

The STATUS of WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP in WEST AFRICA

A Study Commissioned by West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI)



The STATUS of WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP in WEST AFRICA

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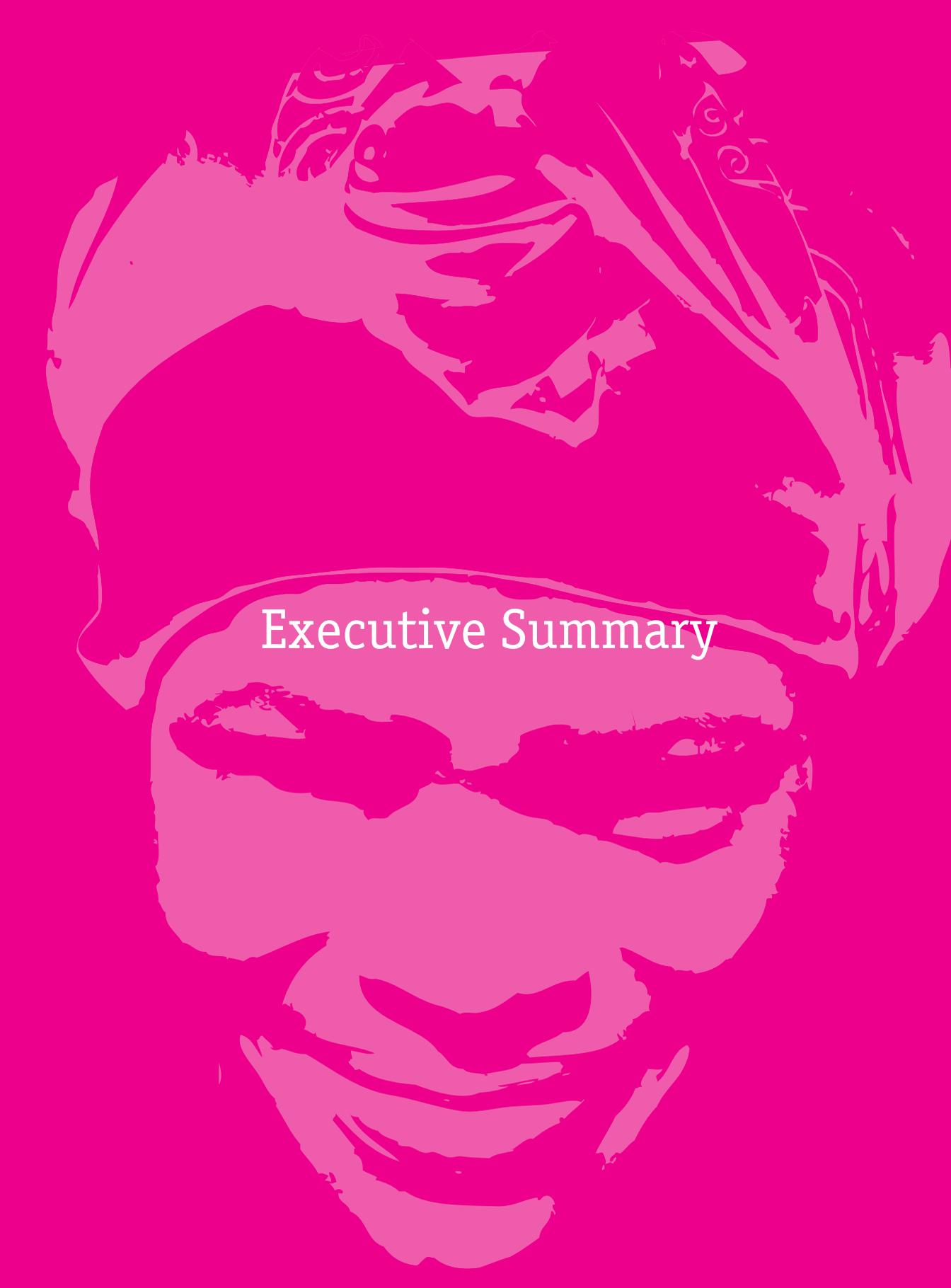
Acronyms

ABANTU	ABANTU for Development
ADEPME	Agency for development and management of small and medium enterprises
AfA	Alliances for Africa
Africa's (FWA)	French West Africa
AIDF	Association Ivoirienne pour la défense des Droits de la Femme
AKIWOL	Akwa Ibom Women League
ASBEF	Association pour le Bien Etre Familial
ASFCE	Association Sénégal-aise des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprise
AWEG	African Women Empowerment Guild
AWLA	African Women Lawyers Association
BAOBAB	BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CA	Consultative Assembly
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discriminations against Women
CFEL-CI	Coalition des Femmes Leaders de Côte D'Ivoire
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CIRDDOC	Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre
COCOVIKO	Coopérative des Commerçantes du Vivrier de Cocody
COFEMCI-RPC	Coordination des Femmes pour les Elections et la Reconstruction Poste Crise
CONGAD	Conseil des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales d'Appui au Développement
COSEF	Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes
CPP	Convention People's Party
CRES	Consortium pour la Recherché Economique et Sociale
DFP	Democratic Freedom Party
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit
DWM	31st December Women's Movement
FAFS	Fédération des Associations Féminines du Sénégal
FIDA (IFWL)	International Federation of Women Lawyers
FLF	Female Leadership Forum
GADI	Gender and Development Initiative
GAT	Gender Action Team
GJA	Ghana Journalists Association
GNAT	Ghana National Association of Teachers
GPI	Girls Power Initiative
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HDR	Human Development Report
INAFI	International Foundation for of Alternative Financial Institutions
IWSN	Initiatives for Women Studies In Nigeria

KAIPTC	Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
KIND	Kudirat Initiative for Democracy
LWI	Liberia Women's Initiative
MARWOPNET	Mano River Women's Peace Network
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFFDS	Ministère de la Femme de la Famille et du Développement Social
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
MP	Members of Parliament
NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education
NCWD	National Council on Women and Development
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NETRIGHT	The Network for Women's Rights in Ghana
NPP	New Patriotic Party
ONEF	Organisation Nationale pour l'Enfant, la Femme et la Famille
ONUCI	Opération des Nations Unies en Côte d'Ivoire
PAVAW	Project Alert on Violence against Women
PNAF	Plan National d'Action pour la Femme
PNC (PCP)	People's Convention Party (Use original language?)
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Council
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
REFAMP-CI	Réseau des Femmes Africaines Ministre Parlementaires section Côte d'Ivoire
REOSAO	Réseau des Opérateurs Economiques du secteur agroalimentaire de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
RIOF	Réseau Ivoirien des Organisations Féminines
RPD	Reformed Patriotic Democrat
RULIF	Rural Life Improvement Foundation
RUWEN	Rural Women Empowerment Network
RWD	Rahama Women Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
VAFAG	Vision et Action des Femmes Africaines contre les Guerres
WACOL	Women Aid Collective
WACSI	West Africa Civil Society Institute
WACSOFF	West African Civil Society Forum
WANEP	West African Network for Peacebuilding
WAO	Women Action Organisation
WARDC	Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre
WAWA	West African Women's Association
WEALE	Women Advancement For Economic and Leadership Empowerment

The Status of Women's Leadership in West Africa

WIA	Women in Action
WIL	Women in Leadership
WILDAF	Women in Law and Development in Africa
WIN	Women in Nigeria
WISCORD	Widening Scope for Rights and Development
WIPSEN-A	Women in Peace and Security Network - Africa
WMC	Women Manifesto Coalition
WOCON	Women's Consortium of Nigeria
WODEF	Women Optimum Development Foundation
WONGOSOL	Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia
WRAN	Women's Right Advance Network
WRAPA	Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Network



Executive Summary

Executive Summary

This report is the outcome of research commissioned by The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) on the “Status of Women’s Leadership in West Africa”. The study is regional in scope, with empirical grounding in four countries: Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sénégal. Côte d’Ivoire provides insights into women’s leadership in countries transitioning from protracted conflicts, while Ghana and Sénégal epitomise relatively politically stable countries in the process of democratisation. Nigeria was selected due to the size of its population and its geo-political significance in the sub-region. These countries, individually and collectively, offer comparative and contextual insights into the continuities and changing dynamics of women’s leadership status in West Africa. The four countries shed light on the overarching governance and democratisation processes within which women’s demands for leadership are expressed. They also exemplify some of the challenges women face on the thorny quest for leadership, and the prospects for change in women’s leadership development.

Within this context, the core objectives of the research were to examine and document the evolution of women’s leadership in the region; map out women’s leadership in different sectors of West African society; and assess how women have contributed to governance and democratisation. By tracing the evolution of women’s leadership from the pre-colonial era to the present, the study captures the changing dynamics of women’s social and political status at different historical junctures.

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Primary informants for this study were selected from a broad spectrum of actors and stakeholders; women leaders in government, private sector, and civil society. However, male counterparts were included to garner diverse perspectives and gendered accounts on the status of women’s leadership.

The data and related findings derive from an exploration of multiple data sources, including: primary data drawn from in-depth face-to-face interviews with women leaders and open-ended survey questionnaires. Extensive desk review and content analysis of policy documents, varied literature from academic and non-academic sources, and descriptive statistics to supplement the empirical data was also conducted.

Uniquely, the study records women’s perceptions and conceptions of leadership, their rich personal accounts of experiences and trajectories of leadership. It examines ideological underpinnings of their engagement, their multifaceted contributions to governance and democratisation processes, as well as the challenges and prospects for change in leadership development. In doing so, the study addresses the lack of recognition of women’s leadership roles, by mentioning the names of key women playing critical roles at all levels of the countries studied.

The substantive sections of the study are split into 7 chapters. **Chapter Two** provides a detailed historical and contextual overview of the status of women’s leadership in West Africa. This chapter provides a historical grounding for women’s leadership in West Africa as a vantage point to better

situate and historicise progress in women's advancement and status that have been eroded or enhanced at different historical junctures. It further uncovers structural changes over time that have enabled or hampered women's rise to leadership. The chapter examines the roles of women in pre-colonial societies; traditional governance structures; during British and French colonial rule; and post independence era. This analysis indicates that though West Africa's indigenous history records women playing significant roles in traditional systems of governance, West African states in their early formations did not systematically support and promote women's integration into the political and state apparatus, resulting in poor representation of women in governance and power structures. European colonial rule further entrenched, rather than transformed, inherited structural forms of power and patriarchal ideologies which are still present across the social, economic, and political spheres.

Chapter Three reviews the implementation of laden concepts like democracy and governance in West Africa. Specifically, the chapter underscores and analyses women's multifaceted roles in the democratisation processes by interrogating their participation in political parties and elections, and the gender representation gaps in governance. A comprehensive analysis was also conducted of the factors that impede women's rise to leadership within political parties and their lack of participation in governance processes within the countries studied.

Chapter Four maps and assesses the status of women's leadership in government and public administration. Accounts from the target countries posit that the public sector has not emerged as an arena for promoting equal opportunities for women and men, particularly in the executive and judicial arms of government. Using statistics from the target countries, the chapter highlights the composition of women in the civil service and their minimal representation in senior decision making positions. The study reveals an incremental ascendancy in women's leadership in legislative and parliamentary systems in the region. However, the numbers remain below the 30 percent representation proposed by the United Nations.

Chapter Five examines the status of women within the private sector and civil society and offers a comparative and cross-national analysis. The chapter assesses the dominant trend of women's uncontested leadership in the informal private sector, however noting women's visible absence in the formal private sector. By the accounts in the study, women tend to be confined to the "feminised" and less productive subsectors, with limited potential for capital accumulation and growth into medium and large scale industries. This chapter also addresses the role of women in civil society, revealing that civil society offers the most promising avenue for the emergence of women's leadership across West Africa. Civil society remains the fastest growing, less constricted and favourable locus of women's leadership development. Within the sector, women hold undisputed and almost exclusive leadership roles in homogenous women's associative movements and networks. More tenuous is women's equal leadership positioning within civil society groups with mixed and heterogeneous constituencies and mandates.

Chapter Six situates women's leadership in conflict and post conflict contexts. It explores the challenges and backlashes, induced by conflict and post-conflict situations, pertinent to women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding, reconstruction and democratic transitions, as illustrated by Côte d'Ivoire. The findings underscore women's differentiated levels of participation in peacebuilding initiatives and the recognition of their mobilisation capacities and contributions to household and community maintenance as well as in humanitarian relief. However, women's indigenous conflict resolution, peacebuilding strategies, and local knowledge in general, remain largely untapped, yet potentially strategic in current post-conflict and transition contexts, especially with regards to reconciliation and "social healing", and the overriding psychosocial and traumatic impacts of conflicts. This brings salience to the crisis paradox, where gender ideologies of nurturance are made more operative in periods of crisis and when women's assets, resources and labour are mobilised. Yet such critical contributions do not systematically translate into new paradigms, systemic reconfiguration, and transformative change of women's participation in post conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding.

Chapter Seven is devoted to revisiting the status of women's leadership through empirical accounts, perspectives and the standpoint of West African women leaders. It examines women's notions of leadership shaped by contextual realities and personal experiences. It highlights that women's ascension to leadership is not monolithic. Women across the sub-region express varied reasons for seeking leadership. However these experiences reveal commonalities in the challenges women face within different structures where they seek leadership. The chapter also outlines in women's own voices the strategies, skills and measures that can be taken to enhance the quality of women's leadership in West Africa.

Chapter Eight concludes the report, highlighting, key findings of the study, challenges and the way forward.

The key findings of the study include:

- The underlying ideology and related practices of domesticity, which restricted women's active engagement to the private sphere, only allowing their participation in the public arena as appendages of men, has broader implications for women's status in contemporary West Africa. However, the extent of gender disparities in decision-making is not uniform in the four countries studied here.
- Women's ascension to leadership and its resulting outcomes, albeit inadequate, non-linear and uneven, appear to be facilitated and impelled by several mutually reinforcing factors: 1) women's associative power and support networks; 2) linkages with international movements since 1975 with the United Nations' seminal conferences and platforms; 3) positive policy outcomes such as quotas resulting from successful gender equality advocacy, mobilisation, and awareness raising initiatives; 4) capacity building of women's organisations through the mediating role of civil society and international organisations; 5) government enforcement

- of gender equality measures and commitments.
- Notwithstanding the positive trend in the numerical increase of women within different arms of government, women still occupy inferior leadership positions that reflect enduring discriminations against women. Furthermore, in the legislative sphere, none of the countries covered in this study has achieved the targeted 30 percent representation benchmark instituted by the United Nations. To their credit, some political parties endeavour to engender leadership to meet quota conditionalities, acquiesce to women's electoral demands, and capitalise on women's mobilisation and campaigning assets, and comparative advantage. Nevertheless, the pace, rate, scope of change, albeit promising, remains insufficient to shift women's predominant confinement to party wings, and promote a critical mass of representative women leaders at the strategic apex of political parties.
 - The rationalisation of women's unequal leadership positions points to several interrelated contextual, structural and circumstantial factors that undermine women's upward mobility in parties' leadership including: "exclusion from the party hierarchy"; "political violence"; inadequate financing; "godfatherism"; covert and overt competition resulting in duplication of efforts and costly redundancies; and the instrumentation, politicisation and polarisation of women's organisations.
 - The asymmetries and stark deficit in women's leadership status in political legislative structures find expression in other sectors of governance and decision making at the micro and macro-levels. In local governance, the promises of decentralisation policies enacted in most West African countries since the 1990s are yet to yield tangible outcomes for women's increased participation in local governance, which stands below the 15 percent in the countries under study. Women's unequal representation in local governance structures causes serious dysfunction due to the absence of crucial voices, inputs, assets and know-how from the largest demographic group and constituency. This results in gender-neutral or gender-biased policies which are neither adequate nor respond to women's differentiated needs, interest and imperatives in local and national development. It holds wider implications not only for women's access to leadership roles, but also for the quality of governance and growth of democracy.
 - Generally, the findings highlight the resilience to women's equal participation and valued contributions to governance and democratisation processes by structural factors, though emerging trends emphatically show the positive impacts of women's contributions. While it is essential to acknowledge the variegated circumstances - and heterogeneity of individual women leaders - the confluence of forces that shape their life courses and impede their ascension resonate across the West African sub-region. This stems from pervasive gender gaps in educational attainment, institutionalised gender bias in the electoral system, women's lack of confidence, and aversion to politics.

Challenges:

Though the root causes of gender differentials in leadership are well documented, the question remains: Why are women's demands for fair representation in leadership positions in all governance and democratisation processes, endorsed by international, regional and national instruments, still unmet?. The evidence points to interrelated loci and sites of power and disempowerment that subjugate West African women's claims and entitlements to leadership. Accounts emerging from the study converge towards four intersecting areas of concern: 1) structural impediments attributed to patriarchal ethos and entrenched gender biases that impede women's qualitative and quantitative representation in governance processes; 2) institutional barriers and failures to systemise, domesticate and enforce gender equity instruments; 3) contextual challenges, such as, regime change, violent conflict, and the reconfiguration of political power; and 4) internal challenges within women's movements and networks, such as unhealthy competition, lack of mentorship, weak human and financial resource capacities, and inability to influence policy development.

Recommendations:

One of the methodological strategies underpinning the study emphasises a participatory engagement with women leaders across sectors. This provided opportunities for their own framing of substantive issues that impinge upon women's leadership development. In response to the assertion that the impediments to women's leadership development are structural, contextual and behavioural, and to the challenges aforementioned, respondents in the study formulated recommendations to improve women's leadership status. These recommendations revolve around five intersecting thematic categories that converge cross-nationally: 1) Capacity building for women leaders and civil society actors; 2) governments' domestication and enforcement of gender equality policy instruments and commitments; 3) promotion of qualitative quotas; 4) re-energising of the women's movement; and, 5) forging intergenerational "sisterhood," mentorship and inclusive partnerships.

The frequently used term "Capacity Building" stands the risk of becoming redundant in the development sector, however in the case of women's leadership, it remains relevant. High illiteracy among women and their confinement to gendered roles in society have deprived a significant number of West African women opportunities for skills and capacities' development.

- **Capacity building for women leaders and civil society representatives**

Respondents in the target countries stressed the importance of continued capacity building for women in key technical competencies such as strategic thinking, effective leadership, negotiation, networking, policy advocacy and organising. Such skills are necessary to compete in political environments in particular, but are also useful for leadership in general.

Professional leadership of organisations has become a technical competency. Therefore, women need to gain skills on how to lead and manage contemporary organisations. Particularly in

post-conflict contexts such as Côte d'Ivoire, where opportunities for new organisations to rebuild the society emerge. The recommendation also entail capturing new openings in the political and social spheres to effect positive change for women, and to ensure that gender equality advances obviate the emergence of new imperatives.

- **Enforcement of quota system and qualitative quota outcomes**

Recognising that quota systems are not an end in themselves, but a necessary condition for introducing women into leadership positions, it is imperative for governments and political party leaders to create opportunities and enabling environments for the emergence of a critical mass of women leaders in legislatures and public administration, local governance as well as party leadership. This implies complementing the quota system with tailored capacity-building, awareness raising and social dialogues to concomitantly tackle roots causes, normative practices and ideologies that collectively impede women's leadership roles in all spheres of decision making. Conceptualising and articulating women's leadership in the 21st century requires new vocabularies to capture the complex contexts that underlie several processes of change. It is imperative to reassess the results that quotas yield, the challenges they pose, and their long-term outcomes. This assessment should strive to gauge qualitative and quantitative representation, as well as, women's ascendancy and attrition rate in leadership positions.

Along with quota systems, another implicit concern raised is the need to institutionalise representative and inclusive electoral processes that take cognisance of the inherent difficulties women face in putting forward their candidature. For example, specific electoral codes that provide state financing to support female's direct costs during elections will address the common challenge of limited access to funding.

For aspiring women leaders, overcoming the aversion to politics and taking calculated risks within political party structures is paramount. Women who are active and contribute significantly to building and sustaining political parties should demand strategic positions within parties' leadership. Hence, it is important for women to acquire negotiation and bargaining skills and for women interested in political leadership to internalise the notion that "that power and leadership in politics are never given but derived from hard-won battles and strategic manoeuvring of the political system. It may entail negotiating with men as partners and co-opting supportive men to the cause."

- **Domestication and enforcement of gender equality commitments and instruments**

West African countries have signed and ratified landmark gender equality instruments, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Maputo Protocol (2003), among others. However, these remain declarations of intentions, and are not fully enforced. Thus, the domestication and implementation of relevant international legal instruments promoting gender equity is imperative. Governments should depart from the minimalist approach that ignores the structural basis of exclusion and inequalities. They should move beyond rhetoric and actuate gender equality and

the promotion of competent women to all spheres of decision-making at national and local levels. The expectations of decentralisation ushered in the 1990s have not yielded expected outcomes in engendering and democratising representation in local governance structures. The enforcement of the 50/50 commitment to women's representation in local governance in Ghana should be enforced. Civil society's watchdog role in ensuring governments' compliance at all levels is integral to this process.

- **“Inclusive sisterhood”, expanded partnerships and scope for action**

The strength of women's leadership and collective agency lies in its inclusiveness and the diversity of its constituencies. This implies, as prerequisites, fostering the participatory involvement and inclusion of a broad range of constituencies that include women leaders in less visible but equally important sectors such as indigenous governance structures, religious institutions, and the private sector. Stronger ties should be forged between women leaders in government and civil society to enhance the relevance and adequacy of policy changes that reflect their needs and priorities. Intergenerational mentorship and transparent leadership transfer should be encouraged and supported.

The place of supportive men in promoting a feminist agenda should be emphasised, recognising that “change starts from transforming gender ideologies lodged within the household unit, hence the imperative to change men within the family unit”.

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Forging effective partnerships and mobilising constituencies around strategic issues at national, regional and sub-regional levels should be underscored. The regional integration agenda offers a propitious entry point for consolidated and specialised regional networks. It also intensifies advocacy and consultation among women leaders and civil society in West Africa. Such platforms exist, but should be linked, strengthened and utilised.

Lastly, considering the centrality of regional integration, the scope of action should be national and regional. Exercising state ownership in regional integration mechanisms, ensuring that commitments to gender equality are taken into account in emerging regional institutions, is crucial. ECOWAS and UEMOA and other regional configurations in West Africa should provide examples of enforcing gender equality policies and women's participation in leadership, to trigger similar practices at the national level.

Further recommendations underscore “le devoir de memoire” i.e. the commemoration of women leaders to inscribe their achievements and contributions in the history books and oral histories of each country. This will respond to interrelated imperatives: (i) to better document women's contributions and capture women's innovative and adaptive strategies to effect change; (ii) to create timeless repositories of women's achievements across sectors; (iii) to leave legacies for younger and future generations to continue and advance the quest for gender equality.

Conclusion

This study attempts to provide a cross-national analysis of women's leadership in West Africa. It highlights progress and challenges in women's leadership development through different periods; pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, as well as contemporary. The empirical cases catalogue the contributions of women under different systems of governance through the stated timelines and the constraints that hamper women's advancement in society. Approximately, half a century since West African countries gained independence, steady progress has been recorded in women's quest for leadership. This progress is however inadequate with regards to fair and equitable gender-based representation in contemporary democratisation and governance processes.

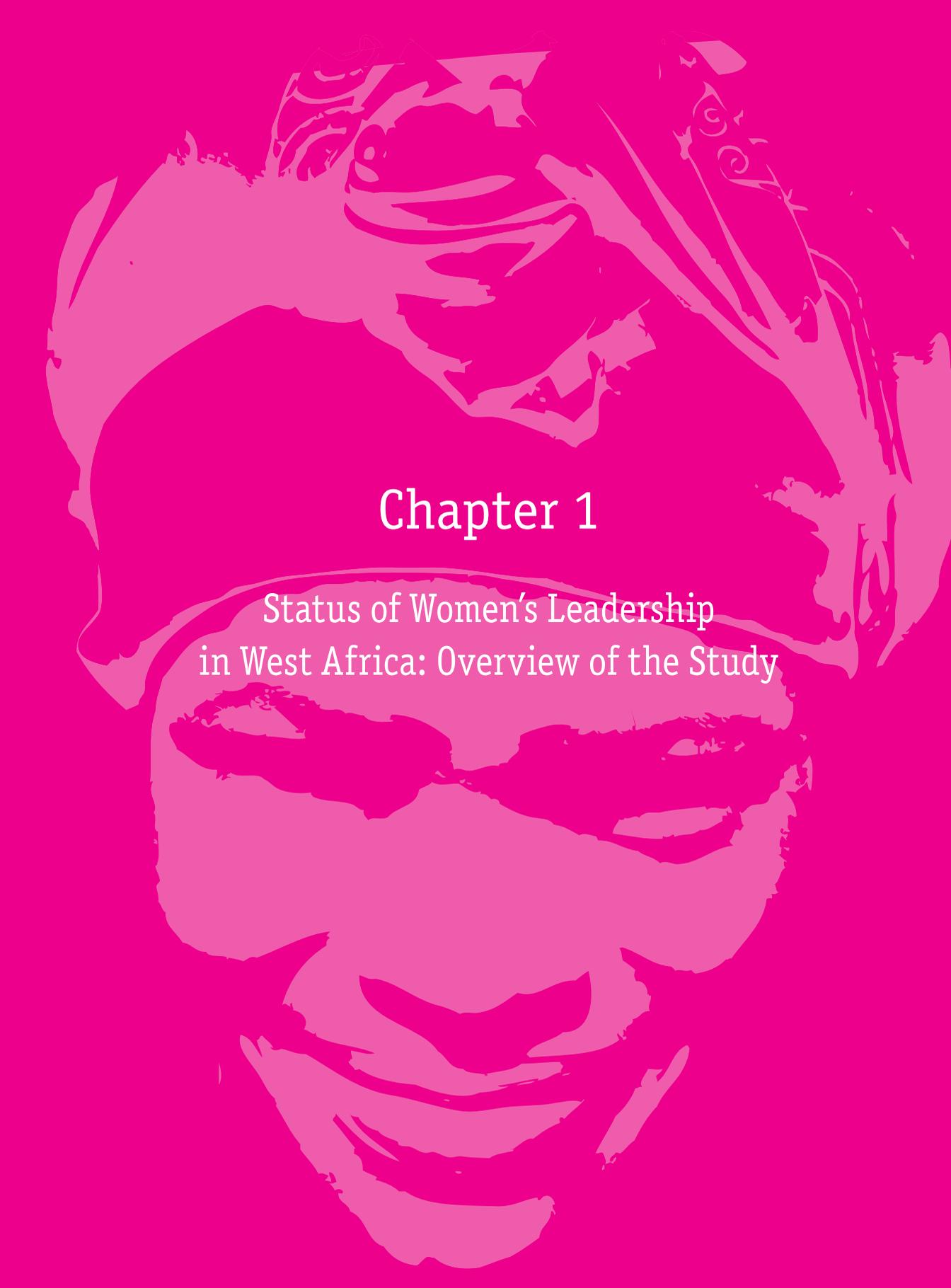
Post conflict contexts, as illustrated by Côte d'Ivoire in this study, reflects the complexities facing countries transiting from war to peace and the roles women play during such transitions. Safeguarding against the erosion of gains women have made in the post conflict environment is an ongoing challenge to women's leadership in several countries in West Africa. Hence the need to institutionalise enforceable mechanisms that promote women's participation in decision making, such as quotas systems is important; while ensuring that these mechanisms are applied contextually and do not become orthodoxies or panaceas to all challenges hindering women's entry into leadership spaces.

