

10

GHANA: LIBERATING SLAVES AND CHANGING MINDS, STARTING AT THE GRASS ROOTS

The persistence of the trokosi system in Ghana—the ritual sacrifice of young girls to enforced servitude as atonement for a family's sins—is one demonstration of the power of tradition in Ghana to deny women their rights. The lack of domestic violence legislation is also hindering a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the problem. UNFPA's strategy in addressing gender-based violence in Ghana is to support existing programmes, many of which are working effectively at the grass-roots level. Still needed are awareness campaigns that target the media, legislators and other decision makers and spread the message of zero tolerance for violence against women.

THE CONTEXT

Ghana is located on the west coast of Africa and shares boundaries with Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. Ghanaian social structure is based on kinship, which also determines the traditional political and social organization of many groups, and the relationships and institutions around which social life is built.¹ The kinship system also determines, to a large extent, property rights as well as the inheritance and succession system and residence patterns of many Ghanaians, particularly in rural areas, and is key to understanding the rules, duties and obligations of individuals in a variety of social settings.

Available data on poverty indicate that 60 per cent of Ghanaians in four out of ten regions live on less than \$1 a day. In general, inhabitants of the northern savannah are poorer than their counterparts in the south, and women are generally poorer than men. This is due to a variety of factors, among which are the low literacy levels of women and the limited range of employment opportunities available to them. According to the Ghana Living Standards Survey of 2000, 65 percent of Ghanaian men are literate, compared to only 37 percent of Ghanaian women. Women dominate the informal sector of the urban economy, but are underrepresented in the formal sector, where incomes are generally higher and more secure.

Violence against Women in Ghana

In 1999, the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre, a non-governmental organization (NGO), published findings of a nationwide study on violence against women and children in Ghana.

The study revealed high levels of gender-based violence, including physical, psychological, economic and sexual violence. One in three women reported that they have suffered physical abuse, most often inflicted by an intimate partner.

Marriage provides an added level of social status for women in Ghana among almost all ethnic, social and economic groups and classes. According to the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey of 2003, about 23 per cent of marriages in Ghana are polygynous. While younger and better educated women are less likely to be in polygynous unions, it is also likely that because of economic hardships and greater personal insecurity, many women may be involved in informal unions with married men to gain access to resources.

The division of labour within the family unit in Ghana means that men usually provide for the larger expenses and women take care of daily provisions for the family. They do this with financial support from their husbands, known as 'chop money', which may range from a lump sum per month to a weekly or daily amount. The refusal of men to provide an adequate household allowance to their partners can lead to altercations and violence against women. This, in fact, constitutes one of the major complaints presented at family tribunals and other adjudicating bodies in communities around Ghana.

GHANA AND CEDAW

Since 1975, attention to women's issues has been institutionalized in Ghana—initially through the National

¹ Nukunya, G.K. 2003. *Tradition and Change in Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.

Council on Women and Development, which played an advisory and advocacy role on gender issues. In 2001, a Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs was established, headed by a female minister with full cabinet status.

The 1992 Constitution guarantees fundamental human rights. In theory, men and women in Ghana are equal before the law. However, Ghana's legal system is pluralistic, and consists of laws and statutes inherited from British colonial rule, legislation passed by successive Ghanaian parliaments, as well as the customary laws of various Ghanaian communities. Exemptions and discrimination based on customary or personal laws are held not to contravene the non-discriminatory clause in the Constitution. The consequence of this provision is the continuation of a number of gender disparities in women's access to a range of personal, public and productive resources. This is reinforced by neo-traditional customary systems and practices, religious doctrines, socialization and education processes that define women as having a lesser status than that of men.

As a result of women's activism and some compliance with international conventions that Ghana is party to, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), signed by Ghana in 1980, and the Beijing Platform of Action, amendments were made to the Criminal Code in 1998 to criminalize harmful traditional practices. These include cruel and degrading widowhood rites, female genital mutilation/cutting and ritual servitude or bondage, known as the *trokosi* system. In addition, the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Ghana Police Service was established to deal with abuses of women and children occurring in the domestic arena. However, as pointed out in a 'Women's Manifesto' developed by a coalition of civil society organizations, there are several areas where there is strong need to follow up closely the implementation of the country's commitments under CEDAW, the Beijing Platform of Action and other international conventions.²

THE UNFPA COUNTRY PROGRAMME

Since 1985, UNFPA has been working with the Government on reproductive health, gender equality and sustainable development. Over the last decade, UNFPA's work has been guided by the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). A key ICPD achievement was creating a consensus on the links among poverty, women's rights and reproductive health, and population and sustainable development. The Programme of Action advocates the enjoyment of good physical and mental health by men and

women, which presupposes the absence of gender-based violence. It is premised on a holistic platform that makes gender equality and equity central to human development generally and, in particular, to those aspects related to sexuality and reproduction.

