REDUCING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AMONG RURAL HOUSEHOLDS USING GENDER ACTION LEARNING SYSTEMS (GALs) METHODOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The major global problem of gender-based violence now affects community development, human rights, and health. It is an indication of inherent inequality and power disparities that influence every community on the planet and transcend all boundaries of location, ethnicity, culture, class, and religion. The construction of a legal framework and interventions on prevention, and participation are only a few of the tactics the government, projects and programs, pressure groups, and civil society organizations have utilized to lessen gender-based violence.

The methodological tool used in this study was the Gender Action Learning System (GALs) focusing on the gender justice diamond tool, gender challenge action tree and the multilane vision journey. Focus group discussions were held with the participants and some community-led discussions. The study's findings indicate that women's labour burden, sexual abuse, polygamous marriage, low decision-making and leadership of women and youth as well as low women's economic empowerment are some of the causes of gender-based violence in the household and the communities. Households and communities should try to reduce alcohol intake, community support systems should be created and respect for human rights should be encouraged if gender-based violence is to be curtailed.

Keywords: *Gender, Violence, Action, Learning, Households*

INTRODUCTION

To reduce gender-based violence in families and the community, which the UN has identified as a global health and development concern (United Nations, 1989), a range of laws and public education programs have been introduced globally. According to existing research, before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 30% of women globally had experienced physical or sexual assault (Chatterji et al. 2020a; Chatterji et al. 2020b; World Health Organization 2019). The global epidemic of violence against women has gotten worse, according to UN Women (2020), particularly during Covid-19 lockdowns. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk to women and girls, worsening gender inequities worldwide (Abou-Habib et al., 2020).

Gender-based violence (GBV) is regarded to be the most under-reported form of violence in the world (Westmorland & Bows 2019), hence it is logical to assume that even more women are affected by violence than indicated by the statistics. The international community has begun to recognize GBV as a human rights violation that has detrimental effects on people's physical and mental health as well as their social and economic development (Michau & Namy, 2021). This includes nation-states, political parties, and humanitarian organizations. Violence against women is expressly acknowledged in the UN 2030 Agenda, a globally accepted framework for addressing development and environmental issues that was signed by delegates from 172 countries in 2015.

The eradication of GBV is of major concern to the international community since it is acknowledged as an obstacle to gender equality and sustainable development (United Nations, 2015). Gender equality is achieved when men and women have the same rights, opportunities, and obligations in all spheres of life, including decision-making, education, participation in politics and the economy, and health. The frequency and types of violence, particularly intimate relationship violence, vary significantly between cultures (Kishor & Johnson, 2004). There is little gender difference in the frequency of such behaviours, according to recent research conducted in the United States, and both men and women routinely shove, hit, or throw things at one another (Frieze, 2005; Frieze & Mettugh, 2005; Frieze & McHugh, 2005; Archer, 2000, 2002; Brush, 1990, 2005).

Domestic violence is defined as abuse by one person against another in an intimate relationship, including marriage, cohabitation, dating, or relationships within the family (Abramsky et al., 2011; Ellsberg et al., 2008; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006, 2013; USAID, 2006), is one of the most common forms of gender-based violence in the world. Gender-based violence is also linked to the persistence of gender inequality as well as negative health and economic outcomes for

victims, including poor physical and mental health, increased risk of HIV and other STDs, limited options for a livelihood, lower human capital, and lower productivity (GarcaMoreno et al., 2005, 2013; Moosa, 2012).

As a result, epidemic levels of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and young girls have been tolerated. Gender-based violence affects one in three women today, and victims still face stigma while offenders get away with it. Ninety-four per cent (94%) of Ghanaian children between the ages of one and fourteen are thought to have experienced gender-based violence in some way (MoGCSP, 2018). Over forty-eight per cent (48%) of Ghanaian women and girls have been sexually abused. Globally, the situation is just as dire. Six hundred and fifty (650) million women and girls worldwide get married before the age of 18, according to a 2018 report (state reference)In West and Central Africa, where this harmful practice is still common, four out of ten young women get married before turning eighteen. In addition to limiting a girl's potential, this situation results in early pregnancies, stopped education, and loneliness. All of these factors raise the possibility that women and girls will encounter domestic abuse. In the fight against gender-based violence, numerous institutions, NGOs, projects and programs, and civil society organizations have all taken the lead. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has provided funding for the Ghanaian government project, the Ghana Agriculture Sector Investment Programme, which is overseen by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. This project has also implemented interventions that help reduce inequality in households and communities. The promotion of including all kinds of disadvantaged groups in its programs is another key area of emphasis. The program has prioritized gender transformation, and to do so, it adopted and put into practice the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), one of the household techniques that IFAD promotes for its sponsored projects. The GALs were tested in two of the program's beneficiary areas, namely Kasena Nankana Municipal in Ghana's Upper East Region and Gomoa East District in the Central Region.

