

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**ADVANCED GENDER ANALYSIS  
AND  
ADVOCACY TRAINING  
COURSE**

**December 12-14, 2006  
ILGS Campus, Legon, Accra**

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# **ADVANCED GENDER ANALYSIS AND ADVOCACY SKILLS COURSE**

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**Keynote Address**

**by Esther Ofei-Aboagye, Director, ILGS**

This paper is intended to stimulate discussion on the status of gender mainstreaming, the national gender machinery and advocacy in Ghana.

Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. It involves ensuring that gender perspectives and gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, and advocacy/dialogue. Its approaches can include legislation, resource allocation and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects. Gender mainstreaming is therefore, the systematic integration of the respective situations, priorities and needs of women and men in all policies and with a view to promoting equality between men and women.

Mainstreaming includes gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Gender-specific interventions, which are necessary temporary measures designed to combat the direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination, can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men. Clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming are important for operationalisation.

In 1979, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) came into being with far-reaching commitments for member states. Ghana ratified this Convention in 1986. The Beijing Platform for Action (PfA) formulated in 1995, re-affirmed these concerns.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) recognize gender equality as a human right because gender discrimination squanders human capital. It results in the inefficient use of individual abilities, limits women's contribution and undermines the effectiveness of development policies. The third MDG is specifically devoted to promoting gender equality and empowering women. For the reasons indicated above, gender inequality slows development. This means ensuring equal political, economic, social and cultural rights for women.

Ghana being signatory to these conventions and international agreements, indicates a national recognition that there is the need for conscious policy action to change the circumstances of Ghanaian women to improve their lots. On the other hand, it also signals a national recognition that Ghanaian women are also rights-holders who can make claims against the state and its institutions.

The supreme law of the land, the Constitution in its sixth chapter makes provisions for the economic, social and political rights of Ghanaians (male and female). Article 35 Clauses 3, 4 and 5 provides for (a) just and reasonable access of all citizens to all public facilities and services; (b) cultivation amongst all Ghanaians respect for the fundamental human rights and freedoms and the dignity of the human person; and (c) the integration of the peoples of Ghana and prohibition of discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of place of origin, birth circumstances, ethnic origin, gender, religion, creed and other beliefs.

Other clauses under Article 36 provide for equality of economic opportunities. In particular, clause 6 provides for the State to take **all necessary steps** to ensure the full integration of women into the mainstream of the economic development of Ghana. Article 37 provides for social objectives – establishing a social order founded on the principles of freedom, equality, justice, probity and accountability. State policy shall be directed towards ensuring that every citizen has equality of rights, obligations and opportunities before the law.

These are important justifications for the work of MOWAC in promoting gender equality through gender mainstreaming in Ghana. National policy documents indicating Ghana's commitments to gender and women's empowerment include

- The National Gender and Children's Policy
- The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I) and the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II)
- National Plan of Action for Women
- The Three-Year Strategic Implementation Plan of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC).

### **Gender Analysis and Gender Machineries**

Gender machineries should have the capacities to

- Provide technical support for national and sectoral planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation
- Undertake gender analysis throughout the economy and in various sectors
- Provide backstopping to gender mainstreaming efforts of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) as well as in the private and civil society sectors
- Provide gender training as will be necessary and to all who require that service
- Undertake relevant research including needs assessment, evaluation studies, impact assessments and thematic studies

- Produce position papers, gender commentaries on national policy initiatives and programmes
- Coordinate gender initiatives for consistency and coherence towards national objectives.

But as a starting point, in order for MOWAC or any other machinery to intervene effectively, gender analysis must be a capacity that it has. Amongst other gains, gender analysis allows the entity to

- map where interventions are required and what kinds of interventions these may be;
- do effective needs assessment and facilitate responsive and sustainable interventions; and
- assess policy and programme impacts.

If MOWAC or any other national machinery wants to authoritatively pursue gender mainstreaming for sustainable development, it should be able to do this. **However, against this checklist, national gender machineries Africa-wide and including MOWAC fall short.**

The Beijing Platform for Action recognized the need for strong institutional mechanisms to shepherd national gender mainstreaming through with public sector as well as private and non-governmental development efforts. It made various recommendations for the resourcing of national machineries to do this, including nations providing sufficient financial and technical inputs on a regular basis as well as insulating them from politicization.

Ghana's gender machinery has evolved in line with the historical development of such entities in Africa. It was established in the wake of the International Year and Decade of Women. Therefore, NCWD was created in 1976. Its women-in-development orientation as well as the gap that there was nationally for delivering programmes that women needed, in a sense handicapped its policy influencing role over the decade that followed.

Eventually, NCWD came to be associated more with programme delivery than policy formulation, influencing and advocacy.

Like many such machineries in Africa, it came to suffer political interference and offered an irresistible temptation to political figures to meddle or co-opt these vehicles.

The need to have it fit into the public administration system of Ghana became apparent if it was (a) to be taken seriously by other MDAs whose characteristics and functions had been clearly articulated in PNDC Law 327 as policy formulating, coordinating,

monitoring and evaluation; (b) if it was going to be able to access public resources consistently for its work.

