

MALE SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS:  
BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY ACTION AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE  
THE CASE OF AWASO, GHANA

Geneviève Proulx

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
on October 28, 2011

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in Globalization and International Development

School of International Development and Global Studies  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
University of Ottawa



uOttawa

L'Université canadienne  
Canada's university

© Geneviève Proulx, Ottawa, Canada, 2012

## Abstract

Efforts to increase girls' access to quality education focus mostly on removing obstacles linked to poverty and discrimination, and often fail to acknowledge the violence many of them suffer in, around, and on the way to and from school. The objective of the present research is to examine the barriers to combating male sexual and gender-based violence in schools at the community level, and to consider community and expert-issued suggestions on removing these obstacles in the Ghanaian context. It does so through the lens of the Gender and Development approach and uses the Ecological Model of Gender-based Violence. Inspired by the standpoint feminist approach to research, data collection in Awaso and Accra involved classroom observation in four (4) Junior high school classes, 19 qualitative interviews with government and civil society personnel, and four (4) focus group discussions with parents, students and teachers. The findings show that barriers to eliminating male sexual and gender-based violence in Awaso include lack of knowledge of girls' rights to protection from violence, of consequences of violence against women and girls and of reporting mechanisms. Other barriers identified were lack of resources at the family and government levels, traditional values of family, community and religion, and social perceptions of both gender hierarchies and violence against women and girls. Gendered power dynamics underlie these barriers and hinder progress on the issue of girls' protection from violence, but groups of Ghanaian women, girls, men and boys are challenging these dynamics and finding ways to make schools safer for girls. Their strategies for change are also featured in the present research.

## Acknowledgements / Remerciements

Tout d'abord, je tiens à remercier ma directrice de thèse, la professeure Andrea Martinez, pour son soutien et ses conseils tout au long de mes études de maîtrise. Merci pour votre générosité et votre dévouement, et pour les nombreuses lectures réfléchies de mes chapitres. Merci également de m'avoir fait connaître avec rigueur et passion les perspectives féministes, qui ont réellement changé ma façon de voir le monde. Je tiens également à remercier les membres de mon comité de thèse, les professeur(e)s Richard Maclure et Nathalie Mondain, pour leur coopération et leur rétroaction constructive.

J'aimerais aussi remercier les membres de ma famille pour leur amour et leur appui sans failles, ainsi que pour leurs mots d'encouragement précieux. À ma mère, Suzanne, merci d'être une femme à la fois forte et douce, qui vit sa vie selon ses rêves et convictions. À mon père, Jean-Luc, tu es un modèle hors pair pour mes frères et pour d'autres hommes. Merci de leur montrer le vrai sens de l'égalité entre les genres, du partenariat et du respect. À Marie, Alex et Félix, merci de croire en moi, de partager mes joies, de m'encourager et d'offrir un espace de discussion autour de la table de cuisine.

Lee, merci mille fois de m'avoir épaulée à travers ce processus. Ton amour, ta patience et ton encouragement, ainsi que ton appui lors de mon séjour au Ghana et à mon retour, ont été essentiels à l'aboutissement de ce projet. Nos inestimables échanges au cours des dernières années m'ont aidée à recréer une image du monde plus informée et nuancée, tout en conservant l'optimisme que l'on partage. Je t'en suis profondément reconnaissante.

Heartfelt thanks to my friends who were there for me through reverse culture shock, cheered me on through the writing process and reviewed parts of this thesis (you know who you are!). You're simply the best.

To the Education community at the Canadian International Development Agency, thank you for sharing your knowledge and passion for education as a way to improve livelihoods, reduce poverty and increase autonomy. Your trust on the Safe and Secure Schools file has been a tremendous contribution to my professional development, and I am deeply grateful for it.

To the Ghanaian women, girls, men and boys who took time from their busy lives to participate in interviews, focus group discussions and classroom observation, thank you for your honesty, your time, and your courage to tell it like it is. Your sincerity and openness contributed immensely to this thesis and to my understanding of male sexual and gender-based violence.

Finally, to my friends in Awaso, Bibiani and Accra, thank you for showing me the true meaning of Ghanaian hospitality and friendship, and for making me feel at home. To the warm and smiling people of Awaso and Bibiani, thanks for showing me that there are still places where people place great value on community and share a sense of humanity.

## Table of Contents

### Contents

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REMERCIEMENTS .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES .....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1    VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN SCHOOLS .....	2
1.2    RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	7
1.3    AWASO AND ITS GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT .....	10
1.4    THESIS OVERVIEW .....	13
<b>CHAPTER II: CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1    GIRLS' EDUCATION IN GHANA .....	15
2.1.1 <i>Progress and current situation</i> .....	15
2.1.2 <i>Challenges and barriers</i> .....	18
2.2    EXISTING POLICIES, ACTS AND REGULATIONS ON SEXUAL ABUSE OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN GHANA	21
2.2.1 <i>International Instruments</i> .....	21
2.2.2 <i>National Instruments</i> .....	23
2.3    SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS IN SCHOOLS IN GHANA .....	26
2.3.1 <i>Basic information on previous research</i> .....	26
2.3.2 <i>Occurrence of sexual violence in society and in schools</i> .....	28
2.3.3 <i>Causes of sexual violence in schools</i> .....	32
2.3.4 <i>Reporting sexual violence in schools</i> .....	34
2.3.5 <i>Reasons for not reporting sexual violence</i> .....	36
2.3.6 <i>Perpetrators of sexual violence in schools</i> .....	37
2.4    CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	38
<b>CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>40</b>
3.1    GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT.....	40
3.2    MEN, WOMEN AND VIOLENCE IN THE PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM.....	43
3.2.1 <i>The Ecological Model of Gender-based Violence</i> .....	43
3.2.2 <i>Gender roles and the patriarchal system</i> .....	45
3.2.3 <i>Male sexual and gender-based violence</i> .....	47
3.2.4 <i>The victimization of women and girls</i> .....	56
3.2.5 <i>Fighting male sexual and gender-based violence: theoretical frameworks for prevention and victim support</i> .....	57
3.3    CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	62

<b>CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>64</b>
4.1 THE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE .....	64
4.2 CASE STUDY IN AWASO, GHANA .....	73
4.2.1 <i>Pre-research</i> .....	74
4.2.2 <i>Data collection</i> .....	75
4.2.3 <i>Data analysis</i> .....	82
4.2.4 <i>Sharing results</i> .....	85
4.3 MATERIAL AND EQUIPMENT.....	86
4.4 LIMITATIONS.....	86
4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	88
4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	90
<b>CHAPTER V: DATA ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>92</b>
5.1 BARRIERS TO FIGHTING MALE SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS IN AWASO, GHANA.....	97
5.1.1 <i>Lack of knowledge</i> .....	98
5.1.2 <i>Lack of financial resources</i> .....	101
5.1.3 <i>Deep-set values: family, community and religion</i> .....	107
5.1.4 <i>Gendered hierarchies and popular perceptions of violence against women and girls</i> .....	113
5.2 LIFTING BARRIERS: SUGGESTIONS FOR FIGHTING MALE SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS AND IMPROVING GIRL CHILD PROTECTION IN AWASO.....	127
5.2.1 <i>Filling the knowledge gap: training, sensitization and empowerment</i> .....	128
5.2.2 <i>Making it happen: Financing the change</i> .....	132
5.2.3 <i>Harnessing the culture’s strengths: Using family, community and religious values to uphold girls’ rights</i> .....	133
5.2.4 <i>Respect within gender hierarchies: making it work the Ghanaian way</i> .....	135
5.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY: RECAPITULATING PARTICIPANTS’ REMARKS IN LIGHT OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND FEMINIST THEORIES ON MALE SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE .....	138
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>APPENDIXES.....</b>	<b>151</b>
APPENDIX 1: CONSENT FORM.....	151
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW / FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDES.....	154
APPENDIX 3: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATION .....	166
APPENDIX 4: DATA ANALYSIS: PRELIMINARY CODING STRUCTURE .....	168
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>170</b>

## List of Tables and Figures

### Tables

Table 1:	Extent of sexual violence against women in Ghana.....	29
Table 2:	Incidence and types of sexual abuse in schools in Ghana.....	31
Table 3:	Reasons given by parents for fearing for children’s safety in the school environment ....	32
Table 4:	Percentage of survivors who reported sexual violence according to type of violence suffered, and person the abuse was reported to.....	35
Table 5:	Participant sample .....	76

### Figures

Figure 1:	Map of Awaso, Ghana.....	10
Figure 2:	Ecological Model of Gender-based Violence .....	44
Figure 3:	Final coding structure.....	84

## List of Acronyms

CAT:	Community Advocacy Teams
CEDAW :	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRRESCENT:	Child Research and Resource Centre
CSO :	Civil society organization
DOVVSU:	Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit
EFA:	Education for All
ESP:	Education Strategic Plan
FCUBE:	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme
GAD:	Gender and Development
GDP:	Gross domestic product
GEO:	Girls' Education Officer
GES:	Ghana Education Service
GEU:	Girls' Education Unit
GNECC :	Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
GPRS:	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GPS:	Ghana Police Service
HIV/AIDS:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ICT:	Information and Communication Technologies
IGWG:	Interagency Gender Working Group
JHS:	Junior High School
KG:	Kindergarten
MDG :	Millennium Development Goals
NGO :	Non-governmental organization
PPE:	Peer-Parent Educators
PTA:	Parent-Teacher Association
SHS:	Senior High School
SMC:	School Management Committee
SVAGS :	Sexual Violence against Girls in Schools
TLM:	Teaching and Learning Materials
UN Women:	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCRC :	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organization
UNGEI:	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF :	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development
WHO:	World Health Organization
WUSC:	World University Service of Canada

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Quality education is a fundamental human right for all children and is the *sine qua non* of the improvement of living standards the world over. It is recognized in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It is also the essence of the Education for All (EFA) movement, a global commitment which aims to fulfill the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015 (UNESCO, n.d.). Furthermore, it is a necessary element in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the most widely known multilateral engagement today through which the international community has committed itself to improving social and economic conditions of those living in the world's poorest countries (United Nations, n.d.). Following decades of research on poverty and underdevelopment in the Global South by academic and civil society researchers alike, girls' education is now perceived by the international community as one of the key solutions to poverty and underdevelopment. Some authors even consider gender equality in education the linchpin of the MDGs (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008: 363). Indeed, the concrete impact of girls' education on hygiene, nutrition, HIV / AIDS, gender equality, maternal, newborn and child health and economic growth is now widely recognized. Despite this recognition of the value of educating girls, the latter represent 53% of the 67 million children who are out of school worldwide, 3.6 million of whom are absent from primary school classrooms due to gender inequalities (UNESCO, 2011a). The gender parity ratio in Sub-Saharan Africa is 0.79 in kindergarten, 0.91 in primary school and 0.79 in secondary school (UNESCO, 2011b : 1, 2, 14). These gender disparities in education are particularly distressing in light of the

numerous commitments of the international community, which has been especially devoted to achieving progress in girls' education since 2000.

Several factors contribute to differences in enrolment rates for boys and girls, and many obstacles still hinder the latter's access to quality education. Poverty and discrimination are two components that are widely documented in the literature and are the focus of many development projects. Indeed, numerous families are struggling to pay their children's tuition fees, and families living in poverty are often forced to choose which children to educate and to which level. Cultural influences often come into play in their decision and lead them to favour boys over girls. Decidedly, many societies give clear preference to male children in the education sphere, based in part on their conviction that boys have a better chance of success both in school and in the labor market. Girls, on the other hand, are believed to benefit less from formal education because, when they become adults, they tend to stay home as caretakers or work in trades that do not require formal schooling. Parents' decision to keep girls at home is a reality in many countries, even in those which have abolished the direct costs of schooling since fees continue to be collected for the purchase of uniforms, textbooks, examination fees, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), transportation and dormitories.

### **1.1 Violence against girls in schools**

A major barrier to girls' education that has received much less academic and programmatic attention than poverty and discrimination is violence in schools. This violence includes all forms of harm, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as well as exploitation and

neglect, experienced by children and youth in, around and on the way to and from school<sup>1</sup> (Pinheiro, 2006). Regardless of the type of school-based violence, these actions represent ways in which a person with a certain degree of power intentionally hurts a person who is more vulnerable and asserts control over him or her. Although it affects boys and girls to a different degree, girls often fall lower than boys in social hierarchies, and therefore tend to face the highest incidence of violence. Gender norms, traditional practices, poverty and a culture of violence all contribute to violence in schools. The UN Study on Violence against Children confirms that violence has an impact on a child's ability to get to and from school, to learn effectively while in school, and to remain in school long enough to reap the benefits of education (Pinheiro, 2006). Studies have also shown that violence is a major cause of declining enrolment, attendance and graduation rates among schoolgirls (ActionAid International, 2008: 2).

This study focuses on sexual violence, described as any sexual activity which is either unwanted or for which acceptance is obtained by force, power or coercion, as well as sexually explicit verbal comments and repeated unwanted sexual advances (Management Systems International, 2008: 5). Although sexual violence against girls in schools is specific in that it concerns a unique and a limited age group, it is a manifestation of the broader problem of gender-based violence in society and shares its causes. As explained in the UN Study on Violence Against Children (Pinheiro, 2006: 111),

---

<sup>1</sup> While cases of violence occurring in schools and in teachers' houses are easily categorized as violence in schools (Antonowicz, 2010), there is challenge in classifying relationships with fellow students and men from the community, as they may sometimes happen on the way to and from school and at other times in moments unrelated to the pupil's school day. For this reason, the present study includes such relationships as fitting in the violence in schools category, which seems fitting due to the fact that they often have an impact on the girls' ability to succeed in her education.

[t]he levels and patterns of violence in schools often reflect the levels and patterns of violence in countries, communities and families. These, in turn, reflect prevailing political and socio-economic conditions, social attitudes, cultural traditions and values, and laws and law enforcement.

In other words, children internalize and reproduce the social attitudes and behaviours of those around them, and schools become microcosms in which children and teachers reproduce their society's hierarchies. The Ecological Model of Gender-based Violence (USAID & IGWG, n.d.; presented further in the document) explains how acts of violence against girls and women stem from systemic societal factors, such as traditional beliefs that lead to sexist and unequal social contexts. While these traditional beliefs dictate how and what young people learn about sexuality, the context of rigid gender roles subjects them to strong conformist social pressures that normalize and legitimize gender-based violence as a feature of normal relations between men and women (Mugawe & Powell, 2006).

In most countries, sexual violence of all kinds has something to do with power. Men usually have more power than women, adults have more than children, and the rich have more than the poor. As such, most perpetrators of sexual violence are male, and include teachers and other school staff, students, bus drivers, “sugar daddies”<sup>2</sup> and other community members. Along the same lines, those who suffer violence are often female, younger than the perpetrator, and of lower socio-economic background. Because it highlights the gendered nature of the phenomenon, the term male sexual and gender-based violence in schools will be used, along with the term sexual violence against girls in schools, throughout this thesis. Details on terminology will be provided in the Theoretical Framework.

---

<sup>2</sup> A term commonly used to describe relatively wealthy community members who pay girls to have sex with them.

Before addressing the issue of male sexual and gender-based violence in schools, it is important to remember that sexual violence happens regardless of the geographic, ethnic, religious and economic context. Even in societies in which gender equality is deemed to be acquired, sexual violence remains very difficult for its survivors to discuss, whether they are children, youth or adults.

Reliable data on the prevalence of male sexual and gender-based violence in schools is very hard to find due to the sensitive nature of the topic, considered taboo in many societies and rarely discussed. Acts of sexual violence do, however, occur around the globe (Management Systems International, 2008: iii). UNICEF indicates that approximately 20% of women and five (5) to 10% of men worldwide were sexually abused during their childhood (UNICEF, 2006a: 5). Indeed, most experts agree that girls and young women are much more at risk of sexual violence in schools than boys and young men (Mirsky, 2003: 1). Their lesser status as females and their reduced access to income-generating activities explain this vulnerability (Leach, 2004: 1). Some parents may even encourage their children to engage in transactional sex to pay their school fees because they can no longer afford to do so. Teachers' low salaries and the fact that they are at times posted to rural areas, which is not seen by teachers as being as favourable as working in urban locations, contributes to justifying sexual violence on their part. In Ghana, it has given rise to the term "bush allowance", where transactional sex with students is seen as compensation for difficult living conditions (Massart, 2007: 4).

This research focuses on sexual violence against female students, who face higher instances of sexual violence and encounter multiple barriers on the road to graduation.

A recent ActionAid study has demonstrated that violence against girls in schools is not limited to a certain group. While girls who are subject to other systems of oppression such as race or poverty are more prone to being victimized (Amnesty International, 2008), violence remains a reality for girls of all ages, ethnicities, class, caste and religion (ActionAid International, 2004: 4). Carol Bellamy, Former Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), confirms the spread of violence against girls: "In today's world, to be born female is to be born high risk. Every girl grows up under the threat of violence...This chronic condition of violence amounts to the most pervasive human rights violation in the world today" (Mugawe & Powell, 2006 : 2).

Sexual violence against girls in schools has multiple repercussions for victims. These are wide-ranging and varied, and include physical, psychological, sexual and educational consequences (World Health Organization, 2002; Management Systems International, 2008). Physical consequences include sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy which can lead to unsafe abortion, and short and long-term physical injuries. Psychological consequences include trauma, diminished sense of self-worth, fear and insecurity, feelings of shame and guilt, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and suicide attempts. Sexual consequences can also occur. For example, some victims are led to engage in risky sexual behaviours and to trivialize sex, and their chances of becoming perpetrators of sexual violence increase. Finally, sexual violence against girls in schools has educational consequences, for instance the inability to concentrate and interact with teachers and schoolmates, diminished motivation, performance and attendance in school, as well as drop out. The intense stigmatization that often accompanies sexual abuse and rape can also lead children to be rejected and abandoned by their families, and left to fend for themselves.

Sexual violence also has repercussions on the child or youth's family and community (Canadian International Development Agency, internal unpublished document). Implications for the victim's family relate to emotional and financial burdens resulting from abuse, including feelings of shame, guilt, and stress for family members, which are often associated with the stigma that accompanies sexual abuse. Financial costs associated with medical care, legal fees and transportation costs are also significant burdens for families. Together, these consequences can lead to the disintegration of the family unit, which in turn decreases the chances that the child will be raised in a safe and supportive environment. On the community's side, decreased schooling can lead to reduced family planning, family health, child survival and participation of women in economic activities in their community.

In addition to blocking girls' access to education and to subjecting them to injury and trauma, sexual violence in schools teaches both boys and girls that sexist and abusive behaviour is acceptable. This is significant because schools are widely recognized as environments of socialization where community power dynamics are reproduced and learned. If schools can help strengthen harmful behaviours, they also have the power to help break the cycle of violence against women within the community by preparing students to live their lives without violence (Mirsky, 2003: 3).

## **1.2 Research questions**

Ghana has signed the major international conventions on the rights of children to education and non-violence, and has a multitude of domestic laws and policies to ensure compliance with those conventions. However, numerous studies have demonstrated that sexual violence

against schoolgirls is common in the country despite these frameworks (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999; Brown, 2002; CRRESCENT, 2009). The initial objective of this research was to explore the strengths and weaknesses of local strategies put in place by the school, parents and community of Awaso, in the Western Region of Ghana, to keep girls safe in learning environments. However, as will be explained in the Data Analysis chapter, research revealed that no such strategies were implemented in Awaso. This led me to question the absence of structures and programs to fight sexual violence against girls in schools (SVAGS), and to reorient my research questions as follows:

- What are the barriers to fighting male sexual and gender-based violence in schools at the local level in Awaso?
- What are some of the ways by which those barriers may be lifted?

Understanding why it remains difficult to eliminate SVAGS in Awaso, Ghana should contribute to grasp the difficulties girls face in having their rights respected and in accessing safe learning environments. It is also expected that such understanding will inform parents, teachers, principals, local leaders, NGO representatives and government employees on the barriers they should strive to remove to improve girls' safety in and around schools, in order to raise enrolment and graduation rates. Potential solutions suggested by community members and experts alike represent a potential starting point for stakeholders wishing to make schools safer for girls.

This research is based on the feminist standpoint approach, which holds that context-specific knowledge, solidarity and commitment of the researcher towards participants should be prioritized over so-called "objectivity" (Haraway, 2007), as explained in the

Methodological Framework. As such, I do not claim to objectivity in the positivist tradition because of its methodological universalisms and androcentric bias. On the contrary, solidarity was established with community members during a three-month internship during which I lived in the vicinity of Awaso prior to data collection. This allowed for the development of friendships with community members who became allies for this research project, and who were instrumental in gathering participants. As such, I cannot state that data was collected and analyzed in an impersonal and detached manner. I do not see this as a weakness of this research, however, but rather as a strong point since trust established with community members allowed me to verify my understanding of the answers to my questions in an open and straightforward manner. Participants also appreciated the main objective of this project, which, since the drafting stage, has been the production of concrete community-based knowledge aimed to improve the safety of schoolgirls in Awaso. In fact, the production of data that is beneficial for marginalized groups is another important pillar of the feminist approach (Löwy, 2000). While gathering data, emphasis was placed on women's experiences and opinions. The Gender and Development lens helped guide me and allowed me to operate in a climate of openness, dialogue and exchange. This facilitated the collection of opinions, perceptions and suggestions from community members as well as experts in education, human rights and gender equality, and encouraged both myself and participants to consider the power structures and social dynamics within the community in our efforts to understand the problem and contribute to finding solutions.

### 1.3 Awaso and its geographical context

Considered an urban community by the Ghanaian government (Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development and Moks Publications & Media Services, 2006), Awaso's characteristics are more representative of rural areas. This small town of 6501 inhabitants (when combined with the nearby village of Asempaneye – the two settlements being so close that separate figures are not available) is located in the Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai district of the Western Region of Ghana. Women represent 52.6% of the population. Although age distribution statistics are not available for the town itself, 37.5% of district residents are of school age (5-19 years).

**Figure 1: Map of Awaso, Ghana (Source: Magellan, 1997)**



Like other areas located in the equatorial climate zone, the two distinct weather periods in Awaso are the dry season, which normally occurs from October to April, and the rainy season which occurs from May to September. Average yearly temperatures hover around 26°C and relative humidity is high, averaging between 75% and 95% (Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai District Assembly, 2006). These levels, combined with high soil fertility, contribute to superior agricultural output. This is important since the Awaso economy is largely based on subsistence farming activities. The main crops are cassava, plantain and yam. Okra, beans, cocoa and palm fruit are also grown in the area. Most women are involved in petty trading and do not have much formal education. They also work in fields which are mainly owned by their husbands or male relatives, and sell produce at the market. Mining is another important activity in Awaso, since the village lies at the foot of a bauxite mine exploited by the Ghana Bauxite Company.

While the Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai district is dominated by the Twi-speaking Akan ethnic group (79.4%) (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Moks Publications & Media Services, 2006), Awaso itself is inhabited mostly by Sefwi-speaking Sefwis (Habitat for Humanity Ghana, 2008). Most of them speak Twi as a second language. The main religion in the district is Christianity (88.7%), followed by Islam (7.5%) and traditional religions (3.8%) (Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai District Assembly, 2006). Awaso is also mainly Christian, with denominations including Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Pentecost, Methodist, Anglican, Christ Apostolic, Assemblies of God, Church of Christ and Seventh Day Adventist (Habitat for Humanity Ghana, 2008).

The internship that preceded data collection allowed me to visit Awaso schools and speak to teachers and community members about their priorities for school improvement.

This helped me understand the context in which students and teachers operate, as well as the barriers to girls' education in the community. Information in the following paragraphs is based on these discussions.

School-aged children in Awaso have access to four public schools. These institutions are under-funded, and many of them lack basic facilities and utilities such as latrines, water and electricity. These schools are overcrowded and have an insufficient amount of teachers, classrooms, furnishings and learning materials. Some of them do not have staffrooms or teacher offices, forcing teachers to work and meet under a tree in the schoolyard, which becomes impracticable in harsh weather conditions. Storage for books and other school materials is also an issue. None of the four Awaso public schools have either a library or an information and communication technologies (ICT) facility. Two of the schools have buildings that do not have doors and windows, which become shelters for animals at night.

The lack of latrines is an important barrier to girl's education in the community, and many girls and female teachers stay home during their menses. Going into the bush when they need to urinate is humiliating for female teachers and students alike, and also makes girls prone to abuse, as these areas are unsupervised (see Asare, 2010, for more information on the lack of school latrines in Ghana).

According to teachers working in the four Awaso public schools, the top barrier to education in the community is the lack of parental interest in their children's education. As is the case in many rural Ghanaian communities, Awaso parents tend to engage their children in various income-generating activities after school. This leaves the children little time to study and increases the likelihood that they will repeat grades, hence decreasing their motivation. This is especially true for girls, who are often asked to help their mothers sell

crops at the market or supervise their younger siblings. The average school dropout level in the community is Junior High School (JHS), and is higher for girls than for boys.

#### **1.4 Thesis overview**

This thesis is divided into four main sections: the contextual framework, the theoretical framework, the methodological framework and the data analysis chapter.

In the contextual framework, I discuss the Ghanaian government's progress in making schools more accessible for girls and boys, as well as the current challenges to girls' education in the country. I also review previous research on sexual violence against girls in schools in Ghana, which informs us on its prevalence and causes, as well as difficulties in reporting cases of abuse. Then, I present existing policies, acts and regulations aiming to protect girls from violence in the country.

I then turn to the implications of socially determined gender hierarchies on development efforts in the theoretical framework, and consider the complex relationships between patriarchy and male sexual and gender-based violence as well as theoretical underpinnings of feminists' fight to eliminate this violence.

This discussion continues with regard to feminist research methodologies, which are considered in their historical context. Participant selection for interviews and focus group discussions, data collection strategies and data analysis methods are presented, followed by limitations and ethical considerations.

Main findings of this study are discussed in the data analysis chapter, and are divided into the various barriers that impede on the elimination of sexual violence against girls in schools. Participants' suggestions for lifting those barriers and making progress in ensuring that learning environments are safe for girls are then presented.

Finally, I conclude with a review of the main findings, present ideas for future research, and reflect on the role of and approaches to social change in eliminating male sexual and gender-based violence in schools.

## CHAPTER II: CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Girls' Education in Ghana

#### 2.1.1 *Progress and current situation*

Since its independence in 1957, Ghana has been recognized as a country that places high importance on education. The *Education Act* of 1961 laid the legislative foundations for the organization and administration of the country's education system, which was at that time considered among the most developed in sub-Saharan Africa (Akyeampong, 2009). After a decrease in school enrolment due to economic difficulties in the 1970s and early 80s, which had caused the real value of government financing for education to fall from 6.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1976 to 1.4% in 1983 (Akyeampong 2001), the Education Reform Programme of 1987 focused on increasing access to primary education, secondary education and skills training. The programme's marginal progress led the Ghanaian Government to implement the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme (FCUBE) in 1996. It aimed to increase both access and quality of education by promoting efficient teaching and learning, improving teacher motivation, increasing the supply of teaching and learning materials and strengthening teacher-community relations (Government of Ghana, 2011). The Government later enhanced FCUBE through a nation-wide Capitation Grant Scheme strategy in 2005/06, under which the government provides public primary schools a yearly monetary compensation for each enrolled pupil. This contribution substitutes the levies placed on parents to fund Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or School Management Committee (SMC) activities and improvements to school infrastructure.

The Capitation Grant Scheme was one of many “pro-poor” education initiatives put in place by the national government. Other policies aimed at promoting equity in access and quality of education in Ghana include the School Feeding Programme, the provision of free exercise books and uniforms in some schools, and the erection of buildings for schools which were previously set up under trees (GNECC, 2011). Together with the rest of the education sector, these initiatives cost the Ghanaian government approximately 30% of its total national budget and around 10% of Ghana’s GDP, of which the basic education subsector is a key beneficiary (GNECC, 2011). This represents heavy government expenditure on education and demonstrates the Ghanaian government’s strong prioritization of this sector.

In 1997, the Government created the Girls’ Education Unit (GEU) within the Ghana Education Service (GES) to focus its efforts on access to quality education for girls. The unit promotes girls’ rights to and within education, and aims to increase their enrolment, retention and achievement. Within the GEU, there are Girls’ Education Officers (GEOs) who are posted in each of the 170 districts in the country, and work to support girls’ education at the regional level.

Education policy and planning in Ghana is guided by the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) (2003-2015), which is in line with the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS). The ESP guides the country’s efforts to meet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) two and three, which relate to the provision of universal basic education and to the achievement of gender equality in all levels of education by 2015. Girls’ access to education is within the

ten priorities presented in the Education Sector Plan<sup>3</sup>. The elimination of education-related fees through the Capitation Grant has been successful in narrowing the gender gap (UNGEI, 2011). Indeed, the gender parity index jumped from 92% in 1999 to 99% in 2007 at the primary level and from 80% in 1999 to 89% in 2007 at secondary level (UNESCO, 2009). These changes represent a positive development. Nevertheless, these statistics represent averages that hide disparities at the local level. Indeed, some of the poorer districts have a low gender parity index of 70% (GNECC, 2009). One must also consider retention and completion rates to get a true picture of girls' education in the country. Both these rates are about 10% higher for boys – retention being at 90% for the latter compared with 80% for female pupils, while the primary cycle completion rates hover around 91% for boys as opposed to 79% for girls (GNECC, 2009). Finally, the gender parity index figures presented above refer strictly to access to education, and relay no information on the quality of the education girls receive as opposed to boys. Evidence gathered during the present study suggests that girls are neglected in the education system, and that boys benefit from education more than girls do. This is due to increased class participation, higher parental and teacher expectations, and more time spent on homework as opposed to house chores (details presented further). Indeed, it is disappointing to see that the only gender-related objective laid out in the Education Sector Plan (namely girls' access to education) fails to move beyond basic access towards lifting the existing barriers impeding girls' success in the classroom and after graduation.

---

<sup>3</sup> Other priorities are pre-school education; access and participation in education and training; quality of teaching and learning for enhanced pupil/student achievement; academic and research programmes; health and environment in schools and institutions; prevention and management of HIV/AIDS; educational planning and management; technical and vocational education and training; and science and technology education and training (ESP, 2003: 8).

### ***2.1.2 Challenges and barriers***

Despite the Capitation Grant, the establishment of the GEU and the ESP focus on increasing girls' access to education, many barriers to educating girls in Ghana persist. Gender-based discrimination is rooted in cultural attitudes, and girls are still less likely than their brothers to go to school. Reasons for this imbalance include low value given to girls' education, deeply entrenched cultural practice, female child labour, poverty, irresponsible parenting and ignorance (Commonwealth Education Fund, n.d.).

