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## **Violence against Women in Ghana: The Interventions by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)**

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### **Abstract**

Violence against Women (VAW) is a worldwide pandemic that permeates across all geographical boundaries and impacts all people and societies regardless of culture, class, ethnicity, age, race, socio-economic status, political leaning, or religion. It is a daily phenomenon faced by humanity from the household level to national levels. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have devised several means of curbing VAW but the menace still persist. This qualitative research assessed the effectiveness of the strategies adopted by four key NGOs in addressing VAW within the Ghanaian context. The study targeted a total of fifty two respondents comprising; eight personnel from the four selected NGOs; twelve state actors; fourteen non-state actors and eighteen direct beneficiaries through the usage of in-depth (informal) and key informant interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, direct field observations as well as desk top review of official documents. The study found out that, all four NGOs utilised among others, five key strategies in tackling the menace of VAW in Ghana and these are awareness creation, lobbying and advocacy, community mobilisation, activism and networking, training/capacity building and service provision. The study results further indicated that, notwithstanding the efficacy of the strategies deployed by the NGOs, there were some challenges that confronted the NGOs in their fight against VAW.

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Notable among them were the lack of willingness on the part of victims of VAW to report and further pursue perpetrators of VAW, financial constraints facing the NGOs as well as state actors and lack of well-coordinated approach on the part of all stakeholders in their effort to eradicate VAW in Ghana. The study made a number of recommendations, including collaborative efforts of all stakeholders to fight VAW, adequate resourcing and funding of the NGOs by both government and donor agencies. Also recommended is the intensification of the education on the unlawfulness of VAW and that, any culprits apprehended would be punished by law. These and many others will serve as measures to improve the effectiveness of the strategies employed by the NGOs in their fight against the cancerous menace of VAW in Ghana.

**Keywords:** Ghana; Interventions; Non-governmental organizations (NGOs); Violence against women (VAW).

## **1. Introduction**

“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture, or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development, and peace.” (Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary General, 1999). “Across the world Violence against Women and Girls remain one of the most serious- and the most tolerated- human rights violations, both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality and discrimination. Its continuous presence is one of the clearest makers of societies out of balance and we are determined to change that. On this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women we say again: it is not acceptable. ‘It is not inevitable. It can be prevented’”. (Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka – United Nations [UN], Women Executive Director, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015).

From these two powerful statements, it is clear that Violence against Women (VAW) is a worldwide phenomenon attacking the very basis of our human rights with replicating cause and consequences on gender inequality and discrimination against women around the world which needs not be tolerated or condoned in any form what so ever. VAW is a global pandemic that cuts across all borders and impacts all people and societies regardless of culture, class, ethnicity, age, race, socio-economic status, political leaning, or religion [1, 2, 3]. VAW is widely spread, deeply ingrained and has serious effects on the well-being of people. This violence desecrates women’s physical and/or psychological wellbeing since it causes harm and pain [4, 5, 6]. Its persistent existence is morally indefensible. It continues to dampen economic development and tears at the fabric of society. The health costs to women include not only the detrimental impact on their physical well-being and life-long emotional distress, but also increases their susceptibility to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection and affects their mental and reproductive health. In addition to physical injury, VAW results in constant episodes of fear, depression, stress, trauma, low self-esteem, and hate [7, 8]. Research also shows that VAW leads to maternal and infant mortality due to poor nutrition, low birth weight, and inadequate nursing [9, 10, 11].

Worldwide, violence kills and disables as many women between the ages of 15 and 44 as cancer, and its toll on women's health surpasses that of motor accidents, war and malaria combined [12]. Recent global prevalence figures indicate that about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual

intimate partner violence (IPV) or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Most of this violence is IPV. Worldwide, almost one third (30%) of women who have been in a relationship report that they have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner. Globally, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner [13]. Some estimates also suggest that one in four women will experience domestic violence (DV) in their lifetime [14]. According to [15], 35% of women and girls globally experience some form of physical and and/or sexual violence in the life time with up to 7 to 10 women facing this abuse in some countries. It is estimated that up to 30 million girls under the age of 15 remain at risk from female genital mutilation (FGM), and more than 130 million girls and women have undergone the procedure worldwide. Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children. 250 million of whom were married before the age of 15. Girls who marry before the age of 18 are less likely to complete their education and more likely to experience DV and complications in child birth. The medical, security, and legal costs of VAW to countries are immense. In addition, the cost to women, their children, families and communities is a significant obstacle to reducing poverty and achieving gender equality.

Like other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, DV is a problem in Ghana probably due to the structures of domination and exploitation often peddled through the concept of patriarchy [16, 17, 18]. A 1998 survey on DV among women in Ghana showed that one in three had been beaten, slapped or physically abused by a current or most recent partner [19, 4]. It is noteworthy that Ghana has signed and ratified a number of international conventions, protocols and treaties including the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979, which states that all member States are obliged to act with due diligence to prevent violations of women's rights, to investigate and punish acts of violence that occur, and to provide assistance and compensation to victims of DV and UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) of 1993. Others include: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality (CPoA. 2005 - 2015) The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) now the Sustainable development Goals (SDG), 2015. At the regional level, Ghana is a party to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights Signed in 1989, Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People's Rights (PACHPR signed in 2003 and ratified in 2007), the Plan of Action on Ageing, promulgated in Madrid, Spain, in 2002, the African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 among others. There is quiet a progressive legal framework that influence gender equality work. The 1992 Constitution – the supreme law of Ghana and subsequent legal provisions are consistent with the demands of international conventions. In line with its international commitments, there are number of laws and policies implemented by different state agencies all aimed at social, economic and cultural development of the country. These includes: Matrimonial Causes Act, 1971 (Act 367); Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694); Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715); Whistle Blowers Act, 2006 (Act 720); Children's Act, 1998, (Act 560); The Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732), among others. Some harmful traditional practices such as widowhood rites and FGM have been criminalised under the Criminal Code Amendment Act 1998 (Act 554).

In 2007, Parliament further strengthened the law against FGM by increasing the maximum penalty to ten years of imprisonment and extending the range of persons who can be prosecuted for involvement in an act of FGM. Furthermore, the Domestic Violence Management Board 2008 is a task force at government level in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisation (CSOs). There has

also been the establishment of institutions such as Domestic violence courts, Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service (GPS), establishment of a national DV secretariat and programmes aimed at creating awareness of VAW in Ghana. The police service's DOVVSU handles cases of DV and child abuse, as well as juvenile offences. It also works closely with the Department of Social Development (DSD), the Legal Aid Board, and several human rights organisations and NGOs to combat DV. To further address discrimination facing women, the Government of Ghana has established the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) to among other things be the policy initiator and to monitor and report on the extent to which government's efforts are achieving results with respect to the elimination of VAW in the country. Despite the international and national efforts, VAW remains an issue in Ghana. Research on the prevalence of VAW in Ghana conducted by the authors in [4] demonstrated the high incidences of domestic VAW: 1 out of 3 interviewed women reported being physically abused by their husbands/partners, 1 out of 5 suffered psychological abused in intimate relations. Some respondents also admitted being sexually abused by their husbands/partners.

In an attempt to address VAW, there has been a sprang in the number of NGOs, CSOs, human rights organisations and women's right groups in Ghana since the 1980's. These organisations are significant in their "outreach to grassroots groups and employs innovative strategies to address VAW [20]. Critical group of actors who complement government's efforts in addressing VAW are NGOs who have used myriad strategies in their interventions. The fundamental concern of this paper is the problem of VAW in Ghana. While the evidence across sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana in particular, suggests an increase in the incidence and prevalence of VAW, the problem has largely been unexplored [17]. In particular, little attention has been given to the compilation of adequate, comprehensive and credible research based data on socio-cultural and economic factors that influence VAW and the assessment of the effectiveness of stakeholder interventional strategies employed especially by NGOs in addressing the cancerous menace of GBV in Ghana [7]. This research seeks to fill this gap by examining and assessing the efficacy of interventional strategies used by NGOs in addressing the issue of VAW in Ghana. The role NGOs play in addressing VAW in Ghana, their use of particular strategies, how they engage with the survivors of gender base violence (GBV) and the effect of any engagement on the success of such strategies as well as assessment of the key challenges and best practices in addressing VAW in Ghana are the key questions that this paper explores.

Focusing on four such NGOs in Ghana, namely; The Ark Foundation (The Ark), Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA Ghana), Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Center (Gender Centre), Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF Ghana), this paper interrogates the extent to which these NGOs have succeeded; what strategies have worked, what did not work, areas where it can be replicated, challenges and sustainability of interventions. This research adds to the body of data available to stakeholders in addressing the issue of VAW in Ghana and an opportunity to work towards real solutions. The research also provides a basis for advocacy for all NGOs and CSOs for policy and legal changes that aids in eradicating the menace of VAW in our societies.