Different tools were used during the GALS pilot to assist transformation in various life and livelihood focus areas. The Gender Justice diamond was one of the tools used to address gender-based challenges in families and communities. In the community, both genders had the opportunity to express what they thought of one another socially. For example, it's common for girls and women to be expected to exhibit courteous behaviour, flexibility, and nurturing. Men are typically supposed to be powerful, combative, and brave. Gender role expectations exist in every country, ethnic group, and culture, but they can vary greatly among them. There was also

discussion on measures to address gender-based issues and make a commitment to deal with them.

The Concept of Gender-based Violence and its Effects on Household and the Community

Gender-based violence against women, according to the 1995 United Nations Platform for Action D.112, is "any act that results in, or is likely to result in, bodily, sexual, or psychological injury or suffering to women, including threats of such actions, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty." This definition, which resulted from the Beijing United Nations Conference on Women in 1995, offers a common understanding of the dynamics of gender-based violence and encompasses stalking, rape, coercive sex, and intimate relationship violence. Violence influenced by gender roles and social status is referred to as "gender-based violence" Not all violent acts a woman may encounter are regarded as gender-based violence against women, such as being robbed while being threatened with a weapon. A complex mixture of gender-related cultural values, beliefs, norms, and social institutions are implicitly and even explicitly supportive of intimate partner violence, leaving its victims with few options (Koss et al., 2003; Koss, et al., 1994; Russo, 2006). Particularly, the normalization, sexualization, and persistence of violence against women have all been influenced by factors such as sexual objectification, male entitlement, gender norms, and power and status disparities.

Kashani and Allan (1998), assert that exposure to family violence as a child may predispose a person to act violently as an adult. Additional research showed that children who witness family violence may experience physical (Suh & Abel, 1990) or biological (Saltzman et al., 2005) effects, emotional consequences (Hoglund & Nicholas, 1995; Wolf & Foshee, 2003), behavioural issues (Lemmey et al., 2001), delayed cognitive development (Margolin & Gordis, 2000), and difficulty with social adjustment (Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Wallace, 2002). Witnessing violence has detrimental impacts on a person's physical, psychological, and social well-being and can even cause early mortality in adulthood, according to the groundbreaking Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES, Centre for Disease Control, CDC, 2021a; Felitti et al., 1998).

For young people, the prevalence of violence in society can be a significant and unpleasant issue. Just recently has the emotional toll that family conflict takes on children been recognized (Adams, 2006; Black et al., 2010; McKinney et al., 2009; Miller-Perrin et al., 2018). The general definition of family violence is "any act or omission by persons who are cohabiting, that results in serious injury (physical or emotional) to other members of the family" (Wallace, 2002, p. 2).

Numerous children witness family violence against other family members even though they don't themselves experience it.

Approximately 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men, according to the CDC's (2021b) data, experience sexual assault, physical violence, or stalking from an intimate partner. 38 million males and over 43 million women have also experienced psychological violence. Also, Dunn (2010) claims that in 80% of family violence and 15% of households, both men and women reported being victims at least once. The National Crime Survey on Victimization (1992–2004) was used to compile these statistics (National Crime Survey on Victimization, 2022).

These numbers significantly understate the number of family violence instances to only that which is reported to the police. Given that many survivors do not report family violence issues and that family violence occurs in a cycle that begins with emotional and/or verbal abuse before becoming physically violent, we must begin researching the use of family systems theory in treating this growing population. The physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health of women is affected by sexual violence in both the short- and long term. It is a serious matter of both public health and human rights. Regardless of whether it occurs in the context of a close relationship, within a larger family or community structure, or even during times of conflict, sexual assault is a very disturbing and unpleasant experience for the victim. The World Bank reports that deaths and diseases globally resulting from violence against women and girls between the ages of 15 and 44 outnumber those resulting from cancer, traffic accidents, and malaria put together. As a result, violence is harmful to the health of women and girls (Baumgarten, 2003).

Gender-based violence has long-lasting repercussions on women's reproductive health. Among these include unwanted pregnancies, pregnancy problems, maternal fatalities, miscarriages, accidents, and STDs like HIV and AIDS. Women are less able to negotiate safe sex, the number and spacing of their children, and access to reproductive health services due to intimidation and male dominance within the family, which are compounded by gender-based violence. Many nations accept female infanticide, incest, rape, child maltreatment and prostitution, early marriage, and female genital mutilation or cutting as cultural norms. These are just a few examples of gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence has significant costs for society in addition to creating unimaginable anguish as well as bodily and psychological harm. These expenses are incurred for both the legal prosecution of gender-based violence offenders and the medical treatment of survivors of gender-based violence. In addition, there are wasted man hours and a decrease in the labour

productivity of mistreated women. All of this is detrimental to development. Women frequently use their income to support their children's survival, health, education, and career development. Because of this, they are crucial in giving children the chance for a better life and in lowering overall levels of poverty. According to research conducted in Managua, Nicaragua, abused women make almost 40% less money than other women (Baumgarten, 2003). This creates a vicious cycle where kids who suffer domestic abuse get sick more frequently and do worse in school than other kids. Thus, the prospects for family and societal development are directly impacted by violence against women.

