



NETWORK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GHANA (NETRIGHT)

YEARLY REVIEW
ON THE STATUS
Of WOMEN
IN GHANA 2009 - 2018





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(Mobilising for Women's Rights in Ghana)

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Since the year 2003, Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) has been organising End of Year Event to assess the extent to which women's concerns have gained attention in the public space during the year.

PREFACE

This publication is a collection of NETRIGHT's End of Year Review Reports from 2009 to 2018. A significant contribution of NETRIGHT to women's rights and gender equality work in Ghana is the annual review event held as the year draws to a close. Instituted in 2003 with the mandate of members, NETRIGHT has used the public End of Year Review Event to share its work, highlighting achievements and acknowledging challenges with a wider audience beyond its membership. In addition to the review paper the End of Year Event includes awards to individuals and organisations for their outstanding contributions to the promotion of women's rights.

As a key event the annual review report provides an "Assessment of Issues of Concern to Women" in the year. All overview reports cover achievements, challenges and prospects and offer recommendations for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights work in the ensuing year. Reviewers are women and men playing key roles in the struggle for women's rights and gender equality in Ghana with a clear conceptual and political understanding of the issues they address. The rich information in the reviews enjoins NETRIGHT to offer them in a publication that can reach a wider reading audience beyond invited guests at the public end of year events. This publication therefore offers a rare opportunity to document for further distribution the rich store of information on the status of women in Ghana. Though the focus is Ghana, reviewers capture global and continental events shaping women's status in Ghana. This connection is important because it offers the opportunity to reach out and network with struggles beyond our national borders and also allows the network to feed into global events that inform the policy landscape in Ghana.

NETRIGHT is grateful to all the reviewers, partners, the media, public and the entire membership and secretariat for their diverse contributions in sustaining the successful celebration of the annual End of Year Events.

It is NETRIGHT's pledge to continue to mobilise women across the country to promote gender equality and women's rights and advocate policy change.

Patricia Blankson Akakpo
Programme Manager

PROFILE OF REVIEWERS

Agnes Atia Apusigah holds a Ph.D from Queen's University at Kingston, Canada with a major in Cultural Studies and minor in Curriculum Studies. She is currently an Associate Professor in Cultural and Gender Studies and the Dean of the Faculty of Education of the University for Development Studies, Tamale. Her research work is in the areas of the political economy of development, educational reforms and policies, gender issues and indigenous knowledge systems. She is also a gender activist and member of the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) and the Association for Women in Development (AWID). Her work in the area of gender includes providing programming support to women's rights and gender equality organisations.

Akosua Keseboa Darkwah is a senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology of the University of Ghana. She has served as a board member of the Ark Foundation, and is currently the Deputy Convenor of NETRIGHT. She is a member of the Public Interest and Accountability Committee (PIAC).

Angela Dwamena-Aboagye is a lawyer, a Christian theologian and the Executive Director of The Ark Foundation, Ghana. The Ark is a non-profit organisation that provides psycho-social services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and runs a battered women's shelter, the first of its kind in Ghana.

Chris Dadzie is a senior lawyer, human rights and gender advocate, educator and a mediator. She is currently a Policy Analyst with oversight for human rights and gender in the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC). She previously worked as an Army officer and Assistant Director of Legal Services in the Ghana Armed Forces, Director of the Legal and Investigations Department and later of Public Education and Anti-Corruption in the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ). She is a member of NETRIGHT, FIDA-Ghana, WiLDAF, Actionaid, and Ghana Association of Chartered Mediators and Arbitrators.

Hilary Gbedemah is a Lawyer, Gender Consultant, and Training Specialist – with thirty-seven years' legal experience comprising private legal practice, lecturing in law, administration and advocacy. She is currently an Expert on the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination

against Women (CEDAW Committee) and has extensive experience in its thematic areas. She works as Rector of Ghana's premier vocational law training institute, The Law Institute which provides training in Paralegal Studies, Corporate Governance, Entrepreneurship, Human Rights Law, and capacity-building for a wide range of organisations. Her work also involves advocacy, policy development, training, and mentoring. She is a member of several advocacy groups including NETRIGHT, Women's Manifesto Coalition (WMC) and the Domestic Violence Coalition (DV Coalition).

Hamida Harrison has been a University lecturer as well as working for many years in the areas of building and promoting a human rights culture and gender equality. She is the Resource Mobilisation and Sustainability Manager for ABANTU for Development, a women's rights policy advocacy group and a founding member organisation of NETRIGHT. She holds Masters Degrees in development administration and development communication. She is very interested in governance issues and the gendered implications of Foreign Aid and Foreign Direct Investments. She currently serves as the Convenor of the Women's Manifesto Coalition for Ghana, an advocacy platform for the political non-partisan document that outlines broad women's rights issues of concern demanding redress.

James Dakyi Clayman is a medical practitioner (Specialist Obstetrician/Gynecologist). He is the Director of Savemum Foundation which provides education on the prevention of pregnancy associated deaths. Dr. Clayman is also the Director of the Child Protection Team - LEKMA. He is the chairperson of the Gender Violence Survivor Support Network (GVSSN) and a member of NETRIGHT and the Domestic Violence Coalition. His research and advocacy interest include promotion of reproductive health rights and ending gender-based violence in Ghana. Dr. Clayman provides medical support for victims and survivors of domestic violence.

