

**ADVOCATING FOR INCREMENT IN THE NUMBER OF
WOMEN IN PUBLIC OFFICE IN GHANA:
FROM INDEPENDENCE TO 2008**

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DEDICATION

For:

Mercy- My dear mother

Hannah -My wife and friend

Jael and Alberta- My two precious and priceless daughters

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	2
1.3 Relevant Literature on Women and Public Office - General and Ghanaian context.....	4
1.4 Research objective.....	8
1.5 Rationale for the study.....	9
1.6 Argument and organization of the thesis.....	9
CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY.....	12
2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.2 Qualitative methodology.....	12
2.3 Sources of data.....	13
2.4 Study area and population.....	14
2.5 Research design and sampling methods.....	15
2.6. Breakdown of key informants.....	16
2.7 Data collection.....	17
2.8 Data analysis.....	18
2.9 Research instruments.....	19
2.10 Ethics.....	20
2.11 Challenges.....	20
2.12 My position and fieldwork.....	21
CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	23
3.1 Introduction.....	23
3.2 The Social Construction of Target Population Theory (SCTP).....	23
3.3 The National-Style Approach (NSP).....	27
3.4 Social Responsibility Theory (SRT).....	29
3.5 The relationship between my three theories.....	31
CHAPTER FOUR: GHANAIAAN WOMEN IN PUBLIC OFFICE: FROM PRE- INDEPENDENCE TO 2008.....	32
4.1 Introduction.....	32
4.2 Colonial period.....	32

4.3 The struggle for independence.....	32
4.4 The CPP and women.....	34
4.5 Women and two short-lived civilian regimes.	34
4.6 Ghanaian women and military regimes	35
4.7 The PNDC Government 1981-1992	36
4.8 The return to constitutional rule.....	37
4.9 Conclusion	42
CHAPTER FIVE: THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT	43
5.1 Introduction.....	43
5.2 Operationalising culture.....	44
5.3 Culture and public policy.....	45
5.4 Male perceptions of women seeking leadership positions.....	49
5.5 Inheritance.....	53
5.6 Land	53
5.7 Conclusion	55
CHAPTER SIX: MEDIA-TED PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN SEEKING PUBLIC OFFICE IN GHANA	57
6.1 Introduction.....	57
6.2 Background to this chapter	57
6.3 Media-ted Portrayals of Women Politicians in Ghana - an assessment.....	61
6.4. The coverage of the wives of the presidential candidates.....	61
6.5. The coverage of the acceptance of two women to be running mates	62
6.6 The coverage of the refusal of one leading women activist to be a running mate of one of the presidential candidates	64
6.7 Conclusion	65
CHAPTER SEVEN: NGOs' AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S ACCESS TO PUBLIC OFFICE IN GHANA: FIDA –GHANA AS AN EXAMPLE	67
7. 1 Introduction.....	67
7.2 FIDA-Ghana - An Overview	68
7.3. Resources	70
7.4 Personal observations.....	71
7.5 FIDA-Ghana officials on resources	72
7.6 Beneficiaries on resources	75
7.7 FIDA-Ghana officials' reaction to beneficiaries' complaints.....	76
7.8 Administrative structure.....	79
7.9. Consequences of Administrative Structure for the Work of FIDA-Ghana - Disagreement on programmes implementation	80
7.10 Conclusion	86
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION	90
8.1 Introduction.....	90
8. 2 What limits the impact of the advocacy?	90
8. 3 Future Research	93

REFERENCES	94
ANNEXES	99

LIST OF TABLES

Table-1: Women Members of Parliament

Table- 2: Regional averages of women MPs Globally

Table-3: Women in key executive positions under President Kufour

Table-4: Sources of Information for Voters in Ghana

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure-1: Social constructions and political power: Types of target populations

Figure-2: Women Members in Parliaments since 1960

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix- A: GDP Per Capita Growth of Ghana

Appendix- B: Interview Guide

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UN	United Nations
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NPP	New Patriotic Party
MOWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
SCTP	Social Construction of Target Population
NSP	National-Style Approach
SRT	Social Responsibility Theory
CFP	Commission on the Freedom of the Press
CPP	Convention Peoples Party
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
MPs	Members of Parliament
NCWD	National Council on Women and Development
NRCD	National Redemption Council Decree
CHRI	Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
FIDA	Federacon International de Abogadas
US	United States
USAID	United States AID
WILDAF	Women in Law and Development in Africa
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
PNC	Peoples National Convention
RPD	Reform Patriotic Democrats.
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations

ABSTRACT

The 1950s were a period of great hope and promise for Ghana. Ghana became the first country south of the Sahara to become independent. Though the independence struggle was led by men they were aided by women. Women played a key role in mobilizing people for the struggle at the grassroot level. After independence the efforts of women were not rewarded with appointments to public office. This was rectified in 1965 through an affirmative action. However succeeding Governments since then have not followed up the 1965 affirmative action programme which led to an increment in the number of women in public office despite rhetorics to the contrary. Many women NGOs have therefore answered the call and taken up the challenge to promote more women into public office. These advocacy groups have become important instruments in highlighting the challenges women face in trying to access public positions. Through seminars and other public fora they have called for these challenges to be addressed. In spite of these efforts the number of women in public office in Ghana remains low. It is against this background this study attempts to identify some of the key reasons that have limited the impact of these women's advocacy groups. It tries to answer the question why these groups have not succeeded in convincing succeeding governments to increase the number of women in public office. Based on data collected by using qualitative methodology, this study found that three factors: the cultural environment, the role of the media and the internal dynamics within the advocacy groups, has been contributors to the little impact made by the advocacy groups.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Globally, the place of women in public governance is one that continues to generate debate among governments, groups and individuals. The debate has led to a recognition of the need to incorporate more women into public office. For example, one of the sub goals of the third theme of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 'Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women', calls for women's equal participation with men in public governance as a fundamental right. It has also been argued that in terms of potentials women have the same capacities as men, which can be mobilised to meaningfully enhance the social, economic and political development of nations. In line with that, within and among nations across the globe, 'this awareness has led to efforts by governments complemented by civil society organizations (CSOs), Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multilateral institutions and individuals...to actualize these potentials' (Allah-Mensah 2005: 5). These efforts have culminated in significant global actions such as the United Nations adopting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979 and the Beijing Conference of 1995.

In line with the global wave, Ghana has made some significant progress in women's rights generally, both in juridical and in practice. At the global level, the country took part in the Vienna Conference of 1993, which had the slogan *Human Rights also include Women's Rights*. Ghana is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 (CEDAW). This convention requires signatory states to '*Take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, appropriate measures, including legislation to ensure the full development and advancement of women...*' In Africa, Ghana played a role as one of the key architects of the Lagos Plan of Action in 1981 which devoted a whole chapter to women in recognition of their importance in development. This Plan of Action for instance emphasized that women should assume positions of authority so that women's concerns and views would be integrated into national development. Nationally, the contribution of women in Ghana has been recognized by law and in policy. The

framers of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana inserted clauses essentially to promote the rights of the Ghanaian woman and to enhance their chances of competing with men for public office. Article 27 (3) states that: *‘women shall be guaranteed equal rights to training and promotion without any impediments from any person’*. It further states in article 6 that: *‘the state shall afford equality of economic opportunity to all citizens; and, in particular, the State shall take all necessary steps so as to ensure the full integration of women into the mainstream of the economic development of Ghana’*. The Directive Principles of State Policy, also under the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, calls for state action in order to ‘achieve reasonable regional and gender balance in recruitment and appointments to public offices’. In a developing country like Ghana one of the key routes to economic development for women is to get employed in public office. Despite these provisions, succeeding governments have tended to have different policy focus concerning women.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the initiatives above to usher more women into public office, yawning inequalities exist in the numbers of women compared to that of men in the corridors of public office. Succeeding Governments have, since independence, stressed the need for an increment in the number of women in public office. However, in contrast to their campaign promises and pronouncements, evidence as shown in chapter four, reveal that there has not been significant increase in the numbers of women in public office in real or percentage terms in Ghana since independence. Advocates for increment in the numbers of women in public office were particularly hopeful in the year 2000. Two reasons accounted for this. First, the year 2000 marked a watershed in the history of Ghana’s political and public life. This was so because in the words of Ahiawordor (2001: 106) ‘... it was the first time an elected Ghanaian president had successfully completed his constitutional tenure of office and was about to leave the political scene without a shot being fired by the ‘men on horseback.’¹ It was thus a major boost for Ghana’s democratic journey, which began in 1992. A peaceful transition from one democratically elected government to another had not happened in the country until then. The party in power at

¹ The men on horseback refer to the military in Ghana.

the time, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), lost the elections and handed over power to the New Patriotic Party (NPP).

Second, the NPP in opposition made a lot of promises on the campaign trail as being champions of human rights, especially those of women. They promised among other things to get more women into positions of trust when elected. The president reiterated this promise in his victory and inaugural speech after the elections. With these promises in mind, women activists had great and justified hopes that the tenure of the NPP was going to see more women in public office.

As a first step to fulfilling the campaign promises, the president established a Ministry for Women and Children's Affairs (MOWCA) of a cabinet rank, charged with driving government policy on women. Additionally, 5 women ministers of state and 6 women deputy ministers out of 43 ministers and 36 deputy ministers respectively were appointed. Compared to the situation in many other countries, these figures may appear an insignificant number. Even in Ghana, if the figures above are compared to the population size, they may appear to be on the low side. Ghana's total population is approximately 18,845,265² with males being 9,320,796 representing about 49% and females being 9,524,471 representing 51% of the population³. Nevertheless according to Tweneboah-Koduah (2003:2) these appointments constituted the highest number of women in key ministerial roles in the nation's history, perhaps underlining how women have been marginalized in public appointments since independence.

As chapter four will show, after 8 years of NPP rule, hopes of women activists appear to have faded. Familiar patterns in relation to women numbers in public office in Ghana seems to have re-emerged. For example, available statistics indicate that women occupied only 25 seats (11 percent) out of the 230 seats in the previous parliament in Ghana. At the district assembly level, women constitute 10 percent of assembly members while in the public service, there are only 5 chief directors, as against 30 male chief directors. There are 3 female members of the council of state as against 21 males, 4 female ministers as

² Ghana 2000 population census which is the latest national population census available.

³ See <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomepage/general/> retrieved in 10th May 2008

against 30 males and 14 deputy ministers out of 49 (Daily Graphic⁴, July 24, 2008:11). After the just ended parliamentary and presidential elections the number of women parliamentary representatives has dropped from 25 to 18⁵. In percentage terms it has moved from 11 to 7.89.

This is happening at the same time that there exists several women NGOs advocating for an increment in the number of women in public office. It must be emphasized here that the advocacy has gone on for several years. The question therefore is: why has the advocacy groups have little success in convincing succeeding Governments to increase the number of women in public office? The study seeks to answer this question by identifying some key reasons behind the seemingly little impact of the advocacy groups.

1.3 Relevant Literature on Women and Public Office - General and Ghanaian context.

The gap between men and women in relation to numbers in public office appears to be a worldwide phenomenon. Therefore, it has drawn the attention and interest of scholars. Within the literature, scholars largely agree that there are fewer women than men in terms of appointment to public office across the globe.

Writing from a human rights perspective, Eide notes that the aim of human rights has been to safeguard basic concepts of ‘...human integrity, freedom and equality’. (Eide, 1995: 24). He further observes that ‘in principle everyone is a beneficiary of rights’ but in practice some groups are more vulnerable to human rights abuse than others. To address the vulnerability of certain groups, like women, one sometimes calls for affirmative action. This, he notes, has culminated in specific instruments such as The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979. (ibid: 32). Eides position is in line with advocacy groups in Ghana, who argue that due to the vulnerability of women, they can only get to public office through affirmative action

⁴ The Daily Graphic is the most authoritative newspaper in Ghana. It has the widest readership and is generally accepted as very credible.

⁵ See http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2123_E.htm

measures effectuated by their governments. That is in line with normative international human rights practice.

Waylen (1996:13) calls for an examination of the gendered nature of states, stressing that whether women are represented or not in the corridors where policies are made, the policies made have an impact on them. Schayan (2002:27) agrees to this view and therefore calls for the employment of gender mainstreaming strategies in all spheres of national life. This, she contends, will help promote equal opportunities for the sexes and ensure the breakdown of roles assigned by tradition to each of the sexes, roles that she finds counter productive. Ida Bull (2000:32) traces the genesis of male dominance in public life in Europe to the household. According to her, in the early modern era the household was the structure around which European public life was built. She notes that generally, at the time the head of the household was the tax payer. Therefore, he was the representative of the household. In most cases men were the tax payers and therefore representatives. In some few cases, however, widows were allowed to represent their households.

Tamale (1999:196) refers to this story and discusses how it was exported to Africa by colonization. She also identifies patriarchy as one of the elements that is used by society to hinder women access to public office. One of the conduits of patriarchy she identifies in Uganda is the media.

In Ghana, studies relating to low number of women in public office mostly focus on finding reasons for women's inability to get access into public office. The Women Manifesto (2004:31) (a document formulated by a broad coalition of women's groups and individual men) stresses that despite the key roles Ghanaian women play within family and society, few of them do hold key decision-making positions in the economic, political and social arenas. It notes that in Ghana, when it comes to key public decision making, women are relegated to the background. The result, it further argues, has been little improvement in the lives of women and men alike in Ghana. It blames succeeding governmental policies for this state of affairs. It is particularly critical of the Economic

Recovery Programme (ERP) and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) that Ghana has undergone since 1983, stressing that it has worsened an already bad situation.

Lauer (2006:625) suggests that emotional differences may be the reason for men she categorizes as 'traditionalist', not wanting women to take part in public decision-making. In her view, women concerns have not been addressed in public decision making because the feelings of the genders are diametrically opposed. She notes that:

...the problem of men dominating women is basically that men constitutionally, cannot understand how it feels to be a rape victim or a battered wife or clitorally mutilated, or sexually molested by an elder relative, or suddenly widowed and stripped of home and property, nor what it is like to fetch water four hours out of every eighteen-hour workday. (Ibid 625).

Allah-Mensah (2005:101) identifies a number of reasons for the low number of women in public office, especially those considered political. She finds the key reason to be the nature and meaning of politics in Ghana. In her view politics in Ghana is considered dirty and therefore a manly activity not fit for women. Other constraints militating against women's involvement in politics in Ghana she asserts to be low levels of education among women in Ghana compared to their male compatriots, domestic obligations and limited vacancies available at the public sector.

Tsikata (2001:270) on the other hand has observed that public speaking skills, the assumption that women should not get involved in politics and lack of self-belief are some of the problems that continue to militate against women's involvement in politics and, by extension, public life.

For Nana Oye Lithur, the debate on the role of women '...needs to be placed within the context of the public private divide argument' (2004:66). She notes that liberal and republican traditions have always insisted on this divide and within this women's role have been confined to the private. She blames colonialism for poor female participation in public life in Ghana and suggests that within Ghanaian traditional governance, women played key public roles, pointing to the role of the *ohemaa* (queenmother) who had her

own *ahenfie* (court), *ntam* (oath) and *okyeame* (spokesperson).⁶ O'Barr and Firmin-Sellers (1995:189) agree with this view, but adds that women's political position and power varied across indigenous African societies.

Odotei (2006:81) discusses the role of women in traditional political structures. She asserts that generally, in traditional Africa most of the leadership positions are occupied by men. She however insist that '...there are cases where women have broken the frontiers and occupied top positions' (ibid 2006:81). She disagrees with the view that in traditional societies the corridors of power are always occupied by men. Fayorsey (2006:657) attributes the low status of women in traditional society to ideological reasons. Due to such reasons, she notes that Ghanaian women are considered subordinate to their men. The reason for this is a conclave of male autocracy.

Awumbila (2001:33) agrees that women in African traditional societies generally have low status. To her, this becomes clear when women's status are compared to that of men. This was further entrenched by colonialism because 'colonial policy... centred mainly on agricultural exports, trade and mining' (ibid: 34). The main aim of colonial policy was to enhance exports. Tsikata (1999:76) agrees that the colonial system shares the blame for women's marginalization in public affairs in Ghana. For her, the educational system introduced during colonial times and which was not rectified by subsequent governments after independence has had a negative effect on women. Manuh (1991:110-111) supports this view, emphasizing that the education given to girls during the colonial period emphasized on good behavior and skills such as needlework and cooking. According to her, this form of training aimed to make the girls 'better wives' for the emerging educated men who were made up of clerks, teachers and a few professional men.

Abena Dolphyene (2005:45) asserts that Ghana boasts skilled and competent women consisting of lawyers, doctors, engineers and university lecturers. These women, she notes, have made valuable contributions to various aspects of life. She continues that 'in spite of the increasing number of highly - qualified and competent women, the number of

⁶ Among the Asantes of Ghana, for instance, the queenmother could lead the army to war if the king was incapacitated. One of their key leaders in their war against the British was a queenmother call Nana Yaa Asantewaa.

women in policy-making in government and on statutory bodies is very small (Ibid: 45). She points out that state institutions like the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) and non-governmental organizations like FIDA-Ghana and Ghanaian Association of University Women have all been helping to get women into public life, especially into statutory boards.

It is clear from the literature reviewed above that considerable efforts have been made in Ghana in search for the causes of the low number of women in public office. The household, colonialism, the educational system and traditional societal set ups are some of the factors that the various works reviewed above identify as causes. In other words, the existing literature to a large extent focus on large, long term structural and institutional causes for the low female representation in public office. Less attention has so far been paid to the role of the groups advocating for women's participation, and the interplay between such groups and the larger cultural and social context they work within.

1.4 Research objective

The main objective of this study is to identify some key reasons for the insignificant increase in the numbers of women in public office in Ghana despite several years of advocacy by women groups. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Trace the historical trend of women in public office in Ghana from pre-independence to the year 2000.
2. Identify and discuss key variables that undermine Ghanaian women's effort in trying to seek public office
3. Analyze the key reasons for the continuous existence of such undermining variables, despite several years of advocacy by women groups such as FIDA-Ghana.

1.5 Rationale for the study

The findings of this study, it is hoped, will broaden the understanding of the work of advocacy groups in their quest to see more women in public office. This is because it does highlight some of the factors facilitating or impeding the advocacy groups in their quest to get more women into public office. This study is important because most of the advocacy groups are NGOs and as Eide and Rosas have put it ‘Non-governmental organizations often play a central role as initiators of fresh thinking and new developments’ (1995:18). Hence, there is the need to review what initiative and ‘fresh thinking’ women NGOs, represented in this study by FIDA-Ghana have brought to women’s quest to occupy public office.

1.6 Argument and organization of the thesis

This study is not a comparative study of the efforts of the NPP government and NGOs to increase the number of women in public. Rather, it focuses on finding reasons for the seemingly little success achieved by advocacy groups such as FIDA-Ghana.

