

## Examining Women's Right in a Multicultural World: The Case of China and Ghana

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### Abstract

Perhaps, after the horrific horrors from the Second World War, the twentieth century lightened the world on the darkness of cruelty against humanity. A growing concern that every human being was important and deserved better grew in the hearts of many people of the world. This resulted in the birth of Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) which defined the content of human rights and was adopted on December 1948 by the United Nations (UN). The UN was committed to promote and respect the rights of every living soul. However, the UDHR didn't quickly spread to cover the rights of women in the world as various forms of discrimination still persisted against women. But it is with the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in December 1979 that universal standards were set for Women's equality. After CEDAW, the discrimination against women has immensely reduced. But there still exist some forms of discrimination against women in societies. Some groups of women face extra forms of discrimination based on their ethnicity, age, nationality, health status, religion, disability, socioeconomic status, marital status, education, among others. UN and other International Agencies have fought tirelessly to improve women's rights in the world, but there still remain some gaps. Women's right which includes economic, social, cultural, political, and civil has been greatly improved in most parts of the world. Women's participation in political and economic activities is seen everywhere in the world although it differs from one country to another. To this end, this paper seeks to examine women's right in a world of different cultures. The paper makes close reference to China and Ghana.

**Keywords:** Women's right; Human right; Ghana; China; Development

### Introduction

It will almost not occur to anyone that in this twenty-first century, there still exist some vicious forms of human rights abuse lingering in our societies-most especially against women [1]. The protection of human rights and dignity span across race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status in a multicultural world [2]. But in an age of modernity and civilization, where human rights are perceived universally as an inalienable right, it is somehow shameful and disgusting to hear of human rights abuse. A quick flashback to the history from the twentieth century reveals that the world woke up to the idea that human rights must be universal after the heinous consequences of the Second World War. It occurred to the peoples of the world that, what happened to anyone anywhere concerned everyone everywhere. This led to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations (UN) which defined the content of human rights and was adopted on December 1948 (Women's Rights to Equality: The Promise of CEDAW 2014) [3].

It is worth noting that the UDHR has in its preamble: "Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom ... (UDHR,)" In this preamble, the UN affirmed the equal rights of men and women. Also, Article two of the UDHR states clearly that: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights).. In this Article, everyone regardless of sex-male or female-is entitled to all the rights in the Declaration. However, this Declaration was unable to materialize immediately among UN member countries especially with regards to women's rights. Arat points out that

historically even during the "Age of Enlightenment" and subsequent centuries, while some rights were extended to some groups of people, discrimination on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, and sexuality was seen as legitimate (Women's Rights to Equality: The Promise of CEDAW [2]. The UDHR became a bad cheque to women as there were insufficient funds of rights to protect them. Various forms of discrimination and violence still plague the life of women across cultures and race. Thus there was the need for an international framework to be adopted to protect women's rights and ensure gender equality. This idea came into reality, with the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which happened in December 1979 that universal standards were set for women's equality.

CEDAW is an international standard-setting instrument that was espoused by the United Nations in 1979 and came into existence in 1982. CEDAW establishes the universality of the principle of equal rights between men and women. The Convention seeks to establish equality of rights for women, whatever their marital status, in all fields – political, economic, social, cultural and civil (CEDAW, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). During this time, the term "women's right", gained much relevance and recognition. The term "women's rights" and the set of practices that are attached to its use are the endlessly developing product of an

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international movement to improve upon the status of women. Prior to CEDAW, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution in December 1972 declaring 1975 International Women's Year and 1975 to 1985 as the Decade for Women.

Since then four UN Conferences on women have been held starting with the World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico in 1975 (Women's Rights to Equality: The Promise of CEDAW). These activities and conferences enhanced the smooth adoption of CEDAW by the UN [2]. CEDAW happens to be the sole human rights treaty (written Agreements) that affirms the proactive rights of women [4]. As of 15 February 2011, 186 nations, over ninety-six percent of the members of the United Nations, are parties to the Convention (CEDAW, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). However, not all countries have ratified the convention and even some of those ratified have said they will not implement certain provisions of the treaty on political, constitutional, cultural or religious grounds. But some countries in Middle East including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Oman, Qatar, Sudan, Syria and the United Arab Emirates, have neither signed nor ratified the Convention. This implies that women in these countries don't enjoy the rights enshrined in CEDAW [2]. Conversely, this Convention has been ratified by China and Ghana.

There is an Optional Protocol to CEDAW, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1999, that seeks to give women the right to lodge individual complaints with the Committee concerning all violations of the Convention by their governments and, on the other hand, to empower the Committee to conduct investigations into the abuses of which women are victims in countries that have signed the protocol [2]. As of 15 February 2011, there are 101 States parties to the Optional Protocol (CEDAW, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). In 2011, Ghana also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2011.

