

# **Changing Masculinities: Perspectives on Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality Initiatives in Tamale, Ghana**

**Abdul Somed Shahadu**

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**School of International Development and Global Studies (SIDGS/EDIM)  
Faculty of Social Sciences (FASS)  
University of Ottawa**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The past three decades have seen a significant increase in the engagement of men and boys in both policies and programs that seek to promote gender equality. This response is driven in part by the realization of men's central roles in determining women's well-being, and the wider acknowledgment that earlier gender equality initiatives achieved limited success due to the exclusion of men and boys. This study builds on a growing body of scholarship that calls for increased attention to men and masculinities in gender studies, policies and programs. Even though there have been interventions aimed at engaging men and boys, the number of evaluation studies documenting the effectiveness of these interventions is inadequate. This study therefore attempts to show the significance of men's participation in gender equality programs with regards to participant perspectives and project outcomes. Central to this dissertation is the imperative for feminist policies and programs to broaden their scope to reflect the fundamental principles of social and economic justice. Programs and policies must be geared towards enacting a truly transformative vision for development that recognizes and addresses structural constraints and unequal power relations between distinct groups.

The gender and development discourse since the 1970s has been premised on the fact that men occupy positions of power in many cultures and institutions of governance, and that the way in which men exercise power over women results in inequities, inequalities, discrimination, and the subordination of women. The themes emerging from the findings of this study illustrate three broad points. Firstly, resistance is significant in gender equality work in Ghana and in many parts of Africa. Secondly, change is taking place, particularly for educated men, those working in the development sector, and those who see opportunities for alternative masculinities. In the spirit of leveraging the current momentum for change, gender equality programs must be context-specific, and linked to strategies of negotiation that are

culturally relevant. In other words, gender equality does not have to always mean the same thing in all places.

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## ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

ADB	Agricultural Development Bank
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CARMMA	Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CHPS	Community-based Health Planning and Service
CPoA	Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DAW/UN	Division for the Advancement of Women
DEVAW	Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FCDA	Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis
FGDs	Focus group discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GAD	Gender and Development
GBA	Ghana Bar Association
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GGG	Global Gender Gap
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HND	Higher National Diploma
HDR	Human Development Report
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
IMF	International Monetary Funds
ISSER	Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research
LGBTQI+	Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Trans-sexual, Queer, Intersex+
MNCH	Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPP	New Patriotic Party
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PACHPR	Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People's Rights
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TTH	Tamale Teaching Hospital
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UDS	University for Development Studies
US	United States
WAEC	West African Examinations Council

WASCE	West African Senior High School Exams
WID	Women in Development
WRC	White Ribbon Campaign

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Chapter Introduction**

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced a mandatory self-isolation for people around the world, Abbey Imoro, a 37-year-old politician and father of three, learned a valuable lesson, and that was to appreciate his wife/partner. Like most men in Tamale, in the north of Ghana where men rarely stay at home during the daytime, Abbey found himself in a strange situation, as social distancing measures forced him to be domesticated for more than two months, a situation which allowed him to observe as his wife performed her domestic tasks such as cooking for the family, cleaning, doing laundry, dishes, child-care, among others. Like many other men in Tamale, Abbey did not realize the daunting nature of housekeeping because it is considered to be ‘a woman’s responsibility’, contrasting it against his own obligation to be the ‘breadwinner’ for his young family. The norm in Tamale is that men go outside to find means of livelihood for their families, while women are expected to stay back for housekeeping. Women like Abbey’s wife, Zeena, a 24-year-old dressmaker, have to perform daily household chores, regardless of whether they have other work or not. But watching her do all the work alone everyday while he idles or watches TV, Abbey got triggered by his conscience to realize the disproportionate distribution of roles and responsibilities between him and his wife and vowed to do something about it. Thanks to COVID-19 social distancing, Abbey learned to spend more time at home with his family, which now allows him to also do some domestic work, even if it is a fraction of what his wife does. The change in Abbey’s attitude has helped him and his wife to enjoy a good work/life balance. Abbey’s story illustrates the fact that men have the propensity to change their traditional ideas of masculinity, given the right conditions and circumstances, a point which is now being considered in feminist research, policies and intervention programs.

The past three decades have seen a significant increase in the engagement of men and boys in both policies and programs that seek to promote gender equality. This response is driven in part by the realization of men's central roles in determining women's well-being, and the wider acknowledgment that earlier gender equality initiatives achieved limited success due to the exclusion of men and boys (Chant, 2012; Colpitts, 2019; Clowes et al., 2013; Vetten & Ratele, 2013; Silberschmidt, 2011; Parpart, 2014; Hearn, 2007; Ratele, 2008; Ampofo & Boateng, 2008; Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007). The power relations within society and between women and men have perpetuated women's disproportionate inequality in society such that, globally, women are still "concentrated in informal and vulnerable employment situations, earn less than men for work of equal value, are substantially under-represented in decision-making at home and all levels of government ... and remain primarily responsible for unpaid care work in the home" (Hendra et. al., 2013: p111). These trends of gender inequality and gender-based discrimination persist in both developed and developing countries and continue to undermine sustainable livelihoods and development, thereby making it imperative to mobilize both men and women to address the long-standing, deep-rooted, pervasive socio-economic and political structures that produce and reproduce these inequalities.

Meaningful engagement with men and boys is increasingly recognized as critical not only for empowering women, but also more generally for transforming gender norms that reinforce patriarchy and harm both men and women. In sub-Saharan African countries including Ghana, specifically in the region of Tamale, the site of this study, several challenges to gender equality remain. Some of these challenges include early or child marriage, women's lack of choice in marriage, imposition of dress codes on women, male migration resulting in desertion, polygamy, and additional burdens on women-headed households. The tactical change to engage men and boys is an evolving consensus that

feminist policies and programs must broaden their scope to reflect the fundamental principles of social and economic justice, human rights, and equality, to enact a truly transformative vision for development that recognizes and addresses structural constraints and unequal power relations between distinct groups (Hendra et. al., 2013). Such a transformative approach is centered on the value of human rights and reflects the imperative to address the structural/relative dimensions of inequality.

Much research has focused on the role of men and boys in promoting gender equality, particularly in the arenas of violence prevention, health promotion, sexuality, and masculinities (Chant, 2012; Colpitts, 2019; Clowes et al., 2013; Vetten & Ratele, 2013; Silberschmidt, 2011; Parpart, 2014; Flood, 2007; Hearn, 2007; Ratele, 2008; Ampofo & Boateng, 2008; Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007). This body of research and program evidence demonstrates that the meaningful participation of men and boys in support of gender equality has the potential to lead to positive changes in men's attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors in ways that benefit women and girls (Flood, 2007). The increased attention to engaging men and boys is important because understanding gender norms for men – the societal expectations for men's roles, relations, and positions as men – can help engage them more naturally in efforts to curb masculine-related violence, achieve equality and reduce poverty (Lang, 2003). The interconnected nature of power, dominant masculinity, and male violence has been particularly explored by researchers. A central premise of the gender and development discourse since the 1970s has been that men occupy positions of power in many cultures and institutions of governance, and that the way in which men exercise power over women results in inequities, inequalities, discrimination, and the subordination of women (Silberschmidt, 2011). Poon (1993) blames the phenomenon on the existence and reification of patriarchal structures, which she defines as rules and resources implicated in the reproduction of male domination over women.

This study thus adds to the growing body of literature on the construction of masculinities and sexual development among men. Conducted in one of the most conservative places in Ghana— a context rife with prominent levels of poverty, violence, crime, and other social injustices – the findings of this research provide insight into how traditional upbringings shape the construction and performance of masculinities, corroborating existing theoretical understandings and providing a basis for comparison with studies conducted in other contexts. As part of this theorization, the study deconstructs the set of masculinities that exist in Tamale and examines what ideas may have influenced the construction of masculinities, exploring the role of colonization and, in recent times, neoliberal consumerism, foreign aid/assistance, policymaking, media portrayals, etc.

The study was conducted in Tamale, the capital city of northern Ghana, which is a hot spot for violence and insecurity, particularly against women and girls. High levels of domestic violence are reinforced by ongoing disputes over land and chieftaincy rights, fueled by long-standing disputes over ethnic and political divisions in the region. This backdrop provided a relevant site for studying the roles of masculinities, and to problematize the concept within the context of promoting gender equality and other fundamental human rights. The violence in Tamale is fueled by poverty, marginalization and limited economic opportunities for productive employment, especially for young males. Thus, Tamale was an excellent context for exploring how masculinities can impact gender equality initiatives. The study situates the problem of masculinities within historical context, particularly the consistent underdevelopment of the northern region in the colonial period and afterwards. The city's unemployed men have been hurt the most by poverty, and the resulting gender violence and urban crime has fueled considerable attention by government and development agencies operating in Ghana, placing focus on masculine behavior.

## **Current Knowledge Gaps**

This study builds on a growing body of scholarship that calls for increased attention to men and masculinities in gender studies, which I turn to in the next chapter. Even though interventions aimed at “promoting gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors among men is a more developed and evaluated field of inquiry” (Casey, et. al., 2018: p.238), the number of evaluation studies documenting the effectiveness of these interventions is small, reflecting, among other factors, the relative newness of efforts to engage men (Maina, Ferguson & Kabiru 2022; Casey, et. al., 2018). This study therefore attempts to show the significance of men’s participation in gender equality programs with regards to participant perspectives and project outcomes. Earlier studies among men who have joined the struggle to support gender equality find that their involvement has been nurtured by tangible opportunities to take part in women’s empowerment.

Examining the context within which NGOs engage men and boys as well as the socio-economic and political contexts that underpin their participation in gender equality initiatives, or their opposition to them, will help policy makers and development practitioners adopt a truly gendered perspective that critically engages men in the notions and politics of masculinities, a necessity that could diffuse resistance and advance the potential of genuine gender reform. This knowledge of men’s roles as enablers or gatekeepers of gender equality within gender equality policies and programs is essential to ending the harmful effects of dominant constructions of manhood and to harnessing men’s potential to facilitate change (Maina, Ferguson & Kabiru 2022; Jewkes, Flood, & Lang 2015; Morrell, 2001; Morell & Morell, 2011). The study thus contributes to the evidence base on the effectiveness of engaging men to promote gender equality. The fact that the lives of men and women are intimately interconnected means that women’s efforts can only be enhanced by the right kind of support from men, which would itself lead to the development of equitable and enriching

relationships. A focus on relationships works to acknowledge the mutual experiences of power and marginalization, and can encourage men, from their position of relative power, to improve the lives of their female partners, colleagues, and associates.

### **Research Questions**

Fundamental to this dissertation is to understand how to rethink masculinity in the current world order. With the growing concern about the difficulty to gain status as ‘successful men’ as defined by their culture: can men in Tamale turn to alternative masculinities as a catalyst to adapt to a changing world? How can we further problematize masculinities for more nuanced understandings of the complexities of gender relations and more effectively address persistent challenges, barriers, and resistances to gender equality programming? In answering these broader questions, the following sub-questions will be asked:

1. How is masculinity defined within Tamale, particularly which ideals exist in Tamale?
2. In what ways do problematic masculinities impede feminist intervention programs and why?
3. Why do men and boys approve or reject gender equality programs and what value do they hold for them and others?
4. How do NGOs in Tamale engage men and boys in gender equality programs?

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

This study draws on transnational feminism, ‘nego-feminism’ (Nnaemeka, 2004) and critical feminist scholarship, specifically critical feminist insights into men and masculinities. Insights from critical studies on men and masculinities are useful in understanding the complex relationships between men and violence. Scholars have argued that men may resort to violence to assert their masculinity in response to the anxiety generated by the gap between

their lived and embodied experiences of masculinity and hegemonic masculine norms (Freedman & Jacobson, 2012), particularly when they feel powerless or emasculated (Kimmel, 2013). This suggests that addressing hegemonic masculine norms is an important part of preventing gender-based violence. Further, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is useful in that it posits that masculinity is constructed rather than innate and is therefore subject to change, which presents the possibility of men taking an active role in transforming inequitable gendered power relations. Critical masculinities scholars have also suggested that men's recognition of the negative consequences of hegemonic masculine norms may encourage their participation in transformation efforts (Connell, 2003).

Forging transnational partnership to solve common challenges has become a major theme in the global development agenda, specifically emphasized in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 "Partnerships for the Goals". Even though critical feminist scholarship has effectively helped to shape our understanding of the relationship between the politics of location and accountability, and the politics of knowledge production, it is less helpful within the context of forging and there is still room for additional reflection on mutually beneficial transnational partnerships in pursuit of development priorities.

Transnational feminism is the most suitable lens through which one can make sense of these transnational partnerships to promote gender equality. This lens examines the implications of defining the transnational with regards to women's cross-border organizing (Mindry, 2001; Mohanty, 2003), and as an analytic framework that recognizes the different levels of intersectionality, while simultaneously maintaining fidelity to difference and dynamics of power (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Radcliffe et al., 2003). The partnerships forged through feminist aid create transnational spaces across the local–international divide that are crucial to achieving international targets and realizing commitments to gender equality. It is therefore crucial for researchers and development workers to appreciate the potential of Western

feminism, but even more critical to understand the transformative potential of new knowledge and its contributions to solidarity movements (Mindry, 2001; Mohanty, 2003).

The study was heavily inspired and influenced by feminist methodologies and epistemologies, as well as feminist standpoint theory. Feminist epistemologists and Stand-Point theorists such as Narayan (1999), Longino & Lennon (1997), and Anderson (1995) have decried and challenged dominant notions of producing knowledge and the process of attributing, acquiring or justifying knowledge in ways that disempower women and other subordinated groups in six specific ways (Anderson, 2007). These examples of discrimination manifest as: (1) excluding women and minorities from inquiry, (2) discrediting their epistemic validity, (3) dismissing “feminine” cognitive styles as unimportant, (4) representing women and minority as inferior, or insignificant except when it serves male interests, (5) ignoring gendered power relations and women’s activities’ or interest in the conception of theories of social phenomena , and (6) the exclusion of people in subordinate positions in the formulation of knowledge, thereby reinforcing patriarchal gender norms or other forms of social hierarchies (Anderson, 2007; Nielsen, 1990; Code, 1991; Bergin, 2002; Solomon, 2011; Mason, 2011; Philhaus, 2011). Feminist epistemologists blame these trends on the limitations of the dominant knowledge and the methods that justify their epistemological validity (Anderson, 2007). To mitigate this epistemological challenge, a diverse range of suggestions have been recommended, not just to show how gender values and perspectives have shaped social transformations, but also to promote theories and methodologies that lend themselves to egalitarian and liberation movements such as feminism and the promotion of gender equality (Nicholson, 1990; Shapin, 1994; Harding, 1989; Ruetsche, 2004; Tobin, 2013).

## **Outline of Chapters**

The rest of this dissertation is split into six chapters. The next chapter (Chapter Two) explores the trajectory and strategic change in feminist approach, which has shifted from the narrow focus on women and girls, to recognize gender inequality as a relational issue. The chapter discusses the underlying assumptions of contemporary social, economic, and political structures that impede gender equality measures, problematizing hegemonic and aggressive forms of masculinities. The debate about men's involvement in feminist initiatives have been discussed, using specific examples and contexts to articulate the socio-cultural and political barriers to the successful engagement of men and boys in gender equality. The impacts of colonization, globalization, the mass media and European/North American organizational principles, have been discussed in relation to expectations on the traditional forms of African male identities. It concludes with an account of existing knowledge gaps, demonstrating how this study fills some aspects of the gaps. Using the double lens of transnational feminism and 'nego-feminism', the section concludes with a reiteration of the need for transnational feminist partnerships to commit to cultural exchanges and knowledge sharing processes that could bridge the cultural gap which often creates a loophole for conservative actors in implementing countries to label initiatives as "Western imposition". The section also highlights the legal and social standards relating to homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and trans-gender identification, with many Sub-Saharan countries, including Ghana, increasingly adopting extreme anti-LGBTQI+ laws. Chapters three and four present an overview of Tamale, Ghana, as my research site, with a detailed summary of the methodology and data collection process. The chapter gives an overview of history, tradition and culture of the people of northern Ghana with a focus on the ancient Kingdom of Dagbon as it encountered colonization, wars, and manipulation of modern politics. Also discussed in these two chapters are participant sampling and recruitment procedures, participants' inclusion criteria,

interviewing and fieldwork practicalities, as well as data analysis. Ghana's national and international commitments to gender equality have been outlined and discussed, with a specific highlight on the activities of local feminist groups. The chapter engages with my positionality both as a Ghanaian male from the north and as a young researcher, situating my research within feminist epistemology which understands the positionality of the researcher as a critical dynamic in the generation of data.

Chapter five covers a summary of the findings of this research, segmented into four parts. The first part presents the Life Histories of 11 key respondents (Seven male and four female), selected from the general pool of 37 respondents. The information and background about these respondents help to shed more light on the circumstances and conditions of their upbringing as boys and girls. This knowledge is imperative to understanding the experiences that shape the lives of the men and women in this study. Life Histories help us to discern the perspectives of the respondents and how they navigate matters concerning feminism and gender equality. The second part presents the main themes that emerged in my engagements with the respondents. The data here covers responses from all the 37 respondents, including the 11 whose stories have been told in Life Histories. This is where participants articulate the fundamental meaning of masculinity, and the traditional pathways to attaining the coveted title of a 'proper man'. Section three discusses the relational views of the women in this study, most of whom challenged the presumption that men are the principal providers. Details of respondents' perceptions about sexual division of roles and responsibilities have been discussed in this section as well as views about alternative masculinities have been discussed in this section. The fourth section wraps up the findings with highlights of local perceptions about gender equality, feminism, and the feminization of development aid. These responses shed more light on the state of gender equality in Ghana, paying particular attention to the

efforts, success and challenges being encountered by the project implementation staff in Ghana.

Chapter six is a comprehensive analysis of the data presented in chapter five. The analysis begins with a deconstruction of the meaning men and women attach to their own upbringing and how these meanings affect their perspectives on gender equality. The chapter problematizes aggressive masculinity as an impediment to gender equality initiatives, while explaining how hegemonic masculinity complicates the lives of men and women. The role of family and other social forces in the production and enactment of masculinity has been discussed with reference to how they underlie local resistance to feminist intervention. The chapter also discusses culture and religion in relation to how they have been misused and narrowly interpreted to undermine and deny the feminist roots of African culture and tradition. The chapter concludes with suggestions on how to use culture as a mobilizing force and not destabilizing for progressive change. The effectiveness of transnational partnerships and commitments have been emphasized in this study as being capable of transforming global gender norms and achieving Goal 5 of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

The dissertation concludes in Chapter Seven, with a clarion call for gender equality programs to pay more attention to the role of men and masculinities, especially when it concerns Africa. The global political disorder, colonial legacies, economic and labor market transformation, neoliberal capitalism, and social changes have challenged patriarchy in most postcolonial African states like Ghana, particularly in recent times. In light of this, this dissertation sees an opportunity for policymakers and development practitioners to redouble the efforts to engage men whose lives have been complicated by the wide-ranging perceptions that men always need to prove their masculinity by being heteronormative breadwinners. Without challenging this culturally grounded understanding of masculinity, gender equality initiatives would encounter challenges to deconstruct and transform the

current social order. Some key recommendations have been proposed to guide gender equality programming in northern Ghana.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **Chapter Introduction**

This chapter enumerates and elucidates the literature on engaging men/boys to promote gender equality. The chapter begins with a discussion on the nexus between masculinity and gender-based violence, with a specific focus on how deteriorating socio-economic and political conditions have made it difficult for men and boys to attain traditionally celebrated masculinity, with its associated authority, economic autonomy, and access to sex. This has often led some young men into fomenting hyper masculine acts, including violence, to gain access/control to resources or preserve their masculinity.

### **Theorizing Masculinities and Violence**

The link between poverty, inequality and violence has resonated with many governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and development agencies struggling to come to terms with both the conflict-ridden 1990s and the subsequent ‘war on terror’ (Berdal, 2003; Munkler, 2005; Ocobock, 2017). The fact that there is a connection between masculinity and violence has been evident for a long time, and there have been increasing efforts in research to understand the nature of the connection and to do something about it (Kaldor, 2006; Connell, 2011). Some scholars have argued that masculinity and the desire to enact violence are interwoven among some men in specifiable contexts (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Ratele, 2016; Luyt & Foster, 2001). To be seen acting as a real man to some men is to dominate and control others in different relationships. While different men may have different interest and motivations to, or not to subscribe to the dominant ideas on normative masculinity which appeal to men to dominate others due to the relationship they have with other people—women, children, and other men, it is imperative, theoretically, to fully explore and understand these varying motives (Ratele, 2016). In a context where no meaningful or viable expressions of traditional masculine dominance exist, some men may subscribe to

violence as a way to assert power and control over others. In other words, violence becomes a readily imaginable masculine tool when limited options exist for men who wish to demonstrate power and assert masculine privilege (Dery, 2019; 2020).

The centrality of gender processes and the dominant roles and expectations of men and women have been foregrounded as key elements in understanding the complex enmeshment of violence with masculinity (Dery, 2019). The situational challenges of men's positions have been taken up and widely acknowledged among different scholars as potent zones that tend to foment hyper masculine acts, including violence (Dery, 2019). Poverty and desire for social recognition and prestige do play a pivotal role in making violence and risk-taking attractive to some men. The decline in opportunities for an independent livelihood, with its associated authority, economic autonomy, and access to sex, often drive some young men and women into violent acts or militarized roles because of the belief that violence promises at least some livelihood. Consequently, joining the militia has been one of the few paths for achieving manhood and the status it confers (Parpart, 2014).

If poverty and the decline in economic opportunities for men are indeed the major causes of male violence, one can imagine why many countries in sub-Saharan Africa are riddled by violent conflicts and gender-based violence. Even though global poverty has reduced the number of people living below the poverty line, and with men dominating the socio-economic and political spheres in the continent, many of those affected are men who are "breadwinners" and "family heads" with their accompanying responsibilities in line with societal expectations. According to the World Bank's "Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018" report, progress was slow in reducing extreme poverty. That was before the pandemic and war in Ukraine, and the global goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030 was already under threat (World Bank, 2022). Disturbingly, a new report now estimates that 7 percent of the world's population (about 574 million people) will still struggle in extreme poverty in 2030

(World Bank, 2022). That is well above the global goal of 3 percent by 2030. The number of people living in extreme poverty increased from 8.4 percent to 9.3 percent in 2019 to 2020, with more than 70 million people living below the bottom-line (World Bank, 2022). Some of the world's biggest economies may have started economic recovery since the COVID-19 pandemic, but the report says growth has been uneven. Food and energy prices have increased due to the war in Ukraine, and it is estimated that by the end of 2022 about 685 million people are living in extreme poverty, making it the second-worst year for poverty reduction in the past two decades (World Bank, 2022). Africa is one of the most-affected regions in the world in terms of loss of income of poor households. A 2021 poverty headcount by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) indicates that, in sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people living on less than \$1.90 per day (below the poverty line) have increased by three percent because of the pandemic (UNCTAD, 2022). While 478 million people lived in extreme poverty before the pandemic, the number increased to 490 million in 2021 (UNCTAD, 2022). That is 37 million more people than initial projections.

Between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income was less than \$1.25 a day was cut by at least half, according to the report (United Nations, 2016). But this came with an admission that eradicating extreme hunger and poverty – the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG 1) - was uneven, given that many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, lagged behind the rest of the world. With an estimated 900 million people in 2012 living on less than \$1.90 a day—the updated international poverty line—and a projected 700 million in 2015, extreme poverty remains unacceptably high (United Nations, 2015). The World Bank report notes that the extreme poverty rate dropped by only one percentage point in the two years from 2013 to 2015. In fact, the total number of poor in Sub-Saharan Africa has been increasing. In 2015, more of the extreme poor lived in that region than in the rest of

the world combined. By 2030, under all but the most optimistic scenarios, poverty will remain in double digits in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2018). Even in a world of single-digit extreme poverty, non-income disparities, like limited access to quality education and health services, pose a bottleneck to poverty reduction and shared prosperity. If these declining economic prospects do not improve, then poverty and gender-based violence are likely to increase.

According to Singer (2019) political instability, bad governance, and failed neo-liberal social and economic policies have exacerbated long standing societal problems and diminished young people's abilities to support themselves and their families. Many are unable to attain the prerequisites of full adulthood and take their place as fully-fledged members of society. Honwana (2013) also observes that most young Africans live in "waithood", a prolonged period of suspension between childhood and adulthood. This is because youth transitions to adulthood have become so uncertain that a growing number of young men and women must improvise livelihoods and conduct their personal relations outside of dominant economic and familial frameworks. Their predicament is particularly troubling, but it also inspires some to devise creative solutions. Based on the analysis by Honwana (2013), the increase in male violence cannot be solely attributed to poverty per se, but it also represents a phenomenon whereby young people devise creative means to sustain their livelihoods in the face of declining opportunities in the traditional paths to attaining adulthood (Singer, 2019).

### **Poverty and Male Violence**

At a special lecture in Accra on April 22, 2019, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, the United Nations Special Representative for West Africa, and the Sahel, raised an alarm about the increasing poverty and high unemployment in Ghana and its implications for the country's peace and stability. "The rate of youth unemployment is a ticking bomb," he said.

