



# Leave No Woman Behind

**National Report on  
the Situation of Women with  
Disabilities  
in Ghana, 2020**

# Executive Summary

The constitution, legislation and international commitments of Ghana affirm the rights of both women and disabled persons. Despite these laws and commitments, however, women and disabled persons – and, clearly, women and girls with disabilities – continue to experience disparities in education, employment and healthcare.

Ghana has made progress on gender equality, manifested in the education system, with almost equal numbers of girls and boys finishing secondary education. Imbalances remain in tertiary education and this progress in the school system has yet to be reflected in the world of employment and earnings, where men still outstrip women, with three times as many men as women, 25% of men as opposed to 8.2% of women, working in the formal sector. In politics, at the top of the decision-making ladder, there are only 35 women in the 275 member parliament. As a result, Ghana ranks 140 out of 189 in the UN Human Development Report's Gender Inequality Index (2019).

Despite the protections against discrimination and abuse guaranteed by the constitution and Disability Act (2006), disabled people are still being left behind. Twelve years after the Disability Act (2006) was passed, the legislative instrument that is needed to activate and operationalise aspects of the Act is yet to be passed, meaning that the act intended to protect the rights of disabled people cannot be fully enforced.

The major obstacles preventing people with disabilities, and especially women and girls with disabilities, from reaching their full potential, are the stigma attached to disability and the attitudes of the families and communities of women and girls with disabilities. There are distressing accounts of religious and traditional beliefs that disability is a curse visited upon disabled people and their families and that this curse can be lifted by harsh treatment. In contrast, as our report shows, with their personal determination, the support of their families and some assistance from the state, women with disabilities can succeed and achieve leadership positions, but this is not a majority experience.

The cost of exclusion of all women and girls, irrespective of ability in Ghana, is high, socially and financially for women themselves, as well as for their families and countries' economies. Ghana's sustainable growth is contingent on implementing gender equality measures with disability perspectives. Discrimination on any grounds is an obstacle to democracy and full citizenship. Ghana has ratified the Convention of Persons with Disabilities and must make better progress to ensure that all women and girls with disabilities enjoy their rights to its provisions, including to education, health, social protection and political participation as well as equal opportunities in leadership and decision-making at all levels. Such action will enable Ghana to harness the potential of all girls and women with disabilities and to reduce the inequalities they face on a daily basis.

## Call to Action

A national education campaign led by government and involving faith communities and voluntary organisations to end stigma and negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

Ensure that the promises of legislation against discrimination and for inclusion of people with disabilities are followed up and enforced in practice in terms of legal protection, access to education and employment.

There should be provision of sanitary facilities in schools, places of employment and public buildings for persons with disabilities, and especially for girls and women with disabilities.

Ensure that social protection systems deliver for persons with disabilities and that women and girls with disabilities are enrolled in social protection programmes.

Put in place affirmative policies and practices to enable persons with disabilities to engage in politics on an equal footing with their able-bodied peers.

Women with disabilities should participate at the highest level in the formulation of policy on disability and, in general persons with disabilities and their organisations should be invited to participate in policy making and monitoring of outcomes, following the slogan “Nothing for us without us.”

The Ministry of Gender and Social Protection should appoint a WWD to cabinet position.

The Ghana Statistical Service should reform its system of data collection and collect data on the situation of persons with disabilities, disaggregated by age and gender, and incorporate the Washington Questions into its census and surveys.

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## Setting the scene

“You have to fight double; you have to think double, the systems discriminate against you.”

Ghana is a presidential parliamentary democracy and has an independent judiciary. Local government is provided for by the Local Governance Act and is delivered by six metropolitan assemblies, 55 municipal assemblies and 151 district assemblies. The assemblies have revenue-raising powers, and receive transfers from national government including for the District Assemblies' Common Fund, to which 7.5% of GDP must be transferred to the assemblies each year. The assemblies are responsible for public health; environmental protection; sanitation; and basic education. Responsibility for social welfare is shared between central and local government.