Throughout Ghana, women are traditionally expected to play the societal role of “ensuring continuity of the lineage”, for which common perception sees little need for formal education (Dolphyne, 2000: 49). Motherhood roles including pregnancy, childbirth, and the nurturing of children are not seen as real work by most Ghanaians, yet the tendency of women to assume these roles at a young age “account[s] for the failure of most female children to complete their formal education” (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008: 371). Meanwhile, many outside-the-home jobs that are accessible to women, such as farming and trading, do not require formal education and thus make it seem irrelevant to women's economic success. While these barriers may be perceived as past concerns in some urban centers, they are still very much present in most rural areas (Dolphyne, 2000).

Despite the fact that these traditional views have been demonstrated to be detrimental to women, “ignorance (...) has made (them) accept the inferior position to which they have been relegated by society for centuries” (Dolphyne, 2000: 56). This occurs through systemic conditioning, both in the family and society at large, and plays a key role in women's acceptance of subordination and oppression (Cusack, 1999). This conditioning also occurs through cultural productions such as legends, proverbs and folktales, in which

prejudices and stereotypes against women are embedded to shape their own beliefs about themselves (Kolawole, 1998, in Tuwor & Sossou, 2008: 372). These traditional beliefs are also reflected in teaching and learning materials, in which women are stereotypically represented as housewives, traders and seamstresses. By making it difficult for girls to see themselves in roles that require formal education, this perceived lack of opportunities contributes to the high dropout rate of girls in West African countries (Jayaweera, 1999). Lack of female role models working in non-traditional sectors supports this messaging, and contributes to the fact that girls often do not protest when taken out of school (Dolphyne, 2000). Traditional beliefs which support male authority and superiority hence actively and passively condition gender dynamics, and lead to the rationalization of gender hierarchies that support boys' education over that of girls.

This is especially true in a context where families are struggling economically, in which financial considerations have great weight in the decision of sending children to school. Despite the absence of tuition fees across Ghana and the existence of the Capitation Grant and additional grant programs for poor families, incidental expenses can still be required for uniforms, books, school supplies, examinations and PTA activities. These costs often represent a large percentage of a poor family's income, especially in rural areas where livelihood is largely based on subsistence agriculture. In these situations, parents are often faced with a decision regarding which children to send to school, and in societies where children are seen as "insurance against poverty in (parents') old age" (Dolphyne, 2000: 49), investing in boys seems more judicious since they are traditionally seen as the breadwinners.

To a low-income family, a child attending school represents both an additional set of costs and a loss of income for parents who either rely on that child's work to supplement

family income or benefit from the child's help with house chores to spend more time working. In many African countries, and indeed in Ghana, girls do most of the chores, both at home and at school. They fetch water, help with cooking and cleaning, and watch their younger siblings while their mothers are away. Boys, often relieved of these tasks, enjoy more time for leisure and studying, which contributes to their greater success in school. Girls are often asked to miss school to help their mothers at home or in the market. Once they have missed many days of school, they have difficulty catching up and often end up dropping out for good (Dolphyne, 2000). They then spend their days helping their mothers and other female relatives with household chores, caring for younger siblings and selling agricultural products and other goods in the market or the street.

Long distances between home and school also subtract hours from the child's availability for work or chores, and increase the chances that the parents will withdraw the child from school. In addition to losing hours of work, long distances also cause parents to fear for the safety of their children. Some children have to face geographic obstacles such as the need to cross forests, ponds or rivers to get to school. Others walk along dusty highways where both car accidents and abductions can occur. The distance to the school itself is therefore an obstacle for girls' enrolment to school in West Africa and presents another situation where in the same circumstances, boys may be sent to school but not girls (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008).

Among poor families in Ghana, sending a child to live and work in middle and upper class homes (often those of relatives) is also a common occurrence, and is known as child fostering. More frequently female children are the ones sent away, given the societal pretext that males are considered stronger workers able to provide more for their family. Under this

kind of arrangement, families send their daughters to work as housemaids. In exchange, they receive either a small salary which they send to their family, or food, clothing, healthcare, and in some cases educational support (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008: 369). While not the topic of this research, it is important to note that human trafficking is a real danger in situations of child fostering, and some girls are sold into the sex trade after having been sent to live with a new family.

Pregnancy is yet another cause for school dropout among Ghanaian girls, who experience difficulty re-entering the education system once they have given birth and take on the added responsibilities of caring for an infant. Data from the Directorate of Births and Death Registry in the Upper-East region hints at the immensity of this problem: 3404 teenagers between the ages of 10 and 19 years were pregnant in 2003/04 (Ghana News Agency, 2006, in Tuwor & Sossou, 2008: 367).

Yet another common reason for school dropout is fear of sexual violence in schools, which happens with impunity in, around, and on the way to and from school. As will be demonstrated further on by reviewing previous studies on this issue, this violence occurs despite policies, acts and regulations which prohibit it.

## **2.2 Existing policies, acts and regulations on sexual abuse of school children in Ghana**

### **2.2.1 *International Instruments***

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC; 1989), which Ghana was the first country to ratify in 1990, commits the global community to protecting children's rights. This includes defending all children and youth's right to be protected from

sexual exploitation and other unlawful sexual practices (Article 34) and to access quality education that:

- supports the development of each child's personality, capacities and interests "to their fullest potential" and prepares each child to live as a responsible citizen "in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples" (Article 29);
- safeguards the child from all forms of violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual violence, while he or she is in school and in the care of teachers (Article 19); and
- ensures to children suffering harm from an abusive social or economic environment a basic education that enables their "physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration" in ways that sustain their "health, self-respect and dignity" (Articles 19 and 39)<sup>4</sup>.

The UNCRC places responsibility on the States for protecting children from all forms of violence, and to establish protective, investigative and preventive mechanisms for this protection.

The same is true of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), which specifies that State Parties must "take specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse" (Article 16). Furthermore, the African Union's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality (2004) holds that States should initiate and engage sustained public campaigns against gender-based violence and trafficking in women and girls, reinforce legal mechanisms that will protect women at the national level and end impunity of crimes committed against women in a manner that will change and positively alter the attitude and behaviour of the African society. The Declaration also affirms that

---

<sup>4</sup> Information taken from an unpublished CIDA document on which the author worked, titled Safety and Security in School for Children and Youth: A CIDA Technical Paper on Protection from Violence in Schools.

States should take specific measures to ensure the education of girls and literacy of women, especially in the rural areas, to achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals.

### ***2.2.2 National Instruments***

National Ghanaian legal and policy frameworks for child protection from sexual abuse in schools stem from the aforementioned international and regional frameworks, and include the 1992 Constitution, the Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560), the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act of 1998 (Act 554) and the Code of Professional Conduct of the Ghana Education Service (GES).

#### *The 1992 Constitution*

Chapter 5 of the 1992 Constitution spells out the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all citizens, including children, and states that “[e]very person in Ghana, whatever his race, place of origin, colour, religion, creed or gender shall be entitled to the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual” (Act. 12, subsection 2). Article 28 is more specific, and describes children's rights to protection: “Parliament shall enact such laws as are necessary to ensure that (...) children and young persons receive special protection against exposure to physical and moral hazards” (section 1d). It also clearly states that “[a] child shall not be subjected to torture or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (section 3). This holds true in any context, including the learning environment.

#### *The Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560)*

The Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560) consolidates the Ghanaian legislative framework relating to child protection and maintenance. It defines a child as any person below the age

of 18 years (Section 1), and states that “[n]o person shall deprive a child access to education, immunization, adequate diet, clothing, shelter, medical attention or any other thing required for his development” (Section 8, subsection 1). On the topic of child marriage, which is sometimes presented as an acceptable solution to pregnancy following child sexual abuse, it states that “[n]o person shall force a child(a) to be betrothed; (b) to be the subject of a dowry transaction; or (c) to be married” (Section 14).

The Children’s Act also reiterates the point made in Section 3 of Chapter 5 of the 1992 Constitution in affirming that “[n]o person shall subject a child to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment including any cultural practice which dehumanizes or is injurious to the physical and mental well-being of the child” (Section 13). Among other things, this section speaks to the caning and other degrading forms of punishment subjected to children, including those who refuse teachers’ and schoolmates’ sexual advances.

Finally, the Act speaks to agencies responsible for ensuring children’s well-being:

“A District Assembly shall protect the welfare and promote the rights of children within its area of authority and shall ensure that within the district, governmental agencies liaise with each other in matters concerning children.” (Section 16.1)

“The Social Welfare and Community Development Department of a District Assembly referred to in this Act as “the Department” shall investigate cases of contravention of children’s rights.” (Section 16.2)

*The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act of 1998 (Act 554)*

The Criminal Code Act defines various aspects of sexual offences and determines penal measures for offenders. It defines rape as “the carnal knowledge of a female of 16 years or above without her consent” (section 98), and states that “[w]hoever commits rape shall be

guilty of a first-degree felony and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than five years and not more than 25 years” (Section 97). Defilement is defined as “the natural or unnatural carnal knowledge of any child under 16 years of age” (section 101, subsection 1), with punishment for “[w]hoever naturally or unnaturally carnally knows any child under 16 years of age, whether with or without his or her consent, (...) to imprisonment for a term of not less than 7 years and not more than 25 years” (Section 101, subsection 2). On indecent assault, the Act states that “a person commits the offence of indecent assault if without the consent of the other person, he: a) forcibly makes any sexual bodily contact with that other person; or b) sexually violates the body of that person in any manner not amounting to carnal knowledge or unnatural carnal knowledge” (Section 103, subsection 2). “Whoever indecently assaults any person shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and shall be liable on conviction to a term of imprisonment of not less than 6 months” (Section 103 subsection 1). In the aforementioned articles, “carnal knowledge or unnatural carnal knowledge shall be deemed complete upon proof of the least degree of penetration” (Section 99).

*The Code of Professional Conduct of the Ghana Education Service (GES)*

The Code of Professional Conduct has been adopted by both the GES and the Ghana National Association of Teachers, for teaching and non-teaching personnel. Section 27 of the code stipulates that “[n]o teacher shall indulge in immoral relations with a pupil or a student of his own school or in any educational institution in which he performs any official duties”. In fact, it also states that “[n]o teacher should indulge in immoral or sexual relations with a pupil or student in *any* educational institution” (emphasis added). The same is true

with regards to the non-teaching staff of GES: “[n]o employee shall indulge in immoral relations with a pupil or student in any educational institution” (Section 53).

The GES deems sexual offences as a major misconduct, and gives authority to the Ghana Education Service Council or any other body to whom that power has been delegated to ensure disciplinary measures are taken against offenders. Such disciplinary measures include (GES, 2000):

- (i) Deferment of increment – that is, postponement of the date on which the next increment is due with corresponding postponement in subsequent years;
- (ii) Reduction in rank or of salary;
- (iii) Suspension – that is, loss of pay and allowances for a period not exceeding two years;
- (iv) Removal from the GES- that is termination of appointment with full or reduced retirement benefits;
- (v) Termination – that is, the offender may be treated as in (iv) above; and
- (vi) Striking of name from the register of teachers - that is withdrawal of one’s certificate or license to teach with consequent termination of appointment for good.

This national legal and policy framework is consistent with international conventions ratified by the country. It is its application that has been questioned by both NGOs and academics alike, who see the gap in enforcement as problematic and unacceptable, as demonstrated by evidence from various studies on the subject (CRRESCENT, 2009).

## **2.3 Sexual violence against girls in schools in Ghana**

### ***2.3.1 Basic information on previous research***

Three separate studies have gathered data on the prevalence, type and significance of sexual abuse in Ghanaian schools. The first adopts a broad focus, and is the only comprehensive

study of violence against women and children in Ghana. Led by Dorcas Coker Appiah and Kathy Cusack (1999), it is based on information gathered from women and girls from all ten regions of the country. The study looks not only at the prevalence, types and contexts of violence against women and girls, but also thoroughly analyzes women's experience of violence, their coping strategies, and the challenges they face with regards to reporting violence. Types of violence included in this study include physical, psychological, socio-economic and sexual violence, as well as traditional practices defined as violence. Although not all sexual violence reported in the study took place in schools, data show that a lot of it happened when girls were still of school-going age. Methodology used in the study includes review of official records, administration of a survey (to 2069 women and girls) and focus group discussions with key informants including police, health workers and traditional and religious leaders.

The second study to analyze sexual violence in Ghana's schools was done by Professor C.K. Brown (2002) from the University of Cape Coast (Ghana). Contrary to Coker Appiah & Cusack's research (1999), it focuses solely on sexual abuse of children (under 18 years old) in school, and therefore paints a more detailed picture of the topic. It was conducted in the four districts of Cape Coast, Sunyani, Afram Plains and Bawku East, and documents the extent, types, main perpetrators and most common reasons for sexual abuse in schools. Unlike Coker Appiah & Cusack's study, this one also includes boys, at a ratio of 1:4 with girls. Brown explains this choice by stating that boys are also targets of sexual violence in schools, although the majority of victims are girls. Respondents to this study (N=655) include students, parents and head teachers in Primary, Junior High, Senior High and Vocational schools.

Like the aforementioned study, the third focuses strictly on sexual abuse of students in school. It was commissioned by Plan Ghana and conducted by the Child Research and Resource Centre (CRRESCENT, 2009). It falls under Plan International's Learn without Fear campaign, which aims to create safe school environments for children, and focuses on the three districts of Awutu-Senya, Effutu and Upper Manya Krobo. This study identifies the types and forms of child sexual abuse in schools, and determines its causes and how cases are handled (CRRESCENT, 2009: 9). Like Brown's study, this one employs both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, and studies abuse of both girls and boys. However, instead of using a boy to girl ratio of 1:4, CRRESCENT uses a 1:1 ratio. 411 people participated in this study, including students from Primary, Junior High and Senior High schools, teachers, parents and key local informants from the District directorate of Education, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the Department of Social Welfare, health facilities and District Assemblies.

Results from Coker Appiah & Cusack (1999), Brown (2002) and CRRESCENT (2009) are jointly presented below.

### ***2.3.2 Occurrence of sexual violence in society and in schools***

Sexual violence against girls of school-going age is quite common in Ghana (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999b). The following table provides evidence of its extent, as well as the age range at which it happens most<sup>5</sup>:

---

<sup>5</sup> Throughout this section, the numbers are shown as they appear in the various studies. Percentages do not always add up to 100%, perhaps because some respondents failed to answer all the questions and others checked more than one box for some questions.

**Table 1: Extent of sexual violence against women and girls in Ghana (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999b: 12)**

For 2 in 10 women, their first experience of sexual intercourse was by force	
1 in 3 women have been fondled or touched against their will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3% below 10 years</li> <li>• 40% between 10-14 years</li> <li>• 54% between 15-18 years</li> <li>• 3% over 19 years</li> </ul>
1 in 5 women experienced forced sex by a man	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17% between 10-14 years</li> <li>• 64% between 15-18 years</li> <li>• 19% over 19 years</li> </ul>
7% of women have been forced to touch a man's private parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3% below 10 years</li> <li>• 40% between 10-14 years</li> <li>• 53% between 15-18 years</li> <li>• 3% above 19 years</li> </ul>
6% have been threatened by a school teacher or principal that schooling would suffer if they did not have sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30% between 10-14 years</li> <li>• 66% between 15-18 years</li> <li>• 4% over 19 years</li> </ul>
4% of women have been threatened with demands for sex before being offered a job or having a favour done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12% below age 15</li> <li>• 50% between 15-18 years</li> <li>• 26% over 19 years</li> </ul>

This data show that women are most at risk of all forms of sexual violence between the ages of 10 and 18. Whether or not they are aware of this risk, 20.4% of girls who participated in Brown's study stated they were afraid of being sexually assaulted at school (vs. 7.6% of boys). When inquiring about school safety, almost half (48.8%) of the students who stated they felt unsafe at school said they felt this way because they were disturbed by the advances of suitors. Put in another way, students in the CRRESCENT (2009: 39) study identified the following reasons for not feeling safe at school:

- "Teachers send us to their rooms and offices and abuse us sexually";
- "Too many dark places in the school for perpetrators to operate from";
- "Teachers themselves abuse us sexually for grades and money"; and
- "Both teachers and the boys are the perpetrators"

When Brown's (2002) participants were asked if they had ever been forced to have sex (including but not limited to the school environment), 11.2% of children answered in the

affirmative. They had therefore experienced either rape (if they were aged 16 and over) or defilement (if they were less than 16 years old). The age range for this abuse was 4 to 17 years, the average being 14 years. There was a statistical difference between the sexes, girls reporting a higher percentage of forced sex (13.5%) than boys (4.2%). This means that almost one out of every six girls under 18 years old had been raped or defiled. The percentage of children who had wilfully had sex was considerably lower, at 4.4%. Put differently, this data show that 71.8% of children (under 18 years) who had ever had sex had been forced to do so (Brown, 2002).

Respondents to the CRRESCENT study (2009: 27) paint a different picture, with only 14% stating they had experienced any form of child sexual abuse. The sex ratios of 1:1 may explain the lower proportion of participants who were assaulted, since most studies and reports affirm that girls are more at risk than boys (Mirsky, 2003; Leach & Mitchell, 2006; Management Systems International, 2008; Brown, 2002)<sup>6</sup>. Survivors' age at time of assault ranged from 6 to 17 years, with the average age being 15 years which is similar to Brown's finding of 14 years. Information on where the abuse took place varies, but the two most common places for sexual violence to occur are school (including on the way there and back; 53.3% in CRRESCENT, 2009; 9.6% in Brown, 2002), and home (46.6% in CRRESCENT, 2009; 67.3% in Brown, 2002).

The following table details actual incidence of sexual violence in the school environment by type of abuse:

---

<sup>6</sup> The CRRESCENT (2009) study found a much smaller difference in vulnerability between boys and girls, and states that 45% of victims are boys. Further quantitative research would be needed to support this data, which for now remains the exception.

**Table 2: Incidence and types of sexual violence in schools in Ghana (Brown, 2002: 24)**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Total incidence (%)</b>
1. Unwelcome sexual advances (verbal or non-verbal)	14.9
2. Requests for sexual favours	15.7
3. Sexually motivated physical conduct	4.9
4. Clothing pulled in a sexual way	7.8
5. Fondled, touched, grabbed or pinched in a sexual way at school	10.8
6. Threatened by a teacher/school employee that schooling will suffer if did not have sex with them	4.5
7. Physically intimidated by another student	4.7
8. Stayed at home or cut class because of intimidation	3.5
9. Been shown, given or left sexual photographs, messages or notes at school	4.5
10. Experienced actual sex at school	5.3
	N=490

Data from the CRRESCENT (2009: 30) study is similar, and show that the most common forms of violence included requests for sexual favours, unwelcomed sexual advances or attacks, and being fondled, touched, grabbed or pinched in a sexual way. Sexual messages, notes and photographs were more commonly reported in the CRRESCENT study. Instances of actual sex were proportionately the same in both.

Despite the high incidence of sexual violence in schools, most (80%) teachers deny that it is a problem (CRRESCENT, 2009: 26). The remaining 20%, who all teach at Senior High School (SHS) level, indicate that sexual abuse has occurred in their school. The numbers are inversed in parents, of which 81% acknowledge the existence of child sexual abuse in school in their community (CRRESCENT, 2009: 26). This is consistent with Brown's findings, which show that parents share the view that sexual abuse is a real problem in the school environment. More specifically, parents stated the following reasons for fearing for the safety of their children at school:

**Table 3: Reasons given by parents for fearing for children’s safety in the school environment (Brown, 2002: 40), by decreasing order**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
The child has reported incidence of sexual abuse in school	36.4
Because of the sexual behavior of some teachers in the school	18.2
The child is easily suggestible, deceived	11.4
The child might become pregnant	11.4
Afraid of rape, sodomy and defilement	6.8
Afraid of influence of peers and friends	4.5
Afraid of being infected with HIV/AIDS	4.5
Any adult can assault the child	2.3
Already a victim of sexual abuse	2.3
The child is already out of control	2.3

The findings presented above indicate that sexual abuse in school is parents’ biggest concern related to the safety of their children in the school environment.

### ***2.3.3 Causes of sexual violence in schools***

Men’s power over women in social and economic spheres has a large influence on male-female relationships in Ghana (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999). In fact, girls grow up knowing that they are dependent upon men to tend to their basic needs, including completing their education: “the women are under men and must be submissive to them” (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999: 14). While unequal gender relationships will be discussed in the next chapter, suffice it to state here that this puts girls and women at a disadvantage from a very young age. This drawback is indeed among the main underlying causes of sexual abuse in schools: “In most cases of abuse, the perpetrators possess some form of power or prestige in the form of economic, social or physical that was used as a tool to entice or coerce the victims” (CRRESCENT, 2009: 33). The power mentioned above

includes teachers' control over grades, graduation and general well-being in school. Girls who refuse teachers' love propositions are often unjustifiably punished:

If a teacher (male) proposes to you and you turn him down, when he comes to class to teach, he would ask you questions and if you are not able to answer he would cane you mercilessly. Same applies to the seniors [older male classmates] but in their case, the least thing you do they punish you... you would be asked to weed or scrub the dining hall (CRRESCENT, 2009: 33).

Girls' low economic power is another cause of sexual violence, and those whose parents cannot afford their school fees will sometimes enter sexual relationship in exchange for tuition money. In fact, some mothers reportedly push their daughters to engage in sexual relationships with boys or men that can support them financially (CRRESCENT, 2009). The inability of parents to cater to the needs of their children was indeed one of the main reasons cited by both children and parents in Brown's study to explain sexual abuse of school girls in Ghana.

Other reasons stated by Brown (2002: 34) include parents' failure to educate their children on the dangers of sex; the lack of sound religious and moral education for children; the tendency for parents to settle sexual abuse cases privately at home; parents sharing the same room with children who are exposed to sexual acts and private parts; the influence of older bad children on younger ones and girls' provocative dressing, walking and mannerisms. The last point demonstrates the strong victim-blaming phenomenon present in Ghanaian society, in which "the behaviour of the victim becomes the center of the attention (and) rarely are perpetrators held accountable or considered to be responsible for their behaviour" (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999: 14).

An identified key challenge to ensuring that children are not violated in schools is the fact that they lack knowledge of their rights, of how to be assertive and of where to report sexual abuse. More specifically, 87.2% of children who participated in the CRRESCENT study (2009: 37) do not know of any institution that supports victims of sexual abuse. Most teachers (61%) and parents (66.7%) are also unfamiliar with reporting procedures, but even those who know them “usually avoid them because they want to maintain good neighbourliness” (CRRESCENT, 2009: 36).

That said, even if everyone knew which institution provides support for child abuse cases, most of the personnel from the institutions mentioned by respondents of the study lack adequate information on the topic. The majority of the staff had no training or education in child sexual abuse and how to handle such cases (CRRESCENT, 2009). In places where Department of Social Welfare (DSW) was present, staff was not involved in handling these cases, as most were never reported to the department or to social workers (CRRESCENT, 2009: 37).

#### ***2.3.4 Reporting sexual violence in schools***

When it comes to reporting sexual violence, two out of three studies found that only one third of survivors tell someone about the incident (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999; CRRESCENT, 2009). The following table details reporting levels for various types of sexual violence against women and girls, as well as whom the abuse was reported to.

**Table 4: Percentage of survivors who reported sexual violence according to type of violence suffered, and person the abuse was reported to (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999b: 16-17)**

When touched against their will	<p>6 in 10 did not report 4 in 10 reported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 46% to parents</li> <li>• 29% to friends</li> <li>• 18% to extended family</li> <li>• 6% to school authorities</li> <li>• 2% to minister/clergy/pastor</li> <li>• 0.4% to chiefs and elders</li> <li>• 0.4% to social welfare</li> </ul>
When forced to touch a man's private parts	<p>7 in 10 did not report 3 in 10 did report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 56% to her own family</li> <li>• 21% to friends</li> <li>• 7% to social welfare</li> <li>• 7% to family of boyfriend</li> <li>• 4% to police</li> <li>• 2% to church/shrine</li> <li>• 2% to other (including husband)</li> </ul>
When forced to have sex	<p>7 in 10 did not report 3 in 10 did report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51% to parents</li> <li>• 30% to friends</li> <li>• 18% to extended family</li> <li>• 0.8% to chiefs/elders</li> <li>• 0.8% to school authorities</li> <li>• 3% to other</li> </ul>
Sexual harassment by a teacher/principal	<p>4 in 10 did not report 6 in 10 reported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51% to friends</li> <li>• 29% to parents</li> <li>• 25% to school authorities</li> </ul>

As indicated in the table above, most women and girls never report acts of sexual violence. Those who do report it most likely do so to family and friends, and are least likely to report the abuse to state agencies including the police. Similarly, CRRESCENT (2009: 34) found that children who voiced the incidents did so mostly to friends (45%), followed by

parents (20.2%), relatives (12.4%), head teachers (7.4%) and the police (1.6%). Of the children who reported the incident, only 13.6% spoke to traditional authorities, assembly members and health workers – the latter being consulted only by girls who got pregnant. Among students who participated in Brown’s study, a bigger percentage of victims of sexual abuse (84.6%) did tell someone – either family members (51.9%), school personnel (15.3%) or friends (13.5%). As with other studies, only a small percentage (1.9%) of victims reported the incident to the police (Brown, 2002: 28-29). Similarly, only a small proportion of cases reported to parents and relatives were then referred to the police (13.9%). In fact, in the majority of cases (55.8% in Brown; 65.4% in CRRESCENT) either nothing was done at all (34.9% in Brown; 37.8% in CRRESCENT) or the perpetrator received verbal warning (20.9% in Brown; 27.6% in CRRESCENT). Of 43 cases that were reported to parents and relatives in the Brown study (2002), only one child was taken to hospital and one perpetrator taken to court. None of the cases in the CRRESCENT study (2009), including cases of actual forced sex, were taken to court. Instead, two (2) out of four (4) perpetrators of forced sex did not face any consequences, one (1) in four (4) were merely insulted and the same proportion were beaten. About five (5) percent of victims revealed they received cash compensation from perpetrators, which ranged between GH¢1.00 (CAD 0.65\$) and GH¢25.00 (CAD 16.20\$).

### ***2.3.5 Reasons for not reporting sexual violence***

Of all types of violence, sexual violence is the kind that is least likely to be reported to government agencies such as police, medical institutions and the department of Social Welfare (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999: 98). As in many societies, Ghanaians perceive

matters concerning sex as taboo. This is the main motive for survivors and families not reporting incidents (CRRESCENT, 2009), and explains why shame (30% in Cocker Appiah & Cusack, 1999), timidity (25% in Cocker Appiah & Cusack, 1999; “significant numbers” in CRRESCENT, 2009) and fear of being stigmatized (10% in CRRESCENT, 2009) are among the most cited reasons for not reporting sexual violence. Other rationales include survivors feeling that they can handle the situation themselves (25% in Cocker Appiah & Cusack, 1999; 21% in CRRESCENT, 2009), wanted it / were interested because the perpetrator fulfilled monetary needs (18% in CRRESCENT, 2009), considered it to be normal (13% in CRRESCENT, 2009), and did not want to betray a friend (8% in CRRESCENT, 2009). Lack of confidence in reporting agencies such as police, Social Welfare and school authorities was also a significant factor in low reporting – 10% of victims in Coker Appiah & Cusack (1999b) and 15.4% of victims in Brown (2002) felt that reporting would not help the situation because authorities would not do anything.

### ***2.3.6 Perpetrators of sexual violence in schools***

All three studies reveal that the main perpetrators of sexual abuse are classmates (88.9% of cases in CRRESCENT, 2009; 75% in Brown, 2002). Others who were identified as perpetrators of sexual violence against children include teachers (20.5% in CRRESCENT, 2009; 12.5% in Brown, 2002), neighbours (35.9% in CRRESCENT, 2009), male adults in the community (13.7% in CRRESCENT, 2009; 12.5% in Brown) and relatives (12.8% in CRRESCENT, 2009). The majority of victims was abused by members of the opposite sex (89.7% of female victims were abused by males and 64.5% of male victims were abused by females; CRRESCENT, 2009: 29).

These studies confirm that sexual violence in schools is widespread and systemic in Ghana, despite the legislative and policy frameworks in place in the country.

## 2.4 Chapter Summary

The Ghanaian government has historically valued education and has demonstrated this both in its policies and budget allocations. This includes a focus on girls' education, which is one of the government's current top priorities within education. Nonetheless, girls face many barriers during both the education period and after graduation, many being cultural and traditional. Sexual violence in many forms, including contact and non contact violence, is present in schools and is a prevalent barrier to girls' education in the country. Perpetrators are mostly male students but also include teachers, other school staff and older community members. Girls face the highest risk when they are 15 to 18 years of age, but sexual violence (including forced sex) also happens in primary school.

Unequal gender relations, difficult economic situations of parents and girls themselves, and lack of parental and school guidance for children are important factors in sexual violence in schools. Most survivors of sexual violence do not report incidents to anyone, but those who do mostly turn to family members and friends. The cultural perception of sexuality (including sexual abuse) as a taboo subject contributes to low reporting rates. There is also a general lack of trust in reporting agencies such as police and the Department of Social Welfare. General practice in known cases of sexual violence seems to be either to keep the act secret in order to maintain good relationships in the community or to verbally reprimand the perpetrator.

The national legislative and policy framework for child protection from sexual violence seems solid upon examination, but research has determined that ineffective enforcement of laws and poor implementation of policies and programs designed for child protection present serious challenges. The lack of preparation of child protection agencies to deal with cases of sexual violence, the lack of knowledge children have of their rights, and the weak supervision and protection provided in learning environments counter schools' educational goals and make them dangerous places for many girls.

## CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Gender and Development

This study is based on the *Gender and Development* (GAD) approach, which holds that unequal relations between men and women hinder development by preventing women from participating fully in the process. Developed in the 1980s as a result of increased awareness of the adverse effects of neoliberalism on the condition of women in the Global South, this framework aimed to address certain issues linked to the *Integration of Women in Development* and *Women and Development* approaches, which preceded GAD (see Martinez, 2012, for more details). GAD therefore presented a new way of understanding women's particular challenges with regards to development initiatives. More specifically, it was the first approach to note the great diversity of experiences and needs of women from the Global South and to focus on the empowerment of women by highlighting both their practical needs and their strategic interests.