“The gap between rich and poor is widening ... this runs contrary to our country’s commitment to the UN’s SDGs 2030 and the Africa Agenda 2063.” (Ghana News Agency, 2019). Ghana is known for its stability, good governance and well-developed institutional capacities that support the gradual achievement of human rights. Having experienced steadily increasing economic growth of over 7% per year on average since 2005, the country attained lower-middle income status in 2010. While overall poverty declined between 2005 and 2017, inequality increased within the same period, according to inequality diagnostics conducted by the Africa Center of Excellence for Inequality Research (ACEIR). The report analyses inequality household income and expenditure, assets, earnings, employment, education, health, access to basic services and infrastructure, and social mobility. The data from the Gini index indicated that Ghana recorded an increase from 0.406 in 2005/06 to 0.409 and 0.416 in 2012/13 and 2016/17 (ACEIR, 2020). Even though some regions like the Central, Ashanti and Greater-Accra regions experienced a decline in consumption inequality, the phenomenon remained relatively high in regions with high incidence of poverty, particularly, the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions (ACEIR, 2020). This reflects the high poverty rates in this region. The report found that opportunities for poverty reduction and income distribution were limited in the northern regions (ACEIR, 2020). Since the 1990s overall, the northern region has seen the smallest progress in poverty reduction. This is a major issue for the country given that the northern region now makes up the largest number of poor people of any of Ghana’s ten regions – 1.3 million (Cooke et. al., 2016).

The poverty situation in Ghana was exacerbated by a freeze in public sector employment since 2008, which was renewed in 2011 upon the request of the International Monetary Funds (IMF) which compelled the government to consider the job freeze to contain the wage bill which alone constituted close to 70% of public sector expenditure. Out of about 250,000 young people who enter the labor market, only 2% get jobs since the freeze on

public sector jobs, which is the source of employment for more than 70% of income-earners in the country, according to the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER) of the University of Ghana (Nlenkiba, 2015). The government announced in 2019 that it will quit the IMF Extended Credit agreement which necessitated the job freeze, but the country's unemployment situation has already been compounded, and, in consequence, the pool of job opportunities provided by the public sector has shrunk considerably. Incidentally, Ghana's public sector is dominated by men, who constitute many educated people and salary-earning workers who have been conditioned by their families and communities to be "family heads" and "breadwinners."

Some unique socio-economic factors have combined with the negative effects of the IMF-directed job freeze to aggravate the poverty situation in Tamale and the north. As found by McGaffey (2013), discriminatory colonial policies by the British established the north – an economically poor and dry region - as a reserve for the manual labor needs of the resource-endowed south. As a result, there were few investments in education in the north and few attempts were made to bridge the inequality between the north and the south until in the early 1950s, shortly before independence. As a result of this historic discrimination against the north, most of its people remain uneducated, and thus have few or no qualifications to attract the disappearing public sector jobs. Moreover, the freeze on government jobs has diminished the chances of the few educated young men and women who complete tertiary education and hope to secure jobs. Since independence, most of the people source their livelihoods from the informal sector, mostly consisting of local trade of produce and agriculture jobs that are also steadily declining because of inconsistent rainfall patterns in the north and lack of soil fertility occasioned by climate change. A weak private sector, coupled with public sector losses and declining agribusiness, exacerbate the poverty and unemployment situation in the north, leaving many unemployed young men with little to do other than sitting around

“ghettos” and under the shade of trees in and outside Tamale. Violence, lack of daily structure, and limited opportunities for men in this region correspond with high rates of theft, violence, and sexual assault, realities that have become part of daily life in the city.

The situation in Tamale with regards to violence and other social vices is comparable to what Izugbara (2011) found in the slums of Kenya, where lack of opportunities and poor livelihoods have created the most sinister forms of conflict where manliness is associated with the capacity to provide and fend for families and households. While the lack of economic opportunities has left older men unable to accomplish their responsibilities and meet the demands of manhood, it has also complicated the lives of young men and their relationships with young women. As the number of unemployed youths increases by the day, a lot of young men now struggle to maintain relationships with women in their lives, as many of them can no longer afford their primary responsibility of spending money on their intimate partners and providing for their needs, necessary to sustain relationships. In the absence of jobs and money, many desperate young men have resorted to risky behavior in the abuse of opioids (the painkiller Tramadol particularly) to gain prolonged libido and sexual stimulation which is deemed necessary to maintain relationships. This is partly due to the stereotypical presumption among local people (mostly men) that the only other thing young girls like more than money is “good sex,” and Tramadol intake offers the route to achieving that sexual gratification.

Statutory and regulatory bodies such as the Pharmacy Council as well as the Pharmaceutical Society of Ghana are all putting measures in place to control the abuse of this stimulant and other drugs (Adu-Poku, 2018), but the harm they cause has far reaching implications. For instance, authorities have blamed abuse of drugs for youth and communal violence in many of the suburbs of Tamale. Likewise, several opioid-related deaths have already been recorded in Tamale and other major cities in the country while the increased

health risks for young men and their sexual partners have become obvious. Many young girls in these relationships are particularly exposed to the risk of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) given that most of the decisions about sex (such as whether to use condoms or other forms of birth control) are made by the men. This leads us back to the point made by Izugbara (2011: 244) that “understanding and addressing violent and self-destructive masculinities among poor men in Africa requires serious attention to the victimizing implications of poverty in the face of the demands of unremitting manliness in terms of power and the ability to provide for and defend one’s family”. The inadequate consideration of joblessness and other challenges faced by poor men is a limitation of contemporary gender equality programs that target men and boys in Africa (Izugbara, 2011).

### **Change in Feminist Thinking: Paradigm Shift from WID To GAD**

The past three decades have seen a growing interest in the role of men and masculinities in international policy debates about gender and development (Bannon & Correia, 2006; Chant, 2000; Chant & Gutmann, 2000; 2002; Cleaver, 2002; Cornwall, 2000; Flood, 2004; 2007; Greig et. al., 2000; Ruxton, 2004; Sweetman, 2001). This shift is owed to the realization that earlier efforts towards achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment had limited success because they equated gender with women, thereby concentrating policies and programs on women and girls, while also labeling men in general terms as the ‘problem’ (Chant & Gutmann, 2002; Cornwall, 2000; Greig et al., 2000; UN DAW, 2008). These women/girls-focused programs were inspired by the Women in Development (WID) paradigm and promoted by neoliberal governments and institutions, including the United Nations, the World Bank and, most notably, the Nike Foundation. The argument for investing in women and girls was a feminist reaction to the discrimination and exclusion of women in both the public and private spheres of life. Women and girls had been overlooked regardless of their potential or qualification with many women being consigned to

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unpaid domestic and care work, and therefore earning less income compared to men. The acronym "WID" was initially used by the Women's Committee of the Washington, DC, chapter of the Society for International Development as part of a deliberate strategy to bring the new evidence of feminist research to the attention of American policymakers (Rathgeber, 1995; 2005). They placed primary emphasis on egalitarianism and on the development of strategies and action programs aimed at minimizing the disadvantages of women and girls in the productive sector and ending discrimination against them (Rathgeber, 1990; 2005).

The main goal of the WID approach was to integrate women into existing development processes, but it was also motivated by the neoliberal economic logic of investing in women and girls which was perceived to bring higher returns in terms of promoting sustainable livelihood and development (Chant, 2005). The concept took an 'efficiency' approach to development, also known as the 'girl effect' in some development discourses, which promoted the idea that an investment in girls would yield better results than in boys. This model became popular following the economic crisis in the 1980s (Chant & Sweetman, 2012) and had influenced several policies of major international development organizations, most notably the World Bank (Goebel & Epprecht, 1995). The other merit to the WID approach was the presumption that the economic empowerment of women and girls would consequently increase their self-esteem and motivation to resist the oppressive behavior of men. This notion placed emphasis on the capability enhancement of women and girls by empowering them socially and economically to ease their integration into the development process.

This woman-centered gender equality programming faced significant resistance for its limitations. For instance, Chant (2012) rejected the notion that investment in women and girls would lead to a solution where everyone would benefit when poverty reduction and gender equality would be simultaneously attained. In her view, the smart economics agenda was

vastly different from the nuanced and careful ideas of what the empowerment of women and the attainment of gender equality would entail – transforming the structural inequalities which constrain the rights, choices, aspirations, and dreams of women and girls. Echoing this view, Parpart (2014) asserts that the obsession with women and girls' economic empowerment caused development agencies to ignore structural inequalities and their gendered implications as well as the need to vigorously pursue the transformative potential of gender mainstreaming.

The narrow focus on women and girls also obscures the fact that many women (and girls) gain from associating with powerful men and often adopt the beliefs and practices of the masculine elite as well as the gendered practices that produce that hierarchy. This complicates the notion that women and men are separate, contained categories, who automatically identify with their sex. Thus, the binary construction of gender as two distinct, opposing groups so prevalent in development discourse “disregards important complexities, particularly the fluidity of gender identities, the gendered character of structural inequality and the need to address gendered practices and relations that undermine gender equality and maintain gendered as well as classed, racialized, ethnic, and other privileges in an increasingly unequal global world” (Parpart, 2014: pg.388)

There is also a concern among critics that overemphasis on the efficiency of women and girls tends to add more responsibility to women in patriarchal systems who are already overburdened with having to combine their reproductive duties with increased productive duties. This concern is echoed by the fact that the ‘women and girls’ approach has not proven to be capable of bringing about the kind of social transformation that is needed to challenge patriarchal systems. A classic illustration of this concern can be found in a Lesotho Case Study on the World Bank and WID Models (Goebel & Epprecht, 1995). In this case, a group

of women was provided with income-earning opportunities to empower them to be financially independent from their male relatives.

The goal of this World Bank sponsored project was to promote gender equality through increased income earning opportunities for women. It was then estimated that the women would be emboldened to resist abusive relationships if they were not financially dependent on the abusive partner. True to the praxis of the WID model, the World Bank project expanded in scale and more women gained income from many job opportunities created through the project. Evidence from a study into the project by Chant & Sweetman, (2012) suggested that many women were paid less than their labor deserved, and the money they earned was mostly spent to provide the basic needs of their families with barely enough left for the women to live decently. Some of the women were also found to have loaned their earnings to their spouses who never paid them back. Other women complained of the exhaustion and additional responsibility their new income-earning statuses put them in, as some husbands started skirting family responsibilities with the expectations that the women will take care of things. The study subsequently concluded that the employment opportunity helped some of them to supply the practical needs of their families and to earn self-esteem by contributing to their local economy. However, the issue of poor wages and the double-burden on the women having to combine productive and reproductive duties were noted as serious challenges that could neither be ignored nor easily resolved.

The criticisms faced by the WID approach occasioned a change in basic assumptions led to the Gender and Development (GAD) approach that broadened the focus to include the consideration of gendered power relations and their impact on gender equality (Momsen, 2004). The focus changed from including women within existing development structures and institutions (Chant & Gutmann, 2000) to a deeper analysis of how social structures and institutions are inherently gendered and must be transformed. This shift also presented an

opportunity to address the constructions of masculinity as a necessary step toward transforming inequitable structures and institutions (Colpitts, 2019). The emphasis on reforming inequitable socio-economic and political structures lent itself to a broader conceptualization of gender equality and how it could be addressed. The fundamental argument in the GAD concept was that women's economic empowerment alone cannot lead to gender equality, unless patriarchal social structures that produce and reproduce gender inequality are challenged. A gender and development approach recognizes gender inequality as a relational issue and as a matter of structural inequality, which needs addressing directly and not only by women, but by development institutions, governments, and wider society (Chant, 2012). GAD sees women as agents of change rather than as passive recipients of development aid, and it stresses the need for women to organize themselves for a more effective political voice. It recognizes the importance of both class solidarities and class distinctions, but it argues that the ideology of patriarchy runs within and across classes to oppress women (Rathgeber, 1990). GAD also emphasizes the important roles for men, women and gender non-conforming individuals in creating equal opportunities and wellbeing for all people. It is worth highlighting that some women-centered gender equality projects have faced significant resistance and implementation challenges over the past four decades, due to their emphasis on women's empowerment and the exclusion of men/boys. The approach enabled conservative actors to wrongfully frame gender equality initiatives as a 'zero-sum' game in which men and boys were the 'losers.' These preliminary approaches also did not challenge the dichotomous categorization and stereotypes that men are oppressors and women are victims, and neither did they consider that the success of 'women-only' projects would be constrained, as men are a central part of gender relations.

The centrality of gender processes and dominant roles and expectations of men and women has been foregrounded as a key discourse in understanding the complex enmeshment

of violence with masculinity (Dery, 2019). In most cultures, men are expected to be physically strong and sexually successful, to be risk-takers and decision-makers, to provide financially for their wives and children. These characteristics are referred to as ‘gender norms’ – the culturally accepted ideas about being a man or woman in a particular society. Situational or context-specific experiences of men, combined with the masculinist norms attributed to men’s roles in society, can contribute to hyper-masculine acts, including violence. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, as elsewhere in the world, violence has been theorized in multiple ways to be deeply interwoven with dominant ways of proving masculinity (e.g., Hearn, 2007; Ratele, 2008; Ampofo & Boateng, 2008; Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007; Clowes et al., 2013; Vetten & Ratele, 2013). Conventional gender norms for men and boys are often described as ‘dominant’ or ‘hegemonic’ masculinities. Internalizing such ideals is not enough -- they must be repeatedly acted out by men to demonstrate and prove their masculinity (Cornwall, 2003). Esplin (2006) sees that these dominant masculine norms are also some of the main factors driving gender inequality because the assumption that men are primary breadwinners means that women are expected to take care of the majority of domestic or care work, which is less socially valued and thereby contributes to women’s lower status in society. But it has also put many men under pressure, since no man can fully live up to all the popular ideals of masculinity throughout a lifetime. Like women, a man’s experience of power fluctuates across his lifecycle, and depends on his class or caste, his sexual orientation, his ethnicity, and race. Men may experience power and powerlessness at the same time – being powerless in relation to an employer but powerful, for example, in relation to a sister (Karkara et al., 2005). Furthermore, lack of power in one realm may be compensated for in others.

Poon (1993) offers an explanation with regards to how power and control over resources are at the heart of patriarchal systems around the globe. According to her, power is

the process whereby individuals and groups gain or maintain the capacity to successfully force their values on others regardless of any form of resistance. This social imposition is exercised through threats or punishment and restricted access to ‘social goods’ ordinarily available to community members. Following this explanation, it can be understood that powerful groups assert and maintain their positions through the control of resources. Even though the basis of patriarchal power is inextricably tied to the ability of men to live up to these dominant masculine ideas, the absence of the material conditions, such as money, jobs, or resources, to make this ideal possible has undermined the normative order of patriarchy. With most men being left with a patriarchal ideology bereft of its legitimizing activities, men’s authority has come under threat, and so has their identity and self-esteem (Izugbara, 2011). For instance, the relationship between male poverty and violence has been extensively documented, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, where environmental changes have coupled with socio-economic and political changes to unsettle traditional income-generating sources which were mostly dominated by men. Estimates from the World Bank suggest that the share of the African population in extreme poverty did decline—from 56 percent in 1990 to 43 percent in 2012. At the same time, however, Africa’s population continued to expand rapidly, and as a result, the number of people living in extreme poverty still increased by more than 100 million (World Bank, 2016).

Given that men dominate the income-generating sphere in many African countries, it would be no surprise that many men in the low income class would be worse affected by the rising poverty, which, in fact, poses a serious challenge to their ability to live up to the masculine ideals or fulfill the roles and responsibilities expected of “men,” exacerbated by their inability to support their families. Following this, Silberschmidt (2011) observes that women have aggressively responded to the challenges of economic hardship to challenge men, their social value, and their positions as heads of household, a situation which poses a

serious threat to their honor, reputation, and masculinity, while exposing conflicts of interests embedded in gender relations. Male poverty is widely thought to have occasioned some sort of existential crisis among men and boys globally, as many of them feel emasculated in the absence of the material conditions by which they can assert their masculinity. It is also believed to be responsible for the violent behavior of men within certain social contexts. There seems to be no doubt that work and access to income is at the heart of male violence – fundamental for men’s social value and self-esteem (Silberschmidt, 2001, 2005, 2007; Cornwall, 2005; Correia & Bannon, 2007).

Kopytoff (1990) outlines the operational basis to explain how male poverty or declining income-generating opportunities can easily turn men and boys towards violent behavior. According to Kopytoff, two different identities reside within every individual in gendered societies. One is based on what a person is (existential identity), while the other is based on what a person does (role-based identity). He defines an existential identity as intrinsic features of a person which are mostly “immanent” in cultural definition of male or female. It indicates a state of being rather than of doing, difficult to renegotiate, immutable and surrounded by strong sanctions that punish deviant behavior. A role-based identity on the other hand is negotiable and can be relinquished with no sanctions. Following Kopytoff, a man’s identity is intricately linked to his culturally defined sexual identity, which is an immanent (inherent) feature of his existential identity and cannot be negotiated. Role-based identities are fundamental to men’s social value and self-esteem, and where opportunities to form such identities are lacking, men and boys are likely to exercise their existential identity (violence and risk-taking behavior) to “prove they are still men.” Even though Kopytoff’s rigid definition of “existential identity” is simplistic and problematic in some sense – it overlooks the complexity of sexual identity formations – it nonetheless helps us to understand the close connection between contemporary male poverty and violence across the globe.

Missing in this analysis, however, are grounded accounts of how a hazardous sense of threatened masculinity and notions of masculine dignity constructed around interpersonal violence become part of the everyday thinking of some men. Izugbara (2011) links masculine violence to the dynamic association, which men make, “between their private and shared marginalization and livelihood misfortunes and the everyday cruelty of others as well as the invasive belief that one must both vigorously resist violence and deploy it against others to be safe” Izugbara, 2011:242).

### **Men as Partners in Sharing Household Work**

An increasing number of programs have specifically encouraged men and boys to share the burden of unpaid care work with women. Men and boys’ roles in sharing the burden of unpaid care, based on more progressive conceptions of masculinity, have been foregrounded as significant and have the potential not only to improve family income, but also to enhance poverty reduction and to achieve a more equitable development. This approach emphasizes the importance of adopting a broad human rights perspective in which individuals have a duty to respect and promote the rights of others. It acknowledges that any meaningful change in gender relations would require a transformative and rights-based engagement of men and boys towards greater equality. The gender bias in the distribution of unpaid work within households is still a serious obstacle to gender equality (Amarante & Rossell, 2018). Even though there have been improvements in the last decades (Amarante & Rossell, 2018) studies of time use between men and women continue to expose a systematic gender bias both over the years and cross-nationally (Budlender 2004, 2010; Kalenkoski, Ribar, and Stratton 2005; Anxo et al. 2007; Antonopoulos and Hirway 2010).

These studies, conducted in both developed and underdeveloped countries, reveal a trend where men devote more time to paid work while women are consigned to unpaid household work. Even in situations where they take up unpaid work hours, women still face a

double burden or a “second shift” of unpaid work (Shelton & Firestone, 1989; Ferrant et al., 2014). Women and girls continue to spend two to 10 times more hours than men and boys on unpaid care work, including domestic work, water, and firewood collection, and caring for children and those who are ill or old (Donald & Moussié, 2016; Heilman et. al., 2016). Even in countries like Sweden and the Netherlands, known for high rates of gender equality, women still do 20% to 60% more unpaid care work than men (World Bank, 2015). In the US, national data show that women with children under the age of six spend just over an hour a day on hands-on care, while men do only about 50% of that amount (World Bank, 2015). This unequal division of care work acts as one of the primary barriers to women’s economic empowerment and relates to other women’s rights violations worldwide. Studies in various contexts in the global South have effectively highlighted intertwined links between women's role in productive activities outside the household, their economic empowerment, and the wider project of women's rights and gender equality.

The expectations to which men are often held accountable, as well as the culturally "masculine" aspects of identity and practice that they adopt, are also known to vary widely, mitigated by class, race, and sexuality. It also varies over time, and across cultural and institutional settings (Connell 1995; Kimmel 1996; Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Thebaud & Pedulla, 2016). Thus, the extent to which men believe that they will be stigmatized by other men for taking on substantial responsibility for housework and caregiving may vary across individuals. Yet, regardless of its social or demographic determinants, simply believing that such stigma exists has been shown to be powerful enough to prevent men from taking or wanting to take advantage of supportive policies (Kelly et al. 2010; Munsch et. al., 2014). Reducing and redistributing unpaid care and addressing the deep-seated social and gender norms that perpetuate inequalities, discrimination and violence would require a fundamental shift in how caring, gender norms and masculinities are perceived. Achieving this will also

depend on efforts at all levels of society, from individual efforts with men and boys, to the adoption of progressive policies and legislation, to the transformation of institutions. The way household chores are divided between women and men is a key issue which reinforces the imperative to engage with men as allies around women's economic empowerment initiatives. Programs that seek to engage men as active, gender sensitive, non-violent fathers and caregivers have been developed in diverse contexts in recent times around the world. Such initiatives are an important means of encouraging men to take on their fair share of caring and domestic work and engaging them as allies for gender equality.

### **Engaging Men as Fathers and Trainers**

In recent years, initiatives that seek to engage men as active, gender sensitive, non-violent fathers and caregivers have been developed in diverse contexts around the world. Such programs are an important means of encouraging men to take on their fair share of caring and domestic work and engaging them as allies for gender equality (Morrell, 2001; Walker, 2005; Cornwall, 2003; Flood, 2014; Clowes et al., 2013; Vetten & Ratele, 2013; Silberschmidt, 2011; Ocobock, 2017). In many societies, fathers have a real interest and investment in seeing their sons display attributes traditionally described as correct masculine qualities. It is a crucial step to make “real men” out of boys, and to ensure the preservation and continuity of the patriarchal family values and heritage. The process of constructing masculinities is often influenced by dominant groups in a society and learned through observing what older men do. Boys learn perceptions of masculinity through adult males, most especially their fathers (Maina, Ferguson & Kabiru, 2022). A father figure serves as a powerful form of surveillance in regulating the boundaries of young men’s pursuit of credible masculinities, acting in the cultural capacity as the traditional trainer and coach whose interest is to perpetuate dominant notions of what it means to be a man (Dery, 2019). Studies have found that young men’s gender ideology and their beliefs about what kind of work-

family arrangement their fathers or male peers ideally prefer may play a role in their likelihood of responding to supportive work-family policy interventions.

It is also recognized that nurturing and parenting may be transmitted intergenerationally. For example, sons of involved and nurturing fathers are less likely to become violent in their intimate partner relationships when they become adults (Barker et al., 2008; Foubi & Lovich, 1997; Shapiro et al., 2011). Moreover, sons of nurturing fathers are likely to be more nurturing and gender equitable as their fathers, and daughters of nurturing fathers are more likely to value equitable partner relationships (Allen & Daly, 2007; Greene & Moore, 2000). Feminist intervention programs have therefore acknowledged fatherhood as a crucial entry point to reach men and have engaged them as fathers and partners to explore masculinity and men's roles in gender inequality. The MenCare+ initiative is one prominent example of work being done at the global level to engage men as caregivers. MenCare+ has worked with public health service providers in Brazil, South Africa, Rwanda, and Indonesia, among others, to engage expectant fathers in maternal and child health education programs earlier: programs that also address partner violence (Levtov et al., 2015; Atkinson, 2022).

Another example of such initiatives is the MenEngage Alliance which engages men at all levels – individuals, communities, institutions, and policymakers. Since its start in 2011, the campaign has been crafting positive messaging that challenges stereotypical expectations around masculinity and caring (Levtov et al., 2015). MenCare is coordinated by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice, both members of the Alliance, in collaboration with a steering committee that includes Save the Children Sweden, Oxfam GB, Plan Sweden and the MenEngage Alliance. The Caring Dads program is another good example of an initiative targeting men as fathers (Scott et al., 2006). Caring Dads uses a range of techniques, including motivational interviewing, psychoeducation, cognitive behavioral techniques, confrontation, and shame work. The program seeks to address four goals: 1. Engaging men to

examine their fathering by developing trust and motivation; 2. Increasing awareness and application of child-centered fathering; 3. Increasing awareness of, and responsibility for, abusive and neglectful fathering and violence against women; 4. Rebuilding children's trust in men's fathering and planning.

### **Engaging Men to Prevent Gender-based Violence, Promoting Peace and Security**

Involving men and boys in violence prevention programs with women and girls has created the opportunity for organizations to work on multiple levels to address social norms and change problematic masculine behaviors. Casey et al., (2016) found that men who abhor violence are motivated by a commitment to social justice or feel empathy towards survivors of gender-based violence. This motivation also “serves as leverage for men to become allies to women in a shared effort of advocacy and gender justice” (Tolman, et. al., 2017: p.72). Wells et. al., (2013) also found multiple promising entry points for engaging men to end gender-based violence, including targeting fathers in violence prevention and exposing the cost of patriarchy on men's health and general wellbeing (Wells et al., 2013). Researchers and practitioners are “increasingly aware that engaging boys and men strategically across the life course is essential to GBV prevention efforts” (Tolman, et. al., 2017: p.74). This shift is premised on the belief that men can play a vital role in prevention efforts. Led by international programs and alliances such as the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) and MenEngage, the number of culturally specific programs and global campaigns that engage men and boys in preventing GBV continues to expand and gain momentum. These programs work to change gender norms and unequal power relationships by helping men and boys to develop healthy approaches to masculinity. Working at multiple levels, these programs promote change and support at the individual, community, institutional, societal, and global levels. As such, these serve as examples of what is possible in Gender and Development

(GAD) programming when gender relations, gender norms and cultural practices are taken into consideration.

The WRC has established itself in more than 60 countries and has partnered with numerous governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including the UN, to “never commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women” (Minerson et al., 2011, p. 2). The WRC efforts seek not only to decrease men’s willingness to engage in abusive behavior, but also to increase their willingness to challenge other men whose behavior is abusive or men whose behavior contributes to or condones violence against women. In 2014, the UN launched its HeForShe campaign (UN Women, 2014). HeForShe is “a solidarity movement for gender equality developed by UN Women to engage men and boys as advocates and agents of change for the achievement of gender equality and women’s rights” (UNiTE to End Violence Against Women, 2015). MenEngage was formed in 2004 when an international coalition of NGOs and UN agencies joined forces to prevent Gender-Based-Violence (GBV). Composed of partner organizations in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America, the MenEngage alliance “shares information, conducts joint training activities, and participates in local and global advocacy” (Minerson et al., 2011, p. 5). The proliferation and diversity of strategies for engaging men in preventing GBV has provided new understandings of how men can challenge hegemonic ideals of privilege and power, and how men as fathers, caregivers, and role models can help challenge and change gender norms and inequalities. Engaging men and boys can help facilitate introspection and reflection, interrupt the intergenerational transmission of GBV, and change social norms at multiple levels (Tolman, et. al., 2017). Debates on violence, patriarchy, and ways of changing men’s conduct have also occurred in countries as diverse as Germany, Canada, and South Africa (Hagemann-White, 1992; Kaufman, 1993; Morrell, 2001).