Ghana consistently ranks in the top three countries in Africa for freedom of speech and press freedom, with strong broadcast media. Thanks to mining and oil Ghana is currently enjoying strong economic growth (8.1% in 2017 and 5.6% in 2018), and has the economic means to address poverty and exclusion of the left behind. Nevertheless nearly 30% (7.8 million people) of Ghana's population of 30 million are classified as experiencing multidimensional poverty.<sup>1</sup>

## The number of disabled people in Ghana

There is an issue around the reliability of data on disability in Ghana. According to the 2010 Census there were 737,743 persons with disabilities, representing 3% of the total population. Women (52.5% of this population) slightly outnumbered men (47.5%). It is not clear how these disability figures were arrived at. The definition used by the 2010 census were those unable to, or were restricted in the performance of specific tasks/activities due to loss of function of any part of the body and mind as a result of impairment or malformation. Estimates of disability vary hugely and the 2010 numbers are almost certainly an underestimate. The World Health Organisation estimates disability prevalence in Ghana at 12.8%,<sup>2</sup> while in 2012 Human Rights Watch estimated the population of persons with disabilities at 5 million (one fifth of the population) of whom 2.8 million were people with mental disabilities.<sup>3</sup> These differing figures show that data on disability prevalence is unreliable and most probably springs from the use of different definitions of disability. Data is not disaggregated by age, an important omission, because the incidence of disability increases with age as a consequence of injury, illness and infirmity.

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1 UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators 2018 Statistical Update. Page 42. Available at: [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018\\_human\\_development\\_statistical\\_update.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf)

2 World Health Organisation, World Bank (2011). World Disability Report. Technical Appendix A. Page 273. Data for this estimate was collected between 2002 and 2004.

3 Human Rights Watch. Press Release. 22 August 2012. “Ghana: Disability Rights Convention Ratified People With Mental Disabilities Need Protection, Community-based Programs.” Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/08/22/ghana-disability-rights-convention-ratified>

### Defining Disability

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by Ghana in 2012, people with disabilities include “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” (Article 1). The short set of ‘Washington Questions’ has been designed to identify people at greater risk than the general population of restrictions on participation in different areas of daily living, resulting from difficulties in the six core functional domains of vision, hearing, mobility, remembering/cognitive capacity, self-care and communication. The Short Set of Washington Questions does not identify particular health conditions or diagnostic categories but seeks to capture the possible impact of these conditions on functional abilities. Nine African governments present at the 2018 Global Disability Summit agreed to use the Washington Questions as part of their data collection efforts in upcoming census and surveys. These countries were Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

### Gender policy and rights compliance

While the constitution of Ghana gives women equal rights, they continue to experience disparities in education, employment and healthcare. Ghana ranks 140 out of 189 in the UN Human Development Report’s Gender Inequality Index (2019).<sup>4</sup> The proportion of girls has been rising in all levels of education but they still lag behind boys. In politics, at the top of the decision-making ladder, there are only 35 women in the 275 member parliament (12.7%).<sup>5</sup>

In recent years however there have been a number of appointments of women to high political and administrative positions. Mrs Joyce Bamford Addo, a retired Supreme Court Judge, was appointed as Speaker of Parliament and sworn into office in 2009. Her Ladyship Mrs Georgina Theodora Wood was the first female Chief Justice of Ghana in 2007. Mrs Marietta Brew Appiah-Oppong was appointed Attorney General in 2013, the second woman to hold this office. Nonetheless, the absence of women in Parliament “adversely affects the way in which women contribute in terms of political leadership in Ghana. ... the low representation of women in politics is as a result of demographic, educational and economic factors as well as entrenched socio-cultural factors coupled with character assassinations and violence against women, among others.”<sup>6</sup>

There are similar gender disparities in employment. At 54.9% male employment was

4 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

5 Charity Elikem Dzradozi, Martin Wiredu Agyekum, Petronella Munemo Ocloo (2018). A Gender Analysis of Political Appointments in Ghana since Independence – Report 2018. Institute of Local Government and Friedrich Ebert

Stiftung. Page 17. Available at [http://www.fesghana.org/uploads/PDF/Gender%20IIGs%20\(Final\)%20FES.pdf](http://www.fesghana.org/uploads/PDF/Gender%20IIGs%20(Final)%20FES.pdf)

6 Ibid. See also Hamah, V. (2015). Women’s Participation in Ghanaian Politics: An Assessment of the opportunities and Limitations, Centre for Social Policy, University of Ghana.

