

## POLICY BRIEF

### A Decade of Closing the Gender Gap in Ghana



stagnation in global rankings. The nation largely maintained prejudicial gender mainstreaming perceptions in the four foundational pillars of economy, education, health and political empowerment. Across the decade, the average overall gender gap in these four sectors remains virtually unchanged or marginally improved by only decimal points in achievement.

Ghana is yet to prioritize gender data collection in national statistics. This is the result of a lack of government regulations mandating gender research and training in the public sector. It has promoted a profound gender data gap at the institutional, policy and programmatic levels within most ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly (MMDAs) and statutory bodies in Ghana. As a result, few policies, programmes and interventions on gender equality in Ghana are formulated out of consistent realistic gender statistics (MoGSCP, 2017). Compounding this gross inefficiency are multifarious factors that have impeded gender equality in the last decade:

- i. Gender remains strongly associated with patterns of informal work in Ghana. Women in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Ghana are overrepresented in informal, temporary, and low-productivity jobs with low income and limited opportunities for advancement.
- ii. Despite commendable progress in

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief forms part of a trend analysis of Ghana's performance in the past decade in closing the gender gap. The result of any efforts towards gender equality in the period was unimpressive. Ghana showed stagnation in global rankings. The nation largely maintained prejudicial gender mainstreaming perceptions in the four foundational pillars of economy, education, health and political empowerment. Across the decade, the average overall gender gap in these four sectors remains virtually unchanged or marginally improved by only decimal points in achievement.

This policy brief forms part of a trend analysis of Ghana's performance in the past decade in closing the gender gap. The result of any efforts towards gender equality in the period was unimpressive. Ghana showed

education, the customary perspectives in mainstreaming and measuring gender parity persist. Other than enrolment and rural/urban access and participation, several other outcomes must be considered when examining gender differences in education.

- iii. Similar to rest of the world, Ghana still has insufficient measurement standards for addressing gender inequities in healthcare. Data for gender health gap stagnated over the decade because of similar focus on women's reproductive health. The biased focus on maternal care/mortality in the NHIS excluded other gender differences in health. Similar to much of the Sub-Saharan region, the country rarely assessed disease by gender over the past decade. Ghana rarely determines whether any diseases affect or exterminate more women than men, whether women and men have different diagnosis symptoms, whether women and men respond differently to prescription medication. This limited approach to gender health prevents raising advanced standard levels and measurement of gender differences in health.
- iv. Discriminatory low female representation in decision-making positions in government persisted over the decade. Political positions are still male-dominated and are consequently slow to respond to women's interests. Political party's campaigns are expensive, and there is critical under-investment in women's campaigns in Ghana.

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, significant progress in gender equality was achieved in many countries in the twenty-seven years after Beijing. Ghana was signatory to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 in recognition that gender parity was fundamental to development. Ghana endorsed gender equality and empowerment as "strategies for reducing poverty levels, social injustices among women and men ... (and therefore) ... achieving gender equality is regarded as the attainment of human rights and

a prerequisite for sustainable development" (MoGCSP, 2015:vii). However, over the past decade especially, overall global progress towards gender equality has been decimal, slow, and even stagnant. The study of trends in gender equality found that this dawdling progress is similarly replicated in Ghana's performance in the last ten years.

Why did growth of gender equality slow down in the last decade globally and in Ghana? Women account for half of the global labor supply and about 70% of global consumption demand, yet continue to lag behind men in economic participation and opportunity by 15 to 25 percent in even the most gender-equal societies (Tyson, 2015). By closing her gender gap to 67.9 % in 2022, Sub-Saharan Africa "females were, on average, some 32% less likely to have the same opportunities as males in the region" (Statista, 2022). After observing the rate of gender advancement in 2017, the World Economic Forum (WEF) maintained that while it took less than 40 years to put a man on the moon, it would take 170 years to put a woman in the boardroom in many businesses on planet earth (WEF, 2017). The study examined gender data from 2012 to 2022, analyzed observed patterns and sought to provide recommendations for strategic gender parity in Ghana.