The first three UNFPA Country Programmes for Ghana focused on integrating population issues into the development planning process, and the re-formulation and implementation of the 1969 population policy. The ICPD document influenced the content of the population policy, which was revised in 1994, and the manner in which it was implemented. Thus, since the ICPD advocated that reproductive rights are part of women's rights, spousal consent was no longer required for a woman in Ghana to avail herself of family planning services. In addition, after the Beijing conference, women's rights were recognized as fundamental human rights, and programmes were designed for women's empowerment, mainly through microcredit schemes. Work on eliminating female genital mutilation/cutting in Ghana also became central, since it was seen as an abuse of women's fundamental human rights. There was also dialogue with the Ministry of Education to extend the focus of girls' education beyond basic education and also to revise the curriculum in population and family life education to include components on sexual and adolescent reproductive health.

The Fourth Country Programme (2001-2005) has two components: population and development, and reproductive health. In addition, gender concerns, which are seen as cross-cutting, were integrated as far as possible into each of these components. Funding was provided to a variety of organizations working on the reduction of gender-based violence in the country.

PART I: CASE STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

THE PROJECT

One of the projects explored in this chapter seeks to free young girls and women who are involved in ritual slavery in Ghana and reintegrate them into society. The project is being implemented by an NGO called International Needs-Ghana, with support from UNFPA.

Ritual slavery is a traditional practice involving virgin girls, mostly between the ages of 8 and 15, who are sent to the shrines of priests in reparation for the misdeeds of family members (see Box). The girls are known as *trokosi*, which is a combination of two Ewe words: '*tro*' meaning deity and '*kosi*' meaning slave, or slave wives of

2 ABANTU for Development. 2004. *The Women's Manifesto for Ghana*. Accra.

THE PRACTICE OF RITUAL SLAVERY IN GHANA

The practice of offering women to shrines originated in Togo and Benin in the 17th century as a war ritual. Before combat, warriors offered women to the war gods in exchange for victory and a safe homecoming. In some traditional religions, there is also the belief that a person's sins are punished by the death of other family members until the sin is pardoned. Up until the 18th century, livestock or other gifts were given in atonement. Since that time, the atonement for crime, whether it be theft, maligning a neighbour or murder, is the life of a young girl.

In Ghana, ritual slavery is prevalent among two patrilineal groups: the Ewes of southern and northern Tongu and Anlo, and the Dangmes of Greater Accra. Among the Dangmes, slaves are known as *woryokoe*. The practice also exists in three other West African countries: Benin, southwestern Nigeria and Togo.

Research conducted to identify the number of Ghanaian women currently held in shrines has produced widely divergent figures. Local organizations estimate the number to be 5,000,³ 9,000⁴ and even upwards of 20,000.⁵ Moreover, it is estimated that nine per cent of those in ritual slavery are children under the age of ten. In 2000, International Needs-Ghana documented more than 6,000 children whose mothers are *trokosiwo*.

the gods. The girls are not kidnapped or abducted, but are freely offered by their relatives who believe that it is necessary to atone for the sins of a family member, lest calamity befall them. Some families have sacrificed generations of daughters for crimes committed so long ago that nobody in the family remembers who committed them or the nature of the crime. Once sent to the shrine, a girl can stay there for a few years or her entire life. When she dies, she is replaced by another female family member.

The priest assumes full ownership of these young girls, beating them when they try to escape, controlling their interaction with others, demanding labour and sex from them, and denying them education, food and basic health services. Once committed to the shrine, *trokosi* are distinguished by their shaved heads, the piece of calico that they wrap around their bodies, the raffia leaves around their necks, and their bare feet. The girls essentially serve as an economic resource for shrine owners and priests, who put them to work in the fields for long hours without any compensation. They cannot leave the shrines without the permission of the priest.