Today, despite significant changes, overall women are still not adequately represented and in two of the three core sectors of society; government and the private sector. This status quo undermines the ongoing democratisation processes in most West African states. The countries studied highlight that governments' rhetoric of gender equality is not matched by convincing actions. The study however cited that women have a level of prominence within civil society and the informal private sector. Nevertheless in the current configuration of West African states, both sectors wield limited influence over state-centric policies and processes. The probable growth, strengthening and relevance of the civil society sector in the region over the long term, and the ability of this stronger civil society to have leverage over governments and hold them accountable to their commitments on gender equality should contribute to enhanced inclusivity and gendered representation in other sectors.

Notwithstanding the differential rate of women's representation in leadership, the study found that a new generation of aspiring women continue to draw strength and inspiration from the activism and contributions of women through different periods of West African history. However most of these aspiring leaders are nationalistic in their activism for leadership and tend not to forge collaborations cross nationally.

Accounts from the study emphasise the importance of periodically analysing the practicalisation of leadership, to give credence to its localised and imbued gendered meanings. Equally important is a strategic rethinking of women's leadership by taking into account unmet demands and emergent concerns and challenges posed by war, militarism, economic and financial crises. Also needed are forward-looking approaches in analysing and anticipating the impact of the global challenges on women's leadership, such as, economic crises; climate change, and the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

The challenges outlined and the related recommendations call for renewed engagement to elevate women's contributions to democratisation, governance and socio-economic development in West Africa. These actions should build on shared visions and ethical values that shape transformational leadership. The scope for action should involve 1) bridging the physical and cognitive distance between urban and rural women, 2) addressing the weaknesses within women's networks, movements and collaborations, 3) broadening entry into politics for women, to ensure quality representation in political decision making processes, 4) developing creative sources of financing to support women's aspirations of leadership, and, 5) systematically recording the substantive contributions women in leadership positions make across the sub-region to counter efforts to undermine their achievements.



Chapter 1

Status of Women's Leadership in West Africa: Overview of the Study

Introduction

The first decade of this century has witnessed an increase in the number of women assuming important decision-making positions in West Africa. In January 2006, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia became the first democratically-elected female President in Africa. Other prominent female political figures soon after emerged across the region, including Zainab Bangura (as Minister of International Cooperation and Foreign Affairs in Sierra Leone); Olubanke King-Akerele (as Minister of Commerce and Industry in Liberia); Maria da Conceição Nobre Cabral (as Minister of International Cooperation and Communities Abroad in Guinea Bissau),ⁱⁱ and Nigeria's highly-praised former Finance Minister, Ngozi Iweala Okonjo. These visible positions occupied by women are products of decades of activism by West African women for gender equality in governance, leadership and development.

This growing visibility has ignited hopes that West Africa, a region with hitherto entrenched patriarchal structures and practices, is changing and becoming more receptive to the potential of women in leadership. However, it is important not to assume that centuries-old exclusionary practices that have hampered women's equal representation in different sectors of West African society have simply faded away. What is needed is an examination through empirical studies of the factors that might have contributed to this shift or lack thereof.

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While many studies have documented women's leadership roles in national legislatures there has been limited critical and empirical examination of the experiences and challenges faced by West African women who hold leadership positions across different sectors of society. Furthermore, there has been minor examination of the lives and experiences of women in leadership. In addition, there is insufficient interrogation of the extent to which an increase in women's representation in decision-making bodies has resulted in gender equality, qualitative and inclusive governance as well as fundamental transformations of the perceptions of women in leadership structures.

The dearth of empirical evidence on the evolution and current dynamics of women's leadership in West Africa motivated the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) to commission a study on the "Status of women's leadership" in the sub-region. The study focused on four countries: Nigeria, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire. The overall objective of the study was to examine and document the evolution of women's leadership in the region. Specifically, the research examined women's leadership in different sectors of West African society, assessing how women have contributed to governance and democratisation processes historically and contemporaneously. The emphasis was on the following:

1. A historical and contemporary analysis of women's leadership in West Africa;
2. Women's leadership positions across different social spaces, including political, economic (formal and informal business sectors), indigenous African governance structures, religious bodies, women in civil society organisations including women's networks and coalitions, women in academia, and women in the security sector;

3. Women's leadership in relation to 'public' and 'private' social spaces;
4. The extent to which women's leadership has transformed perceptions of women in society and the opportunities available to them; and
5. Linkages between women in government and civil society.

Rather than focus solely on recent trends, the study traces the historical trajectory of the status and contributions of women from the pre-colonial and colonial eras to contemporary West Africa. By delineating the evolution of women's leadership from the pre-colonial era to the post-colonial, the study demonstrates the changing character of women's leadership over time, highlighting historical developments in the status of women's leadership in the sub-region. Apart from gauging the advancements women have made in formal decision-making structures within government and civil society, the study unpacks critical concepts of leadership, governance, patriarchy, democratisation and gender equality in West Africa. Furthermore, the research assesses how women's networks, coalitions, and support groups have influenced the development of women's leadership in West Africa.

It also examines what, if any, feminist values and /or praxis have contributed to the ascendancy factor, and what still enhances or hinders women's participation in decision-making.

1.0 Scope of the Study

In the course of extensive fieldwork, wide-ranging data was collected from the West African region. More focused primary data was derived from four West African countries, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Sénégal, and Nigeria. The Côte d'Ivoire situation provides insights into women's leadership in countries transitioning from a period of protracted conflict, while those of Ghana and Sénégal offer insights into women's leadership in relatively stable countries that are in the process of democratisation. Nigeria was selected due to its population size and geo-political significance. These countries offer important evidence of the changing dynamics of the status of women's leadership in the sub-region.

1.1 Data Sources and Method of Data Analysis

Qualitative inquiry was the major analytical technique adopted as the guiding framework for the study, with primary informants and target groups drawn from many avenues: the national legislature (including women in local government representative structures); judiciary; executive (including line ministries, and particularly gender machineries); small and large business enterprises; indigenous governance structures (Chieftaincy systems, women's secret societies, etc); security sector; and civil society (academia, media, NGO's, and CBO's, religious organisations, representing a broad spectrum of civil society representatives). It also included the opinions of a selection of men in these same institutions in order to document men's perceptions of, and the implications of those perceptions for, the advancement of women's leadership.

The study involved multi-sited field research including in-depth face-to-face interviews, and the distribution of questionnaires which were completed by the targeted persons. The questionnaires (N=200) were administered electronically across West Africa. Face-to-face interviews were conducted across the sub-region and indepth research was conducted in all the target countries: Sénégal, Ghana, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire between October 2008 and February 2009.

The interpretive basis of the analysis derives from a triangulation of multiple data sources. The first included extensive desk review and content analysis of relevant documents from civil society organisations engaged in advocacy on women leadership development; existing international, continental, and regional instruments; databases that provided descriptive statistics; and scholarly publications. The second included interview data and the results of questionnaires distributed in the West African region. Narratives from women leaders provided rich and multiple accounts on the intersection between the personal experiences of leadership within broad socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts. Such cogent and critical accounts elicited women leaders' construction of leadership, the ideological underpinning of their engagement, the general perceptions of women leaders, and the contributions of women leaders to democratic governance. They also shed light on the constraints women face on the complex road to leadership. In these accounts, women formulated recommendations directed at government and civil society for an increased participation of women in all spheres of decision-making.

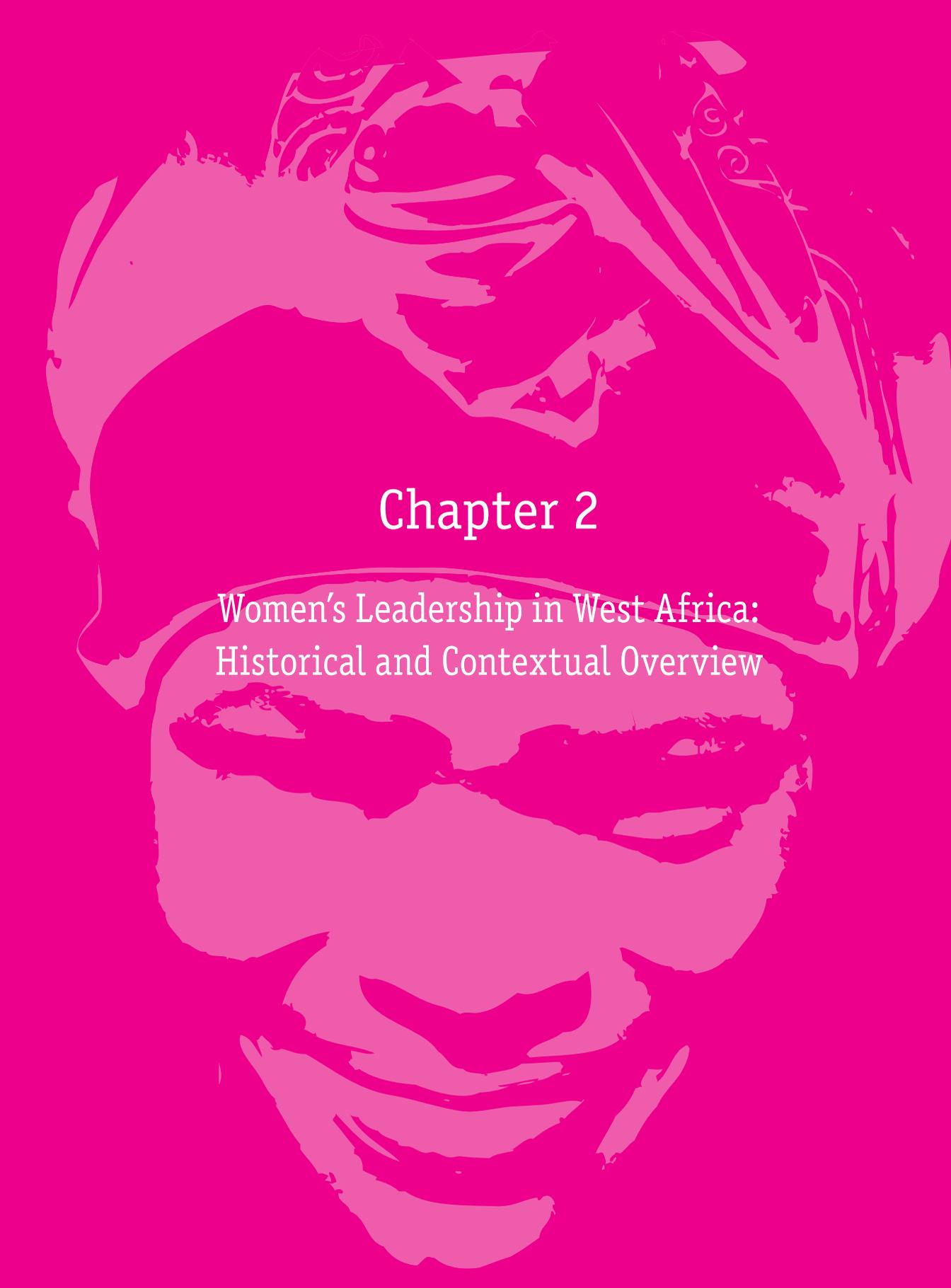
22 1.2 Contributions to the Study

This study makes a number of important contributions to the existing literature. It enriches the scholarship on women's leadership, while offering insights, accounts, testimonials, and recommendations for furthering women's leadership in specific countries in the region. It conveys the rich perspectives and practical experiences of actual women in leadership positions across many spheres of society and power configurations in government and civil society. Moreover, the study captures the views of male actors in civil society on the status and evolution of women's leadership. This allows for unique contributions to a dialogical gender analysis of leadership gaps, not usually captured in singular narratives.

Importantly, the findings carry policy and practical relevance as they provide a substantive and objective basis to tackle structural and contextual impediments to the expansion of women's leadership in the sub-region, as expressed by women leaders and male counterparts. From a programmatic perspective, the study will feed into WACSI's and OSIWA's training and capacity building programmes aimed at enhancing the involvement and participation of women in governance processes across West Africa. The study will also provide the basis for organising intellectual and reflective policy forums for dialogues and actions around women's leadership development

1.3 Outline of the Report

Chapter Two of this report provides a detailed historical and contextual overview of the status of women's leadership in West Africa. **Chapter Three** underscores and analyses women's multifaceted roles in governance and democratisation processes. **Chapter Four** maps and assesses the status of women's leadership in government and public administration. **Chapter Five** examines the status of women within the private sector and civil society and offers a comparative and cross-national analysis. **Chapter Six** situates women's leadership in conflict and post conflict contexts. **Chapter Seven** is devoted to revisiting the status of women's leadership through empirical accounts, perspectives and the standpoint of West African women leaders. **Chapter Eight** concludes the report and highlights challenges and the way forward.



Chapter 2

Women's Leadership in West Africa: Historical and Contextual Overview

Introduction

This chapter surveys the evolution of women's leadership in West Africa, with an emphasis on the socio-economic and political history of Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Sénégal, and Nigeria. The historical and contemporary socio-economic and political contexts provide an analytical focus for a key and comparative appraisal of the status of women's leadership at critical historical junctures.

2.0 The Context of Women's Leadership in West Africa: the Region at a Glance

The countries under study represent instructive case studies for the West African region and its various social, political, and economic trajectories and histories. While these countries share similar colonial experiences, they have different traditional structures, geography, demographics, and economic outlooks.

Côte d'Ivoire, a former French colony independent since 1960, is a secular and multi-ethnic state, with a total population of 18.6 million. Women comprise 50.2 percent of the population and have a 38 percent adult literacy rate (Human Development Report 2009). After a remarkable period of political stability and growth from 1961 to 1993 under the rule of Felix Houphouët-Boigny, the country endured the leadership of President Bedie and then military rule from 1999 and 2002. This was followed by violent internal conflict, which began as a coup attempt by soldiers in September 2002. The crisis was largely politically resolved in 2007, and the country is now in a state of transition. In 2008, Côte d'Ivoire, once the strongest economy in West Africa, with an impressive industrial base, recorded a gross domestic product of only \$1,648, adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), a very low gender empowerment index and ranks 155 out of 179 on critical UN Human Development Index due largely to the fragility of the country since the outbreak of violence in 2002.

Similarly, Sénégal, a former French Colony ranks 153 on the Human Development Index and records a low gender empowerment index. With a \$1,792 GDP, Sénégal has a population estimated at 12.41 million, of which 50.1 percent are women, with only 29.2 percent adult literacy rate. Sharing a similar colonial history with Côte d'Ivoire, Sénégal gained its independence in 1960. The country is acclaimed as a relatively stable democratic, secular and multi-ethnic country, with a multi-party system. Though Sénégal enjoys relative peace, the Cassamance region has experienced a protracted secessionist conflict.

Ghana is a former British colony and a leader in the independence movement in Africa, gaining self-rule in 1957. It is a multi-ethnic state with a population of 21 million of which 51 percent are women. Though Ghana has experienced tumultuous years of military rule and instability, it is currently one of the more democratically stable and progressive countries in West Africa. Adult women's literacy is estimated at 49.8 percent, placing the country in the commendable position

of almost achieving literacy parity in gender terms. Ghana currently records the highest GDP at 2,480, and ranks 133 among the countries with medium human development index, but has a low gender empowerment index.

Nigeria, another former British colony, gained independence in 1960. The country is hailed as one of the largest economies in Africa with a population estimated at 146 million, of which 51 percent are women. Nigeria records an estimated GDP of \$1,128, a low gender empowerment index and human development indices, ranking 158 out of 177. However, Nigeria holds the highest women adult literacy rate, at 61.1 percent and indicates a reverse gender gap.

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country with over 250 ethnic groups spread across thirty-six states, categorised into six geo-political zones for the purposes of administration and political expediency. The country experienced turbulent and successive political phases and regime changes ranging from civilian rule, military takeovers, and a civil war from 1966 to 1979; a Second Republic between 1979 and 1983; a series of military dictatorship and coups d'état from 1984 to 1999, and transition to civilian rule under the Third Republic in 2007.

2.1 Historicising Women's Leadership Status in the West African Context

Gender inequality, as it relates to women's "leadership" status, can be traced through extended historical episodes, in which encounters between expanding imperial cultures and indigenous cultures combined, altering the structural basis of gender relations and the political economy. The social histories and political economies of the West African region have evolved significantly from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era, based on its historical and colonial legacies. Changes in the social, economic and political sectors induced transformation of the status of women, which can be traced through different periods.

2.2 Women's Leadership Status during the Pre-colonial Era

What defines women's leadership status in the pre-colonial era?

Historical accounts, African folktales, and rich literature on African history indicate that women in different parts of pre-colonial Africa had exercised some measure of power and authority, participating in decision making at various levels, based on the structure of the given society. It is widely argued that West Africa has a long and unique tradition of female leadership. Sudarkasa's (2005:25) research on the Yoruba in Nigeria and other parts of West Africa suggests that "except in the highly Islamised areas, women in Sub-Saharan Africa, more than in any other part of the world, were visible in high places in the pre-colonial era. They were queen-mothers, queen sisters, princesses, female chiefs, and holders of other offices in most towns and villages."

A topology of women's sphere of power and leadership is analysed across three categories and related spheres: political roles and leadership in governance structures; economic spheres; and religious and spiritual spheres.

- **Political roles and leadership in traditional governance structures**

In the pre-colonial era, some women are noted for having played significant roles in the political sphere; they exercised power and authority by virtue of entitlements such as birth or based on recognition and honorific appointments related to their individual leadership qualities. In Nigeria, there are accounts of women ruling traditional kingdoms. For example, oral history states that the Igala kingdom was founded by a woman named Ebele Ejaunu. In Ijesha (part of the Yoruba kingdom), 5 of the 30 Owa rulers have been women. In northern Nigeria, Queen Amina of ZauZau ruled in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Gordon and Gordon 1996). In Bonny, Queen Kambassa is noted for being the only female traditional ruler “Amayanabo” of the Bonny kingdom. Similar roles played by women in traditional kingdoms can be found in Sénégal, where women played key roles as princesses and queens of Wallo.

In present day Côte d'Ivoire, women's leadership is embodied in the narratives of the famous Queen Ablah Pokou, who according to oral history led her people from Ghana in the eighteenth century to establish the Akan societies. References are made in the historical literature to female monarchs, particularly in the Baoule and Agni subgroups in the central and eastern parts of the country. Similarly, in Ghana women's leadership is exemplified by the emblematic figure of Asantehemaa Nana Nyarko Kusi Amoia of Asante who combined her role of the Queen Mother of the Asante with the prestigious office of *ohemaa* the second highest political position in the state.

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- **Dual roles and communal responsibilities in the economic spheres**

Women's direct and indirect influence seemed to have extended beyond the political sphere. Scholars have argued that “African women were also conspicuous in the economic life of their societies, being involved in farming, trade, or craft production” (Gordon and Gordon 1996: 251). In Ghana, communal production within the community and other women's groups took up important responsibilities as organisers of funerals, social support networks, and economic groups. It is widely argued that women's economic roles were at once public and private in Nigeria, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire (Amadiumi 1987; Oyewumi 1997) including active roles in the food production systems and community maintenance entrusted to men and women (*ibid*).

- **Women's roles in war, diplomacy and peacebuilding**

The figure of the Queen Mother in the narratives and folk history of many West African societies is imbued with influential decision-making power. Similarly, folk tales about legendary women warriors who fought for the *Fon* (King) of Dahomey, and powerful warrior queens who led their people in battle are dominant (Gordon and Gordon 1996: 251). Further, a legendary woman figure who “blazed a trail” (*oyi akwan*) by being appointed by Nana Osei Yaw Akoto, the Asantehene (1823- 1834) as the head of a diplomatic mission that successfully negotiated the Maclean Treaty of 20th April 1831. (Wilks 1993; Brempong 2000:2). Akyaa is credited with negotiating another treaty with the Danes at Christianborg Castle on 9 August 1831, and for having being the first woman to be appointed the head of a diplomatic mission and a “chief negotiator” of treaties. (*ibid*:2). Historical references also point to the symbolic role of female

stool occupants' participations in the legislative and judicial processes, in the making and the unmaking of war, and in the distribution of land; the basic resource of the economy (ibid.:3).

- **Leadership and parallel spheres of power in indigenous religious and ritualistic practices**

Women appear to occupy a significant place in African cosmogony. Many West African cultures hold specific traditions and systems of gender organisation, where women were able to lead and participate as members of a ritual or professional organisation of peers. Such women appear to have traditionally occupied gender specific roles in religious practices and constructed “spaces/rituals that are exclusive to women, that men cannot invade, though they can share in, and vice versa” (Nfah-Abbenyi 2005: 266). Such is the case of women secret societies – the Sande and *Bondo* in particular - in Sierra Leone (Steady 2006). Another example would be the *ndzang* (women's) and *ndoto** (men's) dances. Either gender can partake in the celebration, on the sidelines, but cannot take control of the space/ritual. The separation of gender from sex roles provides unique spheres, spaces, and locations from which women can constitute and construct identities” (Nfah-Abbenyi 2005: 266).

Similarly, in Sénégal many sanctified rites of passage fell in the realm of women's control and purview. Sow (2003:70) highlights how “women healers (facckat) preside over fertility rites (to cure infertility, or protect a pregnancy), and possession rites (including ceremonies of exorcism)”. Sow further underscores” the preeminent role bestowed to female divinities governing specific areas bordering the sea and rivers”. These accounts hinge on women's centrality in shaping collective belief systems and ritual practices

- **Ascension to power and leadership positions: a dual system**

While the existing literature uncovers the leadership roles of women, what eludes such analyses is the ascension to power outside the realm of documented accounts from the Queen Mothers and the matrilineal system. The social organisation and gender ideology of particular groups appear to enable selective women's access to leadership positions, because of their status as members of a certain dynasty or under a system of succession. For instance, it is argued that Nana Afrakoma Panin of Dwaben in (Ghana) succeeded her mother, Ama Serwaah, and was succeeded by her daughter, while ‘ordinary’ women only obtained equal rights and power after their reproductive years were over, or by obtaining leadership positions within their family units, or in certain women's organisations (Hay and Sticher 1995).

While the ascension to power and leadership appears to be predominantly hereditary in the case of Ghana, accounts from Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire suggest an alternative path to leadership, based on recognition, reward, and individual merit, with distinctive titles such as Iyaloja, Iyalode, Lobo, and Arise among the Yoruba, as well as the Omu of Onitsha and Western Igbo .ⁱⁱⁱ

In contrast, the Akan matrilineal traditional system in Côte d'Ivoire, a gendered pattern and competitive bid for leadership seems to have prevailed. Though “one is born a ruler” into the

ruling family, she is entitled to a leadership role if the position she holds allows it and only if she has no male counterpart in line as well. In other words, the male contenders, generally her nephews, are first in line in the woman's lineage. In this competition for power, the woman's strong personality and demonstrated leadership abilities makes the difference. Such women are referred to as "blah yassouah", an Akan phrase meaning "woman-man".

These accounts suggest a differentiated pattern of leadership ascension in matrilineal systems that have opened up spaces for the emergence of women leaders. Clearly, social divisions during the pre-colonial period suggest separate, overlapping and complementary gendered patterns and forms of social organisation. This suggests a historic pattern of women occupying different and overlapping spheres of power and influence within hierarchical structures, entrusted with diffused and symbolic spheres of power and leadership, and with spiritual powers in the religious realm.

2.3 West African Women in the Colonial Period

Most historical accounts highlight the negative effects of the colonial encounters on West African social, political and economic structures, as well as the induced change in gender ideologies and relations, manifested in several mutually reinforcing spheres. While the histories of women's status diverge based on the nature of colonial encounters and the endogenous socio-cultural specificities, broad convergences and emerging trends can be discerned.

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- **Setbacks and erosions of women's economic, social and political status and the roles and rise of patriarchal systems**

There is consensus among scholars in West Africa that women suffered monumental setbacks in the economic, social and political arenas (Nnaemeka 2005; Sudarkasa's 2005; Aidoo 1981) owing to colonial ideologies and practices of the British, French and Portuguese systems of governance. The underlying ideology and related practices of domesticity, which restricted women's active engagement to the private sphere and only allowed their participation in the public arena as appendages of men, hold broader historical implications for women's status in traditionally matrilineal and patrilineal societies.

However, the extent of changing gender roles and subsequent gender disparities in decision-making, social and economic roles have not been homogeneous and uniform. In Côte d'Ivoire, under the French colonial regime, there was a marked difference which pertained to the erosion of women's economic and political power, particularly among the Baule, and a disruption of egalitarian gender-based relations (Berger and White 1999). According to Berger and White, the imposition of Western ideologies and cultural practices, against which family and conjugal relations and gender roles were defined and judged, led to the dislocation of the source of women's socio-political and economic power.

In Nigeria, the colonial era marked the beginning of a downward turn in the role and status of women in the Nigerian society (Nnaemeka 2005; Aidoo 1981). The adoption of the indirect

rule system in Ghana and Nigeria appear to have worsened the plight of women, especially when only traditional rulers and male cabinet members were favoured by the British administrations. This led to the delegitimisation of the traditional roles women played in decision-making and in political processes in general. Similarly, it is argued that colonialism entrenched and deepened patriarchal domination within pre-colonial societies which co-opted chiefs and male elders into highly authoritarian systems of indirect rule" (Van Allen 1976). This had adverse effects on some of the traditional roles women played in decision-making and in the political process in general, especially when colonial magistrates treated women as legal minors requiring male guidance, thus codifying and institutionalising patriarchy. In Sénégal, in addition to the colonial legacy, women faced multiple influences of Islamic strictures that dictated conflicting transformations of women's status and roles.

