

## GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI)

### Country-level Assessment: Ghana

#### RISA Programme Overview

Research and Innovation Systems for Africa (RISA) is a programme funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) that aims to strengthen research and innovation (R&I) ecosystems in Africa. The RISA Fund is jointly funded by two separate FCDO programmes – Strengthening Research Institutions in Africa (SRIA) for research ecosystems and Africa Technology and Innovation Partnerships (ATIP) for innovation ecosystems. The intended impact of the RISA Fund is to strengthen national research and innovation systems in target countries; this in turn will contribute to economic growth and development. The RISA fund has three core objectives, 1) to support research organisations to have the capabilities necessary to produce relevant, high-quality research, 2) to create an enabling environment for researchers and research organisations, and 3) to strengthen the enablers for scaling of new and emerging technologies with high potential for poverty reduction and inclusive growth.

#### Addressing GESI in R&I Ecosystems

In the interest of ensuring that R&I ecosystems are intentionally gender equitable and socially inclusive, the RISA programme is committed to understanding and addressing the various GESI gaps and barriers that arise within such ecosystems. Drawing on the International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA) framework, which articulates nine key Ecosystem Strengthening Goals, ‘equitable and inclusive participation’ (Goal #7) has been identified as a critical element to be addressed in the process of strengthening R&I ecosystems.<sup>1</sup> This goal explicitly recognizes the existing inequities and patterns of social exclusion that unfold in R&I spaces, and emphasizes the need for being more intentional about assessing how innovation is applied, in order to ensure that the inequalities of established systems are not reproduced.

Some of the key GESI challenges in research and innovation include:

- Underrepresentation of disadvantaged groups within R&I talent pools
- Ecosystem strengthening efforts that often do not address, and can even exacerbate, existing inequalities and patterns of social exclusion
- Lack of gender equality and social inclusion in research

The GESI country-level assessments undertaken for priority countries during the programme inception period (Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa) will serve to illustrate some of the key GESI gaps and barriers within each country’s unique context, as well as to illuminate the broader, overarching challenges that may also cut across countries. Country-level GESI assessments are informed by existing research and evidence, as well as key stakeholder interviews with different actors from typically excluded groups within the R&I space for each country. These assessments will help guide RISA in its efforts to provide targeted GESI support to country-level projects funded by RISA as well as shape and inform a high-level GESI strategy for the RISA programme, with the intention of strengthening the broader R&I ecosystems within each country in line with the nine Ecosystem Strengthening Goals.

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<sup>1</sup> Strengthening Innovation Ecosystems; IDIA, November 2021.

## Country Overview

Ghana is a middle-income country situated on the Atlantic Ocean and bordered by Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso.<sup>2</sup> It has a population of roughly 30 million people, of which 49 percent are women. Over the past 20 years, the country has taken considerable strides toward democracy under a multi-party system, and public trust in its independent judiciary has improved. Ghana consistently ranks in the top three countries in Africa for freedom of speech and press freedom.

Ghana is a diverse country, politically, economically, ethnically, and demographically. The main social and economic divides are between the north and south of the country, as well as between urban and rural areas.<sup>3</sup> These particular divides are primarily a result of ecological conditions and inequalities in service delivery driven by geography and the country's colonial history; under colonial rule, the northern region of Ghana was used as a labour reserve for mines and cocoa farms in the south, with limited investments being made in education, infrastructure, and economic development for the north.

Ghana has been a notable leader in poverty reduction on the African continent.<sup>4</sup> However, the country's rapid economic growth was hit hard by the Covid pandemic. From 2017-2019, the economy grew at an average of 7 percent annually, before experiencing a sharp contraction following the pandemic outbreak in early 2020. The economic impacts of Covid have had a significant impact on households, and the poverty rate is estimated to have increased from 25 percent in 2019 to 25.5 percent in 2020.<sup>5</sup> In spite of Ghana's positive economic growth before the Covid pandemic, poverty rates remain higher than 50 percent in the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions of the country, and with no change between 2005 to 2016 in the Volta Region.<sup>6</sup>

Although Ghana does not have a national policy for research, it does have a comprehensive policy framework for science, technology and innovation (STI).<sup>7</sup> The 2017 National STI Policy articulates key barriers to innovation and commits to supporting the adoption of foreign innovation as an economic driver. Ghana was ranked 112<sup>th</sup> out of the 132 economies in the Global Innovation Index (GII) for 2021, a slight improvement from 2020 and 2019, where the country ranked 108<sup>th</sup> and 106<sup>th</sup>, respectively. Among the 27 economies in sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana ranks 12<sup>th</sup>. Ghana attained positive scores in four out of the seven GI pillars: human capital and research, infrastructure, knowledge and technology outputs, and creative outputs, which are above average for the sub-Saharan Africa region. Conversely, Ghana scores lower in three pillars: business sophistication, market sophistication and institutions, with its weakest performance in institutions.<sup>8</sup>

## Policy, Strategy and Institutional Environment in Relation to GESI

**1992 Constitution (amended 1996):** Ghana's Constitution affirms key fundamental rights and freedoms for all people, and guarantees equality under the law.<sup>9</sup> Discrimination is not permitted on any grounds, including gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, political opinion, occupation, creed or social or economic status. The Constitution also sets out specific commitments for the State to ensure equitable access by all citizens to public facilities and services in accordance, to cultivate respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms and the dignity of the human person, and to actively promote social integration and prohibit discrimination and prejudice on any grounds. However, the Constitution does not provide specific protections for LGBTQ+ individuals and makes no mention of sexual orientation. For women and children, the Constitution contains specific sub-sections that address some additional

<sup>2</sup> [The World Bank in Ghana – Country Context](#); World Bank, 2021. USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; Banyan Global, April 2020.

<sup>3</sup> USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; USAID/Banyan Global, April 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> [The World Bank in Ghana – Country Context](#); World Bank, 2021

<sup>6</sup> USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; USAID/Banyan Global, April 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Assessing the needs of the research system in Ghana: A report for the SRIA programme; UK Department for International Development, October 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana; Republic of Ghana, 1992.

considerations and rights for women (such as paid maternity leave and access to childcare facilities), as well as the basic rights of children and protections against child labour, abuse and neglect. There are additional articles within the Constitution that also commit the State to ensuring that women are fully included and mainstreamed within the country's economic development.

The Constitution also explicitly affirms the rights of people with disabilities (PWD), providing protection against discrimination, abuse, and exploitation, and making note of financial incentives to be provided to PWD engaged in business, as well as to those businesses which hire PWD in significant numbers.<sup>10</sup> There is also a stated commitment to accessibility measures for PWD to access public places as well as ensuring appropriate facilities for PWD, though this is noted with the caveat that accessibility measures will be implemented "as far as practicable". Within the 'social objectives' of the Constitution, the State also commits to protecting the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the disabled, the elderly, children and other vulnerable groups, though specific groups deemed as 'vulnerable' are not articulated.