In other words, this study is an analysis of why several years of advocacy by NGOs like FIDA-Ghana has not led to significant increase in the number of women in public office in Ghana. Indeed, available data suggest that in some cases the numbers, especially with regard to elective office, have dropped both in real and percentage terms. This invariably leads to a search for factors that account for this. Based on the data I gathered in the field, I argue that this state of affairs can be attributed to three main factors. These factors are: *cultural environment*, *role of the media* and *the internal dynamics* within the advocacy groups themselves. The internal dynamics factor is derived from FIDA-Ghana which is used as an example for advocacy groups in this study. The first chapter of the empirical chapters will deal with the cultural environment, while the subsequent two chapters will cover the role of the media and the internal dynamics of advocacy groups respectively.

In terms of structure, this study is divided into eight chapters. Chapter one, which is the introductory chapter, sets out the background, the statement of the problem, the research

objective and the rationale for the study. It also discusses relevant literature and finally presents the main argument and organization of the study.

Chapter two presents the methodology employed in this study. It details the methods of data collection.

Chapter three presents the theoretical framework of the study. It discusses three different but related theories. These three theories are: the *Social Responsibility Theory (SRT)*, the *Social Construction of Target Population (SCTP)*, and *National-Style Approach (NSP)*. All the theories are employed to help answer Lasswell's (1936) classical political question of 'who gets what, when, and how' within the Ghanaian society. The theories recognize the existence of certain forms of inequalities within societies. These inequalities have led to opportunities on the one hand, and lack of opportunities on the other, when it comes to participation opportunities for different segments within society. These inequalities have led to the emergence and institutionalization of forms of social status quo in societies. The theories demand that certain actors within the state rectify the inequalities. The SCTP is employed as an overarching theory, and represents alone in chapter five. It is used together with SRP in chapter six and NSP in chapter seven.

Chapter four traces the historical trend of women in public life in Ghana from pre-independence to 2008.

Chapter five explores culture as one of the factors that contribute to limiting women's participation in public decision-making. Guided by the narratives from my informants and my theoretical framework, I argue that certain cultural perceptions about women in Ghana on the one hand and public office on the other will have to change; otherwise, a substantial increment in the number of women in public office will continue to be a challenge.

Chapter six assesses the role of the media in the promotion of more women in public office. The media can be an instrument of change in any society, whether for good or bad. Data based on this author's own experience in the field and two newspapers serve as

the main material for this chapter. I submit that the Ghanaian media has contributed to reinforce rather than change the negative perception of women in public office.

Chapter seven focuses on the internal dynamics of NGOs advocating for more women into public office using FIDA-Ghana as an example. This chapter examines from the organizational perspective reasons behind their seemingly inability to make an impact. Based on the experiences of my informants, two factors - administrative structure and resources are identified as having acted as a hindrance to advocacy groups like FIDA-Ghana in their efforts to place more women into public office.

I conclude this study with chapter eight by arguing that the present advocacy methods employed by women advocacy groups like FIDA-Ghana, while necessary, is not sufficient to change the status quo which exists in the Ghana society. I assert that as experience has shown, beneficiaries of the status quo will not simply allow change to happen without a fight. The study recommends that for FIDA-Ghana and like-minded organizations to win the fight, there is a need for more friendly engagement with the media and the ordinary citizens in Ghana. Also, an internal re-assessment of administrative structure and its impact on the organization's programmes is recommended.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

Any social scientific inquiry requires a methodology. This chapter will describe the methodology applied in this study. More specifically it will describe the kind of data collected and why, methods of data collection, factors that influenced the data collection, implications, and ethics.

The field work for this thesis was done in the months of June, July and August of 2008. When I arrived in Ghana the plan was to set out on the following day by making telephone contacts with my key informants. Before I left Norway, I had been able to make some contacts through friends and former colleagues at the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and University of Ghana. However, I had to cancel that plan due to family commitment and the fact that I was struck by malaria for some four days. Having satisfied the family demands and recovered from the malaria, the next week, it was time to set off.

2.2 Qualitative methodology

As already stated above, every systematic inquiry study requires a methodology. This study is no exception. Within social science, the choice is usually between qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. With the kind of information I was looking for, I needed to make a decision as to which of the three methodologies mentioned would enhance my chances of accessing it. This I did before even setting off for my fieldwork. In consultation with my supervisor, I decided to choose the qualitative methodology. The decision was based upon the advantages qualitative methodology has over the other methods especially in reference to the kind of data I needed. Dawson brings out the first advantage of qualitative methodology noting that it is extremely helpful if a researcher is seeking an exploration of ‘...attitudes, behaviour and experiences ...’ through ‘... an in-depth opinion from participants’ (Dawson 2006:14). The second advantage of quantitative methodology as I found in the literature is that it helps a researcher to understand and observe another culture. Third, it is also noted as helping to reveal how

organized the informants are. Fourth, it allows open-ended questions to be applied to a smaller sample size (Silverman 2005: 111). Further, according to Miles and Huberman (1994:10), other strengths of qualitative research are: its focus on natural occurrences, 'richness and holism', it enables going 'beyond snapshots', and putting emphasis on 'lived experience'. They warn however that, the realization of these strengths of qualitative research depend '...on the competence with which their analysis is carried out' (ibid: 1994:10). Finally, qualitative methodology was chosen as a method of my social research inquiry because of its reliance mainly on inductive approaches of investigating social phenomena. I believe it is the most appropriate methodology in providing a more authentic and comprehensive understanding of the meaning, context and challenges of advocacy.

Within the qualitative approach, Silverman has identified 4 methods that can be used. These 4 methods are observation, textual analysis, interviews and transcripts (Silverman 2005: 111). The main method used for this study was interview, though others, notably observation and textual analysis, were also employed to some degree.

2.3 Sources of data

According to Gupta, the first question that any empirical researcher faces is 'Where do I get the necessary information to prove my hypothesis or to answer my question?' (Gupta 2001:149) He identifies two sources of data, namely secondary and primary. Any information collected by anybody other than the researcher in a published form is secondary data, while primary data he notes, is information collected by the researcher himself. (Ibid: 149).

Data for this study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources were observation and interviews with my informants. Bearing in mind the topic under study as well as the nature of the case to be studied, structured open ended interviews method was used. This strategy allowed for the gathering of in-depth data from participants in the natural settings. The flexible nature of the open ended interview offered my respondents the opportunity to share their opinions on the issues at stake as

well as addressing other significant issues that arose in the course of the interview. The secondary sources were notably from two newspapers. These newspapers are the Daily Graphic and the Weekly Mirror. These two newspapers have been chosen based on how they are funded, credibility and circulation. The two newspapers are publicly funded newspapers. Therefore one expects them to comply with article 163 of the Ghanaian constitution which enjoins them to ‘...afford fair opportunities and facilities for the presentation of divergent views...’ (Republic of Ghana 1992:112) According to Garbrah (1994:51-52), the Daily Graphic is the most credible newspaper in Ghana. Asante notes that the Daily Graphic has the largest ‘... circulation in Ghana, printing 95,000 copies a day, six days a week.’ (2004:28).

2.4 Study area and population

My data was collected in Accra and Koforidua⁷. Accra was selected because it is the national capital and houses the headquarters of FIDA-Ghana. Additionally, that is where most FIDA-Ghana executives (my first category of key informants) live and work. Koforidua was selected almost as an after thought. This is because it was not part of my original plan, but based on the advice of some FIDA-Ghana members I talked to. They pointed out to me that of all the regional offices of FIDA-Ghana, the Koforidua one was the most vibrant. According to them, as a result of their programs some of the women at the Koforidua municipality⁸ have contested public office at both the local and national level. They therefore encouraged me to go there and talk to some of the women there. All the informants were adults and women only. All the FIDA-Ghana officials interviewed were lawyers except the administrative manager who was a graduate. I had proposed to interview 8 FIDA-Ghana officials. This could not be realized because the Executive Director and the President were both outside the country at the time I was conducting the research. The former was furthering her education in the United States whereas the latter was on a business trip. I must add that I talked to the president a few

⁷ Ghana has been divided into ten regions administratively each with a regional capital. Koforidua is the regional capital of the eastern region. Accra is both the national capital and also the capital of the Greater Accra Region.

⁸Three of the regional capitals are designated as metropolis while the rest are municipalities. Koforidua is designated as municipality while Accra is a metropolis.

days after my arrival requesting for an interview. She told me that she was to leave the country the following day on a business trip and this made it impossible for us to have the interview. Hence I was left with fewer officials and more beneficiaries than had originally been planned.

2.5 Research design and sampling methods.

My preliminary data collection in preparation for the fieldwork was a review of relevant and available local literature and documents on my study. Documents I reviewed include the *1992 Constitution of Ghana* (Republic of Ghana 1992), *The Women's Manifesto* (Women Manifesto 2004), *A Guide to women's participation in public office* (FIDA-Ghana), *Positioning Women and their concerns in Governance Process Processes... Experiences of District Assembly Women in Ghana 2003* (Abantu for Development 2003), and *Getting for District Elections 2006... a women's agenda* (Abantu for Development 2006). I also visited several libraries in Accra in search of relevant material, including the libraries of the Departments of Political department, the African Studies, the Blame Library and the Sociology Department all of the University of Ghana. Others libraries visited are that of Third World Network and Abantu for Development-NGOs who are also concern with placing women in public office.

My key informants were officials and beneficiaries of FIDA-Ghana programs arguing to place more women into public office.

Table showing the sampling size

CATEGORY	NUMBER
FIDA OFFICIALS	6
BENEFICIARIES	10

2.6. Breakdown of key informants.

A. Officials

1. A high court judge and executive member of FIDA-Ghana. (Identified in this thesis as the high court judge)
2. Former head of anti corruption and public education of Commission Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and two time president of FIDA-Ghana. Presently, an executive member of FIDA-Ghana. (Identified in the thesis as former president)
3. A lawyer at the Public Procurement Board of Ghana and an Executive member of FIDA-Ghana. (Identified as The executive member)
4. Administrative manager of FIDA-Ghana.
5. Two private legal practitioners who are members of FIDA-Ghana. (Identified as lawyer A and Lawyer B)

B. Beneficiaries

6. Program official of Abantu for Development⁹ and lecturer at the University of Ghana.
7. The coordinator of FIDA-Ghana at Koforidua. She is also the constituency women organizer of the former ruling party the NPP.
8. Two government appointed members of a district assembly. (Identified as appointee 1 and 2)
9. One elected member of a district assembly. (Identified as the elected member)
10. Five other beneficiaries who do not hold any public office now. (Identified from B1 to B5)

⁹ Abantu for Development is an NGO in Ghana which also argues for the placing of more women in public office. It works in close collaboration with FIDA-Ghana.

On the issue of anonymity, I explained to informants that due to the position some of them hold; (as identified above) sometimes it may become relevant to quote them in my study using their official titles. None of them objected to that.

2.7 Data collection

Interviewing was the method that I predominantly employed in my data collection. The main language employed for the interviews was English, except for three of my interviews in which the Akan language (in which I am fluent) was used. I also attended a seminar organized by NETRIGHT, a coalition of women's NGOs of which FIDA-Ghana is a member, on the 28 of July 2008. My role there was both participatory and observatory. This afforded me the opportunity to talk to a cross section of women with different expertise on the subject. I do not consider these talks as interviews but as participatory observation aiming to understand broadly the thinking of a broad spectrum of Ghanaian women on the subject under study.

Observation as a method of data collection was also employed during the fieldwork. In addition to observation of body language of key informants during interviews, I visited FIDA-Ghana's office in Accra several times to observe how the organization goes about its duties.

As I have mentioned, a review of current and relevant literature on my subject had already been done. This enhanced my understanding of the various concepts and the ongoing debate in Ghana during the fieldwork. It also helped to open my eyes to observe certain things and to pay attention, especially in relation to media coverage of women's political activities. At the time of the fieldwork, Ghana was in the midst of political campaign towards general elections in December 2008 and there was an ongoing debate on women's place in politics. More specifically, the debate was whether women should be offered safer seats within certain constituencies for parliament, in addition to all the presidential aspirants offering their vice-presidential slot to a woman.

2.8 Data analysis

I commenced my data analysis while in the field. Yin (2003:34) discusses the test involved in validating any data in any social science research. He groups them under construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. He explains these tests in the following ways:

Construct validity: establishing correct operational measure for the concepts being studied

Reliability: demonstrating that the operations of a study - such as data collection procedures - can be repeated, with the same results

Internal validity: establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions...

External validity: establishing the domain to which a study's finding can be generalized (Yin 2003:34).

.He adds that construct validity and reliability are the two tests that need to be employed as a tactic in data collection. The other two are for data analysis. These two tests I used to good effect in my data collection. This was done by looking a various sources of evidence to help obtain a chain of evidence. My aim was to be able to develop a data base for my study. I recorded five of the interviews conducted. Also, I took field notes on some of those I did not record. Transcription of the recordings has been done.

The validity and reliability of any social science research can be ascertained from the data collection (Yin 2003:33). Throughout the fieldwork, I did my best to ascertain that the findings would pass these two tests. From the design of the interview guide to my conduct in the field, care was taken to ensure conformity with social science standards required for any social inquiry. For instance, the questions in the interview guide were designed painstakingly to avoid leading questions. Second, the fieldwork was able to provide answers to the questions that this study set itself. Therefore, I believe that the

findings of this study to some degree can be generalized, especially when two main issues are taken into consideration. The first is some of the key variables that have been identified as militating against placing more women in public office in Ghana. Second is what has been the experience of FIDA-Ghana in relation to placing more women into public office. FIDA-Ghana can be used as an example for NGOs advocating for women into public office in Ghana because it has been the face and the most vociferous advocate for that cause. Its success or otherwise can therefore be considered as a reflection of the other NGOs.

2.9 Research instruments

The interview guide I developed in consultation with my supervisor before leaving for the fieldwork was my major research instrument. The interview guide was designed with the capture of the major themes of the study in mind. Bearing in mind my gender, I made a conscious effort during the design of the interview guide to block possible routes of biases on my part, or on the part of the informants. Care was also taken during the designing of the interview guide and the interviews to ward off any traces of bias on my part or that of my informants. Another thing I also took into account when designing my interview guide was the calibre of my proposed informants. Primarily, officials of FIDA-Ghana and beneficiaries of FIDA-Ghana advocacy programmes in relation to public office placement were my core informants. Therefore most of my informants were able to express themselves quite well and in a coherent manner. I sought to make the interview guide, a suitable instrument that offered them the platform to do so.

My second reason for choosing an interview guide was to help find out the reason (s) was to help achieve the objective of this study. As discussed in chapter one, the main objective is to find out the seemingly insignificant impact made in the increment of women numbers in public office in Ghana despite several years of advocacy by women groups. The specific objectives of this study are to:

2.10 Ethics

There is no official requirement for Ghanaian social science students to obtain permission from any statutory body before they embark on research for academic purposes. However, I had to write a letter with a photocopy of my student card attached to the headquarters of FIDA-Ghana. In fact it was a demand made by the administrative manager when we first met. She intimated to me that she must have it as record. Aside that nobody really demanded any formal introduction from me. Any time I visited any library all that I had to do was to verbally communicate to them my mission and the staff there were very cooperative. Getting consent from my informants was not difficult. I did not encounter any difficulty when I had to explain the purpose of my study to my informants. All of them appeared satisfied at least from my observation and seemed to understand why I was conducting the study. In fact, I was really surprised at how welcoming almost all of them were. One ethical challenge I faced rather unsuspectingly was with the recording of the interviews. Some of my informants objected to it and I therefore had to take notes. My decision to accede to their objection created a situation of trust between me and them. Their subject of objection was not me. They explained that some media people have been going round in Ghana masquerading as researchers, posing questions and recording people's voices only to play them on air. One of my key informants had a reservation with the recordings on the grounds that someone had quoted her in a previous study and the English was so bad that it portrayed her as someone who could not express herself well in the English language. A situation she found extremely discomforting, taking into consideration the position she occupies. She gave me permission to record but 'instructed' me to 'listen and write well' when quoting her.

2. 11Challenges

Initially, I faced an enormous challenge with accessing key informants, especially the FIDA-Ghana officials. Lawyers worldwide are known to be very busy people. This problem was alleviated a bit through the untiring efforts of two of my gatekeepers, the administrative manager of FIDA-Ghana and my former boss at the Commission on

Human Rights and Administrative Justice. All my informants I booked an appointment with kept it.

Having solved the problem of accessibility, the problem of time then raised its ugly head. Most of my informants would tell me to make the interview short before we even start. To demonstrate how busy their schedule was, they would be looking at their watch and asking me the number of questions left. For example, the high court judge I interviewed was to sit at 9 am local time. We had to conduct the interview between 8:30 am and the 9am because according to her that was the only time in the day that she would have time for me. There was occasional intrusion from other staff members at their workplaces. Telephone calls to most of my informants were frequent. These served as a bit of an interruption. This did not affect their answer to the question though, because only relevant questions were asked and that they turned out rather to be straight to the point.

Another challenge I faced during my interview with a group of beneficiaries at Koforidua. The interviews were done on the premises of FIDA-Ghana. Occasionally, the coordinator there would come to where we were doing the interview and try to put in a word. I had to find a polite way of keeping her quiet, taking into consideration her position and cultural sensitivities. My guess was that she was trying to show me either she was on top of her job or ensure that I come out with a certain form of report that would enhance her position. That did not significantly affect the data however, because most of the informants would laugh it off and then we would continue with the interview after she had left.

Another challenge was keeping my own views under wraps. This is because at times, they differed sharply from what was being expressed. I had to consistently tell myself that I was not part of the informants. My job was to record what they would say and analyze it later.

2.12 My position and fieldwork

Obviously, any researcher must have a certain level of knowledge and expectations before venturing into fieldwork. I am no exception here. Such knowledge and

expectations help a great deal in the registration process in the field. It also serves as a form of an interpretative tool. Though no one can claim to be fully prepared for the exigencies of fieldwork, I must state here unequivocally that the theoretical knowledge imparted to us at the Department of Gender and Development proved to be a valuable asset. The advice from my supervisor to expect a certain level of behaviour from my intended informants and to ask relevant and straight to the point questions proved to be spot-on. This knowledge and advice helped to calm my nerves in certain situations. Also, it helped me to probe further in certain issues by asking relevant questions while keeping in mind the busy schedule of my respondents.

Second, my gender as a male helped me a great deal. All my informants were women. They were surprised that a man was studying gender. Even more importantly, they were also pleased to know that I was writing about topic some claimed was very dear to their heart. This made them very cooperative considering their busy schedule.

