

## Contents

### Promoting Gender Equality and women's empowerment in Egypt

- *Rasha Hassan*, Ph.D. (Gender Advisor) ..... 1

### Gender Equality and Women Empowerment: A Smart Way to Achieve Development

- *James Twene* (AG. Director, Department of Gender, Upper East Region, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), Ghana)..... 4

Ever since the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) commissioned KFAW to hold the “1st Seminar for Government Officers on the Improvement of the Status of Women” in 1992, KFAW has been conducting the JICA training course on “Gender Mainstreaming Policies for Government Officers.” For 30 years this course has brought together 473 government officers working for gender issues from central and local governments of 91 countries to share and learn about issues on gender mainstreaming promotion policies.

Former JICA participants are our dear friends and KFAW has built a strong network with them.

This time we are introducing reports of two former participants from Egypt and Ghana.

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## Promoting Gender Equality and women's empowerment in Egypt

- *Rasha Hassan, Ph.D.* (Gender Advisor)



Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab Region and ranks 14th globally<sup>1</sup>. In 2022, its population has exceeded 102 million inhabitants and is growing at an annual rate of 2%<sup>2</sup> during the last eight years.

The 2014 Egyptian Constitution established the principles of justice and equality, with more than 20 provisions guaranteeing the rights of women in all spheres of life. The National Council for Women's (NCW's) report on women's empowerment 2021 indicated that Progress is

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<sup>1</sup>) Worldometer, [Population by Country \(2023\)](https://www.worldometers.info/population/) -  
[Worldometer \(worldometers.info\)](https://www.worldometers.info/)

<sup>2</sup>) CAPMAS,

[https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/Publications.aspx?page\\_id=5104&YearID=23573](https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/Publications.aspx?page_id=5104&YearID=23573)

recognized on several levels, including political and will to fulfill women's constitutional rights, and commitment that is evidence-based as it becomes translated into strategies and programs that are implemented by governmental and non-governmental organizations<sup>3</sup>.



In accordance with *women's employment in Egypt*, the Labor Force Survey (LFS, 2021), estimated labour force participation has increased from 28.5 in 2020 to 29.4 in 2021. Male participation rates have declined from 83.2 percent in 2020 to 82.8 percent in 2021, while female participation grew marginally from 16.8 percent to 17.2 percent. According to statistics, the unemployment rate has declined from 7.9 in 2020 to 7.4 in 2021. Male unemployment rates have also declined from 6.0% in 2020 to 5.6% in 2021, while female unemployment rates have declined from 17.7% in 2020 to 16% in 2021. It is worth mentioning that over 75% of the overall unemployed held technical intermediate, above intermediate, university, or postgraduate degrees (CAPMAS, 2022<sup>4</sup>).



***Moving to Educational rights***, in accordance

with the Egyptian constitution, Education is a right for every citizen in Egypt, and it is compulsory until the completion of the general secondary stage. As a result, Egypt is improving in terms of key educational indicators. In 2019, female net enrollment in primary school reached 97.0%, while gross enrollment in secondary school increased to 89.9% and upper secondary enrollment increased to 77.6%. Egypt also boasts an extensive and well-developed tertiary education system, with 35.2% of Egyptians taking advantage of it (gross enrolment rate in tertiary education in 2018). (CAPMAS, 2022<sup>5</sup>).

Despite Egypt's progress toward economic and educational empowerment, as well as the country's strong provisions in the 2014 constitution and Egypt being a signatory to international agreements requiring the state to act against all forms of gender-based violence (GBV), Egyptian women strive to face physical, emotional, and verbal violence in public and private places. According to a survey conducted by the National Council for Women (NCW) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 7.888 million women were victims of all forms of violence each year, whether perpetrated by spouses, fiancés, or individuals in her close circle or strangers in public places, with the calculated cost of violence against women and their families estimated to be at least EGP 2.17 billion (USD \$134 million). (UNFPA, 2015<sup>6</sup>).