There are similar gender disparities in employment. At 54.9% male employment was only slightly higher than that of women (53.4%) but these statistics<sup>7</sup> – now somewhat out of date – hide significant disparities in the quality of employment, as 25% of men work in the formal sector compared to only 8.2% of women.<sup>8</sup> In addition, women are more likely than men to engage in vulnerable employment,<sup>9</sup> (78.0% of total female employment as opposed to 58.3% of total male employment for men.<sup>10</sup>

Education is the key to formal sector employment, and, while girls equal boys at primary and secondary levels, males have an advantage at the tertiary level. In 2014, 19% of women had no education compared with 9% of men, and at the tertiary level men still outnumber women with a gross enrolment rate of 18.68% compare to 13.53% for women.<sup>11</sup> This disparity at tertiary level occurs even though enrolment rates for secondary education are almost the same for males and females.<sup>12</sup>



## Legal Framework

Ghana has several legal and constitutional provisions that are intended to affirm the rights of persons with disabilities. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana recognises the right of the Ghanaian citizenry to occupy key political and constitutional positions in the spirit of democracy and full citizenship. In 2006 Ghana passed the Persons with Disability Act which prohibits exploitation, discrimination and abusive or degrading

7 Ghana Statistical Service, 2006, 2003 National industrial census report: Regional and district analysis, Ghana Statistical Service, Accra, Ghana

8 Clara Osei-Boateng and Edward Ampratwum (2011) The Informal Sector in Ghana. (Freidrich Ebert Stiftung) Available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ghana/10496.pdf>

9 ILO (2018) Paid employment vs vulnerable employment. [https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/--stat/documents/publication/wcms\\_631497.pdf](https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/--stat/documents/publication/wcms_631497.pdf). Vulnerable employment covers 'own account' work and family work. Thus street trading would fall under the category of vulnerable employment

10 World Bank. Vulnerable employment, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate). Data retrieved April 2019. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.EMP.VULN.FE.ZS>

Vulnerable employment, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate) Data retrieved April 2019 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.EMP.VULN.MA.ZS?view=chart>

11 UNESCO. Ghana Education and Literacy, 2017 data. Available at <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/gh>

12 Ibid.

treatment of disabled people. The act also provides for unrestricted access to public places and buildings, free health care, employment, education and transportation. The law allowed for a 10-year moratorium, within which all public buildings were supposed to be made accessible to disabled people.<sup>13</sup> In addition to the Disability Act, Article 29 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana spells out the rights of disabled people.<sup>14</sup> In 2007 Ghana signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and ratified it five years later, affirming a commitment to protecting the rights of disabled people and to their full social participation. Other laws – on children, health, education and labour – also have clauses protecting the rights of disabled people. Despite these provisions women with disabilities remain invisible and marginalised in electoral politics and governance. In 2018 at the Global Summit on Disability<sup>15</sup> Ghana made a commitment to invest in inclusive education and to ‘include provisions on women and girls with disabilities in its affirmative action bill.’

