



ABANTU FOR DEVELOPMENT

ABANTU Launches Project to Strengthen Women’s Capacities for Effective Representation in Ghana’s District Assemblies, ahead of the 2027 District Assembly Elections

PRESS RELEASE

ABANTU for Development is here today to launch the project, “*Strengthening Women’s Capacities for Effective Participation and Representation in Ghana’s Local Governance System,*” a two-year initiative, being implemented with support from PLAN International Ghana under the Renewed Women’s Voice and Leadership (RWVL) programme, with funding from the Government of Canada. The project responds to a crucial and persistent concern in our democracy: more than three decades into Ghana’s decentralisation, women remain profoundly under-represented in the very structures of governance that sit closest to the people. As the country prepares for the 2027 District Assembly Elections, this launch is a call to collective action to ensure that women are no longer left behind in Ghana’s local decision-making.

Local governments are the level of governance closest to citizens and play a central role in the administration and development of Ghana. Established as the highest political authorities in the districts under PNDC Law 207 (1988) and strengthened by Article 242 of the 1992 Constitution, the district assemblies were designed to serve as effective centres of self-governance, participation and development. Article 35(5) of the Constitution further mandates the State to decentralise in order to democratise, and to afford every Ghanaian the opportunity to participate in decision-making. Yet, not every Ghanaian has enjoyed that opportunity equally. Women constitute more than half of Ghana’s population, but they remain evidently under-represented in local governance.

Across the seven district-level elections held since 1994, women have never attained the 30 percent minimum representation threshold recommended by the United Nations. Following the 2023 District Assembly Elections, women’s representation stood at around 4.1%. This continuing inequality between women and men in decision-making is a reflection of the entrenched social, cultural, economic and institutional barriers that have been allowed to stand. It denies the assemblies the experiences, perspectives and contributions of half the population in the decisions that most directly shape community life, and it weakens the very legitimacy and health of our democratic system.

The passage of Ghana’s **Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act, 2024 (Act 1121)** presents a historic opportunity to reverse this trend. Section 14 of the Act commits the State to the progressive achievement of a minimum of 30 percent representation of women, including in appointments to district assemblies, while its Third Schedule sets out concrete strategies such as capacity building,



mentoring and gender-responsive budgetary support. The law, however, is not the finish line; it is the starting point. The true measure of Act 1121 will be whether it translates into real, visible and measurable representation of women in every district. It is against this backdrop, and as host of the Affirmative Action Law Coalition, that ABANTU for Development is determined to ensure the law delivers on its promise.

To this end, the project will be implemented in three municipalities across three regions: West Akim Municipal in the Eastern Region, Adansi Asokwa District in the Ashanti Region, and Ledzokuku-Krowor Municipal in the Greater Accra Region. Over the next two years, from April 2026 to March 2028, ABANTU and its partners will pursue two central objectives: The first is to strengthen the capacities of thirty (30) prospective women candidates, including young women and women with disabilities, to contest the 2027 District Assembly Elections. The second is to strengthen advocacy and awareness among citizens for the effective implementation of the Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act, 2024. Through these efforts, we will also engage duty bearers, particularly the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, to increase the participation and representation of women within Ghana's local governance structures.

The under-representation of women in local governance is not a women's problem alone; it is a democratic deficit that concerns us all. Its resolution lies in redressing the systemic discrimination and marginalisation that women continue to face, and in building a shared national commitment to change.

ABANTU for Development therefore calls on government institutions, district assemblies, political parties, traditional and religious authorities, the media, civil society organisations, and citizens across the country to join hands in dismantling the barriers that keep women out of decision-making. The 30 percent threshold is the baseline of a fair and inclusive democracy. As Ghana looks toward the 2027 District Assembly Elections, let us work together to make certain that women are not only on the ballot, but in the rooms where decisions are made, in keeping with the central and transformative promise of leaving no one behind.

THANK YOU

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June 2, 2026

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