



NETWORK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GHANA (NETRIGHT)

(Mobilizing for Women's Rights in Ghana)

PRESS STATEMENT BY NETWORK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GHANA (NETRIGHT)

The Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), a network of about 100 civil society organizations and over 300 individuals, has followed closely remarks made by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo at the recently ended "Women Deliver Conference" in Vancouver, Canada. We have also followed the comments and interpretations this has engendered on various radio and TV stations, in social media, and at different press conferences.

Some of the debates have been highly politicized, and others have contained inaccuracies, and/or reflected a misunderstanding of the major issues of concern related to the status of women and girls in Ghana and globally. Yet others have lifted the conversation to a place that provides Ghanaians with an opportunity to reflect on, and discuss how we can make Ghana a safe and supportive space where all citizens can flourish and give of their best.

It is important to note that women's activism has a long history in Ghana, and it is rooted in traditions of female mobilisation and cooperation. Ghanaian women have a long and continuing history of political activism and participation in public life and the struggle for a democratic nation. Over the years women's activism has led to the creation of numerous and diverse groups that have advocated and worked hard across Ghana to improve the lives of women and girls. Groups such as NETRIGHT with membership from across rural and urban Ghana, of different political and religious persuasions, and inclusive of men, have worked together to bring a gender perspective to national processes and advocate for policy change to bring about substantive and demonstrable equality between women and men.

NETRIGHT believes that the conditions of marginalized or disadvantaged groups, including women, can never be improved solely through their own efforts, no matter how dynamic they might be. Systemic barriers and structures of male privilege and dominance maintain the status quo, and undermine the ability of women to realize their potential. In contemporary thinking, it is recognised that states have an obligation to create the enabling environment for all citizens to thrive and contribute to development. States such as Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Africa and Senegal provide examples of political will and leadership on women's representation and participation in decision-making. This is in contrast to the situation in Ghana where women continue to lag behind in many sectors of public life and decision-making.

Together with other coalitions such as the Women's Manifesto Coalition, and the Domestic Violence Coalition, we played the critical role in the passage of domestic violence legislation and the development of the Women's Manifesto. As far back as 2004, the Women's Manifesto called for increased representation and participation of women in decision-making and demanded that the legislature become 30% female by 2008 and 50% female by 2012! It also called for the equal participation of women in the leadership of political parties. Copies of the Manifesto were

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presented to Parliament and political parties. Sadly, there has been little progress towards these targets. As of 2019, women's representation in Parliament remains at an abysmal 13.7% and women constitute only 18.55% of all ministerial appointments. For the first time since its creation, the Gender Ministry no longer has cabinet status. Sexual and gender-based violence remains a big problem, notwithstanding the existence of the Domestic Violence Act, and budgetary allocations for effective implementation of the law is low.

NETRIGHT has supported and worked to increase women's representation and effectiveness in district assemblies, in parliament and in public life. We were deeply involved in the constitutional review process and have worked with successive governments to push for the passage of Affirmative Action legislation, the Property Rights of Spouses Bill, and the review of the Intestate Succession Law, all of which are still before Parliament.

We are working with various stakeholders, including traditional leaders and communities, to address structural barriers facing women in the access, control and ownership of land, including agricultural land. Our work is strengthening women's capacities in land governance through the establishment of community land development committees, the development of land tenancy agreement templates to facilitate proper documentation of land tenure security. We want to ensure that the Land Bill, when passed, will protect the interests and rights of women and the vulnerable in society.

NETRIGHT is also strengthening the capacity of rural women to engage with agricultural policies, and working with the Women in Agriculture Directorate (WiAD) of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) to ensure the roll out of the Gender and Development Strategy (GADS II) policy at the district level.

We are also working with the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) to support rural women farmers to add value to agricultural products and working with the Directorate of Agriculture Extension Services (DAES) of MOFA to train female extension volunteers to support women farmers and their groups.

NETRIGHT and other groups are committed to continue their work towards transformative and inclusive change in Ghana. However for this change to occur in the lives of Ghanaian women and girls, the state and its agencies must fulfil constitutional, regional and international commitments to gender equality, and regularly report on progress to citizens.

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