After thirty-seven years of the adoption of CEDAW by the UN, this study seeks to examine women's right in a multicultural world. Women's rights will be thoroughly examined through the lens of objective analysis, across world cultures-African culture, European culture, American culture, Asian culture and the others. This will reveal some of the progress made, failures, expectations, and hopes after the adoption of CEDAW and other major international movements advocating for women's right. Occasionally, more emphasis will be placed on women's right in Ghana and China. There is still a growing movement advocating for women's right internationally. Woman rights can be categorized into various forms. They include, Economic Right, Social Right, Cultural Right, Civil Right and Political Right [5].

## Methodology

This study examines women's rights in a multicultural world using non-quantitative analysis. It unfolds to tell stories and drawing on history of women's rights from different part of the world. It criss-crosses cultures and brings to light how women's rights started to gain relevance and what has happened so far since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the adoption of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by the United Nations. After examining women's rights worldwide, close reference was given to Ghana and China in order to explore in greater detail what happens to women in these two countries. In other words, Ghana and China were used for the study, after which recommendations were made to help best promote and protect the rights of women in the world.

## Economic rights

There is no doubt, that women's rights encompass economic rights. According to Minkler Women's Economic right has its roots in the history of the Women's rights movement [6]. Equality and Women's Economic rights corresponds with the second generation social, cultural, and economic rights [7]. Article thirteen and eleven of CEDAW states the "The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit, and the right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings respectively" [2]. In this convention, it is enshrined that, women have equal rights as men to work and own property (CEDAW, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). Women's Economic right includes the right to own property, the right to strike, the right to work, the right to form and join trade unions, the right to the free choice of employment and favourable conditions of work; and the right to social security (Mubangizi). In this view, Women across cultures will not be denied the rights to work and own properties. This is in contrast to what transpired in the past. Two hundred years ago, in most countries women were considered property of men (typically either a father or a husband) and had no intrinsic rights of their own. They usually could not own property or sign contracts, they had no control over their own body, they could not vote, they had no legal way to end a marriage, and they had no access to their children after a separation (The Economics and Politics of Women's Rights). There is a strong correlation between Women's Economic rights and economic development throughout the world's territories and cultures. It's shown that, in countries where women's Economic rights is enhanced, there is much developments and the reverse is true (Doepkey, Tertilt, and Voen).

## Rights to own property

Numerous scholars think that the woman's ability to own a property plays an important duty in her standard of living and in her pursuit for equality in gender relations [8].

The situation in Ghana with regards to the economic rights of women looks a little complicated especially due to highly embedded existence of customary law joined with a weak state judiciary [6]. Also, many of the laws put in place to grant economic rights for women in Ghana are under-utilized [6].

Kinship including marriage patterns has a strong effect on the distribution of property in the Ghanaian Society [6]. Despite the fact that, marriages may take place under either customary law or statutory law, many Ghanaians prefer customary unions over marriage under the statutory law [9]. Marriages under customary law do not result in partners becoming part of each other's line of descent [10]. Nearly eighty percent of Ghana's lands do not belong to individuals but rather lineages that are family relations or kinship groups, so in a situation where a partner dies property is passed on back to the line of descent or lineages (Hammond). Despite the fact that this seem to have equal effects on both women and men, societal norms make it difficult for women to acquire land independently at a later time than men [6,10].

Due to this, widows face specific difficulties in maintaining living standards especially after the demise of their partners. Also, cultural heritage plays a crucial role in a woman's ability to become the direct owner of a portion of land [6]. The largest ethnic group in Ghana, the Akans are matrilineal and therefore the possibility of them owing property is relatively higher as compared to those ethnic groups that are patrilineal. In actual fact one-fifth, thus (21.1%) of the Akan land portions are owned by women compared to only 11.7% of land portions

held by non-Akan women (Quisumbing and Otsuka). Additionally, Quisumbing and Otsuka study of develop land tenure in Ghana discovered that female-held land in Ghana was mainly acquired as a gift as opposed to privately purchased or being inherited. They opined that although men were also likely to inherit to get land as a gift the distribution of attainment was well-balanced between the modes of heredity, private acquisition and as a gift. Moreover, with the enactment of the interstate succession law, Ghana made its very first legislative efforts to extenuate the discrimination effects of traditional land holdings, the interstate succession law which assures the widows a share of the couple's property in the happening that a will was not initially made was an effort to systematize the process of widows' quest for property inheritance. Unfortunately, there are some various procedural impediments to the effective use of this law by women. For instance, the law applies to only property that was self-acquired by the couple (excluding property that was acquired with the help of extended family) particularly in agrarian areas where records of land owners are rare [6].

More so, women are most of the time not involved in the process of land owners and as a result may not be informed about the specific details of how the property was acquired [6,10]. In most cases extended families may desire to keep the land of the deceased person and therefore insist that they aided the couple in primitively acquiring the land [6]. If the family decides to defend the claim in this manner and then records are not accessible then, the case automatically becomes a group words against that of the individual. The challenges discussed above reduce the emancipatory potential of the interstate succession law when it comes to women's land right issues.

