



REPORT ON THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GENDER EQUALITY | NOVEMBER 26–27, 2024 | ACCRA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER| GHANA

INTRODUCTION

The second International Conference on Gender Equality, ICGE 24 was held from Tuesday 26th November to Wednesday 27th November 2024 at the Accra International Conference Centre, Osu. Accra. The maiden edition took place at the Cedi Conference Centre, University of Ghana, Legon in November 2023.

The 2024 conference is on the theme: “From Vision to Reality: Catalyzing Sustainable Gender Equality in Developing Economies.” The conference is hosted by I Believe Global Foundation, a non-profit organization which is headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden.

DAY ONE TUESDAY NOVEMBER 26, 2024

Introduction

The conference started at 10 am after prayer.

An Introductory Panel Discussion which focused on the conference theme: “From Vision to Reality: Catalyzing Sustainable Gender Equality in Developing Economies” ensued.

The session was moderated by Dr. Emmanuel Ayifah, a Development Expert and Lecturer.

Panelists include Augusta Impact Keneboh, Executive Director, Afro Centre for Development Peace and Justice, Nigeria.

Dr. Virginnia Ochanya-Onche, a lecturer at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, among others.

Official Opening Ceremony

National Anthem was provided by the Sounds team

The conference Welcome Address was delivered by lady Rachel Akosua Lundgren, President IBG. She highlighted the need to shift from talk to action to achieve tangible progress in gender equality, and mentioned the establishment of a research institute, IGRIS, which was established to produce cutting edge research and implementation strategies to advance gender equality in developing economies. She itemized a number of objectives for the conference.

Brief Remarks were made by Mr. Yaw Agyei-Henaku, Board Chairman of IBG. His really brief remarks appealed to every participant, especially females to make the most of every opportunity since Gender Equality does not necessarily mean the right to be given roles particular females cannot perform, but they are given anyway, or being assigned tasks one is not suited for, but given just because one is a woman.

A Brief Address delivered by the Hon. Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Hon. Dakoa Newman was read on her behalf by her aide. In her address, the minister mentioned the role of the ministry in advancing gender equality and intimated how she worked assiduously to get the Affirmative Action Bill passed into law in record time. She also mentioned the revision of the National Gender Policy, 2015 which she had personally championed. The minister advised that the deliberations from the conference should be utilized to improve outcomes towards gender parity.

The Guest of Honor's Address was given by Dr. Afua Ansre, Senior Gender Specialist at UN Women, West-Africa.

According to Dr. Ansre, the UN WOMEN is the organization that promotes gender equality as a fundamental human right. She asserted the need for all gender activists and advocates to confront barriers that hinder gender equality. She listed barriers to include those that appear in the form of socio-economic norms and biases, barriers in political arenas towards women, especially women's voices in parliament in particular, and in the board rooms and the urgent need to confront the patriarchal structures that undermine gender equality, and also the need to invest intentionally in women's economic opportunities for entrepreneurship and self-employment.

In her assessment she explained that in this digital age, women's access to ICT tools can be game-changing. Dr. Ansre also advised that the conference be lifted from talk to reality by building partnerships and engaging greater advocacy to advance gender equality.

Senyo Kwame Adzoro a.k.a. Hot Prof the poet delivered a moving piece on gender equality and how the master architect, GOD, had already enshrined Gender Equality in His book, called the Bible.

The Main Keynote Address on the Conference Theme was delivered by Dr. Angela-Dwamena Aboagye, CEO of the Ark Foundation. Among others she said that the conference has intergenerational potential. She also mentioned that advocacy must rise with intentionality. In her explanation, traditional and religious authority must be at the table of gender equality discussions. In addition, our gender ministries responsible for gender must act as the fulcrum for championing gender policies. She explained the need for international protocols like the Maputo protocol to be properly explained to the populace, especially women and girls.

Panel discussions 2

The second panel discussion of the day was led by Mr. Siapha Kamara, CEO of SEND West Africa. SEND is one of the Civil Society Organizations that championed gender mainstreaming right after the Beijing declaration about thirty years ago.

Mr. Kamara posited that SEND has been at the forefront of championing Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming for over three decades. He intimated that among other initiatives, SEND Ghana was very instrumental in introducing paternity leave for its workers and made the policy very comprehensive. He mentioned that the Paternity Leave initiative is documented in the Human Resource policy of SEND. The CEO advocated for quota systems for labor market interventions. Mr. Kamara mentioned that 60% of his organization's budget goes to women, and they intentionally ensured that the board chair of SEND is always a woman. Also, three out of five board members are women. Mr. Kamara also mentioned gender responsive programming at SEND. There has been conscious attempts to build women's leadership pipeline at SEND. The NGO also undertakes women's leadership training and advocacy as well as regular gender audits to ensure that they are living their mission. According to Mr. Kamara their organization is working on a document and project to handle polygamy.

