

# Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings



"Once women are empowered the sky is the limit as far as development is concerned. "



**Prepared April 2010**

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## Personal Information

**Born:** Nana Konadu Agyeman on November 17, 1948.

**Married:** To Jerry John Rawlings (Former President of Ghana)

**Four children.**

**Education:**

- University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana
- Advanced courses in London, England;
- Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Policy Studies, Baltimore, MD. Certificate for fellows program in philanthropy and non-profit organizations.



## Career

- President of the 31st December Women's Movement (a non-governmental organization), since 1981
- Vice-Chairman of the NDC (National Democratic Congress political party), since 2009.

## Awards

- Honorary doctorate from Lincoln University, Lincoln, Pennsylvania, 1995.

## Life's Work

In a statement released by the Embassy of Ghana, First Lady Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings stated, "My desire is to see the emancipation of women at every level of development to enable them to contribute and benefit from the socio-economic and political progress of the country.... Women's vital role of promoting peace in the family, the country and the world at large must be acknowledged. And to do this, they must be empowered politically to equip them adequately for the challenges of critically identifying and assessing solutions for the betterment of society."

This was the goal of the 31st December Women's Movement of which Agyeman-Rawlings was president. She described it as a "broad based development oriented Non-Governmental Organisation that aspires to achieve these objectives through the effective mobilisation of women." In addition, her movement--two million strong--has set up more than 870 pre-schools in Ghana and has worked actively to stir up interest for the accomplishment of child development and family planning.

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Ghana's First Lady has said that she would continue to work in the women's movement even if her husband were no longer president. Her husband, Jerry Rawlings, led a military coup that seized power in 1981, although he was not established as head of state until the following year. The country successfully reverted to civilian rule in 1992 and held free elections. Calling the first lady "an instrumental part of the revolution in Ghana's economy," the Baltimore Afro-American reported that women were Ghana's largest labor force, and they wanted to be a central part of the country's redevelopment. "Before December 31, 1981, they had no power of influence in law or politics--even the laws that pertained to them." It was a grassroots movement, with women selling their land, clothes, and jewelry to get money.

*"Women serve as barometer of national development" – Nana Konadu*

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Agyeman-Rawlings was born on November 17, 1948 in Cape Coast, in the central region of Ghana.



*The Institute of Global Understanding of the University of Monmouth in New Jersey, United States honoured nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings for her "valuable contribution to the empowerment of women". (2009)*

Both of her parents were professionals, her father serving as a prominent statesman and her mother as an educator. Agyeman-Rawlings followed their lead, making education a primary concern in her own life. She attended one of the country's leading high schools, Achimota Secondary School in Accra, in the 1960s. In 1975, just three years after graduating with honors from the University of Science and Technology with a bachelors' degree in graphic design, she earned an interior design diploma from the London College of Arts.

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She would pursue her education into the next couple decades, acquiring a diploma in advanced personnel management from Ghana's Management Development and Productivity Institute in 1979 and a certificate in development from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration in 1991.

When interviewed in Africa Report in January and February of 1995, Agyeman-Rawlings recalled that in the early 1980s, a few women approached her wanting to form a women's organization but after a few meetings, little happened. She said that after asking the women what they wanted to do as an organization, "It was clear that we had to start with things that would earn money to develop their communities in the social sector. Most of the women wanted things like water." Agyeman-Rawlings spent time listening to women who came to her with their problems. Her movement taught Ghanaian women how to generate income and save money for community projects. It encouraged them to become part of the decision making process in their villages, and explained policies of health and education. It offered an adult literacy program to teach them to read and write-- the majority of women could not do either. Too early marriages among female children were discouraged and

programs were offered on nutrition and immunization. In 1991, through the efforts of Agyeman-Rawlings, Ghana was the first nation to approve the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child.

Via the movement, Agyeman-Rawlings also played a crucial role in the adoption of an "Intestate Succession Law," which is



*Speaking on the role of women in socio-economic development: the case of the 31st December Women's Movement in Ghana, at a seminar marking the inauguration of the Norway Branch of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in Oslo, Norway, the former First Lady said major developmental indices affect women directly.*

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applicable to the survivors of anyone dying without a will. Traditionally, Ghanaian women had little or no rights of inheritance upon the death of their husbands. The new law provides a standard of inheritance.



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Agyeman-Rawlings movement has also taught village women to become involved in the electoral process. "We literally just pounded it into them until they realized, hey, we don't want any of these people who are living outside our areas to come and stand in our areas to be elected," she said in Africa Report. "A lot of women are now on committees in their villages and districts, some are chairing the committees.... I can only say we've made a lot of impact, and I can see from the self-esteem and near arrogance of the women, that now we've actually been able to break through this thick wall." In 1992, 19 women were elected in parliamentary elections.