The approval of laws and the ratification of treaties are only initial steps in the right direction. There are, however, too many phrases such as “as far as practicable” which enable employers, for example, to deny employment opportunities to disabled people. As Joseph Ocran writing in 2019 observes,

“Twelve years after the Disability Act was passed, the Legislative Instrument that is needed to activate and operationalise aspects of the Act is yet to be passed. ... What this simply means is that the Act meant to protect the rights of disabled people in Ghana has been passed but remains unenforceable in some respects. This situation has persisted under four different Presidential regimes. This, in a country that has such huge democratic and human rights credentials, is inexcusable, unacceptable and awkward, to say the least.”<sup>16</sup>

“The laws,” Ocran remarks, “have been designed to challenge the stereotypes and traditional beliefs but, as it stands, the stereotypes and traditional beliefs appear to

13 See DREDF – Disability Rights and Defense Fund <https://dredf.org/legal-advocacy/international-disability-rights/international-laws/ghana-disabled-persons-act/> for a full text of the act

14 Article 29

(1) Disabled persons have the right to live with their families or with foster parents and to participate in social, creative or recreational activities.

(2) A disabled person shall not be subjected to differential treatment in respect of his residence other than that required by his condition or by the improvement which he may derive from the treatment.

(3) If the stay of a disabled person in a specialised establishment is indispensable, the environment and living conditions there shall be as close as possible to those of the normal life of a person of his age.

(4) Disabled persons shall be protected against all exploitation, all regulations and all treatment of a discriminatory, abusive or degrading nature.

(5) In any Judicial proceedings in which a disabled person is a party, the legal procedure applied shall take his physical and mental condition into account.

(6) As far as practicable, every place to which the public have access shall have appropriate facilities for disabled persons.

(7) Special incentive shall be given to disabled persons engaged in business and also to business organisations that employ disabled persons in significant numbers.

(8) Parliament shall enact such laws as are necessary to ensure the enforcement of the provisions of this article

15 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/731878/Global-Disability-Summit-Summary-Commitments\\_2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/731878/Global-Disability-Summit-Summary-Commitments_2.pdf)

16 Joseph Ocran (2019) Exposing the protected: Ghana’s disability laws and the rights of disabled people, Disability & Society, 34:4, 663-668, DOI:10.1080/09687599.2018.1556491. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1556491>

be holding out very well against the anti-discrimination legal regime. These add to the already deep-seated paternalism which disabled people have to live with.”

The government of Ghana was not listed as a signatory of the ‘Charter for Change’<sup>17</sup> agreed at the 2018 Global Summit from persons with Disabilities, although the Ghana Federation of the Deaf was.

Paragraph 8 of the Charter reads ‘Leave no one behind’ and put the furthest behind first. We will champion the rights of the most underrepresented and marginalised persons with disabilities, of all ages, affected by any form of multiple discrimination, and notably women and girls with disabilities.”



### Policy provisions

There are several social protection programmes in Ghana which in principle could benefit persons with disabilities. These are the Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Programme; Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW); National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA); School Feeding Programme; the EBAN Elderly Card; and the “3% District Assembly Common Fund” (3% DACF).

The LEAP programme provides cash payments to extremely poor households with orphans and vulnerable children, destitute older persons and persons with acute disability. Speaking in May 2018 President Akufo Addo said that 213,000 households were being reached by LEAP.<sup>18</sup> In an earlier report (undated) the government indicated that out of the 90,785 beneficiaries of the LEAP, 23,814 persons with Disabilities (PWDs) – 26% of all beneficiaries – were receiving assistance from the LEAP programme.<sup>19</sup>

There are no records of people with disabilities benefiting from LIPW. The EBAN Elderly

<sup>17</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/721701/GDS\\_Charter\\_for\\_Change.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721701/GDS_Charter_for_Change.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Government of Ghana Press Release. 30 May 2018. President Akufo-Addo launches Ghana Zero Hunger review report to end hunger and malnutrition. Available at: <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/news/4712-president-akufo-addo-launches-ghana-zero-hunger-review-report-to-end-hunger-and-malnutrition>

<sup>19</sup> Government of Ghana Press Release (undated). “LEAP as tool for alleviating poverty.” Available at: <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/media-center/features/1641-leap-as-a-tool-to-alleviate-poverty>

“There should be consultation with persons with disabilities in designing such policies.”

