi.

This report has been developed in the context of She Leads,<sup>1</sup> a consortium that brings together child rights organisations, feminist/women’s rights organisations, and girl- and young women- (GYW) led groups in a joint effort to increase the sustained influence of girls and young women on decision-making and the transformation of gender norms in formal and informal institutions. She Leads aims to support and equip girls and young women to drive change in their countries. At the international level, She Leads works to drive policy change on girls’ and young women’s participation and to empower girls and young women to use international mechanisms to advance their advocacy.

2. This report provides an overview of past and recent developments on the implementation of girls’ and women’s rights in relation to the previous UPR of Ghana (28<sup>th</sup> session, November 2017), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments. The report also presents recommendations for the effective realisation and protection of girls’ and young women’s rights and welfare in Ghana. The report captures inputs from relevant stakeholders, non-governmental organisations and girls and young women’s groups and focuses mainly on the situation of girls and young women.
3. This submission is firmly based on the shared experiences of the stakeholders mentioned above and the experiences of girls and young women across Ghana. Fifty girls and young women from across Ghana participated in a virtual pre-UPR submission session (Focus Group Discussions) organised by the She Leads Ghana network from June 20 – 24, 2022, to draft the submission. A validation meeting was held on June 27, 2022, with girls and young women representatives from across Ghana.
4. Under its legal obligation to protect the human rights of girls and young women, Ghana has adopted several legislative, policy and institutional measures. There is, however, a stark gap between these measures and the actual practice. Girls and young women continue to suffer violations of their rights. This is attributable to the State Party’s under-prioritisation of girls and (young) women’s issues, reflected in the consistent low national budget allocation and the absence of inter-ministerial coordination on girls and women’s issues, lack of human and institutional capacity, and inadequate data, which affects the design and implementation of targeted intervention programmes. As well as weak knowledge and enforcement of laws and measures on children’s rights, especially in underserved communities.

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<sup>1</sup> She Leads is a five-year joint programme of Plan International Netherlands, Defence for Children - ECPAT the Netherlands (DCI-ECPAT), African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), and Terre des Hommes (TdH) the Netherlands, in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

5. The Ghanaian government has adopted a comprehensive framework to comply with international laws on girls' and women's rights; however, there continues to be a disconnect between legislation and implementation. Consultations with girls and young women and in-country civil society organisations reaffirmed the three leading causes of gender inequality: absence of gender-responsive laws and policies; discriminatory gender and social norms; and low participation and representation of girls and young women in decision-making processes and structures. This report concludes by strongly emphasising the need for a coordinated, self-sustaining affirmative action on policies and systems in Ghana.

## **Country context**

6. National efforts to implement gender equality laws include the promulgation of the Constitution 1992, the National Gender Policy (2015), the Gender Equality Law (2011), the Affirmative Action policies and guidelines, Domestic Violence Act 2007 (Act 732) and the National Policy and Plan for Action (2009-2019), Child and Family Welfare policy (2014) and other policy development.
7. Despite these laws and policies, girls' and young women's rights are often not respected in Ghana. Although the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) has been mandated to promote and protect the rights of women and girls, it lacks a clear mandate for inter-ministerial coordination on girls and young women-related matters. The expansion of the mandate of the MoGCSP poses an additional risk of diverting or reducing attention from girls' and women's rights. In favour of the numerous other and equally essential mandates of the Ministry.
8. Although the State Party continues to strive to educate the public on girls' and women's rights, there is limited coverage on the matter. Discussions in the media are often not accessible or tailored to the needs of underserved communities or groups in vulnerable situations. Also, girls' and women's rights content in the media is low as daily discussions are dominated by topics other than girls and young women-related issues. Periodic events like the International Day of Women, the Day of the African Child, International Day of the Girl Child and 16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence have created a platform for discussions on girls and young women's rights issues. However, these days are commemorated with events mainly at the national and regional levels, specifically in the country's Southern and Middle zone, with few events held in the Northern part of Ghana.
9. The 1992 Constitution provides Ghana's domestic legal foundation with Chapter 5 mandating the protection of the human rights of the citizenry, including women. Ghana is a state party to several related regional and international treaties and has established several legal instruments to domesticate them.
10. Ghana has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) for the protection of girls and women's rights.
11. Others include the Convention against Torture (UNCAT), the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) including the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).

12. Under domestic law, the Criminal Offences (Amendment) Act, 1998 (Act 554), Human Trafficking Act 2005, (Act 694) and the Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732) all give protection to girls and young women.