According to Gordon and Gordon (1996), men also gained "political advantages as customary sources of female power" were ignored or undermined. Europeans imposed their own prejudices about the proper authority of men over women by dealing only with male leaders. Male-oriented "native authorities" were created in many areas to establish local government, based on controversial notions "traditional" or "customary" laws. Tradition and culture were often interpreted in ways that favoured men's control and domination over women, thus permitting men to gain power at women's expense.

- **New division of labour and forced incorporation in colonial economy and mode of production**

The colonial structures and mode of production, institutionalised in religious, economic, legal, bureaucratic and educational structures, led to a new social and economic order. In the case of Sénégal and Côte d'Ivoire, the French colonial economic policy led to the creation of a gendered work force and dichotomised paid and unpaid labour in the colonial economy. Historically, in Ghana, the existence of an unequal gender division of labour resulted in placing women and men in distinctive positions in the political economy.

In Nigeria, attempts to displace women's role and market power base by regulating the few sites of women strongholds in public spheres, through the imposition of levies, suggests the concerted efforts to displace women in the productive spheres. However, the historic Lagos market women's uprising to retain control and administer their markets in 1945, and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's leadership of the Abeokuta Women's Union in Western Nigeria in 1946 to protest against the taxation (Mba 1982; Odim- Johnson and Mba 1997; Ezumah 2002) are illustrative of women's militant political engagement during the period.

- **Shift from communally shared labour to individualised and genderised labour**

The complementary and communal responsibilities in farming, food production and community maintenance characteristic of social organisations found in modern day Ghana, Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire have been altered. Reproductive work and subsistence economy have traditionally been

the sole responsibility of women. Men, on the other hand, are more involved in “market-valued production” leading to hierarchy in production and segmentation of labour indices by a shift from a subsistence economy to the colonial trade economy, with emphasis on export crops (Amin 1972 cited in Gordon and Gordon 1996).

For instance, in Ghana, women are noted to have fulfilled multiple responsibilities as organisers of funerals, as well as performing communal labour within social support networks and economic groups. This appears to have been debased during the colonial period, as many women were engaged in forced labour to serve the colonial economy. Clearly patriarchy and individualism created new economic opportunities but also disrupted the existing gender relations and fundamentally confined women to domestic spheres (Gordon and Gordon 1996).

- **Colonial education system, domesticity and reconfiguration of women's status**

The foundation for gender inequality in the area of education appears solidly enshrined and instituted during the colonial era (Assie-Lumumba 1994a). Whereas men were availed the opportunity of Western education in different fields to enable them to participate effectively in the areas of politics and economy, it could be said that the efficiency argument was put forward to inhibit the participation of women. Based on the Victorian ideals of a women's place and demeanour in society, confining women in the domestic sphere drew prime emphasis on their reproductive roles as homemakers and mothers in colonial social projects.

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- **“Victorian” ideologies and women's domesticity**

Women's domesticity and the imposition of colonial ideologies on women's identity and social roles emerge as a dominant marker of the shifting pattern of gender relations and women's identities in West Africa, under colonial rule. As Tamale has argued (2004:20), women's reproductive roles and their role as wife, mother, and homemaker become key determinants of the construction of women's identities.

The reordering of familial and social organisations appears insidious to the colonial project. As Cornwall (2005:5), has persuasively argued “the reconfiguration of gender identities during the colonial era that highlights contestations and negotiation in the encounter with colonial and missionary attempts to reproduce Victorian models of monogamous male breadwinners and subservient wives”. Domesticity appears as a systematic strategy to disenfranchise women from access to resources based on ideological boundaries between the public and private spheres, and patriarchy to safeguard the public sphere as a domain of male hegemony (21). Stern Victorian ideas about “the proper place of a woman” reinforced the domestic and reproductive roles favoured by the European colonial concepts of the ‘good’ wife.

- **Access to education and the institutionalisation of gender-base differentiation and inequalities**

Formal education, during the colonial period provided a significant maker of difference that ushered

and crystallised transformative changes and gender hierarchies detrimental to the status of women (Assie Lumumba 1994a). A dominant pattern noted across West African countries is the differential access to or systematic exclusion of women from colonial educational systems (ibid.). Generally, opportunities open to women were merely those that reinforced the colonial ideals of women's domesticity. Several examples highlight this point. In Sénégal, under the French colonial rule, the "Ecole des Fils de chefs" (School for Chiefs' sons), served as the recruiting base for colonial auxiliaries and, much later, the post-colonial elite and intelligentsia in French West Africa. Similarly in Nigeria and Ghana, under British colonial rule, boys schools such as "Kings College" and "Achimota" were modeled along elite English 'Public' schools, namely, Eton and Winchester that trained scholars, gentlemen, politicians, and elite professionals among others. Separate schools for girls were more focused on developing girls into ladies and not necessarily leaders. Clearly, these differential schooling patterns in West Africa provide a historic context for the interpretation of contemporary gender gaps and inequalities and limited representation of women in public affairs, policy and decision making processes.

- **Women in colonial politics: resistance and collaboration**

Notwithstanding their subjugation to the colonial order and the encroachment of the colonial system and political economy in traditional societies, West African women within organised groups challenged colonial authorities. Historical accounts suggest that women were central to anti-colonial struggles from demonstrations to riots to armed combat as protestors, agitators, organisers, and guerrillas.

In Côte d'Ivoire, women mobilised into social movements, including the Grand-Bassam demonstration in 1947 to free their husbands, children, brothers or fathers and participate in market strikes. In Ghana, women in positions of leadership such as Nana Yaa Asantewaa, though a Queen Mother, was revered as an iconic war-leader, the commander of the Asante fighting force sahenew (Brempong 2000). Moreover, she is renowned as a "leader of the resistance," who personified the Asante's historic military tradition and values, and gave expression to Asante's intense objection to foreign rule (ibid.). In Sénégal, the case of women leaders such as Queen Aline Sitoe Diatta (Ca. 1936-43), who set historical precedent by resisting the French colonial occupation, offers a similar example of women's leadership in resistance to colonial rule.

Similarly, in Nigeria, collective resistance of Lagos market women against taxation in response to their declining status under colonial rule (Van Allen 1976) is poignant. Resistance and marginal insertion in colonial politics emerged in Nigeria, where women attempted to play key roles in colonial politics through the emergence of an exclusive women's party in 1944, the Nigerian Women's Union (NWU) and consolidated organisations like the National Council for Women's Societies (NCWS) and Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF).

Other examples across West Africa can also be cited. In Sierra Leone for instance, between the Mende and the Sherbro, female chiefs are said to have held executive positions and some became legends in

their time. For instance Mammy Yoko, is noted for building the Kpa Mende confederacy and her undaunted resistance to being contrived by the British colonial elite (Steady 2006).

In spite of being entirely circumscribed by the oppressive colonial states, these accounts prove that women across West Africa did not passively accept colonial subjugation. Their vocal and visible opposition to colonial policies are illustrations of early women-led activism across the region.

2.4 Women in the Post-colonial and Independence Era

The gendered social order, and the drastic transformations of women's political, economic, and social positions, by the colonial powers was inherited by post-colonial states in West Africa. As (Nnaemeka 2005:34) has argued "the contemporary African woman is a creation of historical and current forces that are simultaneously internally generated and externally induced — from indigenous socio-cultural structures and foreign influences (Westernisation, Christianity, and Islamisation). While the socio-economic position of West African women after independence has been strongly influenced by the structural factors such as the unstable economy of the newly independent states and the political, economic, and ecological challenges that they faced, the dominant pattern of exclusion and marginalisation is salient."

- **Historical erasure and continuity of colonial legacy of gender stratification:**

- Different reckoning of women's roles**

Despite the significant contributions of women in the independence struggle and the liberation movements, the colonial legacy of gender restrictions with respect to citizenship rights and status appear to prevail and manifest in legal, political, and economic structures of independent West African countries. In other words, the laudable efforts of women in the anti-colonial struggle were largely unrewarded. They did not result in more rights for women and appointments into governance structures when West African states gained independence.

Shortly after independence in Côte d'Ivoire the government of Houphouët-Boigny acknowledged existing decrees affecting the status of women and established the primacy of the nuclear family. The President also raised the minimum age for marriage to eighteen, and condemned the general notion of female inferiority. Yet legislation in 1960s established a husband's right to control much of his wife's property. This required women to obtain their husband's permission in performing mundane tasks such as opening bank accounts or obtaining jobs. The government went further to place restrictions on a woman's right to divorce, denied legal recognition of matrilineal rights of inheritance, and abolished the practice of bride-price. In 1963 these laws led women to form the Association of Ivoirian Women (Association des Femmes Ivoiriennes-AFI) to confront the government. It is recorded that Ivorian women also persuaded the President to establish the Ministry of Women's Affairs (Ministère de la Condition Féminine) in 1976 and appoint AFI's leader Jeanne Gervais as Minister. The Ministry's primary goals were to obtain better educational and employment opportunities and to establish judicial equality for women^{iv}. Following their successful advocacy, legislation was enacted in 1983

granting women control over reasonable portion of their property after marriage and to appeal to the courts for redress in the event that these rights were infringed upon.

In Nigeria, it is noted that while the ‘heroes’ occupied all the positions of leadership and authority, the ‘sheroes’ in their midst were not adequately acknowledged nor given prominent status. The period from October 1, 1960 to the onset of military rule in 1966 in Nigeria, did not register significant changes in women’s status.

In Ghana, President Kwame Nkrumah, who led the anti-colonialist and independence struggle, acknowledged women’s contributions. Nkrumah recognised women’s leadership and referred to them as skilful orators, organisers and overseers of logistics in the struggle to overthrow the colonialists. He stated in 1957: “Much of the success of the CPP has been due to the efforts of women members. From the very beginning, women have been the chief organisers. They have travelled through innumerable towns and villages in the role of propaganda secretaries and have been responsible for the most part in bringing about the solidarity and cohesion of the party (cited in Manuh 1991: 246). Such recognition yielded some tangible policies and benefits for women. Nkrumah has been credited for efforts to improve women’s status in early post independence Ghana. By 1965, girls made up 44 percent of total primary school enrolments, 35 percent of middle school, and 25 percent of secondary school. There was also the abolition of pay discrimination against women; the granting of maternity leave with full pay, and the opening up of new avenues of employment for women including opportunities to enter male dominated professions. For example, it was during this period that the first female pilot, policewoman, tractor driver and judge were trained (Manuh 1991).

- **Women’s franchise and citizenship rights**

The evolution of women’s rights to vote in the post colonial and independence era, and the current representation in ministerial and parliamentary positions is captured in the **table below**.

Table 1: Evolution of women’s right to vote and representation in parliaments

Country	Women’s right to vote	Women’s right to stand for election	Date of first woman elected	Women in government at ministerial level percent in 2008	Women in parliament percent in 2008
Cote d’Ivoire	1945	1952	1965 (appointed)	17.1	8.9
Ghana	1954	1954	1960 (appointed)	11.8	7.9
Nigeria	1958	1958	--	10	7 upper 8 lower house
Senegal	1945	1945	1963	20.6	22 40 Senate
Sierra Leone	1961	1961	--	13	13

Source: Compiled from UNDP Human Development Report 2009 at URL: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/308.html> and International Parliament Union at URL: Inter-Parliamentary Union

In Côte d'Ivoire, women gained the right to vote in 1952. In 1976, the first female minister was appointed Mme Jeanne Gervais, in an attempt to illustrate the government intention to promote leadership. In Sénégal, as in other West African countries, there was some recognition of women's roles in the independence struggle. Sénégal elected the first woman, Caroline Diop, as Vice President of the National Assembly in 1971.

In Ghana, a landmark initiative called "the Representation of the People" (Women Members) Act in 1959 made provision for the election of ten (10) women as members of the National Assembly. This was one of the first examples of gender quota system at work.

However, what was necessary but lacking in the post independence era, were transformative policies to redress and radically change structural and gender-based inequalities and women's overall status in West African societies. In Sénégal, exclusionary policies such as occupational restrictions were inscribed in the family code promulgated in 1972, which reified exclusion in the work force and militarised occupations, though the constitution barred discrimination in terms of sex, specific status and occupation. The army, customs, infantry, and police only became open to women in 2006.

It was not until 1976 that women in Nigeria had the right to vote in some parts of northern Nigeria (Suad and Najmabadi 2005:47). Though the 1999 constitution protects women's rights and grants them equal participation, in practice women's constitutional rights are informed by prevailing traditional and religious laws, which tend to discriminate against women.

- **Conflict and militarism backlash on the promotion of gender equality and women's leadership.**

Political instability and violent conflicts in post colonial West Africa have had profound implications for women's leadership and representation in decision-making arenas. The cyclical negative impact of conflict on women in countries that have experienced protracted civil wars such as Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, and to some extent Nigeria illustrates this point. In Nigeria, there was a depletion of women's representation in the highest governing bodies at the federal level. An example of this depletion was seen in the Supreme Military Council, during the country's thirty-year period (1966 to 1999) of fluctuation between a military dictatorship and limited democracy. Similarly, Ghana recorded a halt in the promotion of innovative policies through the succession of various political regimes. Generally, the 1990s era of violent transfers of power and promotion of a militaristic culture in West Africa eroded the marginal gains in women's representation in governance and democratisation processes and heightened their social and economic vulnerability.

- **'First Lady syndrome' and the rise of women's machineries**

The post-colonial leaders did not seem generally inclined towards promoting the autonomous emergence of the women's movement in the target countries. They did not fully acquiesce to

women's demands for the improvement of their conditions and a reversal of gender inequalities. However, the position of the "First Lady" emerged as a phenomenon (emulated from the United States of America) raising divergent perspectives on the relevance of these positions to women's leadership agenda.

In Nigeria, former First Ladies pioneered major national projects. For example, Maryam Babangida established the *Better Life for Rural Women Programme* (BPL), the Centre for Women and Development and the National Women's Commission. Similarly, Mrs. Abacha spearheaded the running of the *Family Trust Fund Programme* that was coordinated by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (Mama 1998:13). These initiatives mainly provided social services to women in Nigeria. However political dimensions of the usage of the First Lady post can be found in Ghana. Nana Konadu Agyemang-Rawlings, the former First Lady of Ghana, is credited for founding the "31st December Women's Movement" and used the movement as her platform and power base. She played a major role in formulating and implementing policies relating to women and expanded opportunities for women's participation in politics at the local and national levels during the 1988 and 1992 general elections. However, evidence from Ghana indicates that generally, these activities were contentious due to the complex interactions and power relations with other women's groups, which raised questions about the political roles of the First Lady and the conflict of interest with autonomous women's movements.

The interpretive analysis of the First Lady phenomenon is differentiated. While there is general consensus on the significant role of First Ladies in Anglophone countries and Premieres Dames in Francophone countries in social welfare programmes across West Africa, there is contention about their political roles in the development of autonomous women's movements and political leadership.

Key African scholars have characterised the First Lady phenomenon as an unhelpful genre of "state feminism" and "femocracy" that was potentially as disempowering of women as it was irrelevant to their cause" (Mama 1997:81). Contrary views suggest that it provides a momentum by placing gender politics at the centre of state political life on the public agenda (Ibrahim 2004).

The First Lady Phenomenon is instructive to understand the dynamics of elite women's movements, the reconfiguration of women's movements in West Africa, and the competing imperatives that shape their development. There are ongoing attempts to institutionalise the First Ladies and Premieres Dames' roles in African states through the African First Ladies summit, as a continental platform for the advancement of First Ladies' social agendas. Lingering questions remain with respect to their linkage with or disconnect from apolitical women's movements and the extent to which the First Lady syndrome helps or hinders the articulation of feminist and gender equality agendas. Central to this analysis are the changing political roles First Ladies are increasingly playing in the region. A good example is the current First Lady of Côte d'Ivoire, Simone Ehivet Gbagbo, who serves as Vice Chair of the Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI, ruling party) and a

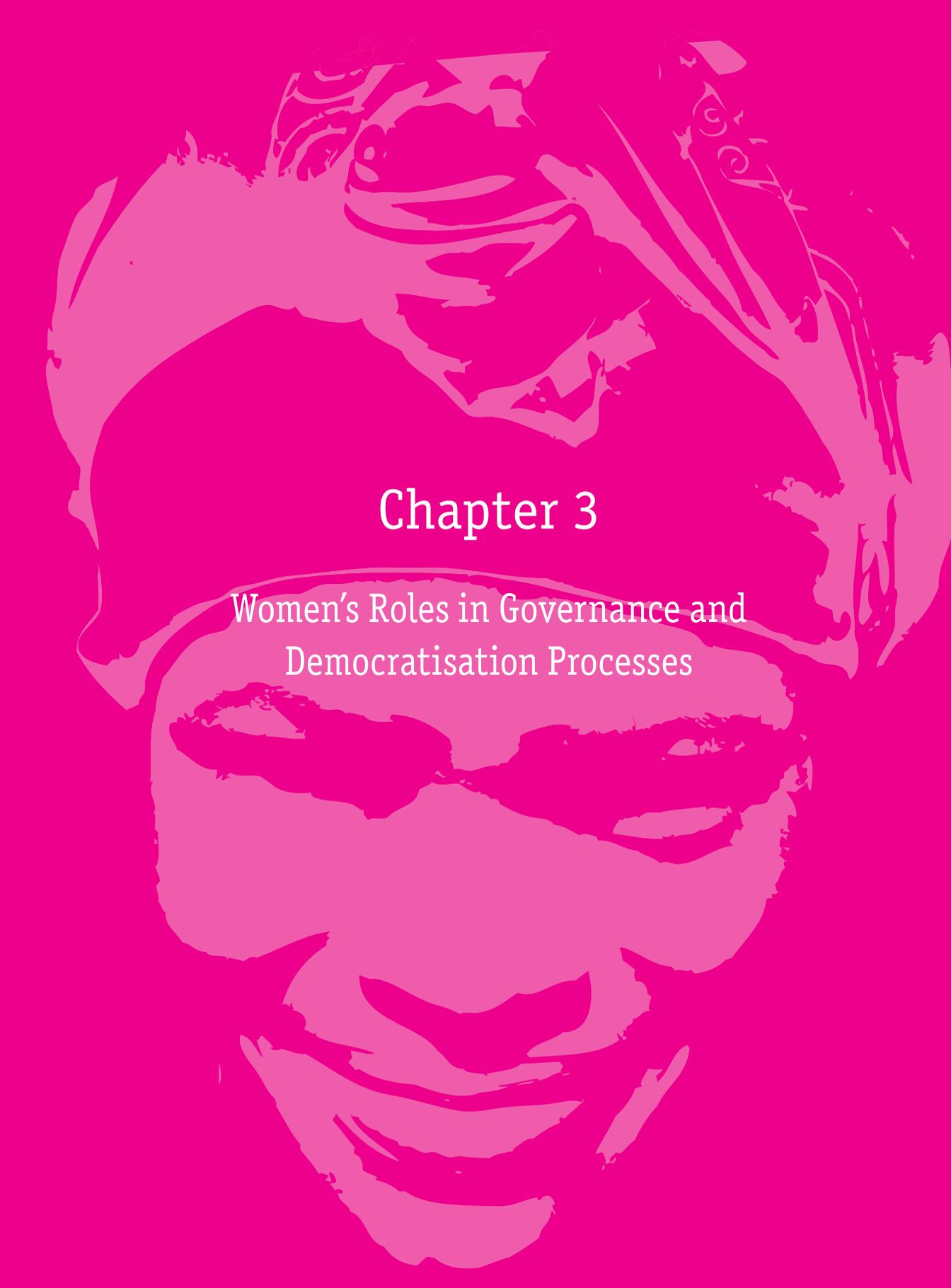
member of parliament. These noted changes differ from the profile of First Ladies symbolised by Mrs Babangida in Nigeria and indicate that the First Lady phenomenon is not immutable and a-historical, thus should be contextualised within specific historical periods.

Conclusion

The historical context of women's status and shifting leadership roles is instructive in understanding the historical moments and forces that have determined such changes. Such an analysis serves pedagogical purposes in motivating a contemporary vision of women's leadership.

West African post-colonial states did not systematically support or promote women's integration in the political and state apparatus. This has led to the marginalisation of women in independent and highly centralised state structures in most West African countries. Rigidities associated with codification of the family code and constitutions underlie unequal citizenship that extends to the social, political, and economic spheres. The tangibility of progress or reversal in women's leadership development will be examined in more detail in the subsequent chapters.

Emerging and changing spaces for women's leadership such as First Ladies' positions in West Africa should not be dismissed as token positions. These positions should be analysed contextually to ascertain the potential contributions they make to advancing women's leadership roles.



Chapter 3

Women's Roles in Governance and Democratisation Processes

Introduction

The process of democratisation across West Africa, suggests increased participation of citizens in decision making, thereby presupposes greater representation of women in governance. However, West African countries' experimentation with democratisation have not automatically resulted in an increase in women's visibility and participation in the process. This chapter unpacks the concepts that underpin democratisation such as democracy; governance; representation and participation. It further examines how, in practice, these concepts have facilitated women's leadership in West Africa. Central to this analysis is the location of women's leadership in democratisation processes as evidenced in party structures, electoral processes, and local governance.

3.0 Defining Democracy, Governance and Democratisation

Democracy is a system in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a process of representation usually involving periodically held free elections. It simply implies universal suffrage, competition for office, freedom of speech and the press, and the rule of law. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, he refers Democracy to a system of government "of the people, by the people and for the people."^v

The concept of governance is defined as the process of decision-making and the process through which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). In analysis, governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved and actively participating in decision-making, in the implementation of decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decisions.

In a democratic system of governance 'democratised governance; government is only one element coexisting in a social fabric of many and varied institutions, political parties, organisations, and associations. This pluralism proffers that many organised groups and institutions are expected to be in autonomous existence without dependence on government survival, legitimacy, or authority.

Democratisation is an inevitable process through which democracy is achieved. Activities such as democratic rights, particularly the right to vote, the right to have one's vote count equally, the right to run for the highest office, and the right to organise political groups or parties are imbedded in this process. Democratic rights, as the hub of democratisation operate effectively under an existing "state law or rule of law" in collaboration with an established framework to protect democratic rights and guide the democratic rule. Universally, democratisation process is considered to be the conduct of a fair and competitive election, assurance of basic civil liberties and respect for the rule of law.

In theory, these concepts call for the involvement of all sectors of the society in governance and democratisation processes. However, the reality across West Africa is that women continue to be systematically excluded from, or marginalised within these processes.

3.1 Women in Political Party Structures

The nature of political parties and women's roles in political parties in West Africa vary based on specific countries' political landscape, and governance policies. Women's roles are intrinsic to political parties' internal regime and politics.

In West Africa, political parties are flourishing with 130 parties in Côte d'Ivoire, 77 in Sénégal, and 22 in Liberia. The existence of these parties in these countries do not necessarily mean competitive party politics exists, as entrenched poverty and illiteracy in the sub-region make it difficult for political parties to raise required human and financial resources for effective political advocacy and mobilisation. In reality, many parties exist only in name. Most parties are weak in organisational capacity, internal democratic culture, and social inclusiveness especially with respect to women, youth and the physically-challenged.

In the respective countries, political parties are endeavouring to engender leadership with variable outcomes. However, women remain predominantly confined to party wings and are rarely promoted in critical masses at the strategic apex of political parties. This is evident in Côte d'Ivoire where only 3 political parties out of over 100 have been founded by women. Two women, Henriette Dagry Diabate, Secretary General of the "Rassemblement des Republicains" (RDR), the major opposition party, and Mme Simone Ehivet Gbagbo, The First Lady and the Vice Chair of the ruling party "Front Populaire Ivoirien" (FPI) currently occupy prominent leadership positions, exercising significant power and authority.

In Ghana, a positive trend is emerging regarding the promotion of women to leadership positions. Changes noted include an increase in the representation of women in several parties: the Convention's People's Party (CPP) 30 percent, National Democratic Congress (NDC) 21 percent and New Patriotic Party (NPP) 14.2 percent. During the 2008 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, women served in strategic posts at the party level. Other women in strategic and symbolic positions include Ms. Evelyn Anabila, the national organiser of CPP; Ms. Hannah Tetteh, the Director of Communication NDC; Ms. Bentsi-Enchill, the Third National Vice Chairperson of CPP; and Ms. Susan Adu Amankwah, Regional Chairperson of CPP. A notable change occurred in the 2008 elections with 3 presidential candidates out of 8 selecting women as running mates. In Sierra Leone, the former ruling party, the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), now in opposition, elected a woman as Vice Chair in 2009. This signals an incremental change and shift in the perspective of women as potentially powerful players in the political arena.

A positive example of this shift can also be observed in Sénégal, where changes have been recorded at the policy level and the accrued participation of women across different social strata and sectors in governance and democratisation processes. Women lead three political parties in the country. Marième Wane Ly founded the female woman-led political party "Parti pour la renaissance africaine" (Parena) in 1998. Hawa Dia Thiam, a former Minister and parliamentarian is currently the leader of a political party "and Jéf Parti Africain Pour La Démocratie et le Socialisme"

(AJ/PADS), and Zahra Iyane Thiam, founder and leader of “PUDs/Innovation” (Union pour le développement du Sénégal) in 2008.

Also noteworthy is the generational aspect that characterises the two leadership trends. One represents seniority, long-standing activism, and political stature, while the other symbolises the buoyancy of the younger generation with diasporic ties. This suggests that young aspiring women leaders are overcoming the often-stated aversion to politics and decisively entering political contests.

Nigeria represents a negative case in the region with only a few women holding leadership positions within political structures. Some notable women in leading positions within political parties are Moji Adegunle Obasanjo, the only woman leading a political party (Masses Movement of Nigeria (MMN)); Sarah Jibril, a three-time presidential candidate; Daisy Danjuma, and Florence Ita-Giwa, who served as influential senators in recent administrations. This is a huge representation gap and deficit from a demographic consideration; it becomes even more pronounced when viewed through a good governance and equity prism. The trend confirms assertions that the entrenchment of women in women's wings of political parties, circumscribe their leadership potential to subsidiary roles.