Akua Opokua Britwum (PhD) is an Associate Professor at the Department of Labour and Human Resource Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. She previously served as the Director of the Centre for Gender Research, Advocacy and Documentation. She also held the position of Convenor of NETRIGHT from 2010 to 2016. Her research and publications are in the area of gender and labour relations. She is currently engaged in a research project exploring social reproduction at end moments within rural economies in Ghana and South Africa. Her most recent publication is: Britwum Akua O. (2018) Organizing

Rural Women in Ghana since the 1980s: Trade Union Efforts and ILO Standards in Boris, E; Hoehtker, D and Zimmermann, S (Eds) *Women's ILO, Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present*. Lieden: Brill

Ann Dela Apekey has many years' experience in leading on gender under various thematic areas in Africa, including international labour standards, agriculture, youth and social development. She currently works as a gender consultant for International organisations including FAO, ILO Banana link and IUF.

ACRONYMS

ABANTU	ABANTU for Development
AMSECs	Agricultural Mechanisation Services Centres
AWD	African Women's Decade
AWID	Association of Women in Development
BpfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CPDE	CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Support Unit
DV Coalition	Coalition on Domestic Violence Legislation in Ghana
FIDA Ghana	International Federation of Women Lawyers Ghana
GCC States	Gulf Cooperation Council States
GNCM	Ghana National Commission on Migration
GVSSN	Gender Violence Survivor Support Network
ISODEC	Integrated Social Development Centre
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
LOGODEP	Local Governance and Development Program
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
NETRIGHT	Network for Women's Rights in Ghana
NMP	National Migration Policy
SSNIT	Social Security and National Insurance Trust
TWN Africa	Third World Network Africa
UN CSW	United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
VSLs	Village Savings and Loans Scheme
WiLDAF Ghana	Women in Law and Development Ghana
WMC	The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana

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The Year 2009 in Perspective: Critical National Issues and their Implications for Gender Justice

Agnes Atia Apusigah

INTRODUCTION

The year 2009, has been quite an eventful one both, locally (national) and globally. For us as NETRIGHT and a women's rights group, 2009 has been special in our history of struggle. It is a landmark year for us as we mark our 10th anniversary. We share this landmark with many others. Those relevant to us are the 10th anniversary of the 16 Days of Activism on Violence against Women, which we share with the Global Women's Leadership Centre of Rutgers University and the violence against women (VAW) movement, globally. Again, we celebrate 30 years of CEDAW; the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. There are probably many more global landmarks of interest. Locally, we join one of our network partners, Women in Self Empowerment (WISE), to celebrate their 10th anniversary this year. Yet another big celebration of relevance for us is the marking of the 100th anniversary of the birth of the first president of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. During his presidency, Dr. Nkrumah, sought to include women by, among other things, initiating and implementing what we now call affirmative action. He expanded legislative representation by introducing and enforcing the women member's bill which led to the election of 10 women representatives to the then legislature.

As we celebrate these landmarks and reflect on the roads that have been travelled, we are reminded not only of the hills and valleys but also the plains. We are reminded of our triumphs and setbacks as well as our allies and

detractors. All these have shaped the path on which we have travelled and should determine our maturity. Undoubtedly, NETRIGHT has matured in the last 10 years. Starting as a small network it has blossomed into a nationally and internationally recognised movement and activist platform of Ghanaian women working to demand and increase their rights and those of the disadvantaged many.

Indeed, we live in a period of great and grave turmoil. We carry with us in this landmark year huge economic burdens in the form of the global economic meltdown, as defined in the financial, oil and food crises. The triple whammy! While the worse of the food and oil crisis seem to be over at this point, that for finance lingers on, although with considerable reduction. These have implications on the form of development partnerships, programming support and project interventions for the many deprived communities and groups, especially women and their rights infringements.

The rise in religious fundamentalism, ethnic conflicts and civil wars and, lately the gradual creeping back of militarism and despotism in countries such as Somalia, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Guinea and Mali, all work to promote patrimonial and patriarchal leadership and ideologies that are not only detrimental to women's causes but also national, regional and global progress towards sustainable and equitable development. Yet, all is not lost as the challenges of the time have also unleashed activism that serve to clarify and intensify the resolve to demand socio-economic options that can result in dignifying living and sustainable livelihoods. The mobilisation and exhibition of resistances around the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) of the European Union (EU) and recent climate change talks confirm the heightening of counter-insurgence on the part of civil society organisations, activist movements and even Third World nations.

When I was invited to conduct the review, I gladly agreed but when I began to think of it, I shuddered as I became unsure what I could really say. I became alarmed when the guide arrived. It was a rather tall order. I wondered how much I could cover and the extent of depth expected of me. I hope you are not too disappointed. I can however assure you that I have tried to follow the guide as much as possible. I know, however, that there is a lot more that could have been included but pardon me to share this as food for thought only. In this review, I look at a couple of things. I start with an examination of the critical global, regional and national events that have been of relevance to us and

women's rights advocacy during the year 2009. I then move on to focus on specific events that have promoted or undermined gender equality and women's rights work in Ghana. This is followed by a review of NETRIGHT @10, under which I look at our triumphs and challenges and continue with a celebration of our 'sheroes.' The review ends with proposals for 2010.

CRITICAL INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL ISSUES

I will like to start off by proposing that as eventful as the year has been, in the general scheme of things we have not really shifted goal posts. We still have to contend with the same old regime, patriarchal machinery and architecture, which persist in undermining and retarding progress on social justice and gender equality. What we can say also, however, is that after 10 years and the specific experiences of the year, what has changed is our need and recognition to remain resolute in our commitment and strategies to keep the struggle afloat. This is not intended to minimize our gains and achievements or deny progress but to suggest that the struggle has become more and more sophisticated requiring sharper and more strategic tools.