Other innovative practices of SEND include SEND's Gender Model Family (GMF) and Gender Mainstreaming Climate Change.

The next presentation was done by Mrs. Jane Amavi Kwawu, a renowned International Development expert on Gender Mainstreaming in Development. She was spot on with her deep insights on the journey of the world on Gender from the Beijing declaration to the present.

Dr. Emmanuel Ayifah gave a seminal presentation on Gender Equality and Nation Building. He mentioned that among others, the conference theme aims at addressing gender inequities. He spoke about Gender responsive budgeting and gave beautiful connectives on Gender perspectives in nation-building. Dr. Ayifah mentioned the need to recreate and add value to decent work and stop negative cultural practices.

Dr. Josephine Larbi Apau's, an Instructional Technology expert, gave a powerful presentation on Technology and Gender Equality. In her presentation she explained some Technology and innovation trends which are open to females as well to take advantage of, both for self-development and for work.

The next presentation of the afternoon was delivered by Kofi Agyabeng of Progressive Sage on the role of women in Artificial Intelligence and Machine learning. His presentation sought to demystify artificial intelligence and machine learning, and highlights of opportunities in the field for women as well as men.

After Lunch

After lunch break, there was a Panel discussion on Women and Leadership Chaired by Professor Smile Dzisi. Panelists included:

Prof. Mrs. Mina Ofosu, who is Dean at Kumasi Technical University

Her contributions about how she climbed the career ladder to leadership are that, though she had grown up in a poor home she decided against all odds to go to school and achieve the highest academic laurels possible even against the advice of her father to get married at an early age. She continually encouraged herself to keep going higher and higher to the PhD level.

Dr. Afamefuna Dunkwu-Okafor, representatives of Her Royal Majesty, OBI, of Nigeria, mentioned that women should give themselves the highest level of education possible, because there is always a future after higher education for women.

Madam Toabra Kasikoro Kilopirite, explained that gender inequity is a societal menace. She also echoed the sentiments of Dr Angela Dwamena Aboagye that the conference has intergenerational outcomes. She saw women's rights being openly infringed upon in her state in Nigeria, and she decided to change the status quo to obliterate the cultural barriers. Discrimination and burial rights were very arcane. Her organization went on rampage up to the national assembly level and their voices were consequently heard.

In her words, there is need to remove cultural limitations that impede establishing interventions for women.

The next panelist in the discussion, **Dr. Josephine Larbi Apau** mentioned that she had studied Agriculture up to MPhil level, hoping to finish her PhD in Agriculture. She went to Cornell University to continue her PhD Agriculture but lost interest in the discipline and later explored Instructional Technology at Wayne State University where she graduated with a PhD in Instructional Technology.

Madam Jane Kwawu also a panelist spoke about the need to explore opportunities and took participants on her personal journey to becoming an international development consultant, with emphasis on Gender, with experience in over 45 countries but not without heavy personal costs.

The panelists gave their final words that women should be: Resilient, Assertive, and Need a life plan for getting ahead, as well as Educate themselves continuously.

In conclusion, the moderator, Professor Smile Dzisi, added her personal story in keeping with the words of Madam Jane Kwawu that she took the risk to explore the opportunities in international consulting and which have turned out well and given her greater breadth of international experiences, independence and wider financial resources in a relatively short period of time, something she didn't get working in the university for a quarter of a century.

Special Guest Speaker's Address was delivered by Eng. Dr. Prof. Amevi Acakpovi), Acting Vice-Chancellor of Accra Technical University. His topic is "The Role of education and policy in advancing STEMD" which he delivered by online video.

There was a moving poetry presentation by Queen Michaela

The Chairperson, Prof. Smile Dzisi presented the strategic vision of IBG.

The President of IBG announced new initiatives, such as the establishment of the Institute of Gender Research and Implementation Science (IGRIS) which will pivot research into Gender Equality to the highest level.

Professor Ebenezer Malcalm, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research at the Ghana Communication Technology University gave the first technical presentation of the day in which he spoke on the need to implement the Affirmative Action Gender Equity Act, 2024. He mentioned among others, that Girl children need mentorship in STEM, as well as role models to thrive in STEM education and careers. The Professor advocated for STEM Scholarships for girls to motivate interest and commitment.

The next technical presentation was done by Dr. Sabina Anokye Mensah, CEO Anomena Ventures.

