

The background is a gradient from dark purple at the top to dark blue at the bottom, speckled with small white dots. On the left side, there are several concentric circles and a large circular scale with numerical markings from 140 to 260. Some of the circles have arrows indicating a clockwise direction.

MARKET WOMEN IN GHANA AND THEIR HEALTHCARE BARRIERS AND GENDERED EXPERIENCES

BY ALISON BARLOW

WHAT IS A MARKET WOMAN

- A market woman is an adult female who works in the informal economy, particularly in the marketplace. (Milne, 1982; Clark, 2010).
- A market queen is a woman who is the manager/employer and peacekeeper of Market women (Milne, 1982, Asaarik, et al, 2020).
- the informal workplace is huge in Ghana (Baah-Boteng, Vanek, 2020).



Informal Employment

Employment in the five occupations is overwhelmingly informal (**table 4**). Over 95 per cent of workers in these occupations are informal, with the exception of domestic work. While domestic work is not a major source of employment for either women or men, over 20 per cent of men working in this occupation in urban areas and 17 per cent nationally are employed under formal arrangements.



For more than five years now, women's clothing vendor Georgina Opare has been vending at Madina Market in Accra. Before coming to Madina, she sold bread in another part of town known as Adenta. Photo: Jonathan Torgovnik/Getty Images Reportage

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Table 4. Occupations of workers by informal employment and sex in Greater Accra, urban Ghana and Ghana nationally: per cent of total employment

Greater Accra	Women	Men	Total
Domestic workers	100.0	75.0	89.8
Home-based workers	100.0	98.4	99.5
Market traders	97.7	94.6	97.1
Street vendors	100.0	100.0	100.0
Waste pickers	100.0	100.0	100.0
Urban Ghana	Women	Men	Total
Domestic workers	99.0	78.5	91.1
Home-based workers	100.0	96.5	99.1
Market traders	98.8	97.7	98.6
Street vendors	100.0	100.0	100.0
Waste pickers	100.0	100.0	100.0
Ghana National	Women	Men	Total
Domestic workers	99.3	82.7	92.7
Home-based workers	99.9	97.1	99.2
Market traders	99.2	98.3	99.0
Street vendors	100.0	100.0	100.0
Waste pickers	100.0	100.0	100.0

HISTORY OF MARKET WOMEN AND SEXISM THEY FACE

- Many men in Ghana believe God put women on earth to please men.
- Many may be fine with women working outside home, but expect women to take care of home duties too.
- Believe this is natural order of things. What women are made for
- Market women have always played role in Ghanaian economy
- Gives women independence
- Europeans portrayed market women as aggressive due to European sexism
- Ghanaian women have dealt with violent raids on workplace



BUSINESS WOMEN

- According to Yepoka Yeebo, “Ghana is one of only a handful of places where women are more likely to start businesses than men.” (Yeebo, 2015).
- More than 90 percent of people get their products from businesses owned by women.
- Notwithstanding this, during the 1970s and 1980s, only several decades after Ghana gained independence, market women were blamed for economic hardships and were met with hostility and abused. (Clark, 2010; Yeebo, 2015)
- Ghana had a dictator, Jerry Rawlings, an air force lieutenant. (Yeebo, 2015). Rawlings had a curfew for people, and he targeted anyone he believed to be a threat, especially market women, they were his scapegoat. (Yeebo, 2015).
- Rawlings accused market women of driving up prices and causing “moral decadence and economic degradation”, armies stormed the markets, searched homes of traders, seized everything and flogged the women publicly. (Yeebo, 2015)
- Market women had to lower their prices substantially to survive under this dictatorship. (Yeebo, 2015)
- Local economist George Owusu, whose mother was a market women, said that in order to survive under the dictatorship, his mom had to stop trading and it was a decade before she could trade again. (Yeebo, 2015)
- Market woman Abenaa Adjiya, discusses how she is a market woman to survive and to help her children find a better life. (Clark, 2010) Being a market woman is hard these days due to competition and overpopulation, but she perseveres and hopes for the best. (Clark, 2010). She says she has to negotiate prices. (Clark, 2010). It is hard to get tomatoes due to their high value, Abenaa does her best and her faith gets her through much. (Clark, 2010). Market women make lots of sacrifices for their families.



