

Gender and Employment in Ghana

(Gender Mainstreaming in Ghana, 2013 - Study from Adobebe Owusu, extract only)

Wage Employment

In the 2008 GDHS, employment was measured using current employment at the time of study and employment within the 12 months preceding the study. It showed that 91% of currently married women aged 15-49 were employed compared to 99% of their counterparts of the same age and status. Of these, for both males and females, 87 percent were paid in cash and a combination of cash and in-kind. Employment is an important basis for empowerment and financial decision making for both males and females. For women particularly, employment is a critical means of empowerment for them (GSS et al. 2009).

There are, however, marked differences in wage employment based on one's location in the country. In rural Ghana, there are five times more men than women engaged in waged-employment activities. While rural males are more likely to be wage-employed, rural women are more likely to be unpaid family workers and non-agricultural self-employed. Employed women in Ghana are entitled to at least twelve weeks of paid maternity leave, fully funded by her employer. In addition, pregnant and nursing women having legal protections against certain forms of nighttime, dangerous, unhealthy, or overtime work, and unfair, discriminatory termination of her employment (ILO, 2009).

Division of Labor by Gender

Gender division of labor varies significantly across ethnic groups in Ghana. Generally, women are responsible for basic domestic and childcare roles. Both genders assume responsibility for basic agriculture production, with a clear role differentiation – men undertake the more laborious tasks such as clearing the bush, and preparing the land for planting, and women the more repetitive ones such as planting or harvesting. In addition, while cash crops are usually controlled by males, female crops include vegetables and food crops needed to support the family (Adomako Ampofo, 2007; Oppong, 2010). For example, in addition to working with her husband on their cocoa farm, women may also have a tomato or cassava farm of their own. Women independently control any money that they receive from their own endeavors, even though their husbands normally provide the capital funding. Traditionally, this arrangement assured women control of resources needed to support their domestic and child care roles (Adomako Ampofo, 2007).

Traditional craft production varies according to gender. Primarily, men are weavers, carvers, and metalworkers, while women make pottery and engage in food processing. Similarly, hunting is considered a man's job, but petty fishing, using baskets and creating small dams and scooping out the water from small ponds to catch river fish, common among the Asante

people for example, is almost exclusively a woman's occupation. Among the Fante, commercial fishing, using motor boats and large nets, is exclusively a man's job, while women process and sell the landed fish (Hagan, 1983).

Again, these patterns and arrangements vary significantly between culture groups and regions. Among the Ga and Adangme, women are responsible for domestic chores, are heavily engaged in petty trade, but do not do any farm work. Ga women are especially prominent traders as they control a major portion of the domestic fish industry and the general wholesale trade particularly in textiles and foodstuffs. Northern and Ewe women, on the other hand, have fewer commercial opportunities and assume heavier agricultural responsibilities in addition to their housekeeping chores. Among the matrilineal Akan, women assume important social, political, and ritual roles. Female elders are considered to be wise advisors to the king, the embodiment of wisdom. In fact, a jury deliberation of a complex nature is literally called "going to ask the old lady."

The Relative Status of Women and Men in Various Occupations

Regardless of culture or ethnic group, women dominate petty trading (Adomako Ampofo, 2007; Darkwah, 2007; Owusu, 2013), selling foodstuffs, textiles, and many informal sector activities, but are less involved in manufacturing. This is the reason for the Mama Benz phenomenon in pre-colonial Ghanaian society where women had considerable economic power, controlling their own income and property without male oversight. Despite complex changes due to colonialism and modernization, women have retained and expanded their trading opportunities and can sometimes acquire great wealth through their businesses, the Mama Benz phenomenon. Consequently, women dominate in the informal, and mostly distributive, sectors of the economy such as retailing. Incidentally, these are the sectors of the Ghanaian economy which are very sensitive to changes in policies and structural reforms (Adomako Ampofo, 2007), thus, making women in these sectors more vulnerable. Also, women may not be involved in an appreciable magnitude or at all in transport and communication, mining, and the emerging oil and gas business (Owusu, 2013).

Men, however, have wider educational opportunities and much higher participation in government and formal employment. In fact, despite the appreciable expansion in tertiary level education, both private and government ones in Ghana, and although both women and men are equally likely to occupy professional level positions in formal employment, women still find themselves mainly as support staff to men, while men occupy the professional and technical grades mostly (GSS, 2013).