A thematic, chronological, and comparative trend analysis of gender indexes was the method adopted to achieve this goal. Ghana's performance was analyzed within a global, regional and local achievement framework. The study adopted international indexes to rectify the magnitude of gender data gap at the institutional, policy and programmatic levels in Ghana, and provide consistent gender data to enable realistic trend analysis over a decade. Statistics from 2012 to 2022 from the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) of the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Reports was the main data source employed to track gender progress over the decade in Ghana. The GGGI is an internationally accepted yardstick of gender parity that provides a framework for capturing the magnitude of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress in participating countries (WEF-GGGR, 2012). Country rankings allow for effective comparisons across and within

regions and income groups, and the GGGI provides measurement ratios for national gender gaps in the four global fundamental pillars of economic, education, health and political conditions (WEF-GGGR, 2022). The GGGI score (S) benchmarks countries on their progress towards gender parity on a scale from 0 (disparity) to 1 (parity) or percentage, while the rank (R) is a collated population-weighted average that covers the number of countries featured in each year's index (WEF-GGGR, 2022). To achieve neutrality, the findings from the GGGI were compared to other globally accepted gender indexes such as the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII) of the UNDP.

### **Gender Equality: A Decade of Performance**

The last ten years of Ghana's performance in the GGGI revealed stagnating trends similar to the overall global growth in gender equality. The GGGI indicated mere decimal point improvements between 2012 and 2020 (68% - 68.6%), even dropping to 68.1% in 2022 in the overall global average index (WEF-GGGR, 2012; 2022). Ghana, comparable to global trends, likewise struggled to close her gender gap in the period. The nation's mediocre position in 2022 (R =108, S = 0.672) was not much different from the situation in 2012 (R= 101, S= 0.661). In essence, gender equality, globally and in Ghana, showed little advancement in the last decade.

Ghana's performance in gender parity within the four key fundamental subindexes of Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment showed similar patterns to global trends. From 2012, the Economic Participation and Opportunity subindex remained stagnated around 60%. Discussion of trends opted towards similarity in regional situation in much of Sub-Saharan Africa. Here, many women are employed, but are overrepresented in informal, temporary, and low-productivity occupations with low income and limited opportunities for advancement.

Invariably, the informal economy provides a better source of employment for men than for women. In Ghana where Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) are the engine of the economy, as they account for about 92% of businesses and contribute about 71% to total employment (Amoah and Amoah, 2018:1-2), Ghanaian men work in their own-account employment and mainly own their SMEs. Ghanaian women, on the other hand, are more likely to be help-outs in SMEs as spouses or relatives as this enables them to attend to household duties. The percentage of Ghanaian women who own their SMEs generally fall into a parallel situation with market sellers/traders. Both depend on informal domestic (relatives) resources for finances to maintain their business and often relapse into the subsistence earnings of precarious occupations, which have no rights and protections.

Intensive attention to gender in education culminated in Ghana experiencing progress in gender parity in education over the course of the past two decades. However, trends are similar to that of the global Educational Attainment Subindex, which measures the gender gap only in terms of female and male current access to education, and captures these ratios in primary, secondary and tertiary level education. The near parity scores of Ghana in the period is therefore predictable as governments, throughout Ghana's history, made impartial education a goal and priority. However, other educational outcomes that shape gender differences in education were not given the needed attention. Ghana's gender parity index in education in reality mainly focused on enrolment and urban-rural access. Hence, the nation's rank and score in 2022 (R=104, S=0.968) of 146 countries was only decimally different from her position in 2012 (R=113, S=0.906) out of 135 countries.

The analysis of trends in the Health and Survival subindex over the same period deceptively indicate that Ghana in 2022 (R=40, S=0.978) achieved a significant shift in ranking from 2012 (R= 105, S=0.967) with only ten decimal points change in scores. The study found that over the past decade, Ghana ascended the gender health gap principally because of her excellent maternal health care system the

National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) whose aims in gender health was similar to the global standard.

In 2012, only 20% of the global political outcomes gap have been closed (WEF-GGGR, 2012:17). In 2022, the Political Empowerment subindex only stood at 22%, indicating that there was “no overall progress ... with virtually no change in the three indicators that constitute it” even though it was “the most advocated [subindex] over the decade” (WEF-GGGR, 2022:12). Gender equality in democratic governance likewise continues to be an extremely limited experience in Ghana. To date, Ghana has never had a female political leader, and women continue to be underrepresented in politics. This is a familiar pattern across the globe where most nations, including the most democratic, human rights influential and powerful USA, have never had a female leader.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Economic: Gather gender data to establish common grounds for inequality in the workplaces

Gender disparities in the largely informal Ghanaian economy continue to locate women in vulnerable and subsistence employment. Gathering of national data to establish common grounds for gender inequality in the informal and formal workplace will commence a discussion of the gender performance process that will prevent structural disadvantages for females who often seize work-life balance opportunities.