**Long-term National Development Plan of Ghana:** Ghana's current high-level national development strategy replaces the country's previous Vision 2020 strategy and earlier poverty reduction plans, and outlines five key goals for the transformation of the country.<sup>11</sup> These five goals include building an industrialized, inclusive and resilient economy, creating an equitable, healthy and prosperous society, building well-planned and safe communities while protecting the natural environment, building effective, efficient and dynamic institutions for national development, and strengthening Ghana's role in international affairs. In terms of gender and social inclusion, the plan highlights gender equality and 'women's issues' as cross-cutting for social development, and includes specific mention of the need for women and other disadvantaged groups to participate in the country's governance.

**Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP):** Established in 2013 as a successor to the previous Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection's primary responsibility is to lead on policy formulation, coordination and monitoring and evaluation of gender, children and social protection issues within the context of Ghana's national development agenda.<sup>12</sup> The main objectives of the Ministry are the achievement of gender equality and equity, the empowerment of women and girls, and promoting the survival and development of children and ensuring their rights. The Ministry is also tasked with harmonizing social protection interventions to better target vulnerable and excluded groups, including people with disabilities (PWD), and to mainstream the fulfilment of their rights, empowerment and full participation in national development processes. The Department of Gender within the Ministry (formerly the National Council for Women and Development, first established in 1975) is responsible for the implementation of policies for the promotion of gender mainstreaming across all sectors.

**National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD):** The NCPD sits within the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and was established in 2006, with the primary responsibility of proposing and evolving policies that mainstream persons with disability into the national development process.<sup>13</sup> The Council's main functions are to monitor and evaluate disability policies and programs, formulate strategies for broad-based inter-sectoral, inter-disciplinary involvement and participation in the implementation of Ghana's national disability policy, coordinate disability activities, advise the Ministry on disability issues, submit proposals for appropriate legislation on disability, coordinate activities of organizations of persons with disability and international organizations and non-governmental organizations that deal with disability, promote studies and research on issues of disability, play an advocacy role at all levels and provide education and information to the public on issues of disability, among other activities.

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<sup>10</sup> Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana; Republic of Ghana, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> [Long-term National Development Plan of Ghana \(2018-2057\)](#); National Development Planning Commission, September 2017.

<sup>12</sup> [Background](#); Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> [National Council for Persons with Disabilities](#); Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2022.

**Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice:** Established in 1992 under Ghana's Constitution, the Commission's primary mandate is to foster good governance, democracy, integrity, peace, and social development by promoting, protecting and enforcing fundamental human rights and freedoms and administrative justice for all people in Ghana.<sup>14</sup> The Commission is meant to be an independent, impartial entity that collaborates with government institutions and civil society to ensure human dignity is protected and to promote transparency and accountability within Ghana's government. The Commission itself encompasses a National Human Rights Institution, an Ombudsman, and an anticorruption agency for the public sector. The human rights mandate of the Commission focuses on promotion and protection, as well as prevention of rights' violations and enforcement. Human rights violations that can be raised to the Commission include discrimination, bullying, prejudice, sexual harassment, domestic violence, mistreatment and early or forced marriages, among others; however, there is a noted 12-month statute of limitations on reporting human rights violations.

**Persons With Disability Act, 2006:** The Persons with Disability Act affirms the fundamental rights and freedoms of PWD across numerous areas of life, including employment, education, transportation and healthcare.<sup>15</sup> The Act guarantees the rights of PWD to live free from discrimination and prejudicial differential treatment, as well as the right to participate in social, political, economic, creative and recreational activities. The Act also includes commitments from the State to ensure that public places and services are accessible to PWD and that additional support is provided to assist PWD with finding employment, including specialized job training as well as the provision of materials and loans for start-up capital. The State also commits to providing tax rebates to businesses that employ PWD, as well as providing free education to PWD and establishing special schools for PWD based on the need.

**National Youth Policy, 2010:** Ghana's national policy on youth describes young people as a critical resource for the country's future development, and defines "youth" as individuals between 15 and 35 years of age.<sup>16</sup> The policy articulates various challenges youth in Ghana face, including access to quality education, unemployment and underemployment, negative impacts of urbanization and modernization, and sexual and reproductive health risks, among others. Gender mainstreaming is highlighted as a key priority for all youth development approaches and interventions, and the policy further acknowledges the unique needs and circumstances of youth with disabilities, street youth and orphans. Within the policy, the State makes numerous commitments to specific actions and areas of responsibility regarding youth development, including providing adequate resources for sustainable youth development, creating institutions that enhance national unity, cohesion and integration, and providing opportunities for educational advancement.

**National Gender Policy, 2015:** Ghana's National Gender Policy identifies gender equality and women's empowerment as prerequisites for sustainable development and poverty reduction.<sup>17</sup> The overarching goal of the Policy is to mainstream gender equality concerns into the country's national development processes by improving the social, legal, civic, political, economic and socio-cultural conditions of women, girls, children, the vulnerable and people with special needs (identified as persons with disability and the marginalized). The Policy explicitly recognizes key barriers that women, girls and other marginalized groups face in Ghana, including inequalities in poverty, education and power and decision making between men and women at all levels, as well as stereotyping and persistent discrimination.

**Criminal Offences Act (Criminal Code), 1960 (amended 2003):** Ghana's Criminal Code criminalizes "unnatural carnal knowledge" in Section 104 of the Act, which is defined as "sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner or with an animal".<sup>18</sup> However, Human Rights Watch reports that authorities interpret 'unnatural carnal knowledge' as "penile penetration of anything other than a

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<sup>14</sup> [Mission and Vision](#); Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> [Persons With Disability Act](#); Republic of Ghana, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> [National Youth Policy of Ghana](#); Ministry of Youth and Sports, August 2010.

<sup>17</sup> [National Gender Policy](#); Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Criminal Code (Act 29); Republic of Ghana, 1960.

vagina”.<sup>19</sup> While this colonial-era law is reportedly rarely enforced through legal means, LGBTQ+ communities report facing persistent physical and psychological violence and abuse, extortion and discrimination in many different aspects of their daily lives, due to widespread social stigma related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

## The Gender Context of Ghana

While Ghana has made commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment at a legislative and policy level, patriarchal gender norms continue to heavily influence the rights, freedoms, security and quality of life that girls and women experience on a day-to-day basis.<sup>20</sup> Widespread social beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours about the roles and entitlements of men and women generally dictate that women are to be seen as subordinate or inferior. These dynamics hinder women’s participation in decision-making as well as their representation in political and governance positions. Recent studies on the gender context of Ghana reveal that weak understanding of gender mainstreaming in the public sector and a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation systems in the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MoGCSP) significantly constrain the effective implementation of Ghana’s national legal frameworks and international commitments on gender equality.