Brief Overview of Gender Action Learning System (GALS)

GALS is a community-led empowerment system that works with both men and women to give them more control over their lives. It is flexible but organized. Because it begins with women and men as individuals rather than with households or communities, it differs from many other participatory and gender methods. It fosters the development of life and livelihood planning abilities that serve as the cornerstone of home collaboration, community collective action, and gender advocacy. Through peer diffusion, integration into other treatments, and decision-making processes, it becomes organizationally and financially sustainable after an initial "catalysing intervention" of 1-2 years.

To provide both men and women more control over their lives and to spark a long-lasting movement for gender justice, GALS is a community-led empowerment methodology. Based on a study of their current circumstances, prior accomplishments, opportunities, strengths, and difficulties, women and men construct their visions for change, along with attainable targets and road maps to work towards these ambitions. The GALS methodology offers useful tools, an all-inclusive participatory process, and a platform for individuals and groups to analyse their livelihoods from a gender perspective and take action to address gender inequalities like the division of labour and household duties between men and women, decision-making about income, expenditures, and assets, and the decrease of alcohol abuse and violence (Reemer, 2015). Breaking down gender-based obstacles on an individual level and addressing gender inequality in the family are major goals because these issues inhibit both women and men from realizing their potential.

Priorities and tactics for long-term change at the larger community, institutional, and macro levels are identified by focusing first on issues that are directly under people's control. People create their graphical plans in locally accessible notebook diaries, check them frequently, and

keep track of their progress depending on their planning requirements. Additionally, people name other members of their own families and support systems with whom they have a personal interest in discussing the gender messages and GALS technique. To enhance decision-making at all levels, communities, groups, organizations, and institutions gather and analyse collectively individual aspirations, plans, achievements, and difficulties along with peer-sharing successes. Even though they have not had the opportunity to learn to read and write, very poor people can be included as knowledgeable and respected partners in participatory planning processes through the use of diagramming tools and specific participation principles.

The Family Conflict Model Theory of Gender-based Violence

This concept holds that both partners are responsible for the violence. However, the family conflict model makes the erroneous assumption that the victim's behaviours somehow justify the batterer's abusive response. Women rarely use violence in intimate relationships, but when they do, it's usually to protect themselves from an assault. The "cycle of violence" explanation of domestic abuse and the family conflict model are closely related. This description claims that batterers engage in a "cycle of violence" that includes sporadic aggressive and regretful episodes. However, advocates in the United States discovered that this description of the assault did not reflect the realities of women. Many women claimed that their violent spouses never changed and that violence was not cyclical but rather an ongoing aspect of their lives. The overarching goal of this study is to provide answers to the issues of what can be done to reduce gender-based violence in the community.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND TOOLS USED

There are many data sources, including national surveys that are used for research on gender-based violence, and a variety of methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative, have been applied in the study of violence (Hamby, 2005). The Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, Hamby, & Warren, 2003) or their variants are arguably the behavioural checklists that are used in surveys the most frequently to evaluate the frequency, prevalence, and type of interpersonal violence. Hamby (2005) outlines the benefits and drawbacks of various data sources, including behavioural checklists. These drawbacks and benefits include underreporting, false-negative and false-positive issues, issues with referent periods, reporting load and respondent fatigue, overly brief or poorly worded questions, social norms' effects on reporting, and distortions that can occur in retrospective memory of past events.

The approach to addressing gender-based violence with the GASIP project is to adopt and implement Household methodologies or systems that would promote gender and livelihood justice through a gender transformation. The Household methodology applied here was the Gender Action Learning System being promoted by IFAD in its projects. The Gender Action Learning System (GALS) involves the application of diagram tools and processes in a participatory manner among communities, households and individuals to build the capacity of men and women to be able to take more control over their lives. It is a community-led empowerment methodology that gives community members at the household groups and community level the opportunity to assess their situations and plans to break the barriers to development. The tools that were applied in empowering these communities to address gender-based violence within their homes and personal lives in the GASIP project communities are the Gender Justice Diamond, the Gender Challenge action tree and the multilane vision Journey. The method used was community meetings and Focused Group Discussions (FGD) involving men and women in separate groups. The number of participants for each group; that is for men and women, was 25 each from the community of Postin in the Gomoa East district of the Central region of Ghana. Each of the discussion sessions took one hour and it was done for two days.