It provides the platform for profiling and highlighting some best practices in ending VAW for the adaptation of all interested stakeholders in Ghana. The findings of this study therefore adds to the existing body of literature, a

valuable guide to especially policy makers and a source of reference for future scholarly research.

The major constriction the study envisages is access to current, adequate and reliable information. Some scholars have questioned the reliability of surveys based on self-reports especially when they border on sensitive issues like GBV particularly in the domestic settings. It is thus possible that physical and sexual violence will be under-reported especially among married couples given the stigma and other related consequences attached to reporting such incidence in most Ghanaian societies. This study foresees that this constraint may not give out findings which are consistent with the current socio-cultural and economic situation on issues of VAW in Ghana. This notwithstanding, the attempt by the researchers to employ the instilment of researcher-respondents trust, respect and confidentiality is belief will be successful in harnessing the needed information from the respondents for the purposes of the research.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the theoretical and relevant empirical literature on VAW. Section 3 outlines the materials and methods deployed for the study. Section 4 discusses the results. Section 5 concludes with some recommendations.

## **2. Literature review**

### ***2.1 Violence and Gender Base Violence Definitions***

Before analysing GBV issues, it is important to understand the definitions of the terms ‘violence’ and ‘gender-based violence’. As indicated by the authors in [4], the way any social problem is defined sets the parameters within which solutions are developed. Definition or lack of a definition can determine the visibility of the issue. How Ghana understands the problem will push her to respond and influence her in her approach to respond [4]. The authors in [21] defined violence as an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another person. The author in [22] also defined violence as punishment for doing or not doing something, a use of force to get somebody to do or refrain from doing something, or forcibly taking something from someone with or without the intention to harm. It can also be defined as the exercise of power in order to impose one’s will on a person or to have ones will with a thing [23]. When this violence comes in the circle of gender relations, it becomes a pervasive and prevalent problem worldwide, touching all aspects of women’s lives, from the home to the workplace [23].

The author in [24] highlights VAW as: VAW includes any act, omission or conduct by means of which physical, sexual or mental suffering is inflicted, directly or indirectly through deceit, seduction, threat, harassment, coercion or any other means on any woman with the purpose or effect of intimidating, punishing or humiliating her or of denying her human dignity, sexual self-determination, physical, mental or moral integrity or of undermining the security of her person, her self-respect or her personality or of diminishing her physical or mental capacities.

The authors in [25] have argued that GBV is defined as ‘violence which embodies the power imbalances inherent in patriarchal society’, an imbalance society and therefore underpins the high level of violence women experience. The social and cultural understandings of women which permit this imbalance can be shared by both

women and men, consequently sanctioning ‘practices that permit male authority figures to exercise high levels of physical violence over women’, [23].

The definition of GBV was discussed in detail at the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development in 1990 and participants concluded that the definition of GBV is “any act involving use of force or coercion with intent of perpetuating or promoting hierarchical gender relations” [23]. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 1993, the General Assembly of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) offered the first official definition of GBV in resolution 48/104:

Article 1: Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Article 2: The definition should encompass, but not be limited to, acts of physical, sexual, and psychological violence in the family, community, or perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. These acts include: spousal battery; sexual abuse, including of female children; dowry-related violence; rape, including marital rape; female genital mutilation/cutting and other traditional practices harmful to women; non-spousal violence; sexual violence related to exploitation; sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in school and elsewhere; trafficking in women; and forced prostitution.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action expanded on this definition of VAW, specifying that it includes violations of the rights of women in situations of armed conflict, such as: systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy, forced sterilisation, forced abortion, coerced or forced use of contraceptives, prenatal sex selection and female infanticide. It further recognised the particular vulnerabilities of women belonging to minorities: the elderly and the displaced; indigenous, refugee and migrant communities; women living in impoverished rural or remote areas; and women in detention. As women who are overwhelmingly victimized because of being women and because of their sex, the term GBV is often used for VAW worldwide. Despite using the two terms interchangeably for the purposes of this discussion, this paper recognises that GBV is not confined entirely to women and girls. Boys and men can be affected by GBV as well. GBV emphasizes that the violence occurred due to the victim’s gender, usually as a result of vulnerabilities due to subordinate status [26]. Following the UN use of the term “women”, this refers to females of all ages, including girls, unless specified otherwise. This paper focuses on VAW committed by both men and women.

## ***2.2 Theoretical framework***

Anti-colonial theory informs us that ‘oppression’ is founded by and maintained through the mechanism of ‘violence’ [27]. According to the author in [27], violence, in forms of physical, psychological, material, and symbolic, rules “over the ordering of the colonial world...”, ‘hemming in’ the ‘native’ by limiting space, choice, and independence. From [27], we draw that male VAW is a projection of systems of colonialism and oppression. It is intended to “hem in” women and limit their independence. The thrust of the anti-colonial framework has been clearly articulated by [28, 29, 30]. According to the authors in [29], anti-colonialism is “an

epistemology of the colonized, anchored in the indigenous sense of collective and common colonial consciousness”. Within this framework the “Colonial...is conceptualized not simply as foreign or alien, but rather as imposed and dominating”. Further, anti-colonialism regards “marginalized groups as subjects of their own experiences and histories” and works to “challenge the foundations of institutionalized power and privilege, and the accompanying rationale for dominance in social relations”. The anti-colonial framework is believed to constitute a point of convergence for all anti-oppression, anti-domination approaches to politics. What is noteworthy of anti-colonial (anti-racism) theory is the belief in the power and agency of the oppressed for resistance and eventual transformation - decolonization.

Feminist theory is a body of literary, philosophical and sociological analysis that explores the inequality that exists between men and women in societies around the world. Specifically, this theoretical body of knowledge examines gender-based aspect that affects politics, power relations and sexuality. Feminist theory consists of numerous subcategories that explain gender disparity through differing causal factors. Regardless of the subcategory of Feminist theory that is examined, all of them contend that men and women should be equal within the political, economic, sexual and social spheres of society [31]. Feminist explanations of domestic and marital violence focus on patriarchy, male dominance and control. Central to this framework, is the argument that VAW is a result of the unequal power relations structurally embedded in a patriarchal system [32]. It also focuses on the societal messages that sanction a male’s use of violence and aggression throughout life, and the prohibited gender roles that dictate how men and women should behave in their intimate relationships [33]. It sees the root causes of IPV as the outcome of living a society that condones aggressive behaviours perpetrated by men, while socializing women to be non-violent. Proponents of feminist theory acknowledge that women can also be violent in their relationships with men; however, they simply do not see the issue of women abusing men as a serious social problem, and therefore, does not deserve the same amount of attention or support as VAW [34].

Connected to the broader anti-colonial (anti-racist) conversational frames is the feminist concept of patriarchy. There is no precise definition of patriarchy. The author in [35] notes that, “it [patriarchy] appears in several logically different forms of theory and takes on different meanings according to its context”. In Max Weber’s usage, patriarchy refers to “a system of government in which men rule societies through their position as heads of households” [36]. It is generally understood that patriarchy is male control and male privilege; the ideology of male superiority, and the dominance of men in the exercise of power and control [37, 38, 39].

According to the author in [40] patriarchy is: the intimate power of men over women, a power which is historically exercised within the family by the male as breadwinner, property owner, or armed defender of women and children... [and] the rule of the father, including the rule of older men over younger men and of fathers over daughters, as well as husbands over wives. The author in [41] noted that: patriarchy which is also put forward as a theoretical explanation for the subordination of women describes the political and social control of women by men. In the same vein, the author in [36] categorised six overlapping structures that define patriarchy and that take different forms in different cultures and different times:

- The state: women are unlikely to have formal power and representation

- The household: women are more likely to do the housework and raise the children.
- Violence: women are more prone to being abused
- Paid work: women are likely to be paid less
- Sexuality: women's sexuality is more likely to be treated negatively
- Culture: women are more misrepresented in media and popular culture

From these scholars we understand patriarchy to give men the right and power to judge behaviour – especially of the non-masculine – and to discipline and punish [42]. The adverse social security – income, health, education, and housing – implications of neo-liberalism for the low-income classes, especially women and girls, are global [43]. The livelihoods of women and girls are being cut off because (1) they have little educational qualification for formal employment and (2) the informal sector they depend on is effectively destroyed by liberalization and structural adjustment policies. It is here we understand that the dismantling of the welfare state in the era of neoliberal globalization is another site in which capitalist masculinity enacts VAW. Women, especially single and racialised mothers, whose opportunities have been so restricted that they constitute the majority constituency depending on welfare, are now regarded as ‘social loafers’, welfare bums, or ‘welfare Queens’, to use of US terminology [44]. There is a collective denial or refusal to acknowledge that it is the patriarchal, sexist, and racist society that has historically constructed women as ‘dependents’. Instead, there is the strong and more convenient temptation to define social problems as ‘individual failures’. In Ghana, for instance, women are expected to be subservient to their male partners demonstrated through accepting, and not responding to physical, emotional and sexual abuse from male partners and by taking care of their husbands in the domestic setting [7, 17]. In one of the pioneering works on DV in Ghana, the author in [17] observed that marital violence was mainly a consequence of the subordinate position of women, their passivity, and economic dependence on their male partners. Thus, from the feminist perspective, marital violence can only be addressed as part of a larger process of dealing with gender inequality in Ghana.