We still live in a world where neo-liberal economics continue to dominate development thinking with the market place (in spite of its demonstrated deficiencies) and might of nations overruling any sense of justice and rights. While there is the general appreciation of justice and rights for all as provided for under global, regional and national frameworks such as the UN Charter, African Charter and national constitutions, these remain superficial. The same tokenism and lip service continue to characterise practice and to slow down progress. What has changed, however, is perhaps the resolve and urgency of deprived and vulnerable constituencies in their resistance and challenge of domination as they intensify their demands for dignifying lives and rights to life and safe livelihoods. These are observable in the many events that occurred during the year, some of which I share next.

In April this year, in London, the United Kingdom, where the G20 Leaders Summit took place, reference was made to the effect that growth should be shared and not concentrated on a few. The third point of the Statement communicated to the rest of the world states that:

We start from the belief that prosperity is indivisible; that growth, to be sustained, has to be shared; and that our global plan for recovery must have at its heart the needs and jobs of hard-working families, not just in developed countries but in emerging markets and the poorest countries of the world too; and must reflect the interests, not just of today's population, but of future generations too. We believe that the only sure foundation for sustainable globalisation and rising prosperity for all is an open world economy based on market principles, effective regulation, and strong global institutions.

While the point is forthright at its opening on the need to take social justice and equity and sustainable development more seriously it downplays its own role in creating social inequalities and injustice. Indeed, social justice and equity are key issues that underpin our struggle for women's rights and gender equality. Our advocacy and claims are staked on grounds of long but varying histories of discrimination and non-distributive benefits sharing, hence we should be lending total support to the G20 for speaking right. However, in that same opening statement one finds grim revelations. Basically, the G20 suggests that the rest of the world is a market place. Just after such honest and heartwarming tribute, the G20 soon puts on its traditional neo-liberal cloak to make prescriptions that centre on the same old globalising and market principles, which purport to be free, open and equitable. In truth, those principles favour the industrialised world to the detriment of industrialising countries or emerged economies and the rich compared to under industrialised countries, stagnating economies and the poor. In fact they create and exploit the conditions of the poor to the benefit of the rich and affluent.

The same old paternalism is upheld as poor nations and peoples are left at the mercy of the handouts and cut-throat trade relations such as those offered under the EPAs. In spite of the unpleasant example of the yet-to-recover financial crisis and stark evidence that non-capitalists economies have held up better compared to capitalist ones in the face of the current economic failures and financial crises, the G20 persists in proposing the same old recipe. Their favourite admonition not to protect the market cannot be missed. Yet, it was to China that the USA turned to when it resorted to social financing to manage its economic crisis. It has been social financing that has shown indication of managing the grim situation and getting the USA economy on the path of recovery. Suddenly, socialist values have become viable and useful alternative to such a rabid capitalist economy.

A few months ago, the newly appointed British High Commissioner proffered similar agenda when on a familiarization tour to the University for Development Studies, Wa campus, Ghana he suggested that we marketise our economy and liberalise our values, as if that was not the case already. Well, more is often better! It makes one wonder whether any lessons have been learned from the exposures of the weaknesses of the market model, which had appeared to be solid and unsinkable a few years back! Media reports show that China and Mozambique are holding up while huge economies and spenders such as the USA and UK are crumbling. That the USA had to adopt socialist strategies in the period of austerity speaks volumes not just to the resilience of the social justice model but also to the weaknesses of its competitor and dominator; the capitalist, neoliberal model.

The collapse of the neoliberal model, which has been long criticised by anti-globalisation and public interest groups such as the Green Movement, Social Watch and Corporate Watch was given impetus especially in the case of Africa with the publication of *Dead Aid* early this year by a Zambian and just exited UN system economist, Dambisa Moyo. Moyo's strong criticism of the inefficacy of aid in Africa's development, which she says damages rather than promotes progress, end in the suggestion to end aid to Africa. This has been met with mixed reviews. Her strongest critiques have been African development economists and civil society organisations, many of who condemn the weaknesses in her thesis and simplicity of her proposal. Yet, for the many African countries including Ghana who are dangerously aid dependent, the year-on-year anxieties over budget shortfalls, struggles with donors over controls and the continual trade-offs in national sovereignty and the disregard for human dignity continue to raise concerns for pro-poor development activists.

Here in Ghana, the hiking fuel and food costs as well as the inflationary and exchange rate volatility issues are just a few of the spill-overs and spin-offs from the global crisis. The hiking interest rates and growing exchange rates have not only served to skew the national budget but also distorted the national growth path. Both CEPA (2009) and ISODEC (2009), in their analysis have expressed concern, among other things, on the implications for social spending and programming. Both CEPA and ISODEC have been concerned about the implications for the pro-poor development agenda in terms of employment and incomes but also social spending, typically in education and health. Even the

World Bank and IMF have been concerned about the slow-down of Ghana's growth and ability to meet its targets in the coming year.

Also, Ghana's much celebrated election success has been marked with expectations of stabilisation and pro-poor deliveries that would benefit vulnerable and excluded groups. The election promises of infrastructural improvements, increased social spending, expanded equity targeting and the enhancement of practical benefits in terms of employment and incomes for the poor, enhanced living conditions and improved socio-economic circumstances are fast becoming a mirage. In place, the global economic meltdown has become an important explanation to the non-start of slowed-down responses to the critical livelihood support needs of the broader masses of the people.