Feminist scholars have also highlighted how hegemonic ideas about masculinity are central to the recruitment, training, and deployment of soldiers or combatants in conflict zones (Enloe, 2000; Goldstein, 2001; Klein, 2003; Whitworth, 2004; Brown, 2012; Eichler, 2012; Basham, 2013; 2016). The concept of militarized masculinity has been politically important to feminist theorizing because it recognizes that there are no inherent connections between masculinity and militarization, but that masculinities become militarized and therefore can potentially be demilitarized (Enloe, 2000). The privileging of militarized masculinity in wider society has been foregrounded as a key mechanism through which violence against 'others' is legitimized more broadly (McClintock, 1995; Tickner, 2001; Cockburn, 2010) and through which states and non-state actors gain legitimacy as the masculinized defenders of the feminized, embodied by women and children as well as men who are deemed unfit and incapable of self-defense (Peterson, 1992; Young, 2003; Eichle, 2012; Sjoberg, 2013). The fundamental logic of masculinist protection is the subordinate relation of those in the protected position. In this account, femininity is a social and symbolic foil against which military (and masculine) solidarity and combativeness is produced. In return for the protection, women concede critical distance from decision-making autonomy.

### **Barriers to Engaging Men and Boys**

Gender equality initiatives that engage men and boys have been contested practice (Connell 2003; Flood 2014; Lang 2003). For instance, some feminist activists and scholars have raised concerns about the involvement of men, challenging the usefulness and appropriateness of allocating scarce resources to men and boys who often maintain positions of privilege and increased opportunities (Cornwall & White, 2000; Morrell, 2001; Flood, 2014; Vetten & Ratele, 2013; Silberschmidt, 2011; Connell 2003; Flood 2014; Lang 2003). There are other concerns about who is responsible for engaging men and who establishes the terms of men's involvement (Cornwall and White 2000; Morrell and Morrell 2011). There

are also suggestions that including men in promoting gender equality will have a depoliticizing effect and serve to strengthen unequal power relations, or that it is an unjustifiable detraction from the struggle to make women's concerns central to development policy (White, 2000). Leek (2019) observes structural constraints such as patriarchal norms in implementing organizations that can potentially devalue rights-based and gendered approaches to development. Lang (2014) also found that individuals within organizations who have political and practical reservations about the increased emphasis on men could potentially constrain the growth of gender programming for men and boys. Kaufman specifically suggests that some believe work to engage men may draw funding and political space from efforts to support women's rights and empowerment (Kaufman, 2004). According to him, women interviewed in his study said they were concerned that any attempt to include men and boys in working for gender equality will redirect scarce resources back to men (Kaufman, 2004). Another cause for skepticism over men's potential contributions to feminism is the fear that men may find it difficult to relinquish their access to male privilege, because men who have enjoyed advantages in the past would remain conflicted with respect to their willingness to give up these advantages in the present. Skepticism around the ability and willingness of men to leave their privilege behind remains a central concern for those who study men's feminist activism (Messner et. al., 2015).

To mitigate these concerns, Barker et. al, (2010) suggests five fundamental principles to guide the positive engagement of men and boys in achieving gender equality. They include: (1) approaches should focus on promoting human rights, including the rights of women and girls; (2) organizations must remain accountable to women's rights movements and constantly engage them in dialogue; (3) gender equality initiatives must be geared towards enhancing boys' and men's lives; (4) programs must be inclusive of and responsive to diversities among men; and (5) organizations must bridge the gap to address the social and

structural determinants of gender inequalities. A growing body of research increasingly shows that well-designed programs can bring about significant changes in men's gender-related attitudes and practices. In Brazil, for example, Promundo's intervention with young men promoting healthy relationships and HIV/Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) prevention showed significant positive shifts in gender norms at both six and twelve months (Pulerwitz, Barker, and Segundo 2004). In South Africa, Sonke Gender Justice's One-Man Can Campaign made a positive impact in reducing rape and other sex crimes (Colvin, Peacock, & Human 2009).

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

This section explains the theoretical and conceptual foundations of this thesis. The theories and concepts problematize the common projection of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity as innate to ancient African cultures and traditions, and the attempts to label gender equality or feminism as 'alien' to African identities and sexualities. The impacts of colonization, globalization, the mass media and European/North American organizational principles and expectations on the traditional forms of African male identities have been discussed, complicating transnational partnerships and commitments to promote gender equality and sexual pluralism as part of the global development agenda. The section also highlights the challenge to male identity, a social phenomenon experienced in all societies which have gone through a process of industrialization. Undoubtedly, implementing feminist projects has been more challenging and difficult for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, where it is perceived by conservative actors to be imported and imposed by colonialists and contemporary Western movements, even though much of feminist scholarship has its origins in African scholarship. Using the dual lens of transnational feminism and 'nego-feminism', the section concludes with a reiteration of the need for transnational feminist partnership initiatives to commit to cultural exchanges and 'multi-directional' knowledge sharing

processes that could bridge the cultural knowledge gaps which often create loopholes for conservative actors in implementing countries to label initiatives as Western imposition. The section also highlights the legal and social standards relating to homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and trans-gender identification, which have been going through remarkable changes in both developed and the under-developed worlds, despite being an uncomfortable fit with traditional attitudes, especially in Africa where religious values and customs have a considerable influence on the population.

### **Theorizing African Masculinities**

As noted by Connell (2011) there may be no settled gender norms to be found in neo-colonial societies, or in a society ravaged by civil war, or by military intervention or by neoliberal structural adjustment programs or in mega cities marked by poverty. These factors exposed African men to cultural values and social patterns that created new opportunities but proved problematic, especially in their understanding of proper behavior and expectations about being a man (Ratele, 2016). Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, colonial missionaries and labor recruits were catalysts for transforming men's gendered relationships and identities (Morrell, 2001; Lindsay & Miescher, 2003; Ouzgane & Morrell, 20005; Shefer et al, 2007; Reid & Walker, 2005). Morrell (2007) argues that the institutionalization of colonial discourses which stratified men and women as diverse groups has been the underbelly of the current models of masculinities among African men. According to him, the violence associated with men's projection and representation of masculinity in post-colonial Africa, South Africa precisely, is the by-product of the cruelty of apartheid and colonialism. Rather than discussing roundly the violent masculinities of men, Morrell insists that it is more profitable to engage with colonial discourses on gender relations. In his book 'Making men in Ghana,' Stephan Miescher (2003) explained a complex trajectory of how cultural identities among the Akan ethnic group of southern Ghana in the early twentieth century were forged,

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contested, and reconfigured. Miescher argued that there were three routes of attaining manhood; a) manhood through the status of an elder–senior masculinity, b) marrying multiple wives and giving births to many children, and c) manhood through economic ‘big Manship.’ These categories may be simplistic in that, firstly, it is overly generalizing to put men into one category or the other together, and secondly, it is limiting and leaves no room for intersectionality which is crucial in any analysis about gender relations. Nonetheless the categories offered by Miescher (2005) reflect some of the dominant forms of enacting masculinity in Ghanaian sense. Concerning adult masculinity, a man was expected to ‘take care’ of his wife and as a father, he must take care of his children until they come of age. The status of Opanyin (senior masculinity) did not depend on specific age or wealth, but on a person’s comportment, reputation, and ability to speak well, mediating conflicts and providing advice (Akyeampong & Obeng, 1995). In short, subjective wisdom was the basis of senior masculinity in southern Ghana. The status of ‘big man’ was reserved for successful traders and cocoa farmers – some occupying chiefly positions – who lived a bourgeois lifestyle and fulfilled the expectation of sharing wealth (McCaskie, 2007).

Unlike the previous generation in which the position of a big man was rooted in a man’s ability to control and wield power over a large crowd of family members such as wives and children (Obeng, 2003: 193), Miescher argues that the commercialization and industrialization which came with the colonial man complicated the position of an economic big man. The position of a big man was opened and new possibilities emerged. Prior to colonial encounter, respect for elders was a key cultural feature of societies in the then Gold Coast and authority was ascribed to older members (particularly older men) of the community (Lentz, 2006). With the arrival of the British colonizers, and to achieve the fundamental goal of colonization, modern political positions such as chiefs were introduced, especially in northern Ghana—which created another zone for contest for power (Miescher,

2005). So, in a typical Akan community during this period, social relations were deeply hierarchical. That is, new forms of hegemonic masculinities were introduced, and many men were enthusiastic in gaining recognition in new ways of being men because the old ways of implementing manhood became obsolete (Ratele, 2016). That is, new forms of hegemonic masculinities based on western ideals became the main measuring benchmarks. But as Miescher has noted, only a handful of men could honestly and unproblematically achieve this new status of becoming men of credible social essence. For most of the indigenous men, it was now difficult to attain the position of meaningful men. To mitigate their plight, polygamous marriage became an important frontier for many men to negotiate the social terrain of manhood—carving a masculine niche for themselves (Miescher, 2005; 2007). Unlike the past where the gender relations between a man and his wife were expressed in a complementary manner; in fact, the division between what a man could do and what his wife could do were not clearly delineated (Ampofo, 1999; 2006), but this became clearly delineated by the introduction of many ethno-patriarchal discourses including wage labor (Arhin, 1983). Hewlett’s (1989) study among pre-colonial Ghana, Central African Republic, and northern Congo-Brazzaville, found similar evidence.

According to Silberschmidt (2011), missionaries and colonial administrators worked through churches, schools, and workplaces, propagating their own ideal of domesticity and men’s place in households and marriages. As they intervened in politics, religion, legal systems and agricultural regimes and labor markets, European actors worked to remake men and women in their own image (Silberschmidt, 2011). Cooper (2003) notes that colonial officials in the 1940s and early 1950s were not satisfied with the actual African men they saw in the workplace. In the belief that African men could be socialized and acculturated to the demands, rhythms and values of industrial labour. British Labour Officers and French Inspectors embarked on a what they called “stabilization” which involved the “socialization

of men” at workplaces where a new culture was being defined and where surveillance could be exercised (Cooper, 2003). Part of the transformation in African labor had to do with families. Workers’ nuclear families were required to reside not in remote villages, but near the industrial workplace where they would both sustain and be provided for by their employed patriarchs, consistent with the “family head” and “breadwinner” ideology that had long been rooted in Western societies. Officials also hoped that workers’ wives would socially reproduce the male labor force through unpaid domestic labor and raise the next generation of urban workers in a “modern” sense, acculturated to urban living and steady wage employment (Lindsay, 2003). This colonial “stabilization” and “socialization” of African men and women did not only disrupt the precolonial gender order, but it also created contradictory notions of masculinity whereby multiple forms of hegemonic masculinity may coexist within a certain socio-cultural and political context. For instance, Ghana has a long history of contested masculinity and femininity (Akyeampong & Obeng, 1995).

The transition of the then Gold Coast into a democratic state of Ghana has generated widespread speculations among many men of uncertain, insecure, eroded, emptied, and destabilized identities. Since the traditionally dominant ways of attaining manhood (e.g., senior masculinity) prior to the arrival of colonialists have been rendered valueless and invalid, some men do think that they have lost something especially important since there is a disconnect between traditional ways of attaining manhood prior to colonialism and the new patriarchal power. As will be illustrated in the findings section of this study, some men are beginning to feel a disconnect between traditionally dominant constructions of masculinity and the changes that are brought about because of a democratic and constitutional regime which is now well entrenched in Ghana. All these changes feed into expressions of masculinity and femininity among men and women. The expression of appropriate masculinity is especially important for men in Ghana, as elsewhere in the globe and since

how masculinity was expressed, for instance, marrying multiple wives and exerting authority of headship over many family members has been rendered invalid; men must look elsewhere to reassert their sense of being seen to belong to the social category of real men (Akyeampong & Obeng, 1995). These concerns identified in literature by authors (see Akyeampong & Obeng, 1995, Obeng, 2003, Miescher (2005), Ampofo (2006), Ratele, 2016) with regards to shifting masculinities and changing expectations on men, draw our attention to the need for further studies to fully understand and appreciate men's experiences of insecurity or self-worth in relation to manhood.

Despite the tendency of many men to resist change in traditional ways of enacting manhood, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that some men are recalibrating their sense of masculinity by adapting and re-aligning with the prevailing socio-economic practicalities (Morrell, 2001; Walker, 2005; Cornwall, 2003). Some men are beginning to take on masculinities which are non-hegemonic despite being aware of the privileges, authority, and power associated with the position of a breadwinner. Non-hegemonic here refers to alternative masculinities which do not glorify violence and authoritarian male figures even in traditionally male dominated cultures. For instance, a study conducted by Andrea Cornwall (2003) found that some Nigerian men in the wake of the Structural Adjustment Program in the 1990s have traded off their position as economic providers and have taken on more domesticated, inclusive, and less controlling ideals. As already mentioned, the current economic crises, structural adjustment programs, urbanization, and their attendant consequences challenge Ghanaian men in their construction of traditional routes to masculinity despite the hegemonic masculinity that is entrenched and ingrained in the psyche of Ghanaian men (Abdul-Korah, 2011). Men's experiencing of continued distress and despondency tend to evoke new ways of re-establishing altered status (Ocobock, 2017). One commonly used outlet is migration of men from rural Ghana to big cities, including

Accra, Kumasi and sometimes Techiman where they anticipate engaging in menial and seasonal jobs such as subsistence farming and the risky illegal mining jobs popularly called ‘galamsey’ in Ghana.

According to Lang (2003), the existential crisis confronting men in today’s world provides a window to dig deeper into men’s lives to understand their gender expectations, their expected roles, and social positions as it can help NGOs to engage men more naturally in efforts to achieve gender equality and reduce poverty. In his view, the differences among individual men and the disjuncture between dominant masculine messages and the reality of men’s lives is a basic starting point to begin to discuss what gender has to do with men – and how more options of behavior and relations for men and women will be beneficial for individuals and societies. To what extent can NGOs adapt their policies and programs in ways which can promote alternative forms of masculinities that can be useful in terms of promoting gender equitable behavior among men and boys? Just like hegemonic masculinity, the ideals of alternative masculinity are socially constructed traits by male actors who wish to manifest dissent against mainstream masculine ideals. Since socially constructed ideals are subject to the social cycle of learning and knowledge transfer to future generations, of what value would it be to adapt gender equality policies and programs in ways that also support and promote these alternative ideals of masculinity? Can men genuinely change to support and promote nonviolence and gender equality? Would they only do so based on altruism, or do they have things to gain? If so, what are those things to be gained by men?

### **Hegemonic Masculinity in Post-colonial Africa**

Raewyn Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity has been widely used as an analytical framework to identify those attitudes and practices among men that perpetuate gender inequality, involving both men’s domination over women and the power of some men over other men. Recognizing different forms of masculinity in Western societies, Connell

(1995) examined a hierarchy and relations of power among these masculinities: one ‘hegemonic masculinity’ dominating “subordinate” variants. She concluded that European empires spread a new global gender norm, and that there was a prospect of all indigenous gender regimes collapsing under the Western institutional and cultural pressure. By hegemony, Connell refers to the point where institutional powers and cultural ideals converged to produce a standard definition and aspirational image of being a social male (Connell, 1995). Hegemony produces power and hierarchies which may attract violence. This does not mean that many social actors are in support of the definition, but they may benefit indirectly by holding onto such ideals.

Connell himself defines the concept succinctly:

... hegemonic masculinity refers to “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women over time and space (Connell, 2005: 77).

The question of the existence of single hegemonic masculinity in colonial Africa has been at the center of much feminist discussion over the years. While acknowledging the influential role of Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity, Africanist feminists have pointedly interrogated the relevance of this theory to a continent that has witnessed complex processes. For instance, scholars such as Lindsay and Miescher (2003), Morrell (1997), Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994), Fuh (2009), Ratele (2016) and many others have questioned the analytic value of a single model of hegemonic masculinity especially when it comes to former colonies.

Hegemony, a pivotal concept in Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* and his most significant contribution to Marxist thinking, is about the winning and holding of power and the formation (and destruction) of social groups in that process (Carrigan et al., 1985). In this

sense, it is important to consider the ways in which the ruling class establishes and maintains its domination. The ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality is an essential part of this process. Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear 'natural', 'ordinary', or 'normal'. The state, through punishment for non-conformity, is crucially involved in this negotiation and enforcement (Messerschmidt, 2018). Scholars have deployed post-colonial theory to explain the fluidity of masculine ideals and gender practices in post-independence Africa. Post-colonial theory has contributed to bringing into clear sight the experience of domination and subjugation that occurred under colonial occupation and how such experiences continue to complicate notions of masculinity and gender relations as well as the lives of both men and women. It critiques hegemonic masculinity for failing to recognize historical and cultural situations. It is not always obvious as to what notions of masculinity are dominant since the understanding and interpretation of masculine practices depend on specific contexts and on different subject positions that may generate contrary readings of hegemony.

### **Colonialism and African Sexualities**

One of the most divisive and contested issues in gender equality policies and programming is the rights of LGBTQI+ rights, with scholars documenting the tensions between notions of 'Africanness,' histories of colonialism, and non-normative sexualities. Constructions of gender in traditional African societies are closely tied to heteronormativity, while non-normative sexual and gender norms are labeled 'unAfrican' and 'Westernized' sexual deviations. Implied in this externalization of homosexuality is a perception that heterosexuality is 'African' and therefore 'cultural,' while homosexuality is un-African and un-cultural. It must be emphasized that such attitudes remain prevalent in many other parts of

the world including North America where the divide has been generational. Older Catholics, for example, are pleased that missionaries from Africa help to strengthen their stand against modern sexuality. The ubiquity of this ‘homosexuality is UnAfrican’ claim is often reflected in the comments of both public figures and ordinary people across the continents. The theory that sub-Saharan Africa’s perception of sexuality differs from those of Eurasia is accredited to Caldwell et al. (1989). They write: “Sub-Saharan African population is not a morally backsliding Eurasian population that can be returned by exhortation and education campaigns to a pattern of sex occurring predominantly within marriage” (Caldwell et al. 1989: pg. 224). This claim is premised on the perception that African sexuality is primarily homogenous and exists for lineage expansion, through which ancestors return to human communities. Sub-Saharan Africans, thus, put emphasis on the importance of ancestry and descent (Caldwell et al. 1989). Associated with ancestral heritage is a belief that the spirit of the dead can intervene in the affairs of the living. Furthermore,

a related social system that is, in its most complex form ... places greater importance on intergenerational links than conjugal ones and that gives profound respect and power to the old ... In keeping with the aim of lineage perpetuation, emphasis is placed on fertility: by society, the ancestral spirits, and even the high gods who are otherwise of a little day-to-day importance (Caldwell et al. 1989: 188).

Bhana et. al., (2007) attribute this notion to the concept of culture as regularly employed to determine what is ‘normal’ and acceptable, including around sexuality. They argue that the oppressive notion of culture as static and untouchable needs to be disrupted so that people may construct and perform their sexualities with greater freedom. African homophobia has been attributed to European colonization in many academic writings. For instance, Wabyanga (2016) argues that Africa’s homophobia must be understood from the context of post-colonial cultural and ideological perspectives. In her view, the encounter

between precolonial African values and European values produced a new cultural space that offered an analytical basis and tools for engaging and evaluating the complexities of human sexual interactions, identity positions and social expectations. “An African of the post-colonial era is a hybrid offspring - who consciously and sometimes unconsciously conceptualizes this hybridity as his or her identity and domain” (Wabyanga, 2016: pg.8). Colonial values underlying idealized identities of masculinity and femininity were integrated into contemporary ideologies constructing heterosexual-based patriarchal African families (Morrel, 2007). Epprecht (1998) writes about the ‘unsaying of homophobia’ and the control of same-sex desire because of the introduction of colonial discourses about sex and gender. Bhana et al. (2007) also argues that the arrival of Islam, Christianity, the missionaries, and colonialism brought a moralism that subordinated women and controlled sexual expression across the continent. In more recent years theoretical perspectives have begun to open sites of resistance and to challenge notions of fixed sexual and gender identities including static and heteronormative notions of ‘Africanness’ as well as the role of hegemonic masculinities (Ouzgane and Morrell, 2005). Oyěwùmí (1997) offers a good example of how Western contact and imperial colonial practices distorted Yoruba notions of sex and gender. Oyewumi rejects ‘Western feminism’ as ‘sisterarchy’, where hierarchical imperialism of Western ideas is inevitably reproduced rather than disrupted or dismantled. In her view, black feminists and feminists of colour must not be perceived as homogenous, given that intersectionality mitigates how discrimination is felt or experienced (Oyěwùmí, 1997).

The notion of a homogeneous 'African sexuality' has been challenged as both empirically and theoretically untenable, even though some social actors such as conservative politicians, clergy, and ordinary men, still find the notion to be amenable to their social and political interests. Several scholars have countered the myth of a primordial heterosexual Africa by adducing evidence of same-sex sexualities from various historical and geographical

settings (Gaudio, 2014; Murray & Roscoe, 1998). Some studies on sexuality in Africa support the argument which locates the origins of homophobia in Europeans, especially British, colonizers' obsessions with sex and race (Epprecht, 2004). Similarly, Epprecht (2008) argues that the idea of 'heterosexual Africa' grew out of colonial attitudes and policies, especially in the Victorian legal and moral code imposed throughout the British Empire (Gaudio, 2014). The idea of 'Sotadic zone' espoused by Burton, (1890) is one classic example of such romanticized colonial logic. Using pseudo-scientific theories of climate, culture, and race, as analytical lens, Burton argued that Arabs, southern Europeans, and peoples at similar latitudes were predisposed to homosexuality, while black people are mostly untainted by sodomy. Although northern Europeans were also supposedly untainted, Burton regarded Africans as primitive and vulnerable to moral contamination, justifying colonization and the Christian missions (Gaudio, 2014). Gaudio emphasizes the diversity in the meanings of 'African sexuality' and how they vary across space and time. He reminds us that in many parts of the continent including Saharan Africa, North Africa, Sudan, the north of Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, and Mali, Arab and Islamic influences were woven into African histories for many centuries prior to the so-called '1884 Berlin Conference' (Gaudio, 2001; 2014). The sexual plurality is therefore multiplied and problematized by the many permutations of religious beliefs/jurisprudence and the evolution of culture (Gaudio, 2001; 2014).

### **Patriarchy, Power, and Resistance to Change**

In patriarchal systems, men and boys are expected to demonstrate superior and dominating qualities when dealing with anyone perceived to be weak, particularly when it involves women and girls (hooks, 2004). Patriarchy teaches men and boys to internalize and embody domination and its related norms such as the right to be leaders to women and girls, and the valorising of violence/aggressive attitude as a legitimate means to maintain that status quo (hooks, 2004). It is mostly defined as the systematic domination of women by men in

some or all of society's spheres and institutions (Walby, 1997). Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity serves as an analytical framework to identify those attitudes and practices among men that perpetuate gender inequality, involving both men's domination over women and the power of some men over other men. Recognizing different forms of masculinity in Western societies, Connell (1995) examined a hierarchy and relations of power among these masculinities: one 'hegemonic masculinity' dominating 'subordinate' variants. She concluded that the spread of European empires caused the emergence of a new global form of dominance, leading to a prospect of all indigenous gender regimes collapsing under the Western institutional and cultural pressure. By hegemony, Connell refers to the point where institutional powers and cultural ideals converged to produce a standard definition and aspirational image of being a social male (Ratele, 2016). Hegemonic masculinity also reinforces male dominance among men and restricts men who would otherwise wish to perform roles normally assigned to women. Traditionally hegemonic masculine ideals significantly obfuscate, rather than support, men's involvement in activities that are perceived to be feminine (Derry, 2020). Patriarchal dividend is the benefit which men accrue from their domination in the overall gender order, and identifying or naming that dividend, and showing how it operates, has been one of the foci of feminist theory, particularly highlighting a deeper structural and cultural discrimination that continue to privilege masculinities while also subordinating femininities. While patriarchy is not equally enjoyed by all men, it is the power that men as a group draw on, even including men who reject it but still partake in the dividends (Connell, 1995; Dowd, 2010).

Over the years, African feminist theorizing and activism have both influenced and brought to the fore, critical debates on gender and intersectional politics (Oyěwùmí, 2003; Tamale, 2011; Ratele, 2013). The 1975 conference on women in Mexico City, the second conference at Copenhagen in 1980, the Third World Conference on Women in 1985, Nairobi,

and the groundbreaking conference at Beijing in 1995, were all to challenge patriarchy, and to galvanize opposition and resistance to deeply held misogynistic or sexist views of society that undermine gender equality. The inclusion of feminism and gender equality as key priorities in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the preponderance of transnational partnerships and commitments to empower women and end gender-based violence, are all reminders of the remarkable achievements of feminism. Throughout history, feminist groups, both domestically and internationally, as well as individual female freedom fighters have stood up to the patriarchal social order and the norms that legitimize male subordination of women. The UN Decade conference for women hosted in Nairobi in July 1985 is remembered as one of the key events which shaped feminist activism and mobilization in the sub-Saharan region. The conference inspired many African women who attended it into local action in their respective countries (Tamale, 1996). These local organizations have been at the forefront of contesting the traditional structures of political and sexual domination. They also continue to inspire the way that individual women perceived their subordination and the action they took to challenge it.