### Education: Incorporate other educational outcomes that create gender disparities

Though female access to education has dramatically improved, gender biases still permeate Ghana's entire education system to some extent. When considering gender disparities, it is important for Ghana to decide on educational outcomes other than access and enrolment. Education has the power to create a more just, prosperous and inclusive world and, “Without achieving gender equality for girls in education, the world has no chance of achieving many of the ambitious health, social and development targets it has set for itself” Kofi Annan, 2005

### Gender Health Gap: Look beyond women's reproductive health

Ghana's ideas for closing gender gap in health is similar to the rest of the world; both conceptualize and measure gender disparities in health mainly in terms of women's reproductive health. However, women's childbearing roles do not constitute the whole of gender gap in health. Global research support other gender disparities in health, citing gender differences in healthcare patterns and the type of medical service used, gender differences in diseases diagnosis and impact of treatments (see e.g. EIGE, 2021, Alcalde-Rubio et al. 2020). Gender “can influence a person's experiences of crises and emergency situations, their exposure to diseases and their access to healthcare, water, hygiene and sanitation” (WHO, 2021).

### Political Empowerment: Monitor and evaluate gender strategies to assess which works

Ghana needs to prioritize gender equality through groundbreaking empowerment strategies. Planning and implementation of gender sensitive strategies together with the systematic monitoring and impact evaluation of the implemented strategy will help programmers find innovative gender policies to advance gender equality in politics.

## REFERENCES

Alcalde-Rubio, L., Hernández-Aguado, I., Parker, L. A., Bueno-Vergara, E., Chilet-Rosell, E. (2020). Gender disparities in clinical practice: are there any solutions? Scoping review of interventions to overcome or reduce gender bias in clinical practice. *International Journal for Equity in Health* (2020) 19:166. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-020-01283-4>

Amoah, S. K. and Amoah. A. F. (2018). The Role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to Employment in Ghana. *International Journal of Business and Economics Research*. Vol. 7, No. 5, 2018, pp. 151-157. Doi: 10.11648/j.ijber.20180705.14

European Institute for Gender Equality. (2021). EIGE-2021 Gender Equality Index 2021 Report: Health. Available from: [file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/european\\_institute\\_for\\_gender\\_equality\\_-\\_gender\\_and\\_intersecting\\_inequalities](file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/european_institute_for_gender_equality_-_gender_and_intersecting_inequalities)



in\_access\_to\_health\_services\_-\_2022-01-27.pdf

GhanaWeb. (2020). Women are underrepresented in Ghana's political life – EU Election Observation Mission. December 13, 2020. Available from: <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Women-are-underrepresented-in-Ghana-s-political-life-EU-Election-Observation-Mission-1132247>

Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection MoGCSP. (2017). Assessment of Gender Statistics at National and District Levels. Report on Findings. Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in Collaboration with Ghana Statistical Service. January 2017.

Ministry Gender Children and Social Protection MoGCSP (2015). National Gender Policy: Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Women Empowerment into Ghana's Development Efforts. Available From: <https://www.mogcsp.gov.gh/mdocs-posts/national-gender-policy/>.

McKinsey Global Institute. January 1, 2015. Promoting gender parity in the global workplace, by Laura D'Andrea Tyson. Available from:

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/promoting-gender-parity-in-the-global-workplace>

Statista. (2022) Gender gap index in Sub-Saharan Africa 2022, by country. By Lars Kamer, Aug 1, 2022. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1220485/gender-gap-index-in-sub-saharan-africa-by-country/>

World Economic Forum. (2022). Global Gender Gap Report 2022. Available from: [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2022.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf)

World Economic Forum. (2017). The Global Gender Gap Report 2020. Available from: [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf)

World Economic Forum. (2012). The Global Gender Gap Report 2012. Available from: [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GenderGap\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2012.pdf)

World Health Organization. (2021) Gender and Health. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/gender-and-health>

Photo credit (page 1): Freepik

---

**Researcher:**

Elizabeth Asiedua Asante (PhD)  
ISSER, University of Ghana  
[eaasante@ug.edu.gh](mailto:eaasante@ug.edu.gh)

\*A full version of the content of this policy brief can be found in the Ghana Social Development Outlook 2022

**Acknowledgment:**

ISSER gratefully acknowledges the support provided by the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) for the research summarised in this policy brief, and associated dissemination activities.

**Published by:**

Institute of Statistical, Social, and Economic Research (ISSER), University of Ghana  
P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra  
Tel: (+233) 057 7699900; (+233) 057 7699902  
Email: [isser@ug.edu.gh](mailto:isser@ug.edu.gh)  
Website: [www.isser.ug.edu.gh](http://www.isser.ug.edu.gh)



**Editorial review & Design:**

Vicentia Quartey  
([vquartey@ug.edu.gh](mailto:vquartey@ug.edu.gh); +233 244 766492)