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Gender-related Human Resources Policies in Armed Forces

Introduction

This overview of gender-related human resources policies in Ghana's armed forces seeks to contribute to the very fragmented and incomplete literature on human resources policies in armed forces. It is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis, but a reference for other armed forces' in considering ways in which they can promote the retention, recruitment, promotion and full participation of women in armed forces. It is accompanied by an overview of human resources policies in the armed forces of Albania and the Netherlands.

“Gender-related human resources” is an indefinite term, but used here to refer to:

- policies that directly refer to gender, equal opportunities or discrimination
- policies that refer to gender-related harassment or violence
- policies that seek to deal differently with male and female personnel – including those that exclude women from certain roles, and those that prioritise recruitment or retention of women
- policies that seek to address the particular needs of military personnel who are mothers or fathers.

This research draws upon interviews, as well as secondary sources, including books, academic papers, newspaper articles and websites¹.

Overview of the Ghana Armed Forces

The Ghana Armed Forces was formed in 1957 and consists of an army, navy and air force.² It is a volunteer force under the supervision of the Ministry of Defence. As of 2006, the Armed Forces had an estimated total strength of 7,000. The army numbered approximately 5,000 personnel, with two infantry brigades, each with three battalions, two airborne companies, a support service brigade, combat support units and the Army Recruit Training School. The navy was approximately 1,000 personnel, divided into Eastern and Western

¹ This case study is based on research undertaken for DCAF by Dr Jason Franks in 2013, supplemented by desk research by DCAF Project Assistant, Veerle Triquet. Dr Franks conducted fourteen interviews in March 2013 with a range of different stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of human resource policies in the Ghanaian armed forces, or affected by them as armed forces personnel. Ten interviewees were from the Ministry of Defence; the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; armed forces directorates; the navy and the army. Four interviewees were outside these structures, being independent researchers and advisors.

² Ghana Armed Forces, Official Website of the Ghana Armed Forces: <http://www.gaf.mil.gh>.

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Commands. The air force also numbered about 1,000 personnel, and consisted of one combat unit, three transport squadrons and one helicopter squadron.³

The Ministry of Defence aims to maintain the Ghanaian Armed Forces in a high state of preparedness for national and international engagements, and be actively involved in promotion of peace and stability in the country and the sub-region. In pursuit of this mission, the Ministry is guided by the following objectives:

- enhance defence policy and control
- improve the state of combat readiness
- support national effort aimed at transforming the nature of the economy to achieve growth and accelerating poverty reduction especially the vulnerable and excluded
- improve logistics and infrastructure facilities
- improve civil-military relations.

The role of the Ghanaian Army is to provide national defence and support the promotion of peace and stability in the country. It is divided into Northern and Southern Commands in a brigade structure. The role of the Navy is to defend the country and deter any aggression from sea, and protect Ghana's lines of communication and the resources of the sea. The role of the Air Force is to provide air transport and offensive air support to the Ghanaian Armed Forces and to protect the territorial air space of Ghana.

The Ghanaian Armed Forces commits a large proportion of its personnel to international peace support and peacekeeping operations.⁴ Ghana's peacekeeping missions are mainly conducted in Africa and involve the deployment of complete units. Smaller elements of the Ghana Armed Forces are also at times posted across the world as part of United Nations peacekeeping forces. Ghanaian forces have served on peacekeeping operations in Côte d'Ivoire, Cambodia, Chad, Darfur, Lebanon, Democratic Republic of Congo, the Sinai, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and the Western Sahara.⁵

Women in Ghana's Armed Forces

In 2006 women reportedly constituted approximately 9% of Ghanaian Armed Forces personnel.⁶ The authors were not able to access data on the current representation of women in the Ghanaian Armed Forces.

³ Eboe Hutchful, "Ghana" in *Budgeting for the Military Sector in Africa: The Process and Mechanisms of Control*, ed. Wuyi Omitoogun and Eboe Hutchful. Stockholm: SIPRI, 2006, pp. 74-5.

⁴ Aboagye, Lt. Col. Festus. *The Ghana Army: A Concise Contemporary Guide to its Centennial Regimental History (1897-1999)*. Accra: Sedco Publishing Ltd, 1999.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Press statement by Nana Effah Appenteng, Ghana's Representative to the UN, 29 March 2006.