During 1995 Ghana's first lady traveled with her husband to cities, including New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Houston, Detroit, Lincoln, Pennsylvania, and Los Angeles, trying to encourage investment and trade with Ghana. Her husband was the first Ghanaian president to go on a nationwide tour in the United States.

The first lady of Ghana was in the United States for five weeks taking part in a fellows program in philanthropy and non-profit organizations at the Institute for Policy Studies at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, where she received a certificate after finishing

the course of study, which included fundraising techniques, tax policy, and a course on community organization. In 1995 both she and her husband received honorary doctorate degrees at Lincoln University in Lincoln, Pennsylvania.

Noting Agyeman-Rawlings's "charm" and "substance," the New York Amsterdam News reported that she was praised by Ghana's permanent representative to the United Nations, George Lamptey, who said, "For the past 12 years she has stood by her husband in the struggle to restore Ghana. She has led a group of active women to help empower Ghanaian women, freeing them from being hewers of wood and drawers of water to be[ing] actors in the political arena."

Ghana's first lady is a member of the Ashanti tribe. She and her husband have four children, three girls and a boy. When not busy with her family or work, Agyeman-Rawlings enjoys swimming, reading, dancing, camping, and collecting dolls from around the world. She also devotes time and money to such charitable causes as the National Radiopathy Project, Friends of the National Zoo, and the Ghana Girl Guides Association to name a few.

*"The establishment of the 31st December Women's Movement had given Ghanaian women more visibility in politics." Nana Konadu*

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## Educational and other information

### Education

**1961-1968** Achimota (Secondary)  
School Accra, Ghana

**1969-1972** Kwame Nkrumah  
University of Science and Technology  
Kumasi, Ghana

*BA Graphic Design, Applied Arts and  
English Literature*

### Qualifications

**1975-1976** Royal College of Art  
London, England

*Diploma in Interior Design*

**1979** Management Development and  
Productivity Institute Accra, Ghana

*Diploma in Management,  
Development and Productivity*

**1983** Instituto Superior Politecnico  
Jose Antonio Echeverria Havana,  
Cuba

*Diploma in Socio-Political Economy*

**1985** Committee for the Defence of  
the Revolution Accra, Ghana

*Diploma in Mobilization*

**1990** Ghana Institute of Management  
and Public Administration Accra,  
Ghana

*Diploma in Management*

**1992** The International Tropical  
Timber Organisation Accra, Ghana

*Diploma in Environment and  
Afforestation*

**1994** United Nations Population Fund  
Accra, Ghana

*Diploma in Population, Family  
Planning Management and Delivery*

**1994** Johns Hopkins University  
Maryland, USA

*Senior Fellow Diploma in Policy  
Studies and Non-Profit Sector of  
Economic Development*

**1995** Lincoln University Pennsylvania,  
USA

*Honorary Doctorate Degree in Social  
Science*

**1998** Irish Management Institute Dublin,  
Republic of Ireland

*Diploma in Senior Management*

**2001** European Market Research  
Commission

*Diploma in Economic and Marketing  
Surveys and their Effects on Africa*

**2003** Irish Management Institute Dublin,  
Republic of Ireland

*Diploma in Advanced Senior Management  
(Chairman)*

### Employment Work History

**1973** Ghana Tourist Board Accra, Ghana.  
Helped to formulate guidelines for tourism  
promotion when GTB was first set up

**1973 - 1974** Lintas Advertising Company  
Accra, Ghana. Trainee in advertising and  
graphic designing of products for  
production and sale

**1974 - 1980** Union Trading Company  
Accra, Ghana. Employed initially as an  
interior decorator of UTC showrooms  
around Ghana and UTC bungalows  
attachment in Switzerland. Rose to the  
rank of administrator of the Display  
Department that was in charge of UTC  
department stores and bungalows all over  
Ghana. Was attached to the biggest  
department store in Switzerland *Jelmoli*  
Grand Passage for 18 months as an  
administrator and interior decorator.

**1980-1984** Nanali Africarts Accra, Ghana.  
Set up a company that was producing  
greetings cards, bed-sheets, chair-backs  
and curtains handcrafted using local  
designs and patterns which I then

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## Educational and other information (Cont.)

supplied to UTC, Kingsway and Multi-Stores Departments Stores.

**1983 - present** 31<sup>st</sup> December Women's Movement Accra, Ghana. Helped to set up a women's development NGO and became its president in September 1983. The 31DWM was created to deal with the inadequacies in the country against women and the discrimination at a time when there was a call for participatory democratic system and the women wanted to be a part of the decision-making. This has since become the largest mass women's organization in Ghana with a presence in all 10 regions and 110 districts of Ghana and indeed the largest in West Africa. 31DWM's purpose has since grown to encompass various projects aimed at the economic, social, political and cultural empowerment of women. Through the 31DWM a lot of laws have been passed to support women and children in Ghana such as the Interstate Succession Law as well as advocating for Parliament to create laws such as Law of accountability, Family Law, Child Support Law, Marriage Law and domestic violence to name a few.