To discuss the economic rights of Chinese women, it is paramount to mention that, the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing that was organized in 1995 served as the beginning of the promotion of Women's rights in China. This conference brought together Women's organizations from all over the world and China to promote Women's human rights. The Preparation for the conference offered Chinese women the opportunity or platform to voice out about their human rights needs and oppression. Despite the fact that, women are most of the time discouraged from participating in political activities at all levels, thus weakening their ability to assume their economic rights, some are discovering other ways to speak out [11].

Paternal traditions in China have declared themselves, hindering women's economic human rights, such as, importantly the right to land and the right to work. There is a wide gap between the grandiosity of the Chinese government concerning women's rights and also the actual experiences of women. Gender-based discrimination in China is not in line with several international conventions to which China is signatory (This includes the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (UNDHR) [2].

The declarations mentioned above call for Women's rights to be esteemed equally with those of their male counterparts, but they often are not in practice.

Gender discrimination in human rights is notably prevailing in China, which does not have a peculiarly strong human rights mark or record [11]. The right to own property is warranted by the UNDHR. Notwithstanding, a recent alteration in land tenure policy in China has resulted in a systematic denial of land to women in China. The new plan of action was designed to promote investment through a thirty-year land tenure for family or household. This revision has particularly wedged married women. It has terminated the periodical

re-allocations that permitted recently married women who had moved to a new village to own a plot of land in that village. Again Fry With the policy alteration, women technically continue to have land rights in their natal towns or villages, but in reality or practice they misplace access to that parcel of land after marriage as a consequence of Chinese cultural norms that does not regard married women to be a part of their natal family [11]. Also, the thirty-year tenure policy also refuse land to women through the titling process. Since land is specifically titled to a family or household as a whole, the name of the man, assumed to be the family or household head, will be on the paperwork. This goes a long way to affect the women in the long run because, in practice, women work tirelessly with their husbands on the family or household plot, but the woman can be denied access to the land in case of divorce, separation or widowhood since her name is not on the title. This is a problem that especially affects women with dependents, because the loss of land can automatically or definitely lead to a loss of livelihood. Moreover, when women do receive land in portion, it is specifically of the poorest quality in the least preferred area. No forgetting the impact of urbanization which is also linked to the denial of land to women, since rapid urbanization is causing rural landowners to be driven off their land. Most at times, expropriated land for urban expansion is not recompensed. Women are not involved in decision making especially during expropriation of land even if they are land holders [11].

### The right to work/rights in the sphere of employment

CEDAW in Article eleven states the right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment and the right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training for all women of the world (CEDAW, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). This shows that women all over the world are guaranteed the universal right to work. However, some countries have signed the convention but they didn't act according to the tenets of the convention. Again, drawing more relevance on China and Ghana.

Another aspect of human rights for which women in China have challenges is the right to work. The challenges with women's rights to work in China emanates from cultural and socio-economic conditions rather than government legislations. It seems obvious that the paternal traditions in China do not favour Chinese women in terms of work. Even though China's economy has been expanded tremendously, the situation does not benefit women as fewer workers are needed probably due to technological changes. Women are also more liable to layoffs and tendency for them to stop working for household duties [11].

In the midst of these challenges rural women suffers most. Mostly, because they have less education. Urban workers are preferred to rural workers by employers. Rural workers only get domestic, canteen, or shop jobs-jobs which urban women consider low-status positions [11]. In the case of Ghana, women are extremely under-represented in the formal sector, Making up of only one quarter of wage employees (Manuh). Within the public sector, women workers are extremely centred in certain branches, including nursing midwifery and teaching. Furthermore, within the public sector, women are strongly centred in the lower grades. Promotion in the civil service is mainly dependent upon having a degree, so taken that only twenty per cent of graduates are female, women are at a crystal clear disadvantage which implies that the percentage of women achieving middle management or administration positions is very low (Gregory). A few women have attained high level

positions in educational and nursing service (Manuh). Other formal sector work occupied by women are positions in banking, as secretaries, telephone operators, in clerical work and mostly as shop assistants. Although women predominate in trading, they are once again poorly pictured in the formal sector commerce; in 1984 just eleven per cent of those in modern sector commerce were women, with an even small dimension at managerial levels.

Most women in commerce are active in informal, hawking and low productivity petty trading. Women's involvement in the market is powerfully concentrated in extremely perishable, low profit goods, including agricultural produce and traditionally processed goods. In the past, these have always been female activities. Entry obstacles to trading are relatively low, with numerous female traders having small or no formal education. New migrants and the jobless often enter this sector. Trading ability is normally acquired at a young age commonly from mothers. Women trade most passively between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four. Women in the informal commerce sector do not have access to formal credit, being restricted by lack of collateral and regarded as not credit worthy by many financial institutions and banks. Numerous traders start by borrowing initial capital from friends, relatives or even money lenders, about only five per cent are able to acquire initial capital from banks. About ninety per cent of traders have no access to institutional credit (Clark and Manuh). They mostly rely upon money lenders, who may charge interest rates of up to hundred percent, and also *susu* systems (Gabianu).

## Social Rights

Social rights include amongst others things the access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning, benefit directly from social security programmes, to obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency. And also to organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment, to participate in all community activities, to have access to agricultural credit and loans, and marketing facilities, to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications (CEDAW, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)).