According to Sylvia Walby (1997), anti-feminist resistance is a constant feature in the history of feminism, and feminist successes have often met, not only with resistance, but with renewed determination by patriarchal forces to maintain and increase the subordination of women. Gender equality programs can provoke hostilities and resistance from a small, but often powerful, group of people within the partner countries. Conservative voices and patriarchal gatekeepers in the Global South often invoke culture and tradition as the pretext to reject gender equality and women empowerment, suggesting these concepts are externally imposed by Western powers, often ignoring the large and growing voices of locally-based feminists (men and women) fighting for gender equality and women's rights in their own communities, including scholars, human rights defenders and civil society organizations

(Kapur, 2005; Mohanty, 2003; Quataert, 2014; Okech & Musindarwezo, 2019). Culturally grounded hegemonic masculine practices, deeply held misogynistic, sexist, and patriarchal behaviors continue to undermine the success of gender-specific development programs.

The gatekeepers of patriarchy - some of whom are women - resist efforts in support of gender equality, asserting men's roles as leaders and heads of the family. The hostilities to gender equality are partly fueled by a narrow and uninformed narrative where claims of culture and tradition willfully ignore/undermine fundamental human rights (Shahadu-Bitamsimli, 2021). Understanding these local hostilities to gender equality is important to inform better education and awareness about women's rights and feminist principles. For most men who resist gender equality measures, the fear on their part is often linked to uncertainties about the social transformations gender equality promises - apprehension of losing the privileges men enjoy in patriarchal systems (Shahadu-Bitamsimli, 2021). The narrative frames feminism as disruptive to people's lives, local beliefs and customs. Resistance to gender equality can be categorized into active resistance and passive resistance. Those in the active resistance category often question the relevance of gender equality, suggesting alternative issues that could have been prioritized over gender equality as a development goal.(Shahadu-Bitamsimli, 2021). Passive resistance can be difficult to detect and can often go unrecognized depending on how close the resistor is to oppressive power (Shahadu-Bitamsimli, 2021). The challenge associated with passive resistance can take longer to detect because resistance is often part of the gender equality project. Those involved pretend to support gender equality, secretly sabotage project outcomes (Shahadu-Bitamsimli, 2021). The resisters in these cases work within the organizational set up and use their positions to undermine the implementation of gender policies or programs (Shahadu-Bitamsimli, 2021). Others profess their support for gender equality but consider other development issues to be more urgent than gender equality (Shahadu-Bitamsimli, 2021). As

projected by the data in this study, the misinformed nature of these perspectives, coupled with limited understanding of the essence for gender equality to be women-focused to a considerable extent of understanding of systemic inequality and how it disproportionately leads to discrimination against both men and women, are some of the major factors responsible for slowing the progress in achieving gender equality goals.

One of the challenges is the persistence of hegemonic practices that legitimizes male superiority in all aspects of social relationships in the private and public sphere, the first of which is the social norms and practices that normalize male privilege, whereby families train boys to be future leaders and breadwinners, and girls to be future subordinated dependents of men. The consequence is lack of paid job opportunities to earn income, while men dominate both private and public sector work. While many women have entered the workforce and sometimes head households as breadwinners, the vision of domestic life which continues to dominate the imagination of many cultures is one in which the logic of male domination is intact, whether men are present in the home or not (hooks, 2014). Transformative feminist thinking emphasizes the importance of learning about patriarchy as a system of domination, how it became institutionalized and how it is perpetuated and maintained. As noted by hooks (2014), the subtle manifestations of sexism and patriarchy in everyday life deserve particular attention in order to properly understand the victimization and exploitation women endure. For example, some of the women who pursue professional careers or have jobs risk the burden of triple role, whereby the woman is forced by conditions to combine her job obligations with housework, while also expected to be a 'good housekeeper (Shahadu-Bitamsimli, 2021). "These are multiple layers of responsibility on the woman. This is one of the reasons explaining the difficulty of removing the glass ceiling on the professional advancement of some women" (Shahadu-Bitamsimli, 2021:113-114).

## **Bridging the Cultural Gaps: The Role of Transnational Feminism and ‘Nego-feminism’**

Retrogressive patriarchal norms and cultural practices are deeply embedded within many cultures, and this makes gender inequality a challenging issue to address. For example, the project staff in this study gave many examples of the specific challenges they encounter; the resistance they meet from different members of the community (primarily men in positions of leadership, but also women who seek to uphold cultural values to maintain social and family cohesion). Despite experiences of resistance to change, gender norms and cultural practices are dynamic (Okech & Musindarwezo, 2019; Ahmed & Meena, 2012). One of the ways through which cultural norms and practices can change is exposure to different views and perspectives (both from within the country and through interactions with outside actors). Deepened ties and collaboration among transnational actors can open up hitherto unavailable spaces to transform local perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, towards the promotion of gender equality (Tiessen et. al., 2020). Transnational actors must pay special attention to the identity issues that are linked to men’s challenges as part of modern feminist principles and development policies. This may take a shape of finding the right balance between the push for radical feminist visions and addressing the insecurities that men experience. Scholars such as Mohanty (2003), Simpson (2004), Baaz (2005), Cook (2007) and Heron (2007) have effectively used critical theory as a lens to scrutinize North-South relationships with a particular focus on issues of power and privilege on the part of transnational actors engaged in promoting gender equality in the Global South.

Such neocolonial interpretations of the cultural exchange highlight the problematic and inequitable structural processes that are facilitated by neoliberal globalization and contribute to ‘colonial continuities’ (Loiseau et al. 2016; Perold et al. 2013; Baaz, 2005). Postcolonial theory highlights how colonial and postcolonial imaginaries of development are reinforced in the process of international development issues. Critical theory scholars have

used colonialism and neo imperialism as entry points to explain the underlying structural dynamics that produce and reproduce unequal international relations, that serve the strategic interests of Northern governments and Global North citizens at the expense of the Southern ‘others’ (Clost, 2014; Simpson, 2004; Tiessen & Kumar 2013; Cook, 2007; Baaz, 2005; Heron, 2007). Neocolonial perspectives may offer valuable insights into structural impediments to equality in North-South relations, but they nonetheless offer insufficient account of the agency and voices of partners in the Global South (Tiessen et. al., 2018). Considering transnational feminism as one of my analytical frameworks in this research offers an opportunity to explore the nuanced values that shape transnational partnerships. A transnational feminist lens places emphasis on agency, and the importance of understanding the perspectives of partner organization staff in the South in terms of their priorities and the values attached to interpersonal dynamics (Tiessen et. al., 2018; Butcher & Einolf, 2017; Seelig & Lough, 2015).

Transnational feminism stems from a renewed urgency to struggle for the principles of gender equality, justice, and fairness (Quataert, 2014) building on African feminist interpretations of gender equality. Transnational feminism combines alliance-building strategies across differences with local level insights on cultural specificity as Global South scholars and activists turn their attention to dismantling patriarchy in their own nations and regions (Quataert, 2014). Transnational feminism builds on insights of African feminists, specifically scholars who have challenged the systematic domination of women by men in some or all of society’s spheres and institutions (Walby, 1997; hooks, 2004). African feminist theorizing places women’s agency at the center of the discussion on gender relations. As such, the transnational feminist lens advances knowledge of agency and structural inequality and how these relate to local feminisms, empowerment, and transnational relationships. Through sustained relationships between Northern and Southern actors, the scope for mutual

learning grows and thereby the opportunities for transnational feminist values to be asserted and enacted in these transnational spaces. Through transnational feminism, alternative interpretations of feminism and gender equality can emerge (Shahadu-Bitamli, 2021). Emphasis is placed on promoting alternative forms of theorizing which allows for multi-dimensional methods of social enquiry, placing equal importance on subaltern voices (Shahadu-Bitamli, 2021). This is imperative towards creating a discursive space where local values can be deconstructed, reconstructed and considered in both theory and practice. The discursive space needed is articulated in detail by Nigerian scholar Obioma Nnaemeka who uses a framework she calls ‘nego-feminism’.

Nnaemeka coined the term ‘Nego-Feminism’ to challenge the location of theory, and its consequent translation into feminist intervention. The central argument articulated in this concept is that the lived experiences of Western feminists should not dictate the narrative around feminism (Nnaemeka, 2004). Thus, Western ideas of feminism should not dominate how feminism should be applied in other parts of the world, precisely in Africa. Nnaemeka describes Nego-Feminism as both no-ego feminism, and negotiation feminism:

First, nego-feminism is the feminism of negotiation; second, nego-feminism stands for “no ego” feminism. The foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance. Here, negotiation has the double meaning of “give and take/exchange” and “cope with successfully/go around.” African feminism (or feminism as I have seen it practiced in Africa) challenges through negotiations and compromise. It knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines. In other words, it knows when, where, and how to negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts (2004: 377 – 378).

Nego-feminism cautions us about the dangers of “unidirectional theorizing” - whereby the socio-economic and political experiences of Western feminists form the basis for knowledge and theorizing. Thus, Nnaemeka invites us to problematize the process of ‘knowing’ in order to re-evaluate ‘who’ and ‘where’ the narrative around feminism emanates. Nego-feminism advocates the need to go “beyond a historicization of the intersection that

limits us to questions of origins, genealogy, and provenance to focus more on the history of now, the moment of action that captures both being and becoming, both ontology and evolution” (Nnaemeka, 2004:361). Western domination of theory formation must therefore be interrogated to allow for the emergence of a democratic process that enables the legitimation, and validation of theories coming from non-Western perspectives. Nnaemeka puts this succinctly:

... theory making should not permanently be a unidirectional enterprise—always emanating from a specific location and applicable to every location—in effect allowing a localized construct to impose a universal validity and application (Nnaemeka, 2004:362).

Criticisms of ‘nego-feminism’ may argue that the concept lends itself to male hegemony and fails to emphasize the need to disrupt and dismantle patriarchal structures that reinforce gender inequality. The strength of the concept, though, lies in its challenge of what Nnaemeka calls “unidirectional theorizing”. It considers negotiation/compromise not as a weakness, but a strategic adaptation of feminism to fit within the context of the realities of African feminism(s). Even though the principles articulated in ‘nego-feminism’ are valuable to deepening our understanding of how gender equality is perceived in African context, certain aspects of the concept require further exploration. For instance, the concept is silent on the specifics in terms of the issues that can be negotiated or can be compromised as culturally relative and what aspects of feminism is non-negotiable. Nonetheless, ‘nego-feminism’, complemented with transnational feminists’ perspectives, offers a better explanation of the thematic and conceptual notions that underpin international development commitments. ‘Nego-feminism’ stands for advancement of reciprocity, mutuality, and intercultural competencies, as well as ethics and social justice. ‘Nego feminism’ moves the discussion forward in offering specific ideas about how to further narrow the differences between Western and African feminisms, e.g., negotiations, no ego, the importance of ‘space

clearing' to allow different but related frameworks to intersect and reinforce one another through multidirectional theorizing etc. In a similar vein, Cole et. al., (2007:3) suggest the discussion on gender in Africa “move beyond the dichotomies entrenched debates and the polarising identity politics that have paralysed past discussion”. To the authors, gender in Africa requires an interdisciplinary approach that mitigates biases and omissions inherent in the various social science disciplines. New discussions consider transcontinental, multi-gendered, and multi-racial collaboration as crucial and necessary conditions for a healthy North/South flow of information (Cole et. al., 2007), like the ‘multi-dimensional’ theorizing proposed by Nnaemeka (2004). To achieve this, Manuh (2007) highlights the need for theoretical contributions to correspond to the reality as felt and experienced by African men and women, as well as a “productive intervention between the dynamic of North-South relations, between scholars living and working in Africa and their counterparts in North America” (p.140).

The utility of transnational feminism, on the other hand, lies in the indispensability of cross-cultural partnership and the imperative of solidarity to achieving goals on promoting gender equality. Conservative actors in the South who resist or oppose gender equality measures may view programs as externally imposed by Western powers with little understanding of the locally based feminists (men and women) fighting for gender equality and women’s rights in their own communities, including scholars, human rights defenders, and civil society organizations (Kapur, 2005; Mohanty, 2003; Quataert, 2014; Okech & Musindarwezo, 2019). The partnerships forged through international development cooperation create transnational spaces across the local–international divide which are crucial to achieving international targets and commitments to gender equality. To effectively harness the potential in these partnerships, researchers and development workers must recognize and

acknowledge both the potential dominant Westernized perception and imposition of gender equality, as well as the potential for new knowledge production and contributions to solidarity movements. The success of feminist and pro-feminist interests in deconstructing and transforming gender relations is likely to be limited in scope and impact if gender equality programs fail to recognize and engage with the complexities and situational realities of men and masculinities in diverse spaces. Substantial evidence continues to highlight diverse ways in which men's entanglement with dominant masculinities profoundly make men vulnerable and significantly expose women to negative acts and behaviors (Clowes, 2013; Ratele, 2013). The southern voices in this research and in previous studies have emphasized that excluding men, boys, and notions of masculinity from feminist work risks producing limited and unsustainable outcomes (Morrell et. al., 2012; Greig & Edstrom, 2012; Ratele, 2014). Without highlighting culturally grounded understandings of male practices of masculinity, feminist struggles would encounter challenges to deconstruct and transform the patriarchal masculinities that are inimical to the progress of gender equality. A transnational feminist lens offers an alternative approach to examining patriarchy and masculinity in cross-cultural contexts. It reaffirms the importance of engaging men and boys in feminist practices and Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) programming, while also exposing the dangers and consequences of patriarchy to individual men and women (hook, 2004).

Noteworthy, however, is the fact that African feminisms played crucial roles in stimulating transformative change through their resistance and activism against oppressive policies and decisions. Perhaps much of such resistance could easily be rendered invisible by the very patriarchal power it sought to disrupt. The claim that 'gender equality' or 'feminism' are 'alien' to the cultures and traditions of people in the Global South is therefore contradictory when viewed in light of the fact that European colonization disrupted what appeared to be gender-balanced cultures of pre-colonial Africa. Furthermore, it is paradoxical

in the sense that patriarchy complicates the lives of both men and women, with the daunting expectations weighing heavily on the shoulders of some men. According to Sylvia Tamale (2000), African women played major and diverse social roles, and wielded substantial economic and political power in all of pre-colonial Africa. Even though sexual division of labour existed in pre-colonial African societies (Schmidt, 1991), the divisions were not based on productive and reproductive lines, and most African women were fully engaged in both reproductive and productive activities (Tamale, 2000). Women in Ghana particularly had substantial control over the proceeds from their trade sales, a factor that gave them relative autonomy from men (Agorsah, 1990). A well-organized market network existed as a strong basis for women's political activism and participation in decision-making processes (Tamale, 2000).

By contrasting the 'dual-sex' political systems of pre-colonial West African traditional societies with the 'single-sex' leadership in much of the North at the time, Okonjo (1975) demonstrates that women were not totally subordinate, despite the patriarchal structure of much of pre-colonial Africa. In a single-sex system, “political status-bearing roles are predominantly the preserve of men and women can achieve distinction and recognition only by taking on the roles of men in public life and performing them well” (Okonjo 1976: 45). Okonjo describes in detail how authority structures in Africa were distinctly sex-separate and demonstrates that within this system, men and women managed their own affairs in mutually complementary political systems that served the interest of the community. According to Tamale (2000), sex-separate institutions existed in East Africa where women performed economic, social and judicial functions through an age-segmented institution. Europeans introduced their ideas of hegemonic masculinity and male-dominated political system when they colonized Africa and by consequence supervised the erosion of African women's political and economic activities (Tamale, 2000). It is these cultural alterations that fostered

patriarchal paternalism and denied women power, authority, or 'adulthood' by constantly framing them in the shadows of men (Staudt,1989) and eroding most of the power and autonomy they had previously enjoyed. Colonial powers deliberately and systematically designed policies to ensure that African women were excluded from politics; and they were distanced from decision-making in agricultural production and other forms of production, due to Western views about the "proper" place of men and women in societies (Tamale, 2000).

### **Chapter Conclusion**

To conclude, it is important to highlight the major points emerging from the literature review and theoretical frameworks. The first and foremost is the point that there is a growing interest in the role of men and masculinities in international policy debates about gender and development due to the realization that previous gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives faced resistance due to the emphasis on women's empowerment and the exclusion of men and boys. An increasing number of programs have specifically encouraged men and boys to share the burden of unpaid care work with women. Men have also been engaged in their roles as fathers/trainers, and also partners to end gender-based violence. Another takeaway from the literature is the fact that contemporary conditions such as political instability, bad governance, failed neo-liberal policies, and economic hardship, have exacerbated long standing societal problems, and diminished young people's abilities to support themselves and their families. Many are unable to attain the prerequisites of full adulthood and take their place as fully-fledged members of society. As a consequence, some men are facing existential crises amidst declining opportunities to attain credible masculinity. The crisis opens a window to dig deeper into men's lives and understand their gender expectations, their expected roles, and social positions. This knowledge can help NGOs to engage men more naturally and meaningfully in efforts to achieve gender equality and reduce poverty.

Also noteworthy in the literature is the apparent connection between masculinity and violence, and the increasing efforts in research to understand the nature of the connection and to find mitigation strategies. The performance of masculinity and the desire to enact violence are interwoven among some men. To be seen acting as a real man to some men means dominating and controlling others in different relationships. Different men may have different interests and motivations to, or not to subscribe to the dominant ideas on normative masculinity, and it is imperative to fully explore and understand these varying motives. Men's experience of power fluctuates across his lifecycle, and is influenced largely by class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and, significantly, race. Men may experience power and powerlessness at the same time. Despite the tendency of many men to resist change in traditional ways of enacting manhood, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that some men are recalibrating their sense of masculinity by adapting and re-aligning with the prevailing socio-economic practicalities. Some men are beginning to take on masculinities which are non-hegemonic despite being aware of the privileges, authority, and power associated with the position of a breadwinner. Non-hegemonic here refers to alternative masculinities which do not glorify violence and authoritarian male figures even in traditionally male dominated cultures.

The contrast between 'African' and 'Western' feminisms, and the interaction between the two in both theory and practice is central to this thesis and as such will be given a detailed treatment in the analysis chapter. The contrast exemplifies the complexity of cross-cultural theorizing. The loaded political and ethical questions associated with these binary calls for negotiations and compromises from both sides in the common interest of achieving global development commitments and goals on promoting gender equality. This imperative takes us back to Nnaemeka's concept of 'nego-feminism' which values negotiation as imperative to advancing feminist goals and outcomes. This concept considers the "possibilities,

desirability, and pertinence of a space clearing that allows a multiplicity of different but related frameworks from different locations to touch, intersect, and feed off of each other in a way that accommodates different realities and histories” (Nnaemeka, 2004: 362-363). ‘Rather than essentializing difference between ‘Western’ and ‘African’ feminisms, ‘nego feminism’ commits to the transformation of the processes of theory making and knowledge construction in order to create an environment of equal power relations and cultural negotiation.

## **CHAPTER THREE: COUNTRY CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Chapter Introduction**

This chapter offers an overview of the country context and gives a detailed summary of the methodology and data collection methods, including participant sampling and recruitment procedures, participants' inclusion criteria, interviewing and fieldwork practicalities, and data analysis. I also engage with my own positionality both as a Ghanaian man from the north of Ghana and as a young researcher. By engaging with my own positionality, I situate my research within feminist epistemology which understands the positionality of the researcher as a critical dynamic in the generation of data (Bennett, 2008). The point of acknowledging my own positionality is to challenge some hypothetical assumptions about gender relations, some of which I may have internalized having been born and raised in the north.

### **Ghana's Commitments to Gender Equality**

Violence against women is a global pandemic that cuts across all borders and impacts all people and societies regardless of culture, class, ethnicity, age, race, socio-economic status, political leaning, or religion. It is widely spread, deeply ingrained, and has serious effects on the well-being of people. This violence desecrates women's physical and/or psychological wellbeing since it causes harm and pain. Like other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, domestic violence remains a major problem in Ghana due to the structures of domination and exploitation often peddled through the concept of patriarchy. A 1998 survey on domestic violence among women in Ghana showed that one in three had been beaten, slapped, or physically abused by a current or most recent partner. It is noteworthy that Ghana has since signed and ratified multiple international conventions, protocols and treaties including the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979, which states that all member States are obliged to act with due diligence to

prevent violations of women's rights, to investigate and punish acts of violence that occur, and to provide assistance and compensation to victims of DV and UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) of 1993. Other international commitments include: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality (CPoA. 2005 - 2015); The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and among the most recent, the Sustainable development Goals (SDG) introduced in 2015.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was one of the earliest reference frameworks evaluating the state of gender equality around the world, and to assess the commitments of states in supporting gender equality (UN Women, 2022). It was adopted by consensus in 1995 following a meeting of over 40,000 government delegates, experts and civil society representatives at the Fourth World Conference on Women. It has since embodied transnational partnerships to achieve gender equality and to provide better opportunities for women and girls across the globe. Empowering women and closing gender gaps in paid work are key to achieving several of the 2030 Agenda for the SDGs. Specifically, it is crucial for meeting Goal 5 (achieving gender equality), Goal 8 (promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all); also Goal 1 (ending poverty), Goal 2 (food security), and Goal 10 (reducing inequalities). Many other international commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a series of International Labour Organization conventions on gender equality, support women's economic empowerment. Significantly, the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls was made a standalone goal (Goal No 5), and for the first time, in its targets 5.1 and 5.2, specifically targeting the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres (UN Women, 2022). The ubiquity of these transnational

partnerships and commitments to empower women and end gender-based violence, is a reminder of the remarkable triumph of feminist resistance.

At the regional level, Ghana is a party to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights Signed in 1989, Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People's Rights (PACHPR signed in 2003 and ratified in 2007), the Plan of Action on Ageing, promulgated in Madrid, Spain, in 2002, the African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, among others. The 1992 Constitution – the supreme law of Ghana and subsequent legal provisions are consistent with the demands of international conventions. In line with its international commitments, there are a few laws and policies implemented by different state agencies all aimed at social, economic, and cultural development of the country. These includes Matrimonial Causes Act, 1971 (Act 367); Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694); Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715); Whistle Blowers Act, 2006 (Act 720); Children's Act, 1998, (Act 560); The Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732), among others. Some harmful traditional practices such as widowhood rites and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) have been criminalized under the Criminal Code Amendment Act 1998 (Act 554). In 2007, Parliament further strengthened the punishment for FGM by increasing the maximum penalty to ten years of imprisonment, while also widening the range of persons who can be prosecuted for involvement in an act of FGM. Furthermore, the Domestic Violence Management Board 2008 is a task force at government level in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs). Signing up to these commitments were the first steps by the government to bring attention to forms of abuse and violation previously unrecognized or acknowledged by the Ghanaian society. It also represented the emergence of the partnership between grassroots feminisms and transnational actors, a partnership which accelerated women's advocacy networks and brought gender equality to international prominence.

The 2019 Human Development Report HDR has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) which measures women's empowerment in health, education, and economic status to quantify gender inequality within countries. The report ranks Ghana at 133 out of 183 globally, which is poor for a middle-income country. The 2020 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap (GGG) report positions Ghana at 107 out of 153 countries in terms of gender equality for educational attainment, access to quality healthcare and political freedoms for both men and women. Even though there have been improvements in female education and political empowerment of women, persistent inequalities in resource allocations, decision-making, and political representation adversely limit the progress of gender equality responsiveness in both private and public domains. Societal beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors dictate women be subordinate or inferior, which hinders their participation in decision-making and representation in political and governance positions. Also, competing government priorities, weak conceptual clarification of gender mainstreaming in the public sector, and a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation systems in the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MoGCSP) challenge the implementation of national legal frameworks and international commitments on gender equality. These factors explain, in part, Ghana's loss in rankings in the GGG report, which dropped double from 58 in 2006 to 107 in 2020 (out of 153 countries). Throughout Ghana, and the north in particular, norms around masculinity tend to justify violence and restrictions on women's mobility and ability to own property, normalizing the idea that men should have control over women and girls. These norms also reduce opportunities for women and men to share workloads, even when task shifting and sharing could increase efficiency, productivity, and income. A 2016 report by the United Nations (UN) on women's economic empowerment identified harmful or adverse social norms as the number one constraint to women, and noted this issue as largely responsible for other key constraints such as discriminatory laws and lack of legal protection;

failure to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid household work and care; and lack of access to assets. (UN, 2016)

The right to gender equality and nondiscrimination are set out in Ghana's Constitution and national legal and policy frameworks as well as the international conventions and declarations the Government of Ghana ratified. At the national level, Article 17 of the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution forbids all forms of discrimination based on sex and Clause 17(4) permits affirmative action to end discrimination. However, the constitution does not define sex, sexual orientation, or gender expression, which means Ghanaians definition of discrimination can often be inconsistent with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)'s definition in Article 1 as it does not include direct and indirect discrimination. Ghana has ratified and implemented important international instruments and frameworks in support of gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; CEDAW and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platforms for Action, and the new Protocol to the African Charter on Women's Rights, which entered into effect in 2005. Critical GEWE-related legislative milestones include the criminalization of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), customary or ritual enslavement of any kind, and harmful traditional widowhood practices in the 1994 Amendment Act to the Ghanaian Criminal Code; the Labor Act of 2003, which protects employees from unfair termination of employment, ensures maternity leave for up to 12 weeks (about 3 months). The Domestic Violence Act 732 of 2007, which addresses economic abuse and takes a broader perspective on access to justice. Ghana approved a National Gender Policy in 2015, aiming to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment

concerns into the national development process and promote commitment throughout the government to empowering women. The policy identifies the following commitments for improving the legal, social, political, cultural, and economic conditions of Ghanaians (particularly women, girls, and children): women's rights and access to justice, women's empowerment and livelihoods, accountable governance structures, women's leadership and participation, women's economic justice, and gender roles and relations. Furthermore, a National Social Protection Policy was drafted in 2015, which provides a framework for delivering social protection coherently, effectively, and efficiently in a way that is holistic and targeted for the poor and socially vulnerable. Many of these laws and policies focus on protection and support for women and girls, yet Ghana's policy framework for gender equality, women's empowerment, and social inclusion contains many policies and initiatives that have contributed to Ghana's progress in several MDG and SDG targets. There are significant gaps, however, in policy and action due to a lack of political will and accountability, capacity gaps within public institutions, financial constraints, and an unclear division of labor or responsibility across ministries or levels of government.