Welfare Card, launched in 2015, is intended to provide easy access and to avoid queuing for persons 65 years and above at hospitals, banks and other public places. It also entitles older persons to a 50% discount on bus fares.<sup>20</sup>

The District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), through Article 252(2) of the 1992 Constitution, provides for an annual allocation in quarterly instalments to the District Assemblies of 7.5% of central government’s revenue to for the purposes of development. Each District Assembly is required to allocate 2% of its share of the Fund to PWDs within its jurisdiction. The aims of the DACF for PWDs are to: a) minimise poverty among PWDs especially those outside the formal employment sector; and b) enhance their social image through dignified labour. Thus, the fund seeks to empower PWDs economically, through the improvement of their sources of livelihood, along with providing educational support for children, students and apprentices with disabilities. The fund is also channelled into the capacity building of various Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPWDs) to advocate for the rights of their members, sensitise them on disability issues as well as provide technical aid and assistive devices for PWDs.<sup>21</sup>

The difference between LEAP and the DACF therefore is that cash payments made by LEAP go to persons with extreme disabilities who are unable to work while those of DACF are made with the intention of enabling persons with disabilities to improve their livelihoods.

### **What is really happening to women and girls with disabilities?**

“Because of the social discrimination against people with disabilities, nobody in my family fed me, hence, I engaged in begging with the aid of my brother’s son to earn a living for myself. Now because of the LEAP grants I can now buy my own food and eat three times a day instead of once a day before LEAP. I am no longer a beggar. I assist my family in providing food and prevent our children from going to school hungry.” (LEAP recipient who is blind).<sup>22</sup>

This section is derived from focus study participants and interviews held with blind women, deaf women, women with physical disabilities, women with autism, women with non-communicable diseases, women who are wheelchair bound, and women survivors

<sup>20</sup> Government of Ghana Press Release. 28 March 2015. “EBAN Elderly Welfare Card Launched.” Available at: <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/media-center/news/127-eban-elderly-welfare-card-launched>

<sup>21</sup> Adamtey, R. Oduro, C. Y. & Braimah, I. (2018) Implementation challenges of social protection policies in four districts in Ghana: The case of the District Assembly Common Fund meant for Persons with Disabilities. *Legon Journal of the Humanities* 29.1 (2018). Available at: <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ljh/article/view/173263/162669>

<sup>22</sup> Mohammed Sulemana, Bukari Francis Issahaku Malongza & Mohammed Abdulai (2018): Assessment of the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty programme in Karaga district, Ghana, *Development in Practice*. Page 7. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329833438\\_Assessment\\_of\\_the\\_Livelihood\\_Empowerment\\_against\\_Poverty\\_programme\\_in\\_Karaga\\_district\\_Ghana](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329833438_Assessment_of_the_Livelihood_Empowerment_against_Poverty_programme_in_Karaga_district_Ghana)

of mental disabilities. 11 women with disabilities had in depth interviews that illustrate the barriers faced and also show that with personal determination, the support of their families and some assistance from the state, women and girls with disabilities can succeed and take leadership positions.

Overall, however, the experience is of invisibility, stigma and marginalisation, and of the double burden of discrimination, of their gender and their disability. The first challenge for disabled girls and women is the attitude of those around them, their families, their neighbours and the wider community. Even though the legal frameworks to support them exist they are ineffective because of stigma attached to disability and attitudes which, even if they are not negative, are paternalistic at best.



### Key issues

The following key issues were identified for action:

- 1. Challenge widespread negative social norms and attitudes towards persons with disabilities, especially affecting women and girls.**

Traditional communities and some religious groups regard disability as a curse visited on parents that can be lifted by casting out evil spirits. It is common among city dwellers to avoid disabled people trying to earn a living as street sellers as if disability were a disease that one could catch. Religion and culture play a strong role in reinforcing discrimination, with entrenched sociocultural perceptions that PWDs lack capacity and are therefore not able, irrespective of their background and qualifications. Women with albinism face special stigma, being thought of as ghosts, and are used as sex toys, abandoned with children, targeted for rape, defilement and sexual abuse due to of the myth that this cures HIV/AIDs.

