

Gender

Ghana's women, peace, security agenda

• Advancing inclusion through shared accountability

By Joana Osei-Tutu & Fiifi Edu-Afful

ON October 31, 2025, the world marked 25 years of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), which elevated the role of women in peacebuilding and security. For Ghana, this milestone sparks reflection, celebration, acknowledgement of gaps and envisioning new directions.

UNSCR 1325 is anchored in four core pillars: Participation, Protection, Prevention and Relief and Recovery.

Participation

Women actively involved in decision-making at every level.

- Protection
Safeguarding women and girls from violence, especially in conflict zones.
- Prevention
Tackling root causes of conflict and advancing gender-sensitive early warning.
- Relief & Recovery
Ensuring women's voices guide humanitarian and post-conflict actions.

Over 100 countries, including Ghana, have adopted National Action Plans for Women Peace and Security (WPS). Institutions

incorporated gender advisors, crafted policies and recognised women as central to lasting peace. Yet, representation has not translated into shifting power structures. Fully realising UNSCR 1325's promise means moving beyond symbolic inclusion towards real accountability, partnership and institutional reform.

From slogan to strategy

Ghana's WPS journey has evolved markedly. Following the 1995 Beijing Conference, Ghana responded with an Action Plan that championed education, health, empowerment and poverty alleviation. This launched campaigns - "Send your girl child to school" and "What a man can do, a woman can do and do better."

Then First Lady, Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, proposed 40 per cent female representation in policymaking. Nearly three decades later, the 2024 Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Bill was passed in Parliament, a milestone reflecting persistent advocacy and slow systemic change.

Today, Ghana sees more joint programming and inter-ministerial collaboration. Dialogues, training and peacebuilding initiatives reveal how gender intersects conflict and development. Still, unless women shape key decisions, WPS

remains aspirational.

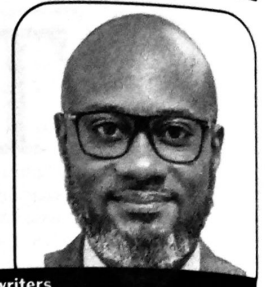
As Ghana deepens its WPS efforts, new paradoxes arise. The ambition to correct gender imbalance can create other forms of exclusion - selected dominated voices, side-lined priorities and tension with traditional security actors. This sentiment of exclusion can project WPS as undermining operational effectiveness - challenge of balancing inclusion without consensus.

Slowing the process is not the answer. Instead, dialogue and partnerships should ensure the agenda complements and enhances, not erodes efficiency. Progress happens when all groups recognise themselves as part of the solution. The next phase must foster allyship across men, youth, traditional authorities and marginalised groups. Not everyone will join immediately, but inclusive coalitions can turn scepticism into shared ownership.

Elsie Initiative

Ghana's military, police and security agencies are vital WPS drivers. Through sensitisation, recruitment reform and operational change, these institutions increasingly recognise peace and security cannot be gender-neutral. The Ghana Armed Forces and Police Service now embed gender perspectives, empowering women beyond presence, promoting leadership.

The Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations has accelerated reform. As a pilot country, Ghana's barrier



• The writers

assessment identified cultural and institutional hindrances to women's deployment. These insights shaped mentorship, leadership pathways and improved conditions for female personnel.

When women serve in peacekeeping roles, they enhance effectiveness: strengthening engagement, mediation and community trust.

Accountability and sustainability

Ghana's future hinges on accountability and sustainability. Impact must reach beyond activities to women's influence on decisions, safer communities and equitable security agencies. Monitoring should measure real outcomes, not just numbers.

National indicators, especially in conflict-prone regions, need ground-level alignment.

Strengthening feedback among beneficiaries, implementers and local structures is critical. Transparent reporting sustains momentum, balancing celebration with honest assessment. WPS aims must be mainstreamed into government budgets, training, and state institutions, not treated as donor-dependent add-ons.

Toward transformative implementation

Transformation requires a whole-society approach rooted in shared responsibility. Women

facing conflict in Ghana experience unique challenges shaped by class, ethnicity and geography. Intersectional, locally grounded WPS strategies matter.

Change comes at every level

Policy: Integrate WPS principles within wider peace/security efforts.

Institutions: Mainstream gender in hiring, training, and budgeting.

Community: Empower local networks—chiefs, queen mothers, youth to convert early warning into coordinated action.

National ethos

Ghana's journey now calls for deeper accountability, broad engagement, and lasting systems that empower all. Real transformation means building bridges, not boundaries sharing responsibility for peace, justice and equality. When every Ghanaian is invested in the process, WPS becomes not just policy, but a national ethos.

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