### **Priority: Girls' and (Young) Women's Rights Issues**

13. Four issues were identified among the multitudes of vulnerabilities faced by girls and young women as being the most serious and urgent issues that require action at all levels but especially by the government of Ghana. These issues are:

- **Girls' Participation**
- **Violence against Girls and (Young) Women**
- **Right to Association and Peaceful Assembly**
- **Girls and (Young) Women in Governance and Decision Making**

### **GIRLS' PARTICIPATION**

*In reference to UPR recommendations 146.142 (participation of women in political and public life); 146.123 (Right to education) 146.121, 146.123 (right to education).<sup>2</sup>*

14. National policies and legislation do not include practical guidelines to promote children's participation. The child protection process lacks guidelines on the participation of the girl child. Overall, the Ghanaian culture places great importance on age and gender hierarchy, as shown in a 2021 joint study by ODS, DCI-Ghana, Plan Ghana, WAN and GENCED, hereafter the She Leads Baseline.<sup>3</sup> The study showed that it's generally held that older people are to lead and decide in all areas of society and that age norms determine that more senior people lead and take decisions while young people should follow the elders' leadership and guidance. Young people should not (openly) disagree with their elders nor voice their opinions regarding important decisions in front of elders. These age norms count for boys and girls. However, since gender norms recognise men as authoritative figures, boys are often given more room to voice their opinions, as this is seen to prepare them for their future leadership roles. Girls are not granted this same room to rule and are thus restricted and excluded based on their age and gender. E.g. young men in Ghana can become youth chiefs, but there are no structures to support female youth chiefs.

15. The She Leads Baseline shows that discriminatory gender- and age-related social norms deny and restrict civic space for girls and young women, limiting their rights to move freely, voice opinions and engage in public life. Discriminatory norms are maintained by

<sup>2</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/367/88/PDF/G1736788.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>3</sup> [https://docs.google.com/document/d/143Y\\_EN\\_x0SaeKXdUHZ86N1sUF1iMNGm-ZMe7IEzKdyw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/143Y_EN_x0SaeKXdUHZ86N1sUF1iMNGm-ZMe7IEzKdyw/edit?usp=sharing)

traditional/religious authorities and often perpetuated by the education system and the media. Some girls' and young women's attitudes are considered defiant toward traditional norms because of who they are (different minority religion, ethnicity, sexual and/or gender identity). Those who challenge traditional norms often evoke hostility from community leaders and members, resulting in stigma, shaming, and risks of gender-based violence. The She Leads Baseline showed that many girls and young women want to speak up but fear backlash.

16. Deeply rooted gendered division of roles further hinders girls' and young women's voices, leadership and participation. The discriminatory norms determine that girls' and young women's roles and responsibilities are confined to the domestic sphere, dedicated to family and household responsibilities. This gendered role division also leads to girls and young women having less access to resources, time, skills, education, formal and informal social networks and connections that are needed to effectively participate in public decision-making, whether as a member of a civil society organisation, voter, political candidate or community leader. In 2021, DCI-Ghana and Plan International (through Songtaba), in collaboration with EWEF and CARD, conducted a field study on unpaid work with 11 GYW groups in the Northern and Middle zones of Ghana. The study shows that girls and young women are structurally overburdened with household chores and that this functions as an enormous limiting factor to girls' participation in social, political and civic activities, denying them the opportunity to voice their opinions and influence decision-making processes. The study also reveals that girls and young women carry out at least 2.5 times more unpaid household and care work than their male counterparts. This affects GYW participation in leadership and decision-making.<sup>4</sup>

**To enhance girls' participation, the government of Ghana should:**

- Operationalise the UNCRC and other legal frameworks that promote child participation, particularly the girl child, to eliminate gender and age-based discrimination against the girl child.
- Work with traditional and religious leaders, boys and men, to change harmful gender norms that hinder girls' and young women's participation in socio-cultural, political and civic spaces.
- Intensify and implement the national gender policy (2015) and the Gender Equality Law (2011) to eliminate structural barriers to gender equality, taking into account the various roles and vulnerabilities of (young) women and their level of influence in individual, household, community, national, regional and international levels.
- Support girls' and young women's participation through mentorship and leadership programmes in inclusive political processes and democratic practices.
- Employ affirmative measures to support girls and young women to participate in leadership positions in public and private spaces.
- Promote enabling an environment (legal frameworks, policies and plans) for girls and young women's participation in various processes and areas (electoral and parliamentary

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<sup>4</sup>[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EC33zH6kYsi8PAAHrjHQNuwEAah8\\_zSQ/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=116657862988574067363&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EC33zH6kYsi8PAAHrjHQNuwEAah8_zSQ/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=116657862988574067363&rtpof=true&sd=true)

processes, public administration and local governance, peacebuilding environments, etc.) at local, sub-national and national levels.