Table 2: Female Leaders of selected Political Parties in West Africa (1999-2007)

S/N	COUNTRY	WOMEN PARTY LEADER	PARTY NAME	POSITION	YEAR
1	Benin	Karimou Rafiato	Parti de Nation et Developpement	Président of the parliament Group	1999/2003
2	Burkina faso	Joséphine Tamboura Née Sama	Alliance pour le Progrès et la Liberté	Secretary général	2002
3	Côte-D'ivoire	Simone Ehivet	Parliamentary Group of Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI)	Vice-president	1999-
4	Ghana	Gifty Eugenia Kusi	National (NPP)	Deputy Chief Whip	2001-
5	Ghana	Araba Bentsi-Enchil	The Convention Peoples' Party	National Vice-Chairperson	2005
6	Liberia	Ayesha Keita Conneh	The Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)	Chairperson	2004
7	Nigeria	Florence Ita-Giwa	All People's Party (APP)	Deputy Senate Leader	1999-2000
8	Nigeria	Sarah Nndwa Jubril	Progressive Liberation Party (PLP)	Deputy National Chairperson	2002
9	Sierra Leone	Haja Memunatu Conteh	The United National People's Party (UNPP)	Interim Leader	2006-
10	Togo	Améyo Adja	The Opposition Group of the National Assembly	President	2007

Source: www.guide2womenleaders.com accessed 24-10-2009

The table above highlights the low representation of women in party leadership structures across the region. This regional dimension reveals how different social cleavages and groups are represented in political parties. Women continue to be marginalised in the formation and leadership of political parties, as in other sectors of the society. The criteria for women's advancement within these structures are predominantly typified by nominations and validations by men.

The tables below depict the meagre representation and participation of women in democratisation processes in the two Anglophone countries reviewed in the study.

Table 3: Women's Participation in Elections from 1992-2008 (Ghana)

	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008
No of candidates	23	53	95	104	103
No elected	16	18	19	25	18
Total no of seats in Parliament	200	200	230	230	230
Percentage (%) in Parliament	8.0	9.0	9.5	10.9	7.8

Source: Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2008

Table 4: Women's Representation in 1999, 2003 and 2007 General Elections (Nigeria)

Position	No of Available Seats	No of Women and % in 1999	No of Women and % in 2003	No of Women and % in 2007
Presidency	1	-- 0.0%	-- 0.0%	-- 0.0%
Senate	109	3 2.8%	3 2.8%	27 25%
House of Representatives	360	12 3.3%	24 6.4%	26 7.2%
Governorship	36	-- 0.0%	2 0.0%	-- 0.0%
State Houses of Assembly	990	12 1.2%	-- 3.8%	416 42%

Source: INEC Elections 2007

• **Impediments to women's rise to leadership within political party structures**

The rationalisation for women's unequal leadership status is rooted in several interrelated factors that undermine women's upward mobility in political party leadership. In Nigeria for instance, it is noted that women face multiple impediments including: 1) burdens of gendered division of labour"; 2) "exclusion from the party hierarchy"; 3) "political violence"; 4) "inadequate finance or outright poverty"; and 5) "godfatherism".

Except for the phenomenon of godfatherism and political violence, these arguments resonate across West Africa. In Sénégal, according to a pioneer in the women's movement; Hawa Dia Thiam (2008); former Minister and parliamentarian and currently leader of a political party "and Jéf Parti Africain Pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme" (AJ/PADS), "the exclusion of left leaning parties has maintained women in marginal positions for decades and this prevails today."

Further, Professor Fatou Saw (2003), a Sénégalese Sociologist, reflecting on the results of local elections in March 2009, imputes the resulting marginalisation of women in local elections and governance, to the absence of proactive strategies and planning to systematically involve women in decision making. There is also insufficient leadership training and capacity building to spur women's leadership development. Sarr further highlights the lack of solidarity among women and unhealthy rivalry and competition within the women's movement as factors that lead to negative stereotyping of female candidates (Ibid).

Congruent with these views, are civil society leaders who also attributes the low-level representation of women in political parties and de facto in governance to internal party politics that do not support the emergence of female leadership from its popular constituency. These set of civil leaders suggest that both civil society and political parties should engender the emergence of a new concept of citizenship integrates good governance principles.

Taking a different stance, Hawa Dia Thiam (2008) notes "the cult of personality, folklorisation of women's roles in political parties and their unequal access to financing" as interrelated impediments. Further, a male University Professor, Abdu Sidath Diagne (2008) contends that the main reasons for women's marginalisation derives from pervasive socio-cultural and religious values that continue to relegate women to subordinate positions.

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In Côte d'Ivoire, the categorisation of women along polarised party ideologies is highly prevalent, which in turn adds to the multifaceted structural and contextual constraints that inhibit women's legitimate claims and entitlement to leadership positions.

3.2 Implications of Gender Representation Gaps in Governance

The gender-based inequities in political party structures extend to governance and democratisation processes. For instance, women's representation is even more marginal in local governance structures and account for only 14.56 percent in Sénégal with women occupying the following local government positions: Deputy-Governor, Prefect, and Deputy-Prefect (MFFDS 2006). The March 2009 local elections in Sénégal resulted in only 7 women elected out of 45 posts for the communes and 121 for sub-communes.

Similarly, in Ghana, while the statistical data suggests a marked increase in women's participation in local government elections from 4 percent in 1998 to 10.1 percent in 2006, according to the Electoral Commission of Ghana, they are still marginally represented. Women's appointments remain below the 50 percent target.

Most national constitutions in West Africa affirm the equality of citizens in all spheres of endeavors, emphasising that women and men should have equal chances of participating in public life. This ideal are yet to be achieved in the countries studied. The persistence of discriminatory practices against women and the patriarchal system of social, economic and political relationships work to

undermine women's capabilities and abilities, thus limiting their options to be fully represented in governance processes and government institutions.

In Nigeria, the representation of women in leadership positions in government remains dismal when compared to other countries in the sub-region. This insignificant representation is more evident considering the number of spaces available to be filled. Below is the summary of women elected and appointed into political leadership position following the 2003 general election^{ix}.

- 6 Female Ministers
- 9 Female Presidential Assistants
- 2 Female Presidential Advisers
- 3 Females in a 109 Member Senate
- 24 Females in 360 Member House of Representatives
- 38 Females in the 36 States' Houses of Assembly
- 5 Female Ambassadors out of 86
- 2 Female Deputy Governors out of 36

Women's unequal representation in local governance induces dysfunctionalities arising from the missing voices, inputs, assets and know-how from the largest representative demographic group. The result is gender-neutral or gender-biased policies that do not respond to women's differentiated needs, interests and imperatives in local and national development.

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Considering the demographic outlook of most West African countries and the centrality of the agricultural sector as the mainstay of economic activity and employment, the gender representation gap in local governance is likely to induce far-reaching impact on the prioritisation, planning and allocation of resources in overall development. Women's limited involvement in local governance means that strong voices advocating gender-sensitive and gender responsive policymaking at that level are silenced.

However, across the region over the last few years there has been a noticeable increase in the number of women appointed to national committees and boards as well as the judicial and executive arms of government; particularly as ministers, deputy ministers, political advisers and assistants in their respective countries. For instance, in Ghana Mrs Georgina Theodora Woode was appointed as the first female Chief Justice in 2006; Mrs Elizabeth Adjei as Director of Immigration in 2007; Mrs Betty Mould-Iddrisu was appointed as the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice in 2009; and Mrs Joyce Bamford-Addo as the first female Speaker of Parliament, amongst others. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, Olubanke King-Akerele and Zainab Hawa Bangura were appointed to head the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007 respectively.

In spite of these positive appointments, gender representation does not come out strongly in the profiles of the political parties in West Africa. The formation and manifestos of most political

parties do not welcome women's ideas or contributions, though women make up a significant portion of the electorate and are often mobilised for campaigns as party supporters.

Most parties do not have specific quotas or affirmative action policies in favour of women; neither do the countries have any provision in the law - legal or electoral regulations - for parties to promote women's representation as candidates for elective offices. In terms of women's representation in parties and elective offices, Burkina Faso and Liberia stand out in the sub-region. In 2003, the ruling party in Burkina Faso, the Congress for Democracy and Progress (Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès, CDP), adopted a directive (no. 2003/001 CDP/CN/BPN of 23 December 2003) to reform the party structures and bodies by imposing a quota of 25 percent for women in all structures and bodies of the party. Similarly in Liberia, the electoral regulation stipulates that 30 percent of all parties' candidates for elections should be women. However, this has not been achievable due to lack of enforcement strategies or sanctions for non-compliance.

3.3 Enabling Conditions and Forward-looking Strategies

The aforementioned are constraints that impede women's leadership status in governance challenges the very notion of good governance. Country data suggests that governments, international institutions, civil society, and women from their free agentic power, have been endeavouring to reverse the negative trends in the nexus between gender, governance, and democratisation, with varied success and outcomes.

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An emerging pattern found across the countries in this study points to specific underlying strategies and mechanisms to enhance women's participation in governance and democratisation processes. They include:

1. Engendering institutional frameworks, enforcing policy instruments, and supporting effective women's machineries. This suggests effective gender-sensitive legislative frameworks for local governance systems, different from the useful but limited overarching decentralisation system act and National Development Planning Act enacted in Ghana.
2. Intensifying issues-based advocacy to shape and induce responsive policies such as quotas, local governance policies, and behavioural change on polity and women's leadership. This implies the mobilisation of civil society actors, including faith-based organisations, to champion feminist agendas and women's leadership. In Ghana, the Ark Foundation and the Christian Council of Ghana have been instrumental in advocating with local authorities to raise the normative 30 percent quota target in local governments to 50 percent.
3. Providing tailored training and capacity building intended for women leaders and younger aspiring leaders on leadership and governance. The work of civil society organisations such as ABANTU in Ghana and the Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes (COSEF) in Sénégal, among others, as well as the contributions of international organisations and regional activist networks are cited as instructive cases contributing towards incremental changes

in awareness raising, policy changes, and women capacity development in leadership and local governance.

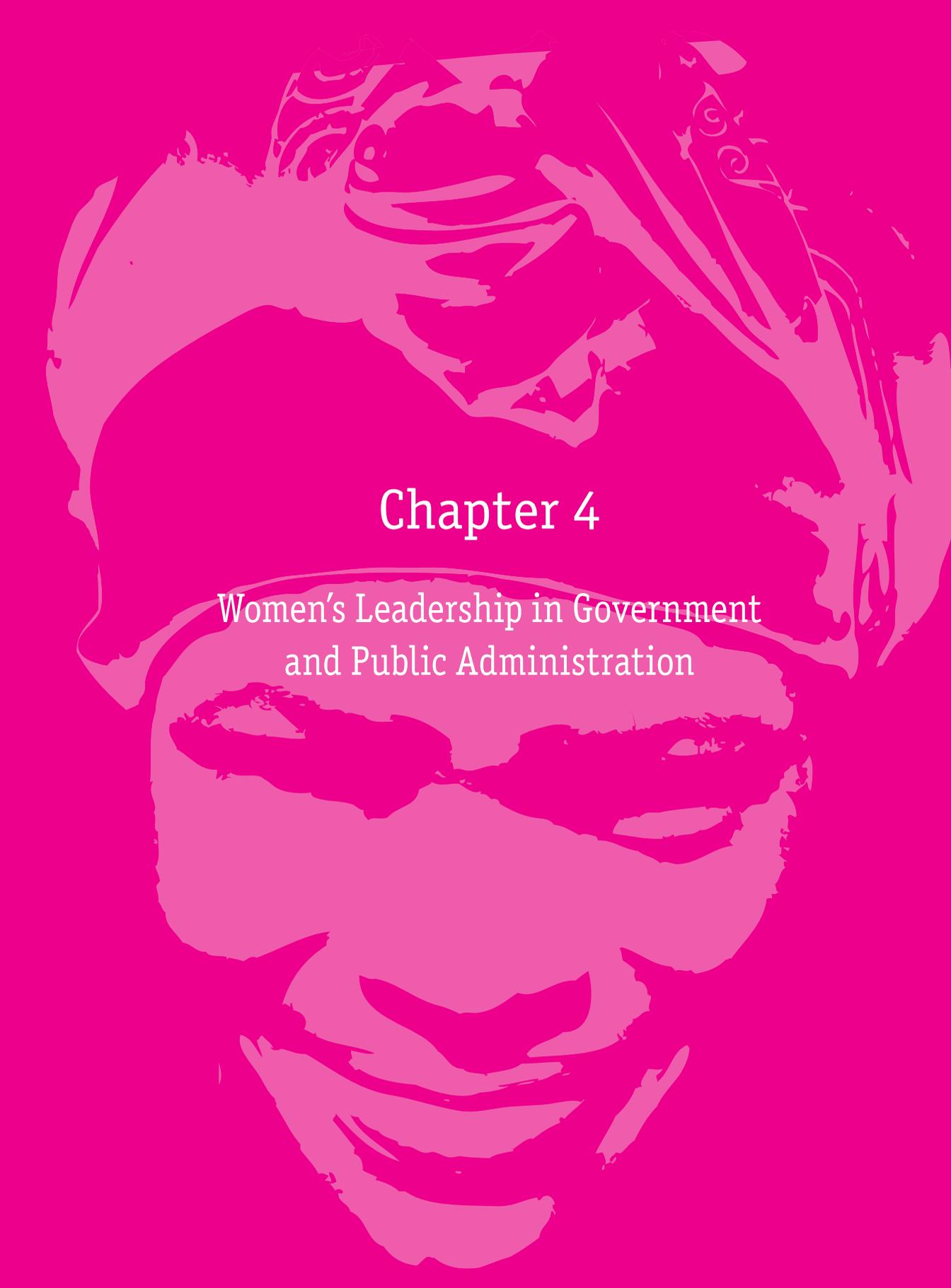
4. Generating new momentum at national and regional levels to hold governments accountable to the commitments made in promoting gender equality and safeguarding women's rights.
5. Discovering creative ways of supporting women political participation. Women's engagement in political processes should be linked to strategies for generating financial resources to support women's participation. According to Hawa Dia Thiam: "women should ensure their financial and material self-sufficiency and empowerment to create favourable and enabling conditions for their political endeavours". This resonates with the claims expressed in Nigeria and the need to circumvent "Godfatherism".

Conclusion

Low-level representation of women in the leadership of political parties' is detrimental to good governance and holds wider implications not only for women's access to leadership roles in the legislature and local governance, but for the quality of governance itself. While marked changes have been noted, leadership and substantive power remain nonetheless gender-biased.

The impediments identified call for multifaceted localised solutions and concrete measures to redress the imbalances in governance and to enhance women's leadership roles. The cases under study also reveal both promising changes and pervasive challenges that amplify in post-conflict situation such as in Côte d'Ivoire.

The 2009 Sénégalaise local elections and the national elections in Ghana are illustrative of the importance of capacity development, advocacy, and policy change as an addition to quotas. The expressed needs of women are based on gender-responsive legal, regulatory frameworks and systematised policies to safeguard their citizenship rights, intensify advocacy, tailor capacity development and greater mobilisation of women.



Chapter 4

Women's Leadership in Government and Public Administration

Introduction

West African women have made notable gains in government and the public sector. These gains have been made in spite of the inimical colonial and post-independence policies and structural constraints that have impinged on women's self-realisation and advancement. This chapter builds on the analysis in Chapter 3 on women's roles in governance and democratisation, by examining women's presence and leadership in government structures and public administration.

4.0 Women's Leadership Status in Government Institutions and Public Administration

Rising women's leadership is evident but uneven across countries in West Africa and across sectors of government and public administration. It is important to dissect women's roles and participation in the formal or public sector and consider their centrality in policy making, budget planning and prioritisation of resource allocation.

Generally across West Africa the public sector has failed to emerge as a credible arena for ensuring equality of employment opportunities for women, particularly in the executive branch, the judiciary and law-enforcement. Several constraints which continually hinder women from reaching key decision making positions include lack of the required level of education for leadership positions within the sector. Additionally, where women have been able to access leadership, pressures of performing multiple commitments at home and the workplace, result in shortened tenures in these positions. In Nigeria, corruption within the public sector, such as nepotism and sexual harassment, are further constraints to women's advancement in the sector. The rigorous lobbying often undertaken by men striving for leadership also contributes to women's marginalisation in the sector.

• Improved yet uneven representation in executive branches of government and public administration

Although West African women have been visible in branches of government since the mid-1970s, the total number of women in these positions has been modest. Generally, with the exception of Liberia, the representation of women in executive branches of government and in particular ministerial positions remains low and confined to feminised portfolios. While the rates of women's ministerial appointments have quadrupled from 3 percent in 1976 to 12.5 percent in 2005 in Côte d'Ivoire (CFELCI 2006), it remains far below the 30 percent representation called for by the United Nations. Women account for 17.1 percent ministerial level appointments in Côte d'Ivoire, compared to 11.8 percent for Ghana, 10 percent in Nigeria (among the lowest rate in the West African region) and 20.6 percent in Sénégal (HDR2009). This 20.6 percent is a variable rate considering the recent government cabinet reshuffle in May 1, 2009, marked by the exit of four (4) women ministers and the entry of five (5) new ministers out of thirty-two (32) in the new government. This reconfiguration, the ninth in the past nine years, compels a re-adjustment of women's representation to a lower rate of 15.15 percent in 2009, a downward trend compared to

2008. This reveals an emergent pattern whereby women's representation in leadership positions in executive branches is constantly shifting along the formation and reconstitution of government cabinets.

What remains constant is the low and unequal representation of women in the highest echelons of power structures in decision-making and public administration. This gender gap is not only a numerical deficit, it is also a vacuum in equal representation within strategic institutions such as National Media Commissions and the Electoral Commissions, with only 3 percent women in senior management. Such a gap constitutes an opportunity cost to inscribe and promote gender equality within strategic regulating and decision-making institutions.

The above trend extends to the civil service sector for most West African countries, such as Ghana captured in the table below.

Table 3: Composition of Senior Staff of Civil Service by Grade and Sex

Grade	Male		Female		Total
	No	percent	No	percent	
Chief Director	9	81.5	2	18.2	11
Director of Administration	186	87.7	26	12.3	212
Deputy Director	205	92.8	16	7.2	221
Assistant Director I	151	90.4	16	5.6	167
Assistant Director 11a	228	88.4	30	11.6	258
Asst. Director 11b	135	74.6	46	25.4	181
Total	914	87	136	13	1,050

Source: Civil Service: 2005 as cited in Allah-Mensah, 2005.

These figures may change under the government of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), which has just formed a government.

The sex-disaggregated data suggests a stratified and differential rate of representation with women located at the bottom levels. 2008 figures in Ghana show that out of 35 Chief Directors of the various ministries only 6 are women. There were also 48 serving Ambassadors and High Commissioners with women occupying only 4 positions. Similarly, in Sénégal, women represent 15 percent of workers in the public sector and 3 out of the country's 35 Ambassadors are women. The Sénégalaise territorial governance structures have one woman in each of the following positions: Deputy-Governor, Prefect, Deputy-Prefect (MFFDS 2006).

The statistical representation is a corollary of the limited scope of representation of women in strategic leadership positions as found also in Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire where women occupy 28 percent of government jobs, of which 78 percent are at secretarial levels.

- **Gender machineries and instruments in West Africa**

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) emphasised the establishment of national machineries in member states to, inter alia, design, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, evaluate, advocate and mobilise support for policies that promote the advancement of women. In practice national machineries should serve as central policy-coordinating units in governments, supporting government-wide mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective in all policy areas.

In the countries studied, the emergence of gender machineries have been critical in the pursuit of women's empowerment and involvement in decision making. Though the overall impact of these machineries and instruments in empowering women's leadership will be gauged over the long term, what is presently discernable is that these machineries have brought attention to the discourse on gender equality.

There are increasingly visible structures at the national level that are committed to women's advancement and empowerment. These range from fully-fledged ministries of gender or women's affairs, national women's bureau or commissions of women in developments to women's desks within ministries. These desks serve as focal points in the advancement of women's issues in various areas including education, planning, health and environment, and legal/regulatory frameworks. These machineries provide the institutional framework for implementing programmes for gender equality. They also serve as conduits for domesticating international agreements such as BPfA, conventions, declarations and other instruments and their follow up.

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For the most part, gender machineries have succeeded in mainstreaming gender concerns in national policies and plans, and played important roles in advocating for legal reform in areas like sexual harassment, inheritance laws, penal codes, nationality laws, social security, and personal status codes across the sub-region. However there are certain impediments such as marginalisation of women's issues and programmes; little or no access to the national decision-making level; lack of information and statistical data, as well as political, institutional, weak human resource capacity (the gender desks in the countries reviewed have one person to promote women's issues within traditionally male sectors), and financial constraints that limit their effectiveness in improving the status of women and contributing to gender equality.

The effectiveness of national gender machineries depends largely on the political will of respective governments to empower women. A report by DAW (2005) asserts that national machineries complain of inadequate space and opportunity to carry out their mandates. DAW also reports that officials of national machineries complained of overextended portfolios and were unable to cope with implementing programmes, monitoring line ministries and coordinating national effort towards gender equality.

In Côte d'Ivoire and Sénégal, the Ministry of Women's Affairs created in the 1970s to promote women's leadership has become the hub of women's leadership and governments' flagship of

accountability to women's empowerment. Almost half a century since independence, such Ministries have remained women's political strongholds, though efforts have been made to diversify women's ministerial portfolios and facilitate women's appointments in technical ministries such as the Prime Minister in Sénégal. A marked difference was encountered in Nigeria and Ghana where women have held ministerial positions in finance and other technical fields.

West African states are signatories to most international instruments promoting gender equity. However, the implementation and domestication of these treaties have been slow in many countries mainly due to an absence of the requisite political will for implementation. For example 30 years since CEDAW came into being, West African countries are still struggling to fully domesticate these conventions. Furthermore, lack of financial, moral and material support from leaders also serves as impediments to these instruments achieving their primary purpose. This makes advocacy by groups around the domestication and implementation of these instruments salient.

The table below depicts countries that have signed/ratified or acceded to CEDAW prior to April 2009 in West Africa

Table 4: List of West African Countries that have signed/ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

S/N	COUNTRY	Date of signature	Date of receipt of the instrument of R-ratification /A- accession or/ S- succession
1	Benin	11 Nov. 1981	12 Mar. 1992
2	Burkina Faso	--	14 Oct. 1987 - A
3	Cameroon	6 Jun. 1983	23 Aug. 1994 - A
4	Cape Verde	--	5 Dec. 1980 - A
5	Cote d'Ivoire	17 Jul. 1980	18 Dec. 1995 - A
6	Gambia	29 Jul. 1980	16 Apr. 1993
7	Ghana	17 Jul. 1980	2 Jan. 1986
8	Guinea	17 Jul. 1980	9 Aug. 1982
9	Guinea-Bissau	17 Jul. 1980	23 Aug. 1985
10	Liberia	--	17 Jul. 1984 - A
11	Mali	5 Feb. 1985	10 Sept. 1985
12	Niger	--	8 Oct. 1999 - A
13	Nigeria	23 Apr. 1984	13 Jun. 1985
14	Sénégal	29 Jul. 1980	5 Feb. 1985
15	Sierra Leone	21 Sept. 1988	11 Nov. 1988
16	Togo	--	26 Sept. 1983 - A

Source: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/states.htm> accessed 28 April, 2009

■ Countries with Signature and accession
 □ Countries with Signature only

4.1 Women's leadership in legislative and judicial systems

Table 5: List of Women Parliamentarians in West Africa (December, 2008)

S/N	COUNTRY	LOWER HOUSES				UPPER HOUSE OR SENATE			
		Elections Year	Number of Seats	Women Seats	% of Womn	Elections Year	Number of Seats	Women Seats	% of Women
1	Benin	Mar. 2003	83	9	10.80%	--	--	--	--
2	Burkina Faso	May 2007	111	17	15.30%	--	--	--	--
3	Cameroon	Jul. 2007	180	25	13.90%	--	--	--	--
4	Cape Verde	Jan. 2006	72	13	18.10%	--	--	--	--
5	Côte d'Ivoire	Dec. 2000	203	18	8.90%	--	--	--	--
6	Gambia	Jan. 2002	53	5	9.40%	--	--	--	--
7	Ghana	Dec. 2008	230	18	7.80%	--	--	--	--
8	Guinea	Jun. 2002	114	22	19.30%	--	--	--	--
9	Guinea Bissau	Mar. 2004	100	14	14.00%	--	--	--	--
10	Liberia	Oct. 2005	64	8	12.50%	Oct. 2005	30	5	16.70%
11	Mali	Jul. 2007	147	15	10.20%	--	--	--	--
12	Mauritania	Nov. 2006	95	17	17.9%	Jan. 2007	53	9	17.0%
13	Niger	Dec. 2004	113	14	12.40%	--	--	--	--
14	Nigeria	Apr. 2007	358	25	7.00%	Apr. 2007	109	9	8.30%
15	Sénégal	Jun. 2007	150	33	22.00%	Aug. 2007	100	46	40.00%
16	Sierra Leone	Aug. 2007	121	16	13.20%	--	--	--	--
17	Togo	Oct. 2007	81	9	11.10%	--	--	--	--

Source: The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

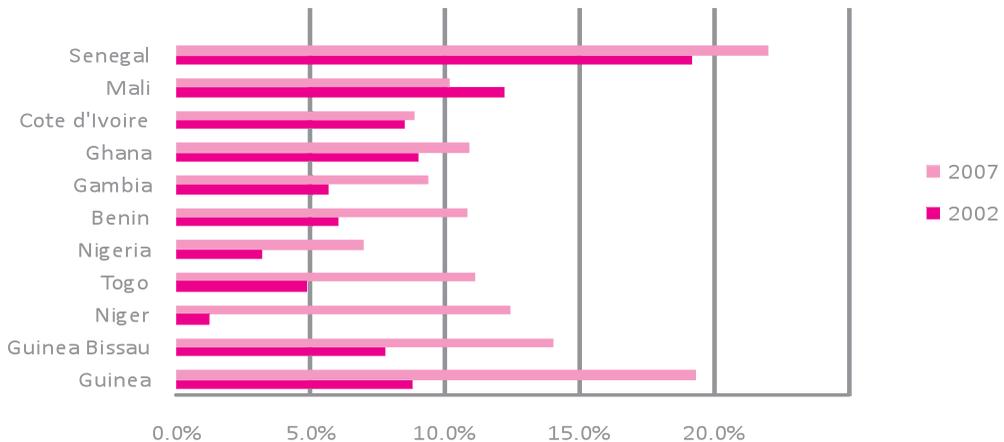
Country with highest % Country with lowest %

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There are visible changes in the level of women's representation in legislative and parliamentary systems across West Africa. Women represent only 10 percent in all West African structures, which is slightly lower than the average 10.81 percent in Africa (IPU 2009). However, their representation is variable cross-nationally. Sénégal records the highest rate at 22 percent, Côte d'Ivoire 8.9 percent, Ghana 7.9 percent and Nigeria 7.0 percent (ibid.). Nigeria has appointed 2 women as Supreme Court Judges out of 17 serving Justices. Sénégal also has a long history of appointing women Magistrates in its high court, although in limited numbers.