Gender and social norms in Ghana often serve to justify and perpetuate various forms of discrimination and violence, including sexual violence.<sup>21</sup> Gender norms related to sex and entitlement make it acceptable for men, but not women, to have multiple sex partners. Even though their male partners more often put them at risk, women are most often blamed for HIV acquisition. When accessing public services or employment opportunities, women often face sexual harassment and exploitation. Individuals from the north of Ghana are often seen as less capable and face discrimination and limited job opportunities, in particular northern Muslims. Fortunately, attitudes towards violence against women are showing positive signs of improvement in recent years; between the 2008 and 2014 Demographic Health Surveys, the proportion of women who agreed that wife beating is justified for at least one of the reasons specified in the survey decreased from 37 percent (2008) to 28 percent (2014). Women who were married or living together, rural women, and women in the Northern region were more likely than their counterparts to agree with one or more of the specified reasons.<sup>22</sup> Child, early and forced marriage is also a significant issue in Ghana; as of 2017–2018, nearly 20 percent of women age 20–24 were married before the age of 18.<sup>23</sup> Rates of child marriage are highest in the Northern, Upper East, and Volta regions of the country, and among the poor and less educated. Female genital mutilation (FGM) continues to be practiced in Ghana to varying degrees with a national prevalence rate of 4 percent, while rates for certain regions and communities in the north of Ghana are much higher, ranging from 38 percent to a high of 82 percent.<sup>24</sup>

Ghana’s micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) segment of the economy comprises about 85 percent of businesses and is critical for employment creation in both the formal and informal sectors.<sup>25</sup> Women’s participation in Ghana’s labour force remains lower than men’s, at just 64 percent compared with 72 percent for men, and there is a significant gender wage gap.<sup>26</sup> A major portion of Ghana’s labour market is in the low-paying informal sector, where women and other marginalized groups are often clustered. In Ghana, women make less than 30 percent of what men make, one of only two countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region to experience gaps at that extreme, the other being Mali.<sup>27</sup> Men also predominate in the realm of professional and technical workers, with 66 percent of men participating in professional or technical work, compared with just 33 percent of women. Literacy rates are lower for

<sup>19</sup> “No Choice but to Deny Who I Am”: Violence and Discrimination against LGBT People in Ghana; Human Rights Watch, January 2018.

<sup>20</sup> USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; USAID/Banyan Global, April 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; USAID/Banyan Global, April 2020.

<sup>24</sup> [Prevalence and factors associated with female genital mutilation among women of reproductive age in the Bawku municipality and Pusiga District of northern Ghana](#); Sakeah, E., et al., 2018.

<sup>25</sup> USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; USAID/Banyan Global, April 2020.

<sup>26</sup> Labor force participation rate, female and male ( percent of population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate), Ghana; World Bank Databank, 2020. [Reducing the gender wage gap in Ghana](#); The Borgen Project, November 2021.

<sup>27</sup> [Global Gender Gap Report: Insight Report](#); World Economic Forum, March 2021.



women than for men, at 74.5 percent versus 83.5 percent, respectively. Vulnerable employment is highest among women, at 68.2 percent or roughly 3.4 million women.<sup>28</sup>

Gender gaps in education are further compounded by poverty and geography. The average number of years of education that the poorest girls aged 20 to 24 from rural areas in Ghana can attain is about four years, compared with a full 13 years for girls from more affluent homes in urban areas.<sup>29</sup> Gender disparities tend to become more substantial at the secondary and tertiary level, even in the wealthiest households, and gender gaps appear to be highest between young men and young women at the level of tertiary education.<sup>30</sup> Teaching and learning materials and resources demonstrate significant gender bias from the level of primary school, reinforcing patriarchal norms and expectations of men as leaders and providers, and women as caregivers and domestic helpers.<sup>31</sup>

When it comes to entrepreneurship, Ghana has one of the highest rates of women entrepreneurs in the world. In 2019, Ghana ranked second in the world for the highest percentage of women's business ownership, with women owning close to four in every ten businesses (37.9 percent); this number declined only slightly between the 2019 and 2020 indexes, with Ghana now taking third place behind Botswana (2<sup>nd</sup> place) and Uganda (1<sup>st</sup> place).<sup>32</sup> While these numbers appear highly promising at first glance, they may also indicate that women tend to face greater constraints than men in terms of securing other types of jobs and formal employment opportunities. Stakeholder interviews from Ghana further reveal that male business owners will sometimes list their wives as the registered business owner, even if she is not involved in the company or fulfilling a decision-making role, in order to be able to capitalize on financial and other opportunities that are intended to support women-led businesses.<sup>33</sup> Despite some of the outward markings of progress in this area, women entrepreneurs in Ghana face further constraints that contribute to large gender gaps in profits, ranging from 23 to 73 percent.<sup>34</sup> There are also distinctly fewer opportunities for women to progress professionally as skilled workers and to assume business leadership roles, compared to their peers in other regions. Women's progress as entrepreneurs or business leaders is further inhibited by the lack of physical infrastructure and government programs made available to support their business endeavours.<sup>35</sup> Gendered power dynamics between spouses create an additional barrier for women; recent studies indicate that women tend to hide their business income from their husbands, for fear that the husband may end the relationship or reduce their financial contributions to the household.<sup>36</sup> These findings hold for both urban and rural women.

In terms of political participation, there are significant gaps in the Ghanaian context. Only 14.55 percent of MPs in Ghana's parliament are women; this translates to only 40 women MPs out of 275 total MPs.<sup>37</sup> At the grassroots level, the country has invested in some targeted programs with the intention of increasing women's political participation through the National Commission for Civic Education, organising assemblies with community leaders known as "durbars".<sup>38</sup> However, targeted evaluations reveal that these campaigns yielded no change in terms of women's attitudes towards or participation in grassroots politics; durbars failed to influence rates of women's participation as well as community members' attitudes about the appropriateness of women's participation, largely as a result of the prevailing power of gender norms in the cultural context of the country. Additional studies on women's political participation across the country indicates that while most women in both urban and rural areas of Ghana can readily identify with a specific political party and consider themselves 'full members' of their

<sup>28</sup> USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; USAID/Banyan Global, April 2020.

<sup>29</sup> [Ghana: Girls Education](#); UNICEF, 2022. [Global Gender Gap Report: Insight Report](#); World Economic Forum, March 2021.

<sup>30</sup> [Global Gender Gap Report: Insight Report](#); World Economic Forum, March 2021.

<sup>31</sup> [Girls' education in Ghana: Fighting barriers beyond gender parity](#); Neltoft, C.L., Global Partnership for Education, October 2021.

<sup>32</sup> USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; USAID/Banyan Global, April 2020. [The MasterCard Index of Women Entrepreneurs](#); MasterCard Foundation, 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

<sup>34</sup> USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; USAID/Banyan Global, April 2020.