The Theme of her presentation is “Gender and the Energy Situation in Ghana”.

She explored the various energy policies in Ghana over the years. Dr Anokye Mensah categorized the timeline sequence of energy plans in Ghana as part of Ghana’s development objectives over the years as follows:

- 1980s
- 2001-2005
- 2006-2009
- 2006-2020 (when there was the introduction of Strategic National Energy Plan (SNEP)

KEY GENDER ISSUES

She explained that women are the most important actors in energy in terms of contact, use and management and expected the relevance of women to be reflected in their inclusion in energy decision making.

For example, according to her, in Ghana, fuelwood and charcoal use was 75% in the 1980s to 2000. Dr. Anokye-Mensah spoke about the need to implement The Affirmative Action Gender Equity Act widely to give Ghana’s energy management a wider expression by the greater inclusion of women in energy planning and utilization.

She recommended women's inclusion at the following levels:

1. Regional: increase women's representations at the Regional Coordinating Councils in all 16 regions.
2. National: Active implementation of the Affirmative Action Act by appointing women (up to 40% of all appointments) to key positions in the public service at the national level.
3. Local level: at the local authority level, women's empowerment should be mainstreamed in all key activities of the various District Assemblies.

The first day of the conference ended at 5.10pm.

DAY TWO

The first item of the day was an Artistic Performance by Kwame Adzoro a.k.a. Hot. Prof who delivered another thought-provoking poetry and oratory piece on Gender Equality.

Thereafter, Professor Ambassador Ada Juni Okika, the United Nations Coordinator for Africana Women Working Group at the United Nations, New York, and Executive Director at Center for SDG Global Education, delivered a brilliant piece on "Catalyzing Gender Equality in the Post-30th Anniversary of the Beijing conference for Women in African communities". She traced Gender Equality in the last 30 years of the Beijing Accord and declaration to date. Her presentation compares Gender Equality achievements on the global stage with the picture in developing countries, especially Africa, as well as the special opportunities that the achievement of the UNDP's Sustainable Development Goals, 2030 holds for achieving accelerated gender parity goals across African countries and cities.

There were two other Scientific presentations before coffee break.

The first was on "Assessing the Impact of the Socio-Cultural and Parental Factors on Gender Disparities" which were authored by Madam Tajudeen Adisa Jimoh and Comfort Adeoyin. Their presentation is on the theme "Assessing the impact of socio-cultural and parental factors on Gender Disparities in STEM programs' enrollment in tertiary institutions in Ogun State of Nigeria.

A significant highlight of their research is that despite the overwhelming emphasis on STEM education for girls in Nigeria, there is a preponderance of noticeable gender imbalance in enrollment in STEM programs in Ogun State in Nigeria, which are caused mainly by the persistence of societal and cultural norms that associate STEM programs with masculinity. There is therefore the need for cultural and parental attitudes to be reformed to motivate more girl children to choose STEM focused courses and careers.

Dr. Dymphna Bakker-Edoh HOD, Dept of Fashion KTU and Dr. Johnson Kofi Kassa of Department of Fashion, Ho Technical University presented their work on “Beauty Practices and Gender Discrimination and Violence”. The presentation was done by Dr Johnson Kassa.

An insightful Academic presentation on the theme: Assessing Mentorship Programs for Girls in STEM Education. Prospects and Challenges for SHS (Senior High School) students In Ghana” was jointly delivered by Dr Afia Nyarko Boakye of Koforidua Technical University and Professor Ebenezer Malcalm. The research was jointly authored by Dr Esther Asiedu, Professor Ebenezer Malcalm, Dr Afia Nyarko Boakye, Professor Smile Dzisi, and Dr Gertrude Amoakohene.

The highlight of their research is that though the Ghana Education Service has made compelling policy proposals which seek to prioritize STEM education for girls, there are limited access to mentoring, gender stereotypes and poor funding of the initiative and these have collectively contributed to low achievement of the policy objectives.

Their findings include among others: that many of the existing mentorship programs emphasize role modeling and skills development to the exclusion of other programs.

Their analysis of the status of mentorship programs for girls in STEM education shows that the program needs better coherence and greater financial commitment.

Some of the schools in Ghana that have STEM focus include, Bosomtwe Senior High School, Sefwi-Awaso STEM SHS which feature programs in Engineering, Biomedical sciences, Aerospace and Robotics.

The study concluded that mentorship holds significant potential to advance STEM education for girls in Ghana.

The next presentation was a health talk by Lady Mae, Founder and President of Emerge New Woman, who made a soothing delivery on the topic, “Bringing Wellbeing to the Forefront: Mental Health and Stress Management”. The presentation was very revealing of what women need to be doing on their own to reduce stress and maintain their health. Later, Lady Mae took the conference participants through a relaxing group therapy to reduce stress.