In Koforidua, my position as a student in Norway really proved to be the attracting point and I used it to good effect. Most of the women were pleased that I was really interested in their activities despite studying abroad. The respect given me was enormous. This affected my fieldwork positively in that a lot of the women were willing to talk to me. Perhaps, the only small problem I had was when some of them asked me how they can access the quota scholarship for their children.

It is important to note in conclusion that in spite of the challenges discussed above; I feel I was able to obtain sufficient and reliable data for this study. It is reasonable to assume that the use of multiple data sources and the maintenance of a chain of evidence enhanced the reliability and credibility of the research findings.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Ideas do not exist in a vacuum. They inhabit a social setting. To be able to understand how certain ideas exist and the environment they exist in, social scientists use tools like theories, model and concepts. Silverman differentiates theory from other research terms like model, concept and methodology by defining it as ‘a set of concepts used to define and/or explain some phenomenon’ (Silverman 2005:98). In other words, for a researcher to be able to properly explain a phenomenon he or she is studying, the person needs a theory as a guide. What it means is that the theory chosen must be suitable for the work under study.

According to Creswell (2003: xxv) a theory’s suitability and its use is linked to the methodology the study employs. Within qualitative methodology, (the methodology this study is employing) he notes that a theory ‘...may often serve as a lens for inquiry...’ (Ibid).

This section discusses the theoretical perspectives within which my data will be analyzed. In this study I draw inspiration from three theories, namely: the Social Construction of Target Populations (SCTP), the National-Style Approach (NSP) and the Social Responsibility Theory (SRT). I believe that these three theories may adequately contribute to the explanation of my findings from my fieldwork.

3. 2 The Social Construction of Target Population Theory (SCTP)

Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram (1993) are the proponents of the Social Construction of Target Populations Theory (hereafter referred to as SCTP). In their own words SCTP ‘...refers to the cultural characterizations of popular images of persons or groups whose behaviour and well-being are affected by public policy. These characterizations are normative and evaluative, portraying groups in positive or negative terms through symbolic language, metaphors, and stories’ (Schneider and Ingram 1993:334).

Further, they argue that ‘...social construction of target population has a powerful influence on public officials and shapes both the policy agenda and the actual design of policy’ (ibid). In other words, Schneider and Ingram are of the view that groups within societies are treated according to how that society sees them. Whether a segment within a society receives a positive or negative treatment is based on that society’s perception of the group. The authors contend that, within every society, pressure is mounted on public officials to design and implement policies to favour certain groups while the other groups within the society ‘...receive messages that encourage them to combat policies detrimental to them through various avenues of political participation’ (ibid).

Schneider and Ingram go further to define the key terms in the theory. According to them:

‘Target population’ is a concept from the policy design literature that directs attention to the fact that policy is purposeful and attempts to achieve goals by change people’s behaviour

‘Social stereotypes’ are about particular groups of people that have been created by politics, *culture*¹⁰, socialization, history, *the media*¹¹, literature, religion....(emphasis mine)

‘Positive constructions’ include images such as deserving, intelligent, honest, public spirited (ibid)

Negative constructions include images such as undeserving, stupid, dishonest and selfish. They agree that this list is by no means exhaustive and that there are several elements within both the positive and the negative brackets that can be used to describe certain elements within a society.

It is reasonable to argue based on this theory that within societies groups are portrayed positively or negatively depending on how the society perceives them. In the Ghanaian

¹⁰ I have italicized culture because it is one of the concepts I will be using in my data analysis.

¹¹ The same applies to the media

socio-cultural context, men tend to be perceived as the only positive and active actors within politics and public office in general. Women are generally perceived as weak. Based on these societal perceptions, it is obvious that women would not be positively portrayed as politicians, which would contribute to keeping the numbers of women in public life low.

Hyden, asserts that when it comes to marriage within African societies, men do the acquisition of women based on the assumption that they (women) ‘... are both the means of economic production and the means of social reproduction’ (Hyden 2007:166). He contends that this perception has persisted throughout generations. However, he accepts that within the younger and educated generation this view may be changing, albeit in an instrumental way. In his view, therefore, Africa is not like Eurasia where real love between a man and a woman leading to respect for her values and integrity leads to marriage. While I disagree with this later assertion, I concede that in most Ghanaian societies there exists a certain perception of acceptable behaviour for women. For example, among the Akans, a woman is highly valued for her ability to reproduce and to keep the family lineage line going. Thus, women may be favourably portrayed in cases that correspond with culturally ascribed characteristics, and negatively described when the opposite is the case. Choosing the SCTP as one of my theories will help me to explore how such perceptions may affect the efforts of women NGOs like FIDA-Ghana to place more women into public office.

Figure 4. 1

Social Constructions and Political Power: Types of Target Populations			
Constructions			
		Positive	Negative
Power	Strong	Adavantaged The elderly Business Veterans Scientists	Contenders The rich Big Unions Minorities Cultural elites Moral Majority
	Weak	Dependents Children Mothers Disabled	Deviants Criminals Drug addicts Communists Flag Burners Gangs

This table is adapted from Ingram and Schneider 1993:336

The diagram above (Figure 1) is how Ingram and Schneider graphically represent how groups are perceived within societies. In other words they try to group the various sectors of members within the society into four. This they did depending upon whether in their view the groups mentioned exercise weak or strong power and also whether the power they exercise is negative or positive. The groups within the table above are grouped according to the ‘convergence of power and social constructions...’Ingram and Schneider (1993:336). Although the diagram is developed on the basis of American society, I argue that it also represent the perception that exists among the Ghanaian society in relation to roles. This inevitably affects people’s perception on who should be in public office in relation to gender.

I deem SCTP appropriate for this study because it would help me to realize the objectives that this study sets itself. SCTP will help me to analyze my main factors in my empirical chapter and to demonstrate its relevance to the reasons for the continued low number of women in public office in Ghana. I argue here that social construction of target population is an important, albeit an overlooked phenomenon. SCTP has an advantage helping to answer Lasswell’s 1936 question “‘who gets what, when and how?’” within a

society. This puzzle is very relevant here because it sums up the objectives described above for this study.

In with the above therefore, SCTP is a useful theoretical framework in understanding why, despite several years of advocacy by groups like FIDA-Ghana, the number of women in public office has not increased and in some cases even has dropped. In specific terms it would help to realize the objectives

1. Trace the historical trend of women in public office in Ghana from pre-independence to the year 2000.
2. Identify and discuss key variables that undermine Ghanaian women's effort in trying to seek public office.
3. Analyze the key reasons for the continuous existence of such undermining variables despite several years of advocacy by women groups such as FIDA-Ghana.

In conclusion, this theory was chosen because it deals with how perceptions contribute to the role society assigns to a certain section of its membership. Culture is a central factor that contributes to forming people's perceptions of groups in society, and the media is a central channel for that. Hence, this theory covers all my foci in the thesis, and serves as the main theoretical framework.

3.3 The National-Style Approach (NSP)

The national-style approach is an analytical framework for organizational analysis that takes the environment in which an organization operates into consideration. The basic argument of this theory is that the environment in which an organization operate does affect its performance. In the words of Tvedt, 'within this analytical perspective the organizational structure and landscape in a country are seen as a reflection of its cultural and historical characteristics rather than as functional products of market and state failures' Tvedt (1998:57). Within this theory, the crucial variable of explanation is the national organizational culture, the reason being that institutional choices are influenced largely by historical contingencies. This theory contends that to be able to analyze an institution very well the unique historical circumstances of the society in which it finds

itself must be taken into consideration. Thus, to the adherents of this approach an organization's size, role and character are influenced by the environment it operates in.

In the same line DiMaggio and Anheier argues that 'non-profit-sector function, origins and behaviour reflect specific legal definitions, cultural inheritances, and state policies in different national societies' (ibid: 137). Further, they assert that 'one can predict the legal form of most organizations if one knows the industry and nation-state in which they operate' (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990:139). This theory sees tradition as being the root of institutional design. In the view of Hood and Schuppert, in studying any organization, it is a requirement to search for 'a deep and holistic understanding of the individual political system within which these political decisions are made' (Hood and Schuppert, 1990:95). Such an analysis can also help the understanding of why and how societies choose a certain form of governance.

Using this approach is not without problems, especially with reference to developing countries. According to Tvedt the NSP has significant weaknesses:

1. First, the theory talk about a deep-seated cultural traditions as decisive while paying no attention to implications of abrupt political and economic changes and instability for NGO work, and thus neglects an important aspect of many developing countries.
2. Second a purely national focus will downplay the impact of external influence on the organizational landscape (1998: 63).

These weaknesses are ones I agree with. However, like for all other theories, the question that arises is how useful is this approach to this study. In other words, why is this approach employed in this study? The national-style approach is being employed in this study because it helps bring to the fore the environment within which NGOs like FIDA-Ghana operate, and the importance of that environment for the experiences of FIDA-Ghana. It also makes it possible to explain why NGOs do what they do even if seemingly insignificant impact is being made.

3.4 Social Responsibility Theory (SRT)

As indicated in my methodology chapter, some of my data is from two leading newspapers in Ghana. In the analysis of these data in particular, I have decided to employ the Social Responsibility Theory (SRT). According to McQuail (1989:116), the Commission on Freedom of the Press (CFP) is the proponent of this theory. Dominick (1993:64) notes that the SRT calls for the upholding of free expression and press freedom. It advocates for the opening of the media space across countries throughout so that the journalists can practice their profession without fear or favour. In other words, the SRT sees media freedom as a universal basic right that everyone within any society must be able to exercise and enjoy without being repressed. Further, it demands that the media have the right to criticize the government and other public institutions responsible for the public good without being harassed.

The proponents of this theory recognize that this freedom is not absolute. Thus, while there is the recognition of the right of the media to criticize the government and other public institutions, its proponents concede that the press can also sometimes go overboard. For Black and Bryant (1992:532) therefore, in order for the media to be able to claim and enjoy the freedom prescribed by SRT, it must fulfill the obligation of adequately representing all shades of political and social opinion as fairly as possible, to enable the general public to be able to make a fair and accurate decision. Therefore within the SRT the media has a responsibility to promote and preserve democracy by being responsive to societal needs and interest.

SRT also affirms the society's right to expect and in fact demand a high standard of performance and professionalism from the media to ensure that the needs of the public interest is served. Merrill (1991:15), for instance, points out that if the press fails to fulfill the role of equal and fair representation assigned to them by the society, then it has failed to ensure public good. When that situation occurs, then SRT reasons that governments and other public institutions have a good justification to interfere in order to ensure public good. The thrust of the theory therefore is the need for the media to balance the duty to hold those in public office to account while at the same time ensuring that

they uphold and fulfill their own social responsibility and as a consequence safeguard the public good. This calls for fair coverage for all manners of people and all shades of opinion within and among the various groups.

This theory is applicable to my study in various ways. First, it will help me to assess the media's role in representation of women's issues during the recently completed general elections in Ghana. Ghana has had a pluralistic and vibrant media sector since 1992 when the country returned to constitutional rule after eleven years of military dictatorship. Called the Fourth Estate of the Realm in Ghana, it is credited as one of the institutions that have helped to prevent the violation and overthrow of the 1992 Constitution. Therefore it will be interesting to analyze this important institution's reporting on women's issues for the 2008 elections in Ghana.

This analysis, I argue, is important within this study because in relative terms the media's representation of issues may be considered a microcosm of how a society values the issues. Thus, the manner in which women's issues are treated by the media in Ghana may give an indication of how such issues are perceived within the general Ghanaian populace. Second, this theory is also important because of the way it is linked to the other two theories. This theory is also applicable to the Ghanaian media landscape because the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana that regulates access to public office in Ghana insists on the right it builds on. Article 163, for instance, states that '*All state-owned media shall afford fair opportunities and facilities for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions*'.

The media in Ghana is famous for calling political leaders to order whenever they sense that the constitution has been breached. It will therefore be interesting to see how the media has complied with the constitutional provision stated above. In sum therefore, the SRT has been chosen to help me analyze (based on the coverage of the two newspapers) whether issues of women's political participation are being given fair opportunity in the media.

3.5 The relationship between my three theories

The three theories acknowledge that organizations and public decision-making are done within a certain environment. They give great importance to the impact of culture in public decision-making. The environment that a group finds itself in plays a crucial role in determining the attention that certain actors within the state are likely to give to its demands. Further, the theories recognize the existence of certain forms of inequalities within societies. These inequalities have led to opportunities on one hand, and lack of them on the other, for segments within the society in relation to participation in its governance. These inequalities have led to the institutionalization of forms of cultural and social status quo in societies as well as the emergence of non state actors who demand certain forces within the state to rectify the inequalities.

CHAPTER FOUR: GHANAIAN WOMEN IN PUBLIC OFFICE: FROM PRE-INDEPENDENCE TO 2008

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a historical overview over the number of women in key public positions from pre-independence to 2008. To help put current numbers of women in public office into perspective, the current numbers in the legislative arm of government is also compared to current averages of women numbers in regions across the globe. I trace the number of women who have held key public positions in Ghana from just before independence up to 2008.

4.2 Colonial period

Ghana was under British colonial rule for several decades until 1957. During those decades, the colonial administration developed several institutions and structures to ensure the smooth administration of the country. Initially all the key colonial institutions were manned by British personnel, but following persistent agitation and criticism from the local intelligentsia, a few Ghanaians were appointed to the legislative council¹². Most of those who got appointed into the colonial administration were men. The only woman known within Ghana's political history to have attained a significant leadership position before independence was Mabel Dove, who became a member of the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly.

4.3 The struggle for independence

Self-determination as a right and principle for people under colonial yoke gained currency especially after the First World War. Though blighted again by Second World War, the continued agitation and protest for self-rule worldwide after War, led colonial

¹² The legislative council in the Gold Coast (that was what Ghana was called until independence) was made up of British officers and later on few people from a section s of the local people were added. They were selected not elected. The council had no powers except that members met periodically to discuss national issues and to advice the governor. Their advice could be taken or rejected by the governor because it was non-binding.

masters like Britain albeit reluctantly to grant states like Ghana autonomy and eventually independence. The key people who led the struggle for independence in Ghana were men¹³. They were however aided by strong women on their side especially in the organization of people at the grass root level. Allah-Mensah (2005:14) points out that the role of women during Ghana's independence struggle can be found in the support they gave to the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) - the party that eventually led Ghana to independence. According to her, most of the women supporters were traders and their support came in the form of what she calls 'financial assistance and support services'. Tsikata (1999:75) has also noted the contribution of women to the CPP's rise to power. She points out that women were responsible for the organization of the youth wing of the party as well as the women's wing.

Ghana gained her independence from Britain on the 6th of March 1957 under the Prime Ministership of Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention Peoples Party (CPP). In Africa Ghana is seen as in a 'special position...as the trailblazer in the decolonization and independence of sub-Saharan Africa...' (Amamoo2007:200). As the first country, south of the Sahara to gain political independence, all colonial Africa at the time looked to her for inspiration, assistance and direction. Ghanaians themselves, women included, looked forward to an era of economic prosperity, full employment, social and economic justice and equal political participation (ibid: 200)

As a political system, Ghana inherited the Westminster model of governance in 1957 but abandoned it in 1960 claiming that it was 'divisive, ill suited and undemocratic' (Jonah 1987:62). This action led to the pronouncement of a one party state which eventually led to Nkrumah's downfall in 1966 in a coup d'etat by a military junta. This accounts a lot for the political turbulence and instability that Ghana has endured over the years. Since then, Ghana has experimented with several systems ranging from civilian to military regimes until it firmly decided to go back to the democratic dispensation in 1992.

¹³ They are known in Ghana as the big six.

4.4 The CPP and women

Ghanaian women were absent from the independence legislative assembly of 1957. This situation was however rectified in 1960 when 10 women were elected by a special ballot to the national assembly. This was done under the Representation of the People (Women Members) Act No.8 of 1960 and was considered at the time to be very positive and progressive and an example for other African countries. Ghana was, in other words, one of the first countries to introduce a quota system for women in public office (FIDA Ghana :xvi) Further, Tsikata notes that *'an assessment of the CPP government policies towards women has noted that it consciously encouraged the participation of women in politics and public life with the result that a few women held high offices as members of parliament, deputy ministers and district commissioners, and that these were not acts of tokenism, but a recognition of their abilities'* (Tsikata 1999:79). Thus, it can reasonably be stated here that the CPP did not forget women upon its ascension to power after independence.

4.5 Women and two short-lived civilian regimes.

Nkrumah was overthrown in a coup d'état in 1966. From then on until 1992, Ghana was largely under military rule. Though the country went back to civilian rule in 1969 and 1979, those administrations were short lived. A cursory look at these two short lived civilian administrations reveal that they did not follow the progressive policies the CPP started in relation to placing more women into public office. The next civilian administration after Nkrumah was led by Dr Abrefa Busia, and the era is called the second republic. It came into effect in 1969.

After the elections 140 members of parliament were sworn into office. Only 1 of them was a woman. The number became 2 when another woman entered the house through a bye election in 1970. Busia was eventually overthrown in a military coup. The next civilian administration came in 1979 and that era is called the third republic. The third republican government was headed by Dr Hilla Limann and was mainly made out of remnants of Nkrumah's CPP. After the 1979 elections only 5 women got elected into

parliament out of a total number of a 140 representatives. 1 woman got appointed as a minister of state and 2 as deputy ministers. The third republic also did not last its full term. Power was taken by a bunch of military adventurers led by Jerry John Rawlings who had in fact help to put in place a mechanism to return the country to civilian rule in 1979. May be due to the fact that both were shortlived, there was no affirmative action from these two regimes.

4.6 Ghanaian women and military regimes

It appears that while the two civilian regimes described above did not put measures in place to place more women into public office, the military regimes that overthrew them followed the same familiar pattern. It is worth noting that until the emergence of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Government only one woman held any key leadership position in the country. Military regimes like the National Redemption Council (NRC) lead by General Kutu Acheampong sought to realize the aims and objectives of the United Nations 1975 International year for women. He sought to do that by creating institutions and not by appointments. He for instance established the National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) by a decree titled NRCD 322. It did not reflect in the form of appointments into high political leadership positions, however.

Indeed, it was after the overthrow of the Acheampong Regime in 1979 by another military regime that the first appointment of a woman into a key political position came. The woman appointed was Mrs Amon Nikoi as Commissioner of Foreign Affairs. She performed her duties so creditably that when that military regime was overthrown also in the same year by another military regime lead by Jerry Rawlings she was asked to remain in government. Allah-Mensah (2004:16) searches for reasons for the virtually non-existent membership of women in succeeding military regimes in Ghana. She points to the ‘...very nature and formation...’ (ibid: 16) of such regimes. Most, if not all military coups are led by men. Also, due to the fact that they come to power without the people’s mandate and therefore through illegitimate means, they turn to be dictatorial in nature. This is because they want to use every available measure they can, legitimate or otherwise, to institutionalize themselves in power. This sometimes led these regimes to

adopt repressive laws and actions. This makes them reluctant to offer positions to women, and for women to take them when they are offered. Second, Allah-Mensah argues that the military regimes in Ghana were not gender sensitive. This, she notes, is obviously clear from their political appointments and policies. She accuses them of not only being ‘averse to women’s political participation and contribution to public life...’ (ibid: 16), but also of being responsible for inhibiting ‘...women’s full contribution to the development of politics and administration in Ghana’ (ibid: 16).