<sup>35</sup> [The MasterCard Index of Women Entrepreneurs](#); MasterCard Foundation, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; USAID/Banyan Global, April 2020.

<sup>37</sup> [Ghana Parliament](#); Interparliamentary Union (IPU) Parline, 2022.

<sup>38</sup> [Civic Education and Women's Political Participation](#); Ichino, N. and Nathan, N., International Growth Centre and Innovations for Poverty Action, Policy Brief, January 2018.

chosen parties, they cannot easily ascend to positions of executive power within their parties.<sup>39</sup> Women highlighted low levels of education as a critical barrier to their ability to take on executive party positions, and gender norms also play a key role in this regard; members of a focus group discussion in one rural area shared, “the fact that the word ‘man’ is in that word [chairman] means that the seat is not meant for us women”.<sup>40</sup>

Expectations around women’s commitment to domestic responsibilities, which limit when and where they can participate in meetings and events, further prevent women from being more politically active. Women also noted that there is a significant degree of tokenism when it comes to women’s involvement in politics and decision making, where women are often relegated to specific roles deemed appropriate for them such as the ‘women’s organizer’ position that most political parties in Ghana have now created. Though Ghana has had an Affirmative Action directive since 1998, this policy has not resulted in greater numbers of women in politics, and government actors alongside civil society organizations have been advocating in recent years for an Affirmative Action law to be put into place to ensure women are able to claim their rights to political participation and leadership at all levels, cutting across both private and public sector institutions.<sup>41</sup>

One of the most persistent barriers that women in Ghana and elsewhere face, and which has a direct and substantial impact on their economic and political participation, is unpaid care work (UCW). UCW refers to the often-invisible household, care and domestic work that largely falls on women and girls.<sup>42</sup> It involves all aspects of domestic and care work, including cooking, cleaning, all facets of childcare, fetching water and firewood, and caring for other family members, including the sick and elderly. It is largely invisible, unvalued and unremunerated labour, and has been well documented in terms of the impact it has on perpetuating women’s poverty and gender inequality.<sup>43</sup> Before the Covid pandemic, women and girls were already spending 12.5 billion hours globally on unpaid care work every day. This amounts to a contribution of at least \$10.8 trillion annually – three times that of the global tech industry.<sup>44</sup> In Ghana, 78 percent of all household work is performed by women and girls, and the Covid pandemic has only served to exacerbate the current situation, with women’s UCW burdens significantly increasing during the pandemic.<sup>45</sup>

While gender barriers play a cross-cutting role in all facets of life, gender norms further intersect with other social variables to compound the marginalization that individual women and girls face. Not all women and girls experience the same disadvantages and marginalization; while gender discrimination and violence can and does impact the lives of women and girls from all walks of life, the nature, frequency and severity of these experiences varies based on other variables of life circumstance and identity, including age, disability, sexual orientation, geographic location, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, religion and culture, among others.

## The Social Inclusion Context of Ghana

Social inclusion is a broad term that can refer to any number of social groups that may experience systematic discrimination and thus exclusion from social, political and economic life.<sup>46</sup> This assessment focuses on how social exclusion creates barriers for individuals to access, participate in and benefit from R&I ecosystems within their country context. Factors such as poverty, rural / urban divides, age, disability and sexual orientation and gender identity play a key role in this regard, diminishing certain groups’ and individuals’ access to opportunities, resources and support.

<sup>39</sup> [Why Women Are Not Participating in Politics in Ghana](#); Muchunu, H., International Republican Institute, May 2018.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> [International Women's Day: What is happening with Affirmative Action in Ghana?](#); Skinner, K., Democracy in Africa, March 2020.

<sup>42</sup> [Addressing Unpaid Care and Domestic Work for a Gender-Equal and Inclusive Kenya](#); Care, April 2021.

<sup>43</sup> [Building Back Better for Women and Girls](#); Report of the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> [Addressing Unpaid Care and Domestic Work for a Gender-Equal and Inclusive Kenya](#); Care, April 2021.

<sup>45</sup> [Infographic: Ghana: Counting Women's Work, 2016. Coronavirus increases unpaid care work on women and girls - Research](#); Ghana Web, February 2021.

<sup>46</sup> [Reducing poverty by tackling social exclusion](#): A DFID policy paper; DFID, 2005.

Poverty is a primary driver of social exclusion, while social exclusion in turn worsens poverty.<sup>47</sup> Those who are socially excluded are often denied access to resources and opportunities available to others to increase their income and develop their households and communities by their own efforts. While the economy may grow and broader income levels may rise over time, socially excluded people are likely to be left behind, and make up an increasing proportion of those who remain in poverty despite improved overall growth levels. Ghana has seen significant economic growth in recent years with an average annual GDP growth rate of 5.3 percent over the last 10 years, but experienced a sharp decline from 2020 onward as a result of the Covid pandemic.<sup>48</sup> Ghana has been designated a middle-income country by the World Bank since 2007.<sup>49</sup> Despite this elevated status based on per capita gross national income, inequality has been increasing and poverty remains prevalent in many areas. Households in urban areas continue to have a much lower average rate of poverty than those in rural areas (10.6 percent compared with 37.9 percent), based on available national statistical data.<sup>50</sup> However, in recent years urban poverty has dropped much faster than rural poverty and the gap between urban and rural areas has doubled – as of 2016, rural poverty was almost 4 times as high as urban poverty compared to twice as high in the 1990s. Overall, Ghana's poverty rate based on the international poverty line has not decreased significantly in the last five years, dropping only 1 percent between 2017 and 2022.<sup>51</sup>

Another aspect of exclusion is disadvantage on the basis of where individuals live, known as 'spatial' exclusion.<sup>52</sup> People who live in rural or remote/isolated areas are often prevented from fully participating in national economic and social life, and faced with the additional constraints of poverty, can be systematically left behind in a vicious, self-perpetuating cycle. Lack of access to electricity and internet connectivity compound the exclusion that poor, rural individuals and communities face, in particular economic exclusion. The geographical and socioeconomic divides between the north and south of Ghana play a key role in the exclusion of certain groups. Ghana's overall development pattern is characterized by a significant 'north-south divide' in which the north lags far behind the south in terms of socioeconomic growth and development, often resulting in the exclusion of Northern Ghanaians.<sup>53</sup> A legacy of British patterns of colonization, northern regions of Ghana persistently remain some of the poorest parts of the country, and continue to lag behind in terms of health, education, sanitation, unemployment and other key metrics.<sup>54</sup> Ghana's post-independence government further contributed to the north-south divide by neglecting the educational system in the north during the 1960s, driven by tribal-nationalist conflicts that emerged alongside post-colonial governance efforts. Education is a critical area of importance for individuals to be able to access and benefit from different social, political and economic opportunities and resources.<sup>55</sup> Considerable disparities in the quality of education and low levels of investment in educational resources for schools and students has driven the region's poverty rates to alarmingly high levels that persist today.