Politically, we have witnessed political/ideological shifts in Ghana and USA although in principle it is the same agenda that drives both. The ascent to high office of Barack Obama, a democrat, as the 44th President of USA offered a lot of hope in anticipation of change in the role of USA in global politics. The bad taste and bitterness that characterised the latter Bush years gave many Americans and even non-Americans the motivation for change and expectations.

The expectations of better appreciation of social justice, better global diplomacy and fairer trade relations especially with the Third World have been high on the wish list. Many non-West, especially Africans, had monitored the elections closely perhaps with the hopes Obama's USA, led by a person of partial African descent, will translate into direct interest in and fairness in its relations with Africa and its people. Obama's political ascendancy has thus marked a proud moment and an era of hope for all nations and peoples of colour but especially so for Africa.

The Obama family visit to Ghana in July this year was thus well celebrated. The choice of Ghana over Kenya, the nation of Barack Obama's African ancestry and Nigeria the next biggest African economy after South Africa has been severally interpreted. Ghana's commitments to democracy: respect for ballot box elections, rule of law and human dignity as well as modest successes in socio-economic liberalisation and track record of peace in an ocean of civil strife and mass conflicts, have been cited, among others, as motivating President Obama's choice of Ghana over others. The understanding that his life and experiences will guide his interpretation and appreciation of the realities of African peoples and their development as well as those of the rest of the Third World is

suggestive of the expected sympathies to the causes and voices of liberation and struggle for inclusion and square-dealing in global politics and economics.

Similar expectations have been made of the Atta Mills administration, which came to office on the promise and appeal of improved politics and economics. The campaign promise to improve the plight of the deprived through the broadening and equitable sharing of national wealth remains high on the wish list of the masses of the people who bought into that appeal. For the women's movements and civil society who followed, monitored and participated actively in the processes of change, expectations are still high amid widespread criticism of lack of rapid response to pressing issues. For the women's movement, the promise of greater equity in terms of socio-economic benefits in the areas of health, education and trade but also policy and political participation are being keenly watched in anticipation that those promises can be fulfilled.

Climate Change

Another important happening is the just ended Copenhagen, Denmark conference on climate change. The tug of war and battle of lords and servants was brought to its peak at that meeting with much anxiety and uncertainty as well as promise and hope. I believe we have all followed closely the tussle between industrialised and industrialising countries. The controversial stances of emergent powers such as China and India and the role of Africa in resisting the dismissive and dominating positions of the industrialised economies as well as the special role of USA, under Obama in the negotiations and the resulting settlements. From Kyoto to Doha and now Copenhagen, the one clear thing has been the reluctance of industrialised nations to take responsibility for their role in global warming and climate change by acting responsibly to mitigate change by cutting emissions. Yet, the reckless materialism and consumerism and their implications for waste production, irresponsible disposal and deforestation remain important reasons for Third World interest in the climate change debate. The disappearance of forests and loss of agrarian livelihoods and the implications for farm families, pastoral peoples and poor women remain grave concerns motivating interest in the climate change debate and negotiations.

Although Ghana as a nation was duly represented by the president and his team and civil society as well, so was the women's movement in Ghana and elsewhere. Abantu for Development, a leading NETRIGHT member was part of the process and has come back hopefully to share and work locally to keep the gender factor in the discussion. The implications in terms of food security,

environmental safety, fuel energy and bio-cultural diversity all have gender implications that the women's movement in Ghana and elsewhere cannot afford to gloss over. Our experiences in mining, logging, real estate development and commercial farming all have implications for the subsistent livelihoods of our constituents.

In this time that Ghana's Oil and Gas industry is emerging in addition to the already grave concerns about the wanton exploration of our mineral sources through surface mining and the resulting loss, destruction and pollution of farmlands and water bodies by concessionaries must be watched. The erosions and losses attributable to this new and emerging extractive industry must be the concern of all but especially the women's right movement and our advocacy on sustainable livelihoods, human security and ecological balance.

Conflict, Peace and Security

Widespread conflicts and wars or rumours of them and the arising insecurities of the peoples who live in such areas across Africa should raise concern for us of the women's movement. The loss of life and wanton destruction of property and livelihoods are the plight of many generations of families growing up without any sense of peace time living. In Eastern Europe, Asia, South America and especially Africa conflicts and wars are widespread. Resource, ethnic and civil conflicts and wars abound on the Africa continent and in all regions; northern, southern, west, eastern and central Africa. The preponderant ones such as those of Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia and Congo DRC have made their mark in the annals of the continent. The now contained ones of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte D'Ivoire as well as the pockets of conflicts and wars in Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroun need to be still watched closely.

For us as a women's rights movement our concerns go beyond the material losses. The abuses that women suffer in terms of sexual violence and violations of the body extend our interests in peace and concerns about conflicts and war. The UN Security Council's 2009 Report on Women and Conflict captured the increasing and widespread use of violence against women and girls in the conflict areas of nations such as Rwanda, Congo DRC, Sudan, Somalia and Uganda. Not only are the affected and survived women citizens of Africa living through the insecurities, material and physical losses as well as humanitarian crises, they are also likely to suffer additional violations such as rape and related sexual abuses from armed combatants, security forces, relief workers and fellow refugees.

Here in Ghana, we live through our own share of conflicts and wars and their attendant violence. Even though Ghana has been celebrated as an island of peace in the highly unstable and volatile West African sub-region, it has its own share especially in the north regions and in the Dagbon and Bawku areas, specifically. This is not to discount the many others in the rest of the regions especially in the Volta, Brong Ahafo, Western and Greater Accra. These unstable conditions among already poor people, explain, among others, the continued impoverishment of the people even in times when the nation seems to be making significant progress economically. The violations of women and their bodies had hit news waves recently with incidences such as the witch camps of Gambaga and elsewhere. Yet such violations are not new.