4.7 The PNDC Government 1981-1992

On the dawn of December 1, 1981, a group of soldiers led Jerry John Rawlings¹⁴ overthrew the democratically elected government of Dr Hilla Limann. Thus, Rawlings overthrew a constitution that he had helped to put in place. Rawlings¹⁵ and his Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) ruled Ghana for 11 years, that is, from 1981-1992, before the country was returned to constitutional rule.

The PNDC sought to help to incorporate women into public governance. This was not done on the basis of political appointment, though. According to Oquaye (1999:4) women comprised only 6% of the ruling council and 3% of the cabinet. The strategy the regime employed with regard to women is what Allah-Mensah calls the ‘co-optation strategy’ (Allah-Mensah 2004:16). Following this strategy, it set up a women’s wing under an NGO called the 31st December Women’s Movement (hereafter called the Movement) led by the wife of Jerry Rawlings, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings. While the Movement consistently emphasised its neutrality in public, it is an open secret in Ghana that it was always connected to the PNDC. What the movement did was not to push for more women into public office, but rather to help mobilize them into groups to

¹⁴ Jerry John Rawlings first came to power in 1979 when he led a group of young soldiers to overthrow the then military government headed by General Akufu. They named their ruling junta the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. After doing what they called ‘house cleaning’ and executing a lot of people including 3 former heads of state for corruption and constitutional disruption, they held elections and handed over power to Dr Hilla Limann on September 24, 1979.

¹⁵ In fact Rawlings is the longest serving head of state in the political life of Ghana. Aside his brief ascension to power in 1979 he ruled Ghana as a military head from 1981 to 1992 and then as a civilian head of state from 1992 to 2000. Thus he serves as Ghana’s ruler for 19 years.

engage in economic activities. It acquired and distributed gari¹⁶ processing machines, opened daycare centres in its drive to help women improve their economic status. It is debatable whether the activities of the movement helped to open political space for women during the PNDC era and upon return to constitutional rule. What is undeniable, however, is that some of the leading women within the Movement have risen to be key members of the main one of the leading political parties in Ghana which is called the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Indeed the current ministers for Central Region and Science and Technology were leading members of the Movement.

4.8 The return to constitutional rule.

Ghana returned to constitutional rule after eleven years of military rule in 1992. After the presidential election, which was won by the then military ruler Jerry Rawlings, the opposition parties boycotted the parliamentary elections. So after the 1992 elections, all the two hundred seats in parliament were occupied by members of the National Democratic Congress, which became the ruling party, and its allies. 14 women were elected into parliament on the onset and later on another was added on the ticket of the NDC to make the number 15 through a bye election. It must be added here that no woman contested for the presidential slot. When it came to appointments into the executive, only 2 women were initially were appointed into the cabinet.

In the following therefore, my task is to put into perspective how women have fared in terms of appointments into public office into perspective. The searchlight will be thrown on key public institutions, primarily the legislature. Tables and a pictorial diagrams will be used to depict and explain the numbers of women in actual and percentage terms since 1960. To demonstrate how low the number of women in Ghana currently is, a comparison is made using regional averages of women MPs globally.

¹⁶ Gari is a staple food in Ghana made from cassava which has been harvested, dried and fried.

Table-1: Women Members of Parliament since 1960

Year	1960	1965	1969	1979	1992	1996	2000	2004	2006
TOTAL MP	104	104	140	140	200	200	200	230	230
Women MP	10	19	1	5	15	18	19	25	18
Men MP	94	85	139	135	185	182	181	205	212
% of women MPS to total seats	9.6	18.2	0.7	3.5	8	9	9.5	10.8	7.9

Source: Extracted from Allah-Mensah 2005:28. The last two boxes constructed by the author based on information extracted from <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> in 4 April 2009.

Figure-2: Women Members in Parliaments since 1960

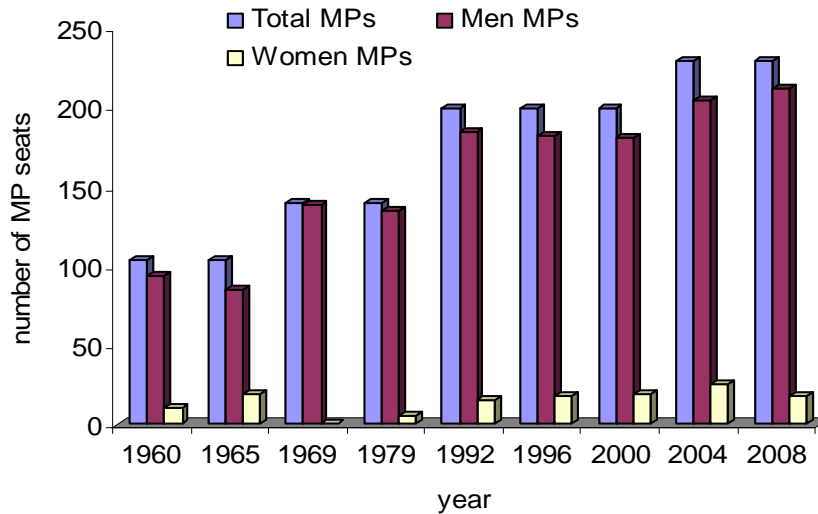


Table- 2: Regional averages of women MPs Globally

Regions	Single house or lower house	Upper house or senate	Both houses combined
Nordic Countries	41.4%	-	-
Americas	21.8%	20.2%	21.5%
Europe-OSCE member countries including Nordic countries	21.3%	19.4%	20.9%
Europe-OSCE member countries	19.3%	19.4%	19.3%
Sub-Saharan Africa	18.1%	21.4%	18.5%
Asia	18.0%	16.5%	17.8%
Pacific	13.0%	32.6%	15.2%
Arab States	9.7%	7.0%	9.1%

¹⁷ Source: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> in 4 April 2009.

Figure 1 and the tables show the reversed journey that Ghana has made over the years in relation to women getting into the legislature. Table 1 shows actual numbers and their percentages of women elected to the Ghanaian parliament from 1965 to 2008¹⁸. Table 11 is an overview of percentages of women members of parliament globally based on regional averages. Table 1 above indicates that, in terms of actual numbers, there has not been any significant increase since independence. It also illustrate that since 1960 when women entered parliament, there has not been any significant increment in percentage terms either. Indeed, the women ratio has declined in percentage terms. For example,

¹⁷ NB: Regions are classified by the descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single house. This format is particularly relevant to Ghana it operates the single house legislature.

¹⁸ At the time I went to the field to collect my data Ghana was in the midst of elections for both presidential and parliamentary elections. The result of the parliamentary election for women is what has been shown in the last box. Some key women including ministers of state who were tipped to retain their seats lost them.

while in 1965 women made-up of 18.2% of Members of Parliament (MPs), in 2008 they only constituted 7.9 a drop of about 11%.

The situation becomes even more interesting when the figures above are compared with the regional averages in table two. A comparison of the two tables suggests that Ghana's current number of women MPs is lower, in percentage terms, than all the regional figures. These include sub-Saharan Africa, where Ghana is geographically situated, and Arab States, where liberal democracy that empower women to access public office are not largely practiced. In 1965, almost 34 years ago, Ghana had 18.2% of its representatives in parliament being women. This historic figure is better able to compete with the regional situations elsewhere in the world than the current one. It is higher than the Sub-Saharan average, and not so far away from the OSCE member countries. That 1965 figure was a result of the affirmative action of President Nkrumah.

At the executive level the situation appear to be little different. Recent data gathered during my fieldwork also show that men continue to dominate women in key ministerial positions. For example, out of a cabinet¹⁹ of 19 in the Kufour administration only 2 were women. Of the 2, 1 was a Minister for Women and Children Affairs while the other was for fisheries. For other ministerial positions that falls outside the rank of cabinet, the situation appears little different. For example the ministerial appointments by Kufour released by the information Department are shown in table 3.

¹⁹ In Ghana not all ministers are members of cabinet. The cabinet is mainly made up of senior ministers who hold key positions within the government. The maximum number of cabinet members allow by the constitution is 19.

Table-3: Women in key executive positions under President Kufour

POSITIONS	TOTAL NUMBER	MALES NUMBER	%	FEMALES NUMBER	%
Cabinet Ministers	18	16	89	2	11
Regional Ministers	10	10	100	0	0
Deputy Regional Ministers	10	6	60	4	40
Sector Ministers	29	25	86	4	14
Deputy Sector Ministers	39	29	74	10	26

Source: Information Department Service Department of Ghana, July 2005

In reference to the judiciary, women make up 4 out of 13 of the judges in the Supreme Court, 4 out of 40 in the court of appeal and 12 out of 65²⁰ in the high court.

At the time President Kufour and the NPP was leaving office, after 8 years of his rule, the hopes of women activists appear to have faded. Similar patterns in relation to numbers of women in public office in Ghana seem to have re-emerged. Summing the number of women in public office after 8 years of NPP rule, The Daily Graphic reported that women occupy only 25 seats (11 percent) out of the 230 seats in the parliament in Ghana²¹. As shown in table 1 above after the recently conducted parliamentary and

²⁰ These numbers were derived from my interview with Justice Margaret Insaaidoo, a high court judge, on July 14 2008

²¹ Reference to the 2004 parliament of Ghana.

presidential elections the number has dropped from 25 in parliament to 18²². In percentage terms it has now decreased from 11 to 7.89.

At the district assembly level women constituted 10% of assembly members while in the public service there were only 5 chief directors as against 30 male chief directors. There were 3 female members of the council of state as against 20 males, 4 female ministers as against 30 males and 14 deputy ministers out of 49. (Source: Daily Graphic²³, July 24, 2008:11)

4.9 Conclusion

It is clear from the above that despite several years of advocacy by women's groups like FIDA-Ghana, the number of women in public office remain low. Indeed, in some cases, in percentage terms it has declined. The question that arises is what reasons account for the decline. Thus, in the following empirical chapters my task will be to identify factors that have been central in producing the above situation. This will be done with reference to my main research question of what account for the low number of women in public office, despite several years of advocacy by women's groups like FIDA-Ghana?

Data I have gathered, suggest that three factors are important contributors to the situation described above without claiming that these are the only ones of significance. These three factors are: the *cultural environment*; *the role of the media* and *the internal dynamics of NGOs* advocating for more women into public office, using FIDA-Ghana as an example.

²² See http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2123_E.htm

²³ The Daily Graphic is the most authoritative newspaper in Ghana. It has the widest readership and generally accepted as very credible.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

5.1 Introduction

As indicated in the previous chapter, the narratives of my informants suggest there exist a cultural environment in Ghana that serves as a hindrance to women accessing public office. The analysis of this chapter will be framed within the theoretical framework of the Social Construction of Target Populations (SCTP) as presented in my theoretical chapter. As noted by Schneider and Ingram, SCTP ‘...refers to the cultural characterizations of popular images of persons or groups whose behaviour and well-being are affected by public policy. These characterizations are normative and evaluative, portraying groups in positive or negative terms through symbolic language, metaphors, and stories’ (Schneider and Ingram 1993:334). The scholars have also argued that public policy making is influenced by the environment that the policy makers find themselves.

As FIDA-Ghana sees it, the continued low number of women in public office in Ghana is the result of the ‘... cultural environment...’ (FIDA-Ghana 2006: xix) that is often ‘...unfriendly and hostile’ (ibid: xix). Narratives of my informants appear to support this perception of the cultural environment as hostile and unfriendly. In the following therefore, I discuss, (based on my informant narratives) ways in which culture has sometimes been used in a discriminatory or abusive way against women. In other words, this chapter is a reflection on cultural practices identified by informants as serving as a hindrance to women accessing public office in Ghana. Under the broad theme of ‘The cultural environment’, four factors will constitute the main foci for the discussion in this chapter. These four factors are:

1. Culture and public policy
2. Male perceptions of women seeking leadership positions
3. Inheritance
4. Land

Culture is a very important component of the Ghanaian society. All the various ethnic groups in Ghana are identified in the public arena by their cultural traits. The framers of

the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana recognized this. Article 11 (2) identifies customary law as part of the common law of Ghana and by extension the constitution itself. It defines customary law in article 11 (3) as ‘... the rules of law which by custom are applicable to particular communities in Ghana’. Further, it states in article 26 (1) that ‘every person is entitled to enjoy, practice, profess, maintain and promote any culture...’ subject only to the constitution. Thus, what the 1992 constitution does is to recognize the different cultural backgrounds that exist in the various ethnic groupings and reveal itself in customs. Culture is an essential part of everyday Ghanaian life. Ghana has a rich and vibrant culture with many positive aspects such as diversity, respect and consideration for others irrespective of age or status. Most Ghanaian culture also has a preference for consensus building instead of conflict. Thus, culture has been credited as one of the key variables that have kept Ghana united and going in the face of adversity (Women Manifesto 2000:41).

5.2 Operationalising culture.

In the literature, views differ as to the meaning of culture. This is because ‘...it presents definitional problems, is difficult to quantify, and operates in a highly complex context with psychological, institutional, political, geographical and other factors’ (Harrison and Huntington 2000: xxx). Perhaps, the very broad definition by the World Conference on Cultural Policies sums up the complex nature of the word. In their opinion ‘*culture is that whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social groups. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditional and beliefs*’ (MONDIACULT 1998). In the view of Belsey, ‘*culture constitutes the vocabulary within which we do what we do; it specifies the meanings we set out to inhabit and repudiate, the values we make efforts to live by or protest against, and the protest is also cultural. Culture resides primarily in the representations of the world exchanged, negotiated and indeed, contested in a society*’ (Belsey, 2001:7 cited in Miles 2007: 30). Miles, on the other hand sees culture as ‘...everyday practices and the objects in which a society’s values are shaped...’ (Miles, 2007: 30). Drawing from the above definitions, this study defines culture as the traditions, values, norms and practices that

any member within the society risk attracting sanctions for challenging or breaking it, however diffused it may be. The focus of the definition of culture in this study is on sanctions, because as it will be shown later, it is the fear of being sanctioned or even the threat of it that according to my informants has acted and in some cases prevented women from competing with men for public office in Ghana.

5.3 Culture and public policy

Obaa ton nyaadua na onton atoduroo: (Literary meaning: a woman sells garden eggs not gun powder).

The above proverb among the Akans (the largest ethnic group) in Ghana is suggestive, perhaps, of the cultural role that is assigned to women in society. As indicated earlier, data gathered from my fieldwork suggest a belief among my informants of a possible link between culture and low numbers of women in public office in Ghana. Indeed, earlier studies have also attempted to make such a link. For Boafo-Arthur ‘cultural inhibitions’ (Boafo-Arthur 2007:17) account for the low number of women in public office in Ghana Using Sylvia Tamale’s paradigm for Sabinu women of Eastern Uganda Oye Lithur identifies ‘element of her indigenous culture that oppresses her...’ (2004:65) as one of the key factors that has contributed to the low numbers of women in public office. These include such degrading inhumane treatment as female genital mutilation and the *trokosi*²⁴ system. Cultural practices continue to be used as an axe to thwart women’s access to public office or sometimes even a recognition that they should be able to compete with men for that. The authors of the women manifesto (women manifesto 2004:41) recognize the dynamism and progressive nature of Ghanaian culture. However, they point out certain elements within Ghanaian culture that has not been able to respond to new challenges and the tenets of modern life.

In Ayee’s (2007:172) view, some of the blame for the decay in the Ghanaian body-politic can be attributed to Ghanaian culture. He identifies ethnicity and kinship as the two key denominators that underpin Ghanaian culture. According to him, these denominators

²⁴ The *trokosi* is where girls who are virgins are sent to certain shrines to atone for the sins of a family member. They remain there for the rest of their lives unless reparation for her release can be paid.

have been used by succeeding leaders of the country as forms of political patronage. The consequence, he contends, has been negative for the country. This is because first, patronage politics is essentially extractive. Second, it has created a winner takes all approach with its attendant acrimony from the losing side. Third, it has helped nurture a zero-sum approach to politics within the Ghanaian political culture.

In winner takes all politics, political parties are likely to field candidates that they perceive as winnable. Therefore, in a situation where the gender of a candidate appears to be a hindrance for victory, it may lead to him or she being dropped by the party. Being perceived as a winnable candidate may be especially significant in a competitive, heated and contested political space like what exist in Ghana now. During my fieldwork interviews, all the 16 respondents I interviewed identified one or another cultural practice within Ghana which serves as a hindrance for women quest to access public office. In fact, all my informants agreed that women in Ghana faced much more structured cultural barriers than men when it comes to seeking public office. Three of my respondents (the former president, the high court judge and lawyer A) referred to a particular situation in which cultural beliefs combine with public policy to deny women voice in public affairs.

This incident happened in Ghana in June 29 2004. On this day a bye election was to be held for a constituency called Upper Denkyira in the Central Region of Ghana due to the demise of the then member of parliament. The situation of the polling stations and the day the election was held disenfranchised a lot of women within the constituency. This was because culturally, it is a taboo for women to cross a river called Offin which flows through their constituency on Tuesdays. The belief is that the two gods of the river which are male and female and lovers come out on Tuesdays to have a chat. Therefore, on this day no one should gossip about them. This is an old-age taboo, based on the belief, that women within that community are gossips. The assumption was that they will gossip about the two lovers when crossing the river on that day. The gods will be chatting at that time and would hear their gossip. This could provoke the anger of the gods. For women to be able to cross the river, the performance of expensive purification rites is necessary. They include the slaughtering of numerous fowls, rams, and offering of schnapps and money- an expensive adventure which only few women can afford even nationwide.

During the bye election, polling stations were situated across the river and voting day fixed for a Tuesday. There was no purification rites performed for the women to cross the river to vote on that day. Therefore, all the women across the river which were to vote on that day were disenfranchised. The electoral authorities at both the national and constituency level knew that such cultural belief exist. They however did not take it into consideration in planning for the bye-election. Perhaps this may be a reflection on the importance that is attached to women's voice in Ghana. Drawing from SCTP, I submit here this is a clear example of how a more advantaged group, in this case men position were reinforced by public policy. The fact that the electoral authorities were not influenced to change the date to enable women affected to vote is suggestive of reinforcement of cultural beliefs that portray women as subsidiary to men.