Despite these commitments, many women in Ghana are still being subjected to: (1) physical violence – cruel punishment and physical torture, forced labor, beating, hits, kicks, pulls, pushes, slaps, or assault with weapons, death (Adinkrah, 2008); (2) sexual violence – forced sex, rape, gang rape, defilement, sexual harassment, fondling young girls, prostitution, forced homosexuality, nonconsensual sex, indecent sexual exposure, and Female Genital Mutilation [FGM] (Cantalupo et. al., 2006); (3) psychologically injurious behavior representing various element of emotional abuse – threatening behaviors, objectification (disrespect for women, discrimination, favoritism, dehumanization and degrading behaviors), verbal abuse/insults, humiliation/shaming, curses, and communication blackouts (Cantalupo et. al., 2006); (4) socio-economic violence – deprivation, tension between essential needs and

available resources, women's demand for money arising from economic hardship (lack of education, unemployment) often trigger conflicts and/or a rationalization for violence (Issahaku, 2016) ; and (5) traditional and cultural practices defined as violence – Female Genital Mutilation (practiced in the upper regions), stigmatization of widows which could involve widow head shaving - in Dagomba/Islamic funerals, a widow must remain indoors for the first four months of her husband's death (MacGaffey, 2013). Other examples of discrimination faced by women in Ghana include seclusion, dress codes, gender-specific and unfair requirements for prayers/rituals, unrealistic expression of loss, lengthy abstentions from sex ranging from 2 to 6 months, restricted movement including edicts not to work which may be combined with neglect from extended family, conflicts over inheritance of property from the deceased spouse (Adinkra, 2008). Forms of violence against women found in Ghana include witchcraft accusation and witch-burning, widow immolation, forced heterosexuality, forced early marriage and childbearing, rape, and exclusion from the public sphere (Ampofo, 1993). The 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that 58% of ever-married women suffered physical violence, while 42.8% of ever-married women have suffered sexual violence by a current or former husband/partner (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, 2014). Further, of the 161 ever-married women included in the 2008 DHS from the northern region 44.5%, 21.6%, and 2.1% respectively reported emotional, physical, and sexual violence by a current husband/partner (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey, 2014). In response to this problem and its widespread implications, many NGOs have sought to design and implement interventions that address the problems. Examples of those NGO strategies to address discrimination, violence and gender inequality are examined below.

### **NGOs Promoting Gender Equality In Tamale**

NGOs have been actively engaged in gender equality programming and activities within Ghana for more than 50 years. Some of the programming carried out by NGOs is done

independently from government and others are directly linked to government-related programming. Organizations working to curb violent conflicts and gender-based violence in the north acknowledge that women and girls constitute the main victims in instances that primarily involve violence perpetrated by men. In my view as a researcher and an indigene of the city, the high rates of male-instigated violence against women partly explain why gender equality is a priority area for 60 per cent of the NGOs who operate in Tamale and other parts of the north. To track the causes of violence against women, organizations are exploring the intersections between violence and masculinity in a variety of social contexts (Bourgeois, 1996; Messerschmidt, 2018).

Risky behavior and masculine violence which affect the lives of both men and women in social relationships have been linked to men and boys' feelings of disempowerment in the absence of income-generating opportunities necessary to shoulder the unrealistic expectations society places on them. Men may resort to risky behavior and violence against women and other men because that is how they can prove they are still men, in the face of declining livelihoods among those living in communities such as Tamale (Izugbara, 2011) Thanks to the paradigm change in contemporary gender equality programming, a lot of the NGOs operating in the Tamale area have adopted a more comprehensive approach to gender equality programming that focuses on gender relations and development programs that work with both men and women in support of gender equality. In the findings section of this dissertation, the nature of these programs will be explored in greater detail.

During my data collection in northern Ghana, I was able to establish that there were at least 40 major NGOs operating in the northern Ghana, including long-term organizations such as World Vision International, Adventist Development Relief Agency, and bilateral and multilateral donors such as Danish Development Agency, Overseas Development Agency, German Technical Cooperation, European Union. There were also a few indigenous

organizations operating with moderate funding from benevolent international organizations. Close to 20 of the NGOs operate in areas within the suburbs of Tamale, and one common thing about them is their shared designation of gender equality as a priority area. Within NGO programming, efforts to promote gender equality have shifted from ‘targeting women and girls’, and at the time of writing, at least 11 NGOs have gender equality programs which engage men and boys along with women and girls. This shift in priorities is partly due to the realization that solely increasing economic assets for women, without addressing larger inequitable gender norms and structural dimensions that inhibit households from getting out of the poverty trap, may not benefit the outcomes of gender equality initiatives (Gupta et. al., 2014). The NGO program staff have realized the indispensable need to better understand masculinity and to critical assess how perceptions of masculinity and privilege can serve also as constraints for men and boys, and for gender equality.

NGOs are therefore one critical group of actors who complement government efforts to gender equality strategies in the country. In Ghana, and particularly in the north of the country, there is a proliferation of NGOs, CSOs, human rights organizations and women’s rights groups whose innovative strategies are partly responsible for the significant improvement in measures of both gender equality and women’s empowerment in the region. The strategies guiding the operations of the 18 partner organizations studied for this research can be categorized into four broad areas, namely, (1) awareness raising, (2) lobbying and advocacy, (3) community mobilization, activism and networking, and (4) training and capacity building. In the section below, I turn to some of the specific gender equality strategies undertaken in northern Ghana as part of the development community’s commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment. In particular, I examine women’s economic empowerment programming.

With the growing body of evidence showing gender equality as significant to advancing economies and sustainable development (Awumbila, 2006; World Bank, 2019; UN, 2016; Pierotti et. al., 2020), the Ghana government, NGOs, and international development partners are engaged in various programs fundamentally aimed at promoting women's economic empowerment. Women's economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women's rights and enabling them to have control over their lives (Chant, 2006). Investing in women's economic empowerment is one of the surest ways to achieve gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth (Chant, 2006; 2012; 2014). Feminist scholars have long foregrounded the overlap between women's economic empowerment and their agency, with the view that a woman in charge of her economic future is a woman with power over her own life (Asgary & Pagan, 2004; Bradshaw, 2002; Chant, 1999; 2007; 2012; Elder & Schmidt, 2004; Kabeer, 1996; 1997; Chen et. al., 2004). All of the 11 organizations participating in this research have ongoing women's economic empowerment projects targeting five broad areas, namely, (1) financial inclusion of women, (2) promoting women's access to and control over land and other resources, (3) Education and Training (4) promoting female entrepreneurship and dignified work, and (5) integrating women into existing markets. In the sections below, I provide an overview of these programming priorities to document the nature of the NGO activities pertinent to women's economic empowerment programs.

### **Women's Political Empowerment**

Political empowerment of women was another major feature of gender equality programming in the north, and in Ghana more generally. Despite stability and a strong democracy in Ghana, women continue to be under-represented in national and local governance structures. The 275-member 8th Parliament which was inaugurated on the 7th of January 2021 has only 40 women MPs; 20 each from the two major political parties, the National Democratic

Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP). This is 14.5% of the total population of MPs as the men continue to be in the majority. According to 2017 UN Women data, the 13% of women representation in the 7th Parliament [2017-2021] was far below the Africa average of 24% and global average of 23% (Based on women representation in unicameral parliaments or the lower house of parliaments) at the time. In the most recent local government election held in Tamale in August 2016, only 13 women were elected out of the 134 female contestants, representing less than 10% of the seats available at the council. Perceptions and attitudes towards women coupled with traditional and cultural setups, have culminated in low representation of women in leadership positions including the government. It is important to also note that most, if not all, the district planners, coordinating directors, heads of various government institutions in the various assemblies in the region, are also male figures. This gender imbalance in leadership results in decisions that are inconsistent with the current needs and well-being of women and the vulnerable.

### **Women's Access to and Control Over Land and Other Resources**

Gender gaps persist in access to and control over assets, especially land resources, as more than three quarters of women in this study (81 percent) aged 15 to 49 do not own a house, and 78 percent do not own any land, compared to 78 and 67 percent of men, respectively (World Economic Forum, 2020). According to 2020 report by the World Economic Forum (WEF), only 4 percent of women own a house alone and just 8 percent own land alone, trends that appear across demographic and socioeconomic categories (World Economic Forum, 2020). The report suggests that women's and men's ownership of houses increases with education but decreases with age. Since 1985, the government has passed a few laws to restructure inheritance systems (such as, the Intestate Succession Law) and ensure a fair distribution of a deceased person's property, especially to support otherwise excluded spouses and children. When it comes to access to and control over resources, many

women in northern Ghana face discrimination and persistent gender inequalities, with some women experiencing multiple discrimination and exclusion because of factors such as education, ethnicity, religion, and social class (Apusigah, 2009; Higgins, 2012; Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2014; FAO, 2018). In a region where the livelihoods of the rural poor are based on secure and equitable access to and control over land, NGOs and development partners are engaged in various programs fundamentally aimed at promoting women's access to and control over resources.

While Ghanaian women can access and own land through inheritance, marriage, lineage, and contractual agreements, they are not applied consistently across the country, and major gender gaps remain with respect to financial access, as well as ownership and control of economic resources. Social norms opposing women's ownership limit their entitlement to land, despite women accounting for about 70 percent of the total agricultural value chain in Ghana (Apusigah, 2009; Higgins, 2012; FAO, 2018). Women farmers have significantly less access to, control over, and ownership of land and other productive assets compared to their male counterparts, and as a result, there is a gender asset gap which also has adverse consequences on the balance of power between men and women in social relationships. Bridging the gap in access to and control over resources - land, forest, and water resources - was therefore a common goal NGOs in Tamale are working to achieve.

During my data collection in northern Ghana, I was able to establish that there were at least 40 major NGOs operating in the northern Ghana, including long-term organizations such as World Vision International, Adventist Development Relief Agency, and bilateral and multilateral donors such as Danish Development Agency, Overseas Development Agency, German Technical Cooperation, European Union. There were also a few indigenous organizations operating with moderate funding from benevolent international organizations. Close to 20 of the NGOs operate in areas within the suburbs of Tamale, and one common

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### **Financial Inclusion of Women**

During my data collection, I was able to establish that seven out of the 11 organizations engaged in programs that were geared towards including women in the financial system. Three of the seven engaged in the distribution of micro-credit facilities and daily-savings schemes to boost women's access to capital and credit, which are major barriers to women's participation in the economy. Also, 13 of the 20 women I interviewed in the beneficiary communities worked in less-productive activities such as food vending, operating small retail shops, working as hairdressers, dishwashers etc., and earning less than men. Only four women held full-time employment in the public sector. On average, in Tamale, seven in

ten (70%) women are not paid for doing tasks such as cooking, cleaning, babysitting, laundry (which all have market value), compared with about three out of seven (43%) for men (Alnaa, 2017). As a result, among currently married women who earn income, a vast majority earn less than their husbands (Alnaa, 2017). Self-employed women often lack adequate finances and assets to expand their working capital and skills in entrepreneurship and business management to grow their businesses, which leads to vulnerability in their employment.

Five organizations were engaged in training women in various technical and vocational skills to increase their chances of attracting paid employment. The training regimes were strategically designed to lead to better paid work, and reverse the concentration of women in low-wage and low-skill work. Some of the women vocational training projects were also designed to challenge the gender stereotypes that reinforce occupational segregation between women and men. The other two organizations were engaged in helping to advance the careers of young female professionals, most of whom are unemployed college and university graduates. One organization had a project to integrate women small-holder farmers in value chains and ensure that they receive their fair share of profit.

### **Education and Training**

Educating girls is one of the most powerful tools NGOs in the north have adopted to promote women's empowerment. It is through education that women and girls are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence they need to seek out economic opportunities. Women and girls are equipped with vital financial skills to build their businesses by providing them with training in savings, loans, and financial literacy. Four of the 11 organizations had programs which covered tuition fees and provided financial incentives for girls to attend school. This approach has proven to be effective for increasing girls' school

enrolment and completion rates. Other key measures included building schools close to remote communities, ensuring that schools have quality teachers – both female and male – and adequate sanitary facilities, and that they are safe places for girls. Increasing women’s and girls’ educational attainment contributes to women’s economic empowerment and more inclusive economic growth. Education, upskilling, and re-skilling over the life course – especially to keep pace with rapid technological and digital transformations affecting jobs— are critical for women’s and girl’s health and wellbeing, as well as their income-generation opportunities and participation in the formal labor market.

### **Focus on Women’s Reproductive Health**

Gender Equality programming in the north is focused on three broad areas, namely, (1) promoting women’s reproductive health, (2) preventing gender-based violence/violence against women, and (3) Socio-economic and political empowerment of women. Each of the 17 partner organizations have a GE project targeting at least one of these three thematic areas. For instance, 12 of the 17 organizations have programs that promote maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH), partly in response to the persistent increase in maternal and child mortality rates across the five administrative regions of the north. A 2019 report by the Ghana Statistical Service highlights the fact that maternal mortality in Ghana remains high, and is the second largest cause of female deaths in the country, with hemorrhage the largest single cause of maternal deaths. According to the report, less than one in two women in Ghana receive all three maternity care components (antenatal care, delivery care, and postnatal care) from a skilled provider (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). The situation is even worse in the five regions of the north, where many rural communities still lack basic health facilities like a clinic, ambulance, or professionally trained health personnel (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). Communities narrate horrible stories of how they had to transport pregnant women in labor on bicycles and in donkey carts because the nearest health facility is more than 10 miles

away. This has caused the unfortunate death of many women and their unborn children. The GSS report says 57% of women aged 15 to 49 reported having at least one problem in accessing prenatal and postnatal health care, with lack of money for treatment accounting for 48% of the cases (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019).

While Ghana has made significant strides in ensuring that national policies and actions on maternal and newborn health are strategically aligned to international and regional targets, significant gaps remain around ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health. Ghana has several interventions targeting the reduction of maternal mortality, notable among which is the 2003 user fee exemption policy for pregnant women. This policy exempts all pregnant women from paying for delivery costs at public, mission, and private health facilities. Several high-level initiatives have been launched in Ghana to enhance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, including the Making Pregnancy Safer Initiative, and the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA). The Ghana government and its development partners also launched the Community-based Health Planning and Service (CHPS) compound project, a national health strategy to deliver essential community -based health services involving health planning and service delivery with the communities. Its primary focus is communities in deprived sub-districts and bringing health services close to the communities.

Despite these considerable investments, high maternal and infant mortality remain a major development challenge and a priority for the government and NGOs, particularly in the north which has the country's highest concentration of poverty. Apart from the inadequate availability of health facilities, some respondents in this research identified outdated myths and stigma of not being able to give birth at home as factors that often discourage some rural women from accessing health facilities. In the north, and particularly among rural dwellers, women are more likely to have a homebirth because it is often considered an act of feminine

bravery, which is highly appreciated and valued in the circle of women. In a region where polygamous rivalry is quite common, the fear of being seen as weak or 'not up to it' by other women sometimes discourage pregnant women from frequenting the available health facilities until it is too late.

### **The Dagbon Kingdom, its People and Culture**

Tamale is the business capital of the Dagbon Kingdom which originated from ancient Mali through marriages, wars, usurpation of power, and migration (Cardinal, 1920; 21; Rattray, 1931; Staniland, 1975; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). Dagbon was founded in 1403 by King Sitobu when the ancient Gbewaa Kingdom broke up to form the kingdoms of Mamprugu, Dagbon, and Nanung, all major traditional areas of the north. These three Dagomba states are traditionally linked and culturally similar, but Dagbon stands apart from the others in its origin in the conquest of the indigenes and the extermination of their leaders; it is also larger and more centralized. The founder of the modern Kingdom, Naa Nyagse, is said to have conquered the indigenous people, whose only leaders were earth priests (*Tindaanba/Tindana* for singular). The secular leadership of chiefs was set up to replace the immemorial institution of a ruler who was the high priest of a totemic clan who had no interest in centralizing power and dealt only in spiritual sanctions. The indigenous practice of matrilineal descent was deemed to be primitive by the newcomers, who took steps to replace it with the patrilineal principles and descent that was practiced by the invaders. The strangers thus set themselves up to become elements of a new, hierarchical, and military political system, the Nam (Heusch, 1982).

The conquered disappears from the narrative at this point, and it remains unclear about who in Dagbon today makes up this indigenous element of the population. The most characteristic feature of the Dagomba is their reverence for bravery, militancy, and honor.

The history of Dagbon as transmitted through oral tradition and recited by griot praise-singers (plural *Lunsi*, singular *Lunga* for both male and female) is dominated by a struggle for Nam (the traditional office of power) by princes (descendants of the founders), and the violent exploits that characterize their succession disputes (McGaffey, 2006; 2010; 2011; 2013). The oral accounts (received history) and the literature produced from them by colonial and contemporary anthropology are laden with tales of bravery, violence, and aggression of rulers and princes. Many Dagomba perceive physicality and combat to be innate in their culture by virtue of their warrior ancestors, whose “hot blood,” they say, still runs through their veins. This narrative, even with its questionable sources, constitutes the foundation upon which the legitimacy of traditional and cultural practices is constructed. Yet, the story is reductive in three crucial ways: firstly, it tells the stories of bravery and heroics of elite political actors competing for power but does not offer any details about the social dynamics of the subaltern/indigenous population, unless they are materially connected to the story of one king or the other. Secondly, the narrative offers gender-blind accounts of history that willfully ignore, neglect or gloss over the role and influence of women and feminism, especially when it comes to accounts of culture and tradition, and thirdly, it deliberately erases or stereotypes the egalitarian and mostly feminine traditions that preceded the modern Kingdom, an omission which emboldens the conservative elements among the population to valorize aggressive masculinities as traditional, while simultaneously devaluing alternative masculinities and social equitable conditions like gender equality as ‘alien’ or Western inspired.

The third point is one of the core arguments to be advanced in this dissertation, problematizing the culture of aggressive masculinities as an impediment to gender equality initiatives, and underlying the socio-economic and political unrests that have plagued Tamale, the Dagbon kingdom and much of the north since Ghana’s independence in 1957.

The Dagbon cultural tradition favors hypermasculinity and the Kingdom's history unnecessarily focuses on the aggressive capacities of chiefs (Kirby, 2003; McGaffey, 2013). A survey by the anthropologist John Kirby (2003), in which members of different ethnic groups were asked to respond to certain proverbs, showed that Dagomba were more inclined to use aggressive phrases.

### **Epistemological Inquisition**

Feminist epistemologists and Stand-Point theorists have long decried and challenged dominant conceptions and practices of knowledge attribution, acquisition, and justification that disadvantage women and other subordinated groups. They specifically argue that dominant knowledge practices disadvantage women by (1) excluding them from inquiry, (2) denying them epistemic authority, (3) denigrating "feminine" cognitive styles, (4) producing theories of women that represent them as inferior, or significant only in the ways they serve male interests, (5) producing theories of social phenomena that render women's activities and interests, or gendered power relations, invisible, and (6) producing knowledge that is not inclusive of people in subordinate positions, or that reinforces patriarchal gender norms or other forms of social hierarchies (Nielsen, 1990; Code, 1991; Bergin, 2002; Solomon, 2011; Mason, 2011; Philhaus, 2011). The case of Dagbon, as documented in this research, demonstrates that male-dominated oral transmission (through praise-singers) and male-dominated colonial anthropology are consistent in the uncritical upholding of patriarchal values as sacrosanct to African culture and tradition. Feminist epistemologists blame these failures on flawed conceptions of knowledge, the social dynamics of knowers and methodological objectivity. To mitigate this epistemological challenge, a diverse range of suggestions have been recommended, not just to show how gender values and perspectives have shaped social transformations, but to also promote theories and methodologies that lend themselves to egalitarian and liberation movements such as feminism and promotion of

gender equality (Nicholson, 1990; Shapin, 1994; Harding, 19989; Ruetsche, 2004; Tobin et. al, 2013).

It is worth pointing out that hegemonic concepts such as patriarchy, polygamy, hegemonic masculinity, exclusive patrilineality, among others, were once external concepts to the population that constitute present day Dagbon Kingdom. Patrilineality and hyper-patriarchy were introduced through colonialism (specifically the Dagbon colonization in 1403) and orientalism. When understood as transient, fluid, nonhomogeneous, and bound by time and space, culture can become a powerful social tool with transformative potential that can be harnessed to empower men and boys to unpack and unlearn internalized misogyny, hegemonic norms, myths, and stereotypes that reinforce the self-destructive patriarchal values (Everitt-Penhale & Ratele, 2015) - the source of tension and complications in the lives of some adult Dagomba men. The study examines the perceptions about gender equality and performance of masculinities by Dagomba men. Dagbon is one of Ghana's oldest, richest, and most resilient traditional areas which dates to the early 15th century. As noted earlier, Dagombas claim descent from warrior ancestry and pride aggressive/militarized masculinities as the most desirable quality for men. This condition is worsened by constant struggles and competition to assume the Nam (traditional power) or local political power. Much of the conflicts in Dagbon today stem from the traditional acceptance of aggression or violence as a legitimate means to win power. Dagbon and Tamale have a reputation for violence because of a succession dispute between two branches of the royal family, the Abudus and the Andanis, which continue to plague the kingdom since 1948. It has often sparked social unrest, sometimes with violence of high proportions.

The fragility of security and inadequacy of law enforcement in the inner communities and villages heightens the insecurity, creating the need for households and communities to make private security arrangements and maintain alertness by way of keeping combat-ready

or abled young men (*nachimba*, also *bidibsi* in Dagbani) who can be rallied should the need arise to defend attacks from perceived enemies or to defend territorial integrity. The region's history of slave raiding may have contributed to the culture of preparedness and warrior/militia training. Dagomba were occasionally subject to slave raids from the North and East, and were also required to send slaves to the South as part of tributaries to the Asante King (Der, 1998). Der (1998) estimates that between 1732 and 1897 at least half a million people were sold into slavery from Northern Ghana, resulting in "depopulation, devastation, insecurity and loss of life and property" (p. 32). The legacy of this trauma must surely have a role to play in the culture of insecurity and mistrust, making it imperative for individuals and communities to be alert constantly, and be ready to act in self-defense. As such, hyper masculinity, aggressiveness and violent behaviors that are ordinarily considered unacceptable in free and democratic societies or behaviors unacceptable in times of peace, are glorified in Dagbon. Boys in traditional Dagomba households are traditionally trained to be fearless, aggressive, competitive, and above all productive, the last being the most essential because boys are also expected to become responsible adult men, which is defined by a successful completion of heteronormative marriage. Getting married to a woman, starting one's own nuclear family, and being prepared to protect them from harm, is a symbolic ritual that boys must pass through to signify a successful transition to adulthood and manhood, at which stage they must also take up the role of provider or 'breadwinner.'

### **Tamale in Historical Context**

The history of Tamale dates to 1907 when the British colonial government created it out of a cluster of indigenous villages to be their military and administrative capital of the northern Territories (McGaffey, 2013). By 1909, Tamale had ceased to be a cluster of villages and had become a town inhabited by its indigenous owners but also by Hausa and Mamprusi ex-soldiers from the north, Yorubas from Nigeria, British officers, and their southern

employees (Staniland, 1975). The city continued to expand in the 1920 as the British strengthened their administrative control and made efforts to commercialize agricultural production. During World War II, from 1940 to 1945, British resources were stretched to the limit while indigenous agitation against colonial despotism increased (Staniland, 1975). Around these periods, the calls for independence and self-rule also grew stronger as the colonial grip on the country loosened, culminating in the British abandoning their Tamale transformation agenda. They had no more time to implement most of the planned modern reforms, leaving the area and its inhabitants stuck in the time past. In this sense, the extreme poverty situation of Tamale and the rest of the north is in fact a ghost of the region's colonial past.

Tamale is the site of the largest concentration of population in the north, and the major population center of the traditional kingdom of Dagbon whose gender norms, specifically masculine culture, is the most central subject of this study. Its geographical area is about 750 kilometers (about 466.03 mi) square, and its economy is agrarian agriculture with most of the population having no elementary or basic education. Tamale is home to about 38% of the region's population of 2.5 million (Census data, 2021). Within this population of the capital, 53% are females and the rest males. Most people in the capital are Muslims because of the precolonial Hausa influence; they practice polygamous system of marriage, and households tend to have large family size. The Dagomba are the dominant tribe in Tamale, but there are other tribes like Gonja, Mamprusi, Konkomba, Hausa, Dagarti, and Grusi. Socially engineered colonial development policies, such as the making of northern Ghana a source of cheap labor for natural resource exploitation and cash crop farming in southern Ghana, structurally underdeveloped the northern regions of Ghana vis-a-vis the southern regions (Brukum, 1999; Dickson, 1968; Ewusi, 1976, Songsore, 1979, 1983). The colonial authorities' concept of headmen helped maintain northern ethnic group

consciousness and traditionalism in the maelstrom of social change (Lentz, 1994, 1995). A conspicuous form of disparity, in terms of socioeconomic development, social welfare and mobility, and overall quality of life, manifests itself in a North-South dichotomy (Bening, 1972).