Now it has become part of a Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) but still has to deal with the following challenges:

- An expanded or reviewed mandate without commensurate staff and budgetary resources
- Inadequate capacities for the range of functions that a self-respecting gender machinery would perform; for research, analysis, tools development, training amongst others;
- Inadequate staff capacities in both numbers and skills, even as the world becomes more sophisticated in gender mainstreaming and in access to relevant information;
- The burden of the legacy of the past – of women orientation, programme implementation and political machination (that even political elements expect that MOWAC provides women political activists with the resources they need)
- Expectations of Ghanaians for the machinery to play a populist, women mobilizing role (tsooboi);
- And in relation to this, expectations of it to deliver credit and resources to women's groups;
- The need to foster innovation and creativity within MOWAC, to stand up and perform even as it finds its feet and undertakes institutional development, itself (being thrown into the deep end, so to speak);
- The multiplicity of proposals, models and systems that have been found and are being promoted by development partners, civil society/non-governmental organizations and other parties, all different and being used in various sectors of the economy such as in health, agriculture and education; and expectations that MOWAC will take these up and use them.

Other challenges relate to the changing environment within which MOWAC exists. The major changes relate to public sector reform by way of

- Strengthening public service at the local level by accelerating the decentralization process (especially in the context of the national poverty reduction strategy GPRS II)

- Creating and operationalizing the local government service
- In relation to that, integrating government departments at the district level
- Enhancing a customer/client orientation in the public service and fostering responsiveness
- Emphasizing efficiency through target-setting, improving planning, monitoring, coordination and analytical capacity; as well as performance contracting
- Improving information communication technology
- Consolidation of efforts to reduce waste and duplication.

How is MOWAC gearing itself up to fit into these new requirements of a public service organization?

There are many gender-related interventions on-going in various sectors and it is not clear the extent to which MOWAC has taken this on such as ongoing work in education, health and agriculture by way of training, policy review, development of guidelines, processes and procedures and research.

There are also programmes ongoing for women and women's groups that have implications for their empowerment and strategic interests in local government, trade and industry as well as various project initiatives. The ongoing efforts by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) in integrating gender into national planning and poverty guidelines as well as into district level frameworks need to be taken on board by MOWAC.

It is not clear the influence of MOWAC on these processes, or the extent to which it is taking account of their progress or their accounting to MOWAC for their actions in order that these are acknowledged as part of a total national effort.

On the other hand,

- to what extent do these sectors know about and take account of national gender documents, and in particular the Strategic Implementation Plan?
- to what extent are the communication lines between MDAs and MOWAC open and operating? **Such that achievements, activities and lessons from other sectors are available on a timely basis to MOWAC and MOWAC is able to use, learn from and share these with other bodies; (the coordination and clearing-house role of MOWAC)**

- to what extent do focal persons or representatives of MOWAC on sector/ MDA committees report back and document the issues raised and planned for the use of the national gender machinery?

There is the business of MOWAC as a decentralized entity, which needs to be resolved. Now that the integration of departments at the local level is taking place, how are MOWAC's decentralized departments to proceed?

The other departments will report to the assembly on matters of programme formulation and implementation in the context of the needs of the district population and the direction of the district medium term plan. They will however report to the sector ministries and technical agencies on matters of policy, technical guidelines, standards, monitoring, reporting and coordination.

MOWAC must be able to position itself in such a way that it is part of this district landscape. It should not stand alone. It should be so to access the assembly and its support and resources as a matter of routine procedure and not as a special arrangement that can be varied or as a favour based on personal influence (who happens to be there at the time).

The second issue is around the ongoing processes to engender district assemblies by various means including planning guidelines from NDPC; development of district gender strategies; the appointment of gender focal persons and desk officers by various parties.

Where is MOWAC in all of this?

Is MOWAC familiar with the guidelines, tracking the progress and harnessing the lessons learned?

Can MOWAC comment authoritatively on all that is going on in gender in any part and any sector of the country?

Can MOWAC claim to be in possession of all the tools and good practices in gender analysis, planning and mainstreaming?

This brings the discussion quite naturally to the issue of advocacy. This paper interprets **advocacy** as actions to change policies, attitudes and opinions to rectify a situation, provide redress or to initiate an innovation that would enhance benefits for all or sections of a population. Such actions will seek to influence decisions

Ultimately, advocacy should bring about more equity and better participation of all. Advocacy to enhance women's participation is often targeted at those who can effect the required change – policy makers, legislators and policy implementers. To make advocacy effective, it must be carefully planned, its message effective and the targets carefully identified. In advocacy, information is critical, team-work beneficial, organizing and analytical skills imperative and timing essential.

Given the Ministry's policy formulating role, its capacity for advocacy is important. At various levels, MOWAC officers will be required to undertake advocacy at institutional as well as departmental and individual levels. This is why advocacy related skills such as those needed in the requirements indicated above are essential for MOWAC staff. It is also about effective packaging of the message, good choices of skilful messengers, good at negotiation and communication. It is also about effective partnering and collaboration for maximum reach and impact.

## **Conclusion**

It is amply proven that gender mainstreaming is fundamental to sustainable development. It is also evident that there are disparate efforts at sectoral mainstreaming and initiatives and tools introduced by various parties. There are various efforts at promoting women's participation and well-being alongside men's and also for correcting past neglect, discrimination and under-servicing of women. MOWAC as the designated national gender machinery is expected to provide a coordinated approach to gender mainstreaming in Ghana. To what extent and in what ways do we equip MOWAC to do this? It is in this regard that programmes such as this one are important and must constitute part of a holistic and programmed approach to building its capacity.