The standard sex and gender model consist of ideologies based on sex and gender of every individual and serves as “norms” for societal life. The model claims that the sex of a person is the physical body that the individual is born with, strictly existing within a male/female dichotomy. The standard model defines gender as a social understanding /ideology that defines what behaviours, actions and appearances are proper for males and females living in a society. Sex or gender role differentiation is a characteristic feature of a patriarchal society. Norms of sex/gender roles dictate that men specialize in production and creation of cultural values and artefacts in the ‘public sphere’ whereas women are assigned roles of procreation, care, and maintenance in the ‘domestic sphere’ [45, 46]. Sex/gender role theory is elaborated by [35].

The author in [35] identifies five principles that constitute “the logical core of role theory”: a distinction between person and position occupied; a set of actions or role behaviours accompanying the position; role expectations or norms detailing appropriate actions vested in a position; role senders and reference groups – policing agents of role expectations; and role enforcement through sanctions – positive and negative reinforcements. According to the author in [35], when role theory is applied to gender, the basic idea is that being a man or a woman means enacting a general role definitive of one’s sex – the ‘sex role’. There are, accordingly, always two sex roles in a given context, the ‘male role’ and the ‘female role’; less commonly but

equivalently called 'man's role' or 'woman's role', the 'masculine' or 'feminine role', etc. It can be deduced from [35] that men are not only assigned the 'masculine' role, they are policing agents with the authority to enforce compliance through various sanctions.

The concept of power is central to feminist analysis and explanations of all forms of VAW. Feminists focus on men's exercise, misuse, and abuse of power over women and identify violence as a means to maintain or regain that power. Some feminists refer to this kind of power simply as power itself, such as defined by the author in [47]: Power consists primarily in being able to take a decision which will affect someone else or in acting to force, confine, forbid, or prevent. Whoever exercises such power subordinates and degrades, forces actions, exercises control and assumes the right to punish, seize material property, infringe symbolic rights and dominate in every aspect [48]. The author in [49] points out that: Power in feminist analysis is *not a property but a relation* [original emphasis] which structures interactions between men and women in all areas of social life. The fact that women, unlike other oppressed groups, are expected to live in intimate contact with those who have power over them, not only respecting but also loving them, makes women's subordination both pervasive and insidious. However, these perspectives fail to note that not all power is harmful. I therefore distinguish men's power over women as *power over* from other kinds of power such as *power within*, *power to*, and *power with*, which will be discussed later. *Power over*, although not limited to, is primarily exercised by men over women and is aimed at achieving and maintaining the subjugation and the exclusion of women. *Power over* can and is often enforced through violence, fear, and the threat of violence. However, it can also be enforced through more subtle means such as fears that women have been socialized to impose on themselves or "social rules which force the weaker to accept the will of the stronger" [50].

## **2.3 Empirical Literature**

### **2.3.1 Types and Nature of Gender Based Violence**

Women are subjected to: (1) *physical violence* – cruel punishment and physical torture, forced labour, beating, hits, kicks, pulls, pushes, slaps, or assault with weapons, death; (2) *sexual violence* – forced sex, rape, gang rape, defilement, sexual harassment, fondling young girls, prostitution, forced homosexuality, nonconsensual sex, indecent sexual exposure, and FGM; (3) *psychologically injurious behavior representing various element of emotional abuse* – threatening behaviors, objectification (disrespect for women, discrimination, favouritism, dehumanization and degrading behaviors), verbal abuse/insults, humiliation/shaming, curses, and communication blackouts; (4) *socio-economic violence* – deprivation, tension between essential needs and available resources, women's demand for money arising from economic hardship (lack of education, unemployment) often trigger conflicts and/or a rationalization for violence and (5) *traditional and cultural practices defined as violence* – FGM, tribal markings, food taboo's for women, widowhood which could involve widow head shaving, seclusion, dress codes, prayers/libation, systematic gestures directed at corpse, unrealistic expression of loss, food rationing, punitive bathing in cold water, among others. Others include lengthy abstentions from sex ranging from 2 to 6 months, restricted movement including edicts not to work which may be combined with neglect from extended family, conflicts over inheritance of property from the deceased spouse, adultery rites, a process of shaming women by subjecting women to cleansing and 'punitive' rites,

'trokosi' a system of female enslavement whereby young female virgins are given away to oracles or shrines in payment for past crimes committed by family members, [4, 51, 52]. Other forms of VAW include witchcraft accusation and witch-burning [53], FGM [54], widow immolation and femicide [55], forced heterosexuality, forced early marriage and child bearing, rape [56], pornography [57], forced sterilization [58], exclusion from the public sphere [59], and trafficking [60].

A Ghanaian survey found that 33% of women have a history of physical partner abuse and a similar proportion have suffered sexual abuse [4]. The 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that 58% and 42.8% respectively of ever-married women have suffered physical and sexual violence by a current or former husband/partner [61]. Further, of the 161 ever-married women included in the 2008 DHS from the northern region 44.5%, 21.6%, and 2.1% respectively reported emotional, physical, and sexual violence by a current husband/partner.

### ***2.3.2 Root Causes of Gender Base Violence***

Cultural explanations of DV have referred to some existing norms and traditional gender roles that create platforms for VAW in Ghana. The status of women in Ghana is determined by traditional values, cultural norms, and gender socialization and patriarchy, which tend to discriminate against girls and women. Studies document various forms of abuse among women as consequences of social acts based on discrimination [62, 63]. Their situation is characterized by pervasive poverty, illiteracy, widowhood, predominantly rural dwelling, and subjection to insidious cultural practices and superstitious beliefs [64].

Ghanaian culture demand that women not only be submissive to their husbands, but also be respectful, submissive and serviceable to the extent that revolting against or challenging abuse may be interpreted as attempting to subvert the authority of the man [7]. The author in [7] further pointed out that some cultural practices and traditional gender roles in Ghana render women unable to defend their rights even when they are physically and sexually abused. Such cultural norms have projected Ghanaian societies as inherently patriarchal, ones that condone male superiority, the basis for which wife-beating and other forms of violence may sometimes be legitimized. The author in [5] observed that the power imbalances present in traditional African marriages create a unique platform for marital violence. In line with this perspective, past research has found socio-cultural variables such as wife's justification of violence and husband's controlling behaviour as influential to domestic and marital violence. The author in [66] conducted a research on seven factors influencing domestic and marital violence in Ghana. His findings were consistent with the assumptions espoused by cultural models of DV. The finding that husband's control of wives' activities was significantly related to both physical and sexual violence independent of other variables, demonstrate how the power imbalances characterizing marital relationships and resulting from the cultural make of the Ghanaian society influences violence among married women. Also, wife-beating, though is detrimental to women's health have often been interpreted as not only a demonstration of a husband's love for his wife, but also a symbol of his authority. Thus, women who consider wife-beating as legitimate may have only internalized such cultural norms and would seek to create conditions that attract such acts.

Other scholars identify predictors of violence among women to include women's low socio-economic status (SES), low education, low income, unemployment, younger age of the woman, presence/absence of children, and rural residence [67] as well as neighborhood poverty [68]. Some scholars posit that violence is a family heritage transmitted from one generation to the next [69]. Also, compared to those who had not, women who witnessed family violence in the life course were significantly more likely to have experienced both physical and sexual violence. Male violence is also caused by personality disorders [70] including borderline personality, antisociality, narcissism, erratic moods, poor anger control, attachment problems, compulsivity, anxiety disorders, and so on. Other scholars draw attention to men's alcohol consumption as the cause of violence [71]. Further, a literature review by the authors in [72] found that while alcohol 'causes' men to batter, the same alcohol consumption causes women to be battered. Other correlates of MPV identified by scholars include type of religion [73] and presence of multiple sexual partners for the man, such as in polygyny or concubinage [74]. Finally, age of the partners as well as age differences between them have come up in studies as risk markers for MPV [75].