## Rights to education and health

Right to Education today is as essential as food and water. A lot has been done in recognition of the importance of education of girls and women in the contemporary world.

Ghana also has obligations under UN Charter, the UDHR, the Convention on Social and Economic Rights, and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). However, education for women still has a long way to go. According to the Ghana Living Standards Survey, 44.1% of women have no formal education, as opposed to 21.1% of men [12]. Adult literacy rates were sixty-six per cent for men, but only thirty-four percent for women. At all grade levels, more girls drop out than boys because they are expected to help feed the family or marry and raise children. Without primary education, these women cannot be productive citizens, caring wives, or conscientious mothers [12].

## Education, health and reproduction in Ghana

Women continue to be underprivileged in terms of education and

training. The gender imbalance is still evident in national enrolment tied, dropout rates and also biases in the curriculum. Cumulatively these end women's access to employment and their potential productivity. In the urbanized areas, lack of the required qualifications and a thin range of skills limits female access to formal employment. In the agrarian areas, lack of female education is probable to limit farm productiveness. Presently three quarters of female farmers have no education. Inadequate numeracy skill and illiteracy are also reported to limit the skilfulness and productivity of female traders. Educational disadvantages may hence also be a leading obstruction preventing women from responding to modification in incentives. There is a need to encourage female enrolment in non-traditional vocational/technical education at post primary level in order to widen their economic possibility. Revising or upgrading of the curriculum of literacy/adult education programmes should include skills that are particularly relevant to women's economic activities and for which women themselves are interested in for example, vegetable production, English, arithmetic, water supply maintenance.

High maternal mortality rates take a precedence issue in women's health, which can be addressed through promoting longer birth arrangement, improving access to and the quality of health care facilities. These measures would also mostly improve child and infant mortality and morbidity, and their operational implications. High fertility rates in Ghana are linked to demographic factors such as early age at first marriage and childbirth, but economic, social and cultural factors distinctly underlie these patterns. The primary single modification required in practice is greater involvement of men in family planning activities, and other measures to promote joint decision making in family planning pattern. The distributed use of traditional birth arrangement methods should be built on as part of a family planning scheme. Women are exceedingly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other STD diseases, due to limits on their control of their sex within and outside marriage. At present women constitute the majority of HIV/AIDS cases in Ghana, although the proportion is falling. Condom use is highly low and several men and women realize condom use to be either ineffective or awkward or even both. HIV/AIDS prevention endeavour will need to focus powerfully on attempting to modify male conduct, through peer educational activity and similar activities. It is pressing to start such efforts at an early age. Strengthening women's desire over their sexuality by empowering their negotiation power within relationships, and granting them broad economic choices (as suggested above), is the fundamental key to reducing their risk of infection in the longer term. Particular legal assistance and advice will be needed to warrant property rights for widows of AIDS victims and their children, and also for children whose mothers have perish of AIDS.

## Education, health and reproduction in China

China has a rich educational history dating back more than three thousand years, but women did not become part of the mainstream education system until the last sixty year. The Confucian ideology, which has been deeply rooted throughout Chinese history, confined females to an oppressed social status. Moreover, this historical ideology continues to cause deep resistance to the changes that would promote women's education, which, in turn, would help uproot the ideological foundation of discrimination against women. Feminist literature has indicated the importance of women's education to their political and social emancipation. Acceptance of women in public educational settings, availability of educational opportunities for women, and equal treatment for female students are variables that affect women's entrance to school, their retention, and their advancement through education (Liu).

In terms of health and reproduction, the situation is not favourable for Chinese women. The one-child policy does not give women the choice to plan and have an ideal family size of their own. China's one-child policy began in the late 1970s when Deng Xiaoping and other leaders concluded that the country's growing population threatened to stifle economic growth. The restrictive policy went into effect in cities, but in the countryside, many families continued having two or more children. However, women in urban centres were compelled to follow the one-child policy prescription. Failure to compliance resulted in fines that were too exorbitant for these women to pay. This led to increased number of abortions to which the government legally approved (Liu).

## Cultural Rights

Cultural rights are oftentimes qualified as an immature or underdeveloped category' of human rights. It proposes that, in comparing with other categories of human rights, namely, economic, civil, political and social, cultural rights are the undeveloped or least developed as far as their legal content, scope and enforceability are involved. An accompanying concern is that cultural rights includes the individual rights of the cultural group's associate, particularly those most assailable, such as women and children. Such critique has power where cultural rights are declared or acknowledged in the repute of conserving cultural identity. Nonetheless, cultural rights also have been developed as human rights on the assumption of "liberal principles" of individual liberty or independence and sameness and, in this case, contend cultural relativism. For instance, an individual right to the free exercise of culture does not warrant cultural practices including female genital mutilation that severely hurt specific social units or members, or that are mandatory on members against their will, as in the case of forced or even organized marriages. whatsoever, cultural rights demands are subordinate or subject to the laws governing public belief of the state, as decided by the state authorities.