One of my informants, the high court judge, even went further. She considers cultural inhibitions in Ghana, in some cases are used to thwart women efforts to access public office. Making a reference to the above case, she pointed out to me that the situation described above attracted national attention due to two reasons. The first was because of the sheer numbers of disenfranchised women. Second, because the issue got highlighted a lot in the media. It seems the latter happened because the political parties involved in the election needed the votes of the disenfranchised women. For the former president, the use of culture as means to inhibit women's access to public office appears to be the norm. Referring to the above case, she opined that:

Even if the election was held on a different day some women may still have been disenfranchised. This is because tradition forbids women to cross the river during their menstrual period on any day or under any circumstances. No purification rites can be done to enable them to cross.

The former president touches on a significant point here. In Ghana, sometimes the spiritual realm is inextricably interwoven with the physical to regulate behaviour. Nukunya (1992:81) calls it social control. That is, a system whereby members of a society are made to conform to law by accepting a certain form of behaviour. He notes that sanctions normally follow when a member of the community goes against the

accepted behaviour. This could range from demanding an explanation to be extradited or shunned by the community. Therefore, for women who find themselves in this situation it would be unthinkable to act against such a strictly held tradition. This inevitably deprives the women involved of the right to vote and be voted for. In other words, it serves as barrier between them and the means for them to access public office. Men are not measured according to similar standard by this culture.

A reference to an earlier study in relation to women and culture in Ghana may help bring this point to the fore. According to Hagan in Ghana, ‘perceptions of gender roles is derived from cultural beliefs, values and attitudes and influence the role that men and women consider appropriate to them as individuals’ (Hagan 2004:47). He adds that these perceptions have made the Akans, a matrilineal people, to say ‘*basia to itur a, otwer banyan dan mu*’ meaning ‘when a woman buys a gun, it reclines in a man’s room’. What this proverb means is that no matter the effort and success of a woman, she must be led by a man. Indeed, the usual refrain in Ghana is that ‘behind every successful man is a good woman’. This I argue is a dangerous statement that bestows success on men only. What these statements reveal is that women are expected to exert power indirectly rather than directly through positions of authority. Thus, women are told to exercise power through such activities as withdrawal, use of the supernatural, and control over food or manipulating men. Women’s access to direct authoritative power that emerges out of elected or appointed office holding with it attendant control over resources is not encouraged. Thus, in Ghana brain and brawn are thought to be bedfellows for success in leadership positions, especially in public office. Thus here in reference to the SCTP, it is reasonable to note here that Ghanaian culture is normative in nature in portraying some groups negatively and others positively. In other words, success is defined not upon how much hard work ones put in. Rather by ones gender. This is because women are supposed to be led by men no matter how successful they are in their field of endeavour. Any woman who defies or attempt to defy such categorization could attract public sanction.

This belief may have contributed to creating a hostile environment referred to earlier on by FIDA-Ghana. Ninsin (2007) agrees to the assertion that hostile environment could prevent people from getting involved in public activities. He argues that a hostile

environment, whether real or imaginary, may serve as hindrance for any group from participating in a certain activity. This may be especially true when it comes to politics. Barber Conable also points out that ‘...people will not participate - if they feel they are facing a capricious, unjust or a hostile political environment’ (cited in Boafo-Arthur 2007:9). This is one of the reasons that may explain why a large section of Ghanaian women are reluctant to engage in partisan politics. Drawing from the SCTP it is clear how societal perceptions have influenced public policy here. As indicated in chapter three, Ingram and Schneider argue that ‘...social construction of target population has a powerful influence on public officials and shapes both the policy agenda and the actual design of policy’. Therefore, how a society perceives a group does shape its public policy towards it. Taken the narratives above together and drawing from the above argument within SCTP, it is reasonable to argue here that the importance given to promoting women candidates within the Ghanaian body-politic is generally low. This is due to how women have been socially constructed by culture negatively as unsuited for public leadership.

5.4 Male perceptions of women seeking leadership positions

It also appears that some aspects of Ghanaian culture have led some men to perceive women as unfit for leadership. One of my informants, the former president, recounted to me a story to emphasize this assertion. According to her, this story emerged out of an encounter some FIDA executives, including her, had with some filling station attendants. This was in the year 2003, at a workshop they organized at Tamale, in the northern region of Ghana. Interestingly, they were on workshop to sensitize traditional leaders in the region on the need to encourage women to take up roles in the public sector. Their main aim was to encourage the traditional leaders to help eliminate some of the traditional cultural practices that inhibit women. She reported that, on the second day of the workshop:

‘We found out that we have run out of fuel so we decided to go to the filling station to fill our tank. While there we decided to seek the opinion of the attendants of women taking up public positions such as the presidency. All the attendants there were males. Not

surprisingly we all found out that they have similar views on this topic. They thought a woman was not qualified to rule or lead a man. One of them remarked, while the others nodded in approval, that: what wisdom has a woman got to lead a man? This was a guy who was standing in front of female lawyers including the president of FIDA who thought women were not qualified to lead’.

Her own deduction, from this encounter: *was the cultural belief and perception that some men have - that women were unfit to lead men.*

She pointed out to me that, in her opinion such views are wide-ranging and are held across a large spectrum of Ghanaians. She went further to talk about the decision of the National House of Chiefs²⁵ not to accept women into their fold. The chiefs have done that with the explanation that the women traditional leaders are queens and not chiefs.

The administrative manager of FIDA-Ghana also appeared to express the same view when she made reference to what in Ghana is known as the Comfort Aggudey. This came up when I asked her what FIDA-Ghana means by cultural environment that is hostile to women. In the said case, one of the presidential aspirants in the 2004 elections, called Mr. Aggudey²⁶ was asked about his plans for women in Ghana on a popular Ghanaian radio talk show. He replied that he had no plans and programs purposely designed for women and that in his view women are there and designed by God for the comfort of men. Consequently the press christened him ‘Comfort Aggudey’. According to the administrative manager, while women’s advocacy groups like FIDA-Ghana were disgusted with the comments he made, the ensuing debate on public radio demonstrated to them a certain realization. In her view, the debate on public radio, suggested a split in public opinion. While some people saw the comment as offensive; some sought to play it down. There were occasional justifications by some contributors. Neither Mr Aggudey nor his party apologized for his comments. Further, and may be as a sign that this view is widely held, none of the men or political parties contesting the elections officially called

²⁵ The national house of chiefs is a public institution made up by traditional rulers in Ghana. It is recognized as so in article 270 (1) of the 1992 Republican constitution of Ghana.

²⁶ Mr Aggudey was running for the presidency under the banner of the CPP, the party of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. This was ironic because Nkrumah’s affirmative action in 1965 led to a near 19% of representation for women, the highest in the nation’s history.

on him to apologize. For the man himself, he showed no remorse and stood by the comment.

I personally encountered a person who holds such views about women during my fieldwork. I went to discuss with a friend and former colleague²⁷ about my topic and to solicit his help in getting relevant Ghanaian literature for my work. All the scholars he suggested to me were women. After the suggestion he remarked:

‘womo bepaekono aware no womo mpe nsemhono nko womoka’ meaning ‘instead for them (the scholars) to find husbands to marry, all that they have been doing is engaging in useless ventures’. By the useless ventures he was referring to these women’s work. This appeared as useless ventures to him because the central argument within these works is for the increment in the number of women in public office.

One of my informants, the coordinator at Koforidua,²⁸ used her personal life to explain the cultural inhibition the Ghanaian society imposes on women who occupy public positions. According to her:

When I decided to go into politics my husband did not react against it. However, I am told his friends teased him that culturally it is not acceptable for a man to be at home taking care of the household while the woman is out campaigning. What I did not know was that while I was away he took to other women. Eventually somebody stole my husband and now lives with him in the north’. She told me that when she confronted him about his infidelity his response was that: I have no time for him due to my political activities, and that he as a man should control me and not vice versa. Explaining further she noted that: I then understood why a lot of married women do not want to get involved in politics’. She went further to explain her reason for continuing her involvement in politics noting that: It is my love for politics that keeps me going.

The sentiment above has to do with the problems she encountered domestically when she got involved in politics. She intimated to me that her problems have not been restricted to

²⁷ This former colleague is now a lecturer at the University of Ghana.

²⁸ She is also the constituency women organizer of the NPP.

the domestic arena. Within the public arena, too, she alleged that even within her own political party she has been discriminated against. This discrimination happens quite frequently at the constituency level, and appears to have a cultural root. According to her:

After I got elected as the constituency women organizer, any time we go for a meeting and I try to put my point across forcefully, my male colleagues will remind me that traditionally, it is unacceptable for women to talk like that in the midst of men.

My other informants also agreed to the views expressed above. According to the elected Assembly member:

Most men do not want their wives to get involved in politics because they find it culturally unacceptable. This is because people regard most women who enter into politics as bossy and sometimes even as prostitutes.

To the appointed assembly member, her situation appears worse because she is a widow. She reported that:

Sometimes people tell me that as a widow I have to forget about politics and concentrate on my children. They tell me that is what my husband would have insisted on if he was alive. That is true. I would have done that, if my children were young. Now they are grown up, so I can afford to attend assembly meetings.

Taken the views expressed above together, it can reasonably be argued that, the perception that women are unfit to rule men cut across a large spectrum among Ghanaian men. The male examples cited above consist of politicians, a university lecturer and filling station attendants. The first two positions are normally recognized as situated within the higher echelons of Ghanaian society in terms of public opinion formulation and material status. Filling station attendants by contrast, generally, are considered in Ghana, as people among the lower rungs of the social ladder. The above views are also in line with one of Schneider and Ingram arguments within the SCTP. For them a society perception of a group positively or negatively determines how the group is treated. The

narratives above suggest that there is a negative perception towards women in Ghana who decides to access public office. Consequently, some men continue to see them as unfit to govern and treat them differently, even if, the women involve have the capability to do so.

5.5 Inheritance

All my FIDA-Ghana officials agreed that progress has been made when it comes to legislation on women's rights in Ghana. However, there were suggestions from them that in practice, most of these laws have not been enforced. One aspect is the Right to Succession law. What was of concern to them was lack of uniformity across the country. The law allows local customary practices to be used. This has acted to deny most women the right to succeed their husbands and fathers. Deceased men in Ghana are succeeded by their brothers, eldest nephews or in some cases eldest sons. In most cases, the distribution of the deceased's property is done by the Head of Family. This has been backed by a law in Ghana called the Head of Family and Accountability Law. Most family heads have tended to use the resources for themselves. The courts in Ghana have in most cases not reacted hard enough to act as a deterrent. In most Ghanaian communities, when a husband dies, the wife is at the sufferance and goodwill of the late husband's family. The state has tried to rectify this through the passage of the Intestate Succession Law (PNDC LAW111) though. But again, sometimes, due to cultural beliefs, the women involved are unwilling or unable to seek redress in the court of law.

5.6 Land

Then narratives of my informants also suggested that culture has been used to deprive women land ownership. This has inhibited women's access to public office, I was told. They noted that on the surface there appears to be no link, but a careful review according to them will show evidence to the contrary. According to them, resources are very important when it comes to seeking public office and in countries like Ghana; land is seen as one of the most valuable resources. Land relations are critical for women's rights in Ghana.

In the literature, the centrality of land as a way to livelihood for the majority of Ghanaians is unquestionable. Land serves as an important source of food, water, fuel and medical plants. Further, in Ghana ‘...land constitutes the most fundamental prerequisite for productive industrial investment start-up and development...’ (Amponsah 2007:122). Therefore, anybody who has control over land and the resources therein also gain social and political power and political authority. As such, women’s unequal land rights ultimately do affect their access to other resources, including public office (Women Manifesto 2000:17).

Nukunya (1992:98) underscores the importance of land in every Ghanaian community by linking it with the primacy of agriculture. Agriculture is the main economic activity, especially in rural Ghana. According to the 2000 Population Census, out of a labour force of 4.1 million, 55% are involved in agriculture and fishing. In almost all communities in Ghana, women generally do not own land. At best they exercise usufructuary rights over land owned by their fathers or husbands. Indeed, the acculturation process involves women being used as a source of cheap labour for their husbands and fathers to maintain the rural and urban economy. The fruits from their labour go to their father or husband who then decides out of his own volition to give them something for their effort. The husbands or fathers are under no legal obligation to them. At best, they will feel a moral obligation for to give them something.²⁹.

It must be borne in mind that in Ghana, as in most countries, seeking public office especially the elective ones, calls for a lot of personal resource accumulation to foot the bill. In modern political contest, money for instance provides the oil in the wheel of the campaign trail. Therefore the lack of it puts one out contention for any political race before it even begins. This is irrespective of the calibre of the candidate or the quality of message delivered to the electorate. Without land therefore, most women are deprived of the means through which they can generate enough resources to seek the peoples mandate for public office.

²⁹ The author has personal experience. I come from a cocoa farming family. I observed how my grandmother had to send delegations upon delegation to persuade my grandfather, before she was allocated her own portion of the cocoa farm. This was after several years of toiling with him to cultivate.

For Ninsin ‘poverty has the power to disempower individual and communities...’ (Ninsin 2007:94). This, he notes, is especially true when it comes to participation in politics. The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice in Ghana agrees. In its 2001 annual report it acknowledged that poverty ‘*negates the realization or enjoyment of human rights. There is no real possibility of enjoying rights, whether civil, political, social, economic or cultural, without resources such as food, security, education, physical safety, health, employment, property, access to justice, and due process*’ (CHRI 2001:15)

5.7 Conclusion

Why have so many years of efforts by advocacy groups like FIDA-Ghana not been able to break the cultural glass ceiling?

Drawing from figure in Social Construction Target Population (SCTP), I argue that there exists an entrenched cultural elites group in Ghana that has a strong stake in the prevailing cultural environment that hinders women’s access to public office. These cultural elites exercise strong and negative power over public policy within both the traditional and modern societal settings. This strong and negative power is exercised over weak and dependent women to maintain a certain level of status quo. They have been able to create a cultural environment that continues to ensure that the public-private roles are ascribed on gender terms. Within this context men are to be seen and be involved in the public arena while women are confined to the private sphere. To be able to break the cultural glass ceiling means the stranglehold that these elites exercise must be broken first. As demonstrated above, advocacy strategies have not been successful at that. Until that happens, it seems that breaking the cultural glass ceiling would be very difficult, if not impossible

As indicated in the text above the cultural environment is an important factor that affects women’s access to public office in Ghana. This is because as demonstrated above, culture affects women’s behaviour in Ghana from the private to the public. This obviously has created a problem for women and as demonstrated by SCTP it has led to a

perception that women are undeserving of positions in public office. For despite the dynamism of Ghanaian culture, some men in Ghana still see *women's office as being in the kitchen*. This obviously has also led to a limitation in the effectiveness of women's groups like FIDA-Ghana to push for more women in public office.

CHAPTER SIX: MEDIA-TED PORTRAYALS³⁰ OF WOMEN SEEKING PUBLIC OFFICE IN GHANA

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how the media portrays women politicians in Ghana. This chapter is discussed within the theoretical framework of Social Construction Target Population (SCTP) and Social Responsibility Theory (SRT). The SRP has two important postulations as discussed in my theoretical chapter. These two postulations are that the media should be fair to all sectors of the society and that what the media portrays represent the microcosm of societal views.

The focus will be on two publicly funded newspapers, The Daily Graphic and the Weekly Mirror. Reasons for the choice of these two newspapers are stated in my methodology chapter.

6.2 Background to this chapter

This chapter was motivated by my experiences during fieldwork. Certain happenings led to the inclusion of this chapter. The first occurrence that drew my attention for the need to look at the media in relation to women's access to public office was the reactions of my informants. Before they accepted to be interviewed, all my sixteen informants first asked me whether I was a journalist. Whenever I replied in the negative, they said to me: *Then I will talk to you*. If it had been one or two, then I would have taken it as a coincidence. However, as one informant after the other made the same statement, it prompted me to probe further. All my informants appeared to give the same reason for not wanting to talk to journalists. Their reason was that they feared being misrepresented by the media.

At a seminar organized by NETRIGHT, which I attended, I observed that most of the participants refused to be interviewed individually by journalists present. This happened during the lunch break and after the programme. Even presenters or organizers declined

³⁰ Adopted from Tamale 1999 : 183

to be interviewed. This prompted one of the journalists to remark that *'you want us to publicize your activities but you don't want to talk to us'*. After the programme, I went back to one of my informants, the lecturer³¹. I wanted her to explain to me why the participants were reacting to journalists who came to the seminar in the same negative way. Her response was that: *they fear being misrepresented*. She indicated that this happens often when they talk to journalists individually. Therefore, their preference is for journalists to take what is said officially or is in the official document. She pointed out to me how the media had given names to women who appear to argue things out strongly. She particularly mentioned the current minister of Central Region who has been nicknamed *Ama Chavez* after the famous Venezuelan president and a former deputy minister who has also been nicknamed *Theresa Tiger*.

This apparent relationship of mistrust between women activist and the media in Ghana was an interesting revelation to me. It led me to investigate this relationship further. This is because the need to court the support of the media appears globally recognized by women rights activists. Indeed, the Beijing Platform for Action list among others *'Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media'* as one of the main critical areas for concern. It calls for action, research and monitoring of women's issues in the media.

Within the literature, too, there is the recognition that candidates' chances for being elected are invariably tied to how they are portrayed by the media. Khan and Goldberg (1991:105) demonstrate the importance of the media on fortunes of candidates in politics. According to them the *'...media influence how people view their political world'* (ibid1991: 105). They assert that the decision of the media in relation to which issues to cover and which to ignore ultimately decides the formulation of public opinion. This again influence who is elected or not.

In another study, Khan (1994:154) points out that the usefulness of the media is due to the fact that most people do not experience politics directly. Hence, what perception they

³¹ She is also the programme officer of Abantu for Development and one of the organizers of the said seminar

form about a candidate is due to how the media represent him or her. In relation to media coverage of men and women candidates, Khan also opines that for an assessment of the effects of news coverage on women candidates' vis-à-vis that of male candidates '... two questions must be explored. First, are there systematic differences in the way the news media cover male and female candidates?' for which he answers 'yes'. The second question, he argues, more fundamental: 'Does press coverage lead voters to develop more negative evaluations of female candidates and more positive evaluations of male candidates?' For Orren and Mayer (1990:200-222), the media has become conduits which candidates use to communicate to voters. Additionally, they note that the media help educate voters. Thus, for them the media has become the main institution for the candidates' evaluation and their popularity.