Despite its challenges, Tamale is regarded as one of the fastest growing cities in West Africa, according to the city's officials. About 20 years ago when I first arrived in Tamale from Libga, the city was still a small town at best. Foreign manufactured goods and technical services were uncommon in the city; existing in the city were only basic living standards of an agrarian population. For instance, the kind of tools one could buy in Tamale at the time were shoddy in the extreme rudimentary and agrarian (e.g., household tools like torch lights; farm implements, blacksmith goods). Even in modern times, trades like blacksmiths and butchers are traditionally associated with specific family lines. The product line and economic role of these native local industries changed significantly in the 1970s. Between 1966 and 1986 a series of military coups, the disastrous policies associated with them, the vagaries of international markets, the misguided policies of the International Monetary Fund, and a drought in the mid-1970s combined to destroy the local and national economy (Chazan, 1983; Herbst 1993). By the early 1970s, there was no foreign exchange with which to buy manufactured imports, especially automobiles and their spare parts.

Today, there are more hardware stores selling 'original' tools of reasonable quality. Manufactured buckets and cooking pots now compete with locally made ones. Going back to Tamale in 2015 after a decade away, I was struck by the amount of "development" that had taken place since I left the city in 2005: more roads, more traffic, more fuel stations; more banks; more and better hotels, more and larger private homes; a greater variety of goods for sale in more businesses; more churches, more mosques, and more religiously-oriented schools. Glass facades and brightly colored roofs now challenge the concrete buildings and

shiny aluminum that were “modern” when I lived there a decade ago. Upon my return to Tamale in 2019 to carry out the research for this dissertation, additional changes were notable. A new multi-million-dollar overhead bridge (first of its kind in the north) was under construction to ease road congestion in the central business area. There were more radio and TV stations, more business, and more taste for foreign consumer goods which were now easily available in the market.

Yet the unemployment rate remains high among the indigenous local population. In some primary schools, the children write their exercises on the floor for lack of furniture; the center of town is clean, but some suburbs are increasingly sordid, despite the efforts of householders to maintain small areas of cleanliness around themselves. The water supply is increasingly erratic and, in some areas, undrinkable; electricity is unpredictable; there are more buildings at the recently re-built Teaching Hospital and the University for Development Studies (UDS), but the hospital is not staffed, a situation often compounded by gravely deficient technical facilities. But the most challenging of the city’s problems is its violence problem, which many experts attribute to the persistent poverty and unemployment that have bedeviled the city since colonization and after Ghana’s independence. The city’s unemployed youth, especially young men, have become desperate to survive, thereby making them vulnerable to so called “big men” and “political contractors” who often recruit them from their “ghettoes” or “benches” to perpetuate violence during electioneering campaigns or chieftaincy succession disputes. (McGaffey, 2008)

The region is also highly impacted by ethnic conflict. In 1994 when I was about 10 years old, there was one of such ethnic wars between the Dagombas and one of the acephalous tribes, the Konkomba's, a bloodbath which lasted more than five full moons before government forces intervened to stop further bloodshed. The fight never reached my village itself because it was in the inner part of the Kingdom, but some of my extended

family members in the villages near Yendi (the traditional seat of our King) were killed in attacks on their villages by Konkomba fighters, while others were displaced and were forced to seek refuge in my village and other places that were not under attack by the rival fighters. In instances like these, every household in every Dagbon village would be required to contribute 'brave men' to defend their villages against potential Konkomba incursions, and where possible, launch retaliatory attacks on enemy villages. According to a government report on the war, more than 20,000 people were killed, and another 10,000 wounded from both sides. Farmlands and livestock worth millions of Ghana Cedis were also destroyed in the violence, leaving the region with a credible threat of hunger and starvation.

In March 2001, when I was in Grade 10, a similar violent conflict broke out in Yendi - the traditional capital of the Dagbon Kingdom - this time involving age-long succession dispute between the two royal gates of the Kingdom, the Abudu Gate, and the Andani Gate (MacGaffey, 2008; MacGaffey, 2011, MacGaffey, 2013; Brukum, 1999). The palace was attacked by a gun-wielding mob loyal to a rival claimant of the Skin. In what was an action-movie-like gun battle lasting 72 hours (about 3 days), our king, the Yaa-Naa Yakubu Andani II, was gruesomely murdered along with 40 of his elders. His head was severed and paraded on the principal streets of the town, amidst jubilations and celebrations by supporters of his rival Prince (MacGaffey, 2008; MacGaffey, 2011, MacGaffey, 2013). His murder triggered reprisal attacks, and degenerated into a violent confrontation in Tamale and all Dagomba towns and villages in the north. Royally affiliated families, clans, their sympathizers and ordinary Dagombas took sides in the ensuing violence which nearly escalated the situation into another full-blown intra-ethnic civil war. Tamale and all the Dagomba-inhabited towns and villages in the north were placed under a State of Emergency and a dawn-to-dusk curfew was imposed in the area by the government with thousands of forces, dressed in full combat gear, deployed to keep the fragile peace. Despite the curfew and security reinforcement,

Dagbon remained under constant threat of war, with spokespersons of the feuding factions constantly using the media to beat war drums, threatening to use violence and force if the government failed to deliver justice in their favor. The succession crisis in Yendi (seat of the Monarch) is the main source of social tensions in present day Tamale, but actual violence is entirely limited to the periods before, during and after elections. The two elections that followed the King's assassination - the 2004 and 2008 general elections - were particularly violent, with so-called "youth clubs" sprouting all over the city, allied with one or other party. Political youth groups in Tamale are called "fun clubs," an expression that means both fun and "fan club" and implies that they are usually funded by political leaders. Most youth clubs in Tamale are not explicitly political. However, there were other intra-party factions implicitly supporting either the Abudus or the Andanis in the chieftaincy feud. Supporters of the NDC (which identifies as a revolutionary/mass/social democratic party) included the "Aluta Boys" and the "Azorka Boys," whereas the "Kandahar Boys" and "Chairman Adoo Boys" were for the NPP (which was the incumbent party in the 2004 elections). The Azorka Boys take their name from their mentor, Awudu Sofo Azorka, a dealer in petroleum products, who is not wealthy but has supported and influenced many young men in Tamale. During the elections in January 2008, a campaign visit by the NPP vice-presidential candidate prompted the Aluta Boys to set up an illegal roadblock at which they checked vehicles for the political allegiance of their occupants, damaging and even setting fire to cars and motorcycles of those they regarded as opponents (Ghana News Agency, 2008; Mcgaffey, 2011). Four days after the election, and before the results were declared, a combined team of Azorka and Aluta Boys, heavily armed, invaded the offices of Metro Mass Transit (a public bus company) and demanded the keys to the buses. They said that because their party (the NDC) had won the election the company was now their property. They came with a list of drivers, conductors,

and mechanics they wanted fired on the grounds that they did not support the NDC (The Statesman, 9 January 2008)

On 5 January 2009, an NDC mob broke many windows in the Central Mosque, which is popularly thought to be allied with the Abudus and therefore with the NPP. The other principal Friday Mosque is Andani and NDC. The NDC foot soldiers also damaged houses, looted property, burned vehicles and exchanged gunfire with their opponents (MyJoyOnline.com 1 April 2008). I was an active news reporter at Radio Justice in Tamale during this time. I was also the host of the morning discussions which allowed listeners to call into the live discussion to comment on news and current affairs. The following morning on 13th February 2009, a youth activist of the NPP called in to the program to complain about the actions of their rivals. He ended up making a controversial comment which provoked insults and violent threats to the caller and me as the host of the program. Meanwhile the two parties again carried their dispute from the radio to the center of town, where seven houses were burned (Daily Guide, 26 January 2009; Daily Guide, 1 February 2009). The party “foot soldier” who made the unsavory comment fled the city immediately. I was taken into custody by the police despite protests by my colleagues at the Ghana Journalists Association, describing my arrest as intimidation of the media which was too common in Tamale at the time, with politicians looking for means to deflect public attention from the security failures. The acting northern regional secretary of the NPP (now in opposition) was severely beaten and his house burned down after he expressed on the air his party’s opinion of yet more violence perpetrated in Changli by the Aluta Boys. In March, the regional minister’s offer of amnesty and a cash reward for turning in weapons ended after a month without eliciting a single response. These examples highlight the tensions and violence that persist and which are deeply rooted in the historical and contemporary violent masculinist culture in the region.

In addition to Tamale's past violent history and ethnic and political tensions, it remains a region with low levels of education. Tamale regularly performs poorly at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) which determines Ghanaian students' progress to senior high school. In 2004, the metropolis ranked 60th in the country in BECE scores; by 2010 its place had declined to 89th. (GNA, Jan.13 2011). One must look back to some of the colonial policies to help to explain why Tamale and the rest of the region lag over the rest of the country. Because of the desire of the colonial government to make Tamale a manual labor reserve for the resource-rich south, there was no interest in starting formal education in the north until in 1908, almost hundred years after the first school was started down south in Cape Coast and less than 50 years before independence. When formal education started in Tamale, there were only a few job opportunities available to educated people, so parents naturally objected to sending their children to school. In contemporary times, the absence of employment for educated people is creating a similar apathy towards formal education in the sense that as people have lost trust in education to change their social or economic class. The consequence of this deplorable colonial policy is a huge uneducated population in the region even in modern times, partly contributing to the city's unemployment situation. In sum, the discriminatory colonial policy against the north underlies the concentration of poverty and protracted conflicts in the area.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In conclusion, Ghana has made significant progress in the past 50 years with local and international commitments to promote gender equality. Multiple international conventions, protocols and treaties have been signed including the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality and the Sustainable development Goals (SDG5) which commit governments to accelerate efforts to achieve gender equality by 2030.

The right to gender equality and nondiscrimination are set out in Ghana's Constitution and national legal and policy frameworks. The Ghanaian Constitution forbids all forms of discrimination based on sex. Despite these commitments, many women in Ghana are still being subjected to discrimination, abuse, and physical violence. NGOs have been actively engaged in gender equality programming and activities within Ghana for more than 50 years. Some of the programming carried out by NGOs is done independently from the government and others are directly linked to government-related programming. Organizations working to curb violent conflicts and gender-based violence in the north acknowledge that women and girls constitute the main victims in instances that primarily involve violence perpetrated by men. This explains why gender equality is a priority for the NGOs in the north.

We have also learned that history, as told in Tamale and the Dagbon Kingdom essentializes bravery and heroics of elite political actors competing for power, but offers no details about the social dynamics of the subaltern/indigenous population, who were materially connected to the story of one king or the other. The history is gender-blind, and willfully ignores, neglects or glosses over the role and influence of women and feminism, especially when it comes to accounts of culture and tradition. The culture of aggressive masculinities has been problematized as an impediment to gender equality initiatives and being the underlying factor behind the socio-economic and political unrests that have plagued Tamale, the Dagbon kingdom and much of the north since Ghana's independence in 1957. The Dagbon cultural tradition favors hypermasculinity as most desirable and culturally appropriate. Finally, this chapter argues that concepts such as patriarchy, polygamy, hegemonic masculinity, exclusive patrilineality, among others, were once external to the population that constitute present day Dagbon Kingdom. Patrilineality and hyper-patriarchy were introduced through colonialism and orientalism. When understood as transient, fluid, nonhomogeneous, and bound by time and space, culture can become a powerful social tool

with transformative potential that can be harnessed to empower men and boys to unpack and unlearn internalized patriarchal values.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Chapter Introduction**

The study was further inspired and influenced by feminist methodologies and epistemologies, as well as feminist standpoint theory. Feminist epistemologists blame epistemological failures on flawed conceptions of knowledge, the social dynamics of knowers and methodological objectivity. To mitigate this epistemological challenge, a diverse range of suggestions have been recommended, not just to show how gender values and perspectives have shaped social transformations, but to also promote theories and methodologies that lend themselves to egalitarian and liberation movements such as feminism and promotion of gender equality (Nicholson, 1990; Shapin, 1994; Harding, 1989; Ruetsche, 2004; Tobin, 2013).

Guided by African feminists' conversation on epistemology, methodology, and constitution of knowledge, my research acknowledges the dual voices of both the researcher and the participants in the production of local-level knowledge on masculinities and domestic violence. Against this background, this study paid critical attention to how I may have influenced the readiness and willingness of the respondents as a local researcher and cultural participant. The complexity of imagining the claims of knowledge, especially in an African context has been a major source of deliberation in challenging the hegemony of knowledge which has been dominated by mostly western writers until recent decades. Notwithstanding this, there has been an exponential growth of scholarship that gives further boost to the constitution of relevant knowledge often drawing attention to issues of intersectionality. Bennett's (2008) writing has been critical on the question of imagining a 'field' and 'home' as an African researcher to generate relevant empirical data. Bennett argues that knowledge production and representation through empirical research in Africa must embrace and respect differences as what is counted as valid knowledge is complex and not straightforward. One

basic argument in Bennett's (2008) work has been that research within Africa must take seriously the positionality of the African researcher as part of broader methodological design. The ability of an African researcher to engage in self-reflexivity is critically essential in the process of knowledge production and sharing (Bennett, 2008).

The research was designed to be exploratory in nature and used qualitative research methods that focus on highlighting the context specific, socially constructed and fluid nature of masculinities, and how this phenomenon interacts with under-development, poverty, and violence as it is in Tamale. The validity of its findings is not based on quantification of the value of engaging men and boys. Neither does it seek to represent data in numerically measurable terms. Rather, it gathers information in narrative forms "to describe or understand people and events in their natural setting" (Manheim et al., 2008: 429). My choice of a qualitative methodology was also influenced by the value that it offers in terms of gaining in-depth insights into the social world and realities of respondents through close interaction, observation, and dialogue. In that regard, gaining access and capturing participants' own world through their stories, behaviors, discourses, descriptions, feelings, and words; either spoken or gestured can only be maximized through a qualitative methodological framework (Bryman, 2004; Taylor & Bodgan, 1984). By engaging participants qualitatively, they are offered some power and agency to reflect upon and engage with their own views, feelings, beliefs, norms. This study also draws insights from dominant conversations on qualitative research as a form of social inquiry. Especially, the work of Whitehead (2005) stresses the importance of qualitative research which forms part of a broader field of social inquiry. The author reasons that using a qualitative methodology enables a researcher to gain a better "understanding of the cultural system and context in which one is studying." Whitehead (2005: 4) further notes that qualitative research as a form of social inquiry excavates in greater depth valuable insights, and nuances about the "socio-cultural contexts, processes,

and meanings within cultural systems". Furthermore, Wood (2013: 22) suggests that qualitative research involves the "exploration and analysis of people's values, norms and perspectives" and the manners in which such perspectival values and norms influence specific behavioral reactions to social phenomenon. Wood further argues that interacting with the range of voices among social actors encourages "consideration of the ways in which people make decisions and participate in social action" (Wood, 2013:22). Qualitative methods thus help to provide a thorough portrait of gender perceptions and practices, and the context in which NGOs in Tamale engage men and boys to promote gender equality or reduce the gender-based violence within the city.

### **Recruiting Study Participants**

The recruitment of research participants was largely limited to those who have participated or are participating in one or more gender equality initiatives being implemented by the partner organisations in this study. I worked closely with program officers to identify potential respondents in communities and project sites. Individual respondents were then approached directly and recruited based on their willingness to participate. Participants were selected through a combination of two methods: purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was used to identify the partner NGOs and project staff for this study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sample and only selected based on characteristics and objective of the study. Since there are only about 10 NGOs in Tamale whose gender equality initiatives explicitly engage men and boys, I used purposive sampling to select four out of the ten NGOs whose program content and implementation were materially relevant to the objectives of this study. The researcher then used snowball sampling to identify respondents. Semi-formal interviews, in-depth discussions, life profiling and focus group discussions were the main methods of data collection the study utilized. The interview

questions were designed to explore individual perspectives from project staff who design and implement gender equality projects that also include men and boys.

Interviews provided the comfort necessary to allow the researcher to dig deeper into the personal lives of men and boys for purposes of unraveling their inclinations, history, and motivations on gender equality initiatives. This approach is heavily inspired by the ‘listening’ methodology developed by Anderson, Brown & Jean (2012). This inductive approach assumes that creating an unstructured, ample space through which to listen to individuals and groups of beneficiaries of aid – in this case gender equality programs in Tamale – allows for a variety of issues and experiences to emerge, which may not have otherwise been accounted for in more prescriptive methods such as structured interviews. My previous experience applying this method during my MA thesis fieldwork in the north of Ghana confirms that this method is most suitable to explore the topic of gender equality programming. Crucially, this approach empowers participants to self-select the issues they wish to share, thus avoiding potential ethical questions of coercion and mitigating researcher bias. Building trust with these respondents was significantly helped by my cultural knowledge as a Dagomba man. As a cultural insider, my fluency in the Dagbani dialect allowed participants to use the language to express themselves when telling jokes or when an English word is not readily available to the respondent.

### **Data Collection**

As noted in the introduction, the data collection for this study was segmented into two phases, Phase I and Phase II. Phase I was targeted at deconstructing masculinity as defined or understood by study participants, identifying the masculinity ideals that exist among them, and understanding the factors that shape people's perception about masculinity, feminism and feminist intervention initiatives that promote gender equality. Three different qualitative

techniques were deployed in this phase, namely key Informant Interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and life histories (LHs). About 23 men and 14 women (selected from the original pool of 58 respondents) took part in the key informant interviews and focus group discussions. All the interviews and six focus group discussion sessions, averaging 5 respondents in each group, 21 of which were conducted between July 2019 and December 2019 during my field trip to Tamale, Ghana. The COVID-19 pandemic prevented me from traveling back to my research field, meaning the other 16 interviews and follow-ups for the life histories sessions were held via video calls on the social media platforms what's app Zoom, and google hangout.

The interviews and group lasted for about 2 hours each (across multiple sittings), it is important to highlight that separate group discussions were held for male and female participants. Thirteen (11) life histories (LHs) were conducted to dig deeper into the seven men and five women purposely selected from the pool of 37 key informant interviews. The life history sessions also have two parts, A and B. Section A presents a detailed biodata of the respondent aimed at revealing his or her identities and background of the speaker, setting the context to better position and analyze their perspectives on gender equality, feminist, and feminist intervention programs. Section B is a 'Q and A' session between the researcher and the informant which would be presented in the form of a discourse. The participants were asked questions that explored perceptions about masculinity, investigated the nature of men/boys' participation in gender equality, and to better understand the socio-economic contexts that underpin their participation. In all, 30 men and 28 women were interviewed, bringing the total number of interviews to 58, with the other eight being gender equality program officers from the four NGOs.

Phase II of this data collection focused on a descriptive analysis of gender equality initiatives that have been completed or near completion. Five such initiatives were studied,

and seven project implementation staff were purposely selected from the partner NGOs. They were selected for their knowledge and first-hand experience, as well as their expertise in the subject area. In addition to conducting primary research considered previous research and pertinent literature dealing with masculinities and gender equality programming, highlighting the knowledge gaps. The review of literature built on knowledge I obtained especially pertaining to masculinities in Tamale having lived there for over ten years before moving to Canada in 2011. During this time, I familiarized myself with current and historic discourses on masculinity, scholarship and theories pertaining to my research. This information combined with previous experience conducting my MA research in the region will be helpful in guiding me to identify gaps in the literature and to shape and construct my understanding of the data.

### **Semi-Structured and In-depth Interviews**

The data analyzed in this study was collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews. A total of 58 in-depth interviews were conducted in English or Dagbani over the course of four months of fieldwork. With the consent of participants, interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Each of these interviews took between 1-2 hours. Over the course of four months, starting in April 2020, follow-up interviews were conducted virtually with the help of online tools such as Google hangouts, Zoom and WhatsApp calls, which was not difficult for most participants. Each participant was interviewed at least once, and no more than three times. With regards to the project implementation staff, there were follow-up interviews focusing on understanding organizational decision-making and culture towards gender equality initiatives within the organization and beneficiary communities. For the participants in Phase I, the follow up interviews were focused on digging deeper into their life histories to profile them, and

unravel or understand the personal circumstances or contexts that underpin their views or perceptions on feminist intervention programs promoting gender equality.

Due to the personal and sensitive nature of research related to gender identity, I found it beneficial to develop a trusting relationship with fewer participants (i.e., 58) rather than engaging in a greater number of less personal interviews. I endeavored for my interviews to be a “collaborative moment of making knowledge” (DeVault & Gross, 2007: 181) rather than a mechanistic question-answer session. Therefore, to achieve this ‘collaborative moment of making knowledge, trust, rapport, and familiarity was imperative. Moreover, I was interested in understanding the lived experiences of participants and getting at their “subjective” understanding. Furthermore, this study is not meant to make generalizations to a larger population or to test any hypothesis. The study favored depth rather than breadth in the sample. This data collection method combined the benefits of an unstructured open-ended interview with the directionality of a questionnaire to produce focused qualitative data (Schensul & Schensul, 1999). This format allowed for open-ended questions to evolve over the interview process. As Miller & Salkind (2002) confirm, “open-ended questions are appropriate and powerful under conditions that require probing of attitude and reaction formations and ascertaining information that is interlocked in a social system or personality structure” (p. 3). Furthermore, being cognizant of the fact that every open-ended question will take an undetermined amount of time, the semi-structured design allowed me the flexibility to tailor questions to ensure interviews stayed on point and within the given period. This also facilitated a deeply ethnographic approach by according the leeway to probe at emerging themes throughout the interviews. I also made several methodological decisions intended to mitigate whatever limitations my identity, as both insider and outsider, may impose.

## **Focus Group Discussions**

A total of six focus group discussion sessions were held. Each of the discussions featured five respondents, conducted between July 2019 and December 2019 during my field trip to Tamale, Ghana. The first four sessions were all-male respondents and the other two discussions exclusively featured women. The objective was to introduce the research to a small group of people who met the original participation criteria and get a collective social background and experiences that influence the way both men and women perceive gender equality. The FGDs were used partly as a source of collecting data and partly as a snowball-style recruitment tool to help identify further research participants. The FGDs also afforded me the opportunity to become familiar with and refine some of the concepts and terminology central to the research, such as gender, feminist approaches and 'NGO operations. The FGDs enabled me to make sense of how these concepts were understood by some members of the community and provided some initial insight into how gendered daily lives were lived and expressed. To ensure that the broadest diversity of groups of men and women were able to participate in FGDs (and eventually LHs), sessions were scheduled on the weekends when particularly younger men, but also working women, would be free from productive work responsibilities and had more personal time.

Also, the limited use of sex segregated FGDs proved to be appropriate for this context as multiple individuals were able to participate at once. Participants were not required to incur any expense with regards to their participation in this study. To avoid potential transportation costs, all interviews were held at participants' primary locations and places that did not require them to incur any transport-related cost. In a situation where a participant incurred any cost relating to her/his participation, I reimbursed such expenses out of pocket. Also, this study was conducted in the time between July and December, which is usually less intense in terms of farm work, because it is the 'dry season' when there is no rainfall.

However, there was a certain limitation with FDGs in the sense that it did not provide the space and privacy suitable to explore the highly unique and often sensitive experiences of using life histories to deeply explore a person's gendered experiences. For this, Life Histories were selected as the most appropriate complementary method which allowed me to zoom in on individual respondents' perceptions and experiences of masculinity.

### **Life Histories**

A total of 11 individual life histories (LH) were held with nine men and four women, to explore the lived experiences of masculinity and gender equality. LH draws from rich anthropological and sociological traditions that began in the sociology department at the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s (Anderson et al., 1987), and later saw a growing number of researchers return to this literature, leading to a 'biographical turn' in the 1980s and 1990s (Chamberlayne et al., 2000; Renders et al., 2016; Rustin, 2002). LH has been applied to explore the lived experiences of trauma effectively and sensitively, as well as agency and the social negotiation of gender roles and identities (Baines & Rosenoff Gauvin, 2014; Baines & Stewart, 2011), all of which are relevant themes for this dissertation. As part of my application of the LH methodology, this study employs the technique of narrative inquiry, which views lives holistically and understands that through narrating their stories, people construct their narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In life histories and narrative inquiry, 'the truth' is personal and subjective, and personal narratives are privileged over fact-checking and corroboration. The interpretations of gender norms and practices reinforce the fact that patriarchal societal norms and patriarchal power structures pervasively permeate women's (and men's) consciousness, behavior, and how people make sense of their lives (Westkott, 1979).

## **Data Sorting and Analytical Framework**

The data recorded in the interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, analyzed, and examined through thematic and narrative analysis. The responses were manually coded along broader themes representing key study concepts that were developed deductively. The themes that emerged from the initial coding were multiple and interrelated. Some of them included (1) participants reflections on incipient and adult masculinities (2) parents specifically train boys to become leaders and ‘breadwinners’ (3) challenges of being a male/female child (4) men’s social responsibilities linked hardship (5) perceptions about aggressive masculinity (6) perceptions around sexual division of labor (7) perceptions about women’s rights (i.e., the right to own property, to do work of their choice, to marry whom they choose, to enjoy the fundamental freedoms that are applicable to your community). There were other themes such as culture and its links to local resistance against gender equality, as well as concerns/reservations about the feminization of foreign aid. I read all the transcripts and identified an initial set of codes for each theme. The thematic analysis involved a process of coding to create established, meaningful patterns of themes. The data is further sorted to identify key, words or phrases. This process involved reading and re-reading the interviews multiple times until tags become apparent. Next, these tags were grouped into key themes that will be color-coded. Marshall and Rossman (2006), describe themes made up of tags as “baskets within which segments of the text are placed” (p. 159).

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) was the lens through which the various themes were analyzed. Feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) combines insights from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and feminist studies to interrogate the complex workings of power and ideology in discourse in maintaining (hierarchically) gendered social arrangements (Larzar, 2005). It is a perspective that seeks to examine “the complex, subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered

assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated and challenged in different contexts and communities" (Lazar 2007, 142). With a focus on social justice and transformation, FCDA aims to challenge discourses that entrench gendered social practices and structures that impinge on possibilities for men and women as human persons. CDA is known for its overtly political stance and is concerned with all forms of social inequality and injustice. It offers a sophisticated theorization of the relationship between social practices and discourse structures (Wodak & Meyer, 2001), and a wide range of tools and strategies for close analysis of actual, contextualized uses of language (Larzar, 2007). A critical perspective on unequal social arrangements sustained through language use, with the goals of social transformation and emancipation, constitutes the cornerstone of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and many feminists' language studies. (Larzar, 2005).