*“Traditional beliefs are still strong in Ghana which means that the birth of a disabled child can be seen as a curse and taken to be a sign that evil spirits have been at work. Disabled children are often shunned or even left to die because they are considered an omen. Laws and beliefs are changing, however, and outright neglect is rare but disabled people are still viewed as a burden to their families and objects of pity. They are not expected to be seen in social gatherings and, if they do go, they attract uninvited looks.” (Patience, polio survivor, September 2019)*

## **2. Put in place affirmative policies and budgets for legal protection and accessible spaces.**

While The Ministry of gender, children and social protection has women as ministers and deputy ministers, women with disabilities (WWDs) are not considered for positions as commissioners, directors or ministers. Political parties lack guidelines for inclusion of WWDs, and finances and lack of inclusive access deny women with disabilities a fair chance of representation. Although women with disabilities are ready to engage with political processes - “we should allow our disabilities to exempt us from political participation” - barriers are very hard to overcome.

The legal system must do more to protect women and girls with disabilities from abusive practices.

*“Exclusion from education means that women with disabilities cannot get the jobs that can be the springboard to political participation and the possibility taking on decision-making responsibilities. Cultural norms also exclude disabled people and women – for example, in the Ashanti community, it is forbidden to have a disabled chief and as such persons with disabilities are not allowed to take up such positions that allows them into such decision making positions and even engage with such traditional leaders.” (Patience, polio survivor, September 2019)*

## **3. Make sure disabled girls and women have the right to education, to employment and to social protection.**

The lack of alternative and accessible education systems and opportunities for technical and vocational education limits education and employment opportunities. Women and girls with mental disabilities do not learn the basic skills for employment and do not have access to decent jobs. One participant recounted how her epilepsy led to her doctor advising her to drop out of normal school because the curriculum was considered heavy. Within schools and in employment visually impaired people have problems owing to the lack of large print textbooks and braille, because there are no assistants to support them, and because many lack the confidence necessary to face these challenges and succeed. Education for people with visual impairments is made especially difficult by the scarcity of materials for students and no instructional

materials for teachers with visual impairments. In the words of one participant 'When we apply for employment opportunities we are denied because of lack of teaching aids and poor infrastructure.'

*With determination it is possible to overcome barriers. A participant shared her experience as a professional woman who is physically impaired. She is a teacher and her first deployment was in a school where "the head teacher confronted me with issues about how I will climb the steps, the challenge of how I will mark the exam sheets of students. I rose above the challenge and studied the environment and learnt to manoeuvre my directions moving without the help of an aid from classrooms to staff room and to and from the house."*  
(Patience, polio survivor, 2019)

In terms of social protection there should be provision for disability through the schemes of the Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Programme; Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPW); National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA); School Feeding Programme; the EBAN Elderly Card; and the "7.5% District Assembly Common Fund" (3% DACF).

However, of the eleven women interviewed only six had accessed financial support. In all six cases this was from the DACF.

*"Girls with disabilities have difficulty getting an education; school buildings are not accessible; and learning materials are not adapted to their needs. And some school heads even turn away children with disabilities, depriving them of their right to education and denying them the opportunity to compete for the jobs which could provide for themselves and their families. After leaving school, at best they are assigned menial jobs as cleaners or messengers in offices and institutions or are even reduced to begging for a living."* Patience, polio survivor, September 2019

#### **4. Ensure information and access**

There are people within the community who cannot hear, see or speak. However, neither the media nor the government are sensitive or responsive to the needs of the deaf, blind and mute. For example, there are no braille papers for the blind. Physical access is very poor with the premises of the district assemblies and public offices being inaccessible, and lack of disabled access within schools. The government should have oversight of accessible public buildings – including schools – to ensure that they meet standards for persons with disabilities. One participant said: "when I was going to school I could not board because I was crippled, my parents had to keep me at home and find transport daily." Participants recommended that all citizens should have access to information including through braille and through disability-friendly teaching materials, which are easy to read and translated in local languages, as well as disability friendly access to classrooms and to washrooms.