### Projects and Proposals

#### **For Ghana**

**1993 -1994** - Solicited for funds for the reconstruction of a unit of both the Accra (Korle Bu) and Kumasi (Okonfo Anokye) Hospitals.

**1995** - Solicited funds from the International Atomic Energy Agency, Austria to bring to Ghana, Radio Therapy Centres to cure cancers and train 30 doctors and technicians to man the centres: 3 Centres - Korle Bu Hospital, Okonfo Anokye Hospital and Tamale Hospital is yet to benefit.

**1991-2000** - Sent proposal to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries to solicit funds for the construction and full equipping of 47 District Hospitals. Succeeded in getting 30 hospitals renovated and re-equipped, 20 mobile medical centres for Ghana, 20 mobile dental units for schools. This was undertaken personally with 31<sup>st</sup> December Women's Movement as the proposers and executors of the project with the Ministry of Health as the implementers of the project.

#### ***For 31<sup>st</sup> December Women's Movement***

Proposal document and successful project with United Nations Development Fund on Women's Empowerment and Economic Development

Proposal document and successful project with United Nations Population Fund on Population Development and Family Planning

Proposal Document and successful project with Sasakawa, Japan on Helping to Equip Women in Income Generating Activities (basket-weaving, kente weaving, shea butter extraction, palm oil extraction, coconut extraction and tomato and

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## Educational and other information (Cont.)

vegetable farms.

Proposal Document and successful project with Irish Development Commission, Dublin on Building and equipping Early Childhood Development Centres

Proposal Documents and successful project with African Development Bank on Loans for Women; Structures for Women's Projects; Children's Education; Health of Women; Adult Education in the Non-Formal Sector.

Proposal Document and successful project with The International Tropical Timber Organisation on Re-Forestation of Worobong Forest by Women through the growth, grooming and maintenance of the Forest.

Project to support Handicapped Schools, Blind Schools through the provision of Braille books, purchase of pianos and other musical instruments for the schools. Also raised funds to build more blocks and equip the schools.

Raised funds to support orphans in Ghana.

### Conferences & Workshops

#### **Organised**

**1987** - Preparatory Conference towards Women's conference Nairobi

**1990** - Collaborative International Conference between 31<sup>st</sup> December Women's Movement and WHO on health of women and economic development to reduce the cycle of poverty.

**1993** - Conference with John's Hopkins University on the third sector/non profit sector.

**1995** - Preparative Conference for Beijing Women's Conference for West, Central and South Africa.

**1996** - Preparatory Conference on peace in Africa, Ghana

**1997** - Conference on Aids Population and Family Planning, Ghana

**1998** - West Africa First Ladies conference on peace and development, Ghana

**1998** - UNDP /DWM Workshop on Women Entrepreneurship Development, Ghana

#### **Attended**

**1987** - Conference on Women's Socio-economic Development and progress - Lagos

**1988** - International Conference on Home Economics - Accra

**1989** - Conference to mitigate the social cost of Structural Adjustment - Ghana

**1990** - International Conference on Breast Feeding

**1991** - Conference on pre-School and Early Childhood Development Centers

**1994** - Conference on Rural Women and Development IFAD - Geneva

**1995** - Beijing Conference on Women - Beijing

**1996** - Africa's First Ladies Conference on Peace Mission - Abuja

**1999** - UN Conference on population - Cairo



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## Educational and other information (Cont.)

**1999** - Conference on the Girl-child Education - New York

**2000** - Beijing+5 UN - New York

### ***Professional Memberships***

- 31<sup>st</sup> December Women's Movement
- Co-opted Member of West African College of Nurses
- WHO member-1990-1998
- Global Commission on Women's Health
- Senior Fellow, Johns Hopkins University
- National Democratic Congress
- Ghana Association of Voluntary and Non-Governmental Organizations
- Ghana Graphic Designer's Association
- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Alumni
- Old Achimota Association

### **Awards**

**1995** - Honorary Doctorate Degree in Social Science by the University of Lincoln in Pennsylvania for Exemplary work in championing the course of women empowerment.

**1997** - Soka Women's College Award in Japan for tireless work in the area of female emancipation and empowerment.

**1999** - Excellence Award from the Ghana Excellence Award.

**2001** - European Market (EMRC) for empowerment of Women and Children's Education in Belgium.

**2004** - An Award from Nigeria for Effective Role in Emancipating Women.