Unlike previous approaches, the GAD framework highlighted the distinction between sex and gender, which called attention to the fact that inequality between men and women is based not on physical characteristics, but rather on social and cultural representations assigned to members of each sex in a specific time and place. The shifting nature of gender roles and dynamics was thus underscored. This constituted a first step towards the achievement of an important objective of the approach: the transformation of power structures enabling women to access equal participation in decision-making and to gain equal profits from development. However, GAD's failure to systematically focus on transforming oppressive masculinities has been criticized and is a recurring weakness of the

approach. Although GAD called for radical changes in political and social power structures and made theoretical provisions for these changes, they were largely cast aside because they were generally not supported by multilateral and bilateral aid institutions (Martinez, 2012). These institutions tend to prefer to “identify problems in the context of existing socio-economic structures” (Rathgeber, 1994: 85) as opposed to supporting true systemic change.

Instead of GAD being viewed as a blueprint for change, Martinez (2012: 96-97) points out that the approach is rather regarded as a tool box, “useful for taking inventory of the activities of each sex, for targeting certain practical needs in the short and medium terms, and for developing strategies (...) to alleviate the domestic burden of women”. By using GAD in this limited way, most development practitioners miss the opportunity to have an impact on the underlying causes of gender-based discrimination, and find themselves chipping away at social inequalities indirectly as opposed to facing the problem head on.

Another concept tackled by the GAD approach, but often ignored by aid agencies, is the gender division of labour, defined as “[t]he socially determined ideas and practices which define what roles and activities are deemed appropriate for women and men” (Reeves & Baden, 2000). While women’s role in society is traditionally seen as reproductive – raising children, taking care of family members, looking after the upkeep of the home and home-based production – men’s activities typically fall under the productive sphere. In almost all cases, work in this domain is seen as more valuable, and is remunerated accordingly. Although women are increasingly participating in outside-the-home activities, they tend to be constricted to certain sectors (sewing, hairdressing, trading) characterized by fewer chances of advancement and lower remuneration than jobs in sectors dominated by men. Women confined to working in the reproductive sphere are not remunerated at all.

The transformation of power relations within communities, as aimed by GAD, must allow for women's increased participation in the economic sphere if they are to profit from more equitable distribution of development benefits. This is a necessary condition for true equality between the sexes. As important as this is, women's increased participation in the economic sphere needs to be coupled with men's increased participation in the reproductive sphere, so as not to overburden women (Martinez, 2012). Again, this piece of the GAD approach has been cast aside by both donor and partner governments, as well as multilateral organizations, but is a vital element of the approach.

If economic opportunity for women is the first cornerstone of the GAD approach, the empowerment of women and other neglected members of society through their full participation in decision-making is the second one. This encompasses decision-making in the social, economic and political spheres, both within families and communities (Le monde selon les femmes, 2007). According to Eyben, Kabeer & Cornwall (2008: 6), “[e]mpowerment happens when individuals and organized groups are able to imagine their world differently and to realize that vision by changing the relations of power that have been keeping them in poverty”. Seen in this light, empowerment is multi-factored and reversible. It aims to give marginalized women and men the tools and confidence to question social inequalities and find ways to broaden their access to education, land, jobs, money and decision making. To bring women to participate fully in the development of their communities and countries, the GAD approach therefore focuses much attention on capacity building – including quality basic education, literacy training and human rights awareness – as well as increased access to financial resources.

### 3.2 Men, Women and Violence in the Patriarchal System

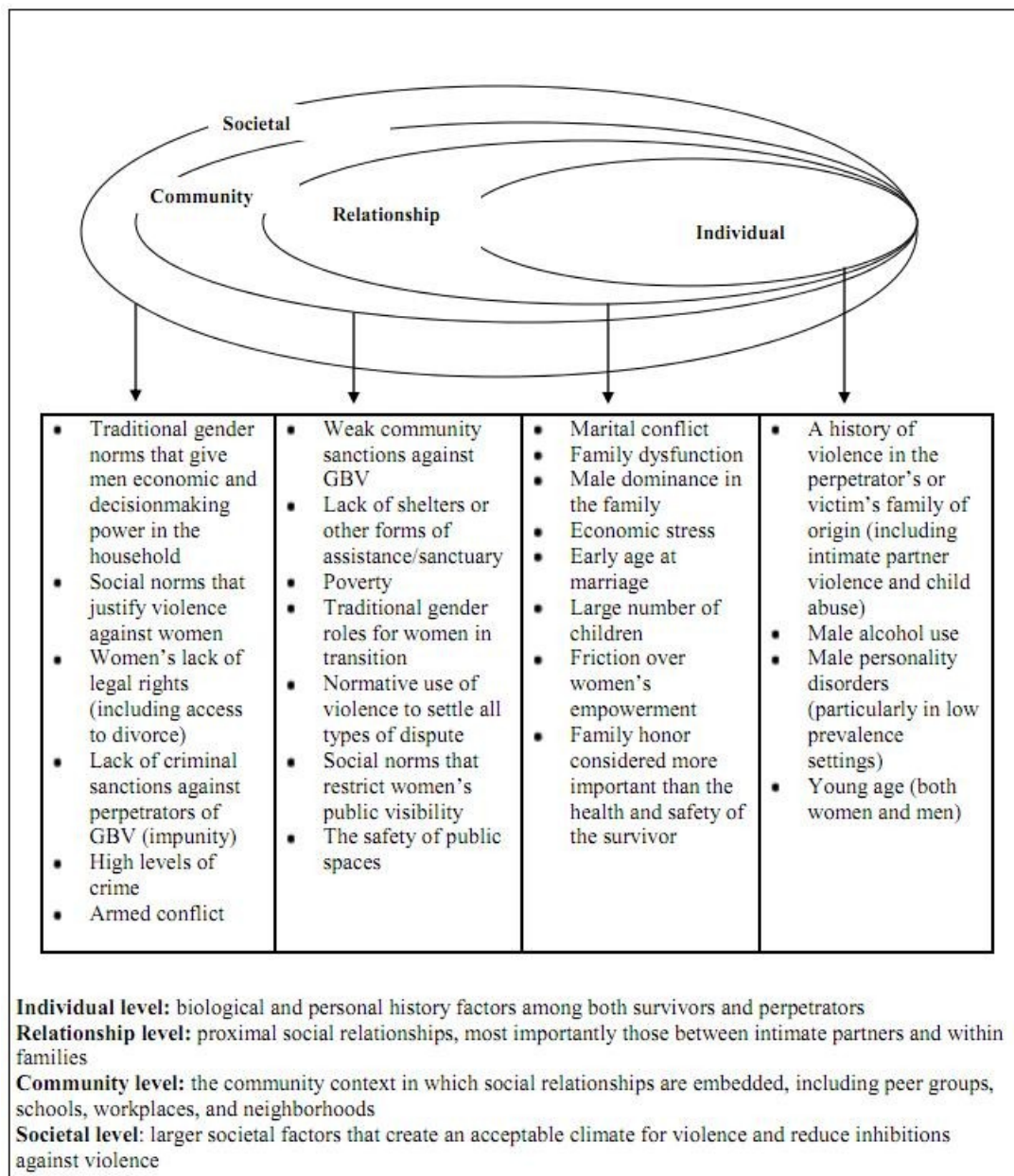
While the GAD approach presents a framework in which to envision women and girls as empowered and active members of their communities and highlights the challenges of structural gender inequalities, it only hints at specific ways in which these inequalities are maintained. Before addressing the role violence can play in such a context, it is useful to understand the meaning of *patriarchal system*, defined by Bahun-Radunović and Rajan (2008: 1) as “a societal dynamic that requires the consistent privileging of masculinity over femininity in an assumed heteronormative framework”. Reeves and Baden describe it, similarly, as “[s]ystemic societal structures that institutionalize male physical, social and economic power over women” (2000:30). Moreover, note these latter authors, gender is sometimes used to explain “the systematic subordination of women by both overarching and localized structures [which] work to the benefit of men by constraining women’s life choices and chances” (2000: 30).

#### 3.2.1 *The Ecological Model of Gender-based Violence*

The Ecological Model of Gender-based Violence provides a theoretical framework for understanding violence against women in a world dominated by men. It presents the various levels at which this violence is perpetrated, namely the individual, relationship, community and societal levels, as well as elements perpetuating violence in each sphere. As demonstrated in the diagram below (USAID & IGWG, n.d.), even when violence is enacted at the individual level, it is often supported by systemic elements at the relationship level. These include economic stress and family dysfunction, which increase the likelihood of

violence. These elements at the relationship level are in turn influenced by the community context, which may include weak community sanctions for gender-based violence. The community context then reflects wider societal factors which condone violent acts and attitudes, such as traditional gender norms that bestow decision-making powers upon men and keep women in a state of dependency and powerlessness.

**Figure 2: Ecological Model of Gender-based Violence**



According to this model, systemic elements in each level gather to form a rigid context of male domination in which violence against women is not only accepted but is in fact actively condoned by society at large.

### ***3.2.2 Gender roles and the patriarchal system***

Gender roles, which comprise a set of traits, characteristics, tasks and aspirations attributed to children according to their biological sex<sup>7</sup>, have a determining impact on boys and girls throughout their lives. Not only do they guide how they should act and what they should be doing, but they also determine what is possible for them to achieve and who they ought to be and eventually become. Indeed, children are taught (albeit informally) that boys and men are entitled to power (see Kimmel, 2007, for more details). They are therefore permitted to act in an aggressive, controlling and violent manner, whereas girls and women are made to accept that they cannot aspire to power and should therefore be passive, docile and submissive. These social patterns related to gender differences are transmitted, often subtly, through the socialization process, by the family, school, church and other social institutions via adults' attitudes, speech and behaviour.

Such gender roles lead to the normalization of gender-based discrimination and justify women's subordination. They are an integral and essential piece of the patriarchal system. Under this system of social organization, men use their power to control decision-making at the political, economic, social and family levels. Women are left impoverished and uneducated, and are thus kept out of decision making altogether, including on matters

---

<sup>7</sup> Although this concept is still widely used, it is becoming more controversial due to the medical advances in sexual reassignment and hormone therapy, as well as the emergence of queer voices who criticize the heteronormativity implied by the term.

directly affecting them. This situation is described by Reeves and Baden (2000:30) as follows: “the roots of patriarchy are often located in women’s reproductive role and sexual violence, interwoven with processes of capitalist exploitation”.

Gender roles are a key tool in the perpetuation of the patriarchal system, and their strongest attribute is the naturalism they are assigned. In other words, the basis of gender roles is presented as biological as opposed to social; as naturally determined and therefore immutable. This leads to their unquestioned acceptance, along with the place they confer men and women in family, community and government affairs. This “biological” feature of the patriarchal system gives it plenty of power and contributes greatly to its perpetuation. When members of a community accept the social position, role and traits assigned to them through entrenched processes of socialization, the status quo is maintained and the group that is in power continues to reign over those that are not. Indeed it is particularly important for women to accept this social organization as natural and predetermined in order for the system to be kept in place.

Although broad comprehension of the patriarchal system allows us to understand common barriers to women’s equality, some authors offer a more nuanced reflection. For example, Bahun-Radunović & Rajan (2008) and Schur (2007) point out that all women do not live the same kind or the same extent of oppression. Indeed, other characteristics such as age, race and religion also play a part, and gender-based oppression is but one determinant of society’s hierarchies. Patriarchy remains a central notion in the analysis of women’s oppression, but one must keep in mind that it plays out in different ways and different levels depending on the cultural context. A case-by-case, context-specific evaluation is thus needed when aiming to understand structures of women’s oppression.

### 3.2.3 *Male sexual and gender-based violence*

This study addresses the intricate topic of sexual violence against girls and women<sup>8</sup>, a subject that has been widely discussed by men and women alike, from all backgrounds and convictions. Feminist writings from the past forty years have led to a deeper understanding of its underlying causes, as well as its consequences both for those who suffer it directly and for women as a group. The aim of this section is to review some of the key definitions and underlying social dynamics of sexual and gender-based violence, as well to highlight some main points of deliberation around the issue. Many of the cited texts date from the 1980s, and consist of fundamental theoretical perspectives on violence against women. As stated by Price, “some of the insights contained in these texts remain as fresh today as when they were first written” (2005: 8). Indeed, many of the more recent texts on violence against women refer back to these authors and offer similar analyses. As such, the original authors are often quoted here.

Violence against women and girls appeared on the public agenda and was recognized as a major social problem to be discussed publicly about thirty years ago (Merry, 2009: 1). Radical feminists are to thank for this development, as they took on the task of studying, analyzing and dissecting violence against women in order to better understand it and start to forcefully oppose it. More specifically, they exposed power as a central issue in male violence against women, and identified the vicious cycle in which sexual violence is both a reflection and a determinant of gendered social structures (McMillan, 2007: 17).

Prior to this, violence against women was widely understood as a natural manifestation of masculinity, much like the gender roles mentioned above. One popular and

---

<sup>8</sup> The term “violence against women” will at times be used to lighten the text. This includes violence against girls.

long-lasting theory was that it could be explained by differences in physical strength between men and women and by male hormones that predisposed men to be violent towards women (see O'Toole, Schiffman & Edwards, 2007). However, the biological nature of male violence has been called into question by researchers, academics and activists alike, who suggest that male violence against women is rather a social phenomenon that stems from the patriarchal system we live in. As O'Toole, Schiffman & Edwards (2007: 3) underscore, this idea points to the social, as opposed to biological, aspect of human behaviour, and suggests that both power structures and violence are socially determined and thus have a beginning and, theoretically – and perhaps optimistically – an end.

Nowadays, there is a tendency to see violence against women as a cultural phenomenon, and to focus on the manifestations seen in the Global South. However, Bunch (2008: xiii) reminds us that almost all cultures still tolerate some forms of violence against women:

Cultural violence is not some marginalized, exotic “cultural practice” that takes place somewhere else. It is the culturally embedded practice and assumption of domination over women in virtually all societies, and the general acceptance of violence as a means of maintaining that control, even of defending one’s masculinity. Rather than label some practices as “cultural and traditional” forms of violence, we need to understand that all violence against women is supported by cultural attitudes, at least as long as the culture – one’s family, community, friends, colleagues, and religion – generally accepts it. This is the real cultural challenge of violence against women.

Despite this recognition, UN definitions of violence against women are quite apolitical, much like GAD in development agencies, and fail to speak to underlying social

power structures. Rather, they focus on the various types of violence as well as on their broad consequences:

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, and it cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography. It takes place in the home, on the streets, in schools, the workplace, in farm fields, refugee camps, during conflicts and crises. It has many manifestations — from the most universally prevalent forms of domestic and sexual violence, to harmful practices, abuse during pregnancy, so-called honour killings and other types of femicide (UN Women, 2011).

The United Nations defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. There are many forms of violence against women, including sexual, physical, or emotional abuse by an intimate partner; physical or sexual abuse by family members or others; sexual harassment and abuse by authority figures (such as teachers, police officers or employers); trafficking for forced labour or sex; and such traditional practices as forced or child marriages, dowry-related violence; and honour killings, when women are murdered in the name of family honour. Systematic sexual abuse in conflict situations is another form of violence against women (WHO, 2009).

In spite of their failure to address unequal gender hierarchies, these definitions' strength lies in their recognition of the severity and breadth of the problem. Feminist academics offer definitions that reach deeper and strive to understand contexts and underlying dynamics.

Before moving to their definitions of sexual violence against women, it is essential to highlight the importance of including women's voices in these definitions and not limiting

them to men's perceptions of the problem. Indeed, the right of women to name their own experience is one of the basic components of feminism (Kelly, 1988; Radford, 1987), and will be further discussed in the Methodological Framework. For the present study, suffice to note that an effort was made to understand participants' perceptions and understandings of violence against women and girls, as seen in the Data Analysis section. As indicated by Brownmiller (1975), definitions based on the experiences of women can lead us towards a more accurate understanding of violence against women. This is of great importance because words and definitions reflect societal beliefs and prescribe paths to action, and are thus political.

For example, Sally Engle Merry prefers the term "gender violence", which she defines as any violence whose meaning depends on the gender identities of the parties (Merry, 2009: 3). As such, she includes any violent act that can be interpreted through a gender lens, and highlights the fact that violence is essentially a cultural construct since what is defined as violence depends on cultural context (Merry, 2009: 5). She emphasizes the need to understand the social context surrounding acts of gender violence as well as behaviours and attributes associated with each gender, since the meaning of violence against women is socially constructed. Violent behaviour is an integral part of ideal masculinity in some cultures, and can thus be perceived as an expression of ideal characteristics of manhood. Indeed, Merry explains that violence not only crosses geographical and historical boundaries, as well as urban/rural and modern/traditional divides, but that its forms also depend on social and cultural contexts. These act according to power structures in place as well as associated gender relations. Merry also places emphasis on structural violence such as poverty, racism and displacement, which are related to interpersonal violence but unlike

it, are perceived as normal, ordinary, and simply as part of the realities of life. Social systems contribute to these inequalities, and hence these are created by society, not nature. Unsurprisingly, women are more affected by structural violence than men. This is due to the male privilege essential to the stability of the patriarchal system, which is “reinforced in the moral frameworks and social processes of all cultural expressions in patriarchal societies to the point of violence” (Bahun-Radunović & Rajan, 2008: 1). Indeed, the underpinnings of patriarchy are themselves enough to justify, legitimize, and normalize violence against women and girls: “Male supremacist ideology thus contributes to anti-woman violence by creating the material and psychological conditions which make such violence likely” (Price, 2005: 27).

While Merry uses the term “gender violence”, Lisa Price (2005) prefers to talk about “men's sex/sexual violence”. This term contains three relevant pieces of information. The first is that most authors of sexual violence are men, in contrast to the majority of victims, who are girls and women (Price, 2005: 11). While this terminology is perceived by some as blaming men, multiple authors denounce opposition to terms highlighting men’s responsibility for violence (for example see Stanko, 1985). Price quotes Sonia Johnson: “Telling the truth is not blaming. It is telling the truth” (Johnson, 1987: 22). As it turns out, the fact that violence is gendered is a point of agreement among researchers and feminist thinkers. The frequent use of violence against women as a vehicle for aggression and male dominance is a recurring theme in feminist writings. Jane Caputi and Diana Russell push this idea even further, asserting that “(t)he goal of violence against women – whether conscious or not – is to preserve male supremacy” (1992: 14; in Price, 2005: 16). In other words, the patriarchal societal structure, which aims to legitimize and maintain male

dominant social hierarchy, encourages actions that perpetuate this social order. Violence against women is among these actions.

While the first part of Price's term, men's sex/sexual violence, refers to the perpetrator, the second part speaks to both the victim and the reasoning. Indeed she uses the term "sex violence" in the same way we speak of sex discrimination: it "encapsulates the pattern of women and girls becoming the objects of male violence because they are female" (Price, 2005: 16).

Finally, the third element of her chosen term refers to the nature of violence: it is sexual. While some authors contend that even the most sexual form of violence – rape – is not about sexuality but rather about power, others are convinced the opposite is true since, according to most accounts, it is felt as sexual by both the perpetrator and the survivor. Like Price, we see the important contribution of the first view in bringing attention to power relations in sexuality: "male sexuality means power; female sexuality means powerlessness" (Price, 2005: 21). However if male sexuality is an expression of male power, then other forms of power such as violence may be felt sexually (see Caputi, 1992, for examples). And, as Catherine MacKinnon states, "(w)hat is sex except that which is felt as sexual?" (1987: 6, in Price, 2005: 19). I am therefore of the view that most male violence against women is in some way sexual. Explicitly sexual forms of violence, such as degrading sexual comments, unwelcomed touching and rape, are the epitome of the intersection of sex, power and male dominance.

While I appreciate Price's reflection on terminology, as well as the various elements pulled into the term "men's sex/sexual violence", I have chosen to use the term "male sexual

and gender-based violence” for the present study<sup>9</sup> as it mirrors those key elements in a way which is clearer and more easily understood, as well as more likely to engage men and boys in a positive way.

Sheffield (1987; 2007) might agree with the view that sexual violence is the epitome of male dominance. She pushes the representation of violence even further by using the term “sexual terrorism”, and by identifying patriarchy as the basis for it. Her views are in line with those of Price: she describes sexual terrorism as “violence perpetuated on girls and women simply because they are female, as when the threat of sexual assault keeps many girls and women in a state of fear, regardless of their actual risks” (1987: 176). This fear serves to control and dominate women, who quickly understand that, in the patriarchal system in which we live, being female is reason enough to be targeted for sexual violence: “the ideological underpinnings of patriarchal power relationships serve as ample justification for violence against women” (1987: 172). Indeed, Sheffield (2007) recalls that while almost all women identify feeling a vague sense of fear when they are alone after dark, a fear they identify with being a woman, men do not fear being attacked because they are men. They are almost strictly afraid when in specific places known for violence, whereas women are conscious they may just be in the wrong place at the wrong time. This is exactly the essence of terrorism: “one never knows when is the wrong time and where is the wrong place” (Sheffield, 2007: 113).

Through her analysis of rape, Brownmiller is in agreement with Sheffield: “From prehistoric times to the present, I believe, rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a

---

<sup>9</sup> The term sexual violence against girls in schools (SVAGS) will also be used, as it highlights different important aspects of the specific problématique. The term SVAGS was used during fieldwork because it was deemed preferable in the cultural context.

state of fear” (Brownmiller, 1975: 5; italics in original). The same can be said of Catherine MacKinnon (1987: 7), who, like Sheffield, refers to male sexual and gender-based violence as terrorism:

[Sexual abuse] is a terror so perfectly motivated and systematically concerted that it never need be intentionally organized... I have come to think that the unique effectiveness of terrorism... is that it is at once absolutely systematic and absolutely random: systematic because one group is its target and lives knowing it; random because there is no way of telling who is next on the list. (...) To be about to be raped is to be gender female in the process of going about life as usual.

MacKinnon’s representation of sexual violence against women as being a widespread and ever-present risk is supported by the limited quantitative data available. However, recent statistics are hard to find, and existing ones vary due to low reporting. In Canada, it is estimated that only 10% of cases of sexual violence are reported to police (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008: 6). Reasons for not reporting include fear of the perpetrator, fear of being judged by society, lack of trust in the judiciary system, lack of funds to pay for legal fees, and desire to move on with one’s life (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008). While this is a challenge which makes it nearly impossible to build a reliable data set on the incidence of sexual violence, States are still responsible for gathering this data to the best of their ability. Not doing so presents a great barrier to policy and programming aiming to curb these actions, as highlighted by the United Nations Beijing Platform for Action (1995: 121):

The absence of adequate gender-disaggregated data and statistics on the incidence of violence makes the elaboration of programmes and monitoring of changes difficult. Lack of or inadequate documentation and research on domestic violence, sexual harassment and violence against women and girls in private and in public, including the workplace, impede efforts to design specific intervention strategies.

In Ghana, the absence of data on violence against women and children was stated by Coker-Appiah & Cusack (1999: x) as the reason to undertake their study on the subject:

Even as the clamour for the elimination of violence against women has gained momentum, it has become evident that the lack of credible data on the prevalence and nature of violence against women is a serious setback. This has seriously affected the ability of all stakeholders to work out responsive strategies to combat violence.

Their data on the prevalence of sexual violence was discussed in the previous chapter. Although dated, their numbers point to the fact that sexual violence occurs too often to be qualified an individual issue – a point that supports MacKinnon’s view – and thus disprove common perception that sexual violence is occasional and that its perpetrators are simply evil or deranged.

According to Stanko (1985), sexual violence against women is so common that it unites all women. She describes the commonality of sexual violence against women, which is so habitual and ever-present it is barely noticeable (Stanko, 1985: 70):

Women’s experiences of sexual and/or physical intimidation and violence – much of it the result of what is assumed to be typical male behavior – is an integral part of women’s lives. It is so common women would like to take it for granted; instead, we take our fear for granted. Women know about the unpredictability of men’s physical and sexual intimidation. We plan our lives around it: finding the right street to walk down when coming home, cooking the eggs the way the husband likes them, and avoiding office parties are examples of strategies designed to avoid male sexual and physical intimidation and violence. None of them are foolproof.

I appreciate Price, Sheffield, Brownmiller, MacKinnon and Stanko’s analysis of male sexual and gender-based violence, supported by Coker-Appiah and Cusack’s (1999) data in the case of Ghana, as well as the importance of highlighting these facts in the choice of vocabulary to emphasize key aspects of the problématique. Of course, I do not deny the

fact that women also commit acts of violence, including of sexual nature, or the fact that boys and men are also victims of sexual violence. In the more specific case of sexual violence in school, boys and young men are also targeted at times, with those who do not fall within socially prescribed gender and sexual identities being particularly at risk. Thus, gay and transgender students face very high rates of all kinds of violence in the school environment. This being said, the term “male sexual and gender-based violence in schools” will be retained here as the sexual abuse of female students at the hands of boys and men is both the most common situation, and the topic of this research.

#### ***3.2.4 The victimization of women and girls***

It should be noted here that there is some debate concerning the term to use when discussing women and girls who have lived episodes of sexual violence. The term “victim” is often used, but is contested by many feminist theorists who see it as contributing to the extensive victimization of women. They normally prefer the term “survivor”, since women who have suffered sexual violence truly have “survived” the experience – both in the literal sense in cases of violent rape, and in the figurative sense when it comes to unwelcomed touching and suggestive language. They have also succeeded in psychologically overcoming the abuse and moving on with their lives. As suggested by Price (2005: 7), use of these appellations may be linked to a temporal component: “in the immediate aftermath of, say, a sexual assault it seems important to emphasize the women’s victimhood. But in the longer term it may be necessary for the victim to make the transition to survivor”. Based on her reconciliation of the two terms, they will both be used in this document, as I feel that these girls and young women are indeed both victims and survivors. It must be kept in mind that

the term “victim” does not suggest that they are purely helpless and without appeal, and reflects their situation as opposed to their character. At the same time, I feel it is appropriate to use this term when referring to children who are coerced into sexual exchanges because of the nature of the relationship and context. The above-mentioned reasons lead to the recognition that addressing violence against women and girls requires us to move beyond this survivor – victim dichotomy. As Bunch notes (2008: xi), there is a need to recognize and understand “the dynamic tension between both dimensions of women’s lives”.

On this note, I restate the caution needed to avoid automatically victimizing Southern women and girls in research, a key aspect of both feminist methodology and the Gender and Development approach. Indeed, many feminist writers denounce the consistent portrayal of women in developing countries as eternal victims of their environment and their social context. On the contrary, insists Chandra Mohanty (1997), women from the Global South organize and mobilize themselves to fight against injustice, to the same extent as women from the Global North. Although this research project focuses on situations of intense victimization and abuse of young women through sexual acts and words, it upholds Mohanty’s vision by paying particular attention to strategies used by Ghanaian girls and women in their fight against male sexual and gender-based violence in schools.

### ***3.2.5 Fighting male sexual and gender-based violence: theoretical frameworks for prevention and victim support***

Feminist movements on all continents have not only sought to define and explain notions of male sexual and gender-based violence against women; they have also pushed for an end to this brutality. The global movement’s mission on this front is twofold. First, it strives to

bring on legislative, political and attitudinal change which will lead to reduction in violence and greater protection for women. Second, it aims to provide support services for survivors, with a particular focus on women's empowerment (McMillan, 2007).

With regards to the first component, namely engendering social changes that will eliminate male sexual and gender-based violence through political, legislative and attitudinal reform, it is widely agreed upon that the most effective interventions are made with young boys before their notion of masculinity is constructed by cultural influence. "This entails exposing and critiquing the hegemony of male supremacy and its prescribed gender relations" (Price, 2005), a large multi-component task that must be taken on in a variety of ways. These include presenting young and adolescent boys with male role models that fully respect women, treat them as equals, and use non violent forms of conflict management. Indeed, working with men and boys is now a key component in virtually all violence prevention initiatives, which targets them in social marketing campaigns, as participants in education programs, as policy makers and gatekeepers, and as activists and advocates (Flood, 2011). Recent examples include Plan International's latest Because I Am a Girl Report (2011), titled "So, what about boys?" The report challenges traditional notions of masculinity and provides examples of actions taken by men and boys to support girls in their journey towards equality. Another prominent girls' rights campaign which highlights men and boys' roles as allies is ActionAid's Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools project, which has a strong focus on involving men at the local level. More specifically, it enlists prominent men in the community to act as ambassadors for girls' rights and as contact people for cases of violence. By supporting girls' right to a safe and protective learning environment, these men send the strong signal to all community members – old and young,

male and female – that violence against girls is unacceptable. Lisa Price (2005: 95) explains why this is so important: “At base, the problem is men. Accordingly, the solution must rest with men. Through theory, analysis and praxis, feminists can point the way but in the end, it is men who must walk the path”. Another initiative that specifically puts this thinking into practice and seeks attitudinal change among men is the “john school”, put in place by Jalma Hanmer to inform men who seek the services of prostitutes of the damaging impacts their actions have on the prostituted women whose services they seek, on themselves, on their families and on their community. By presenting information on legislation against kerb crawling, on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), on the realities of prostitution from the perspectives of women and children and on feminist analysis of violence against women and children, the schools shift the blame from the prostituted women to those who buy their services. According to Hanmer, “unlike girls and women, boys and men generally receive little social education such that they are largely unaware of how their behaviour affects others” (in Price, 2005: 94). A parallel can certainly be made with men who sexually abuse women and children, who could also be educated and led to understand the impacts of their actions on those they abuse and on their communities. They could also be assisted in understanding the relationship between their aggressive behaviour and the hegemonic notion of masculinity, and encouraged to participate in systemic change.

While changing men and boys’ perceptions of gender relations is essential to eliminating male sexual and gender-based violence, girls’ and women’s perceptions of themselves as servers of men and recipients of their violence must also be challenged. To this end, the feminist movement proposes empowerment initiatives, which can be linked to both prevention strategies and survivor support services. The formation of girls’ clubs is an

example of empowerment initiatives, and a strong component of ActionAid's Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools campaign. The clubs create a space where girls can learn about and discuss topics such as children's and women's rights, health issues and violence, and where they learn to speak up and demand respect of their rights. They also invite role models who expand girls' idea of what they can become. Once girls have acquired solid knowledge of these rights, they use creative methods such as poster making, theatre and dance to raise awareness within their communities.

While the strategies mentioned above focus on very important attitudinal changes among members of both sexes, the feminist movement's actions to bring on sustainable change to the lives of women and girls also include changes at the political and judicial levels. These have arguably seen more progress in the Western world than in the Global South. Notable examples include changes to the legal definition of sexual assault in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, as well as changes to the State's responsibility to respond to domestic situations, long considered personal business and therefore not addressed by State agencies (McMillan, 2007; Price, 2005). Changes to pornography laws, viewed as violence against women by some academics such as Catherine MacKinnon (1988) and Andrea Dworkin (1988), have also been pursued both in the US and Canada (Price, 2005). These have encountered various degrees of success, but remain examples of legislative change aimed at breaking the cultural pattern of male domination over women.