Three out of the four programmes run by International Needs-Ghana focus on freeing and rehabilitating female ritual slaves. These include the Trokosi Modernization Project, the Vocational Training Centre located in Adidome in the North Tongu district, which includes a nursery school for children of the trainees who are

under five years of age, and the Microenterprise and Credit Scheme.

With support from UNFPA, International Needs-Ghana was able to implement information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns in previously inaccessible communities. The organization has also been able to conduct awareness campaigns in communities in five districts (Ketu, Akatsi, South Tongu, North Tongu and Dangme East) that practise ritual slavery. In addition, instructors at the International Needs Vocational Training Centre have been provided with information on violence against women, so that they can better understand the population with whom they work.

RESULTS

Since it began operations about 10 years ago, International Needs-Ghana has freed 3,500 slaves from over 130 shrines in the Volta and Greater Accra regions of Ghana; more than half of these women and girls were liberated before the practice was criminalized. Efforts have been made to rehabilitate these women through the provision of vocational training and microcredit to set up small businesses. With training and start-up capital, they have been provided with the tools they need to lead independent lives.

Many *trokosi*, however, return to the shrines of their own free will, in spite of counselling and other support provided by the project team. A study conducted in 2000,

3 Dovo E. and A. K. Adzoyi. 1995 Report on Trokosi Institution. Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon.

4 Nukunya, Godwin, K. 1999. Report on De-criminalizing Trokosi: Research into the Nature and Operations of Ritual Enslavement in South Eastern Ghana. National Population Council/United Nations Population Fund.

5 Ameh, R. K. 1998. Trokosi (Child Slavery) in Ghana: A Policy Approach. *Ghana Studies* (1): 35-62.

for example, found that approximately 87 per cent of the 2,000 *trokosi* liberated between 1997 and 1999 returned to the shrines.⁶ One reason for this may be that liberated women face stigma in the community, and sometimes even from their own family members. In general, the public boycotts those *trokosi* who enter into income-generating ventures, which makes it difficult for the women to sustain themselves economically.

NEGOTIATION PROCESSES

The activities of the shrines represent violations of women's basic rights. The 1992 Ghanaian Constitution contains provisions to guarantee the fundamental human rights and freedoms of its citizens. Article 16 of the Constitution provides that no person shall be held in slavery or servitude or be required to perform slave labour. In recognition of all these commitments to the welfare of Ghanaian women and girls, the 1996 Criminal Code Amendment Bill was passed on 12 June 1998. Section 314 A, which was added to the Criminal Code reads:

Whoever sends to or receives at any place any person or participates in or is concerned with any ritual or customary activity in respect of any person with the purpose of subjecting that person to any form of ritual or customary servitude or any form of forced labour related to customary ritual shall be guilty of a second degree felony and liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than three years.

Civil society organizations working in the area of human rights opted to embark on a two-year sensitization and awareness campaign on the promulgation of the law to ensure that all shrine priests were aware of the law before intensive enforcement would begin. However, to date, no shrine priest has been put before the courts for violating the law.

Moreover, these legal reforms have met with opposition from a small group of Ghanaians who provide arguments for sustaining the practice. Some argue that the children of *trokosi* are special individuals destined to redeem mankind from the mess created by society.⁷ Others⁸ argue that the *trokosi* system works to maintain order in a traditional society where modern structures of law enforcement are nonexistent. Still others⁹ contend that *trokosi* are not slaves, but priestesses. The most vehement form of opposition has come from the

Afrikania Renaissance Mission, which cites article 21 (1) of the Ghanaian Constitution that guarantees freedom of religion and argues that people have a right to preserve the religious practices of their forebears. The programme coordinator of International Needs-Ghana counters this argument with the assertion that cultural relativism should not be grounds for the violation of international conventions. In her words: "We are not against our culture, we are against servitude, slavery and child labour."

PARTNERS

International Needs-Ghana was officially registered as a voluntary, not-for-profit organization in October 1987 and began its operations in 1995. The organization is an autonomous and chartered affiliate of a global organization called Council of International Needs, which is headquartered in New Zealand. Its mission is 'to promote human and community development for the relief of socio-economic problems and cultural injustice'.