Cultural rights have been acknowledged in different international protocols and legal instruments. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone, as a member of society is entitled to cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality" (Article twenty-two). Article fifteen of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights acknowledges the right to "take part in cultural life," and Article twenty-seven of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights asserts the right of "persons belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language." The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities specify further that such persons have the right to enjoy their own culture "in private and in public, and that states shall take measures to create favourable conditions to enable individuals to exercise their cultural rights" (Articles two and four). Although not binding, a major United Nations research report, The Human Development Report: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World, helpfully addresses the major issues and concerns encompassing cultural rights by integrating them into a wide human development framework.

The Beijing Declaration called on nation-state to see to it that "any harmful aspect of certain traditional, customary or modern practices that violates the rights of women... [is] prohibited and eliminated (Fourth conference on Women).

## Cultural rights of women in China

Inferiority of women is profoundly implanted in the Chinese

culture and is also mirrored in the Five Classics, a canonical literary textual matter attributed to Confucius. The Confucian perspective of woman is distinctly stated: "The female was inferior by nature, she was dark as the moon and changeable as water, jealous, narrow-minded and insinuating. She was indiscreet, unintelligent, and dominated by emotion. Her beauty was a snare for the unwary male, the ruination of states". In Chinese culture, girls mostly marry into the husband's family, depart from their home, and concentrate on the well-being of their husband's parents. China's feudal tradition ceaselessly subjected women to submissiveness by their father, husband, and even their son owing to a patriarchal and patrilineal system. Again, according to the rules of inheritance, only the first male born traditionally inherited the parents' treasure. Moreover, only boys can go on with the patrilineal family line. Hence, girl babies are reasoned as financial burdens, because they are not available to take care of their aged parents who, upon retirement, do not receive sufficient money from the social services system in China. As a result, if only one child is permitted per family, the universal agreement in China is that it had better be a boy [13]. As a result, China is currently experiencing a demographic crisis that arguably rises to the level of "gendercide" [14].

Women in China are bought and sold-out, murdered and made to vanish in order to abide by the governmental policy that co-occurs with the cultural phenomenon of male-child predilection. In 1979, the Chinese government instituted a One-Child Policy to control the large population expansion. In order to comply with the One-Child Policy and to ensure that the family has a desired boy child, millions of people in China have engaged in sex-selective abortions, murderer of their own baby girls, non-registration of the first or second infant in the family, and the forsaking or selling of their own girl children. Demographers estimate that there are between fifty and one hundred million missing women in China (Tiefenbrun). In answer to the resulting deficiency of women, gangs, "specialist households," and "specialist villages" have been employed in an organized chain to snatch and trade women in China [14]. Several factors constitute to the cause a serious deficit of women in China. Women are vanishing because of the social pressures of male-child option, the enthusiastic enforcement of the One-Child Policy by local government authorities, and the murderous responses to this policy appropriated by millions of ordinary people in China who are despairing to have a son. The 2000 official Chinese census reported that, there were 117 boys born for every 100 girls, as compared to the global average of 106 or 105 boys to every 100 girls [15]. This inequality may be connected to the practice of killing female babies or aborting female fetuses. The scarcity of women has resulted in a gender imbalance and an increment in human trafficking and prostitution in China [16].

Trafficking in China has several forms: the acquisition of women for brides, the acquisition of a male child or the sale of abdicable female children. Men, mainly in rural China, are urgently hunting a bride in a country where women are in short supply. These men will end up buying a trafficked woman for marriage. Couples hunting a male child will exchange, eliminate, or even slay their girl child in bid to make way for the purchase of a trafficked baby boy. Young adult women and infants are purchased and sold-out like cargo in China. Human trafficking in China is a profitable international business that is spreading out owing to various factors, including the high-pressure implementation of the One-Child Policy, a faulty legal system, and the blind bond to long stagnant cultural traditions that degrade women. In China, Communist Party directive overlook the legislative and judicial process. The primacy of government policy results in the ineffectualness of laws that theoretically defend and protect female and women in China [17]. In 1992, the Law on the Protection of Women's

Rights and Interests (LPWRI) was passed, which was the first basic law to protect women's rights and interests in China (Tiefenbrun). The LPWRI forbid kidnapping, trafficking, and buying women, though it fails to prescribe any special penalties for these offenses (Tiefenbrun) The LPWRI also fails to stipulate a definition of discrimination against women (Tiefenbrun) However, those who buy kidnapped women and force them to have sex may be tried for the crime of rape under the Chinese Criminal Code (Tiefenbrun). Other types of violence against kidnapped women are subject to punishment under the Chinese Criminal Code (Tiefenbrun).

### Cultural rights of women in Ghana

The basic human rights stipulation of the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana guarantee the cultural rights and practices of the Ghanaian people, while still forbidding "all customary practices that dehumanize or are injurious to the physical or mental well-being of a person" [18]. A number of cultural practices including Trokosi, Child betrothal, Widowhood Rites and female genital mutilation that are practiced in some parts of Ghana are degrading to the physical and psychological integrity of women and girls [19,20].

