



Power & Parity: Accelerating Gender Balance in Public Governance

As the world celebrated International Women's Day 2025 under the theme "Accelerating Action" Ghana's journey toward gender parity stands at a pivotal moment. This year marked 30 years since the Beijing Platform for Action, where the global community pledged to ensure equal opportunities for women and girls. Each year, International Women's Day serves as a reminder of this promise, highlighting both the progress made and the challenges that remain. According to UN Women, the Beijing Platform for Action has achieved significant milestones globally, including advancements in girls' rights, integrating gender perspectives into development policies, combating gender-based violence, promoting women's leadership in climate change, and empowering women's leadership.

The passage of the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Act in 2024, after a 13-year struggle, was a landmark moment in Ghana. This legislation aims to rectify historical inequalities that have hindered women's access to opportunities in political, economic, and social spheres. The 2024 general elections delivered Ghana's first female Vice President, marking a historic milestone in women's representation at the highest level of national decision making. There are huge expectations of this role, at least from the feminist movement. One of such is that the female Vice President will be an ally in influencing government's fulfillment of its manifesto promise of achieving at least 30% of women's representation in government and targets of the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Act.

Since coming into office, the President has made nominations to cabinet, ministries and public institutions. Within the same period, the council of state has been composed, and lately in March, the committees of the 9th Parliament have been constituted. STAR-Ghana Foundation looks at the gender representation of these appointments and offers recommendations on how we can accelerate better the gender equality agenda.

Ministerial appointments

- Eight (8) women have been appointed as Ministers, out of a total of forty-three (43), representing 18.6%.
- 3 women appointed as deputy ministers, out of a total of 13, representing 23%.
- Cabinet, a body that assists the President in setting policy direction of government has only 2 women (approximately 11%) out of its total membership of 19 sector Ministers.

Article 78(1) of the 1992 Constitution stipulates that the majority of Ministers of State must be appointed from Parliament. This provision disproportionately affects women, who are underrepresented in Parliament, with only 39 female MPs out of 275 in the 9th Parliament. One potential solution to overcome the limitations imposed by this constitutional requirement, as Ghana embarks on constitutional review, is to decouple ministerial appointments from

parliamentary membership, thereby removing a significant obstacle to women's opportunities for ministerial positions.

Appointments to Offices of the President, Vice President's Offices and to the Council of State

- Appointments to the President and Vice President's offices is **gender balanced**. Out of 10 Presidential staffers, five are women. Likewise, the Vice President's Office staff has 6 women, out of a total number of 10. Out of a total of 14 appointments to the Council of State, 7 are women, making the appointed number, gender balanced. Conversely, the 16 elected regional representatives comprise only 1 female, bringing the entire female membership of the 9th Council of State to 8 (approximately 26%) out of the total number of 31.

Summary of Gender Representation of Ministerial Appointments, Presidential, Vice Presidential Staffers and Council of State.

Appointments	Total	Men	Women	% Men	% Women
Ministers of State	27	22	5	81.48	18.52
Regional Ministers	16	13	3	81.25	18.75
Deputy Ministers	13	11	2	84.62	15.38
Cabinet Ministers	19	17	2	89.47	10.52
National Security Appointments	4	4	0	100.00	0.00
Presidential Staffers	10	5	5	50.00	50.00
Vice President's Office	10	4	6	40.00	60.00
Appointed Council of State Members (excluding president of the Regional House of Chiefs)	14	7	7	50	50
Elected Council of State Members	16	15	1	93.75	6.25
CEO/MDs of State Institutions	37	29	8	78.38	21.62

¹ This excludes the President of the Regional House of Chiefs



Appointments to public institutions

- Out of 37 appointments to leadership positions in public institutions, women hold only 8, representing 21.62% of the total appointments made so far. The situation remains
- unchanged in national security appointments, where women are still excluded.
- As ongoing appointments continue, such as those to public boards, it is crucial to address this gap and enhance female representation in leadership roles within these state institutions.

Women's leadership in parliament The representation of women in Parliament remains significantly low, with only 39 female MPs out of a total of 275. Despite this underrepresentation, female MPs face additional challenges compared to their male counterparts, often being overlooked for leadership roles. For instance, in the 8th Parliament, the Gender Committee was led by a male MP. One short-term strategy to address this disparity is to support women's leadership in committees through appointments, which would enhance their influence in parliamentary deliberations

On the 8th of March 2025, the list of parliamentary committees was released by parliament. 44 parliamentary committees were assessed, both Standing and Select with these highlights;

- There are 157 leadership roles—including chairperson, vice-chairperson, ranking member, and deputy ranking member – in the 42 committees. Men occupy 139 (88.54%) of these while women fill the remaining 18 (11.46%). The chairperson position for two committees (Standing Orders and Selection) is held solely by the Speaker of Parliament without deputies
- **14 committees have female leaders** (as chairperson, vice-chairperson, ranking member and deputy ranking member). These are the Appointments Committee, Committee of Office of Profit, Public Accounts Committee, Committee on Ways and Means, Committee on Back-benchers' Business, Committee on Gender, Children and Social Welfare, Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs, Committee on Works and Housing, Committee on Local Government and Rural Development, Committee on Employment, Labour Relations and Pensions, Committee on Chieftaincy, Culture and Religious Affairs, Committee on Security and Intelligence, Committee on Sanitation and Water Resources, Committee on Public Administration and State Interest.
- **4 committees are chaired by women.** These are the Public Accounts Committee, Local Government Committee, the Security and Intelligence Committee and the Gender Committee.
- There are **7 committees without female representation.** These include House Committee, Special Committee (winnowing), Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs, Committee on Lands and Natural Resources, Committee on Information and Communication, Committee on Environment, Science and Technology. The limited number of female MPs



may have contributed to this situation, as distributing them across all committees could over stretch their capacities. However, the Select Committee on Health having no female representation, despite access to quality healthcare being a critical issue for women is challenging to accept. Ghana continues to fall short of key targets in maternal and child healthcare. The absence of women on this committee raises concerns that health policies may risk becoming gender-insensitive or neglecting the specific needs of women.

Accelerating Equality: Strategies for Change

While the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Act provides the legal framework for gender equality in governance, its transformative power hinges on deliberate actions from stakeholders, particularly government and political parties to make the law benefit Ghanaian women and girls.

In the short-term,

- Government should close the gap in female representation through ensuring women constitute at least 30% of appointments as Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs).
- Government should adopt gender as a marker in the composition of boards of public institutions.
- Parliament should reconsider the constitution of its Health Committee to ensure health policies are gender sensitive.

In the medium to long term,

- Engaging political parties as agents of change: encourage political parties to adopt gender-sensitive policies. This includes introducing quotas for women, for example, promoting women to contest 'safe constituency' seats and
- Constitutional review: integrate gender analysis in the ongoing constitutional review process to strengthen gender equality provisions and ensure they are enforceable.

Conclusion

Ghana's acceleration towards gender equality requires a multifaceted approach and unwavering political commitment. By addressing the systemic barriers, supporting women in leadership, and ensuring robust implementation of gender equality laws, Ghana can truly embody the spirit of "Accelerating Equality." The journey ahead is challenging, but with commitment and collective action, Ghana can become a beacon of gender parity in decision-making roles.

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