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The first woman to enter the Ghanaian Armed Forces in 1958 was reportedly a nurse. In 1964 the first President of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, took an important step to promote gender equality in the Ghanaian Armed Forces by establishing the Direct

This unit was designed to address women's affairs and to increase the representation of women. The Directorate of Women's Auxiliary Corps was disbanded in 1966, following the overthrow of President Nkrumah.⁷ No other unit/structure has been developed to address women's affairs and promote the representation of women. Despite this, women continue to play an important role within the military, including in combat functions. Women of other ranks were accepted in January 1964 as telephonists and signallers. Presently women serve in support services in almost all units except in the infantry.⁸

Ghana's 1992 Constitution contains a number of guarantees relevant to women's right to full and equal participation within the armed forces:

- that a person shall not be discriminated against on grounds of gender
- of paid maternity leave, and childcare
- of equal rights to training and promotion
- that the State shall take all necessary steps so as to ensure the full integration of women into the mainstream of the economic development of Ghana.⁹

Technically, all units and branches in the armed forces are open to women: they can be recruited into, transferred into, serve in or be promoted into combat units. Jobs advertised do not differentiate between the sexes. However, research undertaken in 2006 found that female personnel were not fully involved in duties that are likely to involve combat and hence did not acquire the necessary training and as a result were not perceived as capable of undertaking certain positions: "From the onset, only few women are selected into specific role categories. The mostly male contingents selected for frontline duties are given extra training for combat, but the females are given extra training in their designated duties."¹⁰

Female personnel of the Ghana Armed Forces did not participate in peacekeeping until November 1984, when a nurse participated in the United Nations peace operation in Lebanon.¹¹ Women were banned from participating in peacekeeping missions between 1986 and late 1994. In 1994, Ghana sent a gender-mixed infantry company of rifle soldiers to serve in the refugee camps with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda. From 1994 onwards, the representation of female personnel on peacekeeping missions has steadily

⁷ Aboagye, Lt. Col. Festus, *supra* note 4.

⁸ Abraham T. Afrim-Narh, *Gender Integration and International Peacekeeping: The Case of the Ghana Armed Forces*, Thesis submitted to the department of political science in partial fulfilment of the master of Philosophy Degree in Peace and Conflict Studies Department of Political Science. Oslo: University of Oslo, 2006.

⁹ See, in particular, Articles 17 and 27.

¹⁰ Abraham T. Afrim-Narh, *supra* note 8.

¹¹ Aboagye, Lt. Col. Festus, *supra* note 4.

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increased. Statistics from the United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations show that Ghana contributed 107 female military personnel for peace operations in 2005. Afrim-Narh's 2006 research found that:

“... as far as the peacekeeping personnel of the Ghana Armed Forces are concerned, gender integration is perceived to be feasible in all aspects of peacekeeping operations. However, male personnel of Ghana Armed Forces do dominate in leadership and combat related duties in peacekeeping.”¹²

In 2014, women represented 9.98% of the Ghana Armed Forces personnel deployed on peace keeping missions (data includes experts, contingent troop and individual police). Figure I illustrates the progression of the participation of Ghanaian women to UN peacekeeping missions during the month of July over the course of four years, 2010-2014.¹³

Figure I: Participation of Ghanaian male and female personnel in selected UN peacekeeping missions for four consecutive years (2011-2014) during the month of July

| | 2011 | | | 2012 | | | 2013 | | | 2014 | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------------|----|-------|---------|----|-------|-----|----|-------|-----|----|
| | Total | M | F | Total | M | F | Total | M | F | Total | M | F |
| MINURSO – Western Sahara | 17 | 1 0 | 7 | 13 | 12 | 1 | 17 | 15 | 2 | 17 | 15 | 2 |
| MINUSMA - Mali | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 128 | 128 | 0 | 159 | 159 | 0 |
| MONUSCO - DRC | 489 | 4 4 1 | 48 | 489 | 44 8 | 41 | 488 | 449 | 39 | 487 | 450 | 37 |
| UNAMID - Darfur | 203 | 1 3 0 | 73 | 143 | 11 8 | 25 | 170 | 114 | 56 | 138 | 65 | 73 |
| UNIFIL - Lebanon | 877 | 7 9 5 | 82 | 875 | 80 8 | 67 | 871 | 815 | 56 | 871 | 799 | 72 |
| UNISFA | | | | 5 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 1 |
| UNMIL - Liberia | 732 | 6 7 2 | 60 | | | | 743 | 671 | 72 | 740 | 681 | 59 |
| UNMISS – South Sudan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 42 | 36 | 6 | 341 | 335 | 6 |
| UNOCI - Côte d'Ivoire | 540 | 4 8 2 | 58 | 527 | 46 8 | 59 | 520 | 461 | 59 | 166 | 140 | 26 |

¹² Abraham T. Afrim-Narh, *supra* note 8.

¹³ UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Public Information: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml (accessed February 2015). The month of July is used in this comparison as data was available for that month for all four years.

