

# WOMEN MEDIA AND CHANGE



## 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

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## Mission and Vision Statements

### Mission

- To conduct research on the media needs of women in Ghana.
- To undertake media skills and ICT training for women with leadership potentials, parliamentarians and middle-level career women.
- To build the capacity of media personnel to effectively report on gender and women's issues.
- To publish appropriate publications on women and gender.

### Vision

WOMECE's vision is to bridge the gap between rhetoric and action in addressing issues on gender and to empower women to gain public voice and visibility through the effective use of the media.

## Acknowledgement

Women, Media and Change (WOMECE) wishes to express its profound gratitude to the Global Fund for Women, UK, the Canadian International Development Agency, (CIDA), and ABANTU for Development.

We wish to also thank the African Media and Malaria Research Network (AMMREN) for supporting WOMECE.

## Executive Summary

The year 2009, was a very challenging one for WOMEC as almost all our proposals were not funded. Despite these financial difficulties, WOMEC was able to chalk up a number of successes.

WOMEC organized two media training workshops which were follow-ups to two similar ones organised in 2008 to enhance women's leadership and participation in Election 2008.

The 2009 workshops analyzed media coverage of women candidates in the 2008 elections. They were also used to reflect on gender sensitive issues and media coverage with regards to women's leadership role and participation in general during the elections.

Although, it is evidently clear that Ghanaian women have made considerable advancements over the past decade in the areas of education, commerce and other sectors of public life, few women still participate in decision-making in public life as compared to their male counterparts who form less about 49 per cent of the population.

Ghanaian women are still generally under represented in all sectors though there are signs of improvement in representation at the political and international level

A radio discussion on gender and development issues in Ghana was held on Uniiq FM's Woman to Woman programme. The theme for the programme was "promoting the participation of women in politics".

Currently, WOMEC is working on the second edition of its news letter: "The Female Parliamentarian".

An ICT workshop for female journalists has also been planned for 2010.

WOMEC is also looking for funds to organize gender training workshops for journalists, which will centre on the forthcoming District Assembly Elections.

WOMECE wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Global Fund for WOMEN, ABANTU for Development, African Women Development Fund (AWDF), NETRIGHT and all of its partners for their endless support to the organization.

Charity Binka  
Executive Director  
WOMECE

## 1. PROJECT REPORTS

### Radio programme on gender and development issues in Ghana

WOMECE in July organized a radio discussion on Ghana Broadcasting Corporations' Uniiq FM, Woman-to-Woman programme.

The NDC Member of Parliament (MP) for North Dayi Constituency, honourable Akua Sena Dansua, who was also the Minister of Women and Children's Affairs, was on the programme

The other panelist was Mrs. Agnes Chigabatia, the former Deputy Minister of the Upper East Region and former NPP MP for Builsa North,

The radio discussion, which lasted for an hour, centred on how to increase women's participation in Ghanaian politics.

#### **Main outcomes of the event:**

The Minister for Women and Children's Affairs used the opportunity to inform listeners about the various plans being made by government and other bodies to ensure increasing women's participation in politics.

She said Ghana had ratified various conventions like CEDAW and as such was obligated to implement it to the grassroots level. The Minister said the affirmative action policy therefore came out of such obligations and thus the current government had taken steps to review the policy. She added that some civil society groups had looked at it and were making inroads towards its proper implementation.

She noted that there was a project between the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) and the World Bank to identify and support 15-20 females who are competent to be part of each District Assembly. She said resources would be provided to build the capacity of such females as they would be involved in activities at the grassroots level so that they could gain the necessary exposure to aspire to higher political positions.

“All this is to ensure that come 2012 more females can come to the fore with regard to the political activities in the country” the minister said.



***Honourable Akua Sena Dansua Minister for Women and Children's Affairs expressing an opinion during the discussion***



***The two panelists, Honourable Akua Sena Dansua (left) and Honourable Agnes Chigabatiah at the Uniiq FM studio***

The highly interactive and phone-in discussion brought to the fore certain key issues listed below:

- Ms Akua Sena Dansua gave a scenario about how political activities were conducted in Ghana. She observed that there was the need to change the way people participated in politics. She said there was the need to show discipline especially on the part of females already in politics so other women could use them as stepping stones.
- There was a call on government to provide facilities for interpretation especially in parliament so that females who are not well lettered could make their contributions.

This call was in response to a question raised by a listener about whether one needed to be lettered before one could become a parliamentarian. The question was sent through a text message by a female listener during the programme.