This is the case also in Africa. The importance of the media in relation to the access of anybody to public office is in other words well-documented. Tamale (1999) for instance, suggests that, people's idea about public policy and people in public office can be influenced by the media. She notes that in Uganda, it is not only those who buy the newspapers who read them. Rather, one newspaper can move from the buyer to several people through several means. Therefore, official statistics may be deceptive as they 'they fail to capture the number of people who actually read the paper or those who may congregate around an electronic transmitter to listen to or view the news' Tamale (1999:183)

In Ghana, the relevance of the media to women role is recognized by the activists themselves. Among other things, the Women Manifesto (a document written by women activists in Ghana for which FIDA-Ghana played a key role) demands:

1. That government formulates and adopts a comprehensive communication and information policy that would address issues of... media representation and content and clarifies issues relating to access, control, and information flow
2. That government and District Assemblies champion community radio, television, newspapers and other media and information forms that give women... the

opportunity to participate actively in programmes that improve their well being. (Women Manifesto 2004:53).

Ansah (1994) identifies the role of the media in Ghana. According to him, these are education, mobilization and entertainment. He contends that these roles make the media important within any society. Through this role people who seek public office can get their message across to the electorate.

That the content of newspapers is important when it comes to voter choice in Ghana has been underlined by a nationwide study conducted by Ben Ephson³² 2008: In his study titled ‘*The Countdown to 2008 Elections*’, he sought to find out, what source of information Ghanaians will rely on to make electoral decisions. His data was collected in July 2007 and March 2008. A summation of his report can be found in the table below.

Table-4: Sources of Information for Voters in Ghana

Source of information	JULY 2007	MARCH 2008
Newspaper	26.3	27.5
Radio	53.8	53.5
Television	13.2	15.4
Friends	5.2	2.9
Others	1.4	0.6

Ben Ephson (2008)

³² He is one of Ghana’s leading experts on election monitoring. He is a researcher, pollster and journalist. He is widely respected in Ghana for predicting accurately the results of the four elections Ghana has had since 1992.

In the above table it is suggested that 26.3% in July 2007 and 27.3% in March 2008 said that they will base their decision on the content of newspapers. However, the study reported further that 70% of the 53 % of those informants who cited their source of information as being from radio agreed that the content of newspapers reviewed on radio as being what they will base their decision on.

6.3 Media-ted Portrayals of Women Politicians in Ghana - an assessment.

Three cases related to women in politics that got media coverage during the 2008 election campaign are discussed under this sub-theme. These cases are:

1. The coverage of the wives of the presidential candidates
2. The coverage of the acceptance of two women to be running mates
3. The coverage of the refusal of one leading women activist to be a running mate of one of the presidential candidates.

6.4. The coverage of the wives of the presidential candidates

My analysis reveals that the women given most prominence in the two newspapers in the last quarter of 2008 were the wives of the presidential candidates. With headlines like ‘*WWW.Prospective First Ladies’ Campaigns.Com*’, ‘*Mrs Akufo Addo interacts with people of Mafi Kumasi*’, ‘*CPP to modernize Accra attributed Mrs Yvonne Ndoum*’ can be found throughout the newspapers. Most importantly, most of the potential First Ladies made the front page. For instance, The Mirror, in September 20, gave prominence to the wives of the presidential candidates under the headlines: *Aspiring first ladies*. Then in November, it gave a whole page to panelists to discuss the relevance of the *Campaign of aspiring first ladies*. In terms of space, aside the aspiring first ladies, none of the contesting women candidates made the front pages of the Mirror. Rather the Mirror mainly confined reports on women candidates to its Gender and Children page. The Daily Graphic also gave the potential first ladies the more prominence, and thus better chance, to reach the Ghanaian populace than women who were seeking the people’s mandate. On Saturday December, 6 this Newspaper reserved two centre pages in support of the potential first ladies rather than women candidates in the upcoming election.

Therefore it is reasonable to argue that women who were given most prominence by the Mirror and the Daily Graphic in connection with the 2008 elections did not receive attention due to their own merit, but due to the fact that they were wives of presidential candidates. In reference to the SCTP therefore, I argue that the social construction of women as undeserving of prominence unless they are attached to a man is reinforced by the media in the 2008 elections in Ghana. Also, it rewards women-as-wives. This is also a confirmation of the two postulates in the NSP. Here, the media is reflecting the cultural environment of the political space in Ghana. In other words, it is a microcosm of the importance that the Ghanaian community attaches to women leadership in public positions. By contrast, the media reflecting a certain social construction of the Ghanaian has led to the violation of the NSP for the media to be fair to all segment of the society.

6.5. The coverage of the acceptance of two women to be running mates

In Ghana, presidential candidates enjoy more media coverage than parliamentary ones. In the 2008 elections, out of the seven presidential candidates who stood none was a woman. Therefore, with respect to the presidential race, the media had nothing to discuss in relation to women candidates and what they stand for. However two of the parties, the Peoples National Convention (PNC) and the Reform Patriotic Democrats (RPD) chose women as running mates.

Reporting on the choice of the two women by PNC and RPD in the Mirror Saturday October 11, 2008, the reporter chose to introduce his story with these words:

In a dramatic twist from mainstream, the PNC last TUESDAY became the first political party to select a female candidate to run as its vice-presidential aspirant in this year's election. The second party to do likewise is the Reformed Patriotic Democrats.

The report went further to say:

Women have long been regarded for their compassionate nature, gracefulness and homeliness and are also seen as God-fearing and incorruptible, attributes that many believe stood a woman in good stead to lead the country to its hallowed destination.

The choice of words like *dramatic*, *compassionate*, *gracefulness* and *homeliness* in the report may appear harmless on the surface. But it must be understood within the stereotyping of certain groups within societies as argued within the SCTP by Schneider and Ingram. Drawing also on the previous chapter on culture, I submit that these words are suggestive of personal character traits that are accepted in the private domain and not the public domain. Why is it that it is not dramatic when a man is chosen as a running mate or even elected as presidential candidate or even president? I argue that those words are not used in the case of men because there is an assumption that such positions belong to men.

The Daily Graphic reported on the female running mates in its politics column '*RPD also pick a woman as running mate*'. In the story accompanying the headline, the reporter introduced the subject as: '*The Reformed Patriotic Democrats has chosen a Cape Coast-based business woman, Ms Rosemond Abraham as the running mate...*' This appears to be a fair coverage. Subsequent follow-up in the story, however, reveal an interesting gendered nature of it. The reporter quoted her as saying: '*I am well groomed to partner the flag bearer of our party to victory because of my passion for women*'. This on the surface of it may appear harmless. However, beneath the story, I suggest is the assertion that she was chosen due to her gender rather than her qualifications. The follow-up sentences in the story do reveal that. Continuing the story, the reporter paraphrased her as noting: *... that the urgency to get more women involved in the development of the country had become more crucial now than before and indicated that her selection was in recognition of that fact.*

The words italicized are in the report but the reporter did not show that it was a direct quotation from the woman. It appears to me the reporter, when trying to make sense of his interview with the woman, decided to highlight the gender reasons for her choice.

Seen together, the two cases above suggest that the media is reflecting the social construction within the Ghanaian society that perceives men more positively than women when it comes to seeking for public office. Due to these perceptions, the media does not

give the same prominence in coverage to women as men, thereby undermining the NSP call for the media to be fair to all segments within societies.

6.6 The coverage of the refusal of one leading women activist to be a running mate of one of the presidential candidates

News broke in September 2008 that one of the leading voices on women rights in Ghana had declined the opportunity to be a running mate for one of the presidential candidates. No public explanation was given for the refusal. The media, however, found a reason for her. One of the privately owned newspapers, The Heritage, in the October 22 2008 claimed she declined because she was a single mother. This put her on the defensive and forced her to defend herself publicly which she did in the October 25 2008, of the Daily Graphic. The woman in question is Ms Anna Bossman³³. She refuted the claim noting that: *Being a single mother did not in any way affect a woman's ability to serve in a position, as all it required was the commitment to do a particular job.*

This is an interesting story because men are not held to such standards. As her rebuttal rightly pointed out, what has being a single mother got to do with aspiring for a position? Also, perhaps, the story sought to portray her as an unmarried woman and therefore unfit for the position. Again here, it is clear that the fairness that NSP advocate has been undermine by the media desire to uphold women to certain cultural standards.

This story in isolation may appear not be of any significance. However, it is also public knowledge that in the just completed elections, the candidate of the NPP picked the then Minister for Women and Children Affairs³⁴ only to be rejected by the party hierarchy. The reason speculated for her rejection was that she was a single mother. In other words, she was not married. None of her other capabilities was taken into consideration. Men are not held to such standards in Ghanaian politics. There is historical antecedent to back this assertion. In 1979, one of the leading candidates, who was from the political tradition of

³³ She is the acting Commissioner for Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice and a leading member of FIDA-Ghana

³⁴ She is also a member of FIDA-Ghana.

the former Minister for Women and Children Affairs was allowed by his party to run on their ticket for president, even though he was not married.

6.7 Conclusion

The analysis of the two Newspapers under study suggests a fair coverage for the wives of the presidential candidates. However, it seems that the positive media attention enjoyed by these women were the reflections of the media's attention on their husbands rather than on them. Implicit in this attention is that, the media is concerned with men candidates for public office to the extent that the coverage given to their wives surpasses that of their female counterparts. Why was the searchlight of the media more on the wives of the presidential candidates even than on the women who were running mates?

Drawing on SCTP and SRT, I submit that the Ghanaian media is just a reflection of the generally held view of Ghanaian society. Thus, the media hold women to the standards set by the Ghanaian cultural environment which encourages men rather women to seek public office. The cultural environment in Ghana dictates for instance that women who accompany men to public functions are given more attention than women who go alone. This belief has moved from the communal level to the national. Thus, when women show their face to contest for public leadership positions alone, they are often met with hostility and an environment most unfriendly to their womanhood. It is therefore not surprising that in Ghana women's participation in politics has been largely limited to dressing in the colours of the parties, singing and hailing the male players. Indeed, it is not uncommon to see women spread their clothes on the ground for the male players to walk on. Sometimes, the extent to which some Ghanaian women go to endorse and install men in a loyal and faithful way may be odd to a casual observer. But it is a result of the cultural environment that has existed for a long time and has been reinforced by modern actors like the media sometimes against the ethics of their own profession, and in violation of the NSP that demands fairness on the part of the media. As discussed in chapter five, some men in Ghana sees the office of women as being the kitchen. As the cases discussed above reveal, any time a woman leaves the kitchen to seek a place in the social structure, the tendency is for her be called names and publicly riddled and stigmatized. The result

could be the loss of her sense of human dignity and decency. Some women, therefore, choose to seek refuge in the kitchen and not to venture into public leadership positions to render service to humanity for fear of being victimized. This perhaps is the sort of refuge that some women NGO activists were seeking when they refused to be interviewed by the media during the NETRIGHT seminar as discussed in the introductory section of this chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: NGOs' AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S ACCESS TO PUBLIC OFFICE IN GHANA: FIDA –GHANA AS AN EXAMPLE

7. 1 Introduction

Several NGOs³⁵ exist in Ghana purporting to advocate for women's rights in general and women's access to public office in particular. However, as indicated in chapter four, despite several years of advocacy for increment in the number of women to public office, there have not been any significant changes. In search for the reasons for this situation, the first two empirical chapters have identified culture and the media as contributors. The narratives of my informants also suggest that there are internal problems within these organizations that have limited their impact of their advocacy. This chapter assesses the efforts of NGOs that have been at the forefront of this advocacy, using FIDA-Ghana as an example. The reason for this choice is three-fold. First, FIDA-Ghana is the oldest of women's NGOs in Ghana who advocate for increment in the numbers of women in public office. Second, it is generally seen in Ghana as a flagship and even perhaps as a symbol for women advocacy groups. Third, as a result of its unflinching determination for the cause of women, several NGOs have emerged as an offshoot of FIDA-Ghana, all pushing for increment in the numbers of women in public office in Ghana. The assessment will be done within the theoretical frameworks of SCTP and NSP as presented in chapter three.

Statements from my FIDA-Ghana informants form the core of the data collected for this chapter. My analysis of these statements suggests that external factors such as culture and the role of the media contribute to the small number of women in public office. Further, some seemingly inherent internal weaknesses within advocacy organizations also contribute. These internal inherent weaknesses grouped together I have called internal dynamics. Based on my data, I have operationalized the internal dynamics into two factors. These two factors are:

³⁵ Some of these NGOs are Abantu for Development, Gender Centre, The Hunger Project and Women in Law and Development WILDAF.

1. Administrative Structure
2. Resources

The findings from my fieldwork suggest that the above factors have been problematic for FIDA-Ghana advocacy activities. My task in this chapter is therefore to analyze how these two factors have impacted on FIDA-Ghana's ability to place more women into public office in Ghana. I argue that the two factors stated above have contributed significantly in limiting FIDA-Ghana's ability to make an impact.

7.2 FIDA-Ghana - An Overview

FIDA-Ghana is a non-governmental, non-partisan and non-profit organization that is made up of female lawyers in Ghana whose aim is to employ their knowledge, experiences and expertise to promote the legal rights of women and children in Ghana. Its main commitment is the promotion and enhancement of the rights and well-being of the Ghanaian woman through its legal aid, legal literacy, educational programs, advocacy, law reform, research and publications. FIDA-Ghana is an affiliate of the International Federation of Women Lawyers established in 1944 by a group of women lawyers. FIDA is an acronym and stands for the *Federacion Internacionale de Abogadas* which is the Spanish name for International Federation of Women Lawyers. Its headquarters is situated in New York in the United States of America.³⁶

FIDA-Ghana is a result of the efforts of a group of Ghanaian Women lawyers who had individually been members of the parent organization. Their effort began in 1968 and was crowned with an official launch in 1974. Membership is open to all Ghanaian female lawyers and female law students. This includes both female members of the Bar and the Bench. Female lawyers who obtained their training in a foreign country can join as associate members.

³⁶ *Federacion Internacional de Abogadas: FIDA-Ghana Program 2000 pp 3-4*

FIDA-Ghana's main objective is '... a commitment to improving the situation of women... and to strengthening their position in the overall developmental process of Ghana'.³⁷

Additionally, FIDA-Ghana shares the same broad aims and objectives of its parent body. These objectives are:

1. To promote the same principles and aims of the United Nations in their legal and social dimensions
2. To enhance and promote the welfare of humanity but more particularly, women and children realizing that the happiness of the home and the strength of society depends on this.
3. To advocate and propagate the human rights of women.
4. To maintain the unity of the family.
5. To extend legal aid to everybody but especially women and children in a vulnerable situation³⁸.

To help achieve its set objectives it implements a three-pronged programme. What is of interest to this study is the *advocacy and awareness creation programme*. Realizing the need for women's equal participation at the public level, FIDA-Ghana has vigorously undertaken a series of advocacy, gender sensitization and awareness creation activities. These activities involve round table meetings and seminars. The round-table meetings form part of the media strategy targeted at policy makers, political parties and the general public to promote an enabling environment for women's participation in public affairs, especially in politics and the electoral processes. The seminars are aimed at providing skills and training to women, especially those aspiring to public office. The seminars also aim at providing a forum for networking for the aspirants and to give them publicity and media exposure. Under this programme, therefore, FIDA-Ghana seeks the social and political empowerment of women. Thus, the main activities that falls under this program are:

³⁷ see <http://www.iisd.org/50commodb/desc/d29:htm> Retrieved on 9th May 2008

³⁸ *Federacion Internacional de Abogadas: FIDA-Ghana Program 2000* pp 5-6

Advocacy campaigns focused on reviewing and repealing laws and traditional practices that hinder women's and children's progressive development, aspirations, and advancement and advocacy for the enactment of new laws that will promote their well-being.

Media advocacy for engaging women in the democratic process, i.e, radio and television documentaries to ensure the inclusion of women in the processes by which decisions are made at various levels of government

Gender sensitization seminars and capacity building workshops aimed at increasing participation of women in local and national politics³⁹.

The three factors, within which the analysis will be done in this chapter, are chosen with the main activities within the advocacy programme in mind.

7.3. Resources

Some of the resource-related limitations that will be discussed in this section are acknowledged by FIDA-Ghana. FIDA-Ghana recognizes those elements as challenges. In its own official website it has enumerated some of the 'challenges' the group faces as:

1. The irregular and non guaranteed inflow of funds for FIDA-Ghana's activities
2. Difficulty in attracting qualified women lawyers to manage FIDA-Ghana's offices outside the big cities and towns.
3. Inadequate physical infrastructure to provide reasonable office and accommodation to facilitate **FIDA-Ghana's** work in the regions and districts.
4. The ever increasing clientele of FIDA- Ghana who need the services offered
5. Urgent need to strengthen the Kumasi office to enable it offer services for the women and children in the middle belt of Ghana.
6. Urgent need to expand the services to other areas especially the Upper East and Upper West Regions

³⁹ *Federacion Internacional de Abogadas: FIDA-Ghana Program 2000*

7. The mounting desire of development partners to collaborate with **FIDA-Ghana** in their efforts to empower women and improve the well being of children⁴⁰.

The challenges enumerated above taken together, it is reasonable to argue that the main resource-related limitation FIDA-Ghana faces is financial and human.

Narratives from my informants suggest that the problem of resources exist at both organizational and individual level. It seems this resource problem can also be seen in terms of accessibility and availability. Therefore, in the following, I discuss how data gathered from my fieldwork suggest that access to resources has also been an internal weakness militating against FIDA-Ghana.

7.4 Personal observations

I observed that in FIDA-Ghana there was visible acute shortage of resources at the national and local levels. This could be seen both in human and material terms and from top to bottom. I realized that staff was too skeletal for the assignment they are undertaking. At the time of my visit, aside the administrative manager, the headquarters was manned by seven persons - a regular and remunerated staff of three and four interns. When I saw the number of women who had lined up to file a complaint at the office, I could really understand the load of work on their shoulders. Added to this is material support. The administrative manager gave me permission to look around. Though the office is an imposing building in the middle of Accra, it was poorly furnished. I could see that the other staff had to share computers.

The situation was even worse at Koforidua where the office was manned by only the coordinator, on voluntary basis. Though I observed that she has been doing everything possible to promote FIDA-Ghana activities within the region, I found that some factors have limited her impact. First, she was not fluent enough when it comes to the English language. That is the official language of Ghana and most of FIDA-Ghana's documents are in English. I observed that this made it difficult for her to explain certain things to people who visit the office, including myself. At the time of my visit she was also the

⁴⁰ <http://www.fidaghana.org/major-achievements.php#challenges> retrieved in 8th march 2009

constituency women organizer of the then ruling party and she was therefore shuffling between that job and that of FIDA-Ghana. Also, the office was bad state, situated in an old dilapidated building that belongs to the regional assembly.

7.5 FIDA-Ghana officials on resources

My observation that resources were a problem for FIDA-Ghana is supported by narratives from all the informants I talked to. The administrative manager confirmed my observation. On the day that we met (and this was after she had rescheduled our meeting several times) she admitted that:

I have forgotten that today was the day I agree with you that we will meet. There is too much for me to do.