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Gender-related human resource policies of Ghana's armed forces

Gender policy

In 2010, Ghana adopted a National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325, and later a three-year implementation plan (2012-2014). The National Action Plan pursues the objectives of:

- protection and promotion of the human rights of women and girls in situations of conflict and in peace support operations;
- participation of women in conflict prevention, peace and security institutions and processes; and
- prevention of violence against women including sexual, gender-based and conflict related violence.

The 2012-2014 implementation plan also seeks to achieve the following tasks, related to promotion of gender-responsive armed forces and the deployment of women to peacekeeping operations:

- review national security and defence sector policies to ensure alignment with global and national commitments to gender equality;
- evaluate all training materials to ensure that a gender perspective is incorporated;
- review conditions of service for peacekeepers to ensure that specific requirements for women such as clothing, equipment, monthly suppliers and separate facilities are addressed;
- establish a minimum target for deployment of women to peace-keeping; and
- establish gender units within Ministries of Defence and Interior to, among other things, oversee the recruitment and deployment of women to peacekeeping.

Furthermore the National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325 has requested an increase of 30% over current levels of deployment of women to peace support operations.

Mechanisms to implement gender policy

Some basic gender training is carried out during recruit training. Then, as part of their preparation for participation in peacekeeping operations, personnel receive training in gender, human rights, interaction with civil society and international humanitarian law. The Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, which employs many Ghanaian armed forces personnel, furthermore conducts in-house gender training and offers training in gender.

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Policy regarding recruitment and promotion

Service in the armed forces in Ghana is regarded as prestigious and is sought after, since it provides stable employment in a country with high unemployment. Recruitment is very competitive in all three services and is based on specific employment requirements, such as army mechanic or naval engineer.¹⁴ Requirements for all recruits include the need to be 18 years of age, not married and medically fit by Ghana Armed Forces standards. Men and women have different height requirements. Individuals with a history of physical and mental impairment cannot serve.¹⁵

Although there is no quota system, there is apparently an unofficial policy to recruit more women into the services and an unofficial advocacy programme to encourage more women to join. More women are achieving higher ranks within non-combat branches. Selection for promotion within these non-combat branches is based on time served, completion of the requisite courses and exams, necessary and ability and good promotion assessment reports.¹⁶ However, in a media statement in 2010 a retired Ghanaian General stated that “the recruitment policy generally requires 90% male to 10% female in all three services ... in the 2009/2010 General Recruitment Exercise, the Ghana Army was given a quota of 90% male and 10% female.”¹⁷

Women have yet been able to attain the positions of commanding officers in the Ghanaian Armed Forces. As women are not employed in infantry corps and other combat roles and this experience is necessary for promotion into senior command positions, women are very unlikely to be appointed to roles such as commanding officer of a unit, ship or air station.¹⁸ There are no women on selection boards for promotion or training courses, although most training courses are mixed. There are no positive action programmes or extended training schemes to encourage women to seek higher levels of promotion.

As noted above, women comprise approximately 10% of Ghanaian military personnel deployed on peacekeeping. Families and children affect participation in peace support missions or operational deployments for extended periods of time. Female service personnel can elect not to deploy.

¹⁴ Ghana Armed Forces, Official Website of the Ghana Armed Forces:

http://www.gaf.mil.gh/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=76&Itemid=107.

¹⁵ Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Canada, *Ghana: Recruitment criteria for the Ghanaian Armed Forces (age, preferred educational, professional or ethnic profiles, promotion, practice of rewarding individuals with positions in the army)*, 1 June 1999, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada,

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6aad68c.html>

¹⁶ Personal correspondence with Ghana Armed Forces human resources; personal interview, Accra, 27 March, 2013.

¹⁷ Linda Akrafi Kotey, *The Chronicle*, 11 November 2010, <http://thechronicle.com.gh/minority-takes-minister-to-cleaners-over-army-recruits/>.

¹⁸ Deputy Director Ghana Armed Forces, *Questionnaire*, 14 January 2013.

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Policy regarding intimate relations

Ghana's Code of Conduct for the Armed and Security Forces addresses intimate relations in the following way: "male/ female relationships are accepted and even encouraged but no immoral relationship is to be encouraged among troops."¹⁹

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people may not serve in the armed forces. Same-sex activities between consenting men are illegal. Between women, there is no explicit prohibition.

There are no rules for heterosexual in-service relationships. However, there seems to be an unofficial practice that a couple in an established relationship are precluded from working in the same unit.

Policy regarding marriage

Men and women cannot join the armed forces if they are married, and are to remain unmarried for the first three years of service. It is stated that this is for reasons of operational efficiency. After this initial period, marriage - both in-service and with foreigners - is permitted.

Policy regarding maternity and paternity

Women are prohibited from deploying on missions if they are pregnant, and are routinely tested during pre-deployment training.