Taken together, I can only say that the year 2009 has been one of struggle with implications for women's rights and gender equality.

IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

As already noted the implications are mixed, positive and negative. A number of precise and decisive actions and interventions have been witnessed throughout the year, that are worth celebrating even as we celebrate NETRIGHT and all the others that we celebrate today.

Globally, we have witnessed decisive actions on the part of the UN and its agencies to respond to women's rights and development issues as well as gender commitments. For instance, in July this year, the head the UN, Ban Ki Moon recognised rape as genocide. The cases in Rwanda, Uganda and elsewhere were informative. This is good news even for us in Ghana, especially as we deal with the case of witch camps but also the many other conflict-related violence and even beyond such as the day light rape earlier this year and the rampant raping of women and girls, lately. The Media, our key allies in the process, have helped surface such violation with reports involving even children as young as four years. NETRIGHT and some of its network members as well as MOWAC moved swiftly to condemn such actions through press releases and conferences. The Media have also been very instrumental in publicising such interventions.

On the 10th anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women and 16th Days of Activism, an initiative dubbed Men Leaders against Violence was inaugurated comprising influential men in politics, commerce and industry, media and high society, who have committed to champion the cause. Here in Ghana, the Domestic Violence Coalition, under a male leadership, has continued to lead and press for improvement in the handling of domestic violence among other forms of violence. This initiative extends growing recognition of the role of men or women's partnership with men to stop domestic violence and violence against women. Groups such as Men's Network against Domestic Violence, Seattle, Washington, USA; Men for Gender Equality Now, Kenya; Men Engage Alliance Africa and Ghana Network of Men against Domestic Violence are some examples of male leadership and work with women to end violence against women. This initiative dates back to the Beijing 1995 Global Women's Forum and the Platform of Action, which is up for the 3rd term review next year. In her recent book, Olivia A.T.F. Kwapong (2009) details the genesis, need and framework for men and women to work together for gender equality.

Also, for us in Africa some key appointments should broaden our hope. An African woman, Rashida Manjoo, a South African Legal practitioner has been appointed UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. This adds to the earlier appointment of yet another African woman, Navanathen Pillay, as Commissioner of the Office of Human Rights. Women in North Africa, the magreb, like others elsewhere, have also intensified their activism on citizenship and bodily integrity. Aminatou Haidar of the Saharoui Arab Democratic Republic's hunger strike to protest her return to her home country is one epoch experience.

Also, this year, the UN has hosted a webinar on the finalisation of Women's Empowerment Principles. These principles are expected to guide the UN and its systems in their work toward greater gender equality. While we embrace such global efforts, we in Africa are already ahead on two counts. One is the African Feminist Charter and the various country chapters which set out regional and socio-culturally specific adaptations, respectively. The other is the Women's Manifesto Movement of Ghana, Namibia and elsewhere, which already make available such principles and more. During the 2008, electioneering campaign, the Women's Manifesto of Ghana was brought alive and cited by campaigners and promises were made. We will be tracking progress as the years roll on.

Also, as part of the preparation for Beijing Plus 15, African Ministers of Women/Gender have met in Banjul, the Gambia, to access and strategise for the global conference. This moment of accountability pushes the ministries as representatives of government and women to take stock but also align with the larger body to push the women's rights agenda forward. The flagship publication, the African Women's Report by the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) is revealing of the extent to which, African governments and institutions have been committed or not to women's rights expansion. This year's Report revealed among others "the difficulties countries are having with respect to the full realization of women's rights due to the persistence of negative cultural and religious beliefs and attitudes toward women" (ECA, 2009). This unhappy picture is an indictment on the commitments of our governments and leaders but more importantly vindicates our struggle for women's rights and gender equality.

Locally, some significant happenings are worth crediting this year. These include the appointments of women into public office following the change of government in 2008. While we continue to forge ahead in our advocacy for broader women's representation and inclusion of women's needs, interests and aspirations in national development planning, it is worth acknowledging the progress that we have made lately in the form of the appointment of four women into Cabinet positions, namely, the ministers of Women and Children, Environment, Justice and Attorney General and, Trade and Industry. Although short of the 40 percent promised during the electioneering campaign, this has been an increase by 50 percent over the last Cabinet. Overall, however the trend remains the same. Women remain woefully under-represented in the ministries and public boards. In spite of that, we cannot afford not to celebrate the breakthrough in getting the first woman Speaker of Parliament.

Another important happening is the renewal of efforts to promote gender budgeting in Ghana. In 2005, the then Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, the late Kwadwo Baah-Wiredu of Blessed memory, adopted the gender budgeting approach. Efforts were made to pilot the process under the joint leadership of MOWAC and MOFEP in the Education and Health sectors. Capacities were built and plans set to roll out. With the current change of political leadership, an announcement has been made to scale up the process. We can only hope that government will tap into existing expertise within the women's movement and CSOs such as ISODEC in order to expedite action. NETRIGHT has already, under its Economic Justice Capacity Building

Programme, built the capacities of its members for organisational practice and programming support while awaiting the national level initiative which, we know, would benefit from our network expertise.