For people with disabilities in Ghana, social exclusion is a widespread reality. Comprising an estimated 3 percent of Ghana's population, PWD are one of the largest marginalized groups in the country.<sup>56</sup> PWD continue to experience social stigma, exclusion and discrimination, and traditional and religious beliefs tend to reinforce harmful stereotypes and perpetuate myths and misunderstandings around disability. Ghana has several legal and constitutional provisions intended to protect socially disadvantaged groups, including PWD. In 2007, Ghana signed the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and ratified it in 2012, becoming the 119<sup>th</sup> country in the world to do so and the 32<sup>nd</sup> country in Africa.<sup>57</sup> Along with protections provided under the country's Constitution, there are sections of the Children's Act (1998), the National Health Insurance Act (2012), the Education Act (2008) and the Labour Act (2003),

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> [GDP growth \(annual percent\), Ghana](#); The World Bank Databank, 2020.

<sup>49</sup> [Ghana's Middle Income Reality Check Part II](#); Institute of Economic Affairs Ghana, 2012.

<sup>50</sup> [The Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report](#); UNICEF, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> [International poverty rate in Ghana from 2017 to 2022](#); Statista, 2022.

<sup>52</sup> [Reducing poverty by tackling social exclusion](#); A DFID policy paper; DFID, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> [Regional disparities in Ghana](#); Discussion paper, International Food Policy Research Institute, 2007.

<sup>54</sup> [How to close the north-south gap in Ghana?](#); Awumbila, M., Ideas for Development, June 2021.

<sup>55</sup> [Education in Ghana: The North and South Divide](#); The Borgen Project, June 2021.

<sup>56</sup> [Exposing the protected: Ghana's disability laws and the rights of disabled people](#); Ocran, J., 2018.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



all of which are meant to protect the rights of PWD and combat social exclusion and discrimination. However, despite these promising commitments, there are distinct weaknesses and gaps in the legal and regulatory structures meant to protect PWD, including purely biomedical definitions of disability and loopholes in vague language, further contributing to their continued marginalization.<sup>58</sup> Studies on the lived experiences of PWD in Ghana indicate that social stigma and discrimination, including derogatory names used to refer to PWD across different tribal languages, are some of the greatest barriers that systematically exclude PWD from many different areas of life, including employment, education, and political participation.<sup>59</sup>

When it comes to the stigmatization and exclusion of the LGBTQ+ community, Ghana has a mixed record. The country's criminal code formally criminalizes "unnatural carnal knowledge", which is often interpreted as any same-sex sexual activity or intercourse; though the law is rarely enforced, members of the LGBTQ+ community in Ghana report high rates of physical and psychological violence.<sup>60</sup> Studies conducted on the topic have found that the continued criminalization of adult consensual same-sex behaviours and relationships contributes to an overall climate in which violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people is common and normalized. Such violence is often extreme, including public mob violence and other forms of social punishment often arranged for by family members, including homophobic vigilante groups such as 'Safety Empire' organizing targeted physical assaults on individuals suspected of being queer. Ghana's conservative cultural and religious context compounds the stigma and discrimination LGBTQ+ individuals face, to the point where many of them resort to self-censoring behaviour and hiding their queer identities from family and friends.<sup>61</sup> Many LGBTQ+ community members in Ghana experience domestic violence and family rejection if they are suspected of being queer, and queer women tend to face an additional layer of discrimination based on gender bias as well as sexual orientation. In early 2021, Ghanaian national security forces raided and shut down the office of an LGBTQ rights group in the capital, Accra, after the owner of the property being rented to the organization reported them to the police.<sup>62</sup> Ghana's Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, Sarah Adwoa Safo, was quoted as stating, "the issue of the criminality of LGBT is non-negotiable and our cultural practices also frown on it". While there is no specific legislation in Ghana explicitly prohibiting homosexuality, the act of gay sex is criminalized, with offenders potentially facing up to 25 years in prison.

Ghana has a significant youth bulge, with 58 percent of the total population under 25 years of age.<sup>63</sup> A range of factors both drive and exacerbate the vulnerabilities and exclusion that Ghanaian youth are facing today. Access to quality education and training, information and communication technology (ICT) and health care has a significant impact on young people's ability to transition effectively into the workforce and contribute to wider society. Studies have shown that, as a result of corruption and poor financial management, a considerable portion of government-allocated funds never make it to students or their schools. Young people from poor and rural communities face even greater barriers when it comes to covering the costs of books, uniforms, computers and transportation.<sup>64</sup> It's important to note that youth are not a homogeneous group; girls and young women face uniquely different barriers than boys and young men, barriers which need to be factored into any efforts meant to engage and support young people. Gender inequalities among youth in terms of ICT access also create additional challenges for young people, and poverty, hunger and healthcare issues continue to exacerbate the overall situation. Lack of employment opportunities for youth is another pressing concern in the Ghanaian context, where an increasing number of youth are completing higher education while the labour market is unable to effectively absorb them. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries continue to be the largest employers of young graduates in Ghana; these sectors are followed closely by the sales, craft and trade industries.<sup>65</sup> However,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> [Stigma, Discrimination & Marginalization: Gateways to Oppression of Persons with Disabilities in Ghana, West Africa](#); Baffoe, M., 2013.

<sup>60</sup> ["No Choice but to Deny Who I Am": Violence and Discrimination against LGBT People in Ghana](#); Human Rights Watch, January 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> [Ghana security forces shut down LGBTQ office](#); Rights group; Aljazeera, February 2021.

<sup>63</sup> [Overview of Youth Development in Ghana](#); Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

studies indicate that youth in Ghana are not particularly interested in careers in these industries; in particular, decreasing participation in agriculture is raising concerns related to food security.

## Key GESI Gaps and Barriers in Research and Innovation

Across Ghana's R&I ecosystem, a range of gaps and barriers persist when it comes to the equitable participation of women, youth and other marginalized groups. Available research and evidence in this area has been further supplemented by in-depth interviews with a diverse range of key stakeholders within Ghana's R&I ecosystem.