To run its projects, International Needs-Ghana cooperates with Equality Now, Anti-Slavery International of Great Britain and Australia, OakTree Foundation of Australia and the Reebok Human Rights Foundation. United Nations agencies such as UNFPA and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have also lent financial support. Locally, its network partners include the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the National Commission on Civic Education, Centre for National Culture, National Council on Women and Development, Ghana Law Reform Commission and the Federation of Women Lawyers. International Needs-Ghana is also a founding member of the Ghana Human Rights Coalition.

LESSONS LEARNED

Understanding the beliefs of the community in which one hopes to bring about social change is an important first step. International Needs-Ghana acknowledges the need for individuals to seek atonement for their sins. The NGO does not condemn the practice of seeking forgiveness from the gods. Rather, in its work with shrine priests, it is able to convince them to transform the practice in terms of the requirements for atonement. The transformation takes place because shrine priests are made aware, through education, of the harm such a practice inflicts on young women.

6 UNFPA. 2004. UNFPA/Government of Ghana Mid-term Review of the Fourth Country Programme.

7 Boateng, A. 1997. The *Trokosi* System in Ghana. The Case of Discrimination Against Women. Accra: International Needs.

8 Ahiabile, M. 1995. *The Anatomy of the Trokosi System in Ghana: Report on the first national workshop on the trokosi system in Ghana, July 6-7*. Accra: International Needs.

9 Gakpleazi, A. 1998. *Trokosi is Not a Slave*. *Ghanaian Times*, Monday, 16 November, p. 6.

International Needs-Ghana does not seek to impose on the priests its own value system or a new way of operating; it simply provides them with the opportunity to think critically about the practice and to come to the conclusion on their own that change is necessary. In the words of the organization's executive director:¹⁰ "Our strategy is very simple and it is to educate the practitioners to give up the practice themselves. We believe that a change that emanates from within would be more permanent. Hence the liberations we have had so far have been at the initiative of the shrine themselves."¹¹

As a result of this approach, some shrine priests have chosen to accept income-generating commodities such as cattle, corn mills, fishing nets and canoes or, in rare cases, money, as sacrificial gifts, in lieu of young women.

Social change is a slow and agonizing process that cannot be hurried if it is to be long-lasting. Workers at International Needs-Ghana visit shrines repeatedly so that they can talk through the issue fully and ensure that the priests willingly accept the need for the women's liberation. Sometimes, this process involves visits by the priests to Benin and Togo, where the gods whom they worship are said to be located, to ascertain the perspectives of the gods. These consultations with the gods delay the negotiations between the priests and the NGO, but without the patience to see this process through, a priest will be unwilling to change his practice. Data collected from International Needs-Ghana shows that the process of liberation takes an average of five years.

Acts of gender-based violence that are based on religious doctrine are not easy to eradicate. This is because victims themselves are usually fearful of the repercussions of 'disobeying' the will of the gods. Research has shown, for example, that the vast majority of liberated female slaves return to the shrines, fearing the loss of either their lives or those of family members.¹² Thus, more IEC programmes and basic services (health, education facilities and infrastructure) are needed to end the isolation of some of these communities and to provide access to a range of services that will reduce their dependence on shrine priests.

It is important to adopt a holistic approach to the liberation of girls and women, so that they are able to live meaningful lives outside the shrines. To this end, the organization has set up a training centre in Adidome, located in the North Tongu district, which has boarding facilities for 140 people. Here, the staff provides voca-

tional training of two kinds: a three-month course in confectionery-making, soap-making, and body and hair cream production or a one-year course in batik/tie dyeing and hairdressing. For young girls, their preparation for adulthood is not simply economic; the NGO also provides them with life skills education, particularly information on reproductive health issues.

Soliciting the participation and support of the host community can encourage sustainability. While initial discussions and negotiations take place at the shrine, the final liberation is undertaken in the spotlight of the community at large. A *durbar*, or public gathering, is held under the authority of the traditional leader for this purpose so that the priest in question can publicly declare his decision to liberate his slaves and refrain from taking any more slaves in future. He also signs a legal declaration to this effect. Finally, while the immediate goal is to see to the liberation and rehabilitation of young women, the project also seeks to improve the conditions in which they live. To this end, efforts are made to provide these communities with basic infrastructure, such as boreholes for clean water and schools. The provision of schools also makes it possible for the NGO to educate young children, particularly girls, on the ongoing transformation of the *trokosi* system. In the village of Kebenu, for example, where the two major shrines have liberated women, a nursery/primary school has been built. The children who attend this school are also provided with one hot meal a day.