It also appears that the gap between the women's movement and the national machinery is closing up. Starting from the last administration when collaboration between the two parties were invigorated we are seeing even closer collaboration. This augers well for the two parties in their harmonisation and alignment of plans and agenda. It also aids the push for support and complementary in our pursuits. Indeed, as in the previous administration, the women's movement, with its strong belief in the indivisibility of the rights of women, strives to maintain a non-partisan stance. The movement has continued to take proactive steps to engage with government and the Ministry in attempts to influence and set common and/or complementary agenda. This year NETRIGHT, the Coalition on Domestic Violence and Coalition on the Women's Manifesto, did not only congratulate the minister but also issued a joint statement outlining their interests and agenda for the attention of MOWAC. The minister and her Ministry have since reached out in a number of ways to involve the Movement.

The continuous reaching out to build bridges from both sides is a well deserved effort. It places high the need to build on and work with institutions rather than parties and politicians whose terms are limited and who in their usual conquering posture and partisan enthusiasm are likely to throw out initiatives, even if laudable. It is a mark of our learning from experience of the uncompromising nature of women's rights advocacy and the need to sustain such commitments by building formidable links that can stand the test of time. A much earlier recognition and reciprocity would have saved us the setbacks encountered with the Affirmative Action Framework of 1998, which is currently being reviewed.

On policy, work is also ongoing regarding the Spousal Rights to Property Bill, which has been in the works for a while and currently waiting to be considered by Parliament. I have been impressed by the non-partisan approach of the Committee on Women and Children, the Women's Caucus and other institutions of the House and Legislature as well as civil society who are not only building capacities and creating awareness but are also lobbying support for the Bill when eventually laid. A related effort to review the Intestate Succession Law would help improve women's rights to inheritance and

property and thus serve to protect women's interests and improve their economic situation in and after relationships.

These and many more have and will continue to shape discourse and advocacy on women's rights.

NETRIGHT @ 10

It has been 10 years since NETRIGHT came into being. The well meaning and thoughtful women who conceived of and worked to bring it to being shared the vision of enhancing women's rights. Today as we look back, there is a lot to see. We can see the chequered road travelled filled with the trials and tribulations but also triumphs and inspiration. We could choose to focus on the pain, sweat and hurts. But, we could also choose to look at the positive aspects that call for celebration. Yet we cannot afford to forget the not-so-positive, for in them lie our learning. Ten years of NETRIGHT also means 10 years of the hard work that has been paid off with remarkable successes. NETRIGHT has matured into a responsive women's rights network that moves with clout. Its visibility and respectability, nationally and internationally, are attributable to its committed and persistent leadership and followship as well as sustained interest in national and international issues and the ability to participate effectively at both levels.

Our Triumphs

Through its movement building activities, NETRIGHT has over the 10 years championed gender equality and women's right causes in critical global and national platforms, which would have otherwise been set by mainstream and/or patriarchal agenda. Significant among these have been NETRIGHT's leadership roles in the Aid Effectiveness discourse and actions. Not only has NETRIGHT led the women's front in informing and mobilising support for gender inputs in the country and the continent, it has worked side by side civil society actors and policy think tanks at the national, regional and globally to push agenda intended to serve the social justice and gender interests and needs.

Another area of tremendous triumph is NETRIGHT's involvement in the Oil and Gas discussions, which again, took off on the wrong footing by excluding the interests of the commons including women and local communities. While donors and government assumed leadership in setting the agenda, NETRIGHT, but also its CSO collaborators, worked on an alternative agenda which aimed at

infusing gender concerns and social justice needs and interests in the industry. In addition to its campaigns, NETRIGHT is currently conducting a study on Gender and Oil and Gas Industry, which will be published for membership and broader sharing.

As a member of Social Watch Global and convener of Social Watch Ghana, NETRIGHT has been at the forefront of social justice advocacy in its generality. It therefore comes as no surprise when it naturally aligned with the recent Aid Effectiveness and Oil and Gas initiatives. Through research and publications, organising, facilitating and participating in meetings, exchanging experiences on policies and programmes nationally and globally, NETRIGHT and its partners have not only challenged globalisation policies and programmes but also articulated the specific histories and experiences of Ghana and of women. It has provided in particular alternative perspectives on the impacts of the much-toasted yet failing Bretton Woods programmes in Ghana. What is now considered the reality of the Ghanaian economy, the challenges of aid and donor partners, had been known and articulated by NETRIGHT and its partners over a period in their country/global reports on gender, aid and the economic reforms, among others.

NETRIGHT has also established itself as an important lobby and advocacy group through its leadership, participation and communication of gender equality and women's rights causes. Its participation in international fora with other players, sharing of critical resources and information through its member listserv, outreach programmes and media encounters continue to draw attention to gender equality commitments, inform its constituents and challenge political actors on the issues.

Another major triumph for NETRIGHT has been its ability to work with and influence donors to put money into gender equality and women's rights work. A typical case is its encounter with the Ghana Advocacy and Research Programme, which now offers core and special grants for independent pro-poor development policy influencing and development. From a glaringly gender-blind programming start, G-rap has not only grown to respond to gender equality and women's rights organisations but also encourages its grantees to incorporate gender work in their support programmes. It took the mobilising and resistance to Netright to get G-rap to that point. This is a major achievement which is not only benefiting NETRIGHT and its network members but also the pro-poor movement. Netright has been successful in mobilising

funds to support its programmes (research, publications, meetings, outreach and lobbies) but also partner with others and participate in critical international fora such as the Beijing Plus series, Committee on the Status of Women meetings, and Aid Effectiveness Fora with the support of loyal and trusting benefactors such as the African Women's Fund, Third World Network, Action Aid, UNIFEM and Global Green Grants.