*The issues identification process using The Gender Justice diamond tool*

In this study, the focus is on one such process of applying the gender justice diamond in a community called Postin in the Gomoa East District of the central region of Ghana. This will be a case study among other communities that had this process applied. The process aims to facilitate the identification of concrete indicators about gender which can be used for monitoring and tracking change and also identify what the progress has been and refinement of indicators for future monitoring concerning ongoing project interventions.

In the Postin community, a community engagement process was carried out in a meeting to apply the process of the gender justice diamond tool. The goal of the tool was to facilitate the community and households to identify gender-based issues and plan to address them; the group were asked to represent 2 things each in a drawing that make them proud or the positive side of being a woman or man (male or female) and also 2 things that make them feels sad or feels bad that is the negative side of being a woman or man (male or female). The presentation from these community participants was revealing. They were then asked to put weight or vote on each issue to prioritize them according to the weight or votes to reveal the seriousness of such issues. Each participant in both groups, male and female had 5 scores or votes and they were asked to vote

on the issues and decide how much vote or weight they decided to put on each issue. In the end, the results were that all the issues with high votes on both sides agreed to be put on a mother diamond and from there, a Gender challenge Action tree was used to analyse the root cause of each of the issues and how they are linked and then identify and decide on solutions to resolve them.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

During the plenary, the focused groups were facilitated to present their findings from the development of the gender justice diamond in their groups by teasing out the common and the most voted or weighted issues. Paramount of the issues were picked and harmonized into a mother diamond placing them at
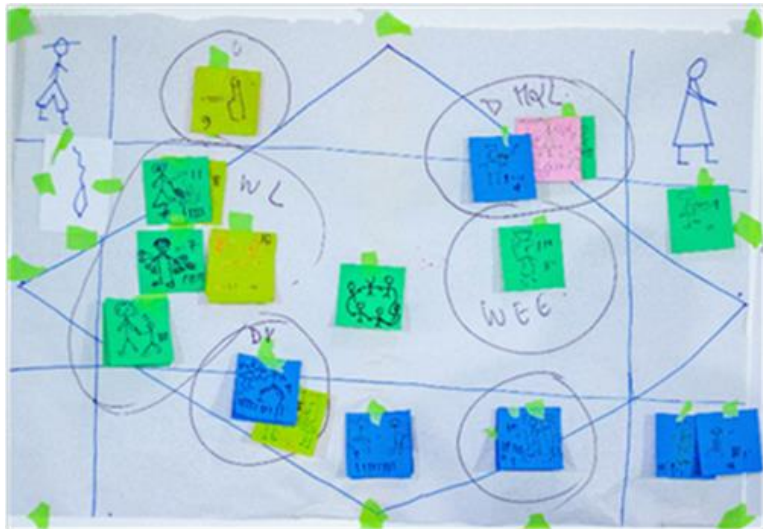
who is more responsible to resolve such issues. And who is affected by such an issue male or female? The most prevalent issue picked from a list of issues was domestic violence. Linked to this issue were Polygamy, women's labour burden, sexual abuse, alcoholism, low decision-making and leadership of women, and low women's economic empowerment. Domestic violence was seen as the big issue that is caused by the rest of the issues identified. It was discussed extensively and agreed that domestic violence happens when any of the above situations or indicators are present. Those indicators identified and discussed as being linked to domestic violence as below:

how domestic violence appears to be in the Gomoa Potsin community

Many gender-based challenges, for example, gender-based violence, often appear so complex and entrenched that it is difficult to see a way forward. In the Challenge Action Tree, the issues were looked at from the Justice Diamond not as problems to depress community participants, but as challenges which can be addressed if it is well thought through and have the determination and support among households and individuals. Here is the tool used to examine strategies for addressing the gender challenges and changes identified in the Gender Diamonds; this is the process concerning the GALS facilitators manual (rocky road to diamond dreams – GALs phase

1 pages 134 and 135). The aim of the Gender Challenge action tree includes the following.