In Ghana, women face numerous barriers in terms of their ability to access, participate in and benefit from R&I ecosystems on par with men and others in positions of social privilege. Stakeholders in the Ghana context report a diverse range of gaps and barriers in this regard, including significant gender pay gaps, gender-based barriers to internal promotion and career progression, workplace discrimination, gender-based violence, financial pressures, and the considerable burden of unpaid care work that reduces the amount of time and energy women have available to invest in and grow their careers. In addition, low levels of knowledge and capacity related to gender equality and proactive inclusion mean that many institutions are neither aware of, nor intentionally focusing on, addressing these gaps and barriers within their organizations or approaches to their work.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the existence of both patrilineal and matrilineal inheritance and family lineage practices among certain tribes in Ghana, stakeholders report that the overall context of the country remains extremely patriarchal and R&I ecosystems reflect these discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.<sup>67</sup> While girls and boys have similar enrolment rates at the level of primary and secondary education, girls tend to miss school more often than boys due to domestic responsibilities. The belief that boys are a better investment for education also drives lower rates of school attendance for girls.<sup>68</sup> At the tertiary level, men outnumber women to a significant degree, with 17.7 percent male enrolment versus 13.6 percent for females.<sup>69</sup> The under-representation of women and girls in tertiary education and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs (only 22.5 percent of STEM graduates are female) significantly affects their ability to access employment in the formal sector, particularly in historically male-dominated fields like research and innovation.<sup>70</sup>

Stakeholders in Ghana report that career progression in research spaces is greatly hindered by gender bias and norms around women as the primary caregivers within households. Women in research report having to put in significantly more effort than their male counterparts in order to justify their inclusion in these spaces. The need to continuously publish one's research in order to build credibility in the sector as well as to achieve career progression is a key barrier for women; gendered expectations and demands on women's time related to UCW, particularly for those who are mothers, greatly limit their ability to devote the considerable time required for career advancement within the research sector. This has the knock-on effect of much slower or even stalled career growth for women in research, compared with their male counterparts. Some stakeholders report having lost life-changing opportunities for career growth due to the demands of motherhood, particularly for single mothers and women whose spouses do not support them or contribute their fair share of effort towards family and care responsibilities. Similar to many other country contexts, UCW was repeatedly cited by multiple stakeholders as a major barrier for women across both R&I; stakeholders in Ghana report that even among urban society, these norms and expectations around UCW persist.<sup>71</sup> In addition, there is significant financial pressure put on women to

<sup>66</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

<sup>67</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

<sup>68</sup> [Barriers to school attendance and gender inequality: Empirical evidence from a sample of Ghanaian schoolchildren](#); Wolf, S. et al., 2016.

<sup>69</sup> USAID Ghana Final Gender Analysis Report; USAID/Banyan Global, April 2020.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

provide for their families, particularly when it comes to covering childcare-related costs, on top of expectations around managing the household and the needs of all family members.<sup>72</sup>

Sexism and discriminatory behaviour in the work environment is another barrier that women face in R&I spaces in Ghana. Stakeholders report differential treatment as women and the persistence of gender stereotypes even in professional settings, such as work meetings or conferences. Women are often expected to serve their male colleagues tea or lunch at formal functions, and stakeholders report that even when an entire core team is comprised of women, any men in the room will be expected to lead professional conversations. The gender pay gap in the workplace is also considerable; while individuals have the opportunity to earn more income as they progress in their careers, career progression for women is twice as hard due to the additional gender barriers and bias they must grapple with on a daily basis. In addition, stakeholders report that gender norms from a young age have a tremendous impact on virtually every area of life, including women's ability to negotiate effectively, advocate for themselves and set assertive boundaries with both family and colleagues.

Women also face negative gender stereotypes about their emotional and intellectual capabilities, including their ability to get along with other female colleagues; when women disagree or debate in the workplace, it is often trivialized as petty conflict arising from 'women's emotional natures', while if men disagree, it is seen as legitimate and collegial conversation or debate.<sup>73</sup> As research and innovation are sectors which are historically and presently highly male-dominated, women are often not taken seriously when it comes to their knowledge, expertise or leadership capabilities. Stereotypes abound regarding women belonging in low level positions, such as secretaries, and sexual harassment and exploitation in the workplace is common. Just 17 percent of Ghana's researchers are female compared to the African average of 31.6 percent, and only 26 percent of PhD graduates are women.<sup>74</sup> Further, only 8 percent of professors in Ghana's public universities are women.<sup>75</sup> Stakeholders also report that women are often judged and shamed for being 'too masculine' when taking on leadership roles; Ghana's gender norms dictate that men are leaders and providers, while women are wives and mothers. One stakeholder from the research sector described a specific tactic used in order to try to mitigate the negative impact of this gender bias: *"Sometimes I invite male colleagues to meetings so that others will take me seriously - sometimes I even get men to say what I need to say so that I will be taken seriously"*.<sup>76</sup> Stakeholders report that these issues have a significant impact on women's quality of life overall.

Gender gaps in science, technology and innovation continue to persist in the Ghanaian context. Such gender disparities are reflected in the leadership of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, as just one example; the Academy has only had 3 women Presidents out of 20 in the 52-year history of the Academy.<sup>77</sup> Ghana's National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy acknowledges historic gender gaps across the sector, but does not lay out a clear path for closing these gaps or addressing the surrounding gender barriers that hinder women's access to, participation in and benefits from the research and innovation ecosystem in Ghana.<sup>78</sup> Stakeholders report that the innovation sector in Ghana remains male-dominated; most innovation hubs in Ghana are technology hubs founded by men, and even among those that promote coding for women (as one example), very few have women leaders.<sup>79</sup> In some cases, innovation hubs or firms that hire women tend to do so in a tokenistic manner. In addition, many start-up initiatives often lack structure and full-time staff, so internal elements like gender and inclusion policies or strategies are often non-existent. Among key leaders in Ghana's innovation space, there is a general lack of capacity and knowledge around gender issues and barriers, as well as issues of social inclusion. Stakeholders report that *"most entrepreneurs are just trying to survive"*, so unless their founder

<sup>72</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

<sup>73</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

<sup>74</sup> Assessing the needs of the research system in Ghana: A report for the SRIA programme; UK Department for International Development, October 2019. [Women and Girls in science and technology: Bridging the gender gap](#); UNDP Ghana, February 2022.

<sup>75</sup> [Women Leading](#); Education Sub-Saharan Africa, 2019.

<sup>76</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

<sup>77</sup> [Women and Girls in science and technology: Bridging the gender gap](#); UNDP Ghana, February 2022.

<sup>78</sup> [National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy \(2017-2020\)](#); Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana.

<sup>79</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

or their work directly targets women or other marginalized groups, these kinds of considerations are generally not included or mainstreamed. Some entrepreneurs do have a social impact focus, and this often leans towards issues of gender equality and the inclusion of women and/or girls, with less of a focus on other excluded groups.<sup>80</sup>

Access to finance and start-up capital is another key barrier for women in innovation. Stakeholders in Ghana report that women innovators don't get funded at the same rate men do, and women tend to be more risk averse when it comes to securing loans or credit for start-up capital.<sup>81</sup> Feedback from the sector indicates that start-ups in Ghana tend to prefer grants rather than private investment for growth, as there are concerns about the business failing; for women, these concerns are even more pronounced. Women's domestic roles significantly limit the time they have available to invest in starting and growing a business, which can directly influence the success or failure of their ventures. While most innovation actors are not well versed in GESI issues, key stakeholders report that this dynamic is slowly beginning to shift, with more innovation hubs showing active interest in building their capacity around equity and inclusion for a range of different social groups. Organizations like iSpace Foundation in Ghana (a current RISA inception grantee) are working to support different organizations to improve their skills and knowledge related to GESI in Ghana's innovation sector, including considering social impact and inclusion beyond gender alone, such as engaging youth, PWD and other marginalized communities.