Trokosi in its simplest form can be described as a customary rite that is practiced in some part of Ghana, specifically, the Volta Region. It is mostly practiced among the Ewe folk [21]. With the practice of this, a virgin girl is arrogated to a shrine to pay for the wrongful conduct of a family member, particularly the parents. The girl is presented to the shrine, so mislay the opportunity of getting married to any other man, since she is considered to be married to the fetish priest right after the necessary rite is concluded. The fetish priest, owing to this, starts to have sex with her at a young age of just about thirteen. All decisions relating to her life lie in the custody of her husband, the fetish priest [21,22]. Over the past years, agitation against the practice by some human rights activist and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has been productive especially with a large number of girls being disentangled from captivity.

Child betrothal is another practice against girls. Child or minor marriage can be described as marrying a girl off earlier than the age of pubescence or puberty. Whereas some tribes regard it an honour and value, to permit a girl to mature till the suitable period of time for marriage, others regard it as irrelevant and worthless [19]. Child marriage is being practiced without any sense of regret in many parts of the world including, Niger, Chad, Mali, Malawi, Burkina Faso, parts of Ghana particularly the northern part [23]. The primary cause of this practice is Economic hardship or poverty World Vision report [23]. Poverty being the cause for child marriage being practiced overly in the world is not very amazing, since according to a research made, 25,000 lives are lost every day from poverty and hunger. Poverty is the reason why poor families consume nearly seventy per cent of their financial gain on food [23]. The UN researching on the standard of living in Niger, also has described Niger, in West Africa, as the last-place to live in the world, due to the life expectancy which is 44.6 years, while seventy-one per cent of adults are uneducated and seventy-nine per cent of children don't go to school at all. According to research, many people live in poverty in the northern parts of Ghana and it is regarded to be the poorest part of the country. Numerous families living in such intense poverty opt to marry off their children, for money to make a living, and also be able to care for the other children or siblings (UN Report). Trokosi and Child marriage tend to shatter the ambition of many girls. Education always becomes a topic of less value in this instance and girls are not given the chance to show freely what they are able to do in future.

Astonishingly widowhood rites still exist in numerous remote communities in Ghana. It is a rite that some spouses, peculiarly women, have to go through after the death of their husbands. Though it is being performed in many societies and countries, its practice differs from society to society. Mostly, some of these women have to go through ritual bathing, hair shaving and confinement in a particular room for a number of days or sometimes years. Recently, three very old women in a royal house were confined in a particular room for approximately nine years, merely because their husband who was the king was dead. They spent nine years of their lives, cage up in a room. Such women go through humiliation and, also undergo economic, social and emotional psychic trauma.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is another cultural practice that affects the rights of women. The definition according to the World Health Organization (WHO) is the total or partial removal of the female outer or external genitals, or an operation that intentionally modifies or cause injury in the female genital organs, on non-medical grounds. The Operation can cause extravagant bleeding and urinary difficulty, and subsequently potential childbirth complications and new-born deaths. It is generally carried out on young girls, between early childhood and the age of fifteen. The practice has no health significance for females, and in Africa about three million girls are at risk of FGM annually. An approximation of hundred to 140 million girls and women globally, are presently living with the consequences of FGM. According to those into this activity, it is meant to discourage girls from committing fornication, since the removal of the outer genital organ takes away any sort of arousal or feeling for sex. The UN General Assembly passed a declaration in 2001 to the effect that states had a social control of developing policies and programmes. Illegitimate traditional or customary practice poignant to the health of women and girls such as Female Genital Mutilation, and the perpetrators of such practices must be abolished (Kaarsholm). Both the post democratization national law and the international conventions enforce positive obligations on states including Ghana to eliminate traditions and customs that sabotage the gravitas and rights of women. This can, withal, only be achieved if judges take up the situation and execute both the conventions and constitutional provisions in a way that display sensitivity to the objectives of the norms reserved in those documents. The Ghanaian courts have worked tirelessly to combat customs and traditions that do a great disfavour to women. For instance the courts have shown its readiness and flexibility to avoid customary norms that discriminate against women. Ghanaian courts ruled that the successor's title is open to the widow's right to the home, her right to all the household or family goods used in common with the departed in the marital home, and the right of the widow and children to upkeep out of the estate. A case in point is *Akrofi v Akrofi*, the plaintiff was the only child of the departed and wanted an order from the court declaring her as the only successor to her departed father. This action came as a result of the fact that the departed's brother had been ordained heir to the departed's estate. Successiveness to property in Buem is patrilineal, and male children take penchant over female children. All the same, in the absence of any male children, female children are not forbidden from inheriting and are, in the language of the court, "within the range of persons entitled to succeed." The court found that a custom that excludes women did not exist. Moreover, the court notes that even if such a custom did exist, that custom had outlived its usefulness and was no longer in conformity with public policy.

It is evident that, some Ghanaian cultural practices are outmoded therefore conscious efforts are being made to stop them. The constitution of Ghana guarantees that, these outmoded practices must stop.