Feminist discourse scholars have paid particular attention to unraveling the interconnections as well as particularities of discursive strategies employed in various forms of social oppression that can feed back into feminist strategies for social change. The marriage of feminism with CDA can produce a rich and powerful political critique for action. The central concern for feminist critical discourse analysts is to critique discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order. It disrupts relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantages, excludes and disempowers women as a social group. Feminist activism has challenged the status quo, advocating a vision of just society, where gender does not predetermine or mediate relationships or an individual person's identity (Lazar, 2010). The analytical strengths of FCDA lies in some five interconnected principles as articulated by Lazar (2010) These principles include: (1) feminist analytical activism as imperative for positive social change, (2) gender should be considered as ideological structure and practice, (3) recognizing the complexity of gender and power relations, (4) discursive (de)construction of gender, and (5) critical reflexivity as an exercise

of transformation. FCDA is considered a suitable framework for this study because it enables an analysis of discursive strategies of negotiation, resistance, solidarity, and social empowerment of disenfranchised women. Such an analysis has been less emphasized within CDA. It points to an intersectional approach that “helps to expose historical silences and to understand oppression and privilege as lived experiences and processes situated in and shaped by material, political, and social conditions’ (May, 2015: 6). In the section that follows, I provide findings from the different data collection methods used throughout the research.

## **POSITIONALITY OF RESEARCHER**

As a native of northern Ghana and international student from a Canadian university, it is important to mention how this study may have been impacted by my social position as both an insider and an outsider within the context of this study. I am an insider by virtue of my upbringing and an outsider by virtue of my Western education and training. My upbringing and life training has been both traditional and modern, consisting of social norms and values that differ in perspective. On the one hand, I grew up in an Islamic Dagomba family home where I spent my formative years with the matriarch of my maternal family, my great-grandmother, Zaaratu. Living with her between the ages of three and 13, Zaaratu who was in her 90s at the time trained me to help her with basic chores, some of which were traditionally female tasks such as washing dishes, hawking farm vegetables, sweeping our compound, and helping her to walk as she aged. It meant that I spent more time with Zaaratu and other older women. Apart from Zaaratu, I also spent much of my teenage years helping out my single mother with her local food business. Between 1998 and 2002, I used to carry cooked food on my head to sell in the open market, a task often reserved for girls. Since my younger sister was too young, I became responsible for doing most of the ‘girls work’, which I did not

always like because of the stigma and embarrassment I endured from some of my peers. Nonetheless, this experience exposed me to the realities of gender politics in Dagomba households and communities, even as a boy. Witnessing the struggles of my mother as a single mother of three, and my time learning from my great-grandmother helped me to develop gender consciousness. The experience enabled me to understand, first hand, the difficulties and challenges some women endure due to gender discrimination, and this understanding spurred me into activism. It has shaped my understanding and involvement in gender equitable measures such as feminist intervention programs.

To appreciate the true value and imperative of feminist intervention, one must recognize the historical damage caused by patriarchy, specifically, the historical discrimination against women. Even with the relative success of feminist intervention programs, men continue to dominate in both public and private spheres, while many women continue to suffer discrimination in many parts of the globe. This underscores the need for equity in the nature of increased and strategic feminist intervention through transnational partnerships in order to set the stage for equality. Gender equity calls for fair treatment of both women and men according to their strengths, limitations, opportunities and challenges, while gender equality requires tackling the systemic barriers that perpetuate unfairness. My upbringing and experience in Ghana as well as the academic training I have received in Canada have helped me to understand the historical discrimination against women and, thus, attain higher gender consciousness, which partly reflects in the design of this dissertation. My Western education and the liberal values I have internalized by virtue of living, studying, and working in Canada for the past 13 years have shaped my viewpoint. I am particularly interested in understanding how traditional values interact with modern liberal perspectives and how that interaction is reflected in the everyday life of ordinary people performing

gender. Not only did these factors impact the design of this study, it also had implications on how I understand or interpret the data and findings.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS - LIFE HISTORIES**

### **Chapter Introduction**

In this section, the findings are divided into four sections to reveal core findings arising from the different methods used above. First, I provide an overview of the participants who took part in the life histories research. In total, 11 participants completed life histories, and their stories are summarized below. These 11 participants were volunteers from the general pool of 37 respondents who took part in the main interviews and focus group discussions. They agreed to share more information and background to shed more light on the circumstances and conditions of their upbringing as boys and girls. This information is useful for helping to uncover some of the experiences that have shaped the lives of the men and women in this study. Specifically, this information helps us to discern the perspectives of the respondents in matters concerning gender equality and women's empowerment.

The second section presents the themes that emerged in the interviews and focus group discussions. The data in this section covers responses from all the 37 respondents, including the 11 whose stories are told below. The participants elaborated on what they believed to be the fundamental meaning of masculinity, and the traditional pathways to attaining the coveted title of a 'proper man', which entails three interrelated elements of responsibility: (1) the responsibility to provide (breadwinner), (2) responsibility to protect (warrior/aggressive man), and (3) responsibility to sacrifice (bravery/take risks). These responses will help us to discern the complex conditions and challenging circumstances men and boys navigate in their quest to be recognized as 'real men'. Section three discusses the relational views of the women in this study, most of whom challenged the presumption that men are the principal providers. The section also presents details of respondents' perceptions about sexual division of roles and responsibilities. Views about alternative masculinities have been discussed in this section. While demonstrating that the majority of men will consider

alternatives in the right conditions, the section also problematizes culture as an impediment to equal division of household work and other gender equality initiatives.

The fourth section wraps up the findings with highlights of local perceptions about gender equality, feminism, and the feminization of development aid. These responses help us to determine the state of gender equality in Ghana, and to appreciate the efforts, successes and challenges being encountered by the project implementation staff. The firsthand knowledge and experience of project staff helps us to understand the trajectory and dynamics of promoting gender equality in Ghana.

#### **“WUMBEI”**

Wumbei is a 32-year-old nurse stationed at the Tamale Teaching Hospital (TTH), the biggest health facility in the north. Wumbei was born at Choggu Hilltop near the main Tamale Hydro Station. He is the second born of three children. Wumbei has an older sister (aged 35), a classroom teacher and a younger brother aged (24), a second-year university student. Wumbei lives with his 28-year-old wife, a college graduate, and their two children, a son aged five, and a daughter aged two. They live in an official government bungalow (a two-bedroom townhouse) near the hospital where Wumbei works as a senior nurse. Wumbei’s parents separated when he was seven, and he moved with his mother and siblings to stay at her family-house near the Aboabo Market in the Tamale Central Area. His father had married two other wives, and so Wumbei had eight half-brothers and sisters from his two stepmothers.

Wumbei says most of his father’s other children left to live with their mothers who broke off with their husband, as a result of what Wumbei describes as his father’s toxic behavior (violent attitude). Wumbei says his father often beat his wives and children at any least provocation. He contributed only occasionally and grudgingly, towards his children’s

education and upkeep, so most of Wumbei's education and personal needs was provided by his single mother who had to combine multiple jobs in order to support her children. She operated a road-side convenience store and sold cooked food near her store. Even though Wumbei was often busy with his schoolwork, he still was available to help his mother and older sister to perform household tasks. He grew closer to the two women who he credits for significantly shaping his life in a positive way.

Wumbei was a brilliant student and scored straight As in the West African Senior High School Exams (WASCE), a common entrance exam conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). Wumbei studied midwifery at the Tamale Nursing and Midwifery Training College where he earned a 3-year Diploma in Midwifery. He initially worked at the Gynecology Ward of the Tamale Teaching Hospital but was forced to leave the Ward having been told that some pregnant women who visited the facility expressed discomfort (mainly for religious reasons) objecting to be examined or prepared by a male nurse during check-up or delivery. Wumbei felt "discouraged" by that negative sentiment and decided to go back to school to study general nursing practice. He studied a 3-year top-up course at the University for Development Studies, where he earned a B.Sc. in Nursing Practice. He currently works as a senior nurse at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the Tamale Teaching Hospital. Wumbei is also a part-time master's student (as of March 2022) at the University for Development studies, pursuing M.Sc. in Nursing.

### **"RASHEEDA"**

Rasheeda is a 43-year-old housewife and mother of six children who operates a small roadside restaurant near the Bulpiela dam. Rasheeda was born at Bulpiela, a suburb in the Tamale South area. She is the 11th born of 16 children by her late father, a farmer and trader who had three wives at the time of his death in 1997. Rasheeda says her father's death cut her education short because her mother was an unemployed stay-at-home spouse who had no

financial means. She was eventually adopted by an extended family member, her aunt, who took the responsibility of raising Rasheeda. While living with her aunt, Rasheeda never got the opportunity to go back to school, having only completed grade five. Instead, she worked as a servant and did all kinds of household chores for her aunt's family. Rasheeda got married and moved in with her auto-mechanic husband, with whom she has three children, boys, aged 5, 9, and 14.

Rasheeda is a member of a women's credit union in Tamale which provides financial capital and training for female entrepreneurs. The union helped Rasheeda to develop a business plan and gave her the loan she used to establish her roadside restaurant. Even though her husband works as a mechanic and earns income, Rasheeda says she gets no support towards her upkeep and the welfare of her children. Even though she does not expect her husband's lackadaisical attitude to end anytime soon, she hopes her "suffering" and "struggles" will "bring blessing" to her children so that they would become successful and take care of her in future. Rasheeda sounds indifferent about her marriage, but insists she is focused on securing a better future for her children as compensation because "there is nothing else" to get in her marriage.

### **"IBRAHIM"**

Ibrahim is a 32-year-old High School Teacher at the Ghana Senior High School in Tamale. Ibrahim was born in Kpawumo, a farming community on the outskirts of the Tamale metropolis to the north. Ibrahim is married to a 30-year-old dressmaker with whom he has three children, an 11-year-old girl and a 7-year-old boy. The family live in a 13-single-bedroom mud brick house Ibrahim inherited from his late father. Ibrahim's mother still lives with his family, but his sisters have all married and have moved, leaving Ibrahim as the head of his family (commonly called 'landlord' in Ghana), a role his father prepared him for since his childhood. Ibrahim teaches English and Social Studies, and earns a salary of GHC1,560

(approximately CDN\$210) per month, as a teacher. Even though Ibrahim's wife earns some income from her dressmaking business, he says he is the one primarily responsible for the welfare and upkeep of the family. Ibrahim's father, a college diploma graduate, was a Postman at the Tamale Post Office until his death. His mother used to sell plastic bags at the Tamale Central Market, but she stopped after the death of her husband in May 2015. Ibrahim's grandfather was a highly respected Sunni Islamic cleric in Tamale who was killed in 1965 during a clash between Sunni Muslims and the Tijaniya Suffi Order.

Unlike his father who experienced a difficult childhood, having lost the guidance of his own father (Ibrahim's late grandfather) at a very tender age, Ibrahim by contrast grew up close to his own father being the only male-child, a presumptive future family head who must be prepared for the task ahead. Ibrahim says his upbringing was anchored around his education. His father ensured he attended some of the best private schools in Tamale, only afforded by middle-high income earners. In 2016, Ibrahim earned a Sociology degree from the University of Cape Coast, from where he was hired by the Ghana Education Service. Ibrahim prides himself as a nurturer of talent in his work as a teacher, a skill he also utilizes to inspire his young children. Ibrahim describes himself as a "open-minded" man who is committed to the course of social justice and fundamental human rights for all.

### **“ZIBLIM”**

Ziblim is a 43-year-old blacksmith (macheli) at Kanvili, a peri-urban community located in the north-eastern corridors of the Tamale Metropolis. Ziblim was born in Karaga, a Dagomba village 40 miles out of Tamale to the north. He lives in a traditional compound (quad) house of 13 single rooms shared by 63 family members. The house itself is built of a mixture of mud and red clay soil. It is roofed with zinc metal which has never been replaced since the house was built more than 50 years ago. Ziblim has two wives and 9 children - 3 boys and 6 girls. His first wife, Adisa, is 36 years old, uneducated, and unemployed. The

second wife, Fuseina, is a 29 year-year-old Junior High School leaver who operates a small bread store near Ziblim's Blacksmith's shop. Ziblim himself has a diploma in basic education and works as a full-time elementary school teacher, combining that with her part-time job as a blacksmith. His nine children are all enrolled in school, but Ziblim also trains his three sons to "follow my step" in learning his blacksmith work, which he proudly calls his family trade. Ziblim's major goal in life is to own a house so that he can move his large and increasing family out of the family house.

Ziblim is particularly interested in controlling his immediate environment so that he can "train" his children. The training of his three sons is of particular interest to Ziblim because "the boys are the future of my family. They continue my lineage." Acting as the head of his own nuclear family, Ziblim says his current monthly salary of GHC950 (CDN150) is not adequate to take care of his responsibilities as a father of nine and husband of two wives. He therefore relies on his blacksmith work as a crucial means of supplementing his family income, a situation he expects his three boys will potentially face when they become grown men, hence the need to train them for the responsibilities awaiting them. As for his daughters, Ziblim would like them to be educated but in his estimation, they are less of a worry to him because they would get married and become their husbands' responsibilities. Even though Ziblim is optimistic for his daughters' future - for them to be educated and "have something to do" - he would not like them to "overstay" in school since it would affect the timing of their marriages and "create problems" for them. Ziblim describes himself as a "traditional" Dagomba man with strong fidelity to his tradition, culture and religion, the foundations of his upbringing.

#### **"ZARATU"**

Zaratu is a 33-year-old Civil Engineer working as Assistant Director of Roads and Highways at the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly. Zaratu, a mother of two, was born at SSNIT

Flats, an affluent neighborhood in Tamale inhabited mostly by senior government officials stationed in the northern region. Zaratu is the first born of three children; her two younger brothers aged 30 and 26, work as a construction foreman and a teacher respectively. Her husband is a medical doctor, with whom she has a son, aged 6, and a daughter, aged 3. Zaratu's father worked as a college principal until his death in 2013, at the age of 63. Her mother is a retired police officer in her late 60s. Zaratu attended some of the best schools in the northern region, enjoying good care and support from her well-educated parents who were invested in her development. Unlike other female children who were often treated with less privilege compared to boys, Zaratu's parents gave her the same opportunities as her brothers. Zaratu's own mother has an interesting story of her own; she beat the odds to become one of the first female recruits in the male dominated Ghana Police Service. That was in the 1990s. Inspired by her mother, Zaratu broke a glass ceiling of her own to earn a civil engineering degree at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, a feat achieved only by a handful of Ghanaian women.

In Ghana, as in many other countries, any work in the line of engineering or construction is regarded as 'men's job', and so, Zaratu often got asked by some family members and strangers acting astonished when they see her at work or when they hear she is an engineer. At work, Zaratu is surrounded by men, but she is unfazed by this. For her, "men trouble you or give you a hard time in office if you are a woman and act afraid in front of them." Zaratu says she is not afraid to speak her mind when necessary or take a tough position against a male colleague or subordinate who transgresses, a reputation that earned her the honorary title "pag-doo," meaning a "manly-woman." In her office, Zaratu is called by all sorts of nicknames for her uncompromising nature; names like 'iron lady', 'Obaa-berma' (masculine-woman) and so on. Zaratu is neither afraid nor shy to be called a feminist; in fact, she prides herself as a member of a professional women's self-help group in Tamale.

She attends meetings regularly where the group deliberates issues affecting the lives of professional women in Tamale.

#### “MANAN”

Manan is a seasonal farmer and butcher (*nakoha*) selling fresh meat at the Tamale Central Meat Shop (*nakohaduu*) near the main taxi station at the Central Business area of the city. The 61-year-old father of eight has a two-acre farmland at Kpiljini, a village which is 50 miles away from Tamale. Manan was born in the village where his farm is located, but his family was forced to move to Tamale in the late 1960s having been displaced by the Konkomba-Dagomba war. Manan father was killed in the war and some of Manan’s peers also died trying to flee the bloodbath in their village. Manan grew up under the care of his uncle. In the rainy season which usually starts from March to July each year, Manan and his two wives work away on the farm along with some of his children, where they plant tubers, like yam and cassava as well as grains such as corn and millet. He returns to his meat selling business in the off season, often buying livestock from the villagers which is cheaper compared to buying from the Tamale market. Manan says he has never attended school. His father did the same business as him before he died, and Manan hopes some of his sons would continue the family trade since “one cannot trust school alone” to achieve success nowadays.

Manan says there was an opportunity for him to enroll in school through a refugee resettlement program in Tamale, but he declined because, in his own words, he did not believe in his intellectual capability to do well in school. Even though he hopes some of his children will become educated, Manan still believes that it would be a remiss for one to put all hopes into schooling. In his view, it does not make a difference to go to school these days because he sees many university graduates either unemployed or “doing the same manual work uneducated people do.” Apart from his 33-year-old first son who has become a full-

time butcher, Manan's children from other women, five boys and two girls, are currently in school. He does not pay any school fees because of an ongoing government free-education policy. Manan is unsure if he would be able to afford to send even one of his children all the way through university because, he says, "it is too expensive." He does not expect his two daughters (aged 9 and 16) to go to school beyond junior high school. "They are girls and need to marry as soon as possible," says Manan. "If a woman reaches a certain age, it becomes difficult for her to find a man to marry."

### **"AYISHA"**

Ayisha is a 39-year-old mother of three, and an administrator working in one of the academic departments at the Tamale Polytechnic. She was born in a part of Tamale known as *Macheleni*, an indigenous Dagomba community near the Tamale Central Mosque. Ayisha's late father was a respected Islamic cleric and Sunni preacher in Tamale. She grew up in a large family. Her mother was her father's second of four wives. She has 16 siblings, sharing the same mother with four of them, two boys and two girls. Ayisha's mother was a stay-at-home wife, but she sometimes operated a small food court in front of their house. Ayisha earned her Diploma at the polytechnic, specializing in Secretaryship and Management. She graduated in 2013 and became the second wife of a senior lecturer at the polytechnic, who was also a phenomenally successful and respected businessman in Tamale. Even though she was raised in a traditional Dagomba-Islamic home, Ayisha says she was never denied the opportunity to be educated, and neither was she ever prevented from following her aspirations as was often the case in families like the one she comes from. There were however a few exceptions which she would mention in the discourse to be presented.

Ayisha says she feels proud of what she has achieved for herself, crediting much of her success to her upbringing and her education. She says she is committed to ensure that her

daughter gets as far as she can in school because “a woman who is educated always knows how to manage their lives irrespective of the situation they find themselves in.”

### **“JAATO”**

Jaato is a 50-year-old Accounts Clerk at one of the branches of the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) in the northern region. Jaato was born at Kanvili, one of the inner suburbs of Tamale, where he grew up with his family. Jaato comes from a large family. His late father, a cargo truck driver, had four wives, and Abdul-Rahman has four siblings and seven stepsiblings, making up a total of 13 children for his late father. Having such a large family is not rare in Tamale, a legacy of the region’s polygamous history. Jaato grew up attending school and doing apprenticeships in various employable skills in order to support his mother. Because his father had four wives and many other children, Jaato says it was difficult for his father to afford to support all of them through school, and it was left on to each wife to figure out how to sustain her children. To support his mother, Jaato and his two brothers did menial jobs to earn supplemental income. Rahman says this experience toughened and helped him “to become a man,” a training he also credits for his “hardworking nature.” His sister used to help their mother to operate her roadside fast-food business. Jaato says his father hardly lived up to his responsibilities of providing for his large family.

While doing all he could to support his family, Jaato also took his education seriously. He passed his entrance exams and got accepted to study for the Higher National Diploma (HND) at the Tamale Polytechnic. After graduating in 2001, Jaato did his mandatory National Service at the bank and has since worked in various capacities with the same institution. Jaato owns a five-bedroom self-contained apartment, where he now lives with his wife, a 43-year-old hairdresser, and four children, a boy and three girls. Jaato describes himself as a cautious progressive when it comes to issues of gender equality. He supports

women empowerment measures, but he is concerned about finding the right way to approach the issue without undermining local traditions and cultural sentiments.

### **“KATUUME”**

Katuume is a 25-year-old final-year student at the University of Ghana, where she is completing her bachelor's degree in languages, specializing in English and Arabic. Katuume was born at the Vittin Estate, one of the most affluent neighborhoods in Tamale. Her father is a medical doctor, and her mother is a nurse, both stationed at the Tamale Central Hospital. Katuume is the oldest child of her parents. She has two younger brothers, both still in senior high school, aged 22 and 17. Katuume's says her parents took her education seriously as their only daughter. She attended some of the best schools in Tamale and Accra. After completing her junior high school at the prestigious Abel Halprin School Complex in Tamale, Katuume was accepted to study General Arts at the prestigious Wesley Girls Academy at Cape-coast. She performed distinctively in her West African Senior High School Exams (WASCE), a common exam for tertiary school admissions. Katuume earned an admission to study at Ghana's premier university, the University of Ghana, a remarkable achievement being a young Dagomba girl from Tamale. In Tamale and many other parts of the north, early marriages have often denied many young women tertiary education.

Katuume is still single, but she has a boyfriend who is also in his final year at the same university. The two plan to get married immediately after their graduation in 2023. Unlike some of her peers in Tamale who have been forced into marriages by their own families, Katuume says she feels “lucky” to have parents who have allowed her to make her own choice of who to marry and when to do so. Katuume is looking forward to her wedding, but she would like to have a job before marriage since she “would not like to depend” on her future husband.

## **“Danaa”**

Danaa is a 54-year-old Teacher at the Tamale Senior High School, the north’s premier second-cycle school. Abdulai was born in a small village known as Saha Kpalgu, a farming community in the northern corridors of Tamale. Danaa and his younger brother were adopted and raised by their maternal grandmother, having been abandoned by their father along with their mother. Danaa’s mother got married again and moved in with her new husband, leaving her two young boys with her mother to raise. As a child, Danaa went to a community school which taught both Arabic and English syllabi. Such schools were often classified as less endowed due to inadequate quality of teaching and learning conditions. At Danaa’s school, Al-Azhariya, the focus was mainly on teaching the Quran and Sharia. He would often do menial jobs after school in order to save money to buy his schoolbooks and supplies. Despite his struggles, Danaa made it all the way to the government’s teachers’ training college where he earned a three-year Diploma in Education. Having saved money from his initial employment as an elementary teacher, Danaa went on to further studies at the University for Development Studies, where he earned bachelor's and master’s degrees in education.

Danaa is currently a Senior Housemaster in charge of Guidance and Counselling (Boys) at the school he teaches. He combines this role with teaching his “favorite” courses, English Language and Social Studies. In his role, Abdulai gives guidance and mentorship to young schoolboys. Danaa is married to a 39-year-old female politician in Tamale, with whom he has four children - three girls aged 8 to 21, and a 24-year-old boy who is currently studying medicine at the University for Development Studies. Danaa’s oldest daughter is also in her first year at the University of Ghana, while the two other girls are both in senior high school. Danaa says he was emotionally affected by the absence of his parents when he was growing up, most especially his father. The struggles he experienced growing up without his

parents are what motivates Danaa every day as he is passionate about giving the right training and guidance to the schoolboys under his care.

### **“OSMAN”**

Osman is a 32-year-old Public Prosecutor stationed at the Tamale Circuit court. Osman was born at Wayamba, a farming community near the Kamina Military Barracks in Tamale. At the age of 9, Osman and his parents moved to live permanently in Tamale where his father was appointed a Teacher at Tamale Senior High School. His family lived together on a school property near the campus, where Osman and his four siblings were raised. Osman was the first-born of his parents; he had two younger brothers and two younger sisters who attended the same school with Osman, the Tamale Anglican Elementary school, a one-hour commute from their home. Their mother was a high-school leaver who traded in grains at the Tamale Old Market. Osman describes his upbringing as “normal” but “very disciplined.” His father ensured that he and his siblings were educated in school, at the time most parents in Tamale were still reluctant about sending their children to school. They each had different tasks assigned to them as daily chores, including taking care of family livestock, cleaning their father’s motorbike, cleaning the house every morning, etc. Osman was a serious student. He passed his entry exams and gained admission to study Political Science at the University of Ghana, where he graduated with a Second-Class Upper, a qualification which earned him a post-graduate admission at the highly coveted Ghana School of Law. He graduated from the Law School and was called to the Ghana Bar Association (GBA) in June 2019. He got married in September of the same year (I attended his wedding having been personally invited) and currently has two children with his 28-year-old wife, a classroom teacher.

Osman calls himself a “rights activist” and a “supporter” of women empowerment because he believes in gender equality. Through his work as a state attorney, Osman has

prosecuted more than four cases which dealt with gender-based violence. As a barrister, he has heard first-hand accounts from men and women who have experienced violence.

## **LOCAL PERCEPTIONS ABOUT MASCULINITY**

This section is a presentation of the data impressions from the study. The chapter begins with a presentation on participants' constructions of masculinity and the role of a 'man' within the family system. In this section, participants reflect on their own training as boys and how their upbringings have shaped their life decisions and priorities. Participants elaborate on the three key functions associated with the social category of 'manliness'; (1) the responsibility to provide (breadwinner), (2) responsibility to protect (warrior/aggressive man), closely tied to (3) responsibility to sacrifice (bravery/take risks). The chapter goes on to present the male respondents' assessments of their wellbeing in relation to their duties as men and how they navigate the complexities of taking care of these responsibilities in the midst of challenging times. Since gender practices are relational in nature, the chapter also presents women's views about masculinity and the domestic politics associated with its performance as experienced by the women. The chapter rounds up with respondents' reflections on their experience of violence as boys and how those experiences have shaped the way they approach the training of their own children.