PART II. A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

UNFPA's current strategy in addressing violence against women is to support existing programmes, many of which are working effectively at the grass-roots level. The following section details the mechanisms by which these partnerships were developed; the processes through which projects are designed and implemented; the issue of cultural sensitivity in programming; the achievements and limitations of the projects; and an assessment of lessons learned and good practices.

PARTNERS

In the area of gender-based violence, UNFPA has worked with the following agencies: the National Population Council; the UN System Gender Programme; African Youth Alliance/Federation of Women Lawyers (AYA/FIDA); Ghana Association for the Welfare of Women; International Needs-Ghana; Rural Help

¹⁰ Reverend Pimpong, Executive Director, International Needs-Ghana.

¹¹ Ameh, 1998, p. 55.

¹² UNFPA. 2004. *State of Ghana Population Report 2003*, p. 137.

Integrated; and the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Police Service.

National Population Council

The National Population Council (NPC) works with UNFPA to decide on the strategies to be adopted to achieve the specific goals of the National Population Policy. UNFPA provides financial support to ensure that the strategies are implemented. In this manner, UNFPA and the Council have collaborated on a number of gender-based violence projects. In 2001, the NPC, in collaboration with UNFPA and with funding from DANIDA, conducted an in-depth study of the practice of ritual slavery. The results of this study led to UNFPA support of International Needs-Ghana, whose work is described in Part I of this chapter. UNFPA has also provided funding through the NPC to build the capacity of staff at the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Ghana Police Service.

Women and Juvenile Unit of the Police Service

A major problem confronting this unit has been the lack of police personnel knowledgeable about gender issues and sensitive to issues related to gender-based violence. Funding was therefore provided by UNFPA for training on these issues, along with human rights, drawing on resource persons from NGOs working in these areas. Beyond the training, UNFPA provided the unit with about \$3,000 on a quarterly basis to run an awareness campaign in markets, lorry parks, hospitals, schools and churches in ten regions. The Unit's success is due in no small measure to its collaboration with civil society organizations and the networks they have jointly created, which include professionals in various fields, such as medical officers, psychologists and counsellors.

UN System Gender Programme

Three UN agencies (the UN Development Programme, UNIFEM and UNFPA) that are part of the UN Development Assistance Framework and working closely to harmonize their programmes came together to fund a gender programme in 2001. UNFPA provided about a third of the funds, which were designated for specific projects with the Ghana Association for the Welfare of Women and International Needs-Ghana.

Collaborative Work with Other Donor Agencies

Beyond the UN Development Assistance Framework, there is a gender equality and stakeholder's forum where donor agencies such as the World Bank, UNFPA and the Canadian International Development Agency meet on a monthly basis to keep each other on track with respect to their gender programming. Sometimes,

the forum picks up on specific issues that they want to work on together. According to UNFPA's advocacy and resource mobilization officer, donor agencies that are part of the forum recently pledged that in all their programme activities for the upcoming year, financial support would be provided for advocacy towards the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill.

Partnerships with NGOs

Most of the NGO partnerships that were formed in the area of gender-based violence have been with organizations working on the more flagrant forms of abuse, such as ritual slavery and female genital mutilation/cutting, rather than daily acts of violence, such as domestic abuse.

PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Organizations that work on gender-based violence generally offer two kinds of services: information, education and communication (IEC) programmes or direct services. Organizations that run IEC programmes develop many behaviour change communication materials, such as posters and flyers. They conduct sensitization workshops and seminars, hold *durbars*, show films and run radio or television programmes/advertisements as funds allow. Direct service providers offer shelter, counselling, training, legal aid and other forms of support to the survivors of gender-based violence. UNFPA has worked with implementing partners that offer both kinds of services.

Two of the activities undertaken by implementing partners were explicitly included in the Fourth UNFPA Country Programme for Ghana. These were projects undertaken by the African Youth Alliance/Federation of Women Lawyers and Rural Help Integrated.

The AYA/FIDA project sought to broaden access to legal aid, which was previously confined to individuals residing in and around Accra and Kumasi, where the two FIDA offices are located. The project provided paralegal training to 800 individuals selected from 100 communities in 20 districts across the country. In each community, the individuals selected included two traditional authorities (a chief and queen mother), two religious leaders (one Christian and one Muslim), an assemblyman/woman, a teacher, a health service professional, a youth activist and one young person. Paralegal training covered the following areas: knowledge of adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues; skills in communication, counselling, mediation; human rights conventions at the global level and legal conventions at the national and regional level.