- *improving understanding of gender opportunities and challenges which people face;*

- *improving understanding of the types of gender strategies people think they can implement before asking for organisational support.*

- *helping people to analyse the reasons for and interrelations between different dimensions of the gender challenges they face;*

- *providing a pictorial basis for sharing and exchanging ideas for actions to address different dimensions of gender challenges;*

- *identifying action commitments which they can take immediately after the event to improve the middle lane highway.*

1) **Women's labour burden**. The Gomoa Potsin woman is expected to take care of the family's nutritional needs, ensure proper sanitation both inside and outside the home, ensure the children's and occasionally the father's hygiene, support the family's financial and economic needs, and participate in social events like weddings and funerals. The incapacity of the woman to successfully balance these duties can lead to a situation where she will face violence. When she is believed to be failing in these roles, family members could abuse her rights. If she is unable to perform successfully here and is frequently accused of being lazy while she is severely overloaded with her tasks, her in-laws may start to treat her negatively. When the food is running low, the clothes are not washed, and she is running late to the farm, some husbands even go as far as to beat their wives and female children. These debates were passionate and emotional. Because it was considered to be a more acceptable occasion and forum for men and women to discuss and reach a resolution to this problem, a participant from Potsin who was also a widow shared what it's like for women when she lost practically all of the assets she and her husband had accumulated to the in-laws when the husband died.

> *"After my husband died, a week after the burial, I saw a car packed beside the house with the uncles, aunties and siblings of my husband around it. What were they talking about, it was who takes what of his property. They never involved me. When I approached and tried to ask why, one of the in-laws asked me, do women working in the home bring money or assets? You are a housewife and so own no property. All belong to our son or brother and you belong to another family that is where you came from so, we are leaving nothing for you except the house because of the children he left behind. My eyes were filled with tears but I tried to push them back. I*

> *asked myself when would women's unpaid jobs be valued and seen as income, or savings, if I never cooked, and had done all the domestic work I would have been able to have a livelihood for myself. Now see where I am after he asked me to stop my bakery business and try to take good care of the family and I accepted. Now all is taken away not even money left to start my bakery. Why are we wicked to our daughters, wives and sisters? So, I am happy that today this is discussed here. If I offered those services outside the home, I would have made money that could buy assets and property. Please let's appreciate the work women do and support, otherwise, you would have paid for them"*

While she was recounting her story, some heads were bowed and her eyes were beginning to be filled with tears as if it happened just the very day. The unpaid labour of women seems not to be recognised, appreciated or paid for but instead invites pain and sorrow and sometimes physical abuse.

2) **Sexual Abuse**: Very linked to women labour burdened as the community discussed is sexual abuse. It was revealed that when the woman, is very exhausted due to the work burden both inside and outside the home from dawn to dusk, then her mood, appetite and urge for sex dwindles. Here, she may attempt to reject sex or deny the husband sex. When this happens there could be an attempted application of force to ensure that it happens. This is surely a clear violation of her rights and was agreed in the meeting, to be violence against her.

Both men and women discussed how sexual abuse could occur among couples at home:

a) When one partner is frequently demanding and having frequent sex against the will of the other

b) The woman is denied sex for a long time due to migration of the spouse or infidelity

c) The man is denied sex because the woman feels exhausted

d) Attempting sex during mensuration

e) Spousal rape

f) One partner suffering from sexually transmitted diseases like candida commonly suffered by women that put the partner off

Participants of the focused group discussed how different is sexual abuse from other forms of gender-based violence they had identified in their discussions. From the focused groups' discussion; it was realised that Sexual abuse is different from other forms of violence

because:

- It's not usually openly and freely discussed
- Other forms of abuse are likely to be visible but not sexual abuse
- Victims may not be ashamed to talk about other forms of abuse like beating, verbal abuse, economic abuse etc but find it shameful to talk about sexual abuse
- Other forms of abuse or violation can easily be discussed with mediators who may try to intervene or intercede on the other behalf but sexual abuse is not resolved openly
- Sexual abuse may lead to other forms of abuse; physical assault, verbal abuse, and economic abuse

3) Polygamous marriage: The groups both recognized violence in polygamous homes. This could be conflict among rivals that ends in a physical fight or the use of violent and abusive language. The man may likely love or favour one spouse more than the other and this could create conflict that may result in violating each other. Unnecessary competition within polygamous couples can cause violence and tension within the homes

4) Low decision-making and leadership of women and youth: In the Postin community the meeting that was used to discuss this made it clear that women's participation in decision-making at the home, group and family level is extremely low. In the meeting, besides the Female Head of the Department of Agriculture in the District, there was no female in a leadership position there. There is a chief and his council of elders, the local assembly

representatives, group leaders, household heads, youth leaders and all other community members including men, women and youth. Once a woman is not in decision-making, decisions likely to be taken may be against her. They gave an example, that women may prefer water and sanitation facilities in the community and home over electricity. But the man who decides will still go ahead to bring electricity to the home or community because he wants to enjoy fun, TV, charge his phone and use more gadgets. Though this is good for the women as well it's not a priority over water and sanitation facilities which may be cheaper to deal with. Deciding for women, youth and children without taking into account their needs is an abuse of power at home and outside the home. Women, children and youth are to remain silent when decisions are to be taken and must accept the results of their decisions whether good or bad. Refusing to obey or accept decisions at home or community could bring serious consequences which may be seen as disobedience, disrespect, disregard and contesting the power of the decision-maker. This they said can lead to beating, refusal to provide financially for the needs of the family, banishment, divorce and even stigmatisation where you could be branded with name calling.

