

# Building Equality Through the Media: How Ghanaian Women Are Making Their Voices Heard

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## INTRODUCTION

Feminism in the Western world often portrays African women as unassuming, fragile, and in need of guidance. However, through mass media use, Ghanaian women are making a name for themselves, their abilities, and their skills. Ultimately, making a difference at all levels of women's rights, laws, and norms within Ghana. Through this research, learn directly from Ghanaian women themselves how media, feminism, and determination have come together to push forward women's opportunities within the country.

## OBJECTIVE



How are Ghanaian women utilizing popular mass media to change social norms and laws for the betterment of women within the country?

## CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

- First sub-Saharan country to gain independence March 6, 1957
- 31 million population: Women = 49%, Men = 51% (World Bank, 2020)
- Over 100 tribal groups and 50 languages
- Women's literacy rate: 74.4% (World Bank, 2018)
- Men's literacy rate 83.5% (World Bank, 2018)
- Radio, TV, WhatsApp, and newspapers are the largest methods of mass communication

## GHANAIAN FEMINISM AND CHALLENGES OF WESTERN FEMINISM

- Pre-colonial history: largely egalitarian (depending on tribal group) with significant positions of power for women (Abankwa, 2021)
- Mid colonization: large scale removal of women's influence and rights
- Post colonization: Women's importance rises as a vital part of the community with European influence
- Rejection of "Feminism" - often described as something which belongs to the West and being imported (Abankwa, 2021)
- Difficult to make sense of women's domestic and professional roles in this cultural context (Abankwa, 2021; Acolatse Apaloo, 2021)

## METHODOLOGY

The research for this study was conducted using an elite in-person semi-structured interview, oral histories, and prior existing literature. This information was used to build a larger contextual understanding of media and women's lives.

### SELIKEM ACOLATSE APALOO - GHANAIAN JOURNALIST

- One of the most successful female journalists in Ghana, conducted news reporting with Ghana Broadcasting Corporation for over a decade
- Host of "Women's Voice" a TV show which gave a voice to women's issues and stories within Ghana to a much larger audience than before
- Member of multiple women's media alliances within Ghana
- Provided first-hand accounts of women's political action in Ghana relating to media

### ORAL HISTORY

- Collected through various women family members.
- Oral history is particularly valuable and insightful within Ghana as it is an oral society and commonly how information is passed on.

## CONCLUSION

Ghanaian women are using mass media significantly to enact change within the country for women's rights with visible results. This can be seen through:

- Increased interest by men in the country in women's issues.
- Government support of reports on women's progress with the aim of change.
- Increased opportunities for women via reproductive rights and access.

### NEXT STEPS FOR RESEARCH

- Conducting more interviews with women with broadcasting ability within Ghana to grow my research.
- Actively observing the work of a local NGO that uses mass media to better women and seeing their societal acceptance.

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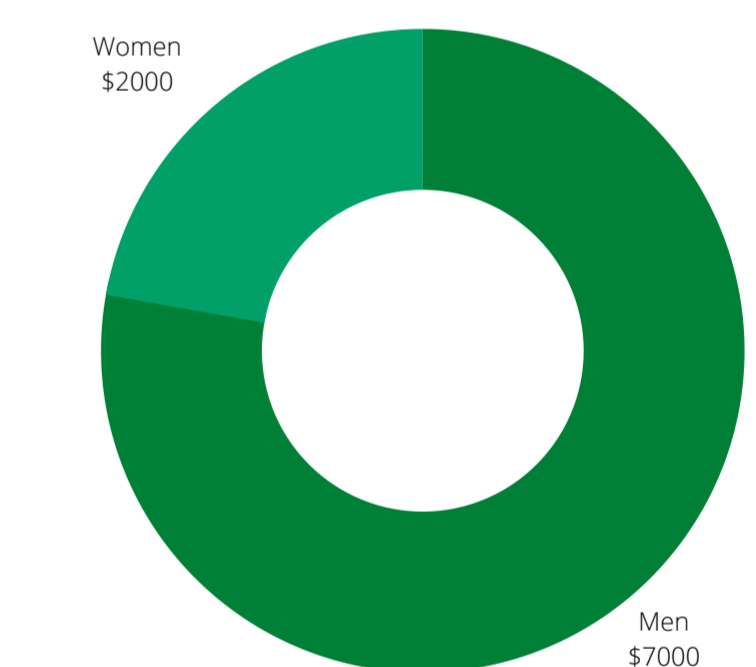
## KEY FINDINGS

### WHAT IS STALLING PROGRESS FOR WOMEN?

- Lack of progress from the government due to a focus on infrastructural and economic development
- Lack of anti-discrimination labour laws against women in the workforce
- Lack of representation of and limited opportunities for women in key media and political positions (Acolatse Apaloo, 2021; Amoah Boampong, 2018)
- Low self-esteem in being able to reach high levels of professional success without discrimination (Acolatse Apaloo, 2021).

### CHANGES GHANAIAN WOMEN ARE FIGHTING FOR

- Change to current marital rape laws (Amoah Boampong, 2018).
- Increase in information shared to the general public about women's issues
- Equal or equitable labour laws (Amoah Boampong, 2018).
- More high-level professional positions for women.



Pie chart of average monthly salaries (GHC) by gender for media broadcasters in Ghana (Acolatse Apaloo, 2021)

### WORKING TOGETHER & VISIBLE PROGRESS

- Acolatse Apaloo's Women's Voice, a women-centered TV show allowed women from all walks of life in Ghana to share information for 45 minutes a day without mentioning "feminism", building unity - **70% of viewers were men, the most popular news show in the country** (Acolatse Apaloo, 2021).
- Alliance for Women and Media in Ghana: created and submitted to the government a data collection report on how media in Ghana reflects on women and the high levels of harassment women who work in media face with the goal of change (Alliance for Women and Media in Ghana, 2020).
- The majority of young women who were able to make their own decisions about accessing birth control all had significant access to mass media (Parr, 2001; Ahinkorah et al, 2020).



### Status of Women in the Ghanaian Media