UNFPA also provided funding to Rural Help Integrated, an NGO located in the Upper East region that conducted

IEC campaigns around reproductive health. As part of its community sensitization programmes, the NGO leads discussions on the harmful effects of female genital mutilation/cutting.

Both of these projects had UNFPA personnel working closely with them. UNFPA's work with other organizations, such as the Ghana Association for the Welfare of Women, which conducts IEC campaigns, and International Needs-Ghana, which is a direct service provider, was covered through UNFPA's contribution to the UN system's Gender Programme. These organizations did not have a close working relationship with UNFPA. Moreover, these two organizations focused on the more flagrant forms of gender-based violence (that is, female genital mutilation/cutting and ritual slavery).

ENSURING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

To change attitudes towards gender-based violence in Ghana, organizations take the local context into consideration. Local languages are used to ensure that organizations are not seen as elitist and that the message is understood by both those literate in English and otherwise. Organizations gain entry into the communities in which they work by seeking the permission of the chiefs. In addition, *durbars* are held with the consent of community leaders such as chiefs and queen mothers, who are seen as the custodians of culture. This serves to legitimize the organizations' messages. Finally, as far as possible, perpetrators of gender-based violence who have come to acknowledge the inhumanity of their actions are used as spokespersons in these campaigns. This serves to make the message more credible because the spokespersons are recognized and accepted members of the community.

Organizations use different mechanisms to get communities to condemn all forms of gender-based violence and to commit to working to eliminate it. This process is outlined in the analysis of the work of the Ghana Association for the Welfare of Women below and in the case study in Part I of this chapter.

Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

The Ghana Association for the Welfare of Women is working towards the elimination of female genital mutilation/cutting. With support from UNFPA, the association conducted an educational campaign in the Upper West region that sought to sensitize the community to the harmful effects of the practice and the law that prohibits it. The Upper West region was chosen because of the prevalent nature of the practice in most parts of the region.

The campaign was carried out in two phases. The first phase consisted of training programmes for targeted groups of people: 178 health personnel, 95 traditional birth attendants, 35 school health teachers, and a one-day seminar each for the following groups: police and other security personnel, media representatives, religious leaders, youth leaders and women's groups. Behaviour change materials, including posters, fliers and question-and-answer booklets were provided to the trainees for distribution in their communities.

Training took the form of lectures, discussions, videos, group work and demonstrations using a model. The training was conducted in collaboration with various state and non-state agencies, including the Ghana Health Service, the Ghana Education Service, the Ghana National Commission on Children, the National Council on Women and Development and the Regional House of Chiefs.

The second phase was targeted at the community at large. It took the form of radio programmes and jingles in the local languages, which were aired for a six-month period (December 2003–May 2004) and community *durbars* that were held in all five districts in the Upper West region: Jirapa, Lawra, Nadowli, Tumu and Wa. These *durbars* were held under the auspices of the chiefs of the various communities. Support from these custodians of culture was crucial since they served as a legitimizing force for the IEC campaign message.

The two phases of this educational campaign were extremely useful because they raised awareness of the issue. In addition, they convinced various members of the community to acknowledge that since female genital mutilation/cutting was a harmful practice, they would resolve to help eliminate it.

A nurse who was participating at the Wa workshop and worked at the Loggu Health Centre announced that a village health volunteer had informed her that genital cutting had been performed on three children in Billi-uu. Officials from the Ghana Association for the Welfare of Women, together with four police officers, took the issue up, traced the children to their home and eventually located the woman who performed the circumcision. The woman was detained and put before the court, where she was found guilty upon her own plea, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. The case was discussed extensively in the electronic and print media, which served to further increase awareness about the law on genital cutting. The case also highlighted the limits to the law, since it only allows for the prosecution of the cutter, but not the parents who request the circumcision and/or the community members who

witnessed it—a point that was raised by various callers to the radio stations. This suggests that some members of the community are willing to see a much more concerted attempt on the part of the state to stamp out the practice.