Overall, feminist interventions against male sexual and gender-based violence "involve radical root and branch change to the institutions and ideologies of our culture" (Price, 2005: 94). For girls to grow up in a world in which they do not fear being sexually

abused by men and boys, important changes must be made to interactions between men and women. These must be carried out both by members of society and in vehicles of popular culture such as television, music and film (Price, 2005).

Refuges and crisis centers aimed at empowering women and questioning male dominance complete the feminist response to male sexual and gender-based violence (Charles, 2000; Lovenduski & Randall, 1993; in McMillan, 2007). In the United States and the United Kingdom, these centers were first established in the 1970s by women for women, guided by clear feminist understandings of men's violence against women. They were deliberately independent from the State to maintain their autonomy and therefore "were free to explore (...) the structures of power that dominate in our society" (Reinelt, 1994; in McMillan, 2007). Although influx of State money to women's shelters in the United States impeded the latter's freedom and made their mandates less political and more focused on victim support per say, State funds in the United Kingdom and Sweden did not have the same impact on women's shelters. Instead, these were able to secure State funding without jeopardizing their ideological and political stance. Through their activities, they maintain a feminist political analysis of male sexual and gender-based violence, and remain in a position to aspire to "dismantle the existing social order" (McMillan, 2007: 18).

This element of radical systemic change is a crucial piece of both the Gender and Development approach and the feminist movement for eradicating male sexual and gender-based violence. As bilateral and multilateral donor organizations had done, United States shelters receiving State funding cast it aside in favour of actions which do not require such a massive transformation of societal structures. However, it is clear that changing gender

hierarchies that push women to subordinate positions and thwart their potential is the starting point to achieve true gender equality and to build strong communities.

### 3.3 Chapter Summary

This study is based on theoretical and epistemological understandings from the Gender and Development approach and feminist theories of male violence against women. Together, they help frame the problématique of violence against women as a symptom of patriarchy, and share the objective of transforming unequal power structures for women to be respected, heard and able to participate in decision making in all spheres and all arenas of their lives. There is still a long way to go before achieving this change worldwide, and Ghana is no exception. Violence is among the many barriers that irrefutably block women's empowerment, participation and equal treatment. As described by the Ecological Model of Gender-based Violence, violence against women is perpetrated at the individual, relationship, community and societal levels.

This research addresses the issue of male sexual and gender-based violence. In patriarchal contexts, men use violence to maintain their dominance over women and girls. Studies focusing on this issue are sparse, but those that have been carried out by feminist academics focus on the necessity to enable women to voice their own experiences of violence in order to gain a more accurate understanding of it.

Feminist academics and practitioners also work towards the eradication of male sexual and gender-based violence through legislative, political and attitudinal change and provision of support services for survivors. They work to empower women and question the

social order which condones violence against them. Like the Gender and Development approach, they have their eyes set on radical systemic change involving a levelling out of gender hierarchies. Only when women and men are valued equally will they be able to contribute fully to the betterment of their communities.

## CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

While the Gender and Development approach is the base upon which this study's theoretical framework is built, the feminist approach shapes its methodological framework. A brief overview of its historical and conceptual evolution is presented here to highlight its key tenets and better understand the methodological foundations of the present research.

### 4.1 The Feminist Perspective

Feminism consists of a perspective rather than a research method in and of itself (Ollivier & Tremblay, 2000: 14). It is the ideological backdrop which guides the research process and informs researchers' decisions on research topics and objectives, on methodologies and interview questions, as well as on researcher-participant relationships and data interpretation.

The feminist approach to research was institutionalized in the 1970s, when women flowed into academia and began denouncing men's control over the production of knowledge. These first female academics insisted on the necessity of women's participation in this process to break the cycle of androcentricity in science, and worked on bringing women's voices to the forefront to curb the historical prevalence of men's control over the power of naming. This power, which entitled them to define, analyze and register their vision of social realities into the public record, "enable(d) men to define experience, to articulate boundaries and values, to designate to each thing its realm and qualities, to determine what can and cannot be expressed, to control perception itself..." (Price, 2005: 26). Women were thus left without a voice, both in the process and in the product, while

men distorted, invented or trivialized their experiences and naturalized the source of their oppression (Ollivier & Tremblay, 2000). Feminism in academia therefore “challenged existing institutions of knowledge by revealing the partial nature (...) of what had been masquerading as universal truth” (Borland, 2007: 621). This was an important step forward in paving the way for the production of a women’s knowledge which would be based on their own experiences and analyses. 1970s feminist theorists, who leaned towards epistemological relativism, also importantly called into question the very idea of objective knowledge, which was the cornerstone of the positivist approach that dominated science and research from the 1940s to the 1970s (Ollivier, 2004). This approach, which holds that science produces knowledge that is certain, absolute and definitive, was seen by most male academics and scientists as the purest form of knowledge production on the grounds that it was based on factual data and on objectivity. Feminist epistemological relativists, along with post positivists such as Thomas Kuhn, radically criticized the objectivist and universalist claims of this position, and argued that in fact true objectivity is impossible to achieve given that every situation is inescapably analyzed through a researcher’s own ideas and preconceptions. While Kuhn linked these to the interpretative lens of researchers’ chosen paradigm (Kuhn, 1962), epistemological relativists highlighted the impact of the social context in the production of knowledge. The latter also avowed that what were taken as facts were in reality social constructs serving dominant groups (Ollivier & Tremblay, 2000). Since most, if not all, societies remain marked by unequal power relations among genders, it is to be expected that scientific knowledge echoes this bias and produces an androcentric result serving the interests of men.

This realization led to the development of feminist standpoint theory in the early 1980s, which claimed that all knowledge production is situated in a context that influences its outcome. This awareness of the multiplicity of available standpoints promoted the creation and appreciation of socially situated and non-generalizable knowledge, which is linked to the situation it stems from and to the biases thus associated. It does not purport to neutrality or objectivity. On the contrary, standpoint theorists believe that true objectivity is impossible to achieve. Instead, some of them aim for “strong objectivity”, defined by Sandra Harding (2004) as simply being less partial and distorted than existing knowledge. Standpoint theorists thus believe that some social contexts are better positioned than others to produce knowledge. Namely, they contend that women’s standpoints are “epistemically superior to that of men” because they are less inclined to hide power hierarchies and injustice (Jaggar, 2008: 305) and therefore paint a more realistic picture of the research topic. While this position seems dangerously close to falling into the essentialist trap for which positivism is criticized, it does remind us that no standpoint holds an objective vision of the truth. Despite this caveat and the fact that I agree with the contention that the viewpoint of the marginalized is often less dismissive of power dynamics than that of dominant groups, I find it important to include both men’s and women’s voices in data collection. Doing so enabled me to gather a diversity of viewpoints and greatly enriched my analysis.

Postpositivism, postmodernism and postcolonialism were also products of the 1980s. Postpositivism holds that objective truths exist but are based on conjectures rather than solid truths, that is that facts can never be truly proven but rather are held true until disproven. Feminists critique this position for its lack of consideration for cultural and historical

diversity, which can indeed alter what is deemed true or false. This shortcoming was remedied by postmodernist thinking, which sees the world as a patchwork of socially constructed realities, dependent on time and place and thus always subjective and changing. It therefore rejects belief in a large scale, universal narrative, and offers standpoint feminist thinkers the idea that experience is not determined by one's position in a rigid category (such as man, woman, lesbian, heterosexual, black, white, etc.), but rather is "shaped and limited by available discourses on race, ethnicity, and sexuality" (Jaggar, 2008: 345). Although postmodernist thinking seems perfectly aligned with the ideology of feminist standpoint theory, proponents of the latter criticize the former of recognizing the multiplicity of voices without actually listening to them. In practice, this means postmodernism is prone to "mask(ing) existing power relations rather than empower(ing) new actors" (Borland, 2007: 623), and distances it from feminism. This concern for hearing and empowering subaltern voices is shared by postcolonialism, which highlights the fact that alternate and marginalized voices remain hushed by the very social structures that made colonialism possible (racism, inequality, etc.). Postcolonialists denounce unequal East/West, North/South or Developed World/Third World power relations (see Edward Saïd's *Orientalism*, 1978), hegemonic discourse being the basis for these power relations. Since knowledge creation and power are inseparable, the dominant group's taking up of the responsibility to write the "other's" story maintains the latter in a position of subalternity. While Gayatri Spivak condemns the essentialisation of the East and West categories and the failure to present the large diversity of subaltern voices and experiences, she sees value in uniting voices to focus on common ground and have weight as a movement. "Strategic

essentialism” is her antidote, which does not aim to deny group diversity but rather emphasizes the common and essential elements in the group (Spivak, 1988).

Postcolonial feminists have added the man/woman dichotomy to the North/South one, and explained that these interact to render the Southern woman the most marginalized and voiceless of all. Indeed, postcolonial feminists were the first to denounce the positivist notion of “universality” in feminist discourse. Because 1970s feminist researchers and early standpoint feminists were mostly white, middle class occidentals who had spoken on behalf of women as a homogenous group (therefore somewhat replicating the monopoly over the power of naming that they reproached to men), postcolonial feminists from the Global South condemned their failure to recognize the differing realities of women. By highlighting the fact that a middle class, educated, heterosexual white woman does not face the same challenges as a poor black uneducated lesbian, for example, they brought forward the importance of considering the multiple factors of exclusion facing women from marginalized ethnic, social or economic groups, or women of different sexual orientation or disabilities. While 1970s feminists had indeed taken the first step towards giving women a voice, they had not succeeded in including the diversity of voices needed to truly bring women’s experiences to the forefront of research. This lesson learned from postcolonial feminists was indeed an important consideration for the present research, I myself being a white, middle-class Canadian woman studying at an Occidental university. As will be discussed in more detail further on, it was therefore important to truly listen to Ghanaian women, from different age, ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic groups, and to base my analysis on what they had to say about their lived experiences. While a tension existed between myself (a White, urban, middle-class Canadian academic researcher) and the black

Ghanaian participants living in a rural area, this research was conducted in the spirit of bell hooks' then revolutionary thinking on ways of working together to bridge the gap between colonized and colonizers (hooks, 1990: 152):

This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we meet in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality is the space of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators.

A humble attempt to answer hook's call to enter this discursive, interactive space was taken up here, and while navigating any new space requires practice, this was certainly a more inclusive way of approaching the research process and felt more respectful of the participants.

Linked to the various aforementioned advances in the feminist approach to research were reflections on research methods. Feminists' penchant towards engagement brought them to favour qualitative over quantitative methods. The latter, deemed to be detached and unfit to adequately relay participants' experiences, are based on questionnaires largely written by the researcher, and therefore reflect his/her biases and preconceived ideas. This leaves little space for the participants to express their experiences according to their own terms. Questionnaires have also been blamed for maintaining a distance and hierarchy between participant and researcher, the latter holding both the power to define questions and to interpret results (Ollivier, 2004: 53).

To be fair, various authors denounce the harsh criticism directed towards quantitative research methods, including Ollivier herself. Damaris Rose, for her part, speaks of the exaggerated dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research methods, and assures

us that the days of strong partisanship toward one or the other are over (see Rose, 2001 for details).

This being said, many feminist researchers still feel that qualitative methods give participants more space to speak about their experiences, preoccupations and analyses. These methods are generally more inductive, and while the researcher still holds the power to ask the questions and interpret the answers, the categories and findings normally emerge from the voices of participants. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) have therefore been traditionally favoured by feminists over questionnaires for their flexibility and for the discursive space they provide, although methodological choices evidently depend on the scope and focus of the study. Despite scepticism regarding the nature of the information collected via interviews and FGDs, which lead to normative discourse and cannot be understood as presenting a full picture of participants' true individual experience, other methods can be used to offset this limitation. In the present study, classroom observation, the study of local documentation and statistics, as well as informal exchanges with Ghanaian colleagues and friends helped to untangle and clarify some general ideas stemming from interviews and FGDs (details in the Methodological Framework).

One of the most important tenets of feminist research is that it should aim for social change in favour of the marginalized. It therefore inherently encourages the social and political engagement of the researcher towards her/his participants. Coupled with this open mindedness and socio-political engagement, qualitative methods were and remain seen as the best way to engage with marginalized populations and to produce knowledge that is useful to them.

Although qualitative methods are still favoured by most modern feminist researchers, albeit with a greater acceptance of pairing these with quantitative measures, another key development in feminist epistemology consisted of questioning the superiority of collaborative, engaged research. As it was, feminists from the 1980s realized that socially and politically engaged research did not in fact eliminate unequal power dynamics within the research encounter, and on the contrary held the potential to be even more harmful to participants in that it tried to downplay the researcher-participant hierarchy. They underlined the fact that power dynamics are present in any research, despite the researcher's best intentions and methodological rigor.

Indeed, I see the potential for this type of research to lead to abuses of power, in that participants' perception that the researcher "cares" for their well-being may lead them to divulge information they would otherwise refrained from sharing. As Patai brilliantly points out, the mere fact that western researchers are able to study women from the Global South replicates and strengthens patterns of North-South exploitation. Raw data is extracted in the third world by a westerner, is modified and repackaged as the latter sees fit, and is marketed and sold to a distant customer (Patai, 1991). I would even add that this is done mostly to the researcher's benefit, despite of his or her best intentions. Here I agree with Patai's assessment that ethical research is impossible under such circumstances. The implications of realizing that feminist research conducted in developing countries is complexified by such sturdy power dynamics cannot be overstated. It does not mean that such research is undesirable altogether, but rather that these power dynamics must be well understood in order to produce research that is as ethical as possible. According to Patai humility is key, as highlighted in these three (3) recommendations: "acknowledging our privilege within the

research encounter”, “ceasing to claim our research improves the lives of those we study”, and “recognizing the gap between a researcher’s intentions and the actual consequences of her work” (Borland, 2007: 622). These suggestions are true eye openers for the novice feminist researcher, who is not accustomed to such humility in academia. Implications for the present research are important and will be discussed further.

Modern feminism has studied this criticism of qualitative and engaged research and has broadly recognized that qualitative research in itself is not free from power relations (Ollivier, 2004). While most feminist scholars still hold that qualitative methods are more likely to create knowledge that is true to participants’ lived experiences, they press the researcher to be aware of the hierarchical power relations inherent to the research process. Despite these words of caution, they still hold that engagement towards the participants is possible, and indeed necessary. In Ollivier’s words, the researcher should have “political engagement towards equality and social justice, theoretical engagement towards feminist analysis, and personal and emotional engagement towards her research topic” (2004: 53; free translation).

Among other developments to feminist epistemology in the 1990s, reciprocal ethnography suggested welcoming participants’ inputs at the writing and reviewing stages in order to verify the researcher’s analysis and comprehension of the issue. This development seems to flow logically from Patai’s call to humility, as does Visweswaran’s (1994) recognition of the necessity to identify our own epistemological and representational assumptions (see Borland, 2007: 624). These require the researcher to remain humble in her analysis and to identify her potential biases and preconceptions to her readers.

Some of the many epistemological and methodological approaches that have endeavoured to integrate the aforementioned principles of feminist research have been identified above. While each had considerable strengths, they were all deconstructed on their weaknesses. Finally, in the 2000s, the search for a strictly feminist approach was put aside in favour of the recognition that what is important in feminist research is not the particular approach, but rather the political commitment of the researcher. Indeed, the latter should remain aware of the “distortions and erasures” of social power structures discussed above and consider these in “building an alternative legacy” (Harding, 2003, in Borland, 2007: 625). Solidarity and commitment of the researcher towards participants remain cornerstones of the approach, and can be manifested through caring relationships, empathy and research protocols which inform and empower participants. The creation of knowledge that is useful for marginalized populations is another key element of the approach (Haraway, 2007; Harding, 2004; Löwy, 1992), although this objective must be paired with a humble attitude.

#### **4.2 Case Study in Awaso, Ghana**

It is with awareness of power dynamics within the research encounter and within gendered societal structures, as well as with the long-term objective of social change towards a greater respect for girls and women, that the present research was addressed in all its phases. While I do strive for the knowledge generated by this research to be useful for the local population and will share findings with participants either during a visit to Ghana or through the village’s religious and educational authorities, I remain aware that this study’s impact can only be very limited. Indeed, all it can truly do is create space for discussion by informing stakeholders at the local and national levels of the barriers to fighting male sexual and

gender-based violence in schools, as perceived by participants, as well as their suggestions for moving the student security agenda forward.

Feminist researchers from the 1980s may have encouraged me to show yet greater humility in my objectives, and although I strive for humility and realism I remain convinced of the legitimacy to aspire to contribute to the betterment of women and girls' condition. This desire, coupled with the realization that this research would not in itself have a strong impact on Awaso girls' security in and around school, was the primary drive behind my decision to collaborate with the community to start girls' clubs in the five (5) participating schools once the data collection period was over<sup>10</sup>.

The present research was the object of a case study in Awaso, Ghana, and took place in four (4) distinct phases: pre-research, data collection, data analysis and sharing results.

#### ***4.2.1 Pre-research***

An informal pre-research was done through a twelve-week internship with World University Service of Canada (WUSC), organized through the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ottawa. The internship took place in Bibiani, the regional capital of the Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai district, which lies 34 km from Awaso in the Western Region of Ghana. This project was conducted with two (2) Ghanaian colleagues working for WUSC Ghana, in partnership with Rio Tinto Alcan (RTA). RTA owned and recently sold the

---

<sup>10</sup> While this initiative is beyond the scope of this thesis, suffice to say that these clubs were started with the support of the district Girls' Education Officer (GEO), the Girls' Education Unit in Accra, community religious leaders, school headmasters and female teachers and students in each school. Once club members and matrons had been chosen within each school, a one-day workshop was organized in partnership with key stakeholders, and club matrons were trained on their roles and on the objectives and activities of the clubs. They were also provided short-term funding, as well as basic fundraising training. Technical support responsibility for the clubs was then passed on to the GEO, and responsibility for club finances was given to an experienced colleague working and living in Awaso.

bauxite mine situated in Awaso, and was working with WUSC to support a project in the mine catchment area, in line with its corporate social responsibility framework. Our mission aimed to identify five (5) rural communities' development priorities in education, health, water and sanitation and alternative livelihoods. This was achieved through focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Through community consultations, researchers identified community structures currently in place and those deemed necessary for further development. RTA and WUSC later used these to inform their project in the five (5) communities.

This project allowed me to create links with some of Awaso's local leaders and community members, as this community was among the future beneficiaries of the RTA/WUSC project. Awaso participants included the village chief, the Queen Mother, a prominent pastor, school headmasters, representatives from Parent-Teacher Associations, School Management Committees and Sanitation Committees, as well as health workers. These relationships were indispensable to the success of my research due to its sensitive nature, which lies at the intersection of the two taboos of sexuality and violence against women and girls.

#### ***4.2.2 Data collection***

Participants who were solicited for data collection include students, parents and teachers from the Awaso community, as well as NGO personnel and representatives from local and national government ministries.

**Table 5: Participant sample**

Method	Group	Number of participants		
		Total	Female	Male
Classroom observation	Junior high school students (JHS 1 – JHS 3)	75	35	40
	Junior high school teachers (JHS 1 – JHS 3)	4	1	3
Subtotal		79	36	43
Individual semi-structured interviews	National government officials	5	3	2
	Local government officials	4	2	2
	NGO representatives	10	6	4
Subtotal		19	11	8
Focus group discussions	Awaso parents	20	9	11
	Basic school teachers <sup>11</sup>	10	3	7
	Senior high school teachers	14	4	10
	Senior high school students	11	11	0
Subtotal		55	27	28
TOTAL (including classroom observation)		153	74	79
TOTAL (without classroom observation)		74	38	36

<sup>11</sup> Basic school in Ghana consists of primary school (P1 to P6) and junior high school (JHS 1 to JHS 3).

*Classroom observation*

Observation sessions were conducted in two (2) Awaso schools at the beginning of the data collection period for the present study. This was done with the authorization of each school's headmaster, with the aim of permitting me to observe interactions between students – boys and girls – and between students and teachers. The time devoted to observation was short, but still allowed the identification of gendered dynamics and behavioural patterns. Four (4) classes were observed for a period of approximately one hour each. A total of 75 students were in these classes combined, as well as four (4) teachers - one (1) woman and three (3) men. Classes were chosen based on headmasters' recommendations and teachers' willingness to accept observation in their classroom. Classes consisted of a JHS 1 Math class, a JHS 2 English and Science class, a JHS 2 Food and Nutrition class and a JHS 3 Social Studies class, and were located in the DA/JHS and Presbyterian schools. The students and teachers were aware of my presence but asked to carry on with their lessons as usual. I did not interact directly with the classes and limited my actions to taking notes, in order to have the least impact possible on the lessons and on classroom dynamics.

*Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions*

Nineteen (19) individual semi-structured interviews of approximately 40 to 60 minutes each were conducted with representatives of local and national government ministries, civil society and the community. Participants were identified and approached during a WUSC Annual Review meeting in Accra, which addressed the issue of girls' education and attracted interested individuals from the government and civil society. They were contacted and interviewed three (3) months later, during the data collection phase that followed my

internship with WUSC. Some participants recommended meeting colleagues from other organizations and helped me contact them, and thus the list of interviewees grew. Specifically, five (5) national government officials were interviewed – representing the Girls’ Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service (two representatives), the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service (DOVVSU), the Department of Women and Children and the Ministry of Social Welfare. Four (4) local government officials were also interviewed – two (2) from the Ghana Education Service and two (2) from DOVVSU. Finally, 10 representatives of nine (9) civil society organizations were also interviewed. They were working with World University Service of Canada (WUSC), the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC), ActionAid, Child Rights International, the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Center, Put A Smile On A Face Foundation, the Human Rights Advocacy Center, Songtaba, and Ark Foundation. These NGOs do most of their work in education, human rights, child rights, social justice and women’s empowerment.

Four (4) FGDs were also held. The first gathered 20 parents in Awaso, and consisted of 11 men and nine (9) women. The initial plan was to discuss with the men and women separately to ensure stronger validity of data. Each group was given a different arrival time for the discussion, but, interestingly enough, both male and female participants arrived together. This could be interpreted as a sign of men’s subtle and silent resistance to giving women the power of speech. Interviewing men and women together posed a challenge for discussion, since cultural norms dictate that men have the right to speak whereas women should remain quiet. A conscious effort was therefore made to stimulate women’s participation. This was done by ensuring women were heard when they raised their hand to

speak, and that they were not interrupted when doing so. They were also specifically asked if they had thoughts to share on the questions that were asked as discussion primers (see interview and focus group discussion guides in Appendix 2). Themes discussed during focus group discussions include girls' education, gender relations, gender-based violence in schools and ways to fight this violence.

The second FGD was held with 10 Awaso teachers, representing each of the five (5) village schools. The group was composed of seven (7) men and three (3) women, which is fairly representative of the observed gender ratio among teachers in the region. Unfortunately the district does not gather sex-disaggregated statistics on the teaching force, making it impossible to confirm whether this male to female teacher ratio was indeed truly representative.

The third focus group was formed by 14 teachers from one of the nearest senior high schools (SHS), located in a nearby community. Although this session was not part of the initial interview schedule because the school is not located in Awaso, it was deemed necessary to include opinions from teachers working at SHS level since much of the sexual violence against girls in schools occurs at that level. Awaso youth who continue their schooling to the SHS level therefore attend one of two schools near Awaso. The group of teachers from this SHS consisted of 10 men and four (4) women, which also seems fairly representative of observed sex ratios among teachers.

The fourth and final focus group discussion was also an addition made in the field. It was conducted with 11 female students studying at SHS level, aged 16 (n=1), 17 (n=5) and 18 (n=5) years old. Although this discussion was not part of the initial data collection plan, and therefore not included in ethics approval obtained from the university, the decision to

listen to female students' opinions of male sexual and gender-based violence in schools was based on the recommendation of multiple participants including parents, teachers, civil society representatives and government staff. The importance of hearing students' opinion of violence is supported by the feminist literature, which highlights the value of hearing marginalized voices in any study. Indeed, the past few years have seen the development of a large movement committed to hearing children's voices in research. This seems essential when discussing issues that directly affect them. Well established organizations such as Save the Children and ActionAid have included children in their research on violence, and have written guidelines on the topic. By listening to children's voices, they have highlighted the important contributions they bring to projects on violence. Not only can children teach us about their experiences and perceptions of what matters to them, but they can also voice their needs and priorities. Some of the key benefits of child participation in research on violence include helping to understand their definitions of violence and the strategies they use to prevent and deal with situations of violence, thus asserting their position as agents of change (Save the Children, 2004). Other benefits include asserting their right to participate and to voice their opinion, which helps to protect them against violence by increasing their self-confidence, assertion and critical thinking abilities (Save the Children, 2004). However, speaking to children in research is also a highly ethical matter, and a researcher must ensure participants are physically and emotionally safe during and long after research discussions. Fortunately, such a supportive framework was easy to put in place in the context of the present study, since I had lived in the community for several months. The students were informed of the purpose of the study, of their rights to leave at any point and to abstain from

answering any question, and provided with contact information of adults (including myself) who could support them on issues related to the discussion.

Together, these interviews and FGDs allowed for data collection on girls' education in the region, gender relations in the community, male sexual and gender-based violence in schools and various programs aimed at reducing it. Interview questions also touched on obstacles to the protection of girls in school as well as gaps in regional and national programs. Interview grids are presented in Appendix 2.

It may be noted that 19 community members from Bimbila, a rural community in Northern Ghana benefitting from the ActionAid Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools project, were also interviewed during the course of this study. They consisted of teachers, parents, Girl's Education Officers, Parent-Teacher Association members, Community Advocacy Team members and local government officials. They were interviewed to fill a knowledge gap linked to the absence of such a project in the Awaso community – and the related limited array of ideas on how to curb such violence. The data gathered from interviews in Bimbila will not be presented in this research per se, since this surpasses the scope of this study, but will rather inform the recommendations and concluding remarks.

*Study of documents and statistics provided by government officials and civil society representatives*

Documentation gathered from various sources during field work focuses on international conventions as well as national laws and policies on human rights and child protection. It includes information on the incidence of reported rape, defilement and other types of violence against women and girls in the country, as well as on gender dynamics within Ghanaian society.

### **4.2.3 Data analysis**

Data was analyzed using the Qualitative Content Analysis method, which “facilitates contextual meaning in text through the development of emergent themes derived from textual data” (Bryman 2001, in Priest, Roberts and Woods, 2002). I analyzed the data for latent content, which is based on meaning behind participants’ words (as opposed to manifest content, which studies the actual words used to express ideas). This strategy was chosen because it leads to richer analysis and because the interviews were conducted in participants’ second or third language, which is not conducive to using specific and exact words to communicate complex thoughts. While I remain conscious of the fact that my interpretation may not be in tune with the participants’ intended meaning, a few elements helped ensure that the latter was indeed well understood. First, I lived with participants for 18 weeks, creating basic understanding of local speech patterns and expressions. Second, I periodically verified that I understood what participants meant during interviews and FGDs, and third, a large number of interviews were conducted to increase my confidence in the data. Analysis itself was modeled on Rubin & Rubin’s (2005: 201) step-by-step model, which “entails classifying, comparing, weighing, and combining material from the interviews to extract the meaning and implications, to reveal patterns, or to stitch together descriptions of events into a coherent narrative”.

Once the interviews and focus group discussions were completed, they were transcribed and imported into the QDA Miner software. They were then read over twice before key concepts (ideas that are relevant to the research question) were identified, defined and organized into themes (summary statements and explanations of the research topic)

(Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The resulting preliminary coding structure (see Appendix 4) was then created and imported in QDA Miner.

Following this key preparatory step, every transcript was systematically examined and coded manually in the software<sup>12</sup>. The concepts and themes were modified and reorganized as coding progressed in order to better reflect the data. The final coding structure is presented below.

---

<sup>12</sup> Coding could have been done automatically with the use of keywords but manual coding was seen as a more thorough option given the fact that keywords are not always used by participants. Automatic coding may therefore have miscoded statements and missed others, and was thus avoided.

**Figure 3: Final coding structure**

1. Girls' education in Ghana
  - a. Status
  - b. Barriers
2. Gender relations in Ghana
  - a. Perceptions of masculinity and femininity
  - b. Socialization
  - c. Religion
  - d. Violence against women
  - e. Improvements to the status of women
3. Violence against girls in schools
  - a. Sexual violence
    - i. Types
    - ii. Occurrence
    - iii. Victims
    - iv. Perpetrators
    - v. Causes
    - vi. Consequences
    - vii. Reporting
    - viii. Support mechanisms
    - ix. Understandings of violence
4. Fighting SVAGS
  - a. Current situation (including gaps)
    - i. International conventions
    - ii. National and local government
    - iii. Civil society
    - iv. Community/schools
  - b. Barriers to fighting SVAGS
    - i. Lack of knowledge
    - ii. Lack of resources
    - iii. Lack of prioritization of women's issues
    - iv. Sense of family/community
    - v. Religion
    - vi. Other barriers
  - c. Recommendations
    - i. Government
    - ii. Civil society
    - iii. Communities and schools

Coded data was then sorted with the help of the software. The concepts and themes most relevant to the research questions were then examined for commonalities and divergences, allowing participants' experiences and understandings to be taken both individually and as a whole. Patterns were identified among genders and groups of participants (teachers, parents, government staff, etc.). Findings were then summarized, and links were made across concepts and themes.

Finally, accuracy and consistency of the findings were verified by reading the transcripts once more.

#### ***4.2.4 Sharing results***

The feminist perspective holds that research projects should aim both to generate knowledge and to improve the lives of participants by contributing to social change. As such, it insists on the importance of sharing results with participants, in keeping with the view that research should be "based on collaborative and non-exploitative relationships" (Sarantakos, 2005: 60). Sharing results with participants thus contributes to the objectives of helping to raise participants' consciousness and of contributing to women's emancipation and empowerment (Reinharz, 1992). It is also a way to validate the researcher's understandings of the research topic. To uphold these key notions, a discussion period was conducted with Awaso community members to share preliminary results and provide them with an opportunity for discussion. Unfortunately many of them were unable to attend due to scheduling issues, and perhaps lack of interest, but this document will be condensed and shared with community leaders who will be able in turn to discuss it with community members if they wish to do so.

Data analysis results will also be distributed to stakeholders from government departments and civil society organizations.

### **4.3 Material and equipment**

Data collection required only minimal material and equipment. A digital recorder was used to record interviews and a laptop to transcribe them. A notebook was also used to record any relevant details and preliminary thoughts. The QDA Miner software was then used to assist with data analysis.