- Promote skill and capacity building of girls and young women to participate actively in democratic practices, including in local, national, and global processes (leadership training, establishing 21st-century skills, etc.)
- Intensify advocacy and educational programmes that promote positive social norms on gender roles to reduce the overburdening unpaid work of girls and young women.

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS AND (YOUNG) WOMEN**

*In reference to UPR recommendations 147.33, 146.52, 146.146 (Violence against women), 146.81, 146.144, 146.48, 146.133 (domestic violence) and 146.134 (right to education).*

17. The incidence of child marriage has been declining in Ghana, but it is still common in all regions apart from the Greater Accra Region. It is twice as common in rural areas compared to urban areas and highest among girls in the poorest households. The national prevalence of child marriage has reduced from 21% to 19%, as shown in the MICS 2017-2018.<sup>5</sup> However, child marriage is still a growing concern among Ghana's rural and urban communities. The following data shows the percentage of young women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18 by regions; Northern 28%, Upper East 28%, Volta 24%, Eastern 23%, Western 23%, Central 22%, Upper West 22%, Ashanti 17%, Brong Ahafo 17%, and Greater Accra 8%. A field study<sup>6</sup> conducted by DCI-Ghana in 2022, with 25 girls and young women working with 6 GYW groups in the Middle zones of Ghana, shows that child marriage still affects girls between 12-16 years. Poverty remains the leading cause. Other factors include early and unintended pregnancy and sexual exploitation of girls. The study also showed that perpetrators of sexual exploitation are often not reported.
18. Domestic violence remains a problem in Ghana. In the same 2022 field study, girls and young women reported an increased rate of domestic violence against girls and young women in the Middle zones of Ghana. Even though cases are reported to the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) under the Ghana Police Service, these cases are often not adequately followed up, and the full implementation of the law remains a problem. For example, perpetrators are often men with power and influence, so when cases are reported, they are often compromised. DOVVSU often does not have the means to deal with such cases, so people usually report their cases to DCI-Ghana instead.
19. The DCI-Ghana field study also revealed that female Head Poters<sup>7</sup> — women and girls who earn a living by caring goods on their heads — are often raped and defiled because they don't have access to proper and safe shelters. Most of these cases are not reported because the perpetrators are not known. Victims sometimes fall pregnant from the rape and are abandoned without access to pre-natal and post-natal care. Furthermore, they often suffer stigmatisation

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/ghana/media/576/file/Ghana%20Multiple%20Cluster%20Indicator%20Survey.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> DCI-Ghana conducted focus group discussions with girls and young women working with GYW groups on issues relating to girls' and young women's rights in June 2022.

<sup>7</sup> <https://weblog.iom.int/protecting-young-female-migrants-gender-based-violence-solar-lamps>

from family and friends.

20. Data from the MICS 2017/2018 indicates that in the domestic environment, girls experience physical violence nearly twice as often as boys. Moreover, one in five girls reported that she experienced sexual violence within the past 12 months, including rape and sexual coercion. The police, courts, social services, and the health sector are not sufficiently funded, equipped, trained, or connected to protect and support girls and young women facing violence.
21. As shown in a DCI-Ghana study, the Government has rolled out educational programmes to raise awareness about preventing harmful practices against girls and young women. Still, these programmes do not reach out to the larger Ghanaian population.<sup>89</sup> As a result, harmful practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilations, trokosi and witch camps are still practised within Ghanaian society.
22. Ghana is one of the last countries in the world that still has camps for "witches".<sup>10</sup> Some people accuse women, particularly elderly women, of witchcraft to avoid paying back a debt or when a relationship fails. Shunned by society, victims often live in dire conditions and are sexually abused by religious leaders.
23. Girls move to these camps with their mothers or grandmothers due to societal stigmatisation, thereby truncating their education. Following the public lynching of Madam Akua Denteh<sup>11</sup> in July 2020, 3 Human Rights Civil Society Organisations formed a Coalition Against Witchcraft Accusations in Ghana (COAWAG) to campaign against the labelling of persons. Two of the camps were successfully closed in 2014 and 2019. Currently, there are five remaining camps, all in Ghana's Northern and North-East regions.<sup>12</sup>
24. The country's practice of female genital mutilation/ cutting (FGM/C) is low. However, women in rural areas (3.6%) are subjected to FGM three times more than women in urban areas (1.2%). Similarly, women in the poorest quintile perform FGM/C seven times more than women in the wealthiest quintile. FGM/C decreases with age. The practice has been declining steadily, and less than one in 1,000 girls under 14 have undergone any form of genital cutting. Even though FGM/C is a severe violation of girls' rights and is thus illegal in Ghana, more than 1 in 20 girls in some regions of Ghana expressed the opinion that the practice should continue.<sup>13</sup>