### ***2.3.3 Consequences and Effects of Gender Base Violence***

Injury resulting from severe physical violence is reported by many studies as a natural consequence [76, 51]. Injuries include bruises, sprains, cuts, broken bones, fractures, broken teeth and so on, some of which require medical attention. Obviously the type and degree of injury will depend on what object was used in the violent act. Some physical violent acts such as pouring of acid, usage of deadly weapons on women often leads to severe injuries and could ultimately results in death.

Other population-based surveys have shown health problems among women experiencing PV to include difficulty with daily activities, memory loss, vaginal discharge, sexual dysfunction, pregnancy and birth complications, suicidal thoughts or attempts, increasing women susceptibility to HIV and mental health problems [77, 78]. The authors in [78] conclusion is that violence seems to be the only factor that puts women at risk of reproductive health problems. According to them, "it appears that wealthier women who have experienced violence are sometimes worse off than those who are poor".

### ***2.4 Overview of Operational Activities of NGOs in Addressing VAW***

NGOs are characterized as autonomous, not-for-profit organisations which provide 'aid, services and information both to those in need and to a wider audience of policy-makers, state organisations and donor agencies' [79, 80]. In terms of how NGOs operate in relation to the problem of VAW, the author in [23] has argued that all programmatic responses should address 'one or all of these areas: 1) the needs of the victims; 2) the social values that justify violent behaviour towards women; and 3) the socio-legal systems charged with protecting the rights of the innocent and sanctioning the guilty'.

### ***2.5 Evaluating the Effectiveness of Strategies Employed by NGOs in Combating VAW in Ghana.***

In response to the problem of VAW and its widespread implications, many NGOs have sought to design and implement interventions that addresses the problems. NGOs use of particular strategies, how they engage with

the survivors of GBV and the effect of any engagement on the success of such strategies are the key questions that this paper explores. To consider these issues, it is first necessary to define certain terms which will be of key importance throughout this paper. To identify the most promising strategies for the primary prevention of VAW, we must be guided by both research on the determinants of this violence and evidence for the effectiveness of particular interventions. On what grounds can one conclude that a strategy is effective or otherwise in combating VAW in Ghana? Is it the case that the strategy must result in achieving its stated objectives or it must result in reducing the incidence of VAW or should the strategy result in covering all aspect of VAW or specialise on a few sections of VAW? Furthermore is the strategy in question measured in a qualitative or quantitative manner and how reliable is such measurement?

There are a wide range of strategies of primary prevention, which are promising or worthy of consideration, and there is some evidence with which to assess their effectiveness. Where possible, the discussions in this paper describes existing strategies and interventions in terms of the level of evidence of their effectiveness. Some strategies and interventions are effective: they have a theoretical rationale, they show evidence of implementation, and they have evidence of effectiveness. Others are promising: they have a theoretical rationale, and they have been implemented, although they do not yet have evidence of effectiveness. Other strategies are potentially promising: they do have a theoretical rationale, but they have not been tried or evaluated [81]. However, this should not be taken to suggest that the best and most important interventions can be found only among those strategies identified as “effective,” while those identified as “promising” or “potentially promising” necessarily are less valuable.

Some of the strategies with the strongest theoretical rationale, such as community development and community mobilization, have been implemented only rarely and evaluated even less often. At the same time, their strong rationale makes them critical elements in future violence prevention efforts. However, other efforts such as school education programs have a substantial body of evidence supporting their effectiveness, reflecting the fact that they are a common form of violence prevention. The level of evidence supporting their use is in part an artefact of their widespread adoption, as well as their genuine effectiveness. They are undoubtedly valuable and at the same time they must be complemented by other promising strategies with equally compelling rationales.

For the purposes of this research, an effective NGO interventional strategy is one that results in achieving its stated objectives of prevention, eradication or minimizing the impact of VAW in Ghana through its impact effect of positively changing behavioral attitudes in relation to perpetrating VAW women in Ghanaian societies. We will only make progress in preventing VAW If we can change the attitudes, identities, and relations among some men, which sustain violence. To stop the physical and sexual assault of women and girls, we must erode the cultural and collective supports for violence found among many men and boys and replace them with norms of consent, sexual respect, and gender equality, and we must foster just and respectful gender relations in relationships, families, communities and the nation at large.

## ***2.6 Brief Background of the Four Selected NGOs***

### ***2.6.1 The ark foundation (the ark)***

The Ark is an NGO that is concerned with the protection of the human rights of women and children. It is one organization that is founded on the Christian principles of love, mercy and justice. The Ark is also concerned with promoting the values of the United Nations Conventions. It has been in operation in Ghana since 1995 under the name Care Foundation and was changed to The Ark Foundation in 1998. It was fully recognized as an NGO in 1999 by the Department of Social Development in Ghana. The NGO's mission and vision are to help individuals including women and children to live a life free from fear, violence and oppression. The Ark is also concerned with providing a safe haven for victims who are abused. The Ark's aims and objectives are to provide protection and support to women and children who are victims of domestic abuse, to advocate for the protection and the promotion of the human right and the needs of not only women and children but the vulnerable in society. Through advocacy, education and the cooperation of other CSO, The Ark is concerned with uprooting the very structures and behaviours that work against women, children and the downtrodden in society. The Ark is concerned with two main issues – 'to be proactive and reactive' as well as 'to prevent and cure'. The Ark is able to achieve this philosophy through its two main programs.

- Women's Law and Human Rights Institute (WLHRI). This is a capacity building program which is targeted at women in particular with the aim of promoting respect for human rights, leadership and empowerment.
- Support to Survivors of Gender Violence and Child Abuse under the Crises Response Project. (CRCP). The CRCP is concerned with the provision of temporary shelter, counselling, legal assistance and provision of some funds to survivors of violence.

### **2.6.2 Fida ghana**

FIDA Ghana comprises of a group of Ghanaian women lawyers, who use their knowledge in the law to promote and protect the welfare of women and children against all forms of discrimination, realizing that the strength of society depends on this. FIDA Ghana is a member of FIDA International (Federacion Internacional de Abogadas), an association of women lawyers in more than 50 countries worldwide who have come together to promote and enhance the status of women and children in society. The NGO has the goal of improving the lives of women and children and strengthening them in the overall developmental process of Ghana. Their mandate is as follows:

- Provide legal aid and counselling services to indigent women and children
- Provide court representation to women
- Organize Legal literacy programs through the simplification of laws and policies that protect women
- Provide mobile legal aid outreaches in the rural areas to women
- Advocate for the abolishing of laws and traditional practices that are harmful to women
- Train paralegals in the basic laws to enable them respond to GBV issues at the community level.

### **2.6.3 Gender studies and human rights documentation centre (gender centre)**

The Gender Centre, established in 1995, is an NGO committed to working for the promotion and protection of

the human rights of women. Specifically, the Centre was founded with the mission of compiling information on women and human rights issues to support assertions about women's human rights issues and to help integrate women's concerns and perspectives into mainstream programmes, projects and policies addressing social and development issues. Its mission is to create a knowledge base through research, advocacy and allied activities on issues of critical importance to women aimed at law and policy reform for the promotion and protection of women's human rights and their full development. Its vision is a society where women's rights are fully promoted and protected and they are able to participate in national development at all levels. Its core values are respect for the fundamental rights of all persons, including women and the recognition of the inalienability, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, promoting and enhancing opportunities for gender equality and empowerment, creating an enabling environment that supports and nurtures individual and collective development and commitment to accurate knowledge transfer and information sharing.