Later on, I got to know she was even acting as an administrative secretary because since the last one quit her post FIDA-Ghana had not have the financial muscle to appoint one. Her real post is the media and communications officer. Perhaps, unknowingly, confirming my own observation, of what appears to be seemingly non commitment to the cause of the Organization by its members, may be due to bread and butter issues, she replied to my question for the total number of FIDA-Ghana membership as:

It is difficult to say because only few of them take active part in the daily activities of the organization. The rest only show up during the General Assembly meeting or when we organize certain events.

On the main challenges that FIDA-Ghana faces she stated the following:

Securing funding for our programmes. Last year we sent a proposal to the US Embassy early but we have not received any response. In order to be able to help women we need the money early. Also we have a shortage of key personnel so we collaborate with NGOs like WILDAF and other NGOs in other areas to use different expertise. That help us to attract a larger audience and to cover a wider terrain which otherwise we wouldn't be able to do.

The former president confirmed this to me when I interviewed her: *The problems of funding and human resource are the two main challenges that we face. In relation to human resources we are faced with getting volunteers, especially when it comes to following up cases that we have dealt with. Recruiting and maintaining lawyers have also been a major challenge. Sometimes I have to rush from this office to the FIDA office and back because Susan⁴¹ will call me and say madam we have a case in which a lawyer has to sit in. However there is no lawyer in the office at the moment. I have made several calls but everyone seems to be busy, please can you come and help?*

The high court judge agrees to these assertions. Reiterating the views above, she identified the main challenges that FIDA-Ghana faces as human resource and financial.

According to her:

Recruiting, maintaining, and motivating a competent staff is a major challenge for us. We can solve this with committed membership but sometimes the demand of our jobs does not allow us to be committed to FIDA-Ghana as we want to be.

I used to be very active in FIDA-Ghana's activities when I was in private practice. But now I can't because of the demands of my job. I hope you understand. Look at the time I am meeting you and I am going to sit from 9 am to 2 pm. The demands of my work have simply made it impossible for me to do what I used to do for FIDA.

The Executive member also echoed the views expressed by other members. She remarked that:

It is an issue of finances for our beneficiaries and us. To help solve the perennial financial problems we have decided to set up an investment fund. However, like our other programmes attracting and maintaining staff to implement this programme has been the main challenge.

⁴¹ Susan is the media and communications officer who was also acting as the administrative manager at the time of my fieldwork.

Apart from availability, another problem that emerged in the narratives of my informants was the sources of FIDA-Ghana funds. Two sources - internally generated funds and donor assistance were identified by my informants. Thus, these two sources of funding are what FIDA-Ghana rely on for the smooth operation of its activities. The internally generated funds come from dues paid by members while the donor assistance is solicited from both foreign and domestic donors. Though I could not get the amount of dues that members pay, it appears that it is clearly inadequate to run their three programmes and pay their staff. All my informants agreed that they rely heavily on donors to fund their programmes. This, I could also see from their publications, in which those who fund their activities are acknowledged. In most cases they were foreign, mainly from the United States Embassy in Ghana or USAID. For example their publication titled '*A Guide to Women's Participation In Public Office*' given to me by the administrator was funded by US Democracy and Human Rights Fund of the US Embassy in Ghana. Naturally, the questions that follow are whether donors influence FIDA-Ghana programmes, and if the donations do not come what become of the programmes that they want to implement? I decided to seek answers to these questions. All my informants from FIDA-Ghana denied donors' influence in the design and implementation of their programs. However, they accepted that they must design their programmes to fit into that of the donors, if they want them to fund it for them.

According to the administrative manager:

No. They (referring to the donors) don't influence our programmes. However they have their own focus and so we have to fit our programs into their own when we apply for funding from them.

For the former president:

We are completely independent. So even if they try they can't. However, like all NGOs we apply for funding for our projects. We don't have international bodies that systematically give us funds. But we do raise funds when we need. So I must admit that though on the

face of it they don't influence our programmes we have to design applications to fit into their programmes.

In the opinion of the high court judge:

Most of our funding is from donors, both foreign and local. Though they do not try to influence our programmes, most of their funding is targeted. Therefore we must take into consideration the targets of the donors.

7.6 Beneficiaries on resources

The resource situation of FIDA-Ghana looks a bit different from the perspective of the beneficiaries of FIDA-Ghana programmes to place more women into public office. The beneficiary informants' mentioned above all two things. First, that they face severe resources constraint when it comes to implementing what they have learnt from the FIDA-Ghana seminars and programmes they have attended. Second, they would prefer shift of resource application from funding of issues like seminars to support for issues like campaign financing. It appears that the beneficiaries want the latter to be prioritized based on the resources available. For example, one of my informants, the government appointed assembly member, while blaming her re-election bid lost on lack of resources, also took the opportunity to call for help from FIDA-Ghana. She reported that:

I lost my re-election bid not because I did not perform well during my tenure. Neither was it because the man I lost to had better ideas or could speak better than me. It was all a matter of money. I did not even have money to print posters for my campaign. I am a widow with three children and I am on a teacher's salary so there was no way I could compete with him. So if FIDA wants us to stand for elections then they should also assist us financially. She continued that:

FIDA-Ghana is doing well in terms of training women. For instance, my public speaking skills have improved since I started attending their seminars. So now anytime they ask us to come for a seminar I take my daughter along. However, we still cannot compete with

the men in terms of campaign financing. Therefore I think it is time they look at that aspect also.

The elected assembly member conceded that: Fear, marital problems, lack of self-confidence restrains women access to public office. However, our main problem is financial. Yes, the programmes and the seminars are good. Indeed, they helped me a great deal in getting me to think of running in the first place. However, that alone cannot help. My husband had to finance my campaign for me. I am fortunate. Most men don't even want their wives to run, let alone finance the campaign for them. Perhaps it is time FIDA-Ghana considers putting some of the money they use for the seminars into helping women in the campaign process especially at the local level.

The university lecturer also agreed: Yes I think they are right. The help must not stop after the training. In a seminar we organized in 2003 for 150 assembly women, every single of them called for assistance in terms of resources for re-election bid. They told us that the seminars were important, but that alone cannot get them elected.

The report issued at the end of this seminar (Abantu 2003) indicated that all the informants identified resources as their main constraints in running for local elections. In furtherance of that study another one was conducted in 2006. That study (Abantu 2006), also suggested that resource constraints were the main hindrance for women when it comes to deciding whether to run for local elections or not.

7.7 FIDA-Ghana officials' reaction to beneficiaries' complaints

Officials of FIDA-Ghana I interviewed admitted to me that they have received complaints about lack of support for election campaigns. However, they explained to me that their hands were tied. Two reasons emerged as to why they cannot do more than they were doing now. First they do not have resources on their own to help women as they would have wished. Further, when donors give them money, they are for specific programmes and they cannot be allocated to support individual campaigns. The administrative manager reported that:

Complaints have been made that instead of always using the money to organize seminars and putting the women in hotels, we should rather use the money to print souvenirs. But our donors will not understand. In fact when we tell them they don't take it seriously. For them, money given to us is for specific programmes.

The high court judge echoed her sentiments:

Yes we accept that training alone is not enough. There is the need for us to go further than that. However, we are constrained by the resources at our disposal.

For the former president:

That is the challenge we face. Until we are able to overcome that, our aim is to enhance the capacity of the women we train so that they can participate in public decision-making. Our hope is that these women when they go back to the communities will share the knowledge they have acquired with others.

On the second question of what happens to their programmes if they do not get funded, the informants suggested several strategies. First they seek collaboration with other NGOs with similar objectives. For instance, at the time of my visit FIDA-Ghana was liaising with Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) to organize seminars for women who had the intention to contest the elections because FIDA-Ghana could not raise funds on its own to do that. The administrative secretary gave the following comments to that: *eating from the same pie lead to donor fatigued*. Second, that FIDA-Ghana is trying to generate funds internally by setting up an investment fund to support its programmes and beneficiaries.

Drawing from the SCTP I submit that the perspectives of the officials of FIDA-Ghana, the beneficiaries of its programmes and its donors have been influenced by the environment in which they find themselves. FIDA-Ghana finds itself in an environment in which the cultural elites have been able to maintain structures that are unfriendly to women. This has made their task of raising resources to fight their cause internally difficult. In line with the NSP, I argue that the position FIDA-Ghana finds itself in is a '... a

reflection of the cultural and historical characteristics...’ Tvedt (1998:57) of Ghana. First, I suggest that a certain cultural environment exist in Ghana that makes it difficult to raise sufficient funds to support women who want to contest for public office. As discussed in chapter five, perceptions exist within a certain segment of people within Ghana that a woman place is not in public service. For this group therefore there is no justification to support FIDA-Ghana and like-minded organizations with private and public funds.

At the individual level too FIDA-Ghana has not succeeded in raising sufficient funds from the Ghanaian public or from its own members. Perhaps the unwillingness or the inability of some Ghanaians to contribute to the cause advanced by FIDA-Ghana and its beneficiaries, may be a consequence of the general economic situation in Ghana. Ghana has gone through economic turbulence since independence. The per capita income of most Ghanaians has not seen any significant increase since the 1960s⁴². This has negatively affected the economic situation of most Ghanaians. Easterly confirms this assertion when he notes that ‘...Ghanaians are still poor as they were in the early 1950’ (Easterly 2002:27). According to him this is because ‘Ghana has had a stagnation of growth’ (ibid). This has made access to internally generated funds within the country very difficult. Finding oneself in an economic situation like the one most Ghanaians find themselves, calls for prioritization of expenditure. The consequence may be that people are more likely not to contribute to a cause that they perceived as not a priority. This seems more likely especially when that cause is culturally perceived as unacceptable. Hence, FIDA-Ghana and like-minded NGOs have had to rely on foreign donors, who are also influenced by cultural environments within their home country and in Ghana. Thus, they have also had to reflect on the policy implications of letting FIDA-Ghana use the money they give to them to support female candidates. Their decisions, based on the narratives above, suggest that they want to maintain the present methodology of training through seminars. The continuous reliance of these NGOs has also led to what the administrative manager described as *donor fatigue*.

⁴² See appendice A GDP per capita pattern from 1960 to 2005 which confirms Easterly assertion.

7.8 Administrative structure

To be able to function effectively, FIDA-Ghana has put in place an organizational structure that sees to its activities. It is a three-tier structure made up of the General Assembly, Executive Board and the Secretariat.

The *General Assembly* is the highest decision-making body of FIDA-Ghana. It is open to all members, especially the fee-paying ones. It is supposed to meet at least once a month to discuss matters referred to it by the Executive Board. This meeting is normally referred to as the *General Meeting*. It has the power to discuss any matter of concern to the organization, both national and international issues. Issues discussed may also range from the domestic to the public and be legal, economic, social, cultural or political in nature. Decisions taken at the General Assembly meetings are normally to put a vote. The first-past-the-post system, resulting in a simple majority vote, is used to arrive at decisions, so majority present at the meeting carries the vote. The General Assembly is responsible for electing the Executive Board. Therefore, it also has the power to dismiss it. Its decisions are final and overrule all the other organs of FIDA-Ghana. It is the only organ in the organization that can change its decisions. It is subject only to the constitution of FIDA-Ghana and the national constitution of Ghana. It is also the legislative arm of the Organization. Thus, it is the only body that can repeal, modify or amend the laws of the Organization. The General Assembly meeting is presided over by the president, and in her absence, the vice-president. In the absence of the two, one of the executive members may be elected or appointed by the meeting to preside. It is also ultimately responsible for the approval of the organization budget.

The current *Executive Board* is made-up of the President, Vice President, immediate Past President, the Executive Director, Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer, Historian and Parliamentarian. Three of my informants are members of the current board.

The main function of the Executive Board is to draw-up policies to be implemented by the Secretariat. It also has an oversight responsibility over the Secretariat. It appoints and dismisses members of the Secretariat in consultation with the General Assembly. It has

also the responsibility to organize events such as the General Meeting. When it is beyond its powers it defers certain decisions that need to be taken and refer it to the General Meeting. It can also call for an emergency General Meeting if need be. It is responsible for the drawing and expending of the organization budget. Its annual budget must however be approved by the General Assembly.

The *Secretariat* membership consists of the Executive Director, her deputy and three other members as appointed by the Board. They are assisted by four staff namely the administrator, communications officer, investigator and front desk manageress. The Executive Director and her staff are responsible for the day-to-day running of the organization, especially activities at the national office in Accra. One of the key tasks of the Secretariat is seeking funding from internal and external donors. The Secretariat members are the only constituent of FIDA-Ghana who is remunerated for the work they do. Any other FIDA-Ghana member who works for the Organization does so, on voluntary bases, and is not financially rewarded for that.

To prop up its staff, FIDA-Ghana also takes interns from domestic and foreign universities. Usually, but not always, these interns are law students or newly-graduated lawyers. At the time of my research there were 4 interns at the head office made-up of two foreigners and two Ghanaians.

7.9. Consequences of Administrative Structure for the Work of FIDA-Ghana - Disagreement on programmes implementation

Data gathered from my fieldwork suggest that all the three administrative units stated above each constitute a centre of power. It also appears from my data that these centres of power have sometimes been a source of hindrance in the drawing and implementation of certain programmes. Experiences recounted by my informants suggest that these have sometimes led to misunderstandings between the remunerated staff and the voluntary hierarchy⁴³. It came to the fore that some programmes had to be delayed or shelved because some of the units within this power structure had to be constituted. For instance,

⁴³ It must be noted that in FIDA-Ghana the remunerated staff at the secretariat operate under the voluntary authority of the members of the board and the general assembly.

the General Assembly had to be summoned to approve the programmes and this did not take place in time it. Four of my key informants, the high court judge, the former president, the executive member of the board and the administrative manager provided me with this information. The situation looked different depending on whether the observer had an administrative or a volunteer leadership perspective. The administrative manager expressed her frustration to me when she noted that:

Sometimes after working on a certain programme day and night you send it to the executive director who tells you it will need the approval of the board. You will wait for weeks and sometimes for months and you don't hear anything. When you ask, often you are told the Board is still deliberating on it. On few occasions though you are told this will require the approval of the general assembly and often nobody knows what time this will be'. She continued that:

This is very frustrating especially when it has to do with issues like sourcing for funding. You know we are in a competitive business nowadays.

Her grimaced face perhaps even explains her frustration better than her words. This is at the drawing of the programmes stage. Her bosses (the three mentioned above) disagreed. While they recognized that the organizational structure has posed problems to programme implementation sometimes, they justified it in the name of good corporate governance and the laws of the land. To the high court judge:

Our organizational structure is in line with good corporate governance no matter how frustrating it may be. To the former president: this is the price we have to pay to remain credible.

The executive member tows the line of the two FIDA members. Another problem with regard to the administrative structure that emerges from the narratives of my informants is the significant differences within the Board. These differences may be natural in organizations like FIDA-Ghana. However the issue here is that, with regard to FIDA-Ghana, I gathered that, these differences seems to have led to delay in implementing certain programmes. According to the administrative manager, in cases where this had

occurred, it had been due to differences of what approach to use rather the content of the programmes. She recalled that there was a serious division within the Board on how a 'paralegal training'⁴⁴ programme needed to be implemented. While some of the members prefer the bottom-up approach, others prefer the reverse. That is, some members preferred that the programme should be implemented from Accra leading to the gradual addition of the regional centres, others insisted otherwise. This, she noted, caused a delay of the beginning of the implementation of the programme for more than a month than it was originally scheduled to take-off.

Another time she recalled that there was disagreement within the Board as to whether to publicly confront the Government on the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill or to adopt what she called the *softer approach*. While some leading members preferred confrontation, others thought it was unhelpful and advocated for the softer approach. She also recalled that just before the 2004 elections, some members of the organization wanted to confront the main political elders to openly declare what percentage of public office they will offer women upon assumption of office. She revealed that while there was almost unanimous agreement on the need for members to know the plans of the various political parties, there was significant disagreement of how to go about it. Eventually, she told me, the softer group won, leading to one of the most active members of the organization, who favoured the confrontation approach, deciding to continue to be a member on a low profile. She decided to leave the executive board. Her official reason was that she needed time to concentrate on her own NGO but many, including my informants believe that the main reason was that her belief that the softer approach does not work.

Statements from my informants also suggest differences and possible misunderstandings in relation to some of the basic strategies of FIDA-Ghana. It seems the differences or misunderstandings in part may be due to the administrative structure. For example, answers provided to me by three key officials of the organization as to why FIDA-Ghana continues to employ the Rights Based Approach despite years of no significant

⁴⁴ With regard to this programme FIDA-Ghana embarked on the training of some selected members within communities in Ghana on the rights of the Ghanaian woman.

improvement in women representation numbers in public office in Ghana, appears to differ. The high court judge saw the continued adoption and use of the rights based approach as:

being in line with the country's own legislative framework and international instruments for which the country is a signatory.

The former president by contrast, saw it as:

as a matter of right, because there are two species of humanity; That you need to get all segments of your society in governance; RBA does not allow Governments to choose how many women they want into public office.

The administrative manager on her side considered that:

We advocate for more increment as a right in order that we can reach the 30% mark which is the international accepted threshold. What we really want is 50%. Rwanda has it, so, why not Ghana?

Admittedly, these three reasons given above can all be good reasons for FIDA-Ghana's right based strategy. However, I found it a bit interesting that three key officials of the organization could give me three different reasons for their continued employment of an approach they have employed for several years. Perhaps the administrative structure's weakness has led to incoherence even in the policy front. In any case, narratives from FIDA-Ghana's management informants indicate that the administrative structure may not be functioning optimally. The question then is whether the functioning problem has to do with the structure itself or the practice of it. I argue that from the narratives of my informants, it is not the structure but rather the practice of it that is the problem. Two reasons lie behind this assertion. First, the narratives suggest some level of conflict in approach between the Board and the remunerated staff when it comes to speedy implementation of programmes. This appears not to be the result of the structure but rather the practice of it. For example, it is obvious from the narratives that the Board has not been meeting monthly as stipulated by their own regulations. Clearly, not meeting

every month is not the result of the structure but rather it appears that it is the practice of it that is causing problems for FIDA-Ghana. Second, it appears that the Board and the Staff are not on the same wavelength on the thoughts behind certain programmes. Thus, it appears that this has led to differences in how to approach such programmes. Guided by SCTP and NSP, I argue that the two reasons given above can be traced to the cultural and historical context within which FIDA-Ghana finds itself. As discussed in chapter five, cultural perceptions within the Ghanaian society have led to stereotyping of women as undeserving of public leadership. Thus any organization that is set up to rectify such a perception has to carve a space within such an environment to be successful. How to do this successfully may lead to differences among the members. The differences may lead to negative or positive consequences. Based on the narratives of my informants it appears that in the case of FIDA-Ghana it has been negative. The consequence is explained also by NSP which contends that the performance of an organization is affected by the environment it finds itself. It is reasonable to argue that the cultural environment within Ghana's political space has affected the performance of FIDA-Ghana. For instance, FIDA-Ghana continues to employ the same strategy despite seemingly little impact.