Inequalities was rooted in the Egyptian culture,

<sup>3</sup>) National Council for Women. (2021), <http://ncw.gov.eg/PdfTag/%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1/312/2>

<sup>4</sup>) the Central Agency for Public Mobilization And Statistics, (2022), <https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/SemanticIssuesPage.aspx>

<sup>5</sup>) the Central Agency for Public Mobilization And Statistics, (2022),

[https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/IndicatorsPage.aspx?page\\_id=6142&ind\\_id=1082](https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/IndicatorsPage.aspx?page_id=6142&ind_id=1082)

<sup>6</sup>) United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), The National Council for Women and the Central Agency for Public Mobilization And Statistics, (2015), <https://egypt.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Costs%20of%20the%20impact%20of%20Gender%20Based%20Violence%20%28GBV%29%20WEB.pdf>

and as a result, Egypt's constitution (2014), came to prohibit inequality and discrimination (Article 9) and notes that the state shall ensure equality between women and men in all political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights (Article 11). Accordingly, in article 214, the constitution enforced the state to establish an independent institution that implement key national strategies and programs in support of gender equality and social protections. And describes the mandate for the National council for women (NCW)<sup>7</sup>, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM)<sup>8</sup>, the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR)<sup>9</sup>. To empower these institutions, the constitution give them to report against any violations pertaining to their fields of work to the public authorities (Egypt's constitution, 2014)<sup>10</sup>. In addition to the Egyptian state's efforts to strengthen the institutionalization of human rights promotion and protection. The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR)<sup>11</sup> was established in 2018 by Egypt President Abd-El Fatah El Sisi. The establishment of these institutions demonstrates



that the Egyptian state prioritizes human rights, including gender equality.

Several strategies have been launched as part of the implementation of the established institutions to align with Egypt's constitution as well as Egypt's Sustainable Development Strategy Vision 2030. The NCW launched the National Strategy to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women in 2015, followed by the National Strategy for Egyptian Women's Empowerment 2030 in 2017 as a policy to promote women's economic and social empowerment. The NCW has also contributed to establishing 32 equal opportunity units (EOUs) in Egyptian ministries to promote gender equality in all Egyptian ministries. In order to reduce the prevalence of child marriage, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) launched the National Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early Marriage in 2014. In addition, in 2015, NCCM launched the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood as a policy to protect children and mothers from all forms of violence and harm. In 2018, The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR) launched the National Strategy for Human Rights, as the first integrated national human rights strategy in Egypt. That builds on the progress achieved and takes into consideration opportunities and challenges at the national level.

The strategies outlined above have action plans that are divided into programmes and policies aimed at empowering women in all economic, social, cultural, political, and civil fields. These action plans include measurable qualitative and quantitative indicators to track

<sup>7</sup>) The National Council for women, <http://ncw.gov.eg/>

<sup>8</sup>) The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood , <http://www.nccm-egypt.org/>

<sup>9</sup>) The National Council for Human Rights, <https://nchr.eg/en>

<sup>10</sup>) <https://www.sis.gov.eg/newvr/theconstitution.pdf>

<sup>11</sup>) The Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR),

<https://sschr.gov.eg/en/about/background/>

and evaluate progress toward women's empowerment.



## Gender Equality and Women Empowerment: A Smart Way to Achieve Development

- **James Twene** (AG. Director, Department of Gender, Upper East Region, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), Ghana)

### Introduction

Ghana is among the countries that have ratified a number of agreements on Gender Equality (GE) and Women's Empowerment (WE), making it legally required for the nation to implement the treaties domestically. Gender Equality and the Empowerment of women have advanced in Ghana. However, there are challenges that exist. This paper is focused on outlining some of the difficulties currently experiencing in my line of work as gender advocate.

### National Context

Governments' efforts and initiatives to promote equality between women and men can be seen in the successful adoption of laws, the development of policies and strategies, and commitments to international agreements that support the development of women, men, boys, and girls from a variety of challenges aimed at achieving equitable benefits. The struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment faces a number of obstacles which are diverse.

The 1992 Ghanaian constitution contains

measures for gender equality and women's empowerment, and successive governments have tried to ensure their implementation.