#### ***2.6.4 Women in law and development in africa (wildaf) ghana***

WiLDAF Ghana is an NGO that has been actively committed to increasing women's access to justice and participation in politics and governance in Ghana since 1991. WiLDAF Ghana is part of a larger pan-African WiLDAF network, created in 1990 and headquartered in Harare, Zimbabwe, which now covers 31 nations. WiLDAF Ghana's mission is to empower women by promoting their rights and increasing their participation and influence at the community, national and international levels through initiating, promoting and strengthening strategies that link law and development. The institution's vision is to become an effective and efficient internationally recognized network that uses law to promote gender and development. WiLDAF currently work in Central, Western, Eastern, Greater Accra, Volta and Brong Ahafo Regions of Ghana. Their advocacy work is at district and national levels. The values of the NGO includes (a) Recognise and respect the rights of other persons, (b) Promote and encourage people to take ownership of their rights and development, (c) Recognise the potential of people to empower themselves, (d) Commitment to promoting the rights of women in Ghana, (e) Uphold the fundamental values of pan-African WiLDAF, (f) Aim for effective delivery of programme priorities, (g) Aspire to good practice in management, (h) Value institutional learning, knowledge management and personal development, (i) Work in partnership with Government and Civil society. WiLDAF Ghana focuses on four broad programme areas as follows: i) Promoting Women and Girls Access to Justice, preventing and reducing Gender Based Violence, (ii) Promoting Women's participation in Governance, Peace and Security, (iii) Promoting Women and Girls Reproductive Health and (iv) Women's Land and Agriculture rights

### **3. Materials and methods**

The study employed both primary and secondary data collecting techniques. These include in-depth (informal) interview with officials from the four purposively selected NGOs, key informant interviews (KII) with the state actors [personnel from the Ghana Police Service (GPS), Judicial service, Department of social development (DSD), MoGCSP, Ghana Education Service (GES), Ghana Health Service (GHS), and District Assembly members] and non-state actors (Chiefs, queen mothers, family heads, religious leaders and community/opinion leaders), semi-structured questionnaires to extract information from direct beneficiaries of the NGOs initiatives

and interventions as well as official review of documents from the four NGOs and the state actors, a desk review of existing research, studies and publications on the subject matter. The study devised a data collection mechanism that was well representative and showcased the role of NGOs in addressing VAW by eliciting the various interventional strategies adopted by the four selected women's rights NGO's in addressing VAW in Ghana.

### ***3.1 Research Design and Approach***

The study utilised a qualitative research design to unveil the underlying issues around the topic. As indicated by the author in [82], using qualitative design, enables the researcher to 'explore a social or human problem, builds a complex holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural settings'. Qualitative research design is linked to the interpretive and critical paradigms school of thought [83, 84]. Using Qualitative research method in this context was useful in addressing the researcher's process of self-awareness and self-reflection, and capturing the meanings, opinions and experiences of respondents. The use of qualitative methods also deepened the researcher's understanding of the dynamic and specific nature of social realities that was investigated and this enabled the study to capture the qualitative nuances and other important elements peculiar to respondents in the study.

### ***3.2 Sample Size***

The sample size of the research was fifty two respondents. This comprised of two top officials each from the four purposively selected NGOs; eighteen individual community members who were direct beneficiaries of the projects and interventions of the NGOs (i.e. women, men, girls and boys); twelve state actors (personnel from GPS, Judicial service, DSD, MoGCSP, GES, GHS, and District Assembly members) and fourteen non-state actors (Chiefs, queen mothers, family heads, religious leaders and community/opinion leaders).

### ***3.3 Sampling Techniques***

#### ***3.3.1 In-depth (Informal) Interviews***

This was utilised to gather information from eight officials from the four selected NGOs in Ghana. Interviews were self-administered with the aid of interview guides in their offices to allow respondents to flexibly and informally talk about their experiences and freely express their views. The study employed purposive sampling based on the work the NGOs have done on VAW. Choosing Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to intentionally select specific organisations whose experiences are central to understanding a phenomenon VAW in Ghana.

#### ***3.3.2 Key Informant Interviews***

These were used in collecting data from twelve state actors [comprising of a personnel from the GPS specifically the DoVVSU, a personnel from the judicial service, two personnel from the DSD, two personnel from the MoGCSP, three personnel from GES, two personnel from GHS] and fourteen non-state actors

[comprising of three Chiefs, two Queen Mothers, two Family Heads, two Religious Leaders, three Opinion Leaders and two District Assembly Members]. These were people who had worked directly with the NGOs and have had knowledge and experience in the area.

### ***3.3.3 Semi –Structured Questionnaire (Open Ended)***

These were administered for eighteen direct community beneficiaries to ascertain the effectiveness of the interventions on them, and also document key impact or success stories.

### ***3.3.4 Direct Observation***

The researchers employed this data collection technique to closely monitor conditions on the ground for any further information

### ***3.3.5 Review of Official Records***

Official records and documents from the four NGOs were reviewed to examine the various interventional strategies adopted to ascertain and assess its effectiveness in addressing the issues of VAW in Ghana. In addition, relevant information from the targeted districts state actors like the GPS (DOVVSU), Judicial Service, DSD, MoGCSP, GES, GHS and District Assembly Members were gathered with specific emphasis on the number of cases being reported, nature of cases, details of information being recorded about the victims and perpetrators and information about action taken by each state acting agency.

## ***3.5 Data Handling and Analysis***

The qualitative data from the field were transcribed and edited. The emerging responses were then categorized into various themes making up the research questions. The data was then examined using a merger of qualitative narrative approaches that presented and allowed the data to largely speak for itself leaving the researcher to make little interjections where required as used by the author in [85]. The researcher in addition to the narrative style, employed qualitative content analysis as used by the authors in [86, 82] that brought out the relationship between the various techniques used.

## ***3.6 Ethical Consideration***

Although there were no identifiable risk for participating in this study, some considerations were kept in mind in dealing with issues of sensitivity such as male participant(s) revealing previously perpetrated DV, issues of marriage not discussed openly and confidentiality. Participants were adequately informed of the nature and purpose of the research and their roles in providing accurate sensitive information. Importantly, respondents were informed that as a means of protecting their identities, those who were not comfortable with their identity being known, were kept anonymous to safe guard their identities. Verbal and or written consent were obtained from the participants. All participants who were uncomfortable with the interviews were allowed to withdraw from the study at their own will without any restrictions. Full acknowledgements were given appropriately in

accordance with research ethical principles.

#### **4. Results**

This section presents the results obtained from analyzing the data collected from the respondents and categorized them into four themes partly to extract socio-demographic information from the respondents and partly to provide answers to the research questions. Sub-section one presents the background information of the respondents. Sub-section two covers the interventional strategies adopted by the four NGOs in addressing VAW in Ghana (Objective 1).

Sub-section three discusses the effectiveness of these interventional strategies in achieving its desired outcome (Objective 2). The fourth sub-section looks at the challenges confronted by the four NGOs in implementing their strategies in fighting VAW in Ghana (Objective 3).

##### **4.1 Background Information of Respondents**

A total of fifty two respondents were interviewed, comprising; eight personnel from the four NGOs; twelve state actors; fourteen non-state actors and eighteen direct beneficiaries. The background information of the participants centres on sex, age, positions on the job, marital status and dependency on the part of beneficiaries who happened to be children under the age of 18 years.

##### **4.1.1 Demographic Data on Officials from the Four NGOs**

Out of eight key informants interviewed, seven were females and one male. The sex composition of the key informants shows that all four NGOs were headed by females. The breakdown is detailed in the table below:

**Table 1:** Demographic data on respondents from the four NGOs.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b># of respondents</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital status</b>
The Ark	2	F	Executive Director	55	Married
		F	Programmes Coordinator	45	Married
FIDA	1	F	Coordinator	50	Married
Gender Centre	2	F	Executive Director	60	Married
		F	Programmes Officer	37	Married
WiLDAF	3	F	NPC	40	Married
		M	Programmes Manger	43	Married
		F	Project Officer	27	Single
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>				

**Source: Author**

**4.1.2 Demographic Data on State Actors**

The table 2 below, shows that out of the total of twelve state actors interviewed, five were males and the remaining seven were females with their ages ranging between thirty one and fifty years. These respondents occupy positions at senior management level and operational levels i.e. officers who provided direct services to the clients at the district level.

**Table 2:** Demographic data on state actors. Source: Author

Organisation	# of respondents	Sex	Position	Age	Marital status
GPS (DOVVSU)	1	M	ASP	41	Married
Judicial Service	1	M	Registrar	52	Married
Social Dev. Dept.	2	M	District Director	54	Married
		F	Social Dev. Officer	35	Single
MoGCSP Gender Desk	2	F	Gender Desk Officer	40	Married
		F	Gender Desk Officer	46	Married
CHRAJ	1	M	Officer	45	Married
GES	3	F	Girls Club Coordinator	38	Single
		F	Teacher	31	Single
		M	Head teacher	50	Divorced
GHS	2	F	District Director of Health	58	Widow
		F	District Nurse	34	Married
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>M=5, F=7</b>			

Source: Author

**4.1.3 Demographic Data on Non-state Actors**

Out of the fourteen respondents who have held key positions in their various communities and have been involved in the work around VAW, eleven were males and 3 were females. These figures reflect the fact that traditional structures are mainly male dominated and patriarchal re-echoing the assertion by [36]; [37] and [87], stating that patriarchy is male control and male privilege; the ideology of male superiority, and the dominance of men in the exercise of power and control. With the exception of one, all thirteen respondent were married. Also, all the fourteen respondent were between the ages of forty one and seventy years old. The details is presented in table 3 below:

**Table 3:** Demographic data on non-state actors.

Position	Number of Respondents	Sex	Age Range	Marital status
Chiefs	3	Males	51-70	Married
Queen mothers	2	Females	41-60	Married
Opinion leaders	3	Males	51-70	Married
Religious Leaders	2	Males	51-60	Married
Family heads	2	Males	51-70	Married
District Assembly members	2	Male Female	41-50	Single Married
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>M=11 F=3</b>		

Source: Author

#### 4.1.4 Demographic Data on Beneficiaries

A total of eighteen direct beneficiaries of the Four NGOs were interviewed, comprising of five Traders, three Farmers, two Artisans, three Salaried Workers (Agriculture Extension officer, Civil servant and a Teacher) and five Students. The total of eighteen respondents included five survivors of DV who were kept at the Ark foundation Shelter. Out of the five survivors were two females under the age of seventeen years. The sex disaggregation data showed six males and twelve females. The demographic data on the beneficiaries presented in table 4 below, confirms [88]’s assertion of the fact that DV phenomenon is an issue that spreads through all segments of society. Also the composition of the respondent reveals that the interventional strategies used by the four NGOs targeted a cross section of people without boundaries or discrimination to age, sex, occupation or educational levels among others.