During pregnancy, servicewomen are downgraded to the status of reserve and are considered not fit for employment, which means they cannot attend the mandatory military courses required for promotion.

Maternity leave is three months which is usually divided into six weeks before birth and six after. Women return to work after this period, although many save up their leave to extend the maternity period for up to four and a half months. There are also *ad hoc* unofficial local arrangements to extend the leave period further. There are no rules against breastfeeding in the workplace but there are no special arrangements or designated areas. No paternity leave is provided.

Policy regarding support to families

There are no options for flexible work hours, part-time work or career breaks for either parent, however the standard working day is 7.30am to 1.30pm. If they are posted away from home, a parent can request to be reposted closer to home which, if possible, will be granted. There are examples of *ad hoc* local

arrangements, dependent on the understanding and inclination of the individual's commanding officer, that allow service personnel time away from work to deal with occasional family problems such as health, schooling or childcare issues.

¹⁹ Hendricks, C. and L. Hutton, "Defence Reform and Gender" in *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit*, Eds. Bastick and Valasek, Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UNINSTRAW, 2008.

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There is full access to military healthcare for serving personnel, spouses and families; service housing; and a survivor's pension. The Armed Forces of Ghana also has range of unofficial arrangements to support families. These include the provision of schools that accommodate children from kindergarten through to senior high school. Although these are considered 'military' schools and are primarily available for military families at a lower fee rate, children from the surrounding area are also able to attend. This arrangement exists on the main military camps for both the north and south commands. There are childcare centres and crèches available on these established military bases. There are also unofficial support networks internal to the armed forces which are led by a wife of a service member who is elected the '*magajia*' or head woman of the group. This unofficial organisation provides a family support network to help with issues such as health, schooling and childcare, but it is not funded or directly assisted by the armed forces.

There is very little movement of military families between the northern and southern commands. As such, apart from short unaccompanied operational deployments, service individuals are permanently based, providing a relatively stable family environment. However, if families are required to move there is some access to service accommodation if it is available, but there is no compensation for partners if they have to leave their employment.

Policy regarding domestic abuse

Ghanaian service personnel have access to civil justice through the police and civil courts. There is a Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit within the Ghana Police Service. If the incident occurs within the jurisdiction of the armed forces, the victim has recourse also to military justice. The armed forces have a counselling unit with access to a legal department, and recognise that complaints may proceed through the military unit and/or to the civilian police.²⁰ A military prosecution would work in conjunction with the civil process and, depending on the severity of the civilian prosecution, penalties might include a courts martial, military prison and dismissal from the service. However, as there are no documented examples of handling of domestic violence within the forces, it is difficult to assess how well the process might work.

Policy regarding sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation and abuse

Sexual harassment is interpreted by the law in Ghana as "any unwelcome, offensive, or importunate sexual advances or requests made by an employer or superior officer or a co-worker to a worker, whether the worker is a man or a woman."²¹ The Ghanaian Armed Forces address sexual misconduct in its Code

²⁰ *Supra* note 16.

²¹ Mywage.org/Ghana, www.mywage.org/ghana/home/labour-law-1/fair-treatment-at-work/sexual-harassment.

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of Conduct by drawing from the standards on sexual exploitation and sexual abuse set by the United Nations. The following must be avoided:

- Any exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex
- Any type of sexual activities with children (persons under the age of 18 years)
- Any other form of humiliation, degrading or exploitative behaviour
- Any sexual favour in exchange for assistance
- Any type of sexual misconduct that damages the image, credibility, impartiality or integrity of the forces that deployed you

The Code exhorts personnel to “Exhibit highest standards of discipline. All acts of indiscipline to be viewed as an affront to cohesion of the force and offenders will be severely punished.”²²

Although there is no established policy or specific mechanism for reporting and dealing with sexual harassment, service personnel with complaints, reports or grievances have access to the standard military chain of command. Through this they can approach their immediate superior who will deal with the matter as with other disciplinary problem through military disciplinary measures, which could lead to courts martial, loss of rank and or dismissal. If it is regarded as a serious criminal offence, a matter will be referred directly to the police.

However, if the problem exists in the direct chain of command, then there is no independent alternative available within the military. In this instance, it would be possible for an individual to file a complaint at the National Labour Commission. The commission would be obliged to investigate and determine the matter. A complaint of sexual harassment could also be filed with the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service. The law provides that a worker may have his/her employment contract terminated on grounds of sexual harassment.

There is no data available for instances of sexual harassment in the Ghanaian Armed Forces and, according to the Ministry of Defence, they have not been dealing with any cases of it.²³

²² Hendricks, C. and L. Hutton, *supra* note 19.

²³ *Supra* note 16.