### **4.4 Limitations**

One limitation of this study is linked to the restricted number of interviews conducted with each group of participants. For example, holding discussions with more local government employees would have allowed for a better understanding of the challenges of adapting national mechanisms and efforts in the fight against violence in schools at the local level, as well as difficulties dealing with situations of violence when they arise. However, obtaining views from many groups allowed for a clearer picture of the network of people and organizations fighting male sexual and gender-based violence in schools in Ghana, as well as for a better understanding of challenges and lessons learned from each perspective. This was simply indispensable to my analysis. The fact that data was obtained through three (3) different methods and analyzed through a process of triangulation, using review of the academic literature and local documents, classroom observation and semi-structured

interviews and FGDs, helps ensure the reliability of results despite each group's small sample size.

A second limitation of this study is linked to language. It is important to note that although English is the official and administrative language of Ghana, many villagers do not speak it fluently. This left two (2) options for interview logistics, each tied to its own set of limitations. The first was to hire a local interpreter, which brought on the possibility of misinterpretation and censorship. The second was to conduct interviews only with people who had basic knowledge of English, the disadvantages of which were related to non-representativeness of respondents – Anglophones having generally benefited from a higher educational input. Ultimately, the question of language was not as important a problem as first envisaged, given that school staff, representatives of NGOs and civil servants all spoke English very well. As for the FGD with parents, two (2) participants - the pastor who helped organize the meeting and a young woman from the region - offered to translate comments spoken in Twi, the local language. This was necessary only a few times during the discussion, given that the vast majority of participants spoke English.

A third limitation of this study has to do with barriers associated with the “external-outsider” position, as described by Joseph Banks and adopted by Sandra Acker (2000). According to Banks' typology, researchers who come from outside the study group and do not share strong ties with its members find themselves in this position. This confers them less access to the unveiling of the participants due to lack of trust and familiarity. Even though I had built excellent relationships with Awaso participants, this position still played out and was even more marked given the taboo nature of the research subject, which is rarely discussed in Ghanaian society. Illustratively, some participants noted that even the

words for sexual organs are considered taboo and are not used in the local dialect. The willingness of community members to discuss violence in schools despite this challenge is very telling, and might be interpreted as a reflection of their strong desire for change, although this interpretation is solely mine.

Finally, a fourth limitation of this research has to do with the concept of intersectionality. Feminist research methodologies normally try to consider the impact of various systems of oppression on women's experiences. In this study, it would have been interesting to gather information on whether ethnicity, language, religion and socio-economic status play a role in exacerbating girls' vulnerability to violence in schools. However, the Awaso population is fairly homogenous in that most individuals are of Sefwi ethnicity, Christian faith, and low economic status. This being said, the notion of intersectionality is discussed where relevant and possible in this study.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this research project remains relevant given the magnitude of the problem of male sexual and gender-based violence in schools in Ghana, as well as the severity of consequences both for its victims and for their community as a whole.

#### **4.5 Ethical Considerations**

The present research was approved by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board. While the FGD with students aged 16 to 18 was not initially planned, it was added to the data collection schedule once in the field, after many Ghanaians highlighted the importance of speaking directly to the girls to hear their perspective on violence in schools. Doing so was considered appropriate, and even essential, in Ghanaian culture, and is supported by

NGO and academic literature on studies focusing on violence against children (for example, see Save the Children, 2004; Daiute & Fine, 2003; Feinstein, Karkara & Laws, 2004). As discussed above, extra care was taken to ensure students' comfort, anonymity and emotional safety during and after the discussion. Themes which were addressed include girls' education in the community (including access to school and class participation), gender relations in the school and the community, and sexual violence against girls in schools. Girls were encouraged to keep their comments general and not to discuss personal experience, since they were in a group setting. However, they were provided with contact information of people who were available and well equipped to support them should they wish to discuss their own experience or to continue the conversation on an individual basis. Much of the group discussion focused on their needs in terms of safety in and around school, as well as their ideas and suggestions on reducing sexual violence. Throughout the session, I reminded them that they were not obliged to answer questions, and that they should only do so if they felt comfortable. As such, questions that went unanswered were not repeated. From the beginning to the end of the FGD, I gauged participants' comfort level and made sure the space was safe and respectful for all.

The sensitivity of the research topic demanded that special attention be paid to ethical considerations throughout the study, with all groups of participants. More specifically, participants were informed of specific project objectives, of what their participation entailed, and of the methods used to collect data. I was sure to obtain informed consent from each participant, who was advised of his or her right to withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason, without penalty of any type. Permission was also obtained to record interviews digitally. The protection of participants' identities was

guaranteed throughout the study, and the names of individuals do not appear in any reports. Personal details permitting readers to identify participants were removed. Interviews were scheduled in a place and time chosen by participants in order to accommodate them as much as possible.

Furthermore, the risk to benefit ratio was carefully evaluated to ensure potential psychological and emotional risks for participants did not outweigh the benefits of participating in the study. These risks, which included anxiety related to discussing and reflecting on the topic of violence against girls in schools, were minimal with civil society and government representatives since the context of their work brings them to consider such issues. However, risks of psychological discomfort were higher among community members, including students, parents and teachers, who may have felt closer to this delicate issue and were at the same time less habituated to discussing it openly. Among other related concerns, it was necessary to consider the possibility that some participants were or knew survivors of male sexual and gender-based violence and that they would thus find it especially difficult to discuss, either during or after the interview or FGD. It was therefore essential to identify a person with whom participants could discuss their specific concerns. The village pastor volunteered for this, as did a WUSC employee working in the region.

#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

Based on decades of lessons learned from feminist research and theory, and with humble recognition of the limited impact of this research on the lives of those whose security it aims to improve, this project tries to find ways of engaging with local communities to assist them in their fight against male sexual and gender-based violence in schools. It does so by

studying at the barriers to implementing legislative, social and community frameworks for child protection in education settings through the eyes of parents, teachers, students and community members, as well as experienced NGO workers and government representatives working at the local and national levels. This research also highlights participants' ideas and recommendations on how those barriers may best be lifted to increase girls' security in learning environments.

## CHAPTER V: DATA ANALYSIS

The initial objective of this research was to study local strategies to fight male sexual and gender-based violence in schools in Awaso, Ghana. A review of the literature indicated that while the Government of Ghana has signed international conventions such as the UNCRC and CEDAW and incorporated key child protection principles into national legislation, there remains a high incidence of male sexual and gender-based violence in schools. While carrying out interviews in Accra, every single participant from civil society, both male and female, confirmed the high levels of violence. As noted by a lady working for a women's organization, "[s]exual violence against girls in schools is a reality; it is happening. (...) Yes, it's frequent. If you talk to girls, you will hear a lot of stories, so it is really going on. It is." Likewise, all government staff interviewed shared this sentiment: "Many young girls are being defiled, in schools. It's serious! Sexual violence, all over!" These statements by participants echoed the findings of previous research, according to which sexual violence in schools is prevalent in the country (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999b; Brown, 2002).

When we asked CSO and government participants in Accra whether they were familiar with local initiatives to eliminate male sexual and gender-based violence in schools, one NGO representative explained it as such: "At the local level, nothing is being done in some areas, and some things are being done in some areas." Speaking specifically about Awaso, another NGO staff answered: "Nothing is being done at the community level there. Institutions that are supposed to protect children are not present. They are far away. Only parents and community leaders are there, and I don't think they are doing much." It was clear I would need to reconsider my research questions.

During the FGD with parents in Awaso, mothers and fathers confirmed the absence of community and school level initiatives that worked on fighting male sexual and gender-based violence in schools<sup>13</sup>. They nodded in agreement when a mother stated: “[t]here is nothing like that here. Nothing.” Examples such as awareness activities, reporting assistance or victim support programs were provided to make sure participants understood the variety of components that could be included in their answers, and the reply from another mother was the same: “There is nothing”. Representatives from the local government confirmed that they had not heard of any such initiatives, either in schools or in the community. “There is nothing in place. Very little is done at school level in fact.” Teachers confirmed the absence of prevention and support mechanisms in their respective schools.

Just as Awaso participants agreed that they were not equipped with local prevention and support initiatives, they shared the opinion that sexual violence against girls in schools happens in their community. Parents were most aware of sexual relationships between girls and “sugar daddies”, who are community members who pay the girls to have sex with them. One father explained it as such: “Some men are beasts. They don't even care about the age of the child; they just want to get under her skirt.” They also mentioned that poverty leads some mothers to encourage their daughters to find sugar daddies, as was reported in the CRRESCENT study (2009). When asked whether sugar daddy relationships were common in the community, another father answered: “Oh yes, it is very common. They are everywhere. Tomorrow, check for yourself at the chop bar<sup>14</sup>.” When speaking about sexual

---

<sup>13</sup> The concept was explained to participants at the beginning of the session to foster common understanding of the issue. It was worded as “sexual violence against girls in schools”, which is used interchangeably in this text. This wording removes the component which may be perceived as “blaming men”, and made it easier to discuss this issue which is both taboo and contentious.

<sup>14</sup> Food stand / small restaurant

relationships among classmates, parents did not feel that those were considered violence. They were not aware of sexual relationships between students and teachers in their community. Rather than dismiss the possibility, they pointed to the lack of reporting to explain that they had not heard of cases. "You know, it is possible, but I have not heard of it. Often, even the mother will not know. They will never find out. Most times, children will hide it."

Like parents, teachers who work at the basic school level (primary and JHS) were fast to acknowledge that students have sex with sugar daddies. In fact, they unanimously agreed that 50% to 60% of JHS female students and 20% of primary school female students in the community have sugar daddies. They were understandably more guarded when asked about sexual relationships in school. After a long silence of hesitation, however, they began an animated discussion:

"Sometimes during the school, girls suffer sexual harassment on the part of teachers and students themselves."

"Ohhhhhh... ha ha ha" (\*with surprise and apprehension that someone was admitting to this)

"Yes!" (\*reaction of teachers: laughter, awkwardness. Giving looks seeming to mean "why are you talking about this?")

"You know, it is happening, but not here... She is talking about the Awaso community, so..." (\*heated discussion – people talking at the same time saying yes, here too, or no, not here, until one of the headmasters said plainly:)

"One of my teachers forced a girl to have sex two years ago. She was in Primary 4, about 12 or 13 years old. (...) It was rape."<sup>15</sup>

"So it has happened here."

---

<sup>15</sup> According to the Criminal Code, it was defilement since the child was under 16 years of age.

Teachers from the SHS were generally a little more open than basic school teachers when speaking about teacher-student sexual relationships, as had been the case in previous research (CRRESCENT, 2009). “It happens, in so many schools. It happens everywhere.” (\*men laughing) “It can also happen here.” “We know about it, but you know, it's an open secret... Those things, you know, there's nothing you can do about it.” There was a discussion around occurrence, some teachers stating that it happens a lot, others saying “it's not that common; it happens randomly, once in a while.” Like parents and basic school teachers, they mentioned that many female students have sex with community members, and do so mostly for money. A male teacher recalled the following experience:

One of the students in my class was very problematic and was not coming to school, so I called her to see what was going on. She told me that the father could not afford her school fees, so she had to find her own means of raising money. I asked her how she did it but she would not tell me. I heard from another colleague that she was having an affair with mine workers.

This statement also supports findings from previous research, which has discussed the effect of poverty on the likelihood that a girl will engage in transactional sex (Leach et al., 2003). It speaks to the intersectionality of gender and poverty and confirms that girls from poor families are more at risk of accepting transactional sex than girls from richer families. SHS teachers also spoke of sexual relationships between girls and their male classmates, both among couples and in exchange for boys' tutoring help with so-called “difficult subjects” such as math and science. “You see, some girls, their IQ is very low, and they always depend on boys when it comes to calculus and science. And the guy, whatever he says, some girls just accept it because she realizes that if she doesn't have sex with him, he will refuse to tutor her. So she will pay him with sex.”

When SHS students spoke of sexual relationships with their male classmates, they insisted that these existed mostly among couples. They were not aware of classmates who had exchanged sex for tutoring, and insisted that transactional sex happened only with teachers. Of all discussion groups, students were the least hesitant to admit the existence of these unlawful relationships. “Yes, it happens that the girls have sex with the teachers. Definitely.” “Most of the teachers befriend some of the students. (...) They befriend them and have sex with them. We have been seeing it, all the time.” The only disagreement in the group had to do with the percentage of teachers that enter these relationships with students, a question to which their answers ranged from 10% to 90%. They agreed that roughly 40% of female SHS students sleep with teachers. This transactional sex with teachers in Ghana has also been documented in previous studies, and was shown to be traded for extra tuition, higher marks on exams and advance copies of exam questions (Afenyadu & Goparaju, 2003).

If participants agreed that SVAGS happens, they also unanimously stated that they found these relationships to be problematic. As this male SHS teacher put it, “[i]t is a problem. It's bad, and it should be fixed.” Different reasons were expressed for the need to tackle the issue, and were mostly centered on its direct consequences, including pregnancy, indiscipline, poor academic performance and lack of respect for teachers.

The comments presented so far in this chapter inform us of three key pieces of information: sexual violence against girls in schools happens in Awaso, community members know about it, and they find it to be problematic. In light of this data, the lack of local initiatives to fight this violence became even more perplexing. Why aren't there more local initiatives to protect girls from this abuse, if students, parents and school personnel

agree that it is a problem? The research questions were thus oriented to find answers to that conundrum and to start thinking of ways to challenge local inertia:

- What are the barriers to fighting male sexual and gender-based violence in schools at the local level in Awaso?
- What are some of the ways by which those barriers may be lifted?

Participants from all groups and genders also touched on national level barriers and recommendations because of the strong influence they exert on community level actions. These are also included in this section.

### **5.1 Barriers to fighting male sexual and gender-based violence in schools in Awaso, Ghana**

The current sub-section focuses on barriers to fighting male sexual and gender-based violence in schools in the village of Awaso. It does not aim to blame community members for their lack of proactive action on the issue, nor should it minimize the work of the many individuals and organizations working to end male sexual and gender-based violence in schools in the country. Rather, it presents the barriers to tackling the issue, as identified by both community members (students, parents and teachers) and experts working in Accra (from governmental and non-governmental organizations), as well as my own observations made while spending time in the community. These have been separated into categories most often cited by participants: lack of knowledge; lack of financial resources; traditional values of family, community and religion; and popular perceptions of masculinity, femininity and violence against women and girls.

### *5.1.1 Lack of knowledge*

Participants from the community and the group of experts identified lack of knowledge as both a cause of SVAGS and a barrier to its eradication. Together, they mentioned that children, parents, community members, teachers, Girls' Education Officers (GEOs), police officers, doctors, and government staff working at the Ministries of Education, Social Welfare, and Women and Children lacked some form of knowledge that would help fight SVAGS.

The most commonly cited area in which a lack of knowledge was said to be halting action against male sexual and gender-based violence in schools, as stated by parents, civil society actors and government personnel, was reporting mechanisms. For cases to be prosecuted and for survivors to receive assistance, incidents must be reported to the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service. The unit is undisputedly the most well known actor in the Ghanaian government' fight against SVAGS, and is the main government institution working on the issue. Most people know it for its investigative and prosecuting role, but it is also mandated to carry out school outreach, community sensitization and victim support. However, as explained by a representative of the local government, people must be aware of DOVVSU's existence, mandate and location to report cases: "How would the girl even know where DOVVSU is? Does she even understand DOVVSU? Does she even know about DOVVSU? They don't know! Somebody may want to report but they just don't know." This participant also mentioned that even if most parents know about DOVVSU, many of them don't understand why and how to report cases. Other government representatives agreed that communities' lack of information on how to handle and report cases of abuse is an important challenge in

fighting SVAGS. This supports findings of CRRESCENT's study (2009), according to which lack of knowledge of where to report sexual abuse was also identified as an important obstacle.

Another important hurdle to fighting SVAGS which was presented in past research (CRRESCENT, 2009) and confirmed here was the fact that personnel from many ministries was also in dire need of training on dealing with violence against girls. This need for training was demonstrated first hand by one of the key actors responsible for following up on cases of SVAGS at the community level.

If a girl reports [abuse] to the headmaster, at times the headmaster will also report it to me. And then I have to go down and investigate. I will give them advice on whether to have them arrest the perpetrator. If he is a school boy, you have to talk to him. Because he is of school-going age. If you arrest the child, the boy, he is going to be a burden in the future. So you have to talk to him. And then at times, if he is not serious, you can find a placement [in prison] for him, just unofficially, to frighten him.

While this kind of informal response to sexual violence in schools would be unacceptable in Canada, I am aware of the fact that different socio-economic contexts call for different solutions. This being said, Ghanaian law states that the responsibility to investigate cases and take decisions on prosecution rests with DOVVSU officers. The fact that people at all levels, including headmasters, community leaders and GEOs, take it upon themselves to decide the fate of perpetrators contributes to low reporting rates, particularly since girls and their families see reported perpetrators being given symbolic, if any, sanctions.

The second most commonly cited area in which knowledge was deemed insufficient was Ghana's legislative frameworks. Representatives from various Government ministries, from civil society and from the community all highlighted this problem. A recent study on existing laws and policies on violence against girls in schools in Ghana, carried out by the Human Rights Advocacy Center and the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC), revealed that many government officials working towards eradication of SVAGS are in fact ignorant of the laws that underlie their work<sup>16</sup>. These officials worked for DOVVSU, the Girls' Education Unit (GEU) of the Ghana Education Service (GES), the Children's Department of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), and District Assemblies. "In terms of the law, their knowledge was very very poor." Through the present research, the same was found to be true of parents, teachers, students and GEOs, who lacked knowledge of national and international child protection frameworks. They all knew that child protection laws and conventions existed at the national and international levels. However, in the words of a father speaking on behalf of the community, "we are not cognisant of them". According to experts working with NGOs and government, girls' rights is an area of the law which is not sufficiently known by community members. This was confirmed during FGDs with parents, students and teachers, who did not mention these at all. When speaking about girls' lack of knowledge of their rights, a young lady working for a child rights NGO remembered her own experience: "They just say you have rights but they wouldn't even tell you what the rights are. So really, the girls don't know their rights." Government representatives shared this opinion, and underscored the need to educate children, teachers and communities about girls' rights.

---

<sup>16</sup> The study has not yet been published.

Like lack of knowledge on girls' rights, ignorance of the consequences of violence against girls and women was mentioned as a barrier to fighting SVAGS by experts only. They generally agreed upon the fact that community members were failing to think deeper into the consequences of violence for victims, causing them to lack empathy towards them. In return, this lack of empathy plays a role in both the high rates of perpetration of violence and the low rates of reporting. "People are forgetting about the consequences of these acts on the life of the child in the future. I think they would care if they knew. They would care, but since they don't know... Some of them need a lot of information on the consequences of violence." Experts also suggested that some DOVVSU officers and staff from the Department of Social Welfare "lack knowledge of women's issues", including of the consequences of violence. According to one government representative, "they need to be reoriented to be more sensitive to abuse of women and children, especially girls". This would increase their empathy for survivors, and may help fight male sexual and gender-based violence.

### ***5.1.2 Lack of financial resources***

According to the overwhelming majority of participants, more specifically 17 out of 23 individual participants or focus groups, lack of money at both the family level and at the government level is a key barrier to fighting male sexual and gender-based violence in schools. The following comment from an expert working for civil society demonstrates some of the key issues related to lack of resources at both these levels, as well as some of the linkages between the two:

Do you know how you report a rape case? You have to go to DOVVSU first. They give you a card, a medical form, then you go to the hospital. When you are there you pay five Ghana cedis [3\$]. Now if you don't pay that five cedis you don't get a medical form. Before they do the test you have to pay for the test. It's not free. But the Domestic Violence Support Fund is supposed to make sure that every medical expenditure related to issues of rape, defilement, and domestic violence is free. That's part of the Domestic Violence Law, but for four years, nothing has happened to that. It has not been implemented. The Government is not interested in that.

As stated by a handful of employees from DOVVSU, the Department of Social Welfare and the Department of Women and Children, most cases of SVAGS are never reported, which supports literature on the subject (see Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999; and CRRESCENT, 2009, among others). Families' lack of financial resources plays a large role in this decision, as it renders them unable to pay for medical examinations and forms. When families do choose to report a case, they also have to pay their transportation costs to get to the nearest DOVVSU office (which in the case of Awaso is located in the district capital, 34km away), the hospital and the court. For this reason, girls from poor families have less chances of having their case taken on by their family. In the words of two (2) civil society workers, “[s]omething that is supposed to be free is not free at the end of the day”, and “it becomes expensive for the victims and their families”. Police bribes and gas money for doctors are also potential expenses. “Doctors will say the state has not provided gas for their going to court to go and give evidence for the case”. Just as the legal framework against SVAGS seems flawless on paper but is not enforced in reality, reporting structures “are supposed to be free legally but on the front side they are not free. [Victims and their families] end up paying a little. And a little to an average Ghanaian is a lot.” It is clear that for many families, the inability to pay fees related to reporting violence is a very real barrier

to fighting SVAGS, as confirmed by Awaso parents and teachers. On top of these financial burdens, families often have to contend with corruption. This means that despite all the time, money and emotional difficulties related to reporting a case, they may not even get a fair trial. “If you are not in luck”, explains a government expert, “some big man somewhere is involved”. As they get away with their violent and abusive actions, these men continue to prey on schoolgirls and perpetrate violence against them.

Family poverty also leads parents to accept money from perpetrators instead of insisting on legal sanctions. As one female representative of civil society explains, “[s]ometimes [the perpetrators] are giving some sort of money as compensation. And you know, in a society where there's so much poverty, you wouldn't deny that. Once people see money, it's a lot of inducement and enticement, and therefore... You know.” This is what happened in the case of the Awaso teacher who had had sex with a student in Primary 4, as recounted by the schools' headmaster during a FGD. While the Criminal Code (Section 101, subsection 2) states that punishment for defiling a child is imprisonment for a term of not less than seven (7) years and not more than 25 years, the headmaster recalled that

[t]he teacher was arrested and put behind bars for about two weeks, then the matter was solved amicably. The teacher gave money to the girl's family and they withdrew the case. The teacher is still teaching, because the matter was withdrawn and solved amicably. (\*general laughter) It was a mutual agreement based on money.

Poverty also leads some families to accept perpetrators' offers to marry their daughters if they have impregnated them, because it guarantees support for the girl and her baby. Once again, girls from poor families are much more at risk of this type of arrangement

than girls from families which are more financially secure. A female government worker explained the decision making process as such:

Most of the time, when they call the teacher because there is a pregnancy involved, the teacher will say, almost invariably, ok well I will marry her. And the village members, they will agree. Unlike in developed countries, where there are packages for families with dependent children [and] for unmarried mothers, (...) those packages are not in place here. There are no funds. So it makes it very difficult for people to come out and report cases. If this man is going to give me so much money, and has promised to marry my daughter, why would I go public? Go chasing the raid, go to the police who may even collect the money and not pursue the case. And when the case goes to the court it's another ordeal. So you see the structures are not favourable, and that also contributes to the violence against the girls.

Finally, parents mentioned that the fact that perpetrators often have many dependents “who will suffer if they are taken to jail” is another way in which poverty hinders reporting. Teachers agreed, as explained clearly by a man teaching in one of the basic schools in Awaso:

Imagine an older person who has a lot of dependants. People depend on him. And then he is taken to a jail, and all his dependents are left without anybody taking care of them. So most of the time, we take this into account and the person is not jailed. Because otherwise the dependents too are going to suffer.

Although further from community life than the families themselves, the government also plays an important role in protecting children from violence, both at the national and the community level. It needs funds to do so, however, and government lack of financial resources was identified as a barrier to stopping male sexual and gender-based violence in schools by experts within civil society and government. Parents, teachers and students did not mention this funding gap as an issue, perhaps because they are unaware of the legislative framework that requires government agencies to carry out prevention and victim support

programs in communities throughout the country, and to ensure that laws are respected and perpetrators are prosecuted no matter where sexual crimes occur. Experts who highlighted the government's lack of resources as an issue stated that the low budget put aside for fighting and dealing with SVAGS meant that ministries working on this issue were unable to carry out activities detailed in their mandates. For example, DOVVSU, the GEU, the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs were all quoted as needing funds to carry out community awareness programs.

Of all government departments lacking resources to fight male sexual and gender-based violence, there was a strong sense among participants that DOVVSU was the most in need of supplementary budgetary allowances, because of the multifaceted role it plays in preventing SVAGS. Its large mandate was described earlier on. Activities such as broad-based sensitization, investigation, arrests and provision of shelters and psychological support for victims are costly. At the moment, DOVVSU is unable to provide shelters and psychological support for abused women and children outside Accra (and even there its coverage is limited). One participant even reported that some DOVVSU offices lack tables, chairs, and confidential rooms needed to welcome people reporting cases and to support survivors. In fact, DOVVSU's victim support program was described as neither thorough nor systematic, and their law enforcement as "patchy". Lack of funds within DOVVSU also translates into vehicle shortages, and blocks the unit's ability to provide psychosocial services to survivors and to arrest perpetrators. In fact, one officer admitted that "[s]ome people even pay police officers' taxi fees for them to go arrest perpetrators of abuse. Some officers pay their taxi fares from their own pocket."

Other departments affected by vehicle shortages include the Ministry of Education, which needs cars to conduct school supervision visits and host awareness campaigns in schools and communities, as well as the Department of Social Welfare which needs them to carry out community activities and monitoring. In short, lack of funds for transportation hinders staff's ability to carry out activities laid out in their mandates.

Additional funds are also needed for the GEU to start girls' clubs in every school in the country, as they have decided to do, and to conduct school visits to ensure professional codes of conduct are being respected and girls are attending school.

Furthermore, experts stated that the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs is short of funds to carry out its policy work on the enforcement and monitoring of the Domestic Violence Act, including the administration of the Domestic Violence Support Fund, which was supposed to be in place four (4) years ago.

Overall, what came through from government and civil society participants was the sense that the government has recognized the problem of male sexual and gender-based violence in schools and has put in place a set of laws and programs to address it, but has failed to fund their implementation. According to a civil servant, “[i]f you look at government policies, you’ll see that they’re quite good. Yet the problem is implementation. You look at some of the financial constraints...” Another government employee was slightly more antagonistic about it:

From the Government of Ghana, there is no commitment, no support, no funds for any of this. They only give enough for salaries and a few projects. They give something but it's not enough. For projects, workshops, we don't get it. We need funds for advocacy, sensitization, vehicles for police, to follow up on

cases, and for shelters. It's like the government settles us with the basic things, but for the resources that you need to educate people – workshops, training programs, and everything – you have to find the NGOs.

We close this section with a key question, asked rhetorically by a woman who has been working on violence against girls in the non-governmental sector for decades. “Really, when you think of it, what good is it for the government to formulate laws without giving funding to implement them?”

### ***5.1.3 Deep-set values: family, community and religion***

Ghanaian culture is very much centered on family and community values. It is also strongly guided by religious tradition. In fact, those are some of the most obvious features of Ghanaian life to foreigners who spend time in the country. As this female NGO representative explains, “[a]ccording to our customs, everyone is family. We go back many generations.” While the powerful ties that link families and neighbours have clear positive repercussions, such as mutual help, collective responsibility, and reciprocal obligations (Utley, 2009), they also lead to some negative ramifications. According to Utley (2009), high incidence of gossip is an issue. Our interviews and focus group discussions revealed another negative aspect, highlighted here by a representative of civil society: “This customary way of thinking interferes with [the] justice system”. As is made evident by listening to participants, survivors’ family members, neighbours and pastors use social pressure to prohibit them from reporting cases to the police. In doing so, they aim to protect family and community members from shame, imprisonment and loss of ability to care for their dependents. The well-being of the wider family and community therefore becomes

more important than that of the survivor of abuse, as well as the protection of potential victims.

As a barrier to fighting male sexual and gender-based violence, the sense of family and community was brought up by only a few parents, teachers, CSO representatives and government employees. It was less often quoted as an issue than lack of knowledge and lack of resources, but the obstacle it represents is just as great. Some might even argue that it is even more challenging to tackle, since it relies on deep-set cultural values which often take generations to change.

Case examples help us understand the high pressure put on victims and their families to keep abuse quiet in order to save their families' and communities' honour. A lady working at an NGO which helps support survivors of sexual violence shared her experience of a recent case, in which a girl of school-going age was raped and impregnated by her father:

She reported the incident to her stepmother, who reported the case [to the police]. The father was then arrested. But then, relatives told the stepmother to withdraw the case. Police called the NGO to help them find a shelter for the girl. The girl went to court and saw her stepmother, who advised her to withdraw case because she was receiving lots of family and community pressure. The girl was really torn, but was counselled by a high level executive of the NGO and slept at her house. The next day, the girl told her story in court. Her father was sentenced to 20 years in jail. Although the girl was supposed to stay at the shelter only for the duration of the case, she will continue to live there [until she is self sufficient] because her family and her community won't have her.

To be sure, stigmatisation is difficult in any social context. However, it can be particularly devastating in a society that places such a high value on family and community

ties. As demonstrated in this next quote by a government official working at the local level, social networks see to the preservation of family honour:

Parents most of the time will not want to report [cases of violence]. You know how we value family lineage; people don't want to earn a bad name for anybody in the family. So you see that they would want to solve it in private; they would want to solve it quietly. They don't want to tarnish the family name. (...) And the social network is so strong that it prevents reporting, because people don't want to disgrace other families.

Awaso basic school teachers echoed this sentiment, and affirmed that, indeed, the well-being of the whole family is judged as being more important than that of one person, even if she is a child who has been violated.

The dependents are going to suffer, and as we are all relations, we are relatives of each other, we don't want our own sister or a relative suffering because an uncle or a husband or a grandfather has been jailed... So normally we overlook these things and we stop the jailing. One person has a lot of people who they are looking after. So if you cause them to be locked up and all the people over there suffer, you haven't done well. That's the societal way of thinking.

The above quotes reflect the strength of Ghanaian family and community networks. These close relationships are virtually unknown to Westerners, who are accustomed to a more individualistic way of life. It can therefore be difficult to understand such a stance towards perpetrators of child abuse. However, when we comprehend the context in which most families in Awaso live, in which one man is responsible for feeding an entire family<sup>17</sup> and in which social welfare programs to care for people who have no means of providing for themselves simply do not exist, we step closer to understanding the mentality behind these

---

<sup>17</sup> Many women also work but men take home most of the family income due to the gender division of labour.

quotes. In those circumstances of economic constraint, a police officer explained that they will leave it to God to punish the perpetrators of violence: “If my father has sex with my sister, since my father is the sole breadwinner, we will tend to cover it up. We will say it doesn't matter. Let's leave it to God. Let's allow God to take care of it.”