## Political Right

### Women's position and their political engagement

Parity was the principal slogan of the 1995 UN Women's Conference. It recommended that "gender fairness" was a balanced fifty per cent representation of women and men in power structures (Rosen). Recognition of "gender fairness" can be described as a multi-dimensional procedure of achieving elementary capabilities, legal rights and engagement in key economic, social, political and cultural spheres (Healey, Moghadam and Senftova). Political participation happens to be a part of "gender fairness" measurement framework. It was recommended by Moghadam and Senftova that, the forty-four indicators within the seven domains should be considered. Nevertheless, whether at the national or local level, for women to achieve empowerment, involvement and rights in the formal political sphere are significant indicators (Moghadam and Senftova).

Women's political involvement is specifically calculated by the percentage of women in power structures. The percentage of women representatives in parliament is used internationally as an essential indicator for women's political involvement, especially at the national level (Inter-Parliamentary Union).

The issue of "glass ceiling" Consequence has been widely discussed in women's political participation (Palmer and Simon; Powell and Butterfield; Conway, Ovidia and Vanneman). In economics, the term "glass ceiling" means "the unseen, still un-breakable obstacle that keeps women from ascending to the high ranks of the corporate ladder, regardless of their achievements or qualifications" (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission).

### Women's political involvement in China

China began to encourage gender equality in the 1950s and has made a revived attempt after 1995 when China hosted the World's Fourth Conference for Women [24].

The new initiatives centring mostly on action and implementation with new movement to training and promoting woman cadres. A most modern action plan came in April 2009 when China decided to encourage human rights, considering women's rights to political involvement. These initiatives help to provide a firm institutional environment for progressive Women's political involvement [24].

According Benxiang Zeng a recent national study in China discovered some essential information for a critical analysis of women's political engagement. The study revealed that about 2.2% of sampled women in line of work are principals of State organisations, mass and Party organisations and enterprises, nearly half the percentage of sampled men (All-China Women's Federation & National Bureau of Statistics of China). Women are at an absolute disadvantage in decision-making positions. The year 2009 recorded around three per cent of women to be heads of various governmental agencies. Women's political involvement at grassroots levels, such as village, township and governance structures (village councils and committees, township governments) has continued to be low. The paramount explanation given for Women's quantitative under representation in the lower level of composition, and in politics more specifically is centred on Women's lack of self-assurance or self-confidence, and on the abiding drag of 'feudal' pose (for example, Women being thought of as lowly to men). More than half of people sampled (54.6% of women and 61.6% of men) agreed that the domain for men is the public and the field for women is within the family or household (All-China Women's

Federation and National Bureau of Statistics of China). This seems to implies that, specifically, people incline to believe that women by their nature are not political or public carnal, which suggest that the traditional ideology about women's role hinders the improvement and promotion of gender equity or fairness, particularly regarding women's political involvement. Benxiang Zeng opines that the situation discussed above keeps worsening, furthermore, it must be known that the people holding on to this perspective have increased by 7.7 and 4.4 percentage points for 144 men and women, respectively, compared with the year 2000 (All-China Women's Federation & National Bureau of Statistics of China). However, the real situation seems more complex, as economic structures, social practices, procedures and political culture and institutional norms all reflect, regenerate and reproduce gendered opinion of the suitable place of women and men in political life (Howell).

### Women's political involvement in Ghana

The composition of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana has recorded a rise in women's political involvement and has since been increasing gradually [25]. Unfortunately Women in Ghana lag behind in political representation [25]. Since 2002, many organizations have been advocating for the election of more women to decision making positions, such as the District, Municipal, Metropolitan Assemblies and Parliament. They have pleaded with women to avail themselves to be elected. They have also encouraged female aspirants in different ways including printing of posters; organizing workshops to assist women develop skills to market themselves, sponsoring discussions on radio to educate the electorate on the importance of increased Women's involvement in decision making structures etcetera [26-29]. Regrettably the attempt has not resulted in any visible increment in the number of women elected to such structures. It is unfortunate that women in Ghana have been nonaligned with political entities. Comparative study indicates that representation of women between 2004 and 2008 elections portrayed a reduction in the trend. It could be seen that in 2004, twenty-five women were voted to the legislative body and the figure decrease to nineteen in the 2008 elections. Currently, there are just seven women among the twenty-five cabinet ministers (Government of Ghana 2014) which is very small to stand for women and their concerns. The dismal display of women's low participation in elective politics can be attributed to many elements [30-32].

According Eisa, two most observable factors impeding female involvement consist of the lack of a legislative structure to increase women's involvement in politics and secondly, the failure of political entities to assist women within their structures. Numbers of interested parties also ascribe the current situation of women under representation to deep-rooted patriarchal society in Ghana which doubtless, works in advantage of male applicant or nominee. As Ghana continues to walk in the manner of democratic union, the country should adopt control measures of instituting structures to inspire women's political involvement since they account for over fifty percent of registered electorates. The inadequacy in committing to women's advancement and "gender parity" footrace across all political entities. In the 2008 parliament, two prima parties had women legislators in their ranks (International IDEA 2010). The New Patriotic Party's (NPP) 128 seats, just twenty (15.6%) were women, whilst the National Democratic Congress (NDC) was dispiriting with an only five (5.3%) of the ninety-four seats. The People's National Convention had four seats and the Convention People's Party had three seats with no female legislators, while the single independent was a man.