In fact, the one area that NETRIGHT has experienced the most growth is the area of research and documentation. Our Newsletter, *Akobon*, is a regular feature, which brings to the Ghanaian public gender discussions on national and global policy issues, women's experiences and network activities. NETRIGHT also as convener of Social Watch Ghana publishes the Social Watch Report as well as the Status of Ghanaian Women reports. It also makes documentaries for trainings and sharing. Its resources unit stocks various research for member and public use.

While we celebrate our triumphs we cannot afford to forget our setbacks. I turn now to some such.

Our Setbacks / Challenges

A couple of issues continue to impede our progress. These include our inability to keep up with the multiple demands on our advocacy work. The severely challenged context in which we work demands the full compliments of resources, human and material, for not only the rapid responses often needed but also the long term programming initiatives that can mitigate the inhibitors and transform our systems and structures toward the monitoring and support for women rights and gender equality. The NETRIGHT Secretariat remains very thin (two permanent staff) and depends on the generosity of network members and partners; so far ABANTU for Development and Third World Network Africa (TWN Africa). Space for growing and expanding to address the spatial needs for a rapidly growing network and the functional needs of staff, network members and women remain key challenges.

Also, in spite of improvements in tools, statistics and documentation on women's conditions, status and gender equality, there are still major gaps in practice. The tools are not widely used and effectively mainstreamed in national and organisational/institutional assessments. This will for sometime continue to

pose a challenge for the effective monitoring of the situation as well as our process.

The political environment remains somehow ad hoc with administrative changes tending to take a huge toll on agreements and plans. This situation does not auger well for progress. The entrenched partisanism and the tendency to start all over or wait-and-see tactics will continue to set back the clock and thus retard progress. As women's rights interest group, Netright has not got the time, energy or resources to engage in such perverse politics. Until such time that our democracy is institutionalised and nationalised with public or civil servants maintaining their neutrality and professionalism, the country will remain in this never-ending game of musical chairs. Unless such is done with rationality and technicality taking centrality in setting the pace of progress, the two steps forward one step backwards rhythm will continue to interfere with our progress and erode gains.

The growing incidence of religious fundamentalism: Christian, Muslim and Traditional, serves to block efforts to initiate discourse or engage meaningfully in negotiated change. This situation demands that we design sharper tools and convincing strategies that would help our partners who work in the area and in this growing unsafe context to mobilise women for their rights more effectively and safely. We will actually need to recreate ourselves in ways that would enable us to engage with progressive forces and support our partners in their advocacy and programming.

CELEBRATING OUR "SHEROES"

As already noted, there is a lot to celebrate this year and for the 10years of NETRIGHT's existence. We could celebrate our collective gains and individual achievements. We could actually honour the many silent sheroes but also the men and women who work together to increase gender equality and women's rights.

Collectively we would celebrate our gains in Cabinet, ministerial and public sector appointments. We could celebrate NETRIGHT's triumphs as discussed above. We could also celebrate the Gender Budgeting initiative and the collaboration with MOWAC and CSOs. But would also celebrate individual women such as Her Excellency Justice Joyce Bamford-Addo for being Ghana's

first woman Speaker of Parliament, Justice Mrs. Georgina Wood for being the first woman Chief Justice and Mrs. Georgina Baiden for being the first Woman President of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT). After over 50 years of independence women are yet counting our firsts. We could also celebrate the late Dr. Mrs Esther Ocloo for her pioneering role in indigenous industry and the founding of the Association of Ghana Industries, the late Madam Hawa Yakubu for being the sole opposition member of Parliament, 1992 to 1996, who represented the minority and kept hopes alive at the inception of our return to democratic rule. We should celebrate Dr. Grace Bediako, the Government Statistician for the transformation that we find in the Ghana Statistical Service toward the provision of gender disaggregated data, Miss Elizabeth Ohene for daring to challenge the excesses of the 31st December Revolution when all chose to hold their tongues. She tried her tongue! ACP Rose Atinga and Mrs Mills- Robertson for the exemplary roles in the Ghana Police Service, Madam Elizabeth Adjei for rising to the headship of the Ghana Immigration Service and Prof. Naana Jane Opoku Agyeman and Prof. Florence Dolphyne for their pioneering roles in university administration in Ghana. Many such women might not stand up for women's rights but still justify our advocacy for women's rights; the right to education, employment, incomes and health. They will forever serve as role models for the many women in their professions, female students and the broader masses of women.

Yet still, we could celebrate the many women and their collectives who work silently under the most trying circumstances to improve their conditions and those of others, who depend on them even as they contribute to community and national development. They include:

- The Women of Bawku who are not relenting in their efforts to stop the conflict and violence and build peace in their families and communities;
- The many and varied market women who continue to demonstrate against ad hoc measures that throw them out of business and macro-economic policies that persistently fail to address the domestic food situation and the basic needs of citizens to decent work and wages. Assembly Women of the Northern Region who have already started their lobby through traditional authorities for the increase in appointments of women into next year's reconstituted assemblies;

- Madam Adwoa Afra (*alias* I go to farm) of Dormaa who continues to show hospitality to the sick and often the neglected patients of Dormaa Hospital;
- The 2004 National Best Farmer who seems to have passed to oblivion;
- Women along the borders of Ghana who understand the dynamics of cross-border trade and find ways to promote regional integration while our political leaders wallow in their egoistic defensive gradualism;
- The Single Mothers Association of the Bolga area who process healthy local rice for the local market, which gives jobs to poor rice farmers, incomes to their members and markets for rice sellers;
- Women of Liberia whose role in the film "Pray the Devil Back to Hell" won them a JFK Profile in Courage Award (Leymah Gbowee, Vaiba Flomala, Janet Johnson Bryant and all the women);
- Clitoraid and the Pleasure Hospital of Burkina but especially the women who are brave enough to go through the procedure. In this category are also those providing shelter for the abused, estranged or homeless women and children such as the Ark Foundation and the Widows and Orphans Movement.