Provisions of International and National Instruments as well as policies and actions are implemented successfully to the benefits of Ghanaians, but there are systemic challenges and implementation gaps that obstructed the achievements of intended results. Consultations and involvement with key stakeholders, including Ministries, Departments, Agencies (MDAs), Metropolitans, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs), and the recipients of all policies pertaining to gender equality and women's empowerment, were used to identify the difficulties. As the regional gender officer for Upper East Region of Ghana, I have observed and highlighted a number of obstacles to attaining gender equality and women's empowerment, including:

**Socio-cultural, traditional beliefs and socialization-** Due to the patriarchal nature of the





majority of Ghanaian societies, institutions and structures that institutionalize male dominance and female subordination, as well as sociocultural and discriminatory practices, prevent women, particularly the marginalized and the most vulnerable, from having access to equal opportunities and other support systems. The girl child is over-exposed to maltreatment, including child and forced marriages, sexual violence, teenage pregnancies, and denial of education due to systemic gender and societal prejudices in cultural practices. Negative gender relations, the value placed on gender roles and obligations, and ongoing discrimination against women and girls all have a negative impact on society.



**Limited Access to Land and other Productive resources by Women for Agricultural purpose-** Ghana's system of land tenure is predominately governed by customary law. According to customary law, the family head, who is often a man, is responsible for managing property as a family asset. Women have comparatively limited access to land and agricultural inputs as a result. This partially arises from inheritance laws that are mostly based on patrilineal laws that emerged in patriarchal societies.

Despite this, women in matrilineal tribes do inherit land from their male or female ancestors to some extent. In general, if they have access to it, women need loans or financing to prepare the

land. This is as a result of their lack of collateral, inability to obtain formal credit from financial institutions, and reliance on expensive informal credit options. Even if they are able to access the formal ones, the amount is so minimal that it cannot meet their demands for farming. In spite of the fact that extension services are skewed toward men due to the dearth of female extension officers and other socio-cultural factors, women require the credit to employ labor and receive knowledge on new technologies.

**Women's limited access to wage employment and decent livelihood-** Women's access to wage employment and decent labor is crucial for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Due to their predominance in the informal sector, household labour, and traditional farming operations, women's employment is still in "poor pay jobs.". The major issue here is the requirement to develop Ghana's macroeconomic policies and methods that support rapid economic growth in conjunction with, among other things, initiatives for affirmative action and increased education.

**Weak informal mechanisms for women's empowerment and gender equality pose difficulties for government measures.** - Urbanization has caused a breakdown in social protection at the local and informal levels via the extended family structure. Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), among other social protection initiatives launched by succeeding governments, aim to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty while preserving the rights of the weak and the marginalized. However, many initiatives have struggled with targeting.

**Limited attention to issues and aspirations of Women with Disability (WWD)-** The issues of women with disabilities have not been fully and explicitly addressed by the current programs for women. The design, implementation, and monitoring of women's activities through the lens of Women with disability are impacted by the lack of knowledge and comprehension of the status of women with disability.

**Low male involvement/inclusion in reproductive health and gender issues-** Male engagement in problems relating to reproductive health has not received the attention it merits or deserves, hence my focus on male inclusion. However, evidence shows that men who are knowledgeable about their sexual and reproductive health are more likely to choose healthier lifestyles for themselves, their partners, and their families.



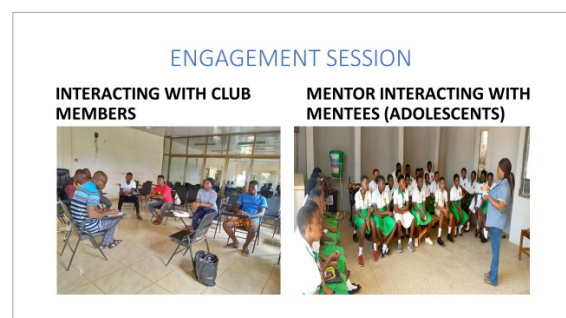
**Action taken-** In the Upper East Region of Ghana, I have established Men and Boys' Clubs/Parent Advocacy Movement (PAM) in 36 communities across 6 districts to advocate against harmful cultural practices like Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, Child Marriage, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, and to promote gender equality and women's and girls'

empowerment. There are 1080 club members (720 males and 360 females). Myself and the club members are spreading the message of gender equality, women's empowerment, and the avoidance of gender-based violence among the



community leadership and various identifiable groups, including churches, mosques, youth groups, men/women groups, and others. Radio engagement is also another strategy to reach out to the masses.

The attitudes and opinions in the communities towards women's and girls' empowerment are slowly changing. I really believe that the issues and difficulties might be resolved in collaboration with the men and boys in the local communities and the nation at large.



Thank you for reading. Any comments and suggestions are welcome.

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