## 5. Remove barriers to political participation

Barriers to the political participation of women with disabilities include finance and discriminatory attitudes. Political opponents can use disability to discriminate. “We persons with disabilities would also like to be among the honourable representatives (MPs or council representatives), but we don’t have the money, and then the insults are usually unbearable” said one of the participants. As well as discrimination, physical barriers are everywhere, for example, it is common to find that there is no wheelchair access to the platforms where political candidates do hustings, and to public buildings generally. Statements such as these were shared: “She had to be carried up to the platform but how can she fight for us”; from the former Minister for Roads - “how will you see if our roads are bad or not because you are blind”.

Another representative who had had the opportunity to participate in the political arena four years ago, and wanted to be a member of parliament explained that “I attended meetings in my community, learnt a lot and I shared my grievances with the MPs, including that being a woman with disability is not easy in this country. I was asked by a male whether I was popular, whether I had money, and would I be able to stand the discrimination? I concluded I did not have the finances and, although I was popular in the community, as I am a wheelchair user and need support to get around, I could not succeed.”. She added that she had reached out to the party secretary for financing, but the party was not willing because ‘they don’t do it for women with disabilities.’

Her conclusion was that a woman with any kind of disability who wants to attempt political leadership should be supported by government. As yet there is no policy provision to support women with disability in Ghana to compete favourably in its political environment. Electoral systems are not in place to facilitate the representation and participation of person with disabilities in the political process.

*A table setting out the ages, disabilities, home district and achievements of the 11 women respondents is appended at the end of this document.*

### *What needs to be done?*

- *The public needs to be educated about the capacities of persons with disabilities and what they can contribute.*
- *Women and girls with disabilities should be empowered to rise above their challenges.*
- *Parents should be urged to educate their girls with disabilities and encourage them to socialise in society.*

## Detailed recommendations from The Ghana National Status Report 2018

- The Ministry of Gender and Social Protection should adopt inclusive laws, policies and programmes in order to harness the potential leadership qualities in women with disabilities. For instance, the Affirmative Action Bill must be inclusive.
- Ghana Statistical Service should reform its system of data collection and collect data on the situation of persons with disabilities, disaggregated by age and gender, particularly persons with disabilities from marginalised communities, across all sectors including health, education, employment, political participation, access to justice, social protection, violence, migration and internal displacement.
- The social security legislation must be revised and reformulate the provisions for women with disabilities in the informal sector as non-contributors.
- The Ministry of Local Government must adopt public policies which foster the fulfilment of effective participation of women with disabilities in political process and public life.
- The Ministry of Local Government as part of its social protection, ought to have budgetary allocation for women with disabilities who desire to be politically active alleviating the extra cost as a result of disability.
- The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Protection ought to streamline the social protection basket and enhance its target to benefit women with disabilities equally, paying attention to target 10.2 of Sustainable Development Goals.
- The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Protection should adopt quota system to increase women with disabilities equitable representation in governance and constitutional bodies.
- The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Protection should adopt a more efficient, more holistic and better-targeted approach to get women with disabilities to be appointed into various political and public leadership positions. The targeted approach which includes mainstreaming disability perspectives especially those of women with disabilities into development policies and programs.
- The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Protection should provide the necessary resources and training to ensure that all information intended for the general public is available in a timely manner in accessible formats and technologies.
- The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Protection should call for the amendment of laws including the 1992 Constitution that use such terms as “unsound mind” to disqualify some persons with disabilities from occupying political process.
- Ghana Federation of Disability Organisation in collaboration of the Women’s wing of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities must build the capacity of women with disabilities so as to raise the low level of participation of women with disabilities in political and public life and their invisibility in laws, programmes and policies related to the advancement of women.