When it comes to social inclusion beyond gender, targeted and supportive efforts are still rather limited within Ghana's R&I ecosystem, not unlike many other countries on the continent. Stakeholders report that gender issues and women's inclusion are generally more visible across the ecosystem, whereas efforts to consider, engage or include PWD, LGBTQ+ communities or poor, rural communities are fairly limited. Youth as a demographic seem to fare better overall in terms of inclusion in R&I, though female youth face additional gender barriers.

PWD in Ghana experience a great deal of stigma and discrimination in all areas of life. Stakeholders report that children with disabilities are often kept out of school, as their education is not considered to be a good investment for the future.<sup>82</sup> The strategic inclusion of PWD in the research and innovation sector is not widespread, and physical spaces are also not disability-friendly in most cases. There are a few social enterprises, such as Amalitech, that seek to foster disability inclusion in entrepreneurship and employment, particularly in the areas of technology and innovation.<sup>83</sup> PWD predominantly have lower levels of education and limited experience in the information technology (IT) sector, compared with their non-disabled peers, which creates additional challenges for their effective inclusion in the R&I ecosystem. TechEra is another social enterprise in Ghana working towards the inclusion of PWD by developing affordable assistive technology, promoting youth leadership and providing experiential learning and digital skill development support to promote independent living for PWD.<sup>84</sup> Key stakeholders in Ghana's innovation sector feel that it is important for firms to be intentionally proactive about disability inclusion, rather than taking a passive stance and expecting PWD to adapt to whatever is presented to them, or not participate at all.<sup>85</sup>

For those in the LGBTQ+ community, barriers towards inclusion in R&I may be some of the most severe among marginalized groups. Due to extreme social stigma and discrimination towards LGBTQ+ individuals in Ghanaian culture and society, as well as legal ramifications, stakeholders report that research and innovation actors and hubs are facing significant potential backlash if they attempt to support LGBTQ+ communities in targeted and transparent ways. Sexual orientation and gender identity is reportedly not something that "comes up" in conversation in the Ghanaian context, and the overall attitude of wider society is described as very anti-LGBTQ+ in general. The process of coming out as a

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<sup>80</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

<sup>81</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

<sup>82</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

<sup>83</sup> Becoming a disability-inclusive employer in the IT sector in Ghana; AmaliTech, 2020.

<sup>84</sup> [About Us](#); TechEra Ghana, 2022.

<sup>85</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Ghana; February 2022.

member of the LGBTQ+ community is fraught with risk, thus openly targeting LGBTQ+ communities for greater inclusion in research and innovation is a highly sensitive issue. Some stakeholders feel that the larger human rights and legal issues related to LGBTQ+ communities in Ghana will first need to be resolved before actions to include LGBTQ+ individuals in the R&I ecosystem can be successfully and sustainably invested in. However, this does not preclude individual firms or organizations from taking independent action to be more LGBTQ-inclusive or supportive in their own practices, policies and project/programs, in a manner that does not put individuals at risk and is conscious of the surrounding cultural context.

Rural communities face significant barriers when it comes to their inclusion in R&I spaces, including low quality of education, lack of access to key resources and opportunities and a general lack of infrastructure such as electricity and internet access. Youth in rural areas of Ghana report numerous barriers in terms of their ability to pursue innovation and entrepreneurship, including a lack of experience, corruption, nepotism, lack of training, lack of skills needed for specific jobs, and the burden of family needs and expectations.<sup>86</sup> Lack of access to start-up capital is a major barrier for all youth. While young men and young women face some of the same key barriers when it comes to entrepreneurship and livelihoods, particularly in rural areas, there are distinct gender differences. Young women face uniquely gendered barriers that hinder their growth and access to livelihood opportunities in a multitude of ways, including differences in the types of education and skills development they have access to, UCW and motherhood responsibilities, low self-confidence and self-esteem, limited financial inclusion and access to assets, gender segregation in the labour market, safety concerns and gender-based violence, and mobility restrictions.<sup>87</sup>

Despite these challenges, youth overall appear to face somewhat less exclusion from Ghana's R&I ecosystem compared to other marginalized groups, such as PWD or the LGBTQ+ community. A range of different government programmes as well as private initiatives have been put in place to target and foster youth entrepreneurship and innovation. The Ghana Chamber of Young Entrepreneurs (GCYE) was established in 2016, as a network of young Ghanaian business owners from all sectors of private enterprise.<sup>88</sup> GCYE was formed with the primary objective to unite, engage, and promote initiatives and innovation of young entrepreneurs in Ghana. The GCYE works to drive trade, advocate for reforms, provide business support services to young innovators with information on funding sources, facilitate access to credit and improve the broader business ecosystem within the country, with the ultimate goal of strengthening entrepreneurship culture among young people in Ghana. In addition, the Government of Ghana has put in place specific agencies and programmes to support youth livelihoods, innovation and entrepreneurship, namely the Youth Employment Agency (YEA) and the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP).

The YEA was set up in 2005 to address Ghana's high rates of youth unemployment, with the overarching objective to develop, coordinate, supervise and facilitate the creation of jobs for youth across the country, and currently hosts a range of programmes and initiatives to foster youth livelihood development.<sup>89</sup> The NEIP is a flagship policy initiative of the Government of Ghana, whose primary objective is to provide an integrated national support system for start-ups and small businesses.<sup>90</sup> Within the NEIP are a number of different initiatives to support MSEs with some of these targeting youth directly, including the Presidential Pitch and the Ghana Skills Centre. The Presidential Pitch is a unique entrepreneurship initiative led by the Ministry of Business Development in collaboration with the NEIP, which offers young Ghanaian entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 35 the opportunity to pitch their business ideas and potentially secure funding to operationalise and scale their businesses.<sup>91</sup> The Ghana Skills Centre is a free online platform offering an impressively wide range of trade, entrepreneurship and employment skills

<sup>86</sup> [Barriers to youthful entrepreneurship in rural areas of Ghana](#); Boateng, G.O. et al., 2014.

<sup>87</sup> [Gender and Youth Livelihoods Programming in Africa](#); MasterCard Foundation, January 2018.

<sup>88</sup> [About Us](#); Ghana Chamber of Young Entrepreneurs, 2022.

<sup>89</sup> [About Us](#); Youth Employment Agency, 2022.

<sup>90</sup> [About Us](#); National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme, 2022.