## Summary

With the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Adoption of Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, one would have presumed that the age of discrimination and abuse of women's rights is a thing of the past. Also, in the twenty-first century where modernity and technological innovation have swept across the length and breadth of the world in such a way that, one will imagine discrimination against women as almost non-existent. But the stark reality is that violence, discrimination, abuse of rights, deprivation, prejudice and other forms of vice still plagues women's life around the world-occurring across different cultures [33,34].

While women still experience discrimination and have unequal opportunities as compared to men, it is a truism that the abuse of women's rights is culturally determined. Empirically, women's rights as we zoom through diverse cultures reveal different levels and layers of women's rights. It is therefore emphatically obvious that culture influences women's rights in modern day times, although religion also plays a role. Women's rights are not the same in all cultures that is the rights of women in African culture, American culture, Asian culture, and European culture differs [35]. In African culture, where men were regarded superior to women, even in the age of modernity we still can see stains of this notion influencing women's rights. In America and Europe, the situation is better than Africa. In Asia the situation is now better, where the Arab nations, India, and China are immaculate examples of countries where women's rights still struggle to enjoy basic rights.

Again, coming back to Ghana and China, as point of reference, it seems that women's rights are not fully enhanced in these countries. However, the situation in Ghana may be better than China due to the latter's paternal traditions which do not favour women. But in Ghana, the Akan-largest ethnic group-practices matrilineal inheritance which places more importance and dignity on women and therefore influences the enhancement of women's rights [36,37].

But wherever in the world, across every culture, where women's rights are undermined, conscious effort must be made to repair these gender imbalances. It can be done through education-both men and women-to come to realization that men and women were created equal and must have inalienable rights. Cultural practices, traditions, and customs that infringe upon women's rights must be abolished or re-structured to ensure gender equality. With this the world will be transformed into a beautiful place where both men and women will stand tall in their own ways.

## Conclusion and Discussion

Discrimination against women appears to be increasing, and this trend must be quickly confined and reversed. The most effective method of eliminating discrimination would be by attacking its roots, through the education of men and women about human worth and the value of gender equality. A higher level of education is needed in order for women to be in a position to take advantage of the new economic opportunities. Providing women with equality in the work force is a crucial step in developing a sense of equality and confidence in all areas of life, as more and more women come to accept the necessity of gainful employment in a person's overall wellbeing. Education is essential to participating successfully in the market, as well as in the rest of society. The education and personal successes of individual women will contribute to the elimination of prejudices in the deeper levels of the society. Although laws and regulations may purport to help those with

the heavy burden of discrimination, they do not change the prejudice; that can only come by the educational advancement of the society, and women repeatedly proving themselves as truly equal in all aspects of life. Even if there were massive educational campaigns, they would need to be supplemented for a more immediate result.

Women deserve equality now, and beliefs which are ingrained into a society cannot be reversed overnight; therefore, the Chinese government needs to actively seek and ensure equality for women. The Chinese government could begin by enforcing the provisions already in existence in the Constitution and the Laws Protecting Women's Rights and Interests, by investigating and monitoring companies for violations, and implementing fines or other penalties. Although these provisions may not change the prejudices so deeply held by people, at least women would receive equal opportunities and treatment, allowing the educational process to continue. In the absence of an aggressive effort by the Chinese government to eliminate the discriminatory treatment against women in the work force, actions by international forces would be the next step. The world as a whole made a strong statement against China's failure to enforce the human rights of its citizens by denying China the 2000 Olympics because of these same violations. The international community has an interest in ensuring equality and human rights within China because of China's active participation in the world trade.

It is already obvious that Ghana is doing just good if not excellent in protecting women's rights in all aspects of their life being it political, physical, psychological, emotional, health, religion, education etcetera. Some of the policies adopted by Government clearly prove her commitment to improve women's rights and wellbeing. Policies such as: the promotion of girl child education, empowerment of women to work in both public and private companies, promotion of women's involvement in politics, and a host of others depict Ghana's readiness to protect women and their rights. But maybe Ghana's effort to forge gender equality is not enough as yet. Because there still exist some practices in the Ghanaian society that undermines the dignity and right of women. Some of these practices may emanate from cultural or societal values that are outmoded and inconvenient. Although, the constitution guarantees that cultural practices that may be injurious and violate women's rights must be abolished, little progress has been made in abolishing these practices. Cultural practices such Trokosi system, Female Genital Mutilation, and early child marriage still burdens the life of women in Ghana. Ghana must work extra hard to strengthen institutions that can enforce laws to abolish these practices. Public education can be used to educate Ghanaians on the dangers of these practices and how it impedes women's growth and the progress of society. The government can collaborate with other International Agencies with the interest of protecting women's rights to work hand-in-hand and remove all forms of discrimination against women.

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