5) **Low women's economic empowerment:** It was realised that most women in the community were not having any better source of income and even if they had it was just small businesses on the tabletop or the ground. They wondered about the miracle they were performing to absorb the expenditure of the family. When you have no economic power, you are voiceless whether man or woman they tried to put it. They discussed and during this analysis, it came to light that, women had limited access to and control of economic resources. They mostly in the community supported the livelihood development of the men and provided most of the farm labour such that the time to develop their own is very limited. One will surely become tired of continuous demand for money and will violently react when one thinks it has become too much of a burden on one person.

Forms in which domestic violence takes place among men and women.

The community members in a meeting discussed and agreed on the forms of domestic violence that happen among families in the community. Generally described domestic violence as all forms of acts within parties that make one a victim and the other a perpetrator or an accused and the accuser which may result in injuries or death, emotional torture, Stigmatization, and denial to enjoy certain basic human rights within the community and the homes. They presented that domestic violence is an issue that destroys their identity as men or women and breaks or harms

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their relationships as husband and wife. These were descriptions of issues that bordered on their identity and feelings.

The forms of violence that were identified among couples and discussed are as follows:

- Fighting physically may result in injuries
- Sexual abuse which includes Rape
- Verbal abuse which includes insults, shouting, hot exchanges and commanding
- Economic abuse that is refusing or denying to take financial responsibility for the family

Proposing solutions and commitment

The next activity in this process after discussing the root causes of their challenge Action Trees was to discuss the proposed solutions as well as make individual and community commitments presented in their challenge action trees from the women and men groups. The solutions proposed on each issue linked to domestic violence as a causal or contributing factor were Highlighted as follows:

1) Sexual abuse:

- Avoid or reduce alcoholism among men, women and the youth.
- Keep very good personal hygiene and treat any sexually transmitted diseases or infections
- Create a mutual and cordial environment that will make sex mutually beneficial
- Accept contraceptive use, to ease the fear of unwanted pregnancy from women and youth
- Create a family or community support system that gives a confidential platform to report or receive and support complaints of victims of sexual harassment. This proposed solution was a result of a submission from a woman as seen below:

"When you are sexually assaulted in this community whether, by a husband or another person, you have no one to turn to for help, or no shoulder to lean on to cry. When you use the formal system like the police domestic violence unit then they stigmatise you for the visibility of the police coming after the man who did that. Then you suffer the traumatic act in silence"

2) *Verbal or physical abuse*:

- See women's and other vulnerable rights as human rights,
- Respect all manner of persons and listen to them

- Discuss to seek an opinion from the assumed offender to understand

- Sanction perpetrators of such persons who physically assault their victims

- Create a community-level gender base team, to be a point of call for victims and perpetrators to reach out to for counselling and support to recover physically and emotionally. They agreed that they both may be passing through emotional and physical trauma and would need someone to talk to or condone to express themselves. If this is absent the victims and the perpetrators suffer emotionally in silence without healing which might create a conducive atmosphere for continuous violence at home.

3) *Women's Labour/work burden:* The intensive discussion on this issue led to the buy-in that this is a problem that must be resolved. They realised that certain gender norms as well as social norms within their communities were what contributed to the work burden of women. Such norms have been long overdue for change since they now live in the era of modernity. Burdening women with all those responsibilities creates a lot of expectations that they must meet. The community in their submissions made it clear that they were made to believe some of the norms were taboos that when you go against them you would suffer spiritual punishment. But now with the technology they watch, see and hear some transformations that happen in other countries and cultures that are more advanced in development than their communities. In proposing solutions here are suggested changes they laid out for their members to adopt:

    - Men and young men including boys should start to support their wives, mothers and sisters with some domestic work like cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children and the elderly ones.

    - They should also take an interest in the financial ventures that they engage in and support them. Help to provide enough food for the family such that mothers are not burdened to endure the family, especially children.

    - Rotate roles for learning and experiencing the pain or benefit that comes with it. Women can go to the farm, and take care of the livestock as in the Postin community by norm only males raise and care for livestock. Or men cook and serve the women while they clean and care for children.