Despite their low numerical representation and quota deficit, notable changes recorded in Ghana offers a glimpse into women's transformative leadership. Ghana made history by appointing the first female Chief Justice, Her Ladyship, Mrs. Georgina Woode, who is credited with a few positive changes in the judiciary namely: 1) the introduction of Saturday courts to minimise the backlog of cases; 2) the establishment of waiting rooms in the family tribunals to make them user friendly for women and children; and 3) calling for more women to be given leadership positions in the judiciary. This example highlights the potential of individual women leaders in engendering

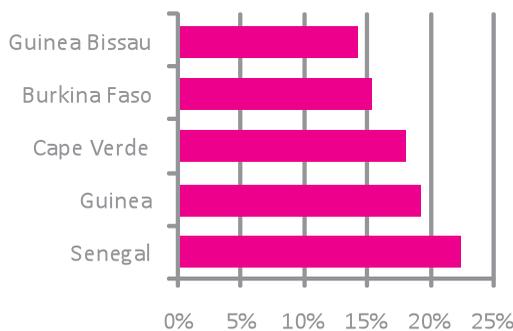
institutions and addressing women's impediments through substantive gender responsive policies. Regardless of the achievements indicated by these high profile appointments, multiple structural, institutional and cultural barriers continue to hinder the achievement of women in public life. Most legislatures across the sub-region fail to reflect the proportion of women in the electorate, and women's limited representation in the judiciary is a common feature in all countries studied.



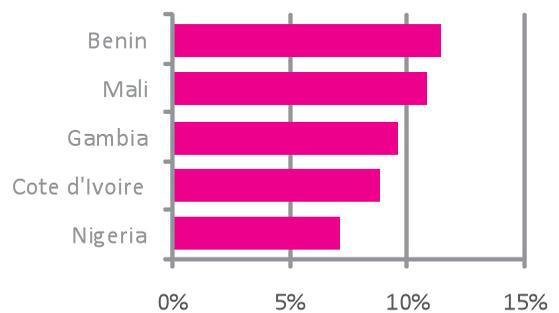
Source: IPU - The table above comparing the data from 2002 and 2007, highlights the improvement in the number of women elected into the legislative arm of government. Whereas major progress was made in some countries, the margin in some others could be regarded as minimal, while only one country recorded a regression during the period.

As the diagram above indicates, the situation in Nigeria represents the worst state of women's participation in governance across the region. Overall, data from the study indicates a variable level of women's representation in legislative and judicial arms of government, and generally stark gender-based inequalities in leadership positions. Such a representational gender gap is attributed to the country's longstanding military regimes; religious fundamentalism; political violence and differential gender educational outcomes, as well as women's differential access to financing.

The regional variability is captured below:



■ Top 5 Countries in West Africa



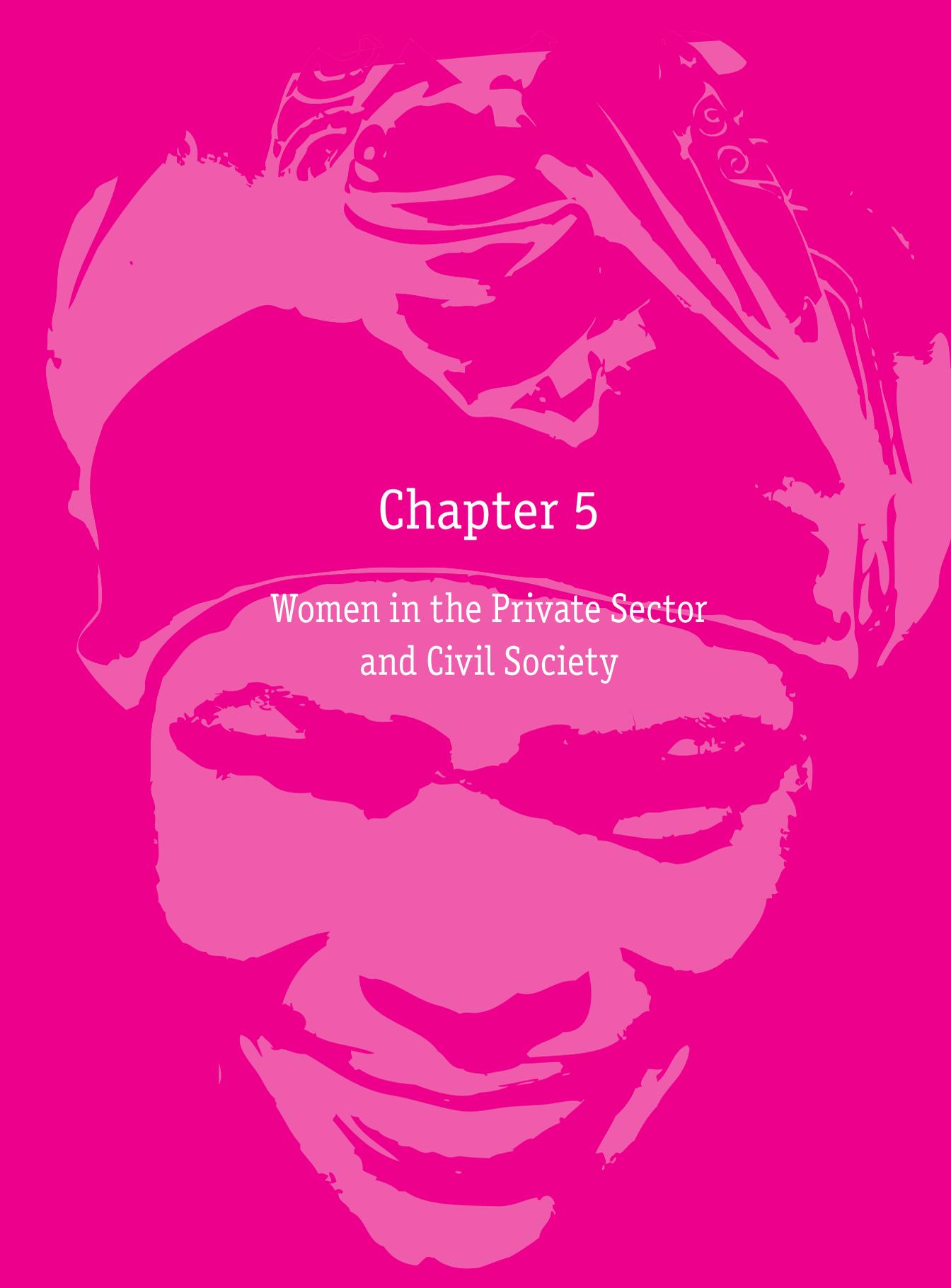
■ Bottom 5 Countries in West Africa

Conclusion

The public sector across West Africa is symbolic of the effect of patriarchy on women's representation in decision-making structures. In all the countries studied, women occupied mainly clerical and administrative levels in government agencies and parastatals. Though there have been significant inroads made in the legislative arm of governments and key appointments made in the judicial and executive spheres, overall, representation of women in the higher levels of governments remains minimal.

Quota systems and other mechanisms to increase women's representation in the public sector are necessary and have yielded some positive results, however, these measures are not sufficient in themselves, and have to be complemented with actions such as governments implementation of instruments that promotes women's participation in governance, e.g CEDAW, the Protocol to the African Charter and other instruments.

Furthermore, practical strategic initiatives to ensure that the public sector is a nurturing space for women's leadership has to be prioritised.



Chapter 5

Women in the Private Sector and Civil Society

5.0 Women's Leadership in the Private Sector

The previous chapter interrogated the participation of women in government and the public sector in West Africa. This chapter analyses women's involvement in the other sectors of society namely; the private sector and civil society.

Studies show that women represent over 55 percent of the total population of West Africa, yet their involvement in decision making in the economic sector is minimal. This is evident in the corporate sector across the region where women are not visible in senior management positions.

Furthermore, many national policies related to international and regional trade agreements have had adverse effects on women's economic activities and few mechanisms and forums exist to enable women in the private sector contribute to the formulation of policies and programmes developed by economic ministries and financial institutions.^{xi}

In West African states, women and men have different access to ownership and control of the means of production (land, credit, and labour), decision-making and participation. In business activities, women tend to be confined to small and medium-enterprises and are often confronted with gender bias in legal and financial regulations which limit their options within the private sector.

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However, a number of recent progressive global and continental instruments call for the elimination of constraints and barriers, including laws and regulations that discriminate against women in the private sector. For example, the outcome document of the Monterrey Consensus of the United Nations Conference on Financing for Development and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) have constructively created platforms for reformation of the private sector, thus, laying a better structure for the advancement of women and encouraging women's participation. These initiatives also included in their guiding principles the necessary framework to promote gender equality within the sector.

The World Bank has also highlighted the importance of including women in the private sector by stating that greater gender equality and a less rigid gender-based division of labour promotes growth in two ways: raising the total level of productive capital in society, and, increasing female productive capital, which has important pro-growth effects.^{xii}

5.1 Women's Contributions to Private Sector Development in West Africa

Women in West Africa contribute 75 percent of the output in agricultural work and produce and market 60-80 percent of food. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report, the female labour force in sub-Saharan Africa in 2003 was about 83 million, representing 34 percent of those employed in the formal sector, earning only 10 percent of the income while owning 1 percent of the assets.^{xiii}

Private Sector Development (PSD) has become a priority in improving the investment climate and market access in West Africa. It also provides new income opportunities to both men and women across the region. However, PSD effectiveness requires an understanding of the different constraints often faced by women in this domain.

Empirical evidence from many countries in the region suggests that a significant potential for higher economic growth will be enhanced if existing barriers to investment and participation by women in the private sector are removed. For example in Ghana, an analysis of the gender and economic growth linkages suggests that a significant increase in the female literacy rate led to a rise in real output growth by about 1.5 percent. This means a significant improvement in gender equity in terms of human capital accumulation.

Women's economic participation or otherwise in Ghana will have significant beneficial effects on the country's economic growth rates amounting to about 2.5 percent a year. This is significant in the quest to scaling up growth rates to 8-10 percent in order to become a middle income country within 10 years and to meet the MDGs. The country is taking notable steps to improve women's participation in the sector. For example, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in collaboration with the Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs (MWCA) and women representatives from the business community have come out with the "Ghana Gender and Growth Assessment (GGA)". The GGA critically examines the linkages between gender and economic growth in Ghana, and results showed that the legal and institutional framework in the country does not overtly discriminate against women. Nevertheless socio-cultural factors such as property ownership, land rights, land acquisition and inheritance rights present obstacles to women's ability to take full advantage of the provisions in the legal framework.

As part of the GGA project, an advocacy tool dubbed "The Voices of Women in Ghana" has also been designed to complement the GGA's effort in presenting the issues, concerns, as well as successes of women entrepreneurs in their own voices. The overall objective of the report is for these voices to trigger action by policy makers that will improve the business environment for women. The document showcases 23 selected businesswomen highlighting their experiences as business owners and proposing recommendations on how to improve the policy environment for women entrepreneurs in the country.

- **Factors impeding Women's Leadership in the Private Sector**

Across West Africa, women manifest leadership abilities in both the informal and formal sectors of their economies but the inherent patriarchal systems and beliefs, coupled with unequal social relationships between women and men, and how this relationship is replicated within the private sector has affected women's visibility particularly in the formal private sector.

In spite of women's notable contribution to the development of the informal sector, they continue

to face discrimination and marginalisation particularly in accessing formal credit opportunities, and in dealing with bureaucracy and corruption that permeates the sector. This impediment has limited women's business growth and conversely reduces their ability to attain leadership opportunities to compete with male counterparts who are better able to access and leverage funds.

Additionally, where funds are made accessible and available to women in business, high tax rates from the financial institutions and women's minimal understanding of tax administration have been identified as obstacles to women's survival and growth in business. Few women have knowledge of the legal frameworks and mechanisms guiding the conduct of business and respective national investment laws. Discriminatory land and property laws also affect women's influence in the private sector.

It is clear that despite efforts deployed towards economic empowerment of women in the sub-region, women remain confined to micro and small-scale enterprises and the informal sector. However, there are indications that women are increasingly seeking self-employment in the formal private sector. Women are organising themselves into associations of entrepreneurs to enhance their economic status and have an impact on economic policies. Despite this trend, the number of women serving in leadership positions in the formal private sector remains low.

• **Segmentation and clustering of women's leadership in the private sector**

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Despite constitutional provisions, the gender representation gap in the private sector in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Sénégal, prevails. The general trend in these countries is that a sizeable number of women working in the formal private sector hold lower positions due to differentials in educational backgrounds and pervasive barriers for entry into the private sector. Côte d'Ivoire is a case in point: women predominantly hold low level positions within the formal private sector and are the first to be adversely affected during economic recessions and shocks. In 2002, the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector was only 22.3 percent^{xiv} and less than 3 percent in the industrial sector^{xv}.

A similar trend is evident in Sénégal, where women's economic activities were estimated at 33.3 percent compared to 67.4 percent for men, representing only 7.6 percent in the formal sector. Among the 16.53 employers, 115 are women, representing 7 percent of employers in the Sénégalaise 'patronat'. A marked visibility of individual women leaders is evident in strategic institutions such as the Agency for the Promotion of Investment (APIX) led by Aminata Niane and the "Agence de développement et d'encadrement des petites et moyennes entreprises" (*Agency for development and management of small and medium enterprises*) (ADEPME) led by Mrs Marie Therese Diedhiou. Notably the leadership of pioneer individual women leaders such as Adjia Dior Diop, President of the "Association Sénégalaise des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprise" (ASFCE) (Association of Women Business leaders in Sénégal) are good examples of the key roles women play in the service industry, textiles and agribusinesses.

Women face similar predicaments in Ghana: they represent only 10 percent of council members in the Ghanaian Employers Association, and they account for less than 20 percent in membership to professional associations. In contrast, Nigeria offers a brighter prospect with regards to individual women's leadership in the private sector though the overall representation is marginal. It is estimated at 4 percent for women leadership in managerial and company executive positions, and 15.4 percent (2 out of 11), at the Central Bank leadership apex. These also include Chief Executive Officers of banks and other financial institutions, such as the Bureau of Public Enterprise (BPE), and the Nigeria Stock Exchange (NSE). Women in the private sector in Nigeria have also formed platforms such as Women in Management and Business (WIMBIZ) to serve as a catalyst for elevating the profile and influence of women in management and business.

- **Women's uncontested leadership in the informal sector**

Women's economic activities are highly concentrated in the informal sector across the service, agri-business and artisan sub-sectors. In these sectors, West African women hold visible leadership positions as producers and distributors for local, national and regional markets. The confinement of women predominately to the agricultural sub-sector in rural areas and the informal sector in urban areas ensues from the traditional division of labour and the historical divide rooted in the dichotomisation of the private and public spheres as well as related differential accounting and valuing of paid and unpaid labour.

Women's stronghold in the informal sector is highlighted in the multiple roles they play. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, women record an increased share of economic activities representing 63 percent of tertiary informal sector, and 38.8 percent of services and petty trade^{xvi}. The influence of women in the informal private sector has led to key women becoming national figures, such as Nanti Lou Rosalie, a pioneer entrepreneur in Côte d'Ivoire; Adja Dior Diop and Diouma Dieng Diakhaté, both from Sénégal, the latter recognised for spearheading and fashioning new professional and semi-industrial production for both local, regional and transnational markets.

Equally important is the emergence of a younger generation of women in the informal sector in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Sénégal who are moving from the informal and retail sector to small and medium enterprises and wholesale distribution cooperatives.

5.2 Women organising for enhanced leadership in the private sector

Though the uncontested contributions of women to the informal sector should be heralded, their confinement to this sub sector limits their ability to control the significant resources, power and influence available in the formal sector. Furthermore, the increased presence of women in the formal sector will assist in addressing the existing legal and financial regulations that discriminate against women. A number of vibrant women's groups are emerging across the sub-region to address this problem. In Nigeria, WIMBIZ is dedicated to improving the success rate of female entrepreneurs and increase the proportion of women in senior positions in corporate organisations.

Similarly, the Ghana Association for Women Entrepreneurs (GAWE) works to enhance women's visibility in the private sector in Ghana. The specific agendas of these groups and others like them revolve around core substantive issues, such as strategies and policies to impact and promote leadership in business and economic sectors, social protection for women entrepreneurs, as well as advocacy for the engendering of fiscal policies and legal regulatory frameworks that impede their economic agency and efficacy.

5.3 Women's Leadership in Civil society

The concept of civil society is dynamic and embodies multiple definitions. For Cohen and Arato (1990), civil society refers to the sphere of social interaction encompassing the family, wider associational life, social movements, and forms of public communication operating in the arena of the organised non-state, non-market sector with origins in both the modern and traditional bases of society. Orji (2009) underscores the prominent role of civil society in the promotion of democracy and good governance in Africa. This role includes the struggle for decolonisation and demilitarisation as well as promotion of rule of law, popular participation in policy making, and transparency in governance. Orji further emphasises a shift beyond restrictive framing of civil society as solely advocacy NGOs to include the traditional organisations that exist within the African context (Orji 2009:95).

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The United Nations refers to Civil Society as an arena of un-coerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and the market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated^{xvii}. Civil Society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power.

The working definition of civil society adopted for this study describes civil society as voluntary civic and social organisations and institutions located outside the structures of national governments.

West Africa has a long history of women's associative movements, support networks and community organising in fluid, formal and informal structures at different historical moments. The symbolic concept of "civil society" is contemporaneous. However, women's organising is well-enshrined in the West African socio-political landscapes, and predates current trends in civil society organising. There is a strong tradition of grassroots organisations led by women in different parts of the sub-region. Women created some of the earliest civil society associations and have always been influential in matters of local economic, social and cultural development. Community self help initiatives such as mothers unions, savings clubs and thrift societies such as the *susu*^{xvii} and the *stokvels*^{xviii} were developed and led by women.

- **Civil society, an enabling platform for women's leadership**

Women's leadership in civil society has evolved significantly from the historical accounts of organised colonial resistance to state abuses of citizens' rights. Across the countries studied the growth of civil society and women's increased leadership roles in civil society dates back to the 1960s through to the 1990s in Sénégal, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria.

In Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, early documented attempts of women to influence political decisions occurred in 1949, when women marched towards a prison to force colonial authorities to release political detainees. Similarly, the Association of Ivorian Women (Association des Femmes Ivoiriennes (AFI) which was formed in 1963, was instrumental in the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (Ministère de la Condition Féminine, which later became the Ministère de la solidarité et de la Promotion de la Femme) in 1976.

Civil Society, in its early formation, embedded in local associative movements, has fashioned and ushered substantive changes in Sénégal that dates back to the 1960s. The women's associative movement emerged on a social welfare agenda and had been credited for the creation of the first Centre D'animation Pour Femmes" in Thies in 1963; the creation of the first day care Centre Garderie D'enfants" to alleviate women's plight in Bignoma, Casamance. The emergence of the first Women's Promotion Division later in 1986 with Maimouna Kane along with the emergence of "groupements féminins" were a turning point in the institutionalisation of a "women's agenda" in national government planning and policies. This is credited for spurring a vibrant women's movement led by self-proclaimed feminists such as Hawa Thiam and Marie Angélique Savané among others. Other early examples of women's organising in civil society include, the Federation des Association Feminine's du Sénégal (FAFS) launched in 1977; the Réseau Siggil Jigeen Conseil des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales d'Appui au Développement (CONGAD); and the Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes (COSEF).

Other notable organisations are women's professional associations such as the Association des Femmes Juristes Sénégalais (AJS) launched in 1974 and which engaged in the defense and protection of women's rights and the revision and engendering of the Family Code. Equally important was the launch of "case foyers" in rural areas of Sénégal in the 1990s and women associative movements at the local level, thereby enabling women to carve out a niche in the public space and promote inclusive participation in community management and decision making processes. Moreover, rural women's associations such as the National Network of Rural Women and the association of Women Leaders of Farmers, Smallholders and Producers, have been instrumental in advocating for women's land rights and demanding local leaders and the national government to promote gender equity in accessing natural resources and markets in Sénégal.

The issues underpinning civil society mobilisation vary across countries and over periods, but they converge around the articulation of specific imperatives and agendas. Mbow (2006) has argued, in the case of Sénégal, that the economic and moral crises have pushed women to the forefront.

The politico–religious contexts, combined with degrading living conditions, have impelled a greater mobilisation in defence of women's socio-economic rights and citizenship. Such agendas revolved around demands for democratic governance in Nigeria and Ghana; women's and human rights issues in Côte d'Ivoire; feminist movements and women's rights and social welfare claims in Sénégal; and overall, the domestication of international and regional instruments on gender equality.

Analyses of the issues of concern for such platforms are generally based on demands for greater accountability, policy change, transparency and inclusiveness in governance. These platforms congregate around similar agendas across the civil society space cross-nationally. In Ghana, as in other countries, women's rights movements formed with multiple imperatives and expanded in scope beyond welfare–driven and survivalist activities. Women's groups currently take on political issues and are engaged in democratisation processes, focusing on women's participation in decision-making. Noted platforms include, the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), which addresses economic policy issues and women's land rights; the Domestic Violence Coalition, which worked for the passage of the Domestic Violence Law, 2007; and the Women's Manifesto Coalition hosted by ABANTU for Development, which works for the implementation of the Women's Manifesto for Ghana.

THE WOMEN'S MANIFESTO OF GHANA:

The “Women’s Manifesto” of Ghana is a political document which sets out critical issues of concern to women in Ghana and consequently makes demands for the government and other decision-makers. As in many other countries in Africa and indeed around the world, it is evident in Ghana that there are constraints to women’s development. Ghanaian women from decades past had suffered lack of integration into leadership, governance and decision-making; underrepresentation and low participation in public spaces and national assembly. This marginalisation of women has triumphed under the monopolisation of power by men and some African traditional/cultural practices that do not give recognition nor accommodate the leadership of women but rather relegate women activities and voices to the domestic front.

Although the country has ratified most International human rights instruments which promote the principle of non-discrimination, women are still marginalised in all spheres, and their representation at different levels of decision-making is negligible, or even non-existent in some cases. Given these challenges amongst others, Ghanaian women through coalition building and effective collaborations were able to put together mechanisms that would progressively advocate their needs and advancement, and enhance their active participation in public affairs.

The Women’ Manifesto of Ghana as a policy advocacy tool provides a common platform for women to demand for the achievement of gender equality and equity, sustainable national development and active involvement and participant in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Manifesto created spectacular opportunities for women to have a say be heard in the 2004 general elections in Ghana, when women were empowered to use their votes as a bargaining tool while also encouraging and mobilising others to do the same. The Manifesto stands as a tool which is used to assess and ensure political parties’ accountability and enthusiasm in relation to issues concerning women as enunciated in the manifesto. Specifically, the Women Manifesto of Ghana addresses direct issues and challenges confronting contemporary women in Ghana, the issues include: women’s low representation in governance; poor access to resources critical for making a living; poverty, poor health and illiteracy level; unacceptably high rate of maternal mortality; harmful and discriminatory social/cultural practices such Female Genital mutilation (FGM) and inhuman treatment against widows; violation of women’s human right; violence against women during conflict situations among others.

The initiative behind the drafting of the Manifesto is said to have been a general demand made by Ghanaian women as part of national development and for the need to uplift women's rights, and also as a continuation of women's struggle across the globe particularly building on the experiences of other African countries that have gone through similar processes –Nigeria in West Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania and South Africa in other parts of Africa.. Additionally, the drafting of the manifesto saw the collaboration and consultation with Women NGOs, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) across the country, representatives from political parties, media, and representatives from faith-based organisations (FBOs), thus, seeking for ideas, and opinions on critical issues of concern to women.

The “Women's Manifesto” is widely accepted and has been adopted by NGOs, government institutions, officials and MDAs, political parties, constitutional bodies, the legislature, the judiciary and law enforcement agencies. The Manifesto based its content and principles on Ten (10) key issues concerning women; Women and Land; Women and Media; Women, Conflict and Peace; Women with Special needs; Discriminatory cultural practices; Women Economic Empowerment; Women, Human rights and the law; Women Social Policy and Social Development; Women Politics, Decision-making and public life; and institutions with the mandate to promote women.

Similarly, in Nigeria women's organisations played a significant role during the military era; they were spearheaded by an organisation that defended a socialist ideology, Women in Nigeria (WIN), under the leadership of Ayesha Imam. WIN pursued several objectives, including research, reporting and addressing women's social, political and economic rights in Nigeria. Women's movements are noted to have gained momentum since the post-military era from 1999, and coalesced around the CEDAW convention, symbolised by the launch of the NGO-CEDAW coalition, and outreach to international social movements. Notable among such organisations are the Nigerian coalitions against violence against women, such as, Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence against Women (LACVAW), and the National Coalition on Violence against Women (NACOVAV). Equally important are the associative professional movements, e.g. Journalists against Violence against Women (JAVAW), as well as advocacy groups that challenge discriminatory bills such as the proposed laws on Indecent Dressing and the prohibition of same sex marriage.

Women's organisations have made landmark progress within the West African civil society sector through continuous advocacy for gender parity and women's advancement in development and decision-making processes. Women have successfully organised via different intervention groups: such as community based organisations; comprising of self help groups with major activities related to poverty reduction; adult literacy, micro projects, savings and credit facilities and cross-border trading. This branch of women's organising specifically focuses on strengthening social safety nets and enabling livelihoods, often overseeing and conducting the interventions carried out by market women. Market women associations have been influential in policy change. In all the countries studied, market women have led protests against rising costs of living, municipal by-laws and other adverse effects of government policies. These associations are also an important barometer of the mood of urban people and are an important indicator of people's perceptions on the capability of the state.

In addition, women in civil society have recorded outstanding successes in assisting countries transiting from war to peace. Well documented cases in West Africa describe the roles women played transforming conflict situations by organising across political, religious, and ethnic affiliations. Networks such as the Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI), Mano-River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) and Women in Peace and Security Network - Africa (WIPSEN-Africa) among others, have played pivotal roles in promoting peace across the sub-region.