RESULTS

Cultural

Despite cultural norms, people are beginning to recognize that violence against women is unacceptable. This has come about largely through IEC campaigns. Even some perpetrators, such as the priests who enslave young girls in their shrines, have come to acknowledge that such a practice has no place in Ghanaian society.

Legal

There is now general recognition that ritual slavery and female genital mutilation/cutting are violations of women's rights and a form of violence against them. The state has gone so far as to criminalize these acts. Individuals also acknowledge that the formal legal system is best suited to address certain acts of violence against women, such as physical violence that results in injury.

The paralegal training project undertaken by AYA/FIDA has broadened the access of people living in rural areas to legal redress. The fact that paralegals are people of some standing in the community who have an understanding of both the human rights dimensions and specific forms of gender-based violence makes it easier for individuals to trust them and to come to them with their legal needs.

Some organizations that provide legal aid have helped to avert gender-based violence. For example, between 2003 and 2005, the 800 paralegals trained under the AYA/FIDA project handled a total of more than 2,500 cases, of which more than a third involved child maintenance/neglect—an area of family controversy that often leads to physical or psychological abuse of the wife. The work of these paralegals has helped stem the tide of domestic violence, although more remains to be done.

Social

Many more people are now aware of the opportunities for redress that are available to women survivors of violence beyond traditional forums (such as family tribunals and other adjudicating bodies or resorting to pastors and other religious leaders). The Police Service's Women and Juvenile Unit, for example, known as WAJU, has become a household word, and its existence provides victims of violence with a legal option for addressing their grievances.

The provision of training for community leaders who traditionally settle cases has raised awareness about the ways in which customary laws may infringe on the rights of girls and women. In some cases, the victim might be appeased with a token gift of restitution and asked to forget about the whole incident. In other cases, where more severe sanctions are imposed, the fines paid by the perpetrators are offered to the parents of the victim, especially if the victim is a child. As a result of training, it is claimed that traditional rulers in some communities now acknowledge their limitations in settling gender-based violence cases and refer them to the appropriate agencies for settlement instead. In the Effiduase Sekyere district of the Ashanti region, for example, we were informed that a chief, after undergoing paralegal training, referred a defilement case to the courts. Eventually it led to the prosecution and imprisonment of the teacher involved.

To some extent, the IEC campaigns conducted by both the Ghana Association for the Welfare of Women and International Needs-Ghana have been successful. The IEC campaign against female genital mutilation/cutting, conducted with funds from UNFPA, has led to awareness that the practice is a violation of the law that can result in the arrest and imprisonment of those who perform circumcision. International Needs-Ghana has also conducted awareness campaigns in communities in five districts (Ketu, Akatsi, South Tongu, North Tongu and Dangme East) that practise the *trokosi* system. In addition, instructors at the vocational centre run by the organization have been provided with information on violence against women so they can better understand and support the population with whom they work.

LESSONS LEARNED

National and district authorities must understand and accept UNFPA-supported programmes if they are to be effective. This will avoid the frustration and waste of resources that typically accompany programmes developed without liaising with structures at the national or district level, and ensure that coordinating and implementing agencies are able to do their work properly.

Both traditional and modern authority figures in Ghana are yet to publicly commit to the creation of a country free from gender-based violence. The Domestic Violence Bill has been subjected to one of the most intensive consultation processes involving legislation ever witnessed in Ghana. After two years of consultation, it still has not been passed into law. A similar lack of commitment prevails at the level of traditional authority. For four years now, the National

Population Council has been trying without success to have a seminar on domestic violence with the National House of Chiefs.

PRACTICES THAT WORK

Using audiovisual aids to combat the more flagrant forms of gender-based violence, such as female genital mutilation/cutting. Such aids are an especially effective communications tool, and make the harmful nature of the act apparent without verbal description. Personnel from the Ghana Association for the Welfare of Women have noted that it is not uncommon for men to walk out of sessions where a film on genital cutting was being shown because they found it so painful to watch.

Encouraging networking among civil society organizations working on gender-based violence. This allows organizations to harness the strengths of individual partners and save money by not duplicating the efforts of other organizations. Already there is considerable sharing, on an informal basis, of information and resources (counsellors, health personnel) among the Ark Foundation, Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment and the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Police Service.

Targeting young people in IEC campaigns. Education and the nurturance of a democratic culture in young people is the best way to promote the development of new attitudes and shifts in power and gender relations.