### **Perceptions of Successful Masculinity**

The respondents in this study understood 'masculinity' or the 'functional male' status to represent a profound sense of social responsibility towards women, children and the aged in one's household or community. The responsibilities cited by the respondents can be placed into three categories. First and foremost, among them is a responsibility to provide for a family. The second is responsibility to protect, and finally to sacrifice one's own life for the

family. In the view of many respondents, a man is defined by his ability to perform these responsibilities consistently.

About thirty-three (33) out of the forty-two (42) respondents in the interviews and focus group discussions (25 men and 18 women) understood ‘masculinity’ to mean an obligation to provide or contribute substantially towards family upkeep; ensuring the constant availability of food and shelter for instance. One of them, Wumbei, the 2-year-old Nurse explained that a man must have the ability to take care of his family: “As a male, you should prepare your life beyond yourself alone, because you will entirely be responsible for your family”. Another respondent, Abdullai, agreed with Wumbei’s statement adding that “a man cannot command the respect he deserves in the household if he cannot provide”. As some other respondents noted, the responsibility to provide goes beyond a man’s nuclear family. A man must have the capability to provide for the extended family, primarily, the parents if they are still alive. Traditionally, the responsibility to care for ageing parents falls on all children, but the primary expectation is on older male children, even though it can also be performed by any capable member of the nuclear or the extended family. One of the respondents, Manan, noted this to be the starting point of a man’s responsibility to his family - to take care of the needs of aging parents:

First you have to stop collecting “chop-money” (pocket-money) from your parents and start taking care of them. That’s why they train you to become a man.

Taking care of one’s parents is a cardinal task for men, but also implied in the interviews were the social expectations for every ‘man’ to have his own family. Manan explains this point:

... a man must have his own family and be able to look after them. You also have to start taking care of your old parents. As a man it is important to be able to do all this and on top of that have your

own family and children. Children are very important. If a man has no children and dies, people forget him easily.

Implied in these statements is the expectation for every 'man' to have a family in the first place. A man's ability to pay the 'bride price' and afford the cost of a marriage ceremony is a source of cultural capital among respondents. Embedded in notions of the 'bride price' is a sense of 'ownership' and 'patriarchal power' over the woman and the children from that marriage. As most respondents pointed out, the social expectations and pressure on boys increase towards the end of their teenage years since this is the stage where boys are expected to take the necessary steps and make the transition from a 'boy' to become a 'real man'. For example, a 31-year-old auto mechanic, Manza, said this:

... growing up and it remained my motivation. I always wanted to have my own family and look after them. I have been able to achieve that even though things are not easy now. We are managing by the grace of God.

For a Dagomba man, a heterosexual marriage is valued as a valid signifier of the transition into adult masculinity; it enhances the social status and capital to be considered as a 'real man' as opposed to a 'functional man' who, at best, is still viewed and treated as a boy. To call an adult Dagomba male a 'boy' or 'woman' is deeply damaging to his ego and personality. In the prevailing gender classification, a married adult male (especially those with multiple wives) is on the top of the order, followed by non-married male adults and boys, before adult women and girls at the bottom. In the words of respondents, the fundamental marker of 'coming of age' is when a boy child assumes the responsibility to start his own nuclear family, and it starts with him entering into a heterosexual marriage. One of the respondents, 43-year-old business owner, Nashirudeen, noted this point:

In our culture, being a responsible man is about getting married and raising a family. A man who is not yet married is not considered to be a

‘real man’ because they will say he doesn’t have responsibility. If it takes too long, you begin to lose your esteem and self-worth. So marriage is the number one priority for a man.

Thus, it is not just enough to marry, but one must also have children (male children preferred) and become a ‘breadwinner’ by ably providing for the upkeep of the household. Mohammed, a 34-year-old High School leaver, explained what it means to be a man in his opinion:

The number one thing is to live independently from your parents. It is good to have your own place as a man so that you can raise your family. Family is very important so one must get married and start a family. Both Islam and our tradition encourage marriage and continuing the family. A man should have his own family and be responsible for their safety and welfare. You know we come from a tribe which believes in the boy child as a sign of success as against girl child. My mother used to be worried that all her children were girls and some of the women in the house used to say things like “she is only having female children”. I remember it used to make her sad that she didn’t have more males. But it is better today because knowledge is advancing; this perception is gradually changing because girls can bring success too.

It becomes clear that starting and sustaining a family is the normative pathway to becoming a ‘real man’ in Tamale. There is a common joke in town where community members ‘congratulate’ newlywed men ‘for joining the table of men.’ Apart from marriage, having a stable/reliable source of income, and honoring one’s aged parents were prominent in these reflections on responsibility to provide. The emphasis on men’s responsibilities in these cases included responsibilities to provide for one’s nuclear family – wives and children – and the extended family members – aged parents, nephews, brothers, sisters -and in some social occasions like funerals, baby-naming ceremony, or weddings, the men involved in the

occasion must provide food to feed the community for at least two days. The responsibility to provide was often mentioned or used as reference when men talked about their anxieties.

### **Responsibility to Protect**

The second key role attributed to ‘successful masculinity’ in the interviews and focus groups was a man’s ability to guarantee his own safety and that of members of his household/community. As such, a real man must be courageous to confront violence and defend his territory against any form of external aggression. In the interviews and group discussions, 18 out of the 25 men recognized this responsibility as profoundly connected to the definition of a real man. One of them was Ziblim, a 43-year-old Blacksmith. In Ziblim’s view, the responsibility to protect fall on men “because they are naturally aggressive”. He goes on to explain:

If you look at the way men are built, our feature is that we are aggressive creatures. Every man is naturally aggressive even if they look like they are calm. A man can withstand a severe fight, especially when violence is involved.

Another respondent Andani, agreed with Ziblim. Andani mentioned temperament, physique and stamina as the core attributes of a fighter and said they were associated with men as opposed to women. Similarly, 13 out of the 18 women I interviewed agreed to the view that men are naturally able to engage and withstand aggressive behavior. One of such women was Zaratu Ali, a 40-year-old petty trader at the Tamale Central Market:

It is true that a household needs a man for such situations when it involves doing violent things. Not that women are not strong but we are not used to it [violent acts]. Women can fight among themselves but when it is serious, fights like the ones that happen during elections, you need a man.

Ayishetu, a 52-year-old mother of 5 and fulltime housewife. According to Ayishetu, a woman, especially an adult woman who is not under the protection of a man, becomes vulnerable and can be abused:

If they know you have men at home nobody will try to take advantage of you because you have someone (man) you can call upon to defend you. As a woman, man's protection is important.

It is worth noting that some 12 participants - seven men and five women disagreed with the suggestions that aggression is innate in men. One of them was Osman, a 32-year-old State Attorney who has prosecuted several cases of domestic violence involving men at the Tamale Circuit Court. Osman noted that aggression is not gender-specific or innate, and that both men and women behave according to the training or social orientation they received from their childhood:

When it comes to aggression it is not about a male or female. It is about an individual attitude, the way they have been trained. Aggression is an attitude and attitudes are learned and can be unlearned. Attitude is not natural. It is formed over time.

Fatima, a 27-year-old mother of two, was one other respondent who rejected the suggestion that aggression is naturally associated with men. Fatima who is The 27-year-old Civil Engineer at the Transportation Unit at the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (city council) said everyone, including women, can have aggression, and even positive forms of aggression "that can be channeled into achieving something meaningful" without being violence. In her view, violence and aggression can be mutually exclusive in the sense that a person can be aggressive but not violent. The physical differences between men, the opportunities/limitations of male and female bodies, as well as propensity for aggression, were the common themes participants highlighted in the above responses. Whereas respondents associated masculinity with strength, aggression, and stamina, feminism was the

contrast, being associated with weakness, vulnerability (needing protection of a man), and submission. These must be viewed within the context of Tamale where sporadic violence reinforces the ‘macho man’ culture.

### **Responsibility to Sacrifice**

Participants often used the word ‘sacrifice’ to define the essence of masculinity. At least 15 out of the 25 men said it was important for a ‘man’ to be courageous and be prepared, when necessary, to put his own life in harm’s way if it is required for the survival of his family. Respondents had various perceptions about what it means for a man to sacrifice for his family. For example, Ziblim, the 43-year-old blacksmith said it was about being “selfless”:

... Every individual has their own challenges and problems but as a man you have to put the problems of your family first before you can think about yourself.

Another respondent, 52-year-old schoolteacher at Nyanshegu, Issah thought of sacrifice to mean ‘valor’ and an unconditional willingness to bear pain and suffering for the welfare of family:

Even though it is hard with money, you still have to provide for the house because you are the head of the house. You end up having nothing (money) left for your own needs. Sometimes you have to go through a lot as a man. You bear all the pain and when the family is suffering, everybody will be looking at you. A man who has a family to take care of is always under stress, especially if it is a big family.

In contrast to the above perceptions, some respondents used words and phrases such as “patience”, “forgiving”, and “loving unconditionally”, to define sacrifice. One of them was the 32-year-old State Attorney Osman. In his view, attitudes such as risk-taking, self-harming

behavior or unmitigated stress are rather the root causes of violence and aggression in the lives of most men:

If someone is silent about his suffering or if he hides his suffering, it will only build up to a certain point where there will be agitation. It doesn't mean the person is sacrificing. They will break down eventually and sometimes it leads to depression or even violence against the same household members he ought to be protecting.

From the above, it becomes clear that starting one's own family and managing its affairs independently and successfully was perceived among respondents to be the important marker of adult masculinity. As such 'real men' are required and should be able to effectively perform this traditional mandate. The status of a person is enhanced according to the size of his family. For example, men with large families, multiple wives and male children are placed higher above men with small families or men who do not have male children. The hierarchy is aligned with perceptions of how much men are sacrificing, and the value associated with that sacrifice. Larger families and multiple wives are associated with a higher level of sacrifice as they require more effort and resources and therefore greater responsibility to protect, to provide and to sacrifice. To have multiple wives and many children is a culturally celebrated masculinity because it presumably demonstrates more power and control over others, as well as "big man" masculinity which is about the number of people under a man's responsibility to provide, to protect, and to sacrifice for. It is important to note, however, that this is just one example or interpretation of sacrifice. There are other forms of sacrifice that reflected gender relations. Women, for example, may also be valued for their willingness to sacrifice in terms of leaving their home communities to live with their husband's family, to sacrifice time with their husbands in a plural marriage environment, and to sacrifice their own desires to support their husbands.

## **Becoming a Man as a Distinctly Masculine and Valued Pathway**

The experiences of some respondents in this study also revealed a systematic process of upbringing and training patterns that condition boys to understand that they are different from girls and should remain different from them as much as possible. The pathway to manhood is seen as a distinct set of gender norms and practices that include limited interactions with women and girls and a strong ethic of hard work. This distinction of ‘becoming a man’ is deemed necessary because, even in his early ages, he is expected to start to show a genuine interest in the rudiments of masculinity, often learning from a ‘father’ figure or an older male who usually acts as head of the household, with the responsibility to train the boy knowing the enormity of the responsibilities ahead of his life. Ziblim, the blacksmith, described his own upbringing:

I was trained to not mingle with girls or women, and to take my work seriously, and be hardworking. I was taught that one day I would have to take care of my own family so the teaching started at an early age. We used to go to the farm with our father even at a young age.

The prosecutor, Osman, had a similar story about the way he was brought up:

I was taught to work hard and defend myself well against any offenders. Boys were not allowed to stay with their mothers or sisters. We used to sit with our father and learn from him. Because he is old he has wisdom to teach us about how to raise our independent families.

Unsurprisingly, boys who were supposedly trained by women had the same experience as those raised by men. One of such men was Wumbei, the 32-year-old nurse stationed at the Tamale Teaching Hospital. Wumbei who was raised by his single mother said she wanted him to become a ‘responsible’ man:

My mother also taught me to not show my emotions and “be like a real man. Like they say “a man does not cry openly in public.” So anytime my uncle beats me and I am crying, that is what my mother would tell me to ‘be brave and not cry in public’. My mother also taught me to be hardworking because one day I would have my own family to learn now so that I can take care of them.

Another respondent, Ibrahim a 32-year-old High School Teacher echoed Wumbei’s view:

As a boy among five girls, I was taught to be hardworking and responsible because it is believed that the man, as the head of the home, should be able to work hard to take care of the family. This really equipped me to work hard. Right after junior high school through to tertiary school I worked alongside my education to support my parents and this has toughened me till today.

As a male child, I was orientated to understand that I must work hard to sustain myself and the family I would raise in the future. I was mainly allowed to engage in activities that were thought to be masculine, example, being around the elderly during decision-making processes and learning of certain vocational skills such as blacksmithing, masonry, and farming practices that were demanding. This was not the same with my sisters. They also had their roles which was helping the older women in the kitchen and learning to cook because it would be their duty when they get married. So they were being taught how to be a good woman.

It can be deduced from these reflections that boys are trained to follow specific pathways of maintaining traditionally celebrated values. More than two-third of the respondents mentioned aggression, toughness and bravery, as some of the distinct pathways they had to

follow, and which are linked to the ethos of their upbringing as desirable qualities a boy must demonstrate to prove his potential.

To live up to the requirements of the social category of a boy means internalizing, knowing, and externalizing the value of what it means to be a ‘boy’ who must remain different from a ‘girl.’ It is not enough to know the value, but one must be ready and willing to face the repercussions of any form of deviation, or failure to match up to the standards of boyhood. As some of the respondents explained, one risked being tagged with the derogatory label of a ‘girl’ or a ‘woman’ which, in this context, is deeply damaging and stereotyping not only to the social standing of any well-meaning boy, but also to any father figure or household head associated with him. A “real boy” must therefore demonstrate, by way of expression or action, to show his potential, which is constantly being surveilled and scrutinized by one’s own peers, as well as his family and the community in general, who are spectators and judges of an individual boy’s performance against his peers. ‘Stubbornness’, ‘uncompromising’, ‘courageous’, ‘tough’, ‘temperamental’, and ‘willingness to engage in physical confrontations’ against other boys if necessary: these were some of the fine boyhood qualities respondents mentioned throughout the interviews. A boy must therefore act accordingly to safeguard his manhood, which is a social capital in a patriarchal society.

### **Influence of the Father Figure**

Some respondents also stressed the family institution as an important patriarchal site in which gendered hierarchies and expectations were constructed, reproduced, and reinforced over generations. As experienced by Musah Abubakar, a boy risks being punished and consequently losing his place in the realm of ‘proper boys’ if he fails to abide by the gender codes embedded in his category as a male child:

The consequences were usually punishment, depending on the nature of the rules broken. For example if I missed my farm work, or if I ran away from a fight or if I cried during playtime, I'd be beaten again at home for not being tough. I might not be given food for the night. Most often than not, my father is usually the enforcer to the rules.

Danaa, a 52-year-old Mason had similar experiences when he was growing up at Nyanshegu in the Tamale North Area:

We were usually beaten with a leather wrap locally called "*baranzim*" (horse-whip). If you do things that they think are not manly, or when you like to mingle with women, you will not be spared. The beating was usually in the night when we went to sleep.

Alidu Yirifa, a 39-year-old scrap dealer in the Tamale Central Market area, once suffered a similar rebuke by his grandfather:

As a boy, it was forbidden for me to engage in any culinary activity. I was not allowed to learn even if I wanted to do so, the culture doesn't allow that. The kitchen was the preserve of the girls and boys were taught to stay away from there. Once when I decided to help my grandmother in the kitchen, my grandfather did not take this lightly. Beside reprimanding my grandmother, I received countless strokes of cane for not adhering to this teaching. My grandfather, who was the family head, subjected me to this beating.

As a boy my father beats me anytime I come home after 6pm from the football field. Football was my greatest passion and I did everything possible to play. My father allowed me to play but strictly gave me time and anytime I go beyond the set time I do not go unpunished.

It is worth highlighting that some of the men I interviewed (five out of 25) described their own upbringing as progressive, in which there were no strict requirements or expectations on them to prove toughness or bravery. These expectations contrast with the dominant, conservative or orthodox Islamic/Dagomba households that are traditionally constituted. Such households typically have a recognizable *Yili-yidana* (“landlord” or household head) to oversee the enforcement of the traditional or generally accepted rules of social behavior, and ensure that both boys and girls, as well as men and women within the household conform to the patriarchal gender order. Some of these traditional households have vested stakes in the ongoing conflicts, which are basically motivated by the pursuit of power. The desire to protect past ancestral lineage of manhood is therefore entrenched within families and communities, leaving boys and men to negotiate a complex set of behaviors and actions that are constantly being assessed and evaluated in comparison to girls.

Fathers in these traditional households have real interest and investment in seeing their sons display qualities traditionally described as culturally correct masculine qualities. These qualities are often considered a crucial step to make “real men” out of boys and valued for their contributions to the preservation and continuity of the patriarchal family values. Furthermore, men’s subordination of women is viewed as culturally necessary for effective functioning of the family and community livelihood system. In many traditional Dagomba households in the north, the father figure (*Yili-Yidana*) serves as a powerful form of surveillance in policing the boundaries of young men’s pursuit of credible masculinities. The power of the *Yili-Yidana* is demonstrated in how he variously acts in the cultural capacity as the traditional trainer and coach whose interest is to perpetuate dominant notions of what it means to be a man. It is worth highlighting that the household head is sometimes a woman (*Yili Yidaan-paga*), but even such situations hardly affect the hyper-masculine upbringing of boys. As we learned in some of the case studies, some women are highly invested in

protecting the status quo, and are themselves privileged beneficiaries of the oppressive patriarchal system. Households headed by such women are also implicated in the patriarchal template of raising children, where the matriarch demands boys to be knowledgeable of the boundaries between their positions and that of girls in the household.

The other category of households consists of what I call progressive or modern Dagomba families. Even though these households are also Dagomba households with a recognizable father figure, such households are also distinguished by specific characteristics such as higher education background of the household head and other household members (both men and women), high economic class, and exposure to diverse cultures. Sexual divisions of labor still exist in these households, but there is no strict adherence to the cultural demarcation or enforcement of strict gender boundaries like those in the traditional homes. It is in these households where both boys and girls are allowed the freedom to express themselves and show their true potential without any form of restrictions. For instance, Yussef Jaja, a 41-year-old store owner at the Tamale Central Market who moved with his parents to live permanently in Tamale where his father was appointed a Teacher at Tamale Senior High School, was given immense freedom to express himself without dominant cultural restrictions. His family lived together on a school property near the campus, where Osman and his four siblings were raised. Yussef's father ensured that he and his siblings were educated in school, at the time most parents in Tamale were still reluctant about their children's education. They each had different tasks assigned to them as daily chores, including taking care of family livestock, cleaning his father's motorbike, or cleaning the house every morning.

Freedom is the way we were brought up; there was no separation of chores, we all did the work in the house together. My sister was free to sit around and have a conversation with

my father. Sometimes I was also close to my mother and spent time with her ... there was no gender bias in our house.

A second example is that of Osman who was the first-born of his parents and had two younger brothers and two younger sisters who attended the same school with Osman, the Tamale Anglican Elementary school, a one-hour commute from their home. His mother was a high-school leaver who traded in grains at the Tamale Old Market. Osman describes his upbringing as “normal” and “there was no pressure to prove anything to anyone”. Even though boys are still expected to show masculine qualities, they are also well drilled in alternative values such as responsible adulthood, love, and kindness, helping others, compassion, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. It is worth highlighting that the father figure in such modern households mostly have experience living in non-hyper-masculine multi-cultural environments and have recognized the potential dangers and damaging limitations of hyper-masculinity, which is partly responsible for the inability of most adult Dagomba boys and men to adapt to the demands of a modern or “civilized” society. Some female respondents, especially the young women, had similar experiences as Yussef and his sisters. Mariama Issahaku, a 25-year-old final-year student at the University of Ghana, is one example. Mariama’s father was a medical doctor, and her mother was a nurse. Due to the upper social class of her parents, Mariama enjoyed a progressive parenting, and describes herself as “lucky to have parents who ‘understand’” and support her desire to be well educated:

We were all (boys and girls) treated the same way. We were all well-liked by our parents. There was freedom for all the children in the house. There was no discrimination.

The latter examples offer insights into distinct experiences that are outside conventional practice. They offer important alternative views and perspectives. Nonetheless, there are predominant views of manhood that are important aspects of how men view their roles and

positions in society and how these views are linked to the passing down of traditions and norms from one generation to the next.

## **MASCULINITIES IN CRISIS**

This section presents participants' reflections of their own experiences as men with enormous pressure to live up to the obligations of their social category. The section begins with an assessment of the cost of being a man in Tamale, and the means through which men navigate the socio-economic pressures they encounter. The section also presents the relational views of the women in this study. Most of the women disagreed with - and challenged - the presumption that men are the principal providers: the very social imperative which justifies men's role as natural leaders indispensable for effective functioning of the family system. The section also presents details of respondents' perceptions about sexual division of roles and responsibilities. Many married women in Tamale contribute financially to help their spouses (such as using their own income to pay for children's medicine, providing money for food), which is a shift from the traditional expectations of the man who is believed to solely shoulder the responsibility of providing for the family. In contrast, not many men are willing to take their fair share of domestic work (reproductive), leaving most women having to do both tasks. The section also presents views about alternative masculinities highlighting the fact that the majority of men are willing to change, except that some of them are being held back by cultural stereotypes and local conditions that can be overcome by gender equality initiatives born out of cross-cultural collaborations and trans-national partnerships. The three themes that emerge from the findings in this section provide an overview of the experiences of change, discontinuity, disruption, and conflict or disagreement about the current and future roles and perceptions of masculinist cultural norms and priorities.

## **Men's Experiences of New Challenges and the Impacts on Perceptions of Masculinity**

Building on arguments provided in the literature review pertaining to: the current economic crises, cuts in social support programs, rapid urbanization, neoliberal consumerism, and their attendant consequences, this section explores the challenges Ghanaian men experience in their construction of traditional routes to masculinity. Key aspects of that construction of masculinist roles include responsibilities to provide (needing money; resources, etc.); protect (needing physical ability, aggression, and courage to fight for the family; and sacrifice (needing bravery, hiding strong emotions) when 'suffering' for the family. These responsibilities have become the fundamental marker of 'masculinity' among respondents, yet current socio-economic realities including a global economic crisis and political conditions have complicated men's ability to properly 'perform masculinity', evoking a sense of failure to live up to the expectations of their social category as 'men'. At least twenty-one (21) of the men in this study (87%) made the categorical statement that 'life is difficult for men these days'. Most of these men pointed to the high cost of marriage such as paying the bride price, buying clothing and other items for the bride, providing food and meat to the bride's family for the occasion, and organizing a grand party for community members. These activities cost not less than 36,000 Ghana Cedis, or \$3,000 United States dollars, on average, a significantly high standard for a society with about 80% youth unemployment rate. A young man who is unable to successfully complete a marriage ceremony is demeaned by referring to him as less-than-a-man, and as a 'boy', or worse forms of stigma and beratement. Ziblim, the blacksmith, explained the consequences a man suffers if he fails in this cultural endeavor:

If your younger brothers get married and have children before you, they will start looking down upon you as if you are not even the elder. So yes it is hard, especially for a man [who] has no means. Everything is done with

money and it is not easy to get. Even workers who receive a salary; they are complaining.

Most respondents lamented their struggles in attempts to strike a good balance between their responsibilities and practical realities. Wumbei, a nurse, emphasized the need for men's struggle to be acknowledged:

A man in a family has major responsibilities like taking care of the family. Taking care of the children and the other family responsibilities I have inherited from my father. It is something that we must do but let's admit it ... it is not easy for us. Men are seriously affected by the hardship.

Another respondent Nazeer Nuhu agreed with Wumbei's assertion, adding that some of the expectations on men are unrealistic in today's world:

Things have changed from the past. This time it is men who are suffering because of heavy responsibilities. You have to provide money every day and that is not easy. That's why we say men are making sacrifices.

One important observation made during the interviews and group discussions is a sense of entitlement on the part of some of these men when they consider how the current hardship exacerbates the decline in traditional ways of enacting manhood. Danaa, the teacher, tried to explain this point:

I am saying that the man is the breadwinner. If he doesn't have the means and the wife has the means to support, that is no problem. The only problem is that you begin to lose your respect if it is the woman taking care of the man. The man becomes powerless and that is the problem.

For example, it is the duty of the man to keep the family together. So he must sacrifice his life for the family. The chop money (pocket money), the food money and other bills. It is the man who must take

this responsibility. Sometimes it is a big family. So what I am saying is that, it is the men who take responsibilities for the family so if there is hardship, it is the man who suffers more.

It became apparent that men's ability to afford their responsibilities as providers was profoundly connected to their sense of power, control, and fulfillment which is a prerogative and the ultimate desire of every 'true' male. As categorically stated by Nazeer:

“a man is nothing if he has no control over his family, or if you can't provide for someone you can't control how they live.”

For a man to be considered 'nothing' means he has been stripped of any authority or significance within his family. To have 'authority' over one's family and to be able to 'control' household members is a critical marker of a successful masculinity in the traditional sense, as it gives power to the man to make all the important decisions within the family. An adult male who is not married or one who has no decision-making power in his family is often treated as a boy at best.

### **Women and Some Men Offer Different Perspectives on Hardships Endured by Men**

It is worth highlighting that two men and almost all the women in this study vehemently disagreed with the suggestions that life has become difficult for men. For most of them, it is men who have put themselves into difficult conditions. One of the men was Osman, the 32-year-old State Attorney:

It depends on who you ask. Life is hard for some men because they have not accepted their reality. How can you be an unemployed man and have three wives? If you don't have the resources to take care of many children, why do you produce too many children? So, it is about the life decisions people make without having the financial means to back that decision. I know it is true that a man in a family has major responsibilities like taking care of the family but sometimes people put

themselves in a difficult situation simply because of pride. If you plan your life well and be careful with your decisions, I don't think you will have that problem.

This example offers insights into critical assessments of masculinity and men's responsibilities as discussed in Section 