Women through their numeric strength in mobilising have also played key roles in the political processes across the sub-region. The result of women's advocacy in the political sphere has resulted in celebrated outcomes such as liberating women from marginalisation and increasing their presence in public domain. A good case study is the 31st December Women's Movement in Ghana, which is credited for bringing about meaningful representation of women in the Constituent Assembly of 1992. Similar to other women's organisation across the sub region, Ghanaian women through knowledge sharing and awareness raising have campaigned for constitutional changes in areas such

as marriage, inheritance and discriminatory practices as part of democratic governance. Thus, legal provisions such as the Intestate Succession Law 111 enabled women to identify gender gaps in the promotion of women's rights and address problems of gender biases in customary and religious laws on family issues (UNRISD, 2005).

Religion plays a central role in West African societies and religious practices have historically been one of the tools used to subjugate women in the sub-region. Nevertheless, women have increasingly demonstrated leadership abilities in the religious sector through faith-based civil society groups. In addition to religious teaching and worship, these groups also engage in activities to build the capacity of women through training in skills that can increase incomes for women. Faith-based organisations have also been instrumental in raising awareness of women on HIV/AIDS.

Further, women in civil society have made drastic progress to increase their visibility in the intellectual arena, significantly by conducting and documenting qualitative and quantitative research. For example, the Gender and Development Action (GADA) in Nigeria, and the Centre for Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation in Ghana are organisations that specialise in evidence based research and frameworks development for policy change.

Finally, though Liberia was not one of the countries studied, the role of women's collective organising in the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia as Africa's first female president resonates across the sub-region as a best practice of the potential of women's organising.

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What forms of organising underpins such movements?

The emergent pattern hinges on a dual form of organising and imperatives under two complementary banners: social welfare motivated organisations and feminist movements as a context for the articulation and emergence of women's leadership and mobilisation within civil society. Another site of differentiation which emerges concerns the distinction between urban-based human rights-oriented civil society activism, and rural grassroots organisations oriented towards community empowerment

- **Multiple Linkages: regional scope, local and global connections**

Women's organisations and civil society actors in West Africa respond to local, national and regional imperatives, they also connect with broader transnational feminist movements through landmark agenda setting conferences such as Nairobi Forum in 1985, and the Beijing Conference in 1995, among others. Women's organisations formed coalitions and alliances linked to transnational social movements, to foster gender equality agendas. The recent emergence of continental platforms with regional and national configurations such as Akina Mama Wa Afrika and the African Feminist Forum (AFF), which were created to provide and support critical and innovative spaces of engagement for feminists and feminist-led institutions, have also been instrumental in promoting women's empowerment agenda.

The Africa Feminist Forum:

The African Feminist Movement is an ideological and political space made up of the many individuals and organisations committed to challenging and dismantling patriarchal oppressions in all its manifestations. The Forum provides space for women activists to mobilise around feminist principles and commitment towards proactively promoting and defending women's rights in Africa. The space further provides an alternative view of critical concerns for the continent and for its women— reducing the increasing levels of impoverishment amongst African women, escalating violence, rising fundamentalism, and ethnic intolerance. In addition the forum also serves as an autonomous space for African feminists to deliberate on the possibility of linking theory and practice as well as sharing, learning and exchanging good practice.

The AFF brought together multi-generational experiences and expressions which provided a systematic process for feminists from the continent to take stock of women's agency and to clarify/reclaim feminist politics individually, organisationally and as movements regionally and nationally. The forum explored the relationship between African feminists and the broader democratic and human rights struggles on the continent particularly in responding to women issues across the continent through mobilisation, concentration, policy advocacy and promotion of women's rights.

Since its formation, AFF has held national forums in Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda, where it brought together cross-section of women from across the continent to make significant contribution to the development of a feminist epistemology in Africa and to create a solid foundation for building a feminist movement on the continent. The AFF platform is also used to involve and engage wider national and local participation and reflection.

Thus far, the Forum has manifested in the processes of women's self-discovery, hopes, dreams, aspirations, yearning for more knowledge and revelations. The AFF developed a charter, "Charter of Feminist Principles for African feminists", which is adopted as a mobilisation tool as well as an instrument to review feminist organising at different levels and in different locations.

Source: The African Feminist Forum
http://www.africanfeministforum.org/v3/files/Reclaiming_our_%20Spaces_AFF.pdf
<http://www.africanfeministforum.org/v3/files/AFF%20background%20paper.pdf> accessed 07 : 06 :2009

• **Differentiated leadership positions in civil society**

A review of the evidence provided in this study and a historiography of women's activism and mobilisation in civil society suggest variegated and differentiated roles. Generally, women seem to have occupied undisputed and almost exclusive leadership roles in early homogenous, women-only associative movements from 1975 to 1990s and onwards^{xviii}. This is evident in women's organisations operating under the banner of National women's associations such as the "Reseau Ivoirien des organisations Feminines" and the Federations des Association Feminines du Sénégal" and within women welfare and feminist-inspired civil society groups in Ghana, Nigeria and West Africa in general.

More tenuous has been women's positioning within civil society groups with mixed and heterogeneous constituencies and mandates over time. Most countries in West Africa do not track the dynamics and growth within the civil society sector. However, evidence from Ghana suggests an increasing, yet unequal representation of women in civil society generally, when the progression of women's leadership is tracked longitudinally and through sex-disaggregated data of the leadership in NGOs and CBOs captured in the table below.

Table 6: Distribution of NGOs and CBOs by Year of Registration and Sex of Head

Period of Registration	Number of NGOs/CBOs	Male		Female		Total
		Number	%	Number	%	
Before 1990	16	16	76.2	5	23.8	21
1991-1995	64	98	87.5	14	12.5	112
1996-2000	65	90	84.1	27	15.9	107
2001-2000	38	50	73.5	18	26.5	68
(Other)Year not stated	194	190	69.6	83	30.4	273
Total	377	444	75.1	147	24.9	591

Source: Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations in Development (GAPVOD)

As this table indicates, only 25 percent of the 377 NGOs and CBOs registered in Ghana, are headed by females. This trend is indicative of gender differentials in leadership within these organisations.

Clearly, the state of women's leadership in civil society varies nationally and regionally. A gender analysis and tracking of women's leadership is instructive and should be systematised to elicit claims of women's leadership based on their numerical visibility, vocality and constituency, and the actuality of their leadership within the sector. This would contribute towards intensifying and advocating equal representation and enhanced leadership roles in civil society, reaffirming demands for accountability to gender equality and equity.

- **New momentum in peacebuilding and post-conflict contexts**

As previously analysed in this report, while there is social, cultural and political heterogeneity across the West African sub-region, conflict and post conflict situations offer opportunities catalytic to women's and civil society engagement. Post conflict scenarios have seen the emergence of women's groups and networks that have increased women visibility and participation in peacebuilding initiatives and formal peace processes. As mentioned, networks such as FAS, WIPNET, MARWOPNET and WIPSEN-A have changed the landscape of peacebuilding in the sub-region and made women's participation in peacebuilding more recognised.

- **Challenges encountered**

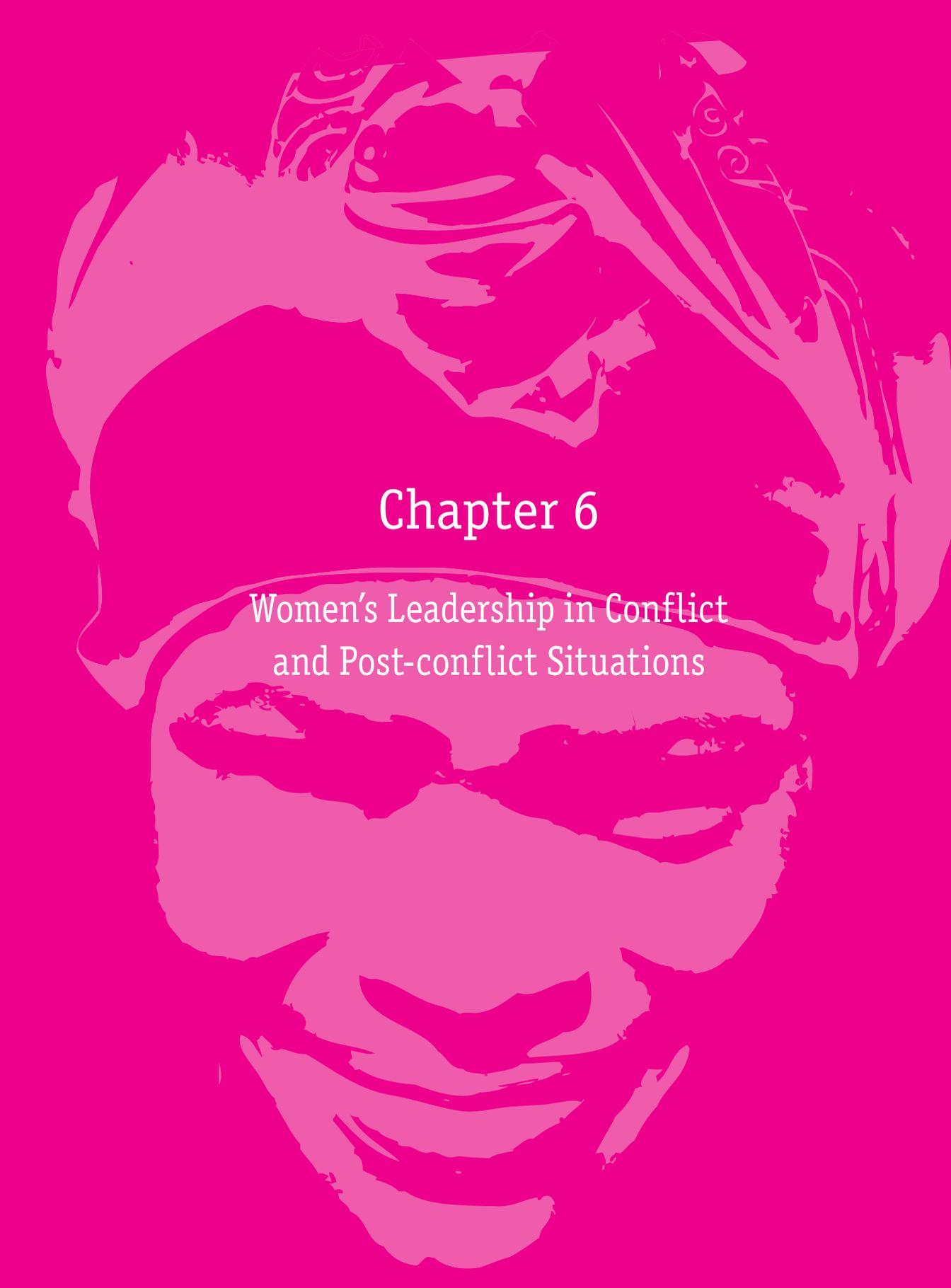
Structural, internal and external constraints impede women's leadership in civil society. Commonly identified impediments of women organisations within the civil society sector include:

1) Overlap and duplications of initiatives among women's groups in similar strategic areas of work. This overlap often introduces tensions among prospective collaborators and reduces the chances of maximising efforts to addresses issues of common interests in the society, 2) Improper foundational structure of most women's coalitions, which lack critical examination of the strength, capability and the comparative advantage of each of the components prior to the formation of the coalition 3) Polarisation between women in civil society and government. 4) Some organisation excludes themselves from collaborations and coalitions in order to avoid unhealthy competition for limited donor support.

Conclusion

Overall, civil society remains the fastest growing, less constricted, and more enabling sphere for women's leadership. Accounts from the respective country studies suggest women tend to dominate the leadership of women's organisations and feminist ideology is at the core of some women's activism within civil society. However, there are unequal representations in leadership in mixed, broad-based and non-gender specific civil society groups. Post-conflict situations often offer an enabling environment for broader social transformation. In these contexts, women have capitalised on the rebuilding processes to renegotiate leadership opportunities. The challenge continues to be how to maintain these gains and prevent a regression to pre-conflict marginalisation and discrimination of women.

Inadequate data on women's contributions to the formal private sector undermines the roles women play in the sector. However, limited available data points to the potential of the private sector as a promising area for women's leadership. Extensive research into the private sector as an emerging space for women's leadership is required to capture women's vibrancy in the economic sector.



Chapter 6

Women's Leadership in Conflict and Post-conflict Situations

Introduction

Chapter two provided a historical analysis of the changing status and leadership roles of West African women at different historical periods. This chapter examines the nexus between conflict and post conflict contexts and women's leadership, while expanding on the role of indigenous African organisations and governance structures in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding in the sub-region.

The West Africa sub-region was enmeshed in conflict for much of the 1990s, with intra- state violent conflicts occurring in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. These conflicts resulted in the deaths, injury and displacement of thousands of the sub-region's inhabitants and disrupted the socio-economic and political structures of the affected countries. The conflicts were also responsible for large-scale human rights abuses and gender-based violence. However, paradoxically, these conflicts also contributed to improving the visibility of women as they played key roles in peacebuilding. This chapter examines this paradox and analyses factors that create leadership opportunities in such contexts.

74 Studies reveal that during violent conflict situations, women play key positive and negative roles. On the positive side, women protect their children and communities and are credited with preserving family units. Conversely, women are also known to have played negative roles in brutal conflicts such as the roles they played in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire as combatants, emissaries, spies and spouses to perpetrators of violence. Women are also recorded as experiencing the worst forms of gender based violence during these conflicts such as rape, forced pregnancies, and mutilations. Conflicts across West Africa have provided documented evidence of the powerful agency women possess in rebuilding societies fragmented by wars. In contrast to these multiple roles women play at all stages of conflicts, the reality in the sub-region is that women have typically been excluded from formal peace processes.

6.0 Overview of Conflicts in the West African Context

As noted above, post-colonial West Africa has been mired by pervasive political instability and insecurity, particularly exacerbated during periods of military dictatorships and violent conflicts. In Côte d'Ivoire, once a bastion of peace and security, the armed conflict that broke out in 2002 had dire social and economic consequences on women and children, who represented 80 percent of refugees and internally displaced persons. The Ouagadougou Peace Accords, signed in March 2007, created the fragile conditions for the restoration of peace and stability.

Though Ghana has not experienced a civil war, its political history has been punctuated by five military coups in 1966, 1972, 1978, 1979 and 1981, followed by a period of brutal dictatorship. It was only after 1992 that the country became relatively stable and democratic. However, Ghana continues to experience localised and small-scale conflicts, predominantly in its northern regions.

Nigeria experienced a civil war in 1967 and the country's stability has been disrupted by military dictatorships resulting from coups d'état and counter-coups from 1966 to 1999, punctuated by flawed attempts at democratic rule. To date, Nigeria experiences intermittent ethnic and religious conflicts in which thousands of people are killed almost every year. The April 2007 election ushered a new era of successful, though seriously flawed, civilian transfer of power and transition to democracy.

Sénégal has experienced relative stability, though there has been a lingering 20-year civil unrest characterised by a secessionist movement in the southern Casamance sub-region.

The protracted civil wars experienced in the sub-region have highlighted the diverse impact of violent conflicts on women, but these conflicts have also amplified the potential of women as agents of change and peace.

- **Women's unequal role in peace negotiation and post conflict reconstruction**

While women are recognised as a good resource and praised for their effective mobilisation capacity in times of conflict and peace, the inclusion of women in peace negotiations is not systematic. In Côte d'Ivoire, a group of women under the umbrella, La Coalition des femmes leaders de Côte d'Ivoire "(CFELCI) attempted to attend the Accra peace talks of 2004 but were not admitted to the negotiation table." Only a limited number of women's organisations were permitted to participate in the peace process. This is not an isolated case; across West Africa specifically in Liberia and Sierra Leone, women's group gave different accounts of the deliberate exclusion of women in peace processes or their inclusion only as "observers". The limited roles played by women suggest that instruments that call for the equal participation of women in peace processes, for example, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, are not systematically adhered to as a guiding framework for women's inclusion in peacebuilding.

- **New momentum in peacebuilding and conflict-post contexts**

As discussed in Chapter 3, in West Africa, the scope of engagement of civil society in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives varies, but on the whole, with few exceptions, are generally inadequate. This has impeded women's rise to leadership in such shifting contexts.

In Côte d'Ivoire, except for pro-government groups, Cadre de concertation permanent des femmes (CCPF) and Coordination des femmes patriotes de Côte d'Ivoire (CFPCI), most civil society organisations were not included in the peace negotiations and the mediation. The role of women's organisations was limited to humanitarian assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the provision of basic necessities.

Accounts from Liberia and Sierra Leone reveal that women have used strategies to include themselves in peace processes that were designed to exclude them. In both instances, women did not accept their overt exclusion or underrepresentation at peace talks as final. Advocacy initiatives

influenced the outcomes of the talks and their implementation. These experiences exemplify the ability of women to lead in peace processes by instituting parallel platforms that influence the deliberations of processes that exclude them.

- **Low-level participation of women's indigenous governance structures and organisations in peace initiatives**

Historically, West African women have been engaged in war, peace negotiations and post-conflict initiatives at various levels. The levels of involvement of women in peace initiatives suggest continuities and discontinuities. Accounts from Nigeria indicate the strategic inputs of female members of the Federation of Ogoni Women's Association (FOWA) and the utilisation of indigenous resistance and war tactics provided to male members of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) during the Ogoni crisis of 1994-1999.

In Ghana, women are credited with the launch of parallel semi-formal structures and community-based associations such as "Women for Peace" initiative of Bawku women and other faith-based groups to contribute to peacebuilding initiatives. Such initiatives intersect with umbrella organisations' engagements such as ABANTU, The Women's Manifesto Coalition (WMC), and The Foundation for Security and Development (FOSDA), committed to the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and its network, and the West Africa Network on Small Arms (WANSA).

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There is also evidence across the sub-region of indigenous women's initiatives that mediate in conflict situations. Examples of such initiatives can be found in Sénégal, with the strategic role played by the "Preresses de Casamance" in peacebuilding. Regrouped under an umbrella organisation Kabonketoor: ("to forgive oneself" in Jola) led by Marguerite Coly Kény, the organisation is constituted by priestesses from the Casamance who invoke and practice sacred peacebuilding rituals in conformity with their historical legacy and local practices. Such practices resonate with the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in Ghana, where the Queen Mothers of the Akan group have played an important role in resolving local or regional conflicts, and suggest historical continuity.

The potential contributions of involving indigenous women's peacebuilding initiatives are not harnessed in contemporary conflicts for a number of reasons, including institutional limitations to foster the active participation of traditional organisations. Moreover, the urban/rural schism in policymaking and peace negotiation platforms appears to be an impediment to the active engagement of indigenous groups. Compounding these predicaments, are the pervasive negative stereotypes of the identity of women mediums that preclude them from playing decisive roles in peacebuilding, reconciliation, and social healing.

- **Disempowerment in peace negotiation as impetus for collective organising and collective political efficacy**

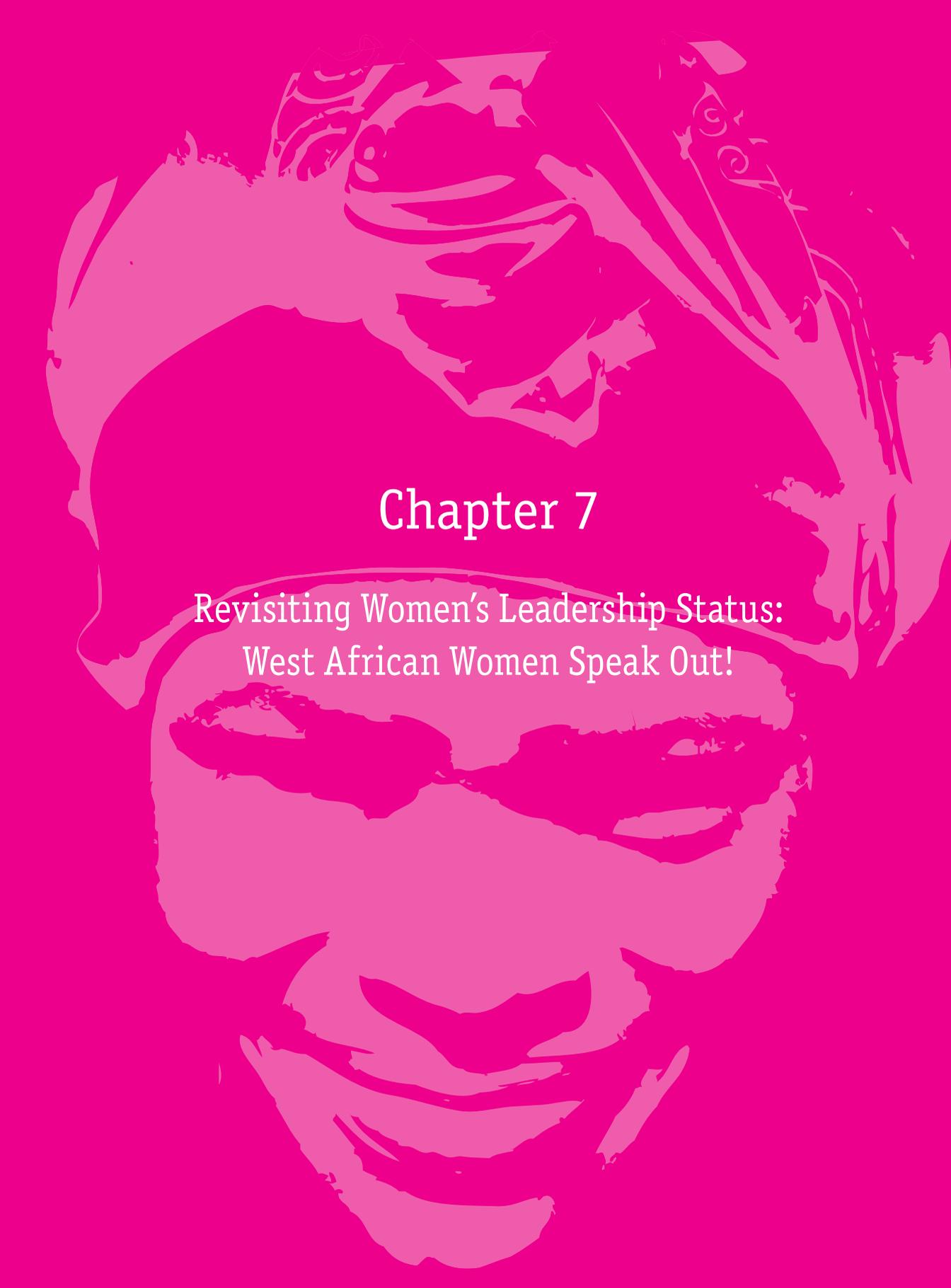
The multifaceted and gendered roles women play in conflict and post conflict contexts suggest both entrapment in traditional gender roles and new openings, opportunities, and spaces for women's leadership development. The general trend noted in the study suggests a gendered and uneven representation of women in peace talks and peacebuilding initiatives. This is symptomatic of entrenched gender hierarchies that remain resilient in crisis and post-crisis periods. However, cases such as Sierra Leone, where women were excluded from formal negotiation processes, but created their own platforms to contribute to peacebuilding and post war reconstruction suggest the potential for collective empowerment and women's political efficacy arising from conditions of disempowerment.

Despite unfavourable conditions, West African women have shown leadership in the peace and security sector through vibrant and often informal networks such as the MARWOPNET, WIPNET, WIPSEN-A, and Femmes Afriques Solidarite (FAS). Using the framework of the UN Resolution 1325, which supports women's active engagement in peacebuilding initiatives, such networks recorded significant achievements in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sénégal, and Guinea. This active participation in peacebuilding was supported by traditional structures and civil society, rather than formal security structures where masculine conceptions of security and peace prevail, and where women are exposed to discriminatory practices.

Conclusion

The post conflict environment in West Africa has been marked by unequal representation of women in peacebuilding initiatives. It has reaffirmed, however, the effectiveness of women's networks and outreach in building peace, and the rise of women's collective leadership and political efficacy. This environment also provides an impetus for women's transformative leadership development in situations where new structures and spaces for engagement open up.

Furthermore, women's indigenous mediation strategies and practices remain relevant and strategic in current post-conflict and transition contexts. Nevertheless, there are core challenges which affect women's collective mobilisations for peacebuilding. These challenges include: access to funds; weak civil society capacity; the perception of security and formal peacemaking as the vocation of men; and, continued resistance to women's involvement in peacebuilding.



Chapter 7

Revisiting Women's Leadership Status:
West African Women Speak Out!

Introduction

Leadership as a concept and process does not lend itself to a single definition. It is ubiquitous. Departing from normative definitions of leadership, this study interrogated women's conception and lived experiences of leadership. The study sought to answer the following questions: what does leadership and women's leadership in particular, mean for women in leadership positions? What are women leaders' lived experiences of leadership? What are the challenges women face in their quest for leadership? What lies ahead in defining new momentum at this historical juncture? Accounting for women's multiple voices was paramount in this study to elicit wide ranging views of women leadership. This chapter captures and conveys individual accounts and the voices of women leaders.

7.0 Defining Leadership: Convergences and Definitional Complexities

The women interviewed in this study defined leadership from contextual and experiential viewpoints. Respondents included leaders in government and civil society interviewed in Nigeria, Sénégal, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and other West African countries. A dominant definition of leadership emerges from their nuanced definitions of the concept. Findings from women across sectors and cross-nationally are captured in the tables below.

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Women in Civil Society Organisations	65% of the women in civil society defined leadership as the "ability to influence people positively"
	30% defined leadership as the "ability to take responsibilities and to be accountable"
	5% defined leadership as the "an act of managing people and resources"
Women in Government	50% defined leadership as the "ability to get thing done while using others"
	30% defined leadership as the "position to lead and delegate duties while others listen and follows instruction given"
	20% defined leadership as the "mentoring, overcoming challenges, taking responsibilities"
General civil Society (mostly men)	50% defined leadership as the "directing people, coordinating people, taking decision, mobilising people and resources."
	20% defined leadership as the "act of making people do things against their will"
	20% defined leadership as the "ability to manage people for a positive goal"
	10% "as an act of serving others under you"

Nuanced differences appear in specific countries. For instance, in Sénégal, dominant definitions equate leadership with the following:

- "Leadership presupposes a set of mutually-reinforcing characteristics and attributes

including foresight, judgment, decision-making and commitment to a cause, a community or country.”

- “At the individual level, leadership is first and foremost intellectual before being political.”
- “Leadership is not self-proclamation, but it entails “being recognised as a leader.”
- “Leadership status is acquired and earned rather than being ascribed and given.”