Professor Sergio Bordalo e Sa, lecturer from the University of Portugal, Lisbon presented Gender Activism on the topic “It’s their Fight” Johnny Guitar, a movie by Johnny on Gender Equality which he invited the whole community of participants to discuss.

Dr. Virginnia Ochanya-Onche, a lecturer at the University of Ibadan, gave a scientific presentation on “Gender Equality: Breaking the Barriers to the Education of Women and Girls in Nigeria”. She identified the barriers to education of women and girls in Nigeria as:

- Socio cultural
- Economic
- Societal

She posited that Women’s underrepresentation in education hinders economic prosperity and prolongs poverty generally.

AWARD CEREMONY

Some hardworking individuals who are brazing the trail in gender equality were recognised and awarded with prestigious awards by GEIID magazine, which is a publication by IBG

Ambassador Augusta Kemeboh of the GEIID Magazine led the awards presentation. The editor-in-chief of the GEIID is Professor Bethuel Presley, one of the associates of IBG in Nigeria.

Some of the distinguished personalities awarded includes:

- Amb. Tonbra Kasikoro Kiloprite
- Mr. Joel, with the HUGEIA Humanitarian Gender Equality Award
- Ambassador Augusta Keneboh; HUGEIA African Empowerment Luminary award, as well as

- Dr. Josephine Larbi Apau, among others.

Some other individuals were also specially appreciated and recognised for their contribution to organizing the 2024 International Conference on Gender Equality. They include Mr. Prince Clinton of IBG team, Mr. Raph Tamba, and Mr. Emmanuel Takyi-Menson.

A seminal Technical Presentation was also delivered by Dr. Patricia Owusu-Darko, who is a Senior Researcher & Consultant on Food Policy. Her topic is on “Food Fraud: A Menace in the Value Chain”.

She spoke about Deliberate and Intentional substitution, adding, adulteration, counterfeiting, mislabeling or tampering of the components of food, as some of the ways in which food fraud can be identified. She explained that Food adulterants for some of the food items include stone, melamine, gravels, leaves, paper, melted foam and saw dust. In many countries food adulteration has been identified as a widespread menace.

Some international adulteration incidents include:

- 1.horse meat scandal in Europe 2013
2. methanol adulteration
3. fake wines, among others.

She concluded by emphasizing how gangrenous the issue of food fraud is across the world and expressed the need for the law enforcement agencies to get involved in apprehending culprits who commit such atrocities, because these culprits are criminals according to our penal code.

Prof Bethuel Presley, who doubled as the M.C. for Day 2 of the conference, spoke about the International Coalition on Gender Equality which is open to all participants.

Professor Ebenezer Malcalm, Dean of School of Graduate Studies and Research at GCTU gave a scientific presentation on Youth Empowerment in Ghana.

He suggests that earlier research on youth empowerment focused solely on the economic dimensions such as youth employment and entrepreneurship but neglected the gendered dimensions.

Another presentation was delivered on Feminist Theories. The presenter recommended intentional implementation of supportive policies that promote gender equality. She also advised public awareness and gender transformative attitudinal change as well as the need to strengthen legal protections for women.

Dr. Elizabeth Korsare, a development practitioner who has done extensive research on women's health delivered an exhilarating presentation on Uterine Fibroids.

She pointed out how reproductive health is critical to women's life. She mentioned ovarian cysts, cancers, fibroids, uterine fibroids, etc. as some of the challenges women have to endure. She explained symptomatic and asymptomatic fibroids. Dr. Korsare analyzed risk factors which women of African descent have to face regarding uterine fibroids.

She mentioned obesity and early mensuration as some of the causes of uterine fibroids. Some of the symptoms include menstrual symptoms, pelvic pressure, urinary symptoms and gastrointestinal, body image/mood symptoms, general symptoms, advanced symptoms and reproductive factors.

The next scientific presentation was done by Dr Tabitha on Motherhood and Work-Life-Balance

The last scientific presentation of the day was by Aderounmou Ayodeji of Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta, Nigeria and his topic is on Work-Life Conflict.

CONCLUSION

The second International Conference on Gender Equality was in every way a great improvement over the first conference which was held in November 2023. Participation in ICGE 24 has been much greater and wider, and the presentations more enriching.

The conference participants and speakers passed resolutions to introduce more strategic items and topics for the 2025 conference which is expected to be held in November 2025.

The conference finally closed at 7pm after an elaborate fun dance by the organizers, presenters and participants.