ISSUES FOR 2010

The coming year promises to be yet another exciting year. While NETRIGHT should be continuing to play its many roles there are some highlights that must be kept in constant view. These include:

Gender Budgeting Initiative: NETRIGHT and its network members and collaborators will need to work closely to ensure that the scaling up is well informed but especially lend expertise to its implementation. We will need to work with the various ministries through and with MOWAC and the gender desk offices to ensure the smooth roll out of the programme and tracking and documentation of progress.

Legal Reforms: We will have to maintain our lobby and monitor developments regarding the Spousal Property Bill as well as support our members who are

working on the Affirmative Action Framework and the Interstate Succession Law.

Constitutional Review: The Constitutional Review process has begun slowly. We need to take interest in and participate in the process and/or sponsor our interested network members and partners to influence and make inputs. In particular the Article on women rights, which remains an apology needs to be completely revised. NETRIGHTs knowledge and expertise will be crucial

Local Government Elections: Early next year, ground works will begin and heat up as the year unfolds, as aspirants lobby and campaign for votes and appointments. NETRIGHT will need to keep its eye on the elections but especially make the necessary entries early enough so that aspiring women can be prepared ahead of their campaigns. The pattern of last minute support often becomes a weapon against aspiring women. Communities have tended to capitalise on such to make excessive demands even as some male competitors manipulate voters to their favour by accusing the women aspirants for being stingy and deceitful. May be we can consider making foot soldiers of students and national service personnel who can sensitise communities on women's political interests. For aspirants, we will need to spend some more time in their own political socialisation which can guide their understanding, analysis and articulation of their agenda.

Engaging with Culture: The African Women's report is clear on the cultural inhibitions that limit progress on women's rights and gender equality. This signals a need to spend more time in that area. We need to conduct research that would help us understand the issue better whether they relate to land, economic justice or human rights in order to be able to engage more effectively with custodians such as chiefs, queenmothers and "magazia", landlords, priests and household/clan heads. Often due to our knowledge gaps we are unable to counter many of the lame reasons put out in defence of practices and ideologies that harm women. Indeed, it has become smart practice for Ghanaians to jump on the culture and tradition bandwagon when challenged on the rationality of harmful practices and ideologies. We should focus, this time round, on understanding those elements that support women's rights and use them to define and defend instead of continuing to concentrate on those that inhibit. The cue is that many traditions have been misinterpreted and misrepresented to deny women their rights.

Global Women's Forum: The Beijing Plus 15 is already here and preparations are already well advanced toward the forum. What I would ask is that we focus on our commonalities more than our differences so that quality time can be spent on jointly strategising to increase women's rights. As women of Ghana and Africa, we know too well that such global agenda have helped push our local agenda more effectively than we would have been able to do alone.

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The Year 2010 in Review: Triumphs, Challenges and the Task Ahead

Akosua K. Darkwah

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am deeply honoured to have been invited to do the annual review for the year 2010. I am not a founding member of NETRIGHT and though I have been a fairly active member of NETRIGHT for the last couple of years, I have not been through the trenches so to speak. To have been asked when there are many women in this room more qualified than me to do this review felt exhilarating initially until I took a look at the reviews of the past and began to wonder if I could live up to the standards set by my predecessors. The guidelines NETRIGHT sent were little consolation. It made it quite clear to me just how tall the task was if I had any prior illusions or should I say delusions. What I am going to do in the next half hour or so is to provide an account, from my perspective of the year's highs and lows so far as women globally, on the continent and in our dear nation Ghana are concerned as well as my sense of what we need to focus on in the year ahead. In so doing, I hope that I do justice to the task I was assigned.

STORIES/EVENTS OF HOPE AND DISAPPOINTMENT GLOBALLY

Three major international events of significance to women occurred this year. First was the official creation on the 2nd of July 2010 of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women also known as UN women, an umbrella organisation that incorporates four organisations (the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research

and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Under the able leadership of the ex-president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, this organisation will work to accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls worldwide by providing coherent and timely support to the UN Member States that request it. The importance attached to this new initiative is evident in the fact that Member States recognise that the organisation requires at least US \$500 million, double the current combined budget of the four organisations it replaces.

As women's rights organizations, we should be indeed proud that the long struggle on the part of women's rights advocates for an international organization with the requisite structure and funding to serve our needs as women has finally come to fruition. In the years ahead, we can hopefully look forward to great policies and programming coming out of this new organization.

The second international event of significance to women globally was the Beijing plus 15 review. At the Beijing conference in 1995, a consensus was reached to develop 12 critical areas of concern that would ensure an acceleration of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. At this meeting, *each country* assigned *itself* a series of tasks that they were going to carry out in their respective countries. Every half decade, there was to be an international review to assess how each country was faring. This year marked the third of such reviews. Although this review process had long been in the making, it was overshadowed by the mid-term review of the Millennium Development Goals, the third internationally significant event that took place this year. In the year 2000, the international community, both developing and developed, committed themselves to the attainment of eight goals by the year 2015. Of these eight goals, three impact directly on women: goal number 2 on universal primary education, goal number 3 on gender equality and empowerment and goal number 5 on improved maternal health.

Three others that seek to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (goal 1), a halving and reversal of the spread of HIV/AIDS (goal 6) and halving the proportion without access to safe water and basic sanitation (goal 7) impact on women as well because the first incorporates the provision of decent



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