This is in spite of the fact that all my FIDA-Ghana informants agreed that the numbers of women in public office is still low despite years of advocacy. However, all of them sought to put the blame somewhere else, either with NGOs involved in advocacy for upping of the numbers. According to the executive member:

For now it is not so good, though there are signs the situation can change. The administrative manager agrees: The numbers are woefully inadequate and it is getting very frustrating.

For the high court judge:

FIDA-Ghana's position is one of disapproval. We have less than 30 women in parliament, in the executive we are less than 20, in the supreme court we have 4 out of 13, court of appeal 4 out of 40 and 12 out of 65 in the high court. This is too low and we

encourage the executive to appoint more. For the former president: The numbers are too low. Indeed, they are shameful. In terms of numbers our view is that not only are women supposed to be enough, but they must be visibly seen. For lawyer A: The numbers are too low, and in my view all succeeding Governments are to blame for this.

So why does FIDA-Ghana continue to advocate the same way despite the seemingly little impact? Tvedt, in explaining the central argument within the NSP, notes that ‘... the organizational structure and landscape in a country are seen as a reflection of its cultural and historical characteristics rather than as a functional product of market and state failures’ (Tvedt1998:57). Drawing from narratives above and my NSP for the existence of NGOS, I argue that FIDA-Ghana continues to do what they have been doing for two reasons:

First, FIDA-Ghana continues to follow the same pattern because of the environment in which it finds itself. In other words FIDA-Ghana has been affected by the sensitivities of the cultural and historical environment it find itself. It appears while members of FIDA-Ghana will like to see things change, they have gone about their advocacy in culturally sensitive way to avoid ruffling two much feathers.

Second, because of the cultural and historical environment that FIDA-Ghana finds itself, it has limited its ability to raise funds. This has led to its over-reliance on donors-in some cases internal but in most cases external. Though these donors see FIDA-Ghana as a brand that can help them further their cause, they also take into consideration the national and historical characteristics of Ghana bearing in mind its sensitive nature. This has affected their decision to effect drastic changes in strategy. As the administrative manager remarked when I asked her about campaign financing of beneficiaries of their programs:

But our donors will not understand. In fact when we tell them they don’t take it seriously. For them, money given to us is for specific programmms. Her narrative is line with DiMaggio and Anheier’s assertion, that, ‘one can predict the legal form of most

organizations if one knows the industry and nation-state in which they operate' (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990:139).

7.10 Conclusion

Perhaps as a consequence of the two factors discussed above, most of the programmes implemented appear too narrow in terms of the target population. This may also contribute to the seemingly little impact of their advocacy in trying to push more women into public office. For instance, when I checked the invitee list for a seminar organized towards the publication of 'A Guide to Women's Participation in Public Office' I realized that only women were invited. In most cases, the target group has been only women. For example during my fieldwork, I was invited to a seminar organized by NETRIGHT (an umbrella of women NGOs of which FIDA-Ghana is a member) on 28th of July 2008 on 'Aid effectiveness on women's Rights', in a plush hotel in Accra. Participants consisted entirely of women, with the exception of a few journalists, sent by their media houses to cover the seminar, and myself. I suggest here that targeting women mostly with their programmes has been a limiting factor in relation to the impact they have made. This is because not only does it serve as a reflection but also as reinforcement of the gender segregation within conventional culture in Ghana. Further and may be, most crucially to the impact of its advocacy, the target group of most its programmes have not been the 'ordinary man in the street'⁴⁵. I found out that even in programmes where men have participated, those invited have mainly been the elite in the society. Most of those invited into the seminars were politicians and leading traditional leaders. For example, in the Tamale seminar referred to in chapter 6, only traditional rulers in the area were invited to the seminar. The two pictures below, best illustrate the point I have been suggesting-that women and some segment of men are targeted, in FIDA-Ghana programmes.

⁴⁵ In Ghana the term is used to refer to people who do not hold position of influence whether in the public or private sector.



FIDA / Legal Aid Collaboration: mobile outreach clinic in Oyoko (Koforidua)⁴⁶



⁴⁶ Pictures extracted from <http://www.fidaghana.org/photo-1.php>

What possibly explain these selective targets? May be the intention is that these targets will help influence the larger society to further the cause of FIDA-Ghana. This has not worked and perhaps it is time for FIDA-Ghana to rethink this strategy. From the experiences of my informants, it appears FIDA-Ghana is experiencing problem in relation to its advocacy is communicating its message. Perhaps Fowler's (1988:3-5) assertion that though flexibility is a hallmark of NGOs, but not automatically linked to them, is what FIDA-Ghana is experiencing. It is obvious from the discussion above that, while FIDA-Ghana have programmes that seek to put more women in public office, official acts alone, though may be a crucial requirement in the advocacy jigsaw, in relations to leading to increment in numbers of women in public office, it is not sufficient. Indeed, in an earlier study, Tweneboah-Koduah suggested that, for an improvement in its advocacy role, FIDA-Ghana 'should intensify its political awareness campaign by using all the major Ghanaian languages...' (Tweneboah 2003:40). He found out that, while 46% of his sampling population has heard about FIDA-Ghana, they did not know exactly what they were doing. According to him, one of the possible explanations for the above statistic is the use of the English language in most of their leading programmes. He further suggested that, this may have led to misunderstanding of FIDA-Ghana within certain segments of the Ghanaian. This misunderstanding he argues, has led to a misleading perception of the group in Ghana as being elitist. One of my informants, the former president acknowledged that the members of FIDA-Ghana are aware that this perception exists, within some segment of Ghanaian society about them. According to her:

People don't understand us sometimes. These we acknowledge make our work difficult. For instance, when we were campaigning for the domestic violence bill to be passed, we held a seminar for journalists. One of the journalists, in contributing to a discussion, said that for him, the push for the passage of the domestic violence bill was the work of some elite women in Ghanaian society who are frustrated because they are without husbands. Their agenda is therefore to wreck families in Ghana.

Maybe it is time for FIDA-Ghana to realize that their advocacy must lead to a facilitation of links between men and women leading to the breaking down of conventional cultural barriers.. In other words there is the need for FIDA-Ghana to help create a dialogue men and women inside and outside political structures if it really wants to make an impact with its advocacy.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to analyze why several years of advocacy by women's groups for the increment of the number of women in public office has had seemingly little impact. The study searched for factors that may account for that.

Ghana gained her independence from British rule in 1957. The struggle for independence was primarily led by men, with the support and assistance of women. However after independence, the assistance and support that the women gave men in the struggle for independence did not translate into appointments to public office. That the numbers of women in public office in Ghana is low is of no doubt. As chapter four demonstrates, from pre-independence to 2008, the numbers of women in public office has not seen any significant increment, except perhaps for a brief period in 1965. Advocacy by women's groups and rhetorics from succeeding politicians have not translated into actual figures on the ground. Indeed, in real and percentage terms, in some cases, there has been a drop. It is against this backdrop that I have explored why several years of advocacy by women's groups such as FIDA-Ghana have not helped to rectify the situation.

8.2 What limits the impact of the advocacy?

Three factors, namely the cultural environment, the role of the media, and the internal dynamics of advocacy groups with FIDA-Ghana as an example - were identified by this study as central contributors to limiting the impact of the advocacy for more women into public office. Indeed, the central finding is that the cultural environment plays a significant role in limiting the impact of the advocacy for increment in the number of women in public office. Culture influences actors from the individual level to the state level, and has in certain cases affected policy formulation. Concerning cultural environment, it was found that in spite of the progressive nature of Ghana's culture, there remain certain aspects of it that act as hindrances to women. From public policy, through men's perception of women in public office, to resource acquisition and land ownership, this study found that women are held to certain standards that men are not. Indeed, a case

is cited in Chapter five in which implementers of public policy conspired with culture to deny some women the basic right of being able to vote or be voted for. Thus, not only were those women denied the right to have a say in who should lead them, they were also denied the right to lead. As emphasized by Schneider and Ingram in the Social Construction of Target Population (SCTP) theory, culture can be used to reinforce stereotyping and negative perceptions. This study has shown how culture has been used to reinforce negative perceptions about women in public governance and to cow women into submission. These processes have been enforced at the highest level, through policy design and implementation. Additionally, it was also found that even where laws have been made to right certain wrongs against women within the Ghanaian society, such as in the area of inheritance, culture has once again been used to bypass these laws.

The role of the media was also found to have had effect on women's ascension to public office. As explained in Chapter six, there seems to be a relationship of mistrust between the Ghanaian media and women's advocacy groups. Examples have been presented in chapter six of the election coverage of two leading Ghanaian newspapers. Again, I submit that the media works within a certain cultural environment and that this cultural environment elevates men above women when it comes to seeking public office. As an actor within such a setting, it is not surprising that the media portrays what the society cherishes. This is true to the extent that even when trying to portray a woman candidate positively, it tends to highlight her feminine side only. This is because the media may be seen as a microcosm of society, and therefore tend to reflect what society wants. As demonstrated in chapter six of this study, the wives of aspiring presidential candidates were given more coverage than women candidates because of their husbands, and when two women were selected as running mates it was only their feminine side rather than their political capabilities that were highlighted. Again the negative perception that Schneider and Ingram highlights in the Social Construction of Target Population Theory (SCTP) is brought to the fore. This is in contrast to the demand of Social Responsibility Theory (SRT) that the media is fair to all segments of people within the state.

Further, this study also found that working in culturally hostile environment makes the work of women advocacy groups like FIDA-Ghana very difficult. Externally, this

cultural environment has contributed to succeeding Ghana Governments not concretizing their rhetoric on women in public governance into action. One consequence of this is that not only are more women not appointed into public office, these advocacy organizations do not get any financial assistance from the state. This makes it necessary for the advocacy groups to seek funding from non state actors. However the dire economic situation in Ghana makes it imperative that people should prioritize. The result is that people are either unwilling or unable to contribute financially to the cause of these advocacy groups, especially when they operate in a cultural environment in which women participation in public governance is not too welcomed. Internally also, there exist certain dynamics within these organizations themselves that also need to be assessed. Using FIDA-Ghana an example, it was found that two elements have limited its impact. It was found that lack of resources both human and material have had an adverse effect on FIDA-Ghana's effectiveness. Further, the bureaucratic nature of its administrative structure has also been a hindrance. The result of these internal problems has been the inability to raise the necessary resources from its own membership. Linked with the inadequate resources is the inability to either recruit or maintain the desired staff. This has also has a negative impact on their ability to pursue their programmes vigorously.

Lack of communication with the media was also found to be a barrier to the impact of these advocacy groups. Examples were cited when members of these advocacy groups were either not willing to talk to the media or were selective on who to talk to. As demonstrated in chapter six the media can be a force of change in a society whether for good or bad. Lack of communication has led a section of the Ghanaian media to either not report on the programmes of these groups or to highlight the negative.

In conclusion, this study has been able to identify some of the key reasons that have limited the impact of advocacy groups in Ghana in relation to the increment of women in public office. As discussed, it was found that the cultural environment, the media and internal dynamics within the advocacy groups have contributed to limiting the impact on their push for more women into public office. It is therefore reasonable to argue here that while advocacy by women's groups like FIDA-Ghana is necessary, it is not sufficient to

change the status quo. More efforts than the present advocacy methods are required in this direction. New initiatives may include building cordial relationships with the Ghanaian media, taking the consequences of the diversity of the cultural environment that Ghanaian women find themselves into a more diversified and inclusive programme of activities, and also find out how women within these communities may get to make their voices heard.

8. 3 Future Research

Time and resource constraints did not allow it. However it will be interesting to do a study on how the activities of women NGOs have been affected by the creation of Ministry of Women and Children Affair (MOWCA). Further, after the just completed elections the rhetorics and the advocacy in relation to increment in the number of women in public office in Ghana have intensified. For example one of the women advocacy groups, WILDAF has already petitioned the president to fulfill his campaign promise of giving 40% of all public appointments to women⁴⁷. It would be interesting to explore this topic again when the current president complete his term in 2012.

⁴⁷ see: <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=162841> retrieved in 28 May 28 2009.

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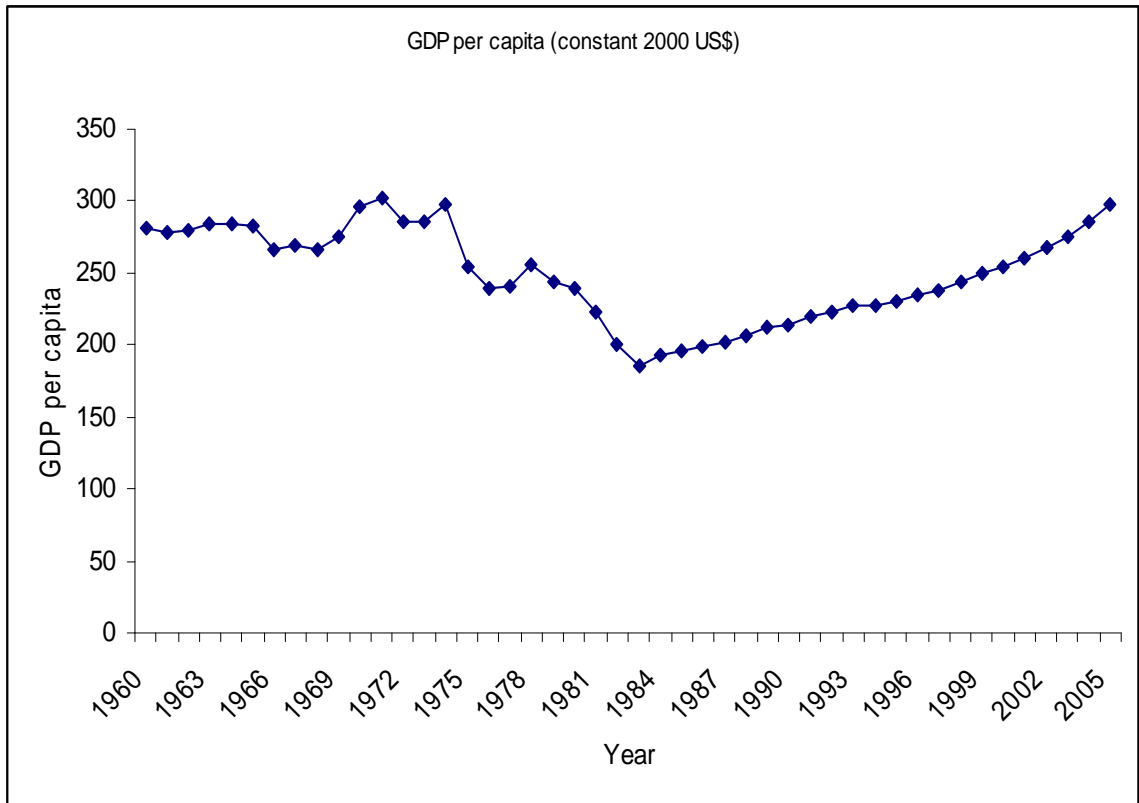
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ANNEXES

ANNEX- A: GDP per Capita Growth of Ghana



Source: World Development Index

ANNEX- B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

QUESTIONS FOR FIDA OFFICIALS

SECTION A

FAMILIARITY WITH FIDA-GHANA

1. For how long have you been a member of FIDA-GHANA?
2. For how long have you occupied your present position in FIDA-Ghana?
3. How many members do FIDA-Ghana has now?
4. How many regions and districts in Ghana does FIDA operate?
5. Please kindly detail the specific components of FIDA-Ghana programmes
6. What are the main activities that FIDA do to actualize these programmes?

PLACING MORE WOMEN IN PUBLIC OFFICE

What is FIDA position in regard to the current number of women in public office?

Why does FIDA advocate for more women in public office?

How successful have FIDA been in relation to this advocacy?

There has been criticism of the rights based approach in the literature especially in relation to its applicability. Why does FIDA continue to use this approach?

Do you have any targets as to the number of women you want to see in public office within the next ten years?

Can you give me an idea as to the number of women who have gained entry to public office as a result of FIDA'S effort? How?

Do you work with other NGOs in this regard?

Are you supported by any governmental organization? If yes, have they try in any way to influence the way FIDA should go about its programmes?

Does FIDA have any foreign donors? If yes have they try to influence your programmes in any way?

RESPONSE TO ADVOCACY

1. What has been the response of women who come into contact with FIDA due to your advocacy on women's rights to public office?
2. What about men who come into contact due to your FIDA advocacy for more women in public office?
3. What has been the response from the political hierarchy to this form of advocacy?
4. In terms of law, what is your assessment of the current law in Ghana in relation to women quest to enter public office?
5. What is your assessment of the current government performance in relation appointment of women to public office? Why that performance?

CHALLENGES

What are the main challenges FIDA has encountered in its drive towards getting more women into public office?

How does FIDA respond to those challenges?

Has FIDA received a complaint from any woman of her rights being violated in her attempt to gain entry into public office?

If FIDA have, how did it respond to that?

Is there a generally mechanism in place at FIDA for dealing with such issues?

Is there any other thing you want to add?

Thank you

SECTION B

FOR BENECIARIES

PERSONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

What is your name?

Can you please tell me your age?

Are you married?

If you are married, for how long?

What is your husband's occupation?

Do you have children?

If you have children kindly tell me their age(s)

Can you please tell me your educational background?

Where did you work before seeking public?

FAMILIARITY WITH FIDA-GHANA

How did you get into contact with FIDA-Ghana?

Which programmes of FIDA have you taken part in?

Were you interested in public office before coming into contact with FIDA-Ghana?

Why do you want to seek public office? Is it related to areas like career development, helping other women, interest in politics generally or making a contribution to Ghana's development, etc?

Do you think your association with FIDA has helped you in your public related activities? Please elaborate further.

Do you think generally FIDA-Ghana has helped to create the necessary awareness on women access to public office in Ghana

Do you think through the activities of FIDA-Ghana women have the same chance of getting elected or appointed to public office like men?

Should women have equal chance getting appointed or elected into public office? Why?

CHALLENGES

What are the main constraints in your view that continue to inhibit more Ghanaian women from getting placed in public office?

In your opinion how can those constraints be removed?

What was the response of your family generally to your attempt to seek public office?

How do your male colleagues relate to you in your place of work?

Have you ever felt discriminated against in your job because of your gender?

If you have, did you report it to FIDA-Ghana and what was their response?

Is there anything you want to add?

Thank You.