    In General, It was concluded that there cannot be a happy family when there is an unbalanced distribution of work and one only depends on the other for most activities to be done and enjoy more pleasure than the other. This creates a real

atmosphere for violence at home. Women were seen applauding the outcome of these discussions. While they did this a man among them started to shout 'Women are servants to men and must continue to serve, why are you liberating them, they will overturn this community and we cannot realise any longer who is a man and who is not"

This created a lot of noise as people reacted to his voice as he raised it with anger and frustration. But the chief in their mist began to speak:

After the noise died off, the chief of the community, **Nana Kwadofrakye V, Mankrado, Akyempim traditional counsel** who had enrolled as a GALS champion began to speak. He said, I am the paramount chief not just for this community but a whole traditional area. I have chiefs who are under me that suggest the authority I have. I used to have same mindset, by how I was raised and informed to behave and think. With what you just said women are to serve, are they not humans. I see many of you, while the woman is labouring on the farm, market and home to bring life to the family, you sit under trees and sheds playing cards, draughts, and all sort of games over beer or other forms of alcohol. When you get intoxicated then you begin to pounce on the women and children when your return. You groan on everyone and they begin to find cover as soon as they hear your footsteps. The entire home which was lovely while you were away is now full of tension, fear filled with total silence. What is heard is your commands and shouts. while you never provided, yet you command for food to be brought. I am a chief that has so much authority, that I use to feel like I must be served. With GALS I now understand that I am not to be served but I must serve. My home is now a happy one. I encourage you all. Live the pride, the stigmatization and the name calling of those who have already started to transform their attitudes and take a big leap to work to lessen the burden of your wives and children, I now do. Even if my wife is busy preparing lunch, I do not allow her to close her shop I sit in to sell. I hear some comments that I have disgrace the stool but I tell you I am living an example for you all to follow, Lets change our mind set, let uss come one day to discuss how to change or remove some norms that are harmful to women and children.
This brought an applause again and this time everyone did, not only women.

4)

Low decision-making and leadership of women and youth: On this subject, the discussion was on who is most affected by the decisions I make. The response was women and children. The next discussion is how to know if what you are deciding on will yield the needed benefit for those whom it's intended for. They sat back for a moment and began to reflect and agreed that it was wrong for anybody to think that he understands it all and so can satisfy any other with his decisions

Planning for change: The next tool that was applied, not the same day but the next day, was the multilane highway vision journey. This is a planning tool that allows individuals households

and groups to plan their livelihoods, happy families and empowerment. The information gathered during the application and discussion of the Gender Justice diamond and the Gender Challenge Action Tree were used as inputs to their planning using the multilane vision journey tool. With this tool, the top lane is for their livelihood planning, the middle lane is for happy family planning and the last lane is for their empowerment.
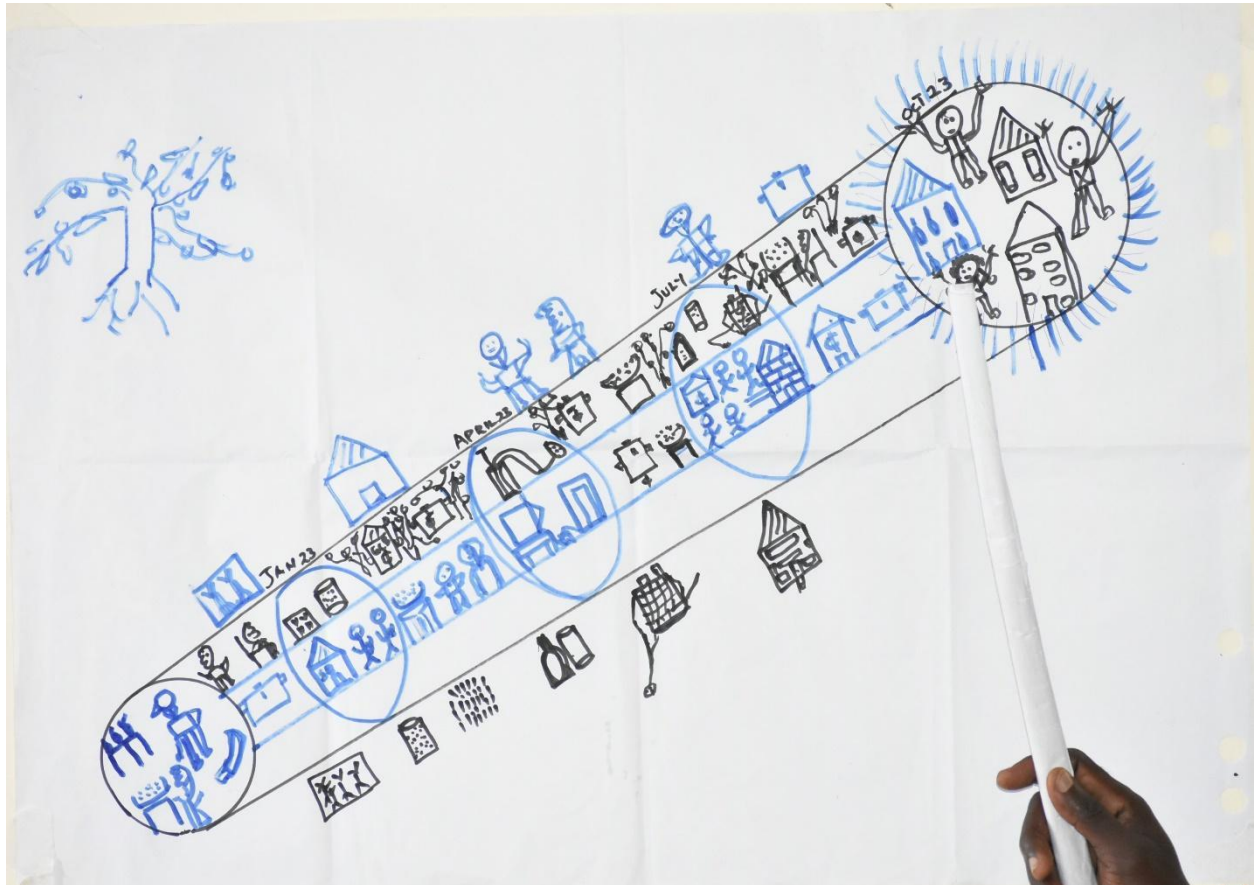
There was a community-level plan on the general targets and timelines for the commonest livelihood which is rice farming and also the middle to address the gender-based issues relating to gender-based violence. Households and individuals had the same role where they developed vision journeys for