- The National Council of Persons with Disabilities should include women with disabilities in its plans and strategies to promote their active participation in political affairs.
- The National Council of Persons with Disabilities should systematically compile data and statistics on the situation of women and girls with disabilities and establish indicators that can be used to assess the impact of the measures taken to counter discrimination against them.
- The National Development Planning Commission should adopt Targets and Indicators that will empower women with disabilities in the political process and social protection.
- Ghana's next Sustainable Development Goal Baseline Report should critically address women with disabilities under the lens of reduced inequalities.

### **Conclusion**

**The cost of exclusion of all women and girls, irrespective of ability in Ghana, is high, socially and financially for women themselves, as well as for their families and countries' economies. Ghana's sustainable growth is contingent on implementing gender equality measures with disability perspectives. Discrimination on any grounds is an obstacle to democracy and full citizenship. Ghana has ratified the Convention of Persons with Disabilities and must make better progress to ensure that all women and girls with disabilities enjoy their rights to its provisions, including to education, health, social protection and political participation as well as equal opportunities in leadership and decision-making at all levels. Such action will enable Ghana to harness the potential of all girls and women with disabilities and to reduce the inequalities they face on a daily basis.**

## Call to action

1. A national education campaign led by government and involving faith communities and voluntary organisations to end stigma and negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities.
2. Ensure that the promises of legislation against discrimination and for inclusion of people with disabilities are followed up and enforced in practice in terms of legal protection, access to education and employment.
3. There should be provision of sanitary facilities in schools, places of employment and public buildings for persons with disabilities, and especially for girls and women with disabilities.
4. Ensure that social protection systems deliver for persons with disabilities and that women and girls with disabilities are enrolled in social protection programmes.
5. Put in place affirmative policies and practices to enable persons with disabilities to engage in politics on an equal footing with their able-bodied peers.
6. Women with disabilities should participate at the highest level in the formulation of policy on disability and, in general persons with disabilities and their organisations should be invited to participate in policy making and monitoring of outcomes, following the slogan “Nothing for us without us.”
7. The Ministry of Gender and Social Protection should appoint a WWD to cabinet position.
8. The Ghana Statistical Service should reform its system of data collection and collect data on the situation of persons with disabilities, disaggregated by age and gender, and incorporate the Washington Questions into its census and surveys.

## Appendix I

Focus Group participants: the table below shows the nature of participants disability, their age, their location and the source of assistance and what it was used for.

### Summary of the Demographic Characteristics of the Interviewees, their experience and achievements

No.	Inter-viewee Code	Age Group	Kind of Disability	Place of Residence	Experience in decision-making		Experience in Political Process
					OPWD	OTHERS	
1	AB1	38-47	Visual impairment	Bongo Upper Region	District President	Girls Prefect at Junior High	2 terms District Assembly Woman
2	AD2	38-47	Deaf	GAR		Ass. School Prefect at Senior High	
3	BB3	48-57	Blind	Wa - Northern Region	National President	Deputy Regional Director of Education	
4	EB4	28-37	Blind	Brong Ahafo Region		Class leader, Senior High	
5	ESM5	28-37	Survival of mental disabilities	Greater Accra Region	National Vice-President		
6	EP6	68 & above	Physical disability	Greater Accra Region	Former Board Member - NCPDs	Dorm Prefect at Senior High - Chief Director	
7	AB7	38-47	Blind	Bolgatanga - Upper East Region		House Prefect at Senior High	Contested the last District Assembly Elections but narrowly missed it

No.	Inter- viewee Code	Age Group	Kind of Disability	Place of Residence	Experience in decision- making		Experience in Political Process
					OPWD	OTHERS	
8	BP8	38-47	Physical disability	Greater Accra Region	Adminis- trator		Contested Parliamen- tary position but narrowly missed it. Constituency chairperson for her Party.
9	EAU9	28-37	Autism	Greater Accra Region	Legal re- searcher/ Resource person	Hall Proto- col Prefect	
10	EM10	38-47	Non-com- municable disease (wheel- chair user)	Greater Accra Region	Executive Member of Women's Wing	Class lead- er at Senior High	Delegate of political party. Aspiring MP
11	EAL11	28-37	Albinism	Greater Accra Region	National Vice President		



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