- A female listener also sent a text message asking about how she could convince her husband to allow her to go into politics.
- This led to a realization that there was the need to educate women at the grassroots level to encourage them to enter into politics.
- This was followed by an advice by to involve males in all meetings and discussions aimed at increasing female political participation so that they will be partners in the campaign for the inclusion of more women in politics.
- Mrs Chigabatia called on the electorate to hold political parties to their campaign promises so that they will deliver on their promises to support female candidates in their parties. She asked for continuous advocacy by civil society groups, religious groups, political parties and the media so that education on the critical role of women will be intensified.



## 2. Media Training Workshops

The workshop was held in two phases- two days each in the Ashanti Region (Kumasi) and Greater Accra Region (Accra).

The Kumasi venue, which represented the northern sector, had participants from five regions: Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Brong Ahafo and the Ashanti.

Accra, representing the southern sector, had participants from the Central, Western, Volta, Eastern and Greater regions

Participants included the following groups:

- Media practitioners.
- Political parties/leaders
- Women in leadership positions
- Women in politics
- The cross-section of the general public, particularly the electorate

### Workshop Methodology

- Presentations on thematic areas
- Reflections on Election 2008
- Interactions with some women in political positions
- Open discussions
- Group work

- Strategy session
- Interaction with selected women in politics

## 2.1

Mrs Dede Bedu-Addo- *Gender and Development Expert*

**“Gender and governance: the role of the media.”**

Mrs Bedu-Addo touched on the above topic and made a case on why women who form the majority of the Ghanaian society must be part of governance and decision making. The reasons she gave included the fact that women play key roles in national economy, community, security and development and are better positioned in reconciliation.

She said are also known to be less corrupt as compared to their male counterparts. She further noted that excluding women from governance would be like a two-legged person trying to run on one leg. She noted that though women have played key roles in political events in the country over the past decades, their participation in politics and governance continues to be limited to the traditional female roles in health, education, tourism and social welfare among others. She cited intense and undue media scrutiny, lack of confidence, traditional female responsibilities, poverty and culture as some factors militating against women’s participation in politics, governance and decision making at both the national and local levels.

Mrs. Bedu-Addo noted efforts that women groups in the country have made but have had little impact on the increase of women’s presence in governance. She noted in particular the outcome of the 2008 elections, where despite the fact that there were more women contestants as compared to the previous elections, the number of women elected into Parliament had dropped from 25 to 20.

This situation she said can be redressed if the media takes up its core responsibility of not only entertaining but educating and informing as well. She said the media also has the responsibility to promote women in politics with the same zeal and enthusiasm they did for their male counterparts.

Mrs. Bedu-Addo’s second presentation was on **“Increasing women’s participation in decision making through affirmative action.”**

She noted that governments all over the world are obligated by UN and other international conventions to do all things possible to increase women's participation in governance and decision making at all levels. For instance, the UN demands that governments should achieve 30% of women participation in politics by 2005.

The media she said must be fully seen to be leading in the campaign to put more women into decision making positions to ensure that the majority of the population is not left out in decisions on matters concerning them.

## **2.2**

### A critical assessment of media coverage of election 2008

This session was delivered by Nana Yaw Osei, Acting Regional Chairman, Ghana Journalists Association (GJA)-Ashanti Region.

Nana Yaw Osei's presentation was aimed at finding out how much news paper space was allotted to women contestants at the height of the December 2008 campaign period.

His assessment was limited to three news papers, the Daily Graphic which is state owned and has nationwide circulation, Daily Guide and the Chronicle which are both privately owned. He selected the months of October and November which were both the peak of electioneering for his study.

He noted that in October 2009, Daily Guide gave 15% of its political news space to women while the Daily Graphic and Chronicle gave 12% their space to women. In November, however, Daily Graphic's space allotted to women dropped to 8%, Daily Guide also dropped to 13% while Chronicle increased its coverage from 6% to 18% coverage of women in politics.

Nana Yaw Osei noted that it is particularly worrying that the Daily Graphic should perform far below the privately owned newspapers in giving coverage to women in politics. In concluding his presentation, Nana Yaw Osei asked the participants to answer for themselves if they have been able to live up to the commitment they made at the earlier workshop in 2008 to give greater visibility to women contesting parliamentary seats.