HEALTH ACCESS BARRIERS



- Market women's access to health resources are slim due to work conditions and work place (Agyarko, Apprey et al, 2023, Adjei Johnson Dei et al, 2023 Anaba Asaarik et al, 2020)
- Market women's jobs are busy so not much time to prepare healthy food (Agyarko, Apprey et al, 2023, Adjei Johnson Dei et al, 2023 Anaba Asaarik et al, 2020)
- Market women afraid to leave their workstations behind and go to doctor because leaving their workstations means losing money (Agyarko, Apprey et al, 2023, Adjei Johnson Dei et al, 2023 Anaba Asaarik et al, 2020)
- Most market women are illiterate

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Table 6: Occupations of workers by highest level of education completed and by sex in Greater Accra, urban Ghana and Ghana nationally (per cent)

	Women				Men				Total			
	None	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	None	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	None	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Greater Accra												
Domestic workers	50.0	0	50.0	0	0	25.0	75.0	0	25.0	12.5	62.5	0
Home-based workers	14.8	9.6	61.7	13.9	3.9	7.9	63.9	24.3	11.7	9.1	62.3	16.9
Market traders	13.8	14.7	63.3	8.2	9.3	2.7	66.8	21.2	13.0	12.5	64.0	10.5
Street vendors	24.6	6.2	63.0	6.2	0	0	100.0	0	21.9	5.5	67.1	5.5
Waste pickers	100.0	0	0	0	0	66.7	33.3	0	25.0	50.0	25.0	0
Urban Ghana												
Domestic workers	30.8	1.5	62.4	5.3	8.5	32.2	59.3	0	22.2	13.3	61.2	3.3
Home-based workers	21.0	14.2	56.0	8.8	6.1	6.8	66.0	21.1	17.3	12.3	58.5	11.9
Market traders	19.1	17.6	58.6	4.7	10.2	3.2	72.8	13.8	17.6	15.2	61.0	6.2
Street vendors	17.5	17.3	60.6	4.6	34.0	1.5	64.5	0	20.2	14.8	61.2	3.8
Waste pickers	100.0	0	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0	20.0	40.0	40.0	0
Ghana National												
Domestic workers	30.4	4.3	61.7	3.6	23.4	31.1	45.5	0	27.6	14.9	55.3	2.2
Home-based workers	27.0	15.6	50.7	6.7	12.9	10.4	59.2	17.5	23.6	14.3	52.8	9.3
Market traders	23.3	17.1	55.6	4.0	13.8	5.6	69.4	11.2	21.7	15.2	57.9	5.2
Street vendors	16.7	18.8	60.7	3.8	40.6	8.1	51.3	0	20.9	17.0	59.0	3.1
Waste pickers	100.0	0	0	0	0	50.0	50.0	0	20.0	40.0	40.0	0

SOLUTIONS

- Ghana ministry of health and Ghana government should propose a Market Women Bill of Rights.
- There also needs to be advocacy for Market Women and their rights need to be taken seriously.
- Market women should have access to education if they so choose.
- There must also be advocacy for all market women, due to inequities and barriers, market women tend to fight amongst one another, this is not sustainable and needs to end. (Milne, 1982).
- There needs to be benefits for women who get injured or who are disabled and still would like to have a business.

CONCLUSION

- The informal economy in Ghana needs to be taken just as seriously as the formal economy. There needs to be a culture of valuing women in the workplace and in business. Since Ghana is now a democracy, there is hope that this will change for the better. Ghana needs to draw on post-colonial theory, and undo any oppressive policies and attitudes they may still have so they can advocate for market women. The history of Ghana gives a backdrop for what they can learn from the past and do differently in the future to continue to help all their citizens.

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