**To end violence against girls and (young) women, the Government of Ghana should:**

- Effectively enforce laws on domestic violence by punishing the perpetrators and state actors who try to manipulate the system to serve as a deterrent to others.
- Establish resource counselling and rehabilitation centres for victims of domestic violence to support post-traumatic stress disorder and the reintegration process.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://mlgrd.gov.gh/mlgrd\\_test/index.php/media2/news/18-stop-sexual-violence-against-women.html](http://mlgrd.gov.gh/mlgrd_test/index.php/media2/news/18-stop-sexual-violence-against-women.html)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.mogcsp.gov.gh/16-days-of-activism-against-gender-based-violence-launched/>

<sup>10</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23420VNR\\_Report\\_Ghana\\_Final\\_print.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23420VNR_Report_Ghana_Final_print.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ghanasomubi.com/blog/ghanas-witches-camps-a-situation-of-unmet-mental-health-needs>

<sup>12</sup> <https://tsinet.org/news/tsis-report-on-alleged-witches-camps-in-ghana/>

<sup>13</sup> [https://docs.google.com/document/d/143Y\\_EN\\_x0SaeKXdUHZ86N1sUF1iMNGm-ZMe7IEzKdyw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/143Y_EN_x0SaeKXdUHZ86N1sUF1iMNGm-ZMe7IEzKdyw/edit?usp=sharing)



- Provide free legal, medical and psycho-social support to victims of domestic violence.
- Create more awareness about existing digital platforms where domestic violence and other harmful cultural practices against women and girls can easily be reported.
- Conduct, together with all relevant stakeholders, public awareness raising campaigns and educational programmes to sensitise the citizens on the various forms of violence against girls and (young) women, including those emanating from cultural practices and beliefs, and on the means for addressing child marriage, female genital mutilation, Trokosi, witch camps and other forms of violence against women and girls.
- Provide adequate resources to support the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU), the Domestic Violence Secretariat and the Domestic Violence Court to address domestic violence cases.
- Support existing girls-led platforms such as girls' clubs, peer educators' clubs, etc., in churches/mosques and communities to engage girls and young women and empower them to be active agents of change to end violence against girls and young women.
- Prioritise domestic violence cases, address them speedily and report back to the general public to win back the citizens' trust.

### **RIGHT TO ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY**

*In reference to UPR recommendation 146.142 (participation of women in political and public life), 146.62 (discrimination against women), and 146.103 (equality & non-discrimination).*

25. In Ghana, girls and young women have limited space for activism. Deeply rooted social norms and attitudes towards girls and young women restricting freedom of movement are reported as barriers to GYW's ability to access the spaces. As shown in a field study with girls and young women's groups in the Southern zone of Ghana by WAN, girls and young women activists experienced backlashes, threats and intimidation when they undertook radio discussions demanding equal treatment and opportunities as their male counterparts.
26. The disconnect between policymakers and young people is aggravated by political elites' negative stereotyping of youth. While enough lip service is being paid to the economic potential and the entrepreneurial creativity of girls and young women, they are predominantly framed and approached as potentially dangerous cadres whose aspirations and beliefs conflict with local traditions and culture. Focus Group Discussions with girls and young women revealed that discrimination and stereotypes function as significant setbacks, which impede the rights to associations and peaceful assembly of girls and young women, effectively limiting their tendency to participate in public advocacy. In a similar field study conducted by CARD with three girls and young women groups in Northern Ghana in 2022, discriminatory and restrictive gender and age norms cause low self-awareness and esteem among girls, preventing them from actively participating in associations.

**To promote the right to association and peaceful assembly of girls and young women, the government should:**

- Increase collaborative efforts with relevant stakeholders to establish more capacity development programmes that build girls' and young women's leadership and communication skills.
- Increase public awareness campaigns and education on the legal rights of girls and young women to peaceful association and assembly.
- Ensuring girls and young women and their groups and associations can safely organise, assemble, and speak out in public spaces and online.
- Guarantee girls' and young women's right to access information appropriate to their age, evolving capacities, and local language.
- Provide secure access to the internet for girls and young women and include digital literacy and security in national curricula.
- Enable girl-led groups and young feminist associations to obtain legal status if they wish through updated laws and administrative practices.
- Ensure that girls and young women enjoy at least the same level of protection against threats and intimidation during peaceful protests as their adult counterparts.
- Ensure that law enforcement agents are aware of the rights of girls and young women to the right to association and peaceful assembly and are trained to take their specific needs and vulnerabilities into account, particularly in policing protests.
- Encourage social media platforms to strengthen GBV reporting mechanisms in consultation with girls and young women.
- Provide adequate multi-year financial and material support to build the organisational capacity of girl-led groups and young feminist activists and associations.

