Social Contract for Ghana's Political and Economic Transformation

Article I

Gender Equality

*The **Citizens' Convention for Ghana's Political and Economic Transformation took place in Accra on June 18-19, 2024,** drawing 510 participants representing numerous stakeholder groups from civil society, government and business. Building on 18 months of research and nationwide engagements, participants agreed on specific goals and targets for the seven key issue areas underpinning the Compact and **Citizens' Declaration for a Social Contract with the Government of Ghana**, which the convention adopted by acclamation. The issue areas are: gender equality, youth employment and skills, vision and planning, fiscal responsibility, private sector development, climate change, and health.*

Background

Ghana's social, political and economic transformation will not take place without women having equal access to jobs, finance, political leadership positions, and careers in the public and private sectors. Ghana's poor performance on women's inclusion in areas such as health, education, and politics is evident in its low rankings on global gender equality indices. In fact, Ghana fell from 58th on the World Economic Forum's Gender Parity Index in 2006 to 117th in 2021. This is not surprising since over that same period, Ghana has enacted reform—the passage of domestic violence legislation in 2008—in only one of eight focus areas of the World Bank's Women, Business and Law report. Many other countries did far better during that same period.

Ghana also lags behind many African peers in progress towards gender parity in employment as well as representation at the highest levels in politics, government and the private sector. The same disparity is found particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and in tertiary education in general. This earned Ghana a ranking of 23rd out of 35 sub-Saharan African countries measured on that same World Bank index in 2021.

Ghana's poor performance on a variety of international gender equality indices is evident in every facet of Ghanaian life. Women are under-represented in decision-making at both national and local levels. Only 14 percent of parliamentarians are women. At district level, only 4.1 percent of the most recently elected officials are women. In education, while attendance rates for girls have increased significantly, completion rates at tertiary level are twice as high for males as they are for females. Women are very poorly represented in the STEM fields: over a

recent 15-year period, only 13.7 percent of students who enrolled in engineering programs at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology were women.

Women also have more limited access to formal sector jobs. Most women work in the informal economy as farmers and agro-processors as well as rural and urban traders. They have lower access than men to the services and resources that would help them grow their businesses and they are often more exposed to the vagaries of climate change.

The situation is equally abysmal in the health sector. Maternal mortality rates are high, standing at 102 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2022. So is the rate of adolescent pregnancy for girls with low levels of education, which stands at 138 per 1,000 births. Only 52 percent of women aged between 15 and 49 make their own decisions on sexual health, contraceptives and reproductive care. Domestic violence levels are high and support services and facilities are woefully inadequate. While women face marginalization and discrimination based on social conventions, women with disability are confronted with double the burden in their attempts to access education, health, and employment opportunities. This is in spite of the existence of a Disability Act since 2006.

Finally, Ghana's socio-cultural norms continue to constrain women's vision of themselves and their role and place in Ghanaian society. Across the country, women are cast primarily as caregivers with inadequate attention paid to either their leadership potential in public spaces or their real role in productive activities. Inequitable access to resources and opportunities deprives Ghana of the benefits that would accrue to women, their families and society at large.

Actions and Targets to Achieve Gender Equality

1. Affirmative action

Issue: *Guidelines for an Affirmative Action Law were passed by the Cabinet in 1998, but as of June 2024 a bill has still not been passed.*

- **Action:** Pass the Affirmative Action Law promptly to hold accountable the incoming government in 2025.
- **Target:** By December 2024, Parliament passes the affirmative action law.

2. Mainstreaming gender

Issue: *Instead of small desks in state agencies, genuine mainstreaming requires well-resourced, decision-making units able to raise public awareness on gender in local languages.*

- **Action:** Create fully functioning gender desks/units in all Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) with provision for staff capacity building.
- **Target:** By December 2026, all MMDAs have functioning gender desks/units with trained staff and requisite resources.

3. Gender budgeting

Issue: *MMDA budgets generally do not reflect gender issues and resource allocations are often misapplied.*

- **Action:** Establish clear policy guidelines for all MMDAs to make their budgets gender responsive, with monitoring and accountability measures to ensure appropriate use of actual allocations.
- **Target:** By December 2026, gender-responsive budgets are submitted to the Ministry of Finance by all MMDAs.

4. Social norms

Issue: *In Ghana's conservative society, there is limited public awareness of central government policies and civil society programs to promote gender equality.*

- **Action:** Embark on a nationwide campaign to transform gender norms in Ghana, with the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) and other agencies decentralizing information through local community centers as well as public and private broadcasters and through social media.
- **Target:** By December 2026, there is a functioning partnership between the National Commission for Civic Education, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, and private media for gender transformative programming.

5. Transformative social policies

Issue: *Promoting gender equality includes safeguarding women's rights to reproductive health and employment. Some employees are afraid they will lose their job if they take maternity leave.*

- **Action:** Enact a law to make regulatory and financial provision for maternity leave, with job protection for expecting mothers.
- **Target:** By December 2026, a three-month maternity grant policy is passed into law.

6. Gender-based violence

Issue: *Despite some increase in attention paid to gender-based violence, the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) remains centralized in Accra.*

- **Action:** Provide comprehensive support services across the country for survivors of domestic violence, with adequate resources for accessible safe spaces and counseling centers.
- **Target:** By December 2026 (or no later than December 2028), a one-stop shelter is established for domestic violence victims in each of the 16 regional capitals.