Here, we start to understand the intricate links between family/community values and religion. It is clear by spending time in Ghana that religion is a very important part of Ghanaians' life. Not only do many of them attend church services several times per week, but they also frequently refer to God in conversations and greetings. In interviews, focus group discussions and classroom observation, many male and female participants quoted the Bible to justify gender hierarchies: “The Bible says *Respect and obey your husband*. We put a lot of meaning to it. It's important here. If you don't, you are not going to be the favourite of the men in the community. Everybody is going to look down on you.” “Basically, it's our culture. You're supposed to respect the man. It's also linked to religion, which says that the man is the head of the house.”

The overwhelming majority of Ghanaian men and women see religion as a force for good in their lives, speaking for example of social-religious clubs which discuss health and social issues and encourage youth to become self-reliant and continue their education. However, trust in any religion can be used in an abusive manner, as was done during classroom observation by a school pastor speaking to JHS students about preventing sexual violence. “If you are the type to attend church, maybe God will help you.” Religion is also used to justify women's oppression and to silence abuse. In a female basic school teacher's words:

From the Bible, women are made to keep quiet. Just from the offset, from the beginning of Noah. (\*group laughs) Women are meant to keep quiet and wherever we are we are made to come under men. That's causing that there's not much change, there's not much liberation for women, to come out, to do our best.

When religion and community pressure are used together, reporting cases becomes even more difficult for survivors and their families. A civil society expert on violence against girls described it as such:

Members of the community will say *Oh, but these are our uncles and our brothers...* do you understand? For instance, if my daughter is raped, and I want to report the person, do you know what people will do? They will go to my pastor, someone that I respect so much, and send him to come and talk to me to convince me not to report the case.

Another CSO representative highlighted the use of religious pressure to prevent victims from reporting cases of SVAGS:

Sometimes family members, or community members, because you know, in our communities, people know each other, will put so much pressure from all angles. And Ghanaians are religious... either the Islamic or Christian beliefs. So they will even go through your religious leader to come and plead with you. How can you say no to your pastor or your imam?

Finally, another way in which religion was seen as a barrier to fighting SVAGS was brought up when discussing the lack of comprehensive sex education, both at home and at school. As this male teacher at one of the basic schools said, “[i]n this country, we all worship God, (...) and we always say *Sexin’ without marryin’ is a sin!* There's no need for it.” Teachers at the SHS were in accord: “Sex education must be emphasized. [Children] must know the negative effects of sex before marriage.” SHS teachers also spoke of their school’s Virgins and Abstinence Club, which only has a few members. After laughing about

this, one teacher explained it this way: “[a] lot of girls register when they start school, but they often change their minds along the way...” Girls had a similar vision of things, and although they mentioned that sex education taught both at school and at home should be more thorough than what is now being presented, when the conversation moved to condom use they seemed conflicted between their experiences and their religious lessons.

No, you should not use [condoms]. You should abstain. That is what the Bible says. We have our club here, the Virgins and Abstinence Club. But in reality, some cannot abstain. So what do we do... But the Bible says no sex before marriage. So you should use the Bible to explain to girls to abstain.

We understand from teachers’ and students’ comments that they know that teaching abstinence only is not sufficient since some students are not abstaining from sex. However, their strong religious background seems to overcome their critical thinking, and they remain outwardly convinced that abstinence is the solution.

When we take a step back and think of the messages these girls and young women are hearing, we cannot help but see the immensity of, and interconnections between, the barriers that prevent them from being protected from abuse. A reconstruction of such messages follows, formed by amalgamating information presented by various participants. It is not meant as a generalization of girls’ experiences, but rather as a window to the interconnections between the social messaging heard by some of them. First, girls are told by their schools, parents and churches that sex before marriage is a sin. Then, some are instructed by their mothers to find sugar daddies to pay for their school fees if they want to continue with their education or buy certain necessities their parents cannot afford. They are not taught much on sexual relations, except that using condoms is sinful. It is therefore not surprising that some of them become pregnant. Many girls to whom that happens are

disowned by their fathers, cast aside by their teachers, and see their character and sense of style blamed for their misfortune. Finally, most are dehumanized each step of the way, and perceived as second class citizens due to the fact that they are gender female.

#### ***5.1.4 Gendered hierarchies and popular perceptions of violence against women and girls***

Understanding societal perceptions of masculinity and femininity, as well as the hierarchical order which places men above women, is essential in comprehending why male sexual and gender-based violence in schools continues to be a problem in Ghana. As Leach (2006: 27) explains:

Violence in schools cannot be divorced from violence in the home, the community and the workplace. This violence originates in the imbalance in power between males and females, in the gendered hierarchy and separation of tasks and responsibilities, and in socially accepted views of what constitutes masculine and feminine behaviour.

While experts from NGOs and government departments working in Accra displayed an understanding of the link between widespread and systemic gender-based discrimination in Ghanaian society and male sexual and gender-based violence in schools, community members did not recognize this link. This is clear when reviewing their explanations of the causes of SVAGS, summarized here with the help of the Ecological Model of Gender-based Violence (USAID & IGWG, n.d.; see Figure 1). At the individual level, community participants suggested that some girls' choice of clothing, low I.Q., lack of seriousness, pride in having sex with authority figures and desire for luxury items like cell phones and jewellery all led them enter sexual relationships in school. It was interesting to see that very

few of the perpetrators' individual traits and motivations were discussed by participants. The strong victim blaming phenomenon present in Ghanaian society and mentioned in past studies (Brown, 2002; Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999) was thus revealed in the present study through participants' explanation of SVAGS. At the relationship level, causes of male sexual and gender-based violence presented by parents, teachers and students are related to peer pressure and to girls' families. Broken homes and irresponsible parenting were quoted frequently, including lack of proper supervision, care and guidance by parents and fathers' lack of interest in their children. While one SHS teacher spoke of girls' low status within the family, others failed to distinguish treatment reserved for boys and girls. A similar situation occurred with community level factors, which could have included the general acceptance of females' position as less important than males in the community. While this was definitely noticed in classroom observations and FGDs (details to come), it was not voiced by participants. Rather, they focused on lack of supervision and encouragement of students in school, discomfort with sex education in the home and school and poverty leading parents to encourage girls to find sugar daddies. They also spoke to the difficulty in accessing reporting mechanisms and to weak community sanctions for acts of SVAGS. At the fourth and final level – the societal level – participants mentioned that the media (television, movies and music videos) had a bad influence on the girls, and led them to engage in so-called “indecent” behaviour. Once again, the prevalence of victim blaming ideologies is evident.

The fact that community members are failing to see gender hierarchies as the main underlying cause of violence against girls is a clear barrier to eliminating this violence. In a context where parents, teachers and students know that sexual violence happens but do not

grasp patriarchy's role in setting the stage for it, they are left struggling to find explanations for these acts. This is demonstrated in an exchange between two basic school teachers:

Man: "You can't blame the young men. Men are feeling pity for the poor girls; they want to help them."

Woman: "Yes you can blame the men! There are so many beautiful ladies around, why do you have to go in for a girl?"

Man: "Because the girl is not being catered for, so he wants to help the girl."

Woman: "That's no good reason. If you want to help then don't go in for that [ask for sex]." (\*heated discussion) "If she needs help, then you just have to give it out without having any sex with that person. The fact that you are giving money and you are also getting something in return, that is not help."

Man: "Ok, but look at their dressing. This also attracts the men."

Woman: "Even if this is the way they dress, do you have to go in for that?"

Man: "Yes! It will attract me." (\*other men nod and say "yes" in agreement)

Woman: "But you have your wife... (\*discussion in Twi)" "It's never the girls' fault, even if she dresses sexy."

Man: "You know, in western culture, you know how they dress? In Ghana, you don't dress like that. (...) But, almost all the women are blaming the men, or the boys. But I also blame the ladies, or the women. Because I have my money. You, girl, you need money. You want my money. Nothing goes free. You come and say *Oh boss, I need this, I need that*. Ok, no problem. I will offer you the money. Unless we go and meet up [to have sex]. So, who is the causer? It's the woman, it's not me, the man. I didn't propose it."

As seen above, participants were divided on whether the man or the girl is to blame.

While in this case the man was blaming girls and the woman was blaming men, when we

factor in other interventions with community members, we see that some male and female participants blamed men, while other male and female participants blamed girls. It was interesting to see, however, that men most often cast the blame on the girls while women mostly blamed the men. It was also eye-opening to realize that even community members who blame these sexual relationships on men refrained from identifying the problem of gender inequalities and naming it as such. Instead, they discussed the fact that men were taking advantage of girls' innocence, of their position as grantors of marks, and of the power they are conferred in rural areas because they are more educated than most community members. Not one student, parent or teacher spoke to men's position of power in the social hierarchy as a cause of male sexual and gender-based violence.

On the other hand, NGO and government representatives did not hesitate to explain that socialization created a situation in which children learned that boys and men were entitled to power, decision making and access to women's bodies, whereas girls and women were to be quiet and submissive. One male NGO representative nuanced this idea, however, by stating that female members of elite households are less socialized for submissiveness than those who live in poorer and more traditional homes:

The only difference is that in the elite homes, homes that have a lot of educated people, a woman has more freedom. She can have her own car, her own land, you know. So she informs her husband of her activities, but she can decide what those are. But in traditional homes, as a woman you can't do that.

The gendered socialization process, which is more traditional in poor households and rural areas, has been documented in previous studies (see Leach et al., 2003). It was

observed first hand during classroom observation, when a school pastor interrupted a teacher during class to talk about the issue of sexual abuse with JHS 1 students:

Pastor: "Can anyone tell me if they have heard of sexual abuse of girls in the community?"

Boy: "I have heard of that last year. A man in the community tried to force the house girl to have sex. But then she screamed and ran away."

Pastor: "Oh too bad, the man missed it. What happened, was he not strong? Was he not man enough? (\*pastor laughs)

Although the pastor laughed and some students may have interpreted his comment as a joke, the message that men should be strong and able to take women whenever they want them was still clear. In fact, the risk of failing to succeed in raping a girl was demonstrated as being ridiculed by other men in the community and having their masculinity attacked, which is no small consequence in a strongly patriarchal society. With this interaction, the pastor, a well-respected authority figure in the school, passed on strong gender stereotypes and socialized boys to be strong, sexual and aggressive. In another class, he asked children whether they knew any of the causes of sexual abuse. Pupils offered various answers such as poverty and lack of supervision. The pastor then asked them the following question, which was rhetoric and coupled with a clear pre-determined answer: "Do we cause people to harass us? Is it our fault if this happens to us?" Students took a few seconds to ponder the question, then one girl answered obediently: "Yes. We dress indecently, and we collect gifts." In this case, children were being socialized to blame girls for the violence they suffered.

The impact of this socialization was evident when speaking with SHS female students, who stated that "[i]t is mostly the girls who chase teachers. They will chase them for tips on examination questions, or for money. Then they will do sexual favours for them.

They are the girls who are not serious.” Girls had internalized society’s messages on their role in generating violence. Another example of socialization of girls was brought to my attention by both students and teachers. In the words of two female teachers,

Sometimes a girl will be very good at some of the subjects, but if she is able to answer questions on the subjects, they will just shout at her that she is a witch, that's why she is able to answer many of the questions. So the boys will just quiet her down.

The same thing applies in the community. When groups of men and women meet, they don't allow the women to talk, to voice out their feelings. If you talk they will just tell you to be quiet.

The female students confirmed that they have seen this happening in school, and that it “makes [them] shy to answer questions in class”. As a child, being called a witch is difficult in any cultural context. It is worse, however, when most community members actually believe in witchcraft, and exile “witches” to witch camps where they live in appalling conditions, as is the case in Ghana. While most, if not all, of these camps are located in the Northern region and affect communities far from Awaso, they are still common knowledge and are a scary reminder of Ghanaians’ perception of witches. For students of both genders, hearing that witchcraft is a more likely explanation to girls’ successful participation in class than their intelligence is a clear indication of society’s perceptions of girls’ potential. Even though the girl may have given the right answer, what is left in children’s minds is not that she is intelligent, but that it was not her place to speak.

Girls being blamed of witchcraft are a poignant example of how they are socialized to act according to society’s expectations of them. As expressed by a male NGO representative, there is a popular conception that Ghanaian women “are to be seen, as preferred to heard”. Indeed, this preference for men to speak and for women to be quiet was

obvious in FGDs, especially those held with parents and SHS teachers. While speaking with parents, men were habitually the first to raise their hand to answer a question. I often had to actively solicit women's participation, and then stop men from taking over once women had started talking. With SHS teachers, men sat in the center of the room and women chose to sit in the corner. Again, men answered most questions, and women had to be specifically prompted for them to speak. Even so, they often chose not to answer questions. If these are the dynamics in rooms full of adults – educated adults in the case of the SHS teachers – it is not surprising that they are even more marked in classrooms. During classroom observation, boys were constantly raising their hands with pride and anticipation when the teacher asked a question, while girls, on the other hand, simply kept their gaze cast downwards and their hands at their side. When a boy was chosen to answer the teacher's question, he stood tall and used a loud voice combined with a determined tone. When a girl was chosen to answer the question despite not having raised her hand<sup>18</sup>, she hesitated, stood slowly, looked down and used a shy, quiet voice to answer the question, her discomfort evident. This increased participation of male students in Ghanaian classrooms has also been documented in the literature, and linked to the low percentage of female teachers in rural schools (Dunne et al., 2005), a trend which has also been observed in Awaso.

The socialization process mentioned in the previous paragraph starts long before children enter school. As discussed by an NGO employee, the gender roles children are taught from a very young age lead women to think they are not as capable as men:

The women themselves, they have the perception that they are inferior. They are as wise as men. It's the society that makes them

---

<sup>18</sup> As the teachers knew I was in their class to study gender-related issues, it is possible they were especially careful to make sure they included female pupils as much as male pupils in classroom activities.

feel that way. When you are a baby girl, you are given teddy bears, dolls, all these things. You learn to be a caretaker. Baby boys are given footballs, gadgets, and etcetera. These are toys that make them active and foster their intelligence. So, right from that period, the girls are taught that they are supposed to take care of babies, to cook, etcetera. Whether we like it or not, that oppresses them right from the start.

This oppression stays with them throughout their lives, because of the strength of systemic conditioning (Cusack, 1999), and remains regardless of how successful they are in their careers. The patriarchal system's self-perpetuating character seems to be one of its strengths. Many participants pointed out that women have accessed high positions in the country, including Minister of various ministries, Speaker of Parliament and Chief Justice. According to a young lady working for an NGO, however, even when they have successful careers, women regard themselves as inferior. "They know the whole country is against it, and they wouldn't feel comfortable. They even think they can't do it. That's what they have been made to accept since infancy, so... Women have these positions, but they are shaken, they are not confident. They are bred to think they're inferior." A CSO colleague confirmed that citizens, including women, are likely to be against women being in positions of power:

If you ask women to vote for either a man or a woman, at least 80% of women will vote for the man. They think that women are not capable of doing it. At times too it's not about capability. You will realize that certain positions, when you occupy them, you'll be insulted and people will say a lot of things about you. All this for the fact that society is patriarchal.

Society has another secret weapon for women who are not deterred from entering politics or holding positions of power because of insults and lack of respect. According to several women working for the government and for civil society, women who have advanced education degrees experience difficulty in finding a husband and therefore having

children, which is especially challenging for Ghanaian women whose culture places such a high value on family.

All the top people in this country who are women, who are holding big positions, they are not married. Some have two PhDs, three Masters... they are single. Because all the men are scared to go for it. If the man has his first degree and you have your Masters, he believes you will dictate to him. So the men wouldn't come for it. They feel you will be arrogant, disrespectful. They will say that it means you've sold your strength to your wife. So he wouldn't even allow you to get it. Even if you are using your own money to further your education he wouldn't allow you to do it. Unless he also has a higher education degree. Then maybe he will allow you to get it. So most women wouldn't search for higher education because of that.

Women who are known as high achievers are therefore generally punished for refusing to follow strict gender roles. According to a woman working for the government, this causes some of them to hide their knowledge and success, for fear of being stigmatized. They are then unable to act as role models for younger girls, whose aspirations grow when they see women who are leading successful lives outside the stiff gender roles they are being socialized to accept. Without role models to inspire them, many girls drop out before graduating from high school to marry and have children (as stated by Dolphyne, 2000). Then, just as the high achievers mentioned above, many are looked down upon. In their situation, however, they are disrespected because of their lack of education. As a father living in Awaso explained, "If I want to discuss a sensible topic, I will not do it with women in the house. They don't know about these things. They are not interested either." This mentality of girls being unfit for intelligent discussion is overt. As one female government employee pointed out, girls are often insulted to such a degree that they virtually lose their sense of self worth:

Our parents will insult children a lot. They leave the children without any self esteem. So the girl, right from the get go, does not have any self esteem. The dad may be insulting her, telling her all the parts that are not beautiful about her and telling her how useless she is. The boys in the home will all leave their chores on her and she will have to do them. So the socialization system itself sort of de-empowers girls right from the home. Our socialization makes the girl feel she is second fiddle to everyone. Now if you have your child and you don't tell her how special she is, how beautiful she is, if a man says *Ah, you are beautiful!*, he sweeps her off her feet right away. Because she has never had that commendation from anyone, not even in her own home. All she gets for all the work she does is insults. So when somebody tells her *you are very pretty*, she is swept off her feet. This is also one of the things that makes girls sort of docile when it comes to abuse.

Participants made it clear that societal pressures on women come from all angles. The great majority of girls are socialized from a young age to be caretakers. They are then required to do many chores, which hinders their schooling because they are tired, don't have sufficient time to study and sometimes skip school for fear of being stigmatized because they are late. While in school, many are scared into not participating. They are also taught that good women keep quiet and don't achieve too much, at the risk of being ostracised, insulted and left single. Some are insulted to the point of having no self-esteem and not being able to affirm themselves. Then, if girls are sexually abused, they are often blamed for it and pressured into not reporting. Not only can these factors contribute to girls dropping out of school, leaving decision-making roles to men, but they also increase their vulnerability to sexual violence. Patriarchy is therefore maintained by society's gendered hierarchies, in a cyclic self-reinforcing process in which girls and women are the clear losers.

Participants from each group spoke to the issue of societal perceptions of violence against women and girls, either directly or indirectly. It was essential to note their understanding of what does and does not constitute violence against women and girls in order to better comprehend their response to acts of sexual abuse and harassment in schools. Many of them mentioned that violence against women and girls is considered an ordinary occurrence. From many participants' point of view, domestic violence is seen as a way to "discipline wives"; to "correct unwanted behaviour". Many women never report this kind of abuse, because they have learned that they must "respect and obey their husbands", as directed in the Bible. In many cases, those who do report it do not receive much sympathy, and in fact are often sent back home by male officers "to settle it in the house", as explained by a female NGO worker.

Societal acceptance of violence against women and girls is easily seen in Ghana. One only needs to look at the incidence of child marriages, female genital mutilation, witch camps<sup>19</sup> and widowhood rites to understand that women are not equal to men in Ghanaian society, and that they are not respected to the same extent as them. Widowhood rites differ in various communities, but they traditionally last one week for men and one year for women. The widow is usually prohibited from talking and working, and forced to wear dark clothing and stay indoors. In the words of a female government expert, "in more extreme cases, community members will put pepper in her eyes, tie a rope around her waist and drag her on the floor. They will also make her bathe the dead body and drink the water, or lock her up in a room with the dead body." Although these traditions are prohibited by the Criminal Code, they are "in the culture and they are happening". Although not examples of

---

<sup>19</sup> Child marriages, female genital mutilation and witch camps are a lot more common in the Northern region of the country.

SVAGS, these demonstrate Ghanaian's widespread acceptance of acts of violence against women, and help understand the inaction on the issue of sexual violence against girls in schools.

With regards to acts considered to be SVAGS in the literature, such as indecent touching and groping, police officers explained that “it is very common but it is not seen as abuse, therefore it is not reported”. Exchanging sex for money, tuition fees, tutoring or good marks is not perceived as violence either, as this student explained: “It seems there's an agreement, so it's not abuse. (...) Madame, if you have accepted it, you said you will do it, then it is not abuse.” Basic school teachers agreed with the girls: “It is not prostitution; it's normal. Prostitution is when one woman is chasing many men, accepting any man. She has a room to accept men. It is a job.” They had this to say with regards to girls' sexual relationships with wealthy community members: “You know, in our communities, it is not considered rape. We have a saying that says *No pants down, no job*. (\*general laughter) For that one, there is no law. If you are of age, there is no law. If you happen to be underage, then the law can react.”

A handful of participants underlined the fact that Ghanaians only perceive acts of physical aggression as violence, as explained by this male CSO staff:

Do you know something... Here, when you talk about violence, people think about physical conflict. They really don't understand the fact that getting raped is violence, sexual harassment is violence, defilement is violence, even insulting is violence. (...) Most people have a narrow perception of what is violence. And some of them have lived in societies where these things are happening over and over. So they think it's part of life. Some have grown up to believe that it's normal. So this needs serious intervention... serious intervention.

Other male and female participants from civil society organizations also spoke about emotional violence, saying that some men threaten their wife to take other wives so she understands that he is in control and that she must behave according to his will. Some also prohibit their wife from working to prevent her from becoming independent. They even force their wife to have sex, knowing that she will not complain because she is financially dependent and because the culture values women who are docile and quiet. As a woman working for a prominent NGO stated, “[t]hey believe that if their wife also has money then they can't dictate to her. So they wouldn't let her make money.”

These cultural issues make it difficult to challenge violence against women. Among other reasons, parents, teachers, and CSO and government staff highlighted the fact that a lot of people simply aren't concerned about women and girls. This is true both at the government and the family level. Within the police service, for example, a male participant explained that “there is a feeling that women's issues are not important; that anybody can deal with them. In fact, you need specialists. You need to know psychology, and understand social work issues and ethics. But this is what happens in a patriarchal society.” Speaking in a more general manner, a lady working for the government explained it in the following way:

The government really has to be committed. It takes government commitment. Now, gender issues are issues that are not taken seriously. All over the world, in government, women and children's issues are secondary. They have forgotten that the women and the girls that are being destroyed. We all have to sit down and think about this.

Many participants also spoke about the lack of interest for women's issues at the community level. This is also part of patriarchal society. As a local government employee

stated, “[t]oo many teachers are not concerned about the girls”. According to a male basic school teacher, “[e]ven if schools focus on issues pertaining to the girl child, the parents are not interested. Even when you call parents directly to discuss problems facing their own wards, they won’t come.” Parents stated that they wished an NGO would bring sensitization campaigns to their area, and an NGO representative pointed out that “[e]ven some of the Girls’ Education Officers are not interested. They will stay in their office waiting for big money to come instead of carrying out activities like they are supposed to”. As we gather from the examples above, various stakeholders are blaming each other for the lack of progress on the protection of girls from violence. They seem to be denying that they all have an active role to play in fighting this violence. They also omit to discuss the issue with women and girls to learn about their experiences of violence. As many feminist authors pointed out (for example, see Kelly, 1988; Radford, 1987; and Brownmiller, 1975), it is absolutely imperative for the women to voice their concerns and to be heard. Only once they succeed in explaining their side of the story will they truly stand a chance to end violence and oppression. The following story, related by a local government employee, provides an example of the harsh reality of a fathers’ failure to ask his daughter about her experience of violence when he learned about her pregnancy.

Last year I went to a village to do sensitization, and a woman came to me and said she had a problem. She said *My girl is in senior high and is pregnant. My husband says if I give her food he will divorce me. And I don't have money so I can't help her.* Then we called the daughter and asked her why she went and got pregnant, and she said *Madam, since I was born, I had never tasted a man before. But a friend of mine said I should accompany her to take her book from her house, not knowing she had arranged for a boy to be there. The boy gave us two bottles of Fanta. I drank it and became drowsy, and I could not see*

*anything. That means he put drugs in it. By the time I woke up, I could only find out there was some starchy thing around my thighs. Then I asked the girl why didn't she report it? She replied Because I felt shy. It was only one time. The boy broke her virginity and made her pregnant. For three months, the father would not ask her what happened. So I told the father Papa, you hear? If you had called the girl and talked to her, you would have known what happened and called for the boy to be arrested. Because this is rape, defilement. You see, it is ignorance. Ignorance! He would not even talk to her. The same thing is true with the teachers. They will not ask her what happened either. They will just say You have sent a girl to school and she got pregnant. You want to struggle, but you should leave her. It is the pregnancy that she wants. This is what people will say.*

## **5.2 Lifting barriers: Suggestions for fighting male sexual and gender-based violence in schools and improving girl child protection in Awaso**

Although thorough analysis of potential initiatives aiming to fight sexual violence against girls in schools is beyond the scope of the present study, I find it important to present students', parents' and teachers' suggestions for breaking down the barriers to eradicating male sexual and gender-based violence in their community and to share evidence-based recommendations issued by CSO and government experts. The differences in participants' backgrounds and experiences help to ensure a diversity of suggestions to protecting girls in schools. This section is neither a compilation of all the recommendations made by participants nor has it been thoroughly researched to find out which suggestions had been discussed in the literature. I leave this last task to future studies due to the limited scope of a Masters' thesis.

### ***5.2.1 Filling the knowledge gap: training, sensitization and empowerment***

Fighting the widespread lack of knowledge about legislative frameworks (including girls' rights and why, where and how to report incidents of sexual violence) was the single most quoted recommendation in interviews and FGDs. It was mentioned by girls, parents, teachers, CSOs and government staff alike. Sensitization can contribute to eliminating not only lack of knowledge but also all other barriers to fighting male sexual and gender-based violence. It helps girls avoid situations of abuse, increases the likelihood that cases will be reported, and decreases the chances that parents will accept either money or a perpetrator's offer to marry their daughter who has been abused. Advocacy is also the first step to persuading the government to allocate a larger share of national and regional budgets to this issue.

Furthermore, awareness campaigns are contributing to modifying popular perceptions of gender roles and responsibilities, and many participants stated that "enlightened men" (those who have received training on gender equality) now help their wives with house chores. This is a first step to gender equality, and helps ensure that women enjoy the same amount of leisure time as men and that girls have as much time to study as boys. These campaigns also help broaden people's definitions of violence, and lead them to understand that many of the situations they dismiss as exchanges are indeed acts of violence. In doing so, awareness campaigns decrease public inaction on the issue. Based on participants' comments, it seems likely that educating the public, including government representatives, police officers, teachers and girls themselves, on this issue would also help diminish victim blaming, and shift the responsibility to perpetrators. Victim blaming is certainly one of the biggest challenges to stopping this type of abuse, and getting people to

understand the power dynamics that underlie these situations helps to bring to an end to dismissing girls' abuse and pregnancies as self-induced. As an example, I return to the GEO's story about the high school student who was drugged, raped and dismissed by both her father and her teachers. The father had disowned the child, but after hearing his daughter's story, he quickly understood that he had wrongly blamed her for her pregnancy. Thanks to the GEO's intervention, this girls' story is among those which end well.

After hearing her story, the parents accepted to take her back. I asked the girl whether she would continue her education and she said yes. She wanted to graduate from high school. She took the final exam and when the results came she had the best mark. She then decided to continue her education despite being a new mother, and she now has a degree in nursing.

The potential of educating the public and raising awareness on issues of violence against women and girls is well demonstrated in the ActionAid Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools project mentioned in the Theoretical Framework. The project was quoted by a few participants from government and civil society as a model of success for its multifaceted and collaborative approach. While the research component of the project aims to create a better understanding of the extent and causes of violence to inform government and civil society programming, the advocacy component is actively involved in fighting violence within communities. The campaign formed two volunteer groups to carry out the main tasks: Community Advocacy Teams (CATs) and Peer-Parent Educators (PPEs). Both teams are formed by well-respected members of the community, and chosen by their neighbours. They are trained by ActionAid on children's rights, related laws and institutions, and mediation and counselling. CATs are the human rights watchdogs in the community, and work to increase awareness of human rights issues and report incidents of violence to the police.

PPEs focus on sensitization, including on the consequences of violence. They talk to parents on the importance of girls' education, and counsel pregnant girls to help them stay in school. Together with local government stakeholders who help provide maximum support for girls, CATs and PPEs form the core of the Child Protection Networks, which are broadly responsible for monitoring the protection of girls in the communities. The last key component of the Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools project is its close work with girls themselves. More specifically, it forms girls' clubs in schools to increase female students' confidence and knowledge so they are better equipped to resist abuse. As part of the clubs' activities, girls learn about their rights, develop life skills, meet with role models, and create advocacy messages on the importance of girls' education. They also share their messages with community members by distributing flyers, writing and singing songs, wearing t-shirts that bear their messages, and engaging as models when reaching out to out-of-school girls. While in Ghana, I had the opportunity to visit Bimbila, one of the communities implementing the Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools project, and to speak with parents, pupils, members of the CATs and PPEs and representatives of the implementing NGO. Everyone demonstrated exhaustive knowledge of girls' rights and the importance of girls' education, and spoke very highly of the project. The girls themselves were particularly assertive and knowledgeable. This was quite a contrast with girls observed during classroom observation. My interactions with them highlighted the potential of girls' clubs and demonstrated that, given some support, girls move beyond victimhood to become powerful actors of change.

Girls' clubs are an increasingly popular solution to gender inequalities in education in Ghana, and are being established by the GEU and NGOs alike. Participants from each

group recommended that clubs be implemented on a larger scale. They are seen as an excellent way of spreading knowledge on children's rights, on the detrimental effects of violence, and on reporting mechanisms, among other issues. Participants who had had the opportunity to establish or visit girls' clubs spoke very highly of them, and noted big improvements in girls' confidence, expression skills and knowledge after club formation. Their value was explained as such by a government worker who has started many clubs herself:

The clubs are socializing the girls. And they give them somewhere to go with their problems. They see that the problem is there, but they are not the only person facing it. Now we are going to solve the problem together. (...) It's just about being there, so girls know that there's somebody there they can talk to. And you let them know that there's something good in them that they can bring out. That is the club. (...) You don't have to do anything big. If you can help one girl, you've helped a lot of girls, because that girl talks to her peers, and the next girl talks to her peers. So before you realize it, your message is going.

Club heads are normally female teachers who have girls' issues at heart. To be successful, it is imperative that these clubs be locally owned and managed. Schools, parents and religious or traditional leaders all play a role in their success. Supervision from GEOs or other government representatives is also imperative. Girls' clubs are currently formed in some schools in Ghana, and their absence from other schools is explained by lack of funds. However, as reminded by this government representative in a message directed to GEOs,

Clubs don't take much money, yet they yield very positive results. (...) Some clubs have got situations by which they have elections. The girls can vote. They can get a female president. So you're empowering them and building this thing from the grassroots. So don't wait for big money before getting to work. Be resourceful with the little that you have and work with it.