## **GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING**

*In reference to UPR recommendations, 146.141, 146.46 (constitutional and legislative framework), and 146.42 (advancement of women's rights).*

27. Women constitute about 51.2% of Ghana's population but hold a relatively low number of seats in the national parliament. Without their effective participation in political governance and decision-making processes, the development effort will remain unbalanced. The representation of women in Ghana's Parliament continues to be very low, although records show that there have been marginal increases over the past decade and a half. The 275-member 8th Parliament, inaugurated on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021, has only 40 women MPs constituting 14.5% of the total of MPs.<sup>14</sup> According to data from Women, the 13% of women represented in the 7th Parliament [2017-2021] was far below the African average of 24% and the global average of 23%. In local government, women hold only 4% of seats in deliberative bodies.<sup>15</sup>
28. The cost in filling a nomination form for both presidential and parliamentary positions is very high in Ghana. During the 2020 elections, nomination fee for presidential aspirants were GHS 100, 000.00 (USD 17,331.02) while parliamentary forms were GHS 10, 000.00 (USD 1,733.10).<sup>16</sup> The high cost of filling for nomination becomes a barrier for capable women to apply for these

<sup>14</sup> <https://citinewsroom.com/2021/01/women-representation-in-ghanas-parliaments-infographic/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://citinewsroom.com/2021/01/women-representation-in-ghanas-parliaments-infographic/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://citinewsroom.com/2020/09/ec-opens-nominations-for-2020-polls-presidential-filing-fee-pegged-at-ghs100000/>

leadership positions.

29. Young women are hardly represented in parliament and local councils. As shown in the 2021 joint study by DCI-Ghana, Plan Ghana, WAN and GENCED, Ghana's political system fails to include the voices and opinions of girls and young women in policy and decision-making. Elderly people mostly dominate decision-making. For this reason, young women are entirely missed from formal political seats. Girls and young women are excluded from formal and informal decision-making structures because of their gender and age.
30. Institutional, socioeconomic and cultural barriers limit GYW's effective participation in democratic elections. Politics is often viewed, by both men and women, as a male domain where women will struggle to contribute. In addition, party politics tends to be dominated by men, making it more difficult for women to get on party lists for elections. As shown in the She Leads Baseline study, violence against girls and young women functions as a cultural barrier to girls' and young women's socio-political participation and serves as an instrument of oppression to ensure the subordination of girls and young women. As well as punish those who do not conform to the prevailing social norms.<sup>17</sup>
31. The Affirmative Action Bill of Ghana, enacted in 2011, has not yet been debated in Parliament. The government of Ghana adopted a national gender policy in 2015 to increase women's participation in government. A quota was set where women were to make up 40% of all state and public boards, councils, commissions, and committees. But the ambitious affirmative action guidelines are yet to yield results. The quota targets have not been met.

**To promote girls' and young women's inclusion in governance and decision-making, the government of Ghana should:**

- Speedily pass the Affirmative Action Bill to address the low representation of women in political, public, and private offices, promote gender equality, and eliminate discrimination against women.
- Intensify awareness raising and educational programmes that promote girls' and women's rights and increase girls' and (young) women's legal literacy.
- Operationalise affirmative action policies, particularly the National Gender policy (2015), to ensure girls and young women from rural poor and poor urban communities participate in political leadership and governance.
- Ensure the full and equal participation of women in all public and private decision-making, including the economic, legal, social, and political life of their communities, and control over finances and resources in line with the National Gender Policy (2015), Affirmative Action policy and the Gender Equality Law (2011).
- Create a fund to support girls' and young women's participation in political governance and inclusion in decision-making.
- Set a quota to promote girls' and young women's participation and presence in political office and decision-making at all levels; this includes the participation of young women through elected and non-elected positions).

<sup>17</sup> [https://docs.google.com/document/d/143Y\\_EN\\_x0SaeKXdUHZ86N1sUF1iMNGm-ZMe7IEzKdyw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/143Y_EN_x0SaeKXdUHZ86N1sUF1iMNGm-ZMe7IEzKdyw/edit?usp=sharing)

- Support Queen Mothers to have a representation at the National House to Chiefs to enhance women's representation and promote women's meaningful participation in traditional and national affairs.