**Table 4:** Demographic data on beneficiaries.

Occupation	# of respondents	Sex	Age range	Marital status	Education
Traders	5	5 Females	31- 50	4 married 1 divorced	2 - no education 1 - secondary SHS 2 - basic – primary
Farmers	3	1 Females 2 male	31- 40 41-50	2 married 1 single	2 - basic level 2 - No education
Artisans	2	2 males	31- 40	2 married	2 - Basic –Primary
Salaried Workers	3	2 Females 1 male	31- 40	3 Married	3 - Tertiary level
Students	5	4 females 1 male	15- 18	5 Single	5 - JHS
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>M= 6 F = 12</b>			

Source: Author

#### 4.2 The Role Played by the Four NGO’s In Combating VAW in Ghana. (Objective one)

When asked the roles NGOs play in the fight against VAW in Ghana, Dorcas Coker-Appiah, the Executive Director of Gender Centre retorted that: “We play multiple roles in addressing VAW in Ghana; policy advocacy and service delivery. Our research findings in the late nineties played a critical role in the advocacy for the passage of the DV law. Also our service delivery includes training community members to undertake sensitisation and awareness raising, provide support to victim, including accompanying them to report to state agencies. We also train and work with state agency personnel, (police, health, social welfare, CHRAJ) for efficient response to victims. Traditional and religious leaders are also another target group that we work with in view of the critical role they play in the lives of their citizens and members in the communities”.

Data collected through documentary evidence in addition to information obtained from the officials of the four NGO's via in-depth (informal) interview aided by an interview guide revealed that, all four NGOs adopted among others five key interventional strategies in combating VAW in Ghana.

These are 1. Awareness-raising, 2. Training/Capacity Building 3. Lobbying and Advocacy, 4. Community Mobilisation, Activism and Networking, and 5. Service Provision.

#### ***4.2.1 Awareness-raising***

Strategies are diverse and seek to raise awareness of different aspects of the problem including public education on VAW, sharing survivor's experiences, publicising services available to survivors and campaigns directly targeting the perpetrators of violence all in an attempt to focus on changing the socio-cultural attitudes which underpin GBV in Ghana by deploying for an example the use of WiLDAF Ghana Legal Awareness Programme (LAP) and FIDA Ghana Awareness creation project through the training of legal literacy volunteers otherwise known as Paralegals in their awareness raising campaigns. This was done with the aid of the already existing structures in the communities and media (community information and radio, print media, electronic media, television and recently, social media etc.) and global communication (public address systems, bill boards etc.).

#### ***4.2.2 Lobbying and Advocacy***

In recent years, NGOs have progressively diversified their strategies to combat the problem of VAW and a key aspect of this is a growing focus on Lobbying and Advocacy as means of engendering legislative change in Ghana. Lobbying can have different aims depending on the relevant stakeholder interests and involvement, but for NGOs, lobbying and advocacy work often translates as ‘policy advocacy, seeking social change by influencing attitudes, policy and practice and seeking to reform state services’ and each of the four NGOs considered here engage in lobbying and advocacy work to some extent. Information obtained from the officials of the four NGOs as well as their key stakeholders interviewed revealed that their traditional method has focused on cultivating effective partnerships with the wider community and other stakeholders including both state and non to successfully lobby for the passage into law of the DV Act in Ghana in 2007 by involving professionals in advocacy campaigns as well. Lobbying and Advocacy strategies which the four NGOs have implemented to address the problem of VAW in Ghana include the growing utilisation of the power of media and engagements with allies, global communication and in recent time social media.

#### ***4.2.3 Community Mobilisation, Activism and Networking***

It emerged from the respondents data that, the four NGOs utilises community outreach and mobilisation initiatives which encompasses a range of interventions and approaches, including community meetings; training or sensitisation sessions with traditional authorities, opinion leaders or religious leaders; community volunteer network, DV watch groups, newly wed mentoring, community action groups and community dialogues street theatres and other cultural activities marches and demonstrations. Community mobilisation is seen as a promising approach which seeks to inspire changes in social norms and behaviour through community activism. They further indicated that, it rest on the premise that effective violence prevention depends on community members leading effort in their own community.

#### ***4.2.4 Training and Capacity Building***

Building the capacity of new and current staff is an essential part of programme implementation. Information gathered from the officials of the four NGOs looked at capacity building at different levels for their key stakeholders. The information revealed that basic training are given to all staff which covered guiding principles, goals and activities of VAW programming; informed staff members about specific methods for working within a human rights and survivor-centred framework; included a review of VAW and gender issues relevant to the context; and encouraged staff members to reflect on their own attitudes and belief related to gender and VAW. Forums were also provided for reviewing staff member's responsibilities in relation to the organisation's code of conduct. In addition to basic training for all staff, specialised staff received targeted training to meet their key responsibilities (e.g. training on case management, counselling, clinical care etc.).

All four organisation have in a point in time provide training for professionals and service providers including health workers, teachers, personnel from the judicial service, DoVVSU, Social Development Department, Traditional and religious leaders who come into contact with victims of VAW. Aside these, the four NGOs also build the capacity of community members who intent provide information to other community members on a regular basis. WiLDAF Ghana call those who have receive such training as Legal Literacy Volunteers (LLV), FIDA Ghana called them Paralegals, Gender Centre named them COMBAT members and the Ark also call them Volunteers and Alumni of the various trainings that they run.

#### ***4.2.5 Service Provision***

All the four NGOs were engaged in some form of service provision for women experiencing GBV, the facilities and services provided by these women's NGOs are often vital and include counselling, medical and psychological services, support groups and legal advice (pro bono court representation) in addition to supporting children where necessary and providing survivors with a safe space (Temporal Shelters). For instance the Ark Foundation's service provision includes offering protection to women through shelters and rape crisis centres, running hotlines and providing medical and psychological assistance and support to women, and in some cases, their children. Each of the NGOs considered here have some form of long-term support for women seeking their services. One example of services provided by FIDA Ghana is the provision of legal aids and free legal advice

and attorney for victims of GBV in the Ghanaian community. WiLDAF also provide legal aid services through counselling, mediation among others. Whiles Ark foundation is the only NGOs that runs a long term shelter provision to women and in some case men who are in danger of abuse.

#### ***4.3 Evaluating or assessing the effectiveness of interventional initiatives/strategies of the four NGO's in combating VAW in Ghana. (Objective 2)***

The effectiveness of every intervention or programme is understood to mean its impact and the degree to which its objectives are achieved and the extent to which its targeted problems are solved. In social research, effectiveness refers to the extent to which an activity fulfils its intended purpose or function [89].

When striving for an intervention's effectiveness, there are specific questions that need to be addressed, thus: is the programme or intervention being implemented consistent with the way it was envisioned? How satisfied are the people with the delivery of the intervention service? Is the programme or intervention reaching the people it is intended to assist in some way? What factors impede the progress of the intervention and how will they be addressed? These and many more are the questions every researcher seeks to find answers to. This session therefore attempt to assess the efficacy of the above mentioned interventions.

Despite a lack of consensus over what constitutes best or good interventional approaches or practices, there is agreement over the key features and characteristics that underlie effective interventions. For the purposes of this research, an effective NGO interventional strategy is one that results in achieving its stated objectives or desired outcome of prevention, eradication or minimising the impact of VAW in Ghana through its impact effect of positively changing behavioural attitudes in relation to perpetrating VAW in Ghanaian societies.