Once a broad base of people has been sensitized on girls' rights, gendered power dynamics, the importance of girls' education and reporting mechanisms, it is imperative to ensure that sufficient people are trained to handle cases that do occur, and that those people are identified to children and adults in the community. Only two ladies working for civil society mentioned this, and suggested that teachers and other community members be trained on child protection, gender responsive schools, counselling and reporting cases of abuse. A few government employees mentioned that DOVVSU officers needed to be thoroughly trained on handling women's and children's issues in order to be supportive of their challenges and be able to offer better adapted victim support.

### ***5.2.2 Making it happen: Financing the change***

Sensitization and funding go hand in hand. While participants were able to provide a number of ideas on how to raise awareness, they did not have clear answers on how to funnel more government funding into girls' safety in schools. Rather, they focused on ways in which the government could help poor families avoid violence at the local level, including scholarships for girls and higher pay for parents, which would contribute to lowering the chances that girls would have to find means of paying their school fees by exchanging sex for money. They didn't have specific strategies for funding such government programs, however, aside from one participant's idea that community members and GEOs pressure District Assemblies for funding.

The two suggestions that seemed most relevant for dealing with low government funding were increasing collaboration between ministries to decrease costs and applying for funding from NGOs and the donor community.

### ***5.2.3 Harnessing the culture's strengths: Using family, community and religious values to uphold girls' rights***

The third barrier to fighting male sexual and gender-based violence named in this study is two-fold, and comprises of the strong sense of family and community and the high importance accorded to religion which has sexist underpinnings. While the former protects perpetrators because of their affiliation with the community and their financial responsibility towards their respective families, the latter justifies unequal gender relations with Bible passages. Solutions to these issues were difficult to extrapolate from the data, since participants did not address them directly. Two women recommended naming and shaming perpetrators, which strong community ties can be helpful in doing if community members receive training on the consequences of violence and the importance of protecting girls. Being named and shamed would indeed be a strong deterrent in a society which values community ties. Another recommendation that may help to make use of Ghanaians' family and community values to protect girls is to put a strong accent on the importance of good parenting, especially for girls. As one female student put it, "parents must council their daughters, encourage them to learn and provide them with their basic needs". Once again, some parents would need to be educated on why and how to do this, but once that is done they would be better equipped to help their daughters avoid sexual abuse by teaching them what constitutes violence and what their rights are. One well-informed government

participant spoke of her experience in other countries to highlight the deficiencies in Ghanaian parent-child relations when it comes to discussing sexual abuse:

I was in some other country and I realized that right from the get go, the mother would teach the girl child that nobody has the right to touch this place ok? But here we don't even talk about it. We don't even mention the vagina in our areas. And that is wrong. So maybe it's time we started educating our children. Right from the get go. Even before the child starts KG, she should know that no one has the right to touch her vagina, or touch her where they shouldn't.

Just as it is possible to use Ghanaians' family and community values to protect girls against violence, it is possible to use their religiosity for the same purpose. One male NGO representative and one pastor addressed ways in which religion is used to protect girls instead of justifying abuse and maltreatment. Although they did not provide details, they briefly alluded to the positive role the church can play in eliminating violence via youth groups, after school programs and parenting guidance given by the church. Elements of religious texts which can be used to highlight the importance and preciousness of women and girls are presented by a woman government expert:

Male and female God created. In his image he created them. He created both of them in his own image. He didn't say that the woman was made from the feet of the man. No, she was created from his rib, near the heart. This is a special place. So you see, we are very important. The woman should know that she is important. Her importance should not be compared to the man, no. You are a woman and you are important in your own right. (...) But you know, human beings, we have changed it to say that a woman doesn't have a say in the home, and that is not what God said. We were made as partners.

While more research would be needed to know the specific roles the church could play in fighting male sexual and gender-based violence, these ideas are certainly worth pursuing since Ghanaian's deep religiousness is there to stay.

#### **5.2.4 *Respect within gender hierarchies: making it work the Ghanaian way***

Just as it was difficult to find participant recommendations that spoke to the third barrier to eliminating male sexual and gender-based violence in schools, few suggestions were made regarding the issue of gendered hierarchies and popular perceptions of violence against women and girls. Awareness campaigns were the most quoted. According to one prominent member of the local government,

There's no equality [between men and women] at all. I wouldn't say it's conscious, but unconsciously there's some amount of discrimination, some amount of stereotypes. We should bring this to people's consciousness through awareness programs, so we can get rid of this two-tiered mentality.

The contentious issue of cultural change was also mentioned, but participants disagreed on whether or not it is required to stop male sexual and gender-based violence. In the words of one female NGO employee,

We have to change our culture, especially in the rural areas. That would be ok... (pause) Actually, you know what, it's not even about changing the culture. The fact that you are supposed to respect your husband doesn't mean that you should succumb to anything. You have to be realistic and think. Respect is not succumbing to abuse.

The fact that she changed her opinion shows the complexity of the question. Another female NGO representative was of the opposite opinion, and thought a cultural shift was

indeed the only way of attacking the root of violence. “The biggest challenge to fighting SVAGS is the culture. Changes are necessary, but they are very slow, and very difficult.” Perhaps the most interesting intervention with regards to gender hierarchies was that of a highly educated lady who works as an expert with the government:

I know the women advocates or the feminists will not like what I am about to say, but I believe definitely that there should always be a leader in the home. And the man is the leader. His salary may be less than the woman's; his education may be lower than the woman's; but a man is the leader. And when you are a leader, you don't take over everything, you delegate. A good leader understands his weaknesses and the strengths of those around him, do you understand? That is a good leader. It doesn't mean that when you talk I don't talk or that you don't listen to my views. So if you're a good leader you'll know that I'm good at this particular aspect. When you want something you will look for my view. And because the home is for the two of us and our children, you will want us to discuss, to undergo negotiations so that at the end of the day, whatever we decide on will be in everybody's interest. So if something should go wrong, we are both responsible for it and we don't blame one another. (...) And as partners I don't have to take over the whole drudgery of work in the home; you're supposed to help me. I came to help you. Do you see? If we don't understand the dynamics and we want to use them to suit us, then there will always be problems in the homes. But that is not how God meant it to be. You know, most Ghanaian women, we have no problem with the man being the leader of the home, no problem at all.

This intervention imposes reflection on the issue of social change. My role here is not to decide how best to fight male sexual and gender-based violence in rural Ghana, but rather to support Ghanaians in doing so. They have identified this as a problem, and have developed strategies and institutions to eliminate this violence. And if, in the end, Ghanaian women want increased equality, improved access to educational opportunities, support with house chores, economic empowerment and greater respect for their rights, as they voiced in

the present study, but want to do it without disturbing their traditional, cultural and religious values, we must step outside our western frame of reference and support them in reaching their goals. These women are “imagin[ing] their world differently and realiz[ing] that vision by changing the relations of power that have been keeping them in poverty”, even if they are doing it ever so slowly and in a gentle manner which does not disrupt social order. According to Eyben, Kabeer & Cornwall (2008), this means that they have achieved a certain level of empowerment.

Pushing for radical change which they have not called for themselves would go against what feminist from the Global South asked of us, which is to consider their circumstances and hear and respect their voices. Many women were consulted in this study. They come from different socio-economic backgrounds, belong to different age groups and work in a variety of professions. Some are students, some are teachers, some are experts on gender equality and/or girls’ education, some are police officers. Many are mothers. Not one of them called for a dramatic overhaul of their social system or for a decrease in religious beliefs. However, I must be careful to consider whether this mentality leads me to adopting the stance taken by major organizations with regards to the Gender and Development approach and women’s shelters in the United States, where some concepts were adopted but deep social reorganization was put aside. While it does seem that way, and I am reminded that society prefers stability over social change, many women expressed the opinion that it was possible for change to occur without disrupting society at its core. It is imperative to keep this in mind when working with Ghanaian women and supporting them in their fight.

### **5.3 Chapter Summary: recapitulating participants' remarks in light of previous research and feminist theories on male sexual and gender-based violence**

Data presented in this chapter corroborates findings of previous studies conducted in Ghana (Coker Appiah & Cusack, 1999; Brown, 2002; and CRRESCENT, 2009). More specifically, participants agreed that SVAGS is a common occurrence in the country and that cases are seldom reported. They also spoke about barriers to educating girls in Ghana, and like the Commonwealth Education Fund (n.d.) they found that gender-based discrimination rooted in cultural attitudes, low value attributed to girls' education, poverty, irresponsible parenting and ignorance hindered girls' access to school as well as their academic success. This in turn led to their increased vulnerability to violence. Like Dolphyne (2000), they were adamant that girl and women's lack of knowledge of their rights contributes to violence by forcing them to accept their inferior position in the gender hierarchies, and that the lack of female role models also plays a part in accepting their status. CSO and government participants echoed Cusack's (1999) assertion that gender socialization happens as much at school than in the home.

Barriers to eliminating male sexual and gender-based violence in schools at the community level in Awaso, Ghana were the main focus of this chapter. Participants from various groups predictably had different understandings of what constitutes violence, but their views on barriers to fighting this violence was grouped into four key categories. The first one was lack of knowledge of legislative frameworks prohibiting SVAGS, of the consequences of violence, and of reporting mechanisms, and offers some explanation of why less than two percent of survivors of violence report cases to the police (CRRESCENT, 2009; Brown, 2002). The second barrier was lack of financial resources at the family level

(also stated as an issue in the 2009 CRRESCENT study) and at the government level. The third barrier to eliminating male sexual and gender-based violence in schools was the strong influence of traditional values of family, community and religion, which were reported to exert a larger influence on community actions than the well-being of one woman or girl. While religion had not been mentioned in previous studies, community dynamics were stated as an obstacle to reporting cases and seeking victim support in the CRRESCENT research (2009). Finally, gender hierarchies and popular perceptions of violence against women and girls was the fourth element raised by participants to explain barriers to Ghanaians' fight against SVAGS, substantiating postmodern feminists' claim that the patriarchal system is organized in a way which allows it to perpetuate itself. Women and girls are socialized to think of themselves as intrinsically inferior to men and boys, which maintains the gendered power imbalance. Accordingly, data obtained for this research has exposed the fact that even Ghanaian women who have achieved high academic and/or professional success often maintain the conviction that they are inferior to their male counterparts.

Numerous participants of this study, who represented students, teachers, parents, as well as NGO and government personnel, spoke to the detrimental effects of sexual violence in schools and saw its role in denying girls their right to education. However, they did not discuss the conscious element Brownmiller (1975: 5) alludes to when stating that "rape is a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men keep all women* in a state of fear". They did, however, demonstrate an understanding that sexual violence is as much a consequence of gendered social structures as it is a way to perpetuate them (McMillan, 2007).

Women and men who participated in this research also presented strategies to remove barriers to eliminating male sexual and gender-based violence in schools and making learning spaces safer for girls. While western feminists' strategies for doing so "[entail] exposing and critiquing the hegemony of male supremacy and its prescribed gender relations" (Price, 2005), suggestions presented by this study's participants are more moderate. Instead of calling for a drastic shift in gendered power structures, they consider the Ghanaian socio-cultural, economic and religious context, and focus on inter-ministerial and organizational collaboration, community sensitization and girl's empowerment.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude this thesis, I reflect on the contributions of this study and summarize the main conclusions stemming from the data analysis. I also present ideas for future research and consider the Ghanaian approach to social change, then conclude on a personal reflection on the complexities of being an occidental researcher working on a sensitive social issue in a cultural context which is not my own.

Despite the fact that male sexual and gender-based violence in schools is an important and demonstrated barrier to girls' education in Ghana, it has not been the subject of much research or programming. The Ghanaian Government has ratified international conventions protecting girls from violence, such as the UNCRC and CEDAW, and has put in place a strong legislative framework to criminalize all forms of sexual violence against girls in schools. It has also mandated various departments to work on prevention, protection and prosecution of SVAGS. These departments, as well as women's organizations and child rights NGOs, are staffed with passionate and well-informed individuals who are working to stop violence against girls in schools. Notwithstanding these efforts, SVAGS remains common in the country, including in Awaso where this research was conducted. It is perpetrated by male classmates, teachers and community members, and is committed against girls of all ages. Male sexual and gender-based violence is underpinned by male supremacist ideology, which is perpetuated through culture and religion in the home, school, church and media. It accounts for low levels of funding into issues affecting women and girls, hinders girls' access to safe quality education, and ultimately leads to a society which condones violence against women and girls and casts them as second class citizens.

This study differs from past research on SVAGS in Ghana in that it is among the very few which highlight the role of dominant social attitudes and gender hierarchies in school-based violence. While Coker Appiah and Cusack's research on violence against women and children in Ghana in 1999 had emphasized the impact of society-sanctioned male authority and superiority on violence against women, most of the studies that followed failed to identify this factor in their understanding of the problem. This study is therefore among the few that support Coker Appiah & Cusack's (1999) understanding of the social dynamics which lead to violence against women in Ghana and hinder its eradication. This research also contributes to knowledge on violence against women and girls in the country by creating a space to consider community members', Government officials' and civil society personnel's inputs in the understanding of SVAGS and to the search for solutions. This choice of participants is somewhat uncommon, most other studies having focused on the school and community level but not gathering information from public servants and NGO experts who work mostly in Accra. By meeting with both local participants who are cognizant of the local context and experts at the governmental and non-governmental levels, many of whom have a deep understanding of the problématique, I was able to better understand the underlying dynamics of violence and to compare different groups' thoughts and solutions to this scourge. Finally, this study is among the first to focus on barriers to eradicating male sexual and gender-based violence in schools. It has done so through classroom observation, interviews with government and NGO representatives and FGDs with students, parents and teachers, and has demonstrated that despite ongoing efforts, many barriers obstruct Ghanaians' fight against male sexual and gender-based violence.

The most important barrier, which is also the principal underlying cause of the problem, is that the socially determined gender hierarchies passed on through culture and religion attribute higher intrinsic value to men than to women. This patriarchal mentality is passed on from one generation to the next, through socialization and education. As children grow up, they learn through observing adults that boys ought to be intelligent, aggressive and controlling, and that they are entitled to power. Girls, on the other hand, spend a lot of time doing house chores and are often taken out of school before boys since the general consensus is that they will become wives and mothers and stay in the home while their husband works. This is especially true for girls from poor families living in rural areas, who are particularly vulnerable to violence throughout their lives due to the facts that they often have no economic independence, are disempowered from a young age, and learn that they do not have the same right to speech and participation as their male counterparts. What is more, girls see that although they are making headway, women who are educated, outspoken and successful, in other words who reject the prescribed notion of femininity, are ostracized by society.

Gender hierarchies also explain why women and girls' attitudes, behaviours and choice of clothing are frequently blamed when they are sexually harassed or assaulted, since perceiving women as immoral is more in line with social perceptions than seeing men as such. It also leads to minimizing the impact of violence against girls and women, and to accepting sexual violence in its various forms. In a society in which men are seen to hold all decision making powers, it is not surprising that many of them find it acceptable to exert their right to control and discipline women. Lack of knowledge of legislative frameworks that aim to protect girls and women from violence is linked to this issue, as some men may

not be aware that government frameworks have been put in place to protect women. Therefore, increasing this knowledge may encourage some of them to change their attitudes and behaviours towards women and girls. However, in a society that intrinsically devalues and disempowers members of the female gender, informing men and boys about women's rights is a necessary but insufficient action to diminishing control over and violence against women and girls.

The fact that Ghanaians have a very strong sense of family and community and that they value the well-being of the group above that of the individual is also an important barrier to fighting male sexual and gender-based violence in schools. Despite having many positive aspects, this strong sense of family and community generally leads Ghanaians to protect perpetrators instead of survivors. In preventing the former from facing the law, community members are not only protecting their uncles and brothers, but also those men's dependents who would suffer a major loss of livelihood should these men be arrested. Only once community members value girls to the same extent as other members of society, and understand the severity of consequences they suffer when acts of violence are inflicted upon them, may they decide that girls' right to protection from violence trumps their own allegiance to their community.

Families' lack of financial resources is another important barrier to fighting SVAGS. It can lead girls to sleep with boys or men in exchange for money for tuition fees or other basic expenses which their families cannot afford. Survivors' families would also be less tempted to accept bribes or marriage proposals from perpetrators if they were in a more favourable economic situation, and may be more willing to pay reporting and victim support related fees such as transportation and medical examination costs. Poverty is also an issue

within perpetrators' families, as mentioned above. If their family members were less dependent upon them, for example if mothers brought home a larger portion of family income, communities may be more inclined to report cases. As they stand now, many women are financially dependent on their husbands for their and their children's survival, since the role they play in the informal economy is often barely remunerated.

Fees related to reporting and victim support could also be paid by the government if it allocated more resources to combating sexual violence. A welfare system which would ensure that families had sufficient resources to cover basic expenses such as food, shelter, clothing and education would not only facilitate women and girls' contribution to their community's socio-political development, but would also make reporting and victim support more likely. At the government level, the low budget attributed to protecting girls and women from violence prevents government structures from fulfilling their mandates. This includes provision of infrastructure that increases girls' safety (including separate latrines), school supervision visits, awareness programs and the formation of girls' clubs. These last two points, or lack thereof, represent another important barrier to eliminating SVAGS, since community awareness and girls' empowerment are linchpins of gender-based violence prevention. Once girls are familiar with their rights and have a safe space in which to develop their self esteem and confidence with public speaking, they are able to challenge discriminative gender norms and lead their communities in making positive change.

Similarly to past studies which have shown the complexity of causes leading to SVAGS, this research demonstrates that the elements which block action aiming to eliminate this violence are interconnected to create a system which is very difficult to dismantle.

Despite its focus on the challenging barriers that hinder action to eliminate male sexual and gender-based violence in schools, this research acknowledges that Ghanaian women and girls are combating violence every day. They have been fighting back for decades in fact, and have been successful in having their voices heard. They are not simply victims of their situation, but, as we have seen in this study, they are also actors of change. Women and girls from all ages, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds achieve this status through education and empowerment initiatives, and work with like-minded individuals to form organizations to lobby the government, work within State structures to further action on girls' rights, and start girls' clubs in schools to empower girls to demand equality and respect. Many Ghanaian men are also part of this movement, and greater numbers are joining governmental and non-governmental efforts for greater gender equality. They come from all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, and have been sensitized to their sisters' causes in their homes, schools, churches and/or workplaces. They are also involved in actively challenging traditional gender roles and are leading by example by helping their wives with house chores, supporting their daughters in their educational aspirations and actively speaking out against gender-based violence and abuse.

Women and men who were interviewed for this study suggested various ways of lifting the barriers to fighting SVAGS. For instance, they stated that the government should allocate a bigger share of its budget to this issue, which would allow it to implement the laws it has developed and to conduct more programs as per various departments' mandates. Greater collaboration between partners working to end SVAGS, both within and outside the government, would also help make the most of available funds, as underscored by many experts who took part in this study. Training sessions offered to government representatives

working on women's issues would also be beneficial by making them more sensitive and better informed of the intricacies of gender hierarchies. Girls' clubs were also hailed for their role in empowering girls to resist violence by knowing their rights and learning to express themselves confidently.

Finding a way to use religion to protect girls from violence is also a key element for change in a deeply religious society. Religion brings Ghanaians together, and priests are highly respected. Their support in the fight against male sexual and gender-based violence would definitely have a positive impact on efforts to eradicate the problem. However, this is a challenging undertaking since Christianity plays an important role in fostering attitudes that lead to unequal gender relations. Although some participants have mentioned that they consider it possible to be religious and believe in gender equality, this remains an issue to be looked into in future research.

Efforts to sensitize community members on the link between society's gendered power dynamics and SVAGS is among the most crucial steps to take to tackle the problem.

Working with men and boys is one solution to stopping SVAGS which was not brought forth by any participant in this study. This key element has been highlighted in the international community's fight to end to violence against girls, as detailed in Plan International's Because I am a Girl 2011 report, titled "So, what about boys?" (van der Gaag, 2011). Involving men and boys in the quest for gender equality, respect and non-violence has the potential to transform men who bully into allies, and helps ensure positive change to women's condition and to relationships between men and women.

Another key element that was not voiced by participants but is essential to fighting SVAGS at the community level is the strong engagement of a core group of community members working together on girls' safety in school. These people are actively involved in the issue, and work with the school as much as the community. Their impact is greater if they are respected members of society, including local or religious leaders, and is positively affected when children of both sexes are involved since they are the ones who are suffering from violence and are also often the perpetrators. They also have a strong influence among their peers, and can therefore alter peer relations within the school.

Finally, efforts on male sexual and gender-based violence in schools are to be led by Ghanaians, and carried out in a way which is respectful of their cultural norms and appropriate within their social context. Participants of both genders stated their preference for a change that will not disturb the stability of the society, and will not shake its bases. To be successful in making this change happen requires raising a common endogenous awareness which will mobilize local populations and lead them to demand respect for girls' right to safe learning environments.

Future research could investigate how these changes may best be made, drawing lessons learned from Ghana's own experiences with social change. African countries which share some cultural similarities with Ghana could also be looked to for examples of successful initiatives. This could include a focus on the positive role religion can play in fighting violence against women and girls. It would also be interesting to further develop knowledge on the ways in which the impact of social initiatives can be increased in a context of limited government and family resources. Future research could also focus on the effects of girl-centered initiatives on male-female relationships, since they present the

danger of aggravating boys' anger towards girls. Finally, more research is also needed on violence against boys in schools, a topic characterized by a serious lack of data.

As a western feminist who is conscious of power relationships within research contexts and development programs, this experience allowed me to reflect on the importance of listening to the voices of women from the Global South and of understanding their cultural context to position their struggles and efforts within their lived realities. Through this thesis, I learned to truly listen to Ghanaian women's experiences of violence, understanding of the phenomenon, and solutions to the problem. In doing so, we discussed their social, cultural, religious, economic and political context, which helped me detach myself from the Canadian framework in which I grew up in order to better understand their battle with male sexual and gender-based violence.

While this thesis is the result of a lot of personal and academic reflection, it represents my understanding of the issue. My next step, which lies outside the scope of this thesis, will be reporting back to Ghanaian women to confirm that their struggles are correctly represented. This will be done by sharing and discussing the findings of this thesis with as many participants as possible upon an upcoming visit to the country. After all, this thesis is theirs more than anybody else's.

As Ghanaians continue their quest to ensure girls learn in safe spaces that are free from violence and discrimination, they continue to think of new ways of surmounting the important cultural, political, religious and economic barriers which stand in their way. Despite challenges, they are finding creative ways of sharing their message of gender equality, are making the most of resources available to them, and are empowering young

girls to take action. Their government values human rights and education, their citizens have a strong sense of community, their civil society is strong and healthy, and their women's organizations are staffed with competent and driven women. In working together to eliminate male sexual and gender-based violence in schools, they are helping to shape a society whose belief in respect and equality is palpable not only on paper, but also in citizens' everyday actions.

## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1: Consent Form

**Title of the study: Fighting gender-based violence in Awaso, Ghana: Political, legislative and social mechanisms**

**Researcher:** Geneviève Proulx  
Telephone number in Ghana:  
Telephone number in Canada:  
Email:

**Supervisor:** Professor Andrea Martinez  
Telephone number:  
Email:

**Institution:** School of International Development and Globalization Studies,  
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa, Canada.

**Invitation to Participate:** I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Geneviève Proulx and funded by the government of Ontario.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the study is to gain better knowledge of political, legislative and social mechanisms that aim to prevent and deal with violence against girls in schools. The objective of the research is to understand how the Awaso community combats this violence, and to know how they feel the present mechanisms could be improved to better protect female students.

**Participation:** My participation will consist essentially of attending one (*individual or group*) interview requiring no more than one hour during which I will be asked a few simple and clear questions concerning exclusively the abovementioned purpose and objectives of the study. The interview has been scheduled for (*insert place, date and time of each session*).

**Risks:** My participation in this study will require that I reveal information and details about my opinion on violence against girls in schools, and this may cause me to feel worried about the situation of schoolgirls in my community. However, I have received assurance from the researcher that the study implies no risks and that every effort will be made to minimize any possible or unforeseen negative consequence through the complete guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity.

**Benefits:** My participation in this study will allow me to speak out on the challenges, difficulties, and opportunities that I and my community envisage in fighting violence against girls in schools. This study may thus contribute to the betterment of our strategies in this regard, and to manage the impacts of gender based violence when it does manifest itself. My participation will also permit civil society organization members, public officials and decision-makers to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current mechanisms, and the impact this has on girls' safety in school and therefore their access to education. Finally, my participation will contribute to a greater awareness of this barrier to girls' education in Ghana among academics and practitioners in the field of international development.

**Confidentiality and anonymity:** I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for academic purposes and that my confidentiality will be protected since the source of the information will never be revealed or shared to anybody, even to those strictly related to the study. Furthermore, I understand that the researcher has no legal obligation that may force him to disclose or breach the protection of confidentiality. **Anonymity** will be protected in the following manner: my identity will all be replaced with a pseudonym and no part of the information will be specific enough to permit someone to recognize my identity. To further this measure, all information collected and stored will be strictly denominalized in such a way that no link will be made possible between the data and its source. These procedures will be strictly followed throughout the whole research, during and after the publication of the results. However, I am aware that my confidentiality and anonymity cannot be fully guaranteed if I participate in a group interview, since the other participants will hear my comments and inputs.

**Conservation of data:** The data will be collected in hard copies through digital audio recording and the taking of notes during the interviews and will then be transcribed to electronic copies only onto the researcher's personal computer. Thereafter, hard copies will be destroyed. Electronic copies will be always and exclusively in possession of the researcher and only her and her research supervisor will have access to them. The researcher's personal computer will be always kept stored in a safe and locked place and no one except the researcher will have access to this place. Furthermore, the computer content will be protected by a secret password and all information inside will be strictly denominalized. All data will be erased five years after the publication of results.

**Compensation:** No compensation will be offered or given for my participation.

**Voluntary Participation:** I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions all of that without having to give any reason and without suffering any negative

consequences whatsoever from the researcher or from anyone else. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will only be used and taken into account by the researcher if I tell him to do so. If I do not mention anything when withdrawing, the researcher will understand that the data gathered must be destroyed.

**Acceptance:** I, (*Name of participant*), agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Geneviève Proulx of the School of International Development and Globalization Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa, which research is under the supervision of Andrea Martinez.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or his supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa.

Tel.:

Email:

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness (*needed in the case where a participant is illiterate, blind, etc.*):

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: Interview / Focus Group Discussion Guides

### Fighting gender-based violence in Awaso, Ghana: Political, legislative and social mechanisms

#### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL

*The purpose of this study is to gain better knowledge of political, legislative and social mechanisms that aim to prevent and deal with sexual violence against girls in schools. The objective is to understand how the Awaso community combats this violence, and to know how they feel about the adequacy of the present mechanisms. Let me remind you that your anonymity will be guaranteed throughout the study by replacing your identity with a pseudonym and not publishing any information specific enough to permit someone to recognize your identity. Let me also remind you that your participation in this study is voluntary and that you are free to remove yourself from it at any time. You may also refuse to answer any questions without giving an explanation or suffering negative consequences. Should you choose to remove yourself from the study, the data you will have provided will be deleted and therefore will not be used in any shape or form. With your permission, I'd like to record this interview to facilitate data collection. I assure you that no one but me will hear the tape, and that I will delete it as soon as I have transcribed the interview onto my computer.*

#### Girls' education in Ghana

1. Can you tell me about girls' education in Ghana?
  - Probes: Do they have equal access to education? Can you compare the quality of education received by male and female students? Do boys and girls have similar attendance rates? What can be said about advancement and graduation rates of boys and girls? Which sex would you say performs better in the classroom? Why is that? Can you compare drop off rates and age/level of drop off between male and female students?
2. What are some of the barriers to girl's education in the country?

#### Gender relations

3. Can you tell me about gender relations in Ghana, in general?
  - Probes: How are women perceived in society? How do women themselves perceive their role in society? Do you believe women are equal to men in Ghanaian society?
4. Can you tell me about violence against women here in Ghana?

- Probes: What are some of the characteristics and manifestations of this violence? What are some underlying causes of this violence? Which social factors encourage this violence?

### Gender based violence in schools (GBVS)

5. Can you tell me about gender based violence in schools?

- Probes: What are the most frequent types of violence experienced by girls in school? How frequent are these acts of violence? Are there areas in the country which experience higher rates of GBVS? If so, why?

*My research will focus of sexual violence experienced by girls in the school environment. This type of violence happens in all countries to both boys and girls, and includes rape, unwanted sexual touching, unwanted sexual comments and verbal harassment based on gender stereotypes. Violence can take place in the school, on school grounds, going to and from school, or in school dormitories and may be perpetrated by teachers, students, or community members.*

6. What can you tell me about the occurrence of this type of violence?

- Probes: Is there an age at which this violence peaks? What can you tell me about the perpetrators of this violence? What can you tell me about those who experience this violence?

7. What are some of the causes of this violence?

- Probes: Would you say this violence is socially a) condemned? b) encouraged? c) other? Could you please provide concrete examples that support this?

8. What are some of the consequences of this violence?

- Probes: Would you say this violence affects girls' enrolment, attendance and dropoff rates? If yes, how so?

9. What do you think might be the result of the diminution of sexual violence against girls in schools?

### Fighting GBVS

10. Are you aware of international conventions that prohibit this violence?

- Probes: If so, which ones?

11. How does the Ghanaian government contribute to the fight against GBVS?

- Probes: How does your department contribute to this effort? Which other departments contribute and how? Which Ghanaian laws prohibit this violence?

12. What can you tell me about enforcement of international conventions and national laws?

- Probes: How effective are these methods in preventing GBVS? How effective are they in dealing with GBVS when it does happen? What are some of the barriers keeping them from being their most efficient?
13. Are you aware of measures taken by communities at the local level to prevent GBVS, or to deal with it if it happens?
14. In your opinion, what could be done to increase the protection of girls from sexual violence in schools?
- Probes: What could be done by the international community? the Ghanaian government? NGOs? the communities? the schools? parents? pupils?)