The personal attributes and characteristics of the leader seem to matter. A leader is supposed to “display specific personal attributes including the ability to advise, guide, communicate, and motivate groups in order to achieve specific collective goals”. The defining characteristics outlined also entails “the capacity to mobilise constituencies,” exhibit “specific managerial capacities”, “display capacities to make strategic decisions and solve problems,” “communicate and share a vision with others,” and galvanise “committed action to serve a common good.”

The dualistic notion that “leaders are born not made,” suggesting an innate nature of leadership versus the acquired notion of leadership, was noted by some women interviewed in interesting ways. They suggest that individual traits matter, but life circumstances can drive a commitment to act on behalf of a group or cause.

In Nigeria, the transformative potential of effective leadership was stressed as desirable. This is manifest when leadership is defined as:

- The ability to get things done while carrying others along.
- The ability to take responsibility at all times in one’s area of jurisdiction or space. This involves confronting challenges, leading by example, mentoring those lower than you in any area of competence, accepting mistakes, listening to concerns, considering other peoples’ opinions; recognising, respecting and accepting people for who they are and providing solutions to their needs.

Generally, women leaders suggest, “If you have all the competence, but no humility, you will not be a good leader.” This comprehension derives from these women’s own reliance on cultural cues and traditional wisdom, which act as guiding principles of their activism. They pay tribute to “foremothers”; the elders who have paved the way for their emergence as leaders. Women with extensive experiences in the associative movement and early feminists movement are cited as invaluable assets and repository of knowledge for younger women.

The findings indicate the following interrelated characteristics of leadership; 1) providing direction and managing resources; 2) influencing others for the common good, and 3) setting a vision. Generally, the desire to change the status quo, in addition to negative experiences of injustice and social exclusion, motivate and compel these women, who typically did not have ambitions of leadership.

A call to overcome the pyramidal structure of leadership was invoked by respondents. The critical importance of overcoming the rural /urban divide and reaching out to women located in rural

areas as valuable sources of information was highlighted. As one of our interviewees stated, "It is critical to stay connected to the grassroots, understand rural women and poor women's predicaments to maintain this essential linkage and speak in one voice."

7.1 Ideologies and Values Underpinning Women's Leadership

The research revealed that leadership does not arise in an ideological or political vacuum. The accounts of women interviewed suggest the convergence of political ideologies with individual values

In Sénégal for instance, more than 90 percent of women interviewed recognised convergent ideologies that linked their personal trajectory to a specific philosophy. A sense of altruism and earnest commitment to social change are fundamental values underlying their actions and sacrifices. Ideologies and virtues guiding their actions and engagement include a commitment:

"to serve others and not be self-serving"

"to be a militant for women's rights and the pursuit of social justice"

"to fight against injustices. it is an unflappable commitment that defies all obstacles."

While in Nigeria, it was argued that to be effective as leaders, in addition to hard work, women leaders have to possess a strong sense of self-belief, informed by faith, firmness and fairness (Justice Aloma Mukhtar).

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For Jane C. Ogbona, "hard work and commitment are core values" as they have been a source of strength in the risky terrain of banking. Oluremi Tinubu the wife of the former Governor of Lagos State in the South West of the country, provided leadership for the wives of the functionaries in the government, and also founded the New Era foundation, a platform that empowers women and girls through socioeconomic programmes, states "a leader must not only have vision, she must be passionate about that vision".

Overall, in Nigeria, 60 percent described their ideology to be "equality for all"; 20 percent a proclamation of feminism and women's rights"; 10 percent refer to organisational and developmental growth"; 5 percent to "service to humanity"; and 5 percent "to honesty, integrity and accountability".

The values and ideologies advanced across West Africa imply an altruistic commitment and engagement, stewardship and devotion to others and to a larger cause, a community or country. They differ from literature on managerial leadership that highlights transactional leadership.

7.2 Meanings and Embodiment of Feminist Leadership

The study found hesitancy by most women to locate their basis for leadership within the feminist ideology. Labelling of women as feminists is contested, as many women are reluctant to embrace the label.

In Nigeria, 96 percent of the total respondents claim a feminist label, while 3 percent claim they are not. 1 percent was neutral in their position. Specifically, 68 percent understood feminism to mean “being passionate about, and finding solutions to the affairs of women”. For 21 percent of the respondents, it means “incorporating women in all decision making and implementation process”. While 10 percent refer to feminism as “encouraging and empowering women of all ages for leadership position,” 9 percent say feminism means “advocating against all forms of discrimination, violence and societal prejudices confronting and limiting women’s advancement.”

For a self-confessed feminist:

“I think it is because I am very concerned about the women having the potential and the same ability to participate in the society, to the extent of their natural gifts. I happen to be a very blessed person in that I had seven distinctions in school certificate. I was the first Nigerian to get a first class degree in English from the University of London; I was the first Nigerian woman to teach in the department of English of the University of Ibadan. Therefore, I have this feeling that the world should be open; other women should have the chance.” (Omolara Ogundipe).

In contrast, in Sénégal and Côte d’Ivoire, a large number of the women interviewed contended that “if being a feminist is defending women’s cause and agenda” then “they are feminists.” One leading academic and activist for woman’s rights vehemently claims “being a feminist” further stating that “feminism is humanism.” For her, “feminism is the act of fighting gender inequality.” For another leading figure of the women’s movement, “[her] highest motivation is to be a militant of women’s rights. I am convinced that women should have credible entities they can look up to in order to defend women’s rights.”

A significant number of women who participated in this study question the meaning of “being feminist”, and the “feminist label”, arguing that “the feminist ideology worked well during specific times, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s.” Some women specify that they are “not feminists, but activists.” The concept of feminism is found to “be too restrictive, exclusive and sometimes antagonistic.” It carries negative stereotypes “that do not serve women in working with men as partners in democracy, governance and development”.

Some women appear to increasingly incorporate men in their cause, in their organisations, and they recognise the contribution of supportive men as allies in advancing their political or economic agendas. The increasing heterogeneity in women’s organisations, including economic interest groups, non-profit and community-based organisations, hinges on emergent patterns that defies the traditional gender-based separation and homogeneity of the women’s movement. The question whether women’s organisations should be open and inclusive of men is at the fore of the unsettled debate among many women activists.

Cross-nationally, the study reveals shared core values among women interviewed including:

“advancing women’s interests, championing the cause of women, and contributing to African women’s emancipation.” These values are based on “the belief that one woman’s problem anywhere is every woman’s problem everywhere,” solidarity to other less privileged, and marginalised group; a passion to contribute to change for the next generation; and the duty to serve and make a social contribution”.

The study noted that women who do not embrace the notion of “being a feminist,” however have core ideals and values underpinning their activism that resonate with feminists. Therefore self-labelling does not necessarily hinder pursuing shared interests. Rather, it reflects the heterogeneity of women’s positions and the existence of parallel discourses that converge in their aspirations to engender change, from feminist, militant, and gender perspectives.

The testimonies in this study suggest that the concept of “feminism” needs to be properly reappraised and situated within the local realities to account for its dynamic interpretive dimensions. Besides, some respondents argue that sources of activism extend to the family unit, including their husbands. Others argue that the struggle for social justice and gender equality is not limited to women’s intrinsic needs and vulnerabilities. It encompasses outreach to other vulnerable groups including the totality of asymmetries that impact women’s welfare. This points to the intersectionality of gender with social markers such as caste, geographical location, socio-economic background, and disability.

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Evidently in West Africa, “feminism” appears to be value-laden concept that women activists question, appropriate, identify with, and impart meanings to, based on the perceptions and the significance attached to their activism. It bears relevance to many women leaders and appeals to a large number of women in this study.

7.3 Motivations for Women’s Social and Political Engagement: “The Personal is Political” and Collective!

Women interviewed cite multiple sources and rationalisations, for their motivations to become leaders. They range from personal experiences and trajectories, to a sense of justice to right discriminations against women, particularly those unable to voice their aspirations and needs.

For the Sénégalaise women interviewed in this study, the constant sources of inspiration and role models are mothers and heroic historic figures. Such historic figures include Aline Siteo Diatta; and the founding members of women’s movements in Sénégal such as “Tata” Annette Mbaye D’Erneville who founded the Association pour le Bien Etre Familial (Asbef), the orphaned and underprivileged children’s home “Village d’Enfants S.O.S.”, and the Women’s Museum on Gorée Island “Musée de la Femme Henriette Bathily”. Other figures include Khoudia Mbaye; Maimouna Kane, late Lena Fall Diagne, Mariane Souaye, Coumba Mbaye, Adja Arame Diene, Caroline Diop, Adjia Dior Diop and Awa Gueye Frass.

Similarly, Nigerian respondents also recall inspirational leaders in the country's history that advocated for women's rights at a time when it was uncommon and unpopular to do so. Examples of such women include Margaret Ekpo and Funmilayo Ransome Kuti who remain central historic figures in the women's movement.

Aside from recognised national figures, across the region, mothers are cited as powerful role models and the sources of inspiration. This suggests the importance of a multi-generational approach to leadership development and the subsequent commitment many women leaders invoke "to make things better for the next generation", ensuring that the sacrifices of previous generations are not in vain. These personal experiences of women act as powerful magnets and a source of motivation for younger women in their activism.

Some references point to regional figures and political leaders such as President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as a potent symbol of the possibilities for women's leadership. The axiomatic pertinence of the assertion that "the personal is political" holds true for many women leaders cross-nationally. These women invoke their personal life stories and journeys; the influence of mothers; social exclusion; poverty; early marriage; and diverse forms of marginalisation by society, as constituting the underpinning of their activism and aspirations for leadership.

Similarities are evident in other countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria where women locate their engagement within a historical continuity and contemporary structural, material and socio-economic contextual challenges and dissatisfaction with the slow pace of change in gender equality. Despite significant improvements in women's status, social exclusion, persistent gender-based inequalities in political participation, limited access to economic resources and productive assets continue to hamper women's productive potential and agency.

7.4 Women's Leadership Progression and Contributions to Change

There is a paucity of rigorous and quantifiable measures to track and assess the qualitative and quantitative contributions of women leaders in West Africa since independence. Women's positions and leadership status have evolved significantly from the historical accounts of emblematic figures and heroic leaders such as Aline Sitoe Diatta; Ndatte Yalla, Queen of Wallo and their struggle against French colonial occupation. More contemporaneous figures exist; however their contributions are not well documented or periodically tracked.

As analysed in Chapter Four, in Sénégal, there has been a remarkable change from only one female representative in 1963, to twenty three in 2005. This is attributed to greater mobilisation and activism of women and the push for domestication of gender equality instruments and mandates.

Key women's organisations served as catalysts for the women's movements in their formative years; however, a significant number of these groups no longer exist. Notable in Sénégal are women's organisations such as The Federation des Association Feminines du Sénégal (FAFS); the

Reseau Siggil Jigeen Conseil des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales d'Appui au Développement (CONGAD); and the Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes (COSEF). Main achievements in the area include changing the family code, inspiring legal and constitutional changes, gaining greater visibility and representation in decision making.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the discernable change manifests in the emergence of women's Community Based Organisations (CBOs), NGOs and cooperatives at the grassroots level. This seems to have created a new category of women whose leadership is acknowledged by rural communities as they are vested with decision-making powers on community affairs.

Similarly, in Nigeria, 90 percent of interviewees mentioned noteworthy changes in this regard since the onset of democratic dispensation. These include increased involvement of women in governance through affirmative action and women's improved interest in politics. Assessing the progress made by women in Nigeria, Justice Aloma Mukhtar, the first female Supreme Court Justice, observed that women in Nigeria have moved significantly from the home front to having professions in male dominated areas such as corporate boardrooms.

Analogous accounts emerge in Sénégal, where prominent women leaders interviewed such as Prof. Penda Mbow, scholar and activist, Honorable Khady Fall Tall, Mme Aminata MBengue Ndiaye, to name a few, applaud women's achievements, but warned against complacency. Stating that women across West Africa should be vigilant to ensure that gains are not lost.

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Overall, tangible changes embodied in gender policies appear easier to capture. Much less evident and quantifiable are structural and behavioural changes, inter-generational social change, and broader social transformations that pave the way for qualitative gender equality outcomes. Aforementioned testimonies attest to the progress made and the remaining challenges. The general findings range from celebration of women's achievements to demands for renewed and earnest commitments to women's leadership development.

7.5 Gendered Analysis and Perceptions of the Status of Women's Leadership

While the contributions of women leaders can be tracked, the perceptions of women leaders appear more subjective. These perceptions are largely gendered and point to differentiated views on the rise of women's leadership.

Accounts from Côte d'Ivoire suggest that there is a general perception of: 1) the emergence of qualified and competent women leaders in all sectors, though the percentage in government continues to be low; and 2) a recognition that women are motivated by an urgency to improve the plight of women in post conflict Côte d'Ivoire. However, some respondents noted a tendency among some women leaders to be individualistic in their leadership, focusing mainly on personal ambition and advancement over representing the needs of the broader community.

Similarly, data from Nigeria suggests that in spite of positive accounts of women's contributions within leadership spaces, the poor track record of some women in political leadership poses a challenge to aspiring women leaders who tend to be judged by the performance of previous women. Respondents assert that given the tendencies of society to generalise women's successes and failures, women in leadership should be conscious of the legacies and examples they leave behind.

However, women in Nigeria rise above victimisation to affirm agency and resilience, against many odds. Gesiere Brisibe-Dorgu Kemsese, one of the two women to seek election as Governors of their states, reported to have disregarded intimidating male presence to contest for the governorship of Bayelsa State.

Clearly, the rise in women's leadership is positively transforming the societal perceptions of women in West Africa. Women interviewed across sectors in academia, government, civil society and private sector agree on and highlight, the remarkable contributions and added bonus that is derived from greater visibility, active engagement and positive stance of women leaders. They caution, however, against a cult of personality, self-interest, self-aggrandisement, venality, and fierce competition to stay in the limelight that alienates and subverts their capacity to change the status quo, and their commitment to serve a broader constituency and cause.

Male civil society actors in West Africa acknowledge:

- Women's positive contributions to national development as "they remain engaged and committed on issues until there are results";
- "The recognition of women in leadership is a work in progress, as women are still struggling with constraints imposed by traditions and cultures."

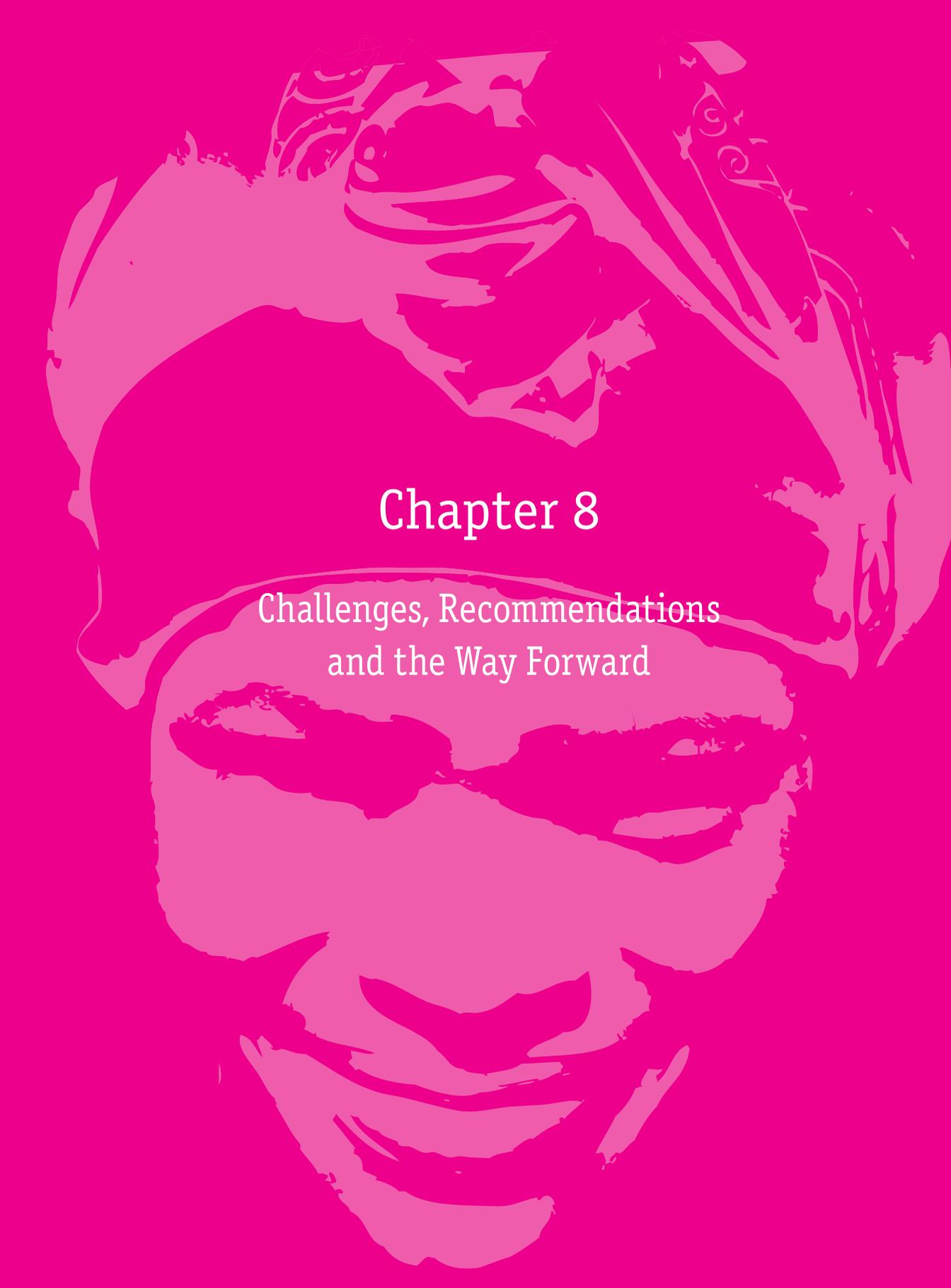
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Conclusion

The general trend and findings in the countries under review show an appreciation of the positive contributions women in leadership we have made to national development, governance, and democratisation processes in West Africa. However, some ambivalence and scepticism about the symbolism of women's leadership still linger.

Considering the diversity of women leaders and their heterogeneous profiles and trajectories, there is a candid recognition of negative cases that warrant caution in equating all women leaders to positive role models and positive influences. Backlash against women leadership is a reality that arises from intrinsic and extrinsic rationalisations and "negative cases."

Gender biases and discomfort with women's rise to leadership remain. Society and the court of public opinion generally put women leaders under scrutiny and "do not offer women second chances to redeem themselves." While some men applaud and support women's leadership aspirations and struggles, negative stereotypes against women in politics are pervasive. These are obstacles to contend with as more women continue to demand recognised roles in leadership and decision making.



Chapter 8

Challenges, Recommendations
and the Way Forward

Introduction

Though the root causes of gender differentials in leadership are well documented, the question remains: Why are women's demands for fair representation in leadership positions in all governance and democratisation processes, endorsed by international, regional and national instruments, still unmet?

The evidence points to interrelated loci and sites of power and disempowerment that subjugate West African women's claims and entitlements to leadership. Accounts emerging from the study converge towards four intersecting areas of concern: 1) structural impediments attributed to patriarchal ethos and entrenched gender biases that impede women's qualitative and quantitative representation in governance processes; 2) institutional barriers and failures to systemise, domesticate and enforce gender equity instruments; 3) contextual challenges, such as, regime change, violent conflict, and the reconfiguration of political power; and 4) internal challenges within women's movements and networks, such as unhealthy competition, lack of mentorship, weak human and financial resource capacities, and inability to influence policy development.

West African countries are part of the global reality of governance and democracy deficit affecting women's ascension to leadership positions. They bring salience, however, to contextual specificities and challenges, paving the way to context-specific responses to the perennial problem of women's leadership gap in governance and democratisation processes.

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8.0 Old Issues and New Challenges: Structural Constraints to Women's Leadership Development

Across the four countries under study, the enduring questions of unequal representation and institutionalised gender biases in leadership appear as impediments to women's access to leadership positions in government, public administration and the private sector. None of the countries has achieved the targeted 30 percent legislative representation benchmark. In Côte d'Ivoire moreover, in spite of the government's promises to mainstream gender into state structures, women's representation in decision making processes is reported to be based on "tokenism".

Compounding the intersecting challenges outlined above are, markers of differentiation like class that transcend gender. This is especially true when constitutional provisions in some countries, Ghana for instance, prescribe levels of education too high for the majority of women to attain. This disregards structural conditions of gender biases, differential educational attainment and outcomes, which tend to "favour urban elite", and "drive only well educated women into leadership positions. This induces a regional divide in representation that ensues from an indirect and tacit exclusion of rural women in modern governance and democratisation structures.

Similarly, except for Sénégal, the conditions of women leaders with disability preclude cogent discussions, as the fact that they occupy visible positions renders their handicap invisible. Lack of institutional accommodation stemming from "architectural biases", as well as social stigmatisation; curtail their opportunities to access leadership positions.

8.1 Mapping Challenges to Women's Leadership Deficit: Gendered and Multi-stakeholder Perspectives

A mapping of the challenges confronting women within government and civil society structures was conducted to ground and contextualise factors that constrain women's leadership potential. Results of the survey suggest convergences and differences in perceptions of such challenges, which highlight the complexity in searching for solutions. 80 percent of respondents within the civil society sector suggest "lack of financial resources" as the core challenge for women in civil society. 10 percent refer to a general lack of commitment by actors within the sector to promoting women's leadership. 10 percent underscored "inadequate training; opportunities for education; and refusal by men to be headed by women as other challenge." In the view of male actors in civil society, 63 percent refer to "scarcity of funds and unrealistic timeframes for the completion of tasks (in light of women's additional responsibilities outside the workplace) as major challenges" confronting women in general civil society. Other results indicated the following: 15 percent cited "bureaucracy" as a challenge, 20 percent cited "low morale of subordinates" as a challenge and 2 percent cited no challenge.

In contrast, respondents working in leadership positions within government agencies and institutions overwhelmingly underscore the "bureaucracy" and "job workload" as core challenges. They also state that the constant awareness of male dominance in government hierarchies discourages women from aspiring for senior positions.

Except for the 2 percent of male respondents in civil society who stated that there were no challenges hindering women's rise to leadership, convergences emerge regarding the lack of funding, capacity, and voice. Furthermore, there is agreement on institutional failures to uphold gender equality commitments and favourable spaces within bureaucratic structures, and political landscape for the emergence and consolidation of women's leadership.

Women's solidarity and importance of enhancing collaboration between women in civil society and women in governments; and, the need to establish linkages with men emerged as critical areas where action is needed. Further accounts emerging from the empirical cases highlight similarities in women's experiences in the different countries, as well as, country specific challenges, which are analysed below.

- **Masculinist discourses and the fables of "dirty politics" as disincentive for women's engagement.**

Evidence gathered across West Africa suggests that women's negative perception of politics serve as a deterrent to their participation in political processes. In Sénégal, Ghana and Nigeria, women described the patriarchal and masculinist frameworks and approaches of political parties and other political processes as oppressive and repulsive. Key crosscutting findings point to the absence of non-manipulative political party or state support structures that promote transformative and inclusive politics. If instituted, the presence of such structures can effectively and radically broaden

the space for women's leadership, entice women and increase participation in governance processes. Civil society actors through a number of women's organisations, including a number of feminist networks are emerging as strong catalysts for changing women's perceptions of politics and the wider political landscape.

- **Negative images of women in politics, unfriendly public perception of ambitious women referred to as “cultural deviants”**

The rhetoric of political campaigns and “negative stereotypes” that frame aspiring female candidates, demoralise and delegitimise women's claims to leadership. This trend induces apathy, disengagement and a “pseudo-disciplining” of women for having leadership aspirations. Experiences of women in the countries studied highlight that these negative depictions are strong deterrents for women's entry into politics. A respondent in Nigeria stated “the hard work carried out by women in leadership positions is not recognised. People believe that for a woman to get to the top, she must have either slept her way through, or there is a godfather somewhere propelling her forward. This can be depressing for an aspiring leader.” Additionally, questions about aspiring female politicians' marital status and sexuality make most women fearful of such scrutiny, thereby avoiding the political realm completely.

These accounts provide credence to the assertion of the resilience of patriarchal ideology and general resistance to female political leadership, as “the potential of women in leadership is neither fully accepted nor encouraged.” Also, residual manifestations of masculinist embodiment of leadership in the postcolonial state formations hinge on “exaggerated expectations on women leaders to perform and achieve the impossible even with zero or minimum support or adequate resources”, as argued by women in Sénégal, reinforced by similar accounts in Nigeria, and the survey responses across West Africa.

The aforementioned impediments make evident the contentious nature of engendering leadership, and the attempts at transforming entrenched structures of power manifest in state bureaucracy, politics and public opinion.

8.2 Institutional Barriers, Political Will and Accountability

Apart from the civil society sector, where qualitative representation of women and actual leadership is emergent, women continue to be inadequately represented at all levels of government. Experiences of other countries such as Rwanda and Liberia have shown that in the absence of affirmative action policies, designed, enforced, and systemised as deliberate government policies, women's participation in governance processes, will not be achieved.

Respondents stress the importance of international instruments such as CEDAW, the Beijing Platform of Action (1995), the MDGs (2000) and the landmark national and African agendas such as the Protocol on Rights of Women in Africa (2003), The Maputo Declaration, and the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality (2004) in reaffirming the centrality of gender equality to African

development. Despite the promises and discourses, lack of enforcement and domestication of these instruments in promoting gender equality, raise perennial questions of political will and structural barriers to change. The absence of political will to uphold binding international commitments and translate them into practice continues to be the basis for collective action among women's groups nationally and regionally. This activism has started to yield results as countries such as Ghana are making conscious efforts towards including women in political decision making.

The challenge therefore, is how to build systematic policies in West Africa, considering the contentious question of political will and political instrumentation of "gender equality agenda" as noted in Sénégal, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria.

- **Risks of manipulation of quota systems**

Evidence suggests that quota systems and affirmative action policies are necessary measures for stimulating women's advancement into decision making. However, the goals of these policies will be elusive if effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are not instituted to safeguard meaningful representation. Measures should also be taken to prevent political parties from manipulating quotas to increase their numerical representation in parliament, thus subverting their initial intent. Furthermore, as women emerge as leaders through quota systems, they should be supported within these historically male dominated leadership spaces to ensure that their potentials are not stifled. Findings from the study highlight that women's representation in leadership, should not be viewed solely through the prism of numbers. Quotas systems should form part of an overall strategy of addressing structural and practical barriers that hinder women's elevation to decision making status.