The results of the process: Following up with the communities after 4 months to find out what had happened from this process it was realised that the following had happened:

I.   **Increased Women Participation in Household Decision-Making.** Decisions on the choice of crops, seeds, variety, quantity and what to do with the products have been jointly decided by both men and women at the household level.

II. **Change in social norms.** Women had ventured into male-dominated investments such as livestock production (cattle and goat rearing). Some men had started jointly owning

assets with their wives and having both names in the documentation of such assets. This was influenced by their inheritance systems which allowed only males to inherit the property of their brothers, sons or uncles due to the patrilineal inheritance system. The story of the widow during the focused group discussion motivated this change.

III. **Reduced social vices:** e.g Reduce Alcoholism and domestic violence (3 persons)

IV. **Increased Households Investment:** spouses were observed to be jointly deciding on household income such as investment in livestock, and dry season farms (irrigation).

V. **Increased household assets building:** families have been observed to jointly decide on improving household shelters such as investment in concrete structures by moulding cement blocks, purchase of lands, and construction of concrete homes.

VI. **Changing roles and reduced household labour burden:** both men and women are participating in stereotyped roles in the household. Household tasks are observed as non-sex-specific compared to the former days. Households interviewed indicated shared domestic duties such as fetching water, firewood, cooking, livestock care payment of school fees etc. This is what a 35-year man (name withheld) from Postin in the Gomoa East District reported:

> My wife began to wonder what had changed me. She was not in the meeting when this entire process of discussing gender violence happened. She is not in the picture of what we the men and especially myself committed when I left the meetings. I decided to stop taking her money and began to support her business. I came to aid her in drying the clothing while she was washing, and I stopped going to the studio for sports betting. I am mostly at home during my leisure time with the children while she is in the market. I cooked dinner ready before she arrived at the market. She exclaimed; indeed, change has come and this is a positive change. I feel like I am in a different home. She added. The joy on her face could be seen very visibly. Her confidence is back because I heard that abuse and violence make them lose their identity. I am happy that there is happiness in my home but worried about the stigma from my peers. They have changed my name. They now call me Akua Junior meaning the Junior sister of my wife Akua. They say I am beginning to be a woman. From the beginning, I felt shy about that, but seeing the results I am more convinced that they need it than me.

VII. **Improved household savings**. Increased savings in community-based savings group per week, and saving in kind as a result of improved planning in the household.

VIII.   **Increased financial inclusion:** increased number of bank accounts either jointly or individually by household members

IX.   **Improved household relationships**: family reunion, resolved conflicts, improved communication and planning

X.   **Enhanced openness and trust among** declaration of assets and financial resources through the application of the gender balance tree.

CONCLUSION

It is known that gender-based violence is pervasive and has negative effects. Because it prevents people from realizing their full potential, which is necessary for progress; gender-based violence impedes development. As a result of the conversations, it was learned that domestic violence has a detrimental impact on people's ability to work, go to school, or take care of household responsibilities, as well as on their levels of confidence and feelings of living in terror. Additionally, both for women and men, the effects of physical violence were more severe than those of other types of violence. Domestic violence, along with other types of gender-based violence, is now acknowledged by civil society and governments around the world as a violation of fundamental human rights and a global problem. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to protect the advancements made in the prevention of gender-based violence to promote gender equality and empower everyone.

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