### Conclusion

*'This almost brings our meeting to an end. Before closing,*

15. Is there anything you'd like to add regarding GBVS that I might not have asked you or that you'd like to emphasize?

*Thank you very much for participating in my research. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, at the number indicated on your copy of the consent form. For my part, I will get in touch with you before the end of the summer to share my preliminary conclusions with you.*

## INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH NGO STAFF

*The purpose of this study is to gain better knowledge of political, legislative and social mechanisms that aim to prevent and deal with sexual violence against girls in schools. The objective is to understand how the Awaso community combats this violence, and to know how they feel about the adequacy of the present mechanisms. Let me remind you that your anonymity will be guaranteed throughout the study by replacing your identity with a pseudonym and not publishing any information specific enough to permit someone to recognize your identity. Let me also remind you that your participation in this study is voluntary and that you are free to remove yourself from it at any time. You may also refuse to answer any questions without giving an explanation or suffering negative consequences. Should you choose to remove yourself from the study, the data you will have provided will be deleted and therefore will not be used in any shape or form. With your permission, I'd like to record this interview to facilitate data collection. I assure you that no one but me will hear the tape, and that I will delete it as soon as I have transcribed the interview onto my computer.*

### Girls' education in Ghana

1. Can you tell me about girls' education in Ghana?
  - Probes: Do they have equal access to education? Can you compare the quality of education received by male and female students? Do boys and girls have similar attendance rates? What can be said about advancement and graduation rates of boys and girls? Which sex would you say performs better in the classroom? Why is that? Can you compare drop off rates and age/level of drop off between male and female students?
2. What are some of the barriers to girl's education in the country?

### Gender relations

3. Can you tell me about gender relations in Ghana, in general?
  - Probes: How are women perceived in society? How do women themselves perceive their role in society?
4. Can you tell me about violence against women here in Ghana?
  - Probes: What are some of the characteristics and manifestations of this violence? What are some underlying causes of this violence? Which social factors encourage this violence?

### Gender based violence in schools (GBVS)

5. Can you tell me about gender based violence in schools?

- Probes: What are the most frequent types of violence experienced by girls in school? How frequent are these acts of violence? Are there areas in the country which experience higher rates of GBVS? If so, why?

*My research will focus of sexual violence experienced by girls in the school environment. This type of violence happens in all countries to both boys and girls, and includes rape, unwanted sexual touching, unwanted sexual comments and verbal harassment based on gender stereotypes. Violence can take place in the school, on school grounds, going to and from school, or in school dormitories and may be perpetrated by teachers, students, or community members.*

6. What can you tell me about the occurrence of this type of violence?
  - Probes: Is there an age at which this violence peaks? What can you tell me about the perpetrators of this violence? What can you tell me about those who experience this violence?
7. What are some of the causes of this violence?
  - Probes: Would you say this violence is socially a) condemned? b) encouraged? c) other? Could you please provide concrete examples that support this?
8. What are some of the consequences of this violence?
  - Probes: Would you say this violence affects girls' enrolment, attendance and dropoff rates? If yes, how so?
9. What do you think might be the result of the diminution of sexual violence against girls in schools?

### Fighting GBVS

10. Are you aware of international conventions that prohibit this violence?
  - Probes: If so, which ones? How effective are these methods in preventing GBVS? How effective are they in dealing with GBVS when it does happen?
11. How does the Ghanaian government contribute to the fight against GBVS?
  - Probes: Which Ghanaian laws prohibit this violence? Are you aware of any other government programs or projects that aim to diminish this violence? How effective are these methods in preventing GBVS? How effective are they in dealing with GBVS when it does happen?
12. How do NGOs contribute to the fight against GBVS?
  - Probes: How does your organization contribute? How effective are these actions?
13. Are you aware of measures taken by communities at the local level to prevent GBVS, or to deal with it if it happens?
14. In your opinion, what could be done to increase the protection of girls from sexual violence in schools?

- Probes: What could be done by the international community? the Ghanaian government? NGOs? the communities? the schools? parents? pupils?)

### Conclusion

*'This almost brings our meeting to an end. Before closing,*

15. Is there anything you'd like to add regarding GBVS that I might not have asked you or that you'd like to emphasize?

*Thank you very much for participating in my research. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, at the number indicated on your copy of the consent form. For my part, I will get in touch with you before the end of the summer to share my preliminary conclusions with you.*

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH AWASO TEACHING STAFF

*The purpose of this study is to gain better knowledge of political, legislative and social mechanisms that aim to prevent and deal with sexual violence against girls in schools. The objective is to understand how the Awaso community combats this violence, and to know how they feel about the adequacy of the present mechanisms. Let me remind you that your anonymity will be guaranteed throughout the study by replacing your identity with a pseudonym and not publishing any information specific enough to permit someone to recognize your identity. Let me point out, however, that the participants in this discussion group will, of course, hear your comments and know your opinion on the subject matter. Let me also remind you that your participation in this study is voluntary and that you are free to remove yourself from it at any time. You may also refuse to answer any questions without giving an explanation or suffering negative consequences. Should you choose to remove yourself from the study, the data you will have provided will be deleted and therefore will not be used in any shape or form. With your permission, I'd like to record this interview to facilitate data collection. I assure you that no one but me will hear the tape, and that I will delete it as soon as I have transcribed the interview onto my computer.*

### Girls' education

1. Can you tell me about girls' education in your community?
  - Probes: Do they have equal access to education? Can you compare the quality of education received by male and female students? Do boys and girls have similar attendance rates? What can be said about advancement and graduation rates of boys and girls? Which sex would you say performs better in the classroom? Why is that? Can you compare drop off rates and age/level of drop off between male and female students?
2. What are some of the barriers to girl's education in the community?

### Gender relations

3. Can you tell me about gender relations in your community, in general?
  - Probes: How are women perceived in the community? How do they perceive themselves?
4. Can you discuss violence against women in the community?
  - Probes: How does this violence manifest itself? Have you witnessed it yourselves? If so, can you tell me about some of your experiences? Is this violence a) encouraged b) tolerated or c) condemned by society? How so?

### Gender based violence in schools (GBVS)

5. Can you tell me about violence towards girls in schools in your community?

- Probes: What are the most frequent types of violence experienced by girls in school? How many girls experience these acts of violence, and how frequently?

*My research will focus of sexual violence experienced by girls in the school environment. This type of violence happens in all countries to both boys and girls, and includes rape, unwanted sexual touching, unwanted sexual comments and verbal harassment based on gender stereotypes. Violence can take place in the school, on school grounds, going to and from school, or in school dormitories and may be perpetrated by teachers, students, or community members.*

6. What can you tell me about this type of violence in the schools here?
  - Probes: Can you give me examples of this violence in your schools? Is there an age at which this violence peaks? What can you tell me about the perpetrators of this violence (age, sex, relationship to girl)? What can you tell me about those who experience this violence (sex, characteristics, etc.)?
7. What are some of the causes of this violence?
8. What are some of the consequences of this violence?
  - Probes: Would you say this violence affects girls' enrolment, attendance and dropoff rates? If yes, how so?
9. What do you think might be the result of the diminution of sexual violence against girls in schools?

### Fighting GBVS

10. Do you know about any laws, either at the national or international levels, which prohibit violence against girls in schools?
  - Probes:
    - a. If no: More generally, do you know of laws on the protection of children? On protection of women and girls against violence?
    - b. If yes: How well are these laws enforced? What are some of the barriers to enforcing them?
11. What are some of the local strategies used in preventing this violence?
  - Probes: What is being done by the school? the parent-teacher association? the school management committee? the community? the parents? the students? How effective are these methods in preventing GBVS?
12. If a girl experiences sexual violence, what are the community and school mechanisms to deal with the situation?
  - Probes: How effective are these methods? Do you think girls feel comfortable assessing these mechanisms? Why or why not? What are some of the barriers keeping these methods from being their most efficient?

13. In your opinion, what could be done to increase the protection of girls from sexual violence in schools?

- Probes: What could be done by the international community? the Ghanaian government? NGOs? the community? the schools? parents? pupils?

### Conclusion

*'This almost brings our meeting to an end. Before closing,*

14. Is there anything you'd like to add regarding GBVS that I might not have asked you or that you'd like to emphasize?

*Thank you very much for participating in my research. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, at the number indicated on your copy of the consent form. For my part, I will get in touch with you before the end of the summer to share my preliminary conclusions with you.*

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH AWASO PARENTS

The purpose of this study is to gain better knowledge of political, legislative and social mechanisms that aim to prevent and deal with sexual violence against girls in schools. The objective is to understand how the Awaso community combats this violence, and to know how they feel about the adequacy of the present mechanisms. Let me remind you that your anonymity will be guaranteed throughout the study by replacing your identity with a pseudonym and not publishing any information specific enough to permit someone to recognize your identity. Let me point out, however, that the participants in this discussion group will, of course, hear your comments and know your opinion on the subject matter. Let me also remind you that your participation in this study is voluntary and that you are free to remove yourself from it at any time. You may also refuse to answer any questions without giving an explanation or suffering negative consequences. Should you choose to remove yourself from the study, the data you will have provided will be deleted and therefore will not be used in any shape or form. With your permission, I'd like to record this interview to facilitate data collection. I assure you that no one but me will hear the tape, and that I will delete it as soon as I have transcribed the interview onto my computer.

### Girls' education

1. Can you tell me about girls' education in your community?
  - Probes: Do parents feel it is more important to educate the boy child or the girl child? Why? Do children from both sexes have equal access to education? Do they attend school as often? Can you compare the quality of education received by male and female students? Can you compare drop off rates and age/level of drop off between male and female students?
2. What are some of the barriers to girl's education in the community?

### Gender relations

3. Can you tell me about gender relations in your community, in general?
  - Probes: How are women perceived in the community? How do they perceive themselves?
4. Can you discuss violence against women in the community?
  - Probes: How does this violence manifest itself? Have you witnessed it yourselves? If so, can you tell me about some of your experiences? Is this violence a) encouraged b) tolerated or c) condemned by society? How so?

### Gender based violence in schools (GBVS)

5. Can you tell me about violence towards girls in schools in your community?

- Probes: What are the most frequent types of violence experienced by girls in school? How many girls experience these acts of violence, and how frequently?

*My research will focus of sexual violence experienced by girls in the school environment. This type of violence happens in all countries to both boys and girls, and includes rape, unwanted sexual touching, unwanted sexual comments and verbal harassment based on gender stereotypes. Violence can take place in the school, on school grounds, going to and from school, or in school dormitories and may be perpetrated by teachers, students, or community members.*

6. What can you tell me about this type of violence in the schools here?
  - Probes: Can you tell me about situations where girls experienced this type of violence in schools? Is there an age at which this violence peaks? What can you tell me about the perpetrators of this violence (age, sex, relationship to girl)? What can you tell me about those who experience this violence (sex, age, characteristics)?
7. What are some of the causes of this violence?
8. What are some of the consequences of this violence?
  - Probes: Would you say this violence affects girls' enrolment, attendance and dropoff rates? If yes, how so?
9. What do you think might be the result of the diminution of sexual violence against girls in schools?

### Fighting GBVS

10. Do you know about any laws, either at the national or international levels, which prohibit violence against girls in schools?
  - Probes:
    - If no: More generally, do you know of laws on the protection of children? On protection of women and girls against violence?
    - If yes: How well are these laws enforced? What are some of the barriers to enforcing them?
11. What are some of the local strategies used in preventing this violence?
  - Probes: What is being done by the school? the parent-teacher association? the school management committee? the community? the parents? the students? How effective are these methods in preventing GBVS?
12. If a girl experiences sexual violence, what are the community and school mechanisms to deal with the situation?
  - Probes: How effective are these methods? Do you think girls feel comfortable accessing these mechanisms? Why or why not? What are some of the barriers keeping these methods from being their most efficient?

13. In your opinion, what could be done to increase the protection of girls from sexual violence in schools?

- Probes: What could be done by the international community? the Ghanaian government? NGOs? the community? the schools? parents? school boys? school girls?

### Conclusion

*'This almost brings our meeting to an end. Before closing,*

14. Is there anything you'd like to add regarding GBVS that I might not have asked you or that you'd like to emphasize?

*Thank you very much for participating in my research. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, at the number indicated on your copy of the consent form. For my part, I will get in touch with you before the end of the summer to share my preliminary conclusions with you.*

### Appendix 3: Letter of consent for classroom observation



uOttawa

L'Université canadienne  
Canada's university

March 29, 2010

Awaso (name of school) Headmaster

Awaso, Bibiani-Ahnuasio-Bekwai District, Ghana

#### **Re: Letter of Intent – Research Project**

Dear Sir or Madam;

I am a Masters' student at the University of Ottawa, in Ottawa, Canada, and am working on a degree in International Development. I am currently in Awaso to conduct research on sexual violence against girls in schools for my thesis.

The purpose of this letter is to request your assistance in this research. More specifically, I would like to request to be allowed to observe classroom interactions for a few hours on the week of March 29th, and to solicit participation of a few teachers in a brief focus group discussion on the matter, which will take place on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ in the Anglican chapel.

For your reference, I have included some additional information about the research.

#### **Description of Research Project**

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this study is to gain better knowledge of political, legislative and social mechanisms that aim to prevent and deal with violence against girls in schools. The objective of the research is to understand how the Awaso community combats this violence, and to know how they feel the present mechanisms could be improved to better protect female students.

**Participation:** Your participation will consist essentially of allowing me to observe classroom interactions during a few hours, as well as allowing a few teachers to attend one focus group discussion requiring approximately one hour during which they will be asked few, simple and clear questions concerning exclusively the abovementioned purpose and objectives of the study. You are also invited to participate in this discussion.

**Risks:** The study implies no risks whatsoever and every effort will be made to minimize any possible or unforeseen negative consequence. The anonymity of yourself, your teaching staff and your students is completely guaranteed, and all the information shared will remain strictly confidential.

**Benefits:** Your and your staff's participation in this study will allow you to speak out on the challenges, difficulties, and opportunities that you and your community envisage in fighting violence against girls in schools. This study may thus contribute to the betterment of strategies in this regard, and to manage the impacts of gender based violence when it does manifest itself. Your participation will also permit civil society organization members, public officials and decision-makers to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current mechanisms, and the impact this has on girls' safety in school and therefore their access to education. Finally, your participation will contribute to a greater awareness of this barrier to girls' education in Ghana among academics and practitioners in the field of international development.

**Confidentiality and anonymity:** I assure you that the information you and your staff share will remain strictly confidential. The contents will be used only for academic purposes, and your confidentiality will be protected since the source of the information will never be revealed or shared to anybody, even to those strictly related to the study. **Anonymity** will be protected by replacing your and your staff's identity with a pseudonym and no part of the information will be specific enough to permit someone to recognize your identities. To further this measure, all information collected and stored will be strictly denormalized in such a way that no link will be made possible between the data and its source. These procedures will be strictly followed throughout the whole research, during and after the publication of the results.

I invite you to contact me if you have any questions regarding the conduct of this study.

Once again, I thank you for your collaboration on this important project.

Sincerely,

Geneviève Proulx

M.A. Student, School of Globalization and International Development  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, Canada

Telephone number in Ghana:

Telephone number in Canada:

Email:

## Appendix 4: Data Analysis: Preliminary Coding Structure

1. Girls' education in Ghana
  - a. Status
  - b. Barriers
2. Gender relations in Ghana
  - a. Perceptions of masculinity
  - b. Perceptions of femininity
  - c. Socialization
  - d. Violence against women
    - i. Types
    - ii. Occurrence
    - iii. Causes
3. Violence against girls in schools
  - a. Sexual violence
    - i. Types
    - ii. Occurrence
    - iii. Victims
    - iv. Perpetrators
    - v. Causes
    - vi. Consequences
    - vii. Reporting
    - viii. Support mechanisms
  - b. Other types of violence
4. Fighting SVAGS
  - a. Current situation: What is done
    - i. International conventions
    - ii. Government
    - iii. Civil society
    - iv. School and community level
  - b. Gaps
    - i. International conventions
    - ii. Government
    - iii. Civil society
    - iv. School and community level
  - c. Barriers to fighting SVAGS
    - i. Lack of knowledge
    - ii. Lack of resources
    - iii. General acceptance of violence against women (context)
    - iv. Attitudes about women

- d. Recommendations
  - i. Government level
  - ii. NGOs
  - iii. Communities and schools

## REFERENCES

- Acker, S. (2000). In/out/side: Positioning the researcher in feminist qualitative research. *Documentation sur la recherche féministe*, 28(1-2), 198-208.
- Actionaid International (2004). Stop Violence Against Girls In School, Johannesburg.
- Actionaid International (2008). Stop Violence Against Girls In School Project Leaflet.
- Afenyadu, D. & Goparaju, L. (2003). *Adolescent sexual and reproductive health behaviour in Dodowa, Ghana*. Washington DC: CEPDA.
- Akyeampong, K. (2009). Revisiting Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in Ghana. *Comparative Education*, 45(2), 175-195.
- Akyeampong, K. (2001). Teacher training in Ghana - Does it count? *Multi-site teacher education research project country report # 1*. Sussex: Centre for International Education, University of Sussex Institute of Education.
- Amnesty International (2008). Des écoles plus sûres : un droit pour toutes les filles. Halte à la violence contre les femmes. London : Amnesty International Publications.
- Antonowicz, L. (2010). Too often in silence : A report on school-based violence in West and Central Africa. UNICEF, Plan West Africa, Save the Children Sweden West Africa and ActionAid.
- Asare, K. (2010). Making schools safer for girls: The impact of school infrastructure on girl's access to quality basic education in Ghana. *Education Watch*. Accra: Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition.
- Bahun-Radunović, S. & Rajan, V. G. J. (eds.) (2008). *Violence and gender in the globalized world: The intimate and the extimate*. Hampshire: Ashgate.
- Bibiani/Anhwiaso/Bekwai District Assembly (2006). Retrieved April 7th, 2011, from <http://bab.ghanadistricts.gov.gh/>.
- Borland, K. (2007). Decolonizing approaches to feminist research – The case of feminist ethnography. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 621-627). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Brennan, S. & Taylor-Butts, A. (2008). *Canadian Center for Justice Statistics profile series: Sexual assault in Canada 2004 and 2007*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.
- Brown, C. K. (2002). *A study on sexual abuse in schools in Ghana*. Funded and distributed by UNICEF Ghana and the Government of France.

- Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against our will: Men, women and rape*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Bryman, A. (2001). *Social research methods*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bunch, C. (2008). Preface – Feminist quandaries on gender and violence : Agency, universality, and human security. In S. Bahun-Radunović and V. G. J. Rajan (eds.), *Violence and gender in the globalized world: The intimate and the extimate* (pp. xi – xiv). Hampshire: Ashgate.
- Canadian International Development Agency (internal unpublished document). Safety and security for children and youth: Protection and violence in schools. A CIDA technical paper on programming to make learning spaces safe, secure and free from violence.
- Caputi, J. & Russell, D. E. H. (1992). Femicide: Sexist terrorism against women. In J. Radford & D. E. H. Russell (eds.), *Femicide: The politics of woman killing* (pp.13-21). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Caputi, J. (1992). Advertising feminide: Lethal violence against women in pornography and gorenography. In J. Radford & D. E. H. Russell (eds.), *Femicide: The politics of woman killing* (pp. 203-221). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Child Research and Resource Centre (CRRECENT) (2009). *Report on the study of child sexual abuse in schools*, Commissioned by Plan Ghana, Accra.
- Coker-Appiah, D. & Cusack, K. (eds.) (1999a). *Breaking the silence & challenging the myths of violence against women & children in Ghana – Report of a national study on violence*. Accra: Gender Studies & Human Rights Documentation Centre.
- Coker-Appiah, D. & Cusack, K. (eds.) (1999b). *Breaking the silence & challenging the myths of violence against women & children in Ghana – Report of a national study on violence: Executive summary*. Accra: Gender Studies & Human Rights Documentation Centre.
- Commonwealth Education Fund (n.d.). *Gender and education in Ghana – Some experiences*. Gender Equality in Education Project Ghana, Accra.
- Cusack, K. (1999). Barriers to effective intervention. In D. Coker-Appiah & K. Cusack (Eds.), *Breaking the silence & challenging the myths of violence against women & children in Ghana*. Accra: Gender Studies & Human Rights Documentation Centre.
- Daiute, C. & Fine, M. (2003). Youth Perspectives on Violence and Injustice. *Journal of Social Issues*, 59 (1), 1-14.

- Dolphyne, F. A. (2000). *The emancipation of women: an African perspective*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Dunne, M. et al. (2005). *Gendered school experiences: The impact on retention and achievement in Botswana and Ghana*, DFID Education Research Report, no. 56.
- Eyben, R., Kabeer, N. & Cornwall, A. (2008). *Conceptualising empowerment and the implications for pro poor growth*. DAC Poverty Network, Institute of Development Studies.
- Feinstein, C., Karkara, R. & Laws, S. (2004). *A workshop report on child participation in the UN study on violence against children*. London: International Save the Children Alliance.
- Flood, M. (2011). Involving men in efforts to end violence against women. *Men and Masculinities*, 14(3), 358-377.
- Government of Ghana (2011). *Ghana's education system*, Ghana government official portal. Retrieved on September 8, 2011, from [http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=163:ghan-as-education-system&catid=72:education&Itemid=222](http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=163:ghan-as-education-system&catid=72:education&Itemid=222).
- Habitat for Humanity Ghana (2008). Ghana. Retrieved on April 7th, 2011, from <http://www.habitatghana.org/affiliatemore.php?affiliateid=180>.
- Haraway, D. (2007). Savoirs situés : la question de la science dans le féminisme et le privilège de la perspective partielle. *Manifeste Cyborg et autres essais. Sciences, fictions, féminismes* (pp. 107-140). Paris : Exils.
- Harding, S. (2003). How Standpoint Methodology informs Philosophy of Social Science. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research: A reader in theory and practice* (pp.62-80). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harding, S. (2004). Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology : What is 'strong objectivity?'. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & M. Yaiser (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on social research*. New York: Oxford.
- Human Rights Advocacy Centre (2010). Policy mapping study into existing legal and policy framework addressing violence against girls in schools (Draft Report – unpublished).
- Jaggar, A. (2008). Feminist Standpoint Theory: Social location and epistemic privilege. In A. Jaggar, *Just Methods – An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader* (pp.303-307). US: Paradigm Publishers.

- Jayaweera, S. (1999). Education and gender equality in Asia. In S. Erskine & M. Wilson (Eds.), *Gender issues in international education: Beyond policy and practice*. New York: Falmer.
- Johnson, S. (1987). *Telling the truth*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press.
- Kelly, L. (1988). *Surviving sexual violence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kimmel, M. (2007). Contextualizing men's violence: the personal meets the political. In L. O'Toole, J. Schiffman & M. Kiter Edwards (Eds.), *Gender violence: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 99 – 110), Second Edition. New York: New York University Press.
- Kolawole, M. E. M. (1998). *The feminisation of culture: towards an African gender theory*. Cape Town: African Gender Institute.
- Kuhn, T. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Labourie-Racapé, A. (2002). Un autre regard avec l'approche genre. *Entreprises, Formation*. AFPA Paris, n°129. Retrieved on January 3, 2009, from <http://www.greenaction.net/spip.php?article3130>.
- Le monde selon les femmes (2007). *Les essentiels du genre 01 – concepts de base*. Bruxelles : Le monde selon les femmes.
- Leach, F. (2006). Gender violence in schools in the developing world. In F. Leach & C. Mitchell (Eds.), *Combating gender violence in and around schools* (pp.23-30). Stoke on Trent: Trenthan Books.
- Leach, F. (ed.) (2004). *Gender violence in schools #1: What is it and why does it happen?* Brighton: Centre for International Education, University of Sussex.
- Leach, F. et al (2003). *An investigative study of the abuse of girls in African schools*. Education Research Report No 54, London: DFID.
- Löwy, I. (2000). Universalité de la science et connaissances "situées". In D. Gardey & I. Löwy (Eds.), *L'invention du naturel : Les sciences et la fabrication du masculin et du féminin* (pp.137-150). Paris : Archives contemporaines.
- MacKinnon, C. (1987). *Feminism unmodified: Discourses on life and law*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- MacKinnon, C. and Dworkin, A. (1988). *Pornography and civil rights: a new day for women's equality*. Minneapolis: Organizing Against Pornography.

- Magellan, 1997. *Nations Online : Ghana*. Retrieved on December 1st, 2009, from [http://www.nationsonline.org/map\\_small/ghana\\_small\\_map.jpg](http://www.nationsonline.org/map_small/ghana_small_map.jpg).
- Management Systems International (2008). *Are schools safe havens for children? Examining school related gender based violence*. Washington, DC: U.S.A.I.D..
- Martinez, A. (2008). Genre et développement : enjeux et luttes des femmes du Tiers Monde. In, *Introduction au développement international : approches, acteurs et enjeux* (pp. 70-86). Ottawa : Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa.
- Martinez, A. (2012). Gender and Development: The struggles of women in the Global South. In P. Haslam, J. Shafer & P. Beaudet (Eds.), *Introduction to international development: approaches, actors, and issues*, Second Edition (pp. 86-106). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Massart, G. (2007). *Violence against girls: Their experience and protection in West Africa*. Plan International West Africa Regional Office.
- McMillan, L. (2007). *Feminists organising against gendered violence*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Merry, S. E. (2009). *Gender violence: a cultural perspective - Introductions to engaged anthropology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Minister of Supply and Services Canada (1993). *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence – Achieving Equality*. Final Report of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, Ottawa.
- Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Moks Publications & Media Services (2006). *Western – Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai*. Retrieved on April 7, 2011, from <http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?news&r=5&=135>.
- Mirsky, J. (2003). *Beyond victims and villains - Addressing sexual violence in the education sector*. London: The Panos Institute.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1997). Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. In A. McClintock, A. Mufti & E. Shohat (eds.), *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspective* (pp. 255-277). Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press.
- Mugawe, D. & Powell, A. (2006). *Born to High Risk: Violence Against Girls in Africa*. The Second International Policy Conference on the African Child: Violence Against Girls in Africa. Addis Ababa: The African Child Policy Forum.

- O'Toole, L., Schiffman, J. & Edwards M. K. (Eds.) (2007). *Gender Violence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Second Edition. New York: New York University Press.
- Ollivier, M. (2004). Méthodologies féministes à l'ère de la mondialisation : Ébauche d'un bilan critique. In P. Bouchard & L. Gélinau (Eds.), *Féminisme, recherche et mondialisation* (pp.45-70). Les cahiers de recherche du GREMF, cahier 88. Québec : Université Laval.
- Ollivier, M. & Tremblay, M. (2000). *Questionnements féministes et méthodologie de la recherche*. Paris : L'Harmattan.
- Patai, D. (1991). U.S. academics and Third World women: Is ethical research possible? In S. Gluck & D. Patai (Eds.), *Women's Words: The feminist practice of oral history* (pp. 137-153). New York: Routledge.
- Pinheiro, P. S. (2006). *World Report on Violence against Children*. Geneva: United Nations.
- Price, L. (2005). *Feminist frameworks: Building theory on violence against women*. Winnipeg : Fernwood Publishing.
- Priest, H., Roberts, P. & Woods, L. (2002). An overview of three different approaches to the interpretation of qualitative data. Part 1: theoretical issues. *Nurse Researcher*, 10 (1), 30-42.
- Radford, J. (1987). Policing male violence – Policing women. In J. Hanmer & M. Maynard (Eds.), *Women, violence and social control* (pp. 30-45). London: MacMillan.
- Reeves, H. and Baden, S. (2000). Gender and development: Concepts and definitions. *BRIDGE (Development – Gender)*, no.55. Brighton, UK : Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rose, D. (2001). *Retour sur les méthodologies de recherche féministes : document de travail*. Préparé pour Condition féminine Canada, direction de la recherche.
- Sarantakos, S. (2005). *Social Research*, 3rd Edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Save the Children (2004). *So you want to involve children in research? A toolkit supporting children's meaningful and ethical participation in research relating to violence against children*. Sweden: PartnerPrint.

- Schur, E. (2007). Sexual Coercion in American Life. In L. O'Toole, J. Schiffman & M. K. Edwards (Eds.), *Gender violence: Interdisciplinary perspectives*, Second Edition (pp.86 –98). New York: New York University Press.
- Sheffield, C. (1987). Sexual Terrorism: The Social Control of Women. In B. B. Hess & M. M. Ferree (Eds.), *Analyzing gender: A handbook of social science research* (pp.71-189). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Sheffield, C. (2007). Sexual Terrorism. In L. O'Toole, J. Schiffman and M. K. Edwards (Eds.), *Gender violence: Interdisciplinary perspectives*, Second Edition (pp.111 –131). New York: New York University Press.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In L. Grossberg & C. Nelson (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. Urbana : University of Illinois Press.
- Stanko, E. A. (1985). *Intimate Intrusions: Women's Experience of Male Violence*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Tuwor, T. & Sossou, M. A. (2008). Gender discrimination and education in West Africa: strategies for maintaining girls in school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 12(4), 363-379.
- UN Women (2011). Violence against Women. Retrieved on September 2, 2011, from [http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/violence\\_against\\_women/](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women/).
- UNESCO (2009). *Rapport mondial de suivi sur l'Éducation pour tous 2010 – Atteindre les marginalisés*. Paris : UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2011a). *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011 – The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education*. UNESCO: Paris.
- UNESCO (2011b). *Synthèse relative aux questions de genre. Survol de genre du Rapport mondial de suivi de l'Éducation pour tous, 2011 – La crise cachée : les conflits armés et l'éducation*. UNESCO : Paris.
- UNESCO (n.d.). *Education for All (EFA)*. Retrieved on October 19, 2011, from <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/>.
- UNGEI (n.d.) *Ghana: Background*. Retrieved on August 15, 2011, from <http://www.ungei.org/infobycountry/ghana.html>.
- UNICEF (2006a). *Violence against Children*. Child Protection Information Sheets. Retrieved on December 10, 2009, from [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Child\\_Protection\\_Information\\_Sheets.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Child_Protection_Information_Sheets.pdf).

- United Nations (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.
- United Nations (1989). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*.
- United Nations (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, Fourth World Conference on Women. A/CONF.177/20 and A/CONF.177/20/Add.1.
- United Nations (n.d.). *End Poverty 2015 – Millenium Campaign*. Retrieved on October 19, 2011, from <http://www.endpoverty2015.org/en/goals>.
- USAID & IGWG (n.d.) *Gender-Based Violence: A Primer – Ecological Model*. Retrieved on September 2, 2010, from [http://www.igwg.org/igwg\\_media/gbv/ecological-model.pdf](http://www.igwg.org/igwg_media/gbv/ecological-model.pdf).
- Utley, I. (2009). *Ghana: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture*. London: Kuperard.
- van der Gaag, N. (2011). *So, what about boys? Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls*. Plan International, New Internationalist Publications Ltd.
- Visweswaran, K. (1994). Feminist Ethnography as failure. In *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (pp. 95-113). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- WHO (2002). *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- WHO (2009). *Violence Against Women*. Fact sheet N°239. Retrieved online on December 10, 2010, from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>.