##### ***4.3.1 Awareness-raising***

It came out from the responses of 3 categories of respondents (direct beneficiaries, state actors and non-state actors) that the awareness-raising campaign of the four NGO's were effective. All eighteen of the respondent interviewed (constituting 100%) have heard of and were aware of the awareness-raising campaign of the four NGOs in Ghana. Five out of the eighteen (representing 27.77%) of the direct beneficiary respondents said they heard the campaign on radio and television, three (representing 16.67%) said they saw the advertisement on bill boards nine (representing 50%) said they heard it from the trained volunteers in their communities and the remaining one (representing 5.56%) said he heard the campaign via social media. All twelve state actors interviewed were also aware of the awareness-raising campaign of the four NGO's and all claimed they got to know of the campaign through the work of the trained volunteers, electronic, print and social media. With respect to the non-state actors, thirteen (constituting 92.85%) out the fourteen interviewed were aware of the educational awareness-raising campaign of the four NGOs with the remaining (1) person (representing 7.14%) saying he was not aware of any awareness raising campaign program of the NGOs in question.

It was found that as a result of promoting and publicising services available to women experiencing violence, the number of people aware of the support services of the four NGOs and using them had increased. In the same vein statistics from DOVVU also reveals an increase of reported cases over the years. There was evidence that

the Nkyinkyim (COMBAT) anti-violence Project initiated and implemented by the Gender Centre has increased the knowledge and awareness on VAWG of community members who have been directly exposed to project activities. The Nkyinkyim (COMBAT) project: A multi-pronged community mobilisation, prevention and response intervention, which seeks to bring about change in individual knowledge and behaviours as well as broader social norms that underpin VAWG by working at different levels. These are: individuals, couples/families, communities and authorities.

The main intervention is the selection, training and mentoring of Community-Based Action Teams (COMBATs), comprised of elected community members who undertake crisis intervention to handle and refer VAWG cases, undertake community sensitisation on VAWG – through community meetings, theatre and house-to-house visits – and work to establish a graded community level system of sanctions against perpetrators of violence. The project also includes targeted work with traditional and religious leaders and state agencies. The majority of community members who participated in sensitisation sessions or sought advice or intervention from the Paralegals, Legal Literacy Volunteers and community-based action teams (COMBATs), members in their communities showed awareness of different types of VAWG and that these were an abuse of their rights.

The fact that several women had also sought help from these trained volunteers suggests that there has been a shift in attitudes and that these women no longer viewed violence as justified. Some beneficiaries also spoke about their change in attitudes towards their children, for example stopping beating them and ensuring girls and boys could attend school. In many cases, women directly attributed their improved knowledge and changed attitudes to the Legal Awareness Programme (for WiLDAF) and COMBAT project for Gender Centre.

#### ***4.3.2 Lobbying and Advocacy***

Legal and policy reforms in relation to VAW have been largely concerned with tertiary responses to the phenomenon. Yet, law and policy also are crucial tools of primary prevention, at national, regional, and local levels. National and regional-based plans of action for eliminating VAW are necessary elements in any systematic prevention effort [90]. Information obtained from the officials of the four NGO's revealed that their traditional method of lobbying and advocacy has focused on cultivating effective partnerships with the wider community and other stakeholders including professionals and this has successfully culminated into the passage into law of the DV bill in Ghana in 2007.

#### ***4.3.3 Community Mobilisation, Activism and Networking***

It came out from the responses of all the four categories of respondents that engaging and utilising community members in the fight against VAW was very effective as the community members were their own agents of behavioural and attitudinal change. More importantly was the utilisation of the Legal Literacy Volunteers or paralegals (who themselves were indigenes and resides in the communities) in educating community members, receiving cases of GBV thereby aiding in its resolution through appropriate ADR techniques and referring cases to the appropriate state actors for further actions and follow ups. Information obtained from respondents revealed that, the activities of community members (acting as paralegals, educating people during public

gatherings, reporting cases of VAW to the appropriate state actors etc.) has resulted in positive attitudinal change on the part of some community members as indicated in a number of documented success stories.

Follow-up visits to few communities where these NGOs operate to have first-hand information and to authenticate claims made by the respondents both verbally and in documents revealed that the community mobilisation, activism and networking strategies employed by the four NGO's have been effective. A convenient random selection of five community indicated to the enumerator that they were aware of the actions of the community members and that their activities have been very helpful in fighting against VAW. It also emerge from the interview with officials from the Gender Centre that since 2002, the Gender Centre has been supporting the development of community-based systems to respond to VAWG in rural communities across four regions of Ghana. Working in partnership with community-based organisations, the Gender Centre set up community-based action teams (COMBATs), which have been effective in improving support mechanism for rural women experiencing violence.

#### ***4.3.4 Training and Capacity Building***

Information obtained from the officials of the four NGOs and their stakeholders uncovered that, of the periodic staff training and sensitisation programmes on how to handle victims/survivors of GBV and the overall work conducted within a human rights and survivor-centred framework, staff general performance and attitudes towards victims and survivors of GBV had improved tremendously over the past 8 to 12 years. (Programme Manager – The Ark Foundation 2016). All four NGO officials interviewed indicated that staff performance had improved in relation to handling victims/survivors of GBV in the areas of Survivor counselling by their counselling section/department, Case management, Courtesy and politeness in dealing with survivors of GBV.

Information gathered from health practitioners (interviewed two personnel that has been engaged with WILDAF's Project) indicated that, the response rate to the attitudinal and behavioural change on the part of health workers have improved. Health practitioners (Doctors, Nurses, Emergency Care Personnel etc.) no longer see victims/survivors of GBV as just a legal or human rights issue and are now fully engaged and involved in its treatment, counselling and giving appropriate referrals. Information gathered from school authorities (interviewed two teachers and one head teacher) of schools that host the Girls empowerment club selected basic schools, revealed that teachers and students alike are responding positively to the training giving them on how to handle GBV incidence at school and also to empower the girl child to say 'no' to all forms of violence at school and at home. More importantly it was revealed during the interview of some students in the schools that the 'Girls Empowerment Club' (GEC) initiative instituted by WILDAF Ghana has been extremely effective with the young girls now aware of the rights, duties and responsibilities as Ghanaian citizens as well as the dangers in indulging in early sex practices, child marriages etc. leading to teenage pregnancies and girl child drop out from schools.

#### ***4.3.5 Service Provision***

It emerged from the information gathered from the respondents that all the services rendered by the four NGO's

were all beneficial and effective for their upkeep, wellbeing and survival. All the eighteen direct beneficiaries who received various forms of interventional aid indicated that the services were valuable, beneficial and effective. The breakdown of the services and interventional aids received by the eighteen beneficiaries are as follows:

- Counselling and psychological aid – all three (3) recipients indicated that it was effective.
- Legal aid services - all five (5) recipients indicated that it was effective.
- Medical support services - all two (2) recipients indicated that it was effective
- Community network support services - all three (3) recipients indicated that it was effective
- Provision of Shelter – All five (5) were indicated that it was effective.

Respondents termed these strategies as effective because their needs were being met.

#### ***4.4 Challenges Faced by The Four NGO's in Combating Violence against Women in Ghana (Objective 3)***

The challenges that were enumerated included unwillingness on the part of victims to report GBV especially in the domestic setting, financial constraints, and lack of well-coordinated approach as well as challenges associated with all six interventional strategies deployed in combating VAW in Ghana.

##### ***4.4.1 The Challenge Of Under Reporting and Unwillingness to Pursue Charges Against Partners***

As a chronically under-reported and under-recorded crime, it is difficult to assess exactly how many women and girls are affected, both directly and indirectly, by physical, psychological and sexual violence but the magnitude of the problem cannot be disputed. It emerged from the interview with all four category of respondents that most cases of GBV especially in the domestic settings concerning IPV were not reported. With respect to the few reported cases, victims were unwilling to press charges against intimate partner perpetrators due to factors such as the economic dependence of women on their partners, fear of loss of marriage, societal ridicule (in the case of marital rape), fear of further violent retaliation on the part of intimate partners upon hearing of their actions been reported.

##### ***4.4.2 Material and Financial Constraints***

Most NGOs including these four understudy have largely depended on donor funding for their activities and survival. The reversal of 20 years of increased funding for development NGOs from official donors. There will be exceptions, but the trends in some of the previously most generous official donors such as the Dutch, European and even the Americans plus the withdrawal from many countries that previously received aid, shows a pattern of reduced resources for the aided section of civil society – especially for both developing and developed country NGOs whom for a generation have been dependent on such funding. The four NGOs are expressing difficulties in finding sufficient and continuous funding for their work. They find accessing donors as challenging as dealing with their funding conditions. They perceive the global economic crisis and the position of Ghana as a lower middle income country are key contributing factor.