A shared and related concern that was underscored, relates to the lack of mechanisms to achieve quality representation and avoid being trapped in perennial second roles. According to a respondent, "prestige appointments without power or resources to achieve substantive changes" undermines women in leadership positions.

Furthermore, respondents describe the ways in which women are objectified by political leaders and co-opted in political parties, and used mainly to sensitise and mobilise communities and "support political contests rather than their own agenda" as insidious. As noted in Ghana, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Sénégal, this trend reveals the competing interests and invisible power contests that jeopardise women's agency and autonomy. They resonate with Mama's (1999) cautioning of the risk of "femocracy".

Linked to these challenges is the tendency of some governments to "give appointments to women as deputies of male leaders", though such appointments are valid in some cases, overall, they suggest an institutionalised relegation of women in "feminised" secondary positions likely to reduce their potential in bringing about transformative changes. The practice also legitimises the stereotypical image of the male as 'leader' or 'head'. Overall, the aforementioned challenges render more salient

women's limited and constricted bargaining power in defining and negotiating the terms of engagement, ascension to leadership positions, and consolidating hard-earned gains in governance and democratisation processes.

- **Are electoral processes inherently gender-biased and/ or gender blind?**

Women leaders have to contend with an inherent bias, embedded and codified in legal instruments, especially when constitutional provisions, as in the case of Ghana, prescribe levels of education, beyond the attainment of most women in the country. While this prescription may serve as incentives for educational achievement, it is nonetheless restrictive and exclusionary.

Discriminatory practices enshrined in electoral processes, such as the high cost of electoral registration, preclude women from vying for elected positions. Women across the region have limited access to funding and resource mobilisation to meet registration requirements. Also, the high transaction costs of elections, haphazard changes in voter registration and card issuance, are identified as impediments and deterrents to potential female candidates.

8.3 Contextual Challenges

Regime change, violent conflicts, and the reconfiguration of political power with its corollary of policy changes, government and ministerial post reshuffling, emerge as limiting factors to the consolidation of gains and linear progression of women leaders in governments and civil society. The plight of women leaders in civil society when “co-opted in national government in the name of inclusive governance”, then “dismissed to make room for party hardliners”, thus erodes momentum and the credibility of such women within civil society.

Changes in government regimes, noted in post colonial West Africa and ad hoc government reshuffling in countries such as Sénégal have resulted in eroding the gains women have made in some sectors. For example, in situations where women appointed to ministerial positions are unseated due to their limited powerbase. There is also the trend in Sénégal called “the massive exit of Fatous”, which describes the removal of women from key posts under the guise of government downsizing.

Though each country has its own specificities, there are common trends affecting women's leadership. These include women's multiple gendered roles and responsibilities; high illiteracy among women; cultural beliefs that discriminate against women; contemporary challenges of career women attempting to balance attaining a lucrative career and motherhood; and, violence against women.

Lastly, post-crisis situations represent a propitious context for the emergence of women's leadership, as has been the case of Liberia, South Africa and Rwanda. However, such opportunities have to be harnessed to materialise. The situation in Côte d'Ivoire is an example, where the representation of women in local governance, parliament and government stagnated and decreased over time in the post conflict era stresses this point.

8.4 Behavioural Challenges

While there is general acceptance on the importance of women's networking and collaborations, the documented internal problems facing women's collaborations such as unhealthy competition, lack of mentorship and "pull her down" syndrome, challenges the notions of "feminist solidarity" and "sisterhood." Respondents in the study stressed that solidarity is at the centre of women's activism and should be preserved, as fragmented activism will impede women's long term progress in leadership. This solidarity has to address critical issues of intergenerational transfer of power, and transparency in leadership succession patterns and cross national support to women's groups working across the sub-region. Furthermore, it is important to note that women in leadership are not a homogenous group nor do they all necessarily share the values of solidarity and sisterhood, therefore, it should be viewed as an anomaly to encounter women who do not represent the ideals of women's movements.

In post-conflict and transitional contexts such as Côte d'Ivoire, limited opportunities for women in all sectors, and political manipulation appear to weaken women's networks. Thus, limiting avenues for collective representation in post conflict decision-making. Furthermore, the internal structures of women's organisations and the constant struggle to access limited resources and gain visibility on the national and international stage, affects collaborations. One respondent in Côte d'Ivoire expressed "scepticism regarding the performance of women in leadership positions, the values that motivate their engagement and the conflict between personal interest and collective empowerment".

Evidence from the countries studies suggests that assumptions of masculinist and militarist leadership style embraced by some women leaders appear to "alienate" their broad constituency, and compromise the transformative potential of women leaders. Some respondents claim that "they did not believe in this gender business" stating that it is being used by opportunistic women to gain visibility. More problematic is the physical and cognitive disconnect between women leaders and their broad based constituencies when they "join the rank of the elite and cluster themselves in high security villas, unreachable by commoners". Hence, the challenge from these accounts becomes how to inspire credibility among women in the broader society of the importance of women's leadership; clarify any shared values underpinning women's leadership aspirations; establish multigenerational links and dialogue; and, mentor young and aspiring women leaders. Generally lacking, but needed, is continued momentum to strengthen women leaders' abilities to recognise and seize existing political opportunities; coordinate efforts in order to pressurise these structures into accepting women's agendas. In light of the current economic crisis, donor fatigue and dwindling resources, developing creative and cost effective strategies to push women's leadership forward is imperative for women leaders across sectors. The effort of indigenous grant making bodies such as the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) which supports women's activism; dialogue and capacity building is laudable but as women's agency grows, other sources of funding dedicated to African women need to be explored.

These aforementioned challenges make it urgent for women to engage men and indigenous structures around dialogical platforms to debunk constructed fables and myths of the social threats that women's rise to leadership pose.

8.5 Recommendations and Way Forward

One of the methodological strategies underpinning the study emphasises a participatory engagement with women leaders across sectors. This provided opportunities for their own framing of substantive issues that impinge upon women's leadership development. In response to the assertion that the impediments to women's leadership development are structural, contextual and behavioural, and to the challenges aforementioned, respondents in the study formulated recommendations to improve women's leadership status. These recommendations revolve around five intersecting thematic categories that converge cross-nationally: 1) Capacity building for women leaders and civil society actors; 2) governments' domestication and enforcement of gender equality policy instruments and commitments; 3) promotion of qualitative quotas; 4) re-energising of the women's movement; and, 5) forging intergenerational "sisterhood," mentorship and inclusive partnerships.

The frequently used term "Capacity Building" stands the risk of becoming redundant in the development sector, however in the case of women's leadership, it remains relevant. High illiteracy among women and their confinement to gendered roles in society have deprived a significant number of West African women opportunities for skills and capacities' development.

- **Capacity building for women leaders and civil society representatives**

Respondents in the target countries stressed the importance of continued capacity building for women in key technical competencies such as strategic thinking, effective leadership, negotiation, networking, policy advocacy and organising. Such skills are necessary to compete in political environments in particular, but are also useful for leadership in general.

Professional leadership of organisations has become a technical competency. Therefore, women need to gain skills on how to lead and manage contemporary organisations. Particularly in post-conflict contexts such as Côte d'Ivoire, where opportunities for new organisations to rebuild the society emerge. The recommendation also entail capturing new openings in the political and social spheres to effect positive change for women, and to ensure that gender equality advances obviate the emergence of new imperatives.

- **Enforcement of quota system and qualitative quota outcomes**

Recognising that quota systems are not an end in themselves, but a necessary condition for introducing women into leadership positions, it is imperative for governments and political party leaders to create opportunities and enabling environments for the emergence of a critical mass of women leaders in legislatures and public administration, local governance as well as party leadership. This implies complementing the quota system with tailored capacity-building,

awareness raising and social dialogues to concomitantly tackle roots causes, normative practices and ideologies that collectively impede women's leadership roles in all spheres of decision making. Conceptualising and articulating women's leadership in the 21st century requires new vocabularies to capture the complex contexts that underlie several processes of change. It is imperative to reassess the results that quotas yield, the challenges they pose, and their long-term outcomes. This assessment should strive to gauge qualitative and quantitative representation, as well as, women's ascendancy and attrition rate in leadership positions.

Along with quota systems, another implicit concern raised is the need to institutionalise representative and inclusive electoral processes that take cognisance of the inherent difficulties women face in putting forward their candidature. For example, specific electoral codes that provide state financing to support female's direct costs during elections will address the common challenge of limited access to funding.

For aspiring women leaders, overcoming the aversion to politics and taking calculated risks within political party structures is paramount. Women who are active and contribute significantly to building and sustaining political parties should demand strategic positions within parties' leadership. Hence, it is important for women to acquire negotiation and bargaining skills and for women interested in political leadership to internalise the notion that "that power and leadership in politics are never given but derived from hard-won battles and strategic manoeuvring of the political system. It may entail negotiating with men as partners and co-opting supportive men to the cause."

- **Domestication and enforcement of gender equality commitments and instruments**

West African countries have signed and ratified landmark gender equality instruments, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Maputo Protocol (2003), among others. However, these remain declarations of intentions, and are not fully enforced. Thus, the domestication and implementation of relevant international legal instruments promoting gender equity is imperative. Governments should depart from the minimalist approach that ignores the structural basis of exclusion and inequalities. They should move beyond rhetoric and actuate gender equality and the promotion of competent women to all spheres of decision-making at national and local levels. The expectations of decentralisation ushered in the 1990s have not yielded expected outcomes in engendering and democratising representation in local governance structures. The enforcement of the 50/50 commitment to women's representation in local governance in Ghana should be enforced. Civil society's watchdog role in ensuring governments' compliance at all levels is integral to this process.

- **"Inclusive sisterhood", expanded partnerships and scope for action**

The strength of women's leadership and collective agency lies in its inclusiveness and the diversity of its constituencies. This implies, as prerequisites, fostering the participatory involvement and inclusion of a broad range of constituencies that include women leaders in less visible but equally

important sectors such as indigenous governance structures, religious institutions, and the private sector. Stronger ties should be forged between women leaders in government and civil society to enhance the relevance and adequacy of policy changes that reflect their needs and priorities. Intergenerational mentorship and transparent leadership transfer should be encouraged and supported.

The place of supportive men in promoting a feminist agenda should be emphasised, recognising that “change starts from transforming gender ideologies lodged within the household unit, hence the imperative to change men within the family unit”.

Forging effective partnerships and mobilising constituencies around strategic issues at national, regional and sub-regional levels should be underscored. The regional integration agenda offers a propitious entry point for consolidated and specialised regional networks. It also intensifies advocacy and consultation among women leaders and civil society in West Africa. Such platforms exist, but should be linked, strengthened and utilised.

Lastly, considering the centrality of regional integration, the scope of action should be national and regional. Exercising state ownership in regional integration mechanisms, ensuring that commitments to gender equality are taken into account in emerging regional institutions, is crucial. ECOWAS and UEMOA and other regional configurations in West Africa should provide examples of enforcing gender equality policies and women's participation in leadership, to trigger similar practices at the national level.

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Further recommendations underscore “le devoir de memoire” i.e. the commemoration of women leaders to inscribe their achievements and contributions in the history books and oral histories of each country. This will respond to interrelated imperatives: (i) to better document women's contributions and capture women's innovative and adaptive strategies to effect change; (ii) to create timeless repositories of women's achievements across sectors; (iii) to leave legacies for younger and future generations to continue and advance the quest for gender equality.

Conclusion

This study attempts to provide a cross-national analysis of women's leadership in West Africa. It highlights progress and challenges in women's leadership development through different periods; pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, as well as contemporary. The empirical cases catalogue the contributions of women under different systems of governance through the stated timelines and the constraints that hamper women's advancement in society. Approximately, half a century since West African countries gained independence, steady progress has been recorded in women's quest for leadership. This progress is however inadequate with regards to fair and equitable gender-based representation in contemporary democratisation and governance processes.

Post conflict contexts, as illustrated by Côte d'Ivoire in this study, reflects the complexities facing countries transiting from war to peace and the roles women play during such transitions. Safeguarding

against the erosion of gains women have made in the post conflict environment is an ongoing challenge to women's leadership in several countries in West Africa. Hence the need to institutionalise enforceable mechanisms that promote women's participation in decision making, such as quotas systems is important; while ensuring that these mechanisms are applied contextually and do not become orthodoxies or panaceas to all challenges hindering women's entry into leadership spaces.

Today, despite significant changes, overall women are still not adequately represented and in two of the three core sectors of society; government and the private sector. This status quo undermines the ongoing democratisation processes in most West African states. The countries studied highlight that governments' rhetoric of gender equality is not matched by convincing actions. The study however cited that women have a level of prominence within civil society and the informal private sector. Nevertheless in the current configuration of West African states, both sectors wield limited influence over state-centric policies and processes. The probable growth, strengthening and relevance of the civil society sector in the region over the long term, and the ability of this stronger civil society to have leverage over governments and hold them accountable to their commitments on gender equality should contribute to enhanced inclusivity and gendered representation in other sectors.

Notwithstanding the differential rate of women's representation in leadership, the study found that a new generation of aspiring women continue to draw strength and inspiration from the activism and contributions of women through different periods of West African history. However most of these aspiring leaders are nationalistic in their activism for leadership and tend not to forge collaborations cross nationally.

Accounts from the study emphasise the importance of periodically analysing the practicalisation of leadership, to give credence to its localised and imbued gendered meanings. Equally important is a strategic rethinking of women's leadership by taking into account unmet demands and emergent concerns and challenges posed by war, militarism, economic and financial crises. Also needed are forward-looking approaches in analysing and anticipating the impact of the global challenges on women's leadership, such as, economic crises; climate change, and the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

The challenges outlined and the related recommendations call for renewed engagement to elevate women's contributions to democratisation, governance and socio-economic development in West Africa. These actions should build on shared visions and ethical values that shape transformational leadership. The scope for action should involve 1) bridging the physical and cognitive distance between urban and rural women, 2) addressing the weaknesses within women's networks, movements and collaborations, 3) broadening entry into politics for women, to ensure quality representation in political decision making processes, 4) developing creative sources of financing to support women's aspirations of leadership, and, 5) systematically recording the substantive contributions women in leadership positions make across the sub-region to counter efforts to undermine their achievements.

APPENDIX I: PROFILE OF RESEARCHERS

Marieme S. Lo (PhD) Lead Researcher, Senegal

Dr. Marieme S. Lo is currently the Assistant Professor in Women and Gender Studies and African Studies at the University of Toronto, Canada, having worked for the State University of New York (SUNY) as an Assistant Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Global Gender Studies. Dr. Lo earned her Msc. and PhD degrees from Cornell University, and held a visiting fellow at the University of Oxford. As gender and development expert, Dr Lo serves as a resource person for various international organisations, NGOs and grassroots organisations engaged in engendering social, economic and political changes in Africa.

Rose Mensah-Kutin (PhD) Ghana

Dr. Rose Mensah-Kutin is the Director of the Accra-based West African Regional Office of ABANTU for Development, a women's rights advocacy organisation that works to promote gender responsiveness in policies in Africa. She is also the current Convenor of the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), a membership organisation that focuses on economic justice and women's land rights.

Dr. Mensah-Kutin holds a PhD in Gender and Energy studies from the University of Birmingham, UK. She also holds an MA in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands. She attended the University of Ghana, Legon, where she studies English and History for her first degree, and Journalism and Communication for a graduate diploma. She worked at the "Daily Graphic" from 1980-89, rising from the position of Staff Writer to Assistant Editor. During that period, she undertook several socio-economic and political assignments, particularly as they related to women, and edited an innovative column, "Women for Change".

She joined the Ministry of Energy and became the Co-ordinator of the Social Impact Assessment Unit of the then National Energy Board (now Energy Commission) from 1990-98. This work involved assessing the impacts of energy policies, programmes and projects on beneficiary groups and communities. Dr. Mensah-Kutin is known as having initiated the production, coalition building and wider dissemination of "The Women's Manifesto for Ghana", a political document that outlines critical national issues of concerns to women and makes demands for addressing them.

She is a member of a number of boards, committees and councils notably the Pentecost University College Council and has written papers on gender equality issues in areas such as governance, energy, climate change and poverty.

Olubunmi Dipo-Salami Nigeria

Ms. Olubunmi Dipo-Salami is a feminist, gender activist, researcher and trainer. She is the Principal Consultant/CEO of LaRen Consulting, Nigeria, an organisation which focuses on enhancing organisational effectiveness for optimal performance to meet the dynamics of the challenges of day-to-day management at the levels of government, the private sector as well as non-profit organisations. Prior to this, she was Programme Director at BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights where she was involved in advocacy, research, peacebuilding, documentation and capacity building initiatives on women's human rights, transformative leadership, gender mainstreaming at local, national, regional and international levels. Olubunmi also worked as a Senior Trainer for Women's Learning Partnership for Rights Development and Peace, USA. Before working in the field of development, she had worked as a teacher and researcher at different levels of education in Nigeria.

Olubunmi is an International Consultant and has been involved in research on transformative leadership, women's human rights; HIV/AIDS; gender mainstreaming; religion and social change. She belongs to several national, regional and international networks. She is also on the Board of various development organisations. A World Bank Scholar and Chevening Fellow, Olubunmi holds a Master of Arts degree in Development Studies, specialising in Women, Gender, and Development from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague.

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Suzanne TRAORE Cote D' Ivoire

Ms. Suzanne Traore is an Ivorian. She is currently the National Expert in Reconciliation and Social Cohesion at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Côte d'Ivoire. Ms. Suzanne is a professional trainer with vast experience and knowledge in gender issues, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Prior to her appointment with UNDP, She was the coordinator of the Vision et Action des Femmes Africaines contre les Guerres (VAFAG) a women's NGO founded in 1999 in Abidjan. She was the Programme officer Gender, Youth and Human Development and Communication officer at WACSOF. She was also the Deputy Director Promotion of social cohesion, ministry of reconciliation at WACSOF

Ms. Suzanne served as an Elections observer for the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF), and African Union for several years. She served as a Resource person for a number of organisations including: West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF), ECOWAS, AFRICAN UNION, WACSI, KAIPTC amongst others.

APPENDIX II: SAMPLES OF QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

The West African Civil Society Institute (WACSI) is commissioning a research on the Status of Women's Leadership in West Africa. The overall objective of the research will be to examine and document the evolution of women's leadership in the sub-region. Specifically, the research will examine women's leadership in different sectors of West African society and assess how women have contributed to governance and democratisation processes. The study will look into the contribution of women in the pre-colonial and colonial era as well as modern West Africa. Apart from gauging the advancements women have made in formal decision-making structures within government and civil society, the study will unpack concepts of leadership, governance, patriarchy, democratisation and gender equality within the West African context. Furthermore, the research will assess how women's networks, coalitions and support groups have impacted women's leadership.

The findings for the research will be disseminated to civil society organisations and academic institutions across West Africa and the continent. It will feed into WACSI's training and capacity building programme that includes strengthening civil society's leadership and corporate governance structures.

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research is to examine and document the evolution of women's leadership in West Africa with particular emphasis on:

- A historical and contemporary analysis of women's leadership;
- Women's leadership positions across different social spaces – political, economic (business sector – formal and informal), indigenous African governance structures, religious bodies, women in civil society organisations including women's networks and coalitions, women in academia, and women in the security sector;
- Women's approaches to leadership and succession planning;
- The effects of notions of sexuality and reproductive social roles on women's leadership;
- Women's leadership in relation to 'public' and 'private' social spaces;
- The extent to which women's leadership has transformed perceptions of women in society and the opportunities available to them;
- Linkages between women in government and civil society.

To be able to undertake the above, WACSI is disseminating short questionnaires on the subject matter across the region. This questionnaire will assist in gauging diverse perspectives on women's leadership in West Africa.

We request that you complete the questionnaire attached and provide us with additional information on women's leadership in your context.

We do appreciate the time you will spend answering these questions considering your busy schedule.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

Please, complete all sessions (A), (B) and (C)

SESSION A: Introduction

NAME:

AGE:

COUNTRY:

ORGANISATION:

POSITION IN THE ORGANISATION:

SESSION B: General Information

Please describe what Leadership means to you as a woman

What ideology guides your work?

Are you a feminist?

If yes, what does that mean in your leadership?

SESSION C: Target Information

How long have you been in your current position?

Were you nominated or voted into this position?

What challenges have you encountered?

What factors have supported your leadership position?

Please advice the involvement of women in government and politics in your country

How do you manage your family obligations with the demands of your position?

How will you describe the state of women's rise to leadership positions in civil society?

What key contributions have women leaders made in your country?

What key changes have you noticed in the past 5-10 years (or since independence with senior leaders) years regarding women's political participation and leadership?

Who/What inspires you in the work you do?

What/Who has been the most important influence on you?

How are women leaders perceived?

What needs to be done to improve women leadership?

- In government

- In civil society

Additional Comments:

Please provide any additional comments that will guide our study:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN IN CIVIL SOCIETY

Please, complete all sessions (A), (B) and (C)

SESSION A: Introduction

NAME:

AGE:

COUNTRY:

ORGANISATION:

POSITION IN THE ORGANISATION:

SESSION B: General information

Please describe what leadership means to you as a woman:

What ideology guides your work?

Are you a feminist?

If yes, what does that mean in your leadership?

SESSION C: Target Information

How long have you been in your current position?

What challenges have you encountered?

What factors have supported your leadership position?

How do you manage your family obligations with the demands of your position?

How will you describe the state of women's rise to leadership positions in civil society?

What key contributions have women leaders made in your country?

What key changes have you noticed in the past 5-10 years (or since independence with senior leaders) years regarding women's political participation and leadership?

Who/What inspires you in the work you do?

What/Who has been the most important influence on you?

How are women leaders perceived?

What needs to be done to improve women leadership?

- In government

- In civil society

Additional Comments:

Please provide any additional comments that will guide our study:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN IN CIVIL SOCIETY

Please, complete all sessions (A), (B) and (C)

SESSION A: General Information

NAME:

AGE:

ORGANISATION:

POSITION IN THE ORGANISATION:

SESSION B: Introductory Session

Please describe what leadership means to you as a Civil Society Actor:

What ideology guides your work?

Are you gender conscious?

If yes, what does that mean in your leadership?

How long have you been in your current position?

Were you nominated or voted into this position?

What challenges have you encountered?

What is your opinion on the evolution of the women in leadership?

Please advice the involvement of women in government and politics in your country

How will you describe the state of women's rise to leadership positions in civil society?

What key contributions have civil society actors made in your country?

What key changes have you noticed in the past 5-10 years (or since independence with senior leaders) years regarding women's political participation and leadership?

Who/What inspires you in the work you do?

How do you perceive women leaders?

What do you think need to be done to improve women leadership?

- In government

- In civil society

Additional Comments:

Please provide any additional comments that will guide our study:

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Endnotes

- i. 'Godfatherism' is a practice in most West African country in the guise of the ubiquitous democracy that is being purported to be practiced in them. Godfatherism is a kind of politics whereby an influential person in a popular ruling party assists a condidate (i.e. godson) to emerge as candidate of the party, either by hook or crook and ensure that such a 'godson' emerge victorious in the election against the opponent. The elected 'godson' on capturing the reins of power will be expected to dance to the tune of the 'godfather'.
- ii. See a website that documents women leaders in Africa, <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/womeninpower/Africa.htm>, accessed 13 September 2008.
- iii. <http://www.iss.co.za/af/profile/Nigeria/politics> Accessed 03/11/08
- iv. <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-6940.html> accessed 22/07/09
- v. Entwistle H. (1971), *Poloitical Education in a Democracy*, London: Routledge, pg.73
- vi. Adigbli, Koffigan E. (April 2009) *Politique-Senegal*. « Les femmes toujours marginalisées dans les élections. »IPA. at IRL : http://ipsinternational.org/fr/_note.asp?idnews=5287April 2. 2009 Accessed 5:9:2009 (An interview after the March 2009 local election. Author's translation from French to English)
- vii. http://www.idea.int/publications/pp_west_africa_/upload/PP_West_Africa_Web.pdf accessed 25:06:2009
- viii. Data Source: The Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Parliament*. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> accessed 5:12:2008
- ix. Gender, Trade and the WTO Speaking Notes for the WTO Public Symposium "Challenges ahead on the road to Cancún" Geneva, June 16, 2003 Heather Gibb The North-South Institute, Canada
- x. *Integrating Gender into the World Bank's Work: A Strategy for Action*, 2002 p. 5
- xi. Available at http://hdr.undp.org/xmlsearch/reportSearch?y=*%&c=r%3AAfrica&t=gender&lang=en&k=&orderby=year, accessed 30:05:2009
- xii. National Report on Millennium Development Goals, Côte d'Ivoire, Page 19
- xiii. In message of Government of Côte d'Ivoire during the 2005 celebration of International Population Day at <http://cotedivoire.unfpa.org/jmpopulation.htm>, visited on accessed 19:02:2009
- xiv. PNAF (Plan National d'Action pour la Femme), 2003, p 21-29
- xv. <http://www.w-yb.org/resources/civil-society.html>, accessed 29:08:2009
- xvi. See a Civil Society Directory for West Africa developed by WACSI
- xvii. *Sususu* is a traditional form of banking systems with origin in Africa and the caribbean. It is a rotating credit associations popularly used for raising quickly capital. The term Susu is derived from the Yoruba word "esusu," which roughly translates to "pooling the funds and rotating the pot." Susu collectors are one of the oldest financial groups in Africa. Based largely in Ghana they provide (for a small fee) an informal means for Ghanaians to securely save and access their own money, and gain limited access to credit, a form of microfinance. Susu bankers assume the responsibility for collecting and keeping track of the contributions and all money collected are stored in a Susu account. With no specific qualifications required, the Susu collector is generally someone who is trusted and respected in the community.

- xviii. The *stokvels* “Stock fairs” had its origin in the Eastern Cape in the early 19th century. A Stokvel is a group savings scheme, where members contribute a fixed amount of money to a common pool monthly. Money is drawn either in rotation or when a particular need or occasion arises. Unlike the Susu, leaders in stokvels are highly regarded and respected people in their community, and the members are usually people of integrity. A Stokvel offers its members a strong social prestige which satisfies social needs, a form of self-discipline and commitment which enables members to have a lump sum to use for a specific purpose. Membership of a stokvels reflects common values and good understanding. See The stokvels “Stock fairs” had its origin in the Eastern Cape in the early 19th century. A Stokvel is a group savings scheme, where members contribute a fixed amount of money to a common pool monthly. Money is drawn either in rotation or when a particular need or occasion arises.