<sup>91</sup> [An Overview of the Presidential Pitch](#); National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme, 2022.



development courses that cover a variety of critical skills, such as financial management and sales and marketing.<sup>92</sup> The Ghana Skills Centre is open to all Ghanaians, with a focus on youth; however, it's worth noting that all courses are only provided online, which can mean that individuals and communities without reliable access to internet, electricity and other resources may be entirely excluded from the benefits of the platform, particularly if digital literacy is low or if assistive technology is required.

In acknowledgement of the gender gaps present in the STEM field, the Government of Ghana has also been hosting the Ms. Geek Ghana competition since 2019.<sup>93</sup> Winners of the national-level Ms. Geek competition can then go on to compete in the international Miss Geek Africa competition. Miss Geek Africa is an entrepreneurship competition that originated as Miss Geek Rwanda in 2014 but was renamed as Miss Geek Africa in 2017, and has since expanded to 22 countries across the continent. Girls and women between the ages of 13 and 21 submit applications that aim to solve problems through technological innovations. This capacity building experience provides all finalists the opportunity to compete and collaborate with their peers as well as to participate in the Transform Africa Summit (TAS) where they interact with industry leaders and their governments. The goal of the competition is to inspire more girls and young women to take up STEM education and careers in order to meaningfully contribute to solving some of Africa's key development challenges using technology. For example, the winner of the Miss Geek Africa 2019 competition designed a mobile platform that can enable expectant mothers to monitor their health during pregnancy; the platform is connected to a smart bracelet, which checks the woman's vital signs and sends them to an emergency service provider in real time.

## Summary & Recommendations

Evidence from the Ghanaian context illustrates that women and other marginalized groups face numerous barriers both within the broader social, economic and political landscape of the country, as well as within R&I ecosystems in particular. These barriers significantly influence how different social groups access, participate in and benefit from R&I processes and outcomes. Based on the findings of this assessment as well as suggestions and guidance provided directly by key stakeholders in Ghana, the following recommendations have been developed to address key GESI gaps and barriers in the country's R&I ecosystem.

- **Baseline capacity building for firms and institutions to better mainstream GESI into their work:** It is crucial for individuals, teams and organizations to have a more robust grasp and nuanced understanding of GESI gaps and barriers and the drivers of exclusion, in order for them to be able to respond intentionally and effectively within their work. Teams should also have their knowledge built around how GESI barriers directly impact their work in R&I, and how GESI barriers manifest themselves in different ways within the R&I ecosystem across different levels and pillars.
- **Coaching top leadership within R&I:** Engaging and coaching key leaders, influencers and decision makers within the R&I ecosystem on GESI issues is a critical component for sustainable GESI transformation and inclusion. This enables top leadership to act as drivers of change and proactively foster enabling and inclusive environments within R&I spaces, including institutionalizing commitments to GESI awareness and mainstreaming through internal policies, strategies and practices within firms and other organizations.
- **Financial incentives to support, hire and promote more women:** Offering financial incentives to businesses, organizations and other initiatives to support, hire and promote women can help to increase women's quantifiable representation in spaces where they are often left behind. However, such incentives should be coupled with qualitative requirements, going beyond women's representation in numbers only and supporting firms to invest in other efforts that

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<sup>92</sup> [Home](#): Ghana Skills Centre, 2022.

<sup>93</sup> [Ms. Geek Ghana Competition](#); Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation, 2022.

address critical capacity gaps in GESI mainstreaming knowledge and practice among staff and leadership, and provide targeted skills and career development support for women.

- **Convening events/spaces where different R&I actors can come together to normalize and mainstream GESI within the ecosystem:** Convening a diverse array of R&I actors as well as other key stakeholders in GESI offers a targeted and efficient way to foster collective knowledge and understanding around GESI issues and best practice approaches for GESI mainstreaming in the Ghanaian context. Such convening could take the form of a member-led, participatory, collaborative Community of Practice for research and innovation actors from all backgrounds. Convening also helps to normalize and mainstream conversations about GESI issues and move away from the perception that GESI is a ‘fringe’ issue that only certain actors or groups need to care about or engage in. Convening also creates intentional space for different actors and organizations to network, learn from one another and strategize around priority issues to improve how GESI is addressed and mainstreamed across different levels and pillars of the ecosystem, including areas such as access to finance. Stakeholders also report that convening can help raise the visibility of critical issues like UCW, which often go overlooked, as well as raising awareness around and understanding of mental health issues and mental disabilities.
- **Establish women-friendly workplaces that consider the responsibilities of childcare:** Individual firms and organizations can vastly improve how they support women who choose to be mothers. Stakeholders report missing out on valuable career development and learning opportunities due to the demands of childcare. Supporting women in this regard could look like investing in childcare services on site or offering subsidized childcare services to women employees who are mothers, as well as offering private rooms for breastfeeding mothers to tend to their infants during breaks from work hours.
- **Mentoring and role models for women’s career progression:** Putting in place mechanisms where women can engage with and learn from other women at different stages of their career growth provides support and solidarity for women pursuing careers in R&I, which are often male-dominated spaces. Such mentoring/role model engagement spaces could happen at a national or regional level, and/or within individual R&I institutions themselves. This approach could also be useful for connecting and supporting other excluded groups, such as adolescents/young people or people with disabilities.
- **Consult directly with women and marginalized groups to assess how best to respond to their needs and support their integration into R&I spaces:** Having intentional conversations with women and other excluded groups is key for ensuring that R&I actors and spaces are responding effectively to the unique needs and barriers that marginalized groups are facing, rather than assuming that they already know what different excluded groups will need. This is particularly important when it comes to the inclusion of youth in innovation, or people with disabilities. Participation is crucial for the process of inclusion to have impact and meaning, and excluded groups need to have a direct voice in the R&I ecosystems that are seeking to integrate and address GESI issues more proactively.
- **Targeted GESI capacity building for male leaders and allies:** In often male-dominated R&I spaces, it can be extremely helpful to have well-informed and supportive male leaders and allies who can help to change the status quo around GESI and normalize the importance of directly addressing these issues in R&I work. While engaging men in such activities and dialogues is a useful approach, it is important to ensure that existing systems of privilege and power are not further exacerbated by spotlighting men’s voices only, which means ensuring that men’s voices and views do not become centered and prioritized in GESI conversations at the very expense of the voices of women and other marginalized groups. Ensuring that male actors and leaders have a

clear understanding of how to be effective allies without reproducing harmful GESI hierarchies is critical for this approach to result in positive, transformative change.

- **Policy advocacy around GESI issues in the wider country context:** There is a distinct need to address the normative belief systems and institutional structures that drive gender inequality and social exclusion to begin with. Despite a progressive national constitution in Ghana, the rights of certain groups often remain unrealized, including the LGBTQ+ community as well as people with disabilities. R&I in Ghana could benefit from high level advocacy around policy and legislation that directly affects the ability of excluded groups to claim their human rights and participate in all realms of life, including in R&I ecosystems.