Another problem with funding that emerged was the issue of rejection of ‘core funding’ – a situation whereby donors are only willing to commit funds to ‘project’ costs. Organisational development, experimental pilot approaches and long-term impact analysis are being abandoned due to lack of funds. The issue of material and financial constraints is not just limited to these NGOs but also a critical issue to all the State and non-state actors interrogated.

#### ***4.4.3 Lack of Coordinated Approach***

Lack of coordinated approach came up strongly in all the discussions and cuts across all the various respondents. Addressing VAW requires a multi-sectoral approach, involving a minimum of legal, health, education, social and security sectors. In practice these sectors seem to be working independently of each other.

#### ***4.4.4 Challenges of Awareness-Raising Campaign***

Any work done by NGOs on raising awareness is complex but that which focuses on VAW whilst simultaneously attempting to engage with survivors can face particular challenges. In terms of engaging with survivors, NGOs organising awareness-raising campaigns have to recognise that survivors can simultaneously be the women they want to engage with and also the intended targets of their efforts, such as those campaigns which seek to publicise the availability of services dedicated to supporting the victims of GBV. This in itself could be a significant barrier to survivors engaging and participating in campaigns. Engagement is a complicated issue because whilst engagement with survivors is essential, in terms of raising awareness, campaigns must simultaneously engage and target all groups in society.

A real barrier to successful awareness-raising stems from ‘patriarchally-defined’ gender roles (the normalisation of violence within societal attitudes and tacit acceptance of GBV within a wider culture of violence and the struggle to capitalise on raised awareness) which can indirectly condone GBV and therefore limit receptivity to awareness-raising campaigns.

#### ***4.4.5 Challenges of Lobbying and Advocacy Interventional Strategy***

Advocacy and lobbying work can pose some clear challenges to the engagement and participation of survivors of violence, particularly the difficulties surrounding the increasing professionalisation of NGOs, unclear accountability structures and finally, the non-linear manner in which advocacy campaigns can progress. These barriers are not insurmountable however and some of the NGOs considered here have made concerted efforts to engage not only with survivors but also wider society and with considerable success. This is indicative of the increasingly diverse nature of advocacy and the importance of recognising a wide range of stakeholders. The complex nature of advocacy work and attempts to engage survivors of GBV is also complicated by the non-linear process of lobbying. With the advocacy process developing in a non-linear fashion, it can be difficult for NGOs to know at which points to engage with survivors to inform their activities.

This is compounded by the fact that evaluating campaigns and attributing change is very difficult and when successes are achieved, they are not necessarily replicable. As a result, it may be very difficult for NGOs to

know at what point and to what extent to engage with survivors to achieve the maximum impact and this is something that an NGO must consider on an individual basis with each campaign. Despite these challenges, all four of the NGOs considered in this paper have delivered effective advocacy campaigns with varying levels of engagement with survivors of GBV.

#### ***4.4.6 Challenges Faced by NGOs with Regards to Community Mobilisation, Activism and Networking***

The basic characteristic of NGO is volunteerism. In early days, youth were making their career in volunteerism but that enthusiasm seems to have faded these days. The extent of volunteerism is declining day by day and turning it into professionalisation. Even the young graduates from social work are interested in making their career in professionalism. This leads to lack of efficient volunteers in NGOs. Also, NGOs are meant to provide opportunities to the citizens for democratic participation but they have not been able to fulfil this obligation due to the method and manner in which they function, and failed to attract people, interested in community work and develop channels for people's enthusiastic participation. It emerged from the information obtained during the in-depth (informal) interview sections with the respondents that some of the factors responsible for such a state of affairs are general backwardness of the people, absence of adequate number of dedicated persons, over emphasis on targets and time bound programmes, distrust of agencies and workers who do not have a base in the community and are unable to win its support.

#### ***4.4.7 Challenges Faced By NGOs with Regards To Training and Capacity Building***

It is believed that the personnel working in such organizations have a sense of dedication, commitment and interest in the social services. NGOs earlier were assumed to be served by unpaid social workers instilled with the spirit of service and did not require any special training. But the present trend those who are having professional education are not interested to work with NGOs.

It emerged from information gathered from the officials of the four NGOs that the vision of their personnel had changed and personnel are interested in working in areas with good social security. Most of NGOs due to lack of funds cannot able to spent some more funds for giving training to the personnel employed in the organization. Some of NGOs are in fear of personnel who may shift to another 'big' NGO after taking training from it.

### **5. Conclusion**

The study examined VAW in Ghana: The Intervention by NGOs. It places special focus on how women's right NGOs respond to this problem and evaluate whether the outcomes of their responses have been effective in curbing VAW in Ghana.

Focusing on four such NGOs in Ghana, [namely; The Ark Foundation (The Ark), Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Ghana, Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (Gender Centre) and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) Ghana], the study interrogates the extent to which these NGOs have succeeded; the role they play; key strategies that worked; challenges faced by the NGOs and the sustainability of interventions. By employing qualitative research inquiry to address the research problems and

the usage of in-depth (informal) interview, to obtain responses from the eight top officials of the four purposively selected NGOs, key informant interview to collect data from the twelve state actors and fourteen non-state actors, semi-structured questionnaires to extract information from the eighteen direct beneficiaries of the NGOs intervention initiatives, reviewing official records and documents from the four NGOs as well as the state actors to examine the various interventional strategies adopted to ascertain/assess its effectiveness in addressing the issues of VAW in Ghana, the study finds out that, all four NGOs utilised among others five key strategies in tackling the issue of VAW in Ghana. These are awareness creation, lobbying and advocacy, community mobilisation, activism and networking, training/capacity building and service provision. Responses received from the respondents depicted that, all the five key interventional strategies used by the NGOs were evaluated by the various stakeholders as being effective. Notwithstanding, there were some challenges that confronted the NGOs in their fight against VAW.

Notable among them were the lack of willingness on the part of victims of VAW to report and further pursue perpetrators of VAW, materials and financial constraints facing the NGOs as well as state actors and lack of well-coordinated approach on the part of all concerned stakeholders in joining their effort to eradicate VAW in Ghana. It also come out from the responses that all five key strategies utilised by the NGOs were saddled with varying degrees of challenges. Nevertheless all four NGOs were measured to have utilised effective strategies in handling the issue of VAW in Ghana.

### **5.1 Recommendations**

Findings from this study have shown that all the five key interventional strategies were assessed to be effective as evidenced by the numerous testimonies and success stories obtained from the participants of the research. However, it was also indicative from data extracted from the respondents that, the NGOs are challenge with enormous problem including financial and resource constraints (lack of donor funding from both domestic government sources and overseas funding), lack of well-coordinated strategic alliances on the part of all other stakeholders interested in the fight against VAW in Ghana. The study therefore recommend the following:

- There should be a well-coordinated effort among all stakeholders, most importantly Government and Policy Makers, NGOs, CSOs, Human and Women Rights Institutions to direct all efforts, energies and resources in an attempt to totally eradicate this cancerous menace of VAW from our societies.
- Foreign donor agencies should reconsider their internal institutional policies and agendas to continue funding these NGOs, not to consider rejection of 'core funding' – a situation whereby donors are only willing to commit funds to 'project' costs as organizational development, experimental pilot approaches and long-term impact analysis are being abandoned due to lack of funds. Organizations involved in the combat of VAW need to consider resources partners interest in terms of thematic focus and geographic coverage. The identification of resource partners should be seen as an ongoing process. There should be resource mobilization from various kinds of sources and diverse types of resources will decrease an organization's financial risk. In addition, it is important to build an internal capacity to mobilise resources internally to support donor efforts. Furthermore, the government must also be seen to support the various state institutions and agencies responsible for handling issues pertaining to VAW

in Ghana through the provision of logistic, funds and all other resources needed for the smooth running of the institutions.

- Education and public sensitization efforts must be strengthened on all forms of VAW cases that are criminal and therefore punishable by law in order to make the general public aware of the need to desist from trying to settle criminal offenses of VAW like incest, rape, murder among others within the confines of the domestic setting and that all of such cases must be reported to the appropriate state authority for proper redress.
- Victims/survivors of VAW who do not report their audiles must be admonished and encouraged to report the perpetrators to help curb the incidences of VAW in our societies. In addition, vigilante and 'watch dog' groups must be formed in every community to assist in checking and reporting all such VAW cases.
- Future studies in this area should consider placing much emphasis on exploring the financial strength of the NGOs in relation to its fund sourcing abilities, strategies and strength as well the numerous fund sourcing avenues available to the NGOs to assess how to sustain their operations by making them financially viable in order for them to operate more efficiently to help eradicate VAW in Ghana.

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