He recommended that in the light of how the Daily Graphic performed compared to the two private newspapers it will be in the right direction if the independent media are courted in the crusade to give visibility to women in politics. He also asked for future training programmes to focus particularly on editors and other senior persons in the media houses.

2.3.

## EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITION

Madam Anima Wilson, Deputy Ashanti Regional Minister

“Running as a female contestant in election 2008”

(In Kumasi workshop)

The Deputy Regional Minister who was a contestant and lost the Ejisu Juabeng parliamentary seat shared her experiences in the parliamentary elections. She noted that the Ghanaian woman has the ability to take up leadership positions with the right support. However majority of such women would need to be empowered and equipped with the requisite skills needed for local governance.

Madam Wilson identified vision, courage to overcome setbacks and good organizational skills, as some of the things that a woman needs while for running elections.

She said though she stood on the ticket of a party that had no chance in the constituency, she was able to win a high percentage of votes compared to what a man had for her party in the 2004 elections. She said she was able to achieve such a feat mainly because she always tried to state her case even when the people she was talking to ignored her and did not think highly of her. She said appearances also counts in the game of politics, she said she tried to dress appropriately for each audience she met, carried herself well and regarded all people as potential allies. Madam Wilson said formal education is essential for any woman contesting elections. She said though she had minimal education she was determined to make it against all the odds.

The Deputy Regional Minister said she faced many challenges as a female contestant particularly with regards to finance, physical and verbal assault from both men and women who sought to deride her as being a woman with loose morals and thus venturing into politics.

She believed that if she had not been widowed she would have had difficulty combining her role as a wife and a contestant in the elections as well as a Deputy Regional Minister.

Madam Cecilia Dapaah, MP for Bantama

“Running for elections as a two-term female Member of Parliament “

(In Accra)

Madam Cecilia Dapaah in sharing her experiences as a second- term Member of Parliament was not happy about the situation where men were made to take over seats that women had held earlier for Parliament. She referred particularly to what happened in her party the NPP, where seats of five women who decided not to seek re-election were given to men.

She was therefore full of praise for the organizers of the workshop which she said will help both the media and female politicians to recognize their complimentary roles in giving visibility to women in politics and decision making positions.

The MP noted that often what women say in Parliament are not reported in the media thus making them look like they are just passive participants in the legislature and called for a forum to be organized by WOMEC and its collaborators for interaction between female MPs and the media for them to have a critical analyses of how they viewed their performance as female parliamentarians.

Sharing her experiences as a woman in politics, Madam Dapaah said she had challenges mainly with other men and women in society who still hold on to traditional beliefs in relations to the role of women. She said the perception that women in politics are hard nuts when they refuse to descend into the gutter or talk straight to the point has also been a major challenge.

She said despite the challenges women should not be daunted to stay away from politics since the challenges can be conquered. She was particularly emphatic that more women needed to go to parliament because that is where women can become very visible, have the opportunity to mentor other women and girls.

Madam Dapaah concluded with the recommendations that the media and other related agencies put in more to work to get women into parliament while political parties are made to remove restrictive structures to women participating in elections and ensure that women contestants are considered for safe seats.

She said efforts be made to make legalize a quota system for women in parliament. Other recommendations she made included the need for women and younger girls to be exposed to public speaking and also for women to endeavour to develop themselves academically.

The participants after the workshop were in agreement that there was the need for all to work together to ensure that women who form 51 per cent of Ghana's population are not left out in the decision making processes as their non involvement would retard the nation's struggle to achieve a middle income status. In this regard the media practitioners together with the politicians agreed to step up advocacy for the passage of an affirmative action law that will encourage women's participation by removing obstacles that currently constrain them.

There were suggestions that young women in schools with potentials must be targeted, trained and mentored to begin to shape their future towards involvement in politics and policy decision making. These young ladies they suggested must be trained in the art of public speaking, comporment and development of self confidence. Participants were generally happy with the programme which they rated as being excellent and an eye opener into the challenges faced by women as they try to climb the ladder of political and national leadership

The workshop in pictures

### **Presentations at the workshop**



*Mrs. Badu Dede Addo*



*Hon. Anima Wilson(Middle) at the workshop in Kumasi*



*Nana Yaw Osei at the Kumasi workshop*



*Hon. Cecilia Dapaah, Dr. Goupal and Mrs. Hamida Harrison*

**Group work at the Accra workshop**



### Group presentations at the Accra workshop



### Group work at the Kumasi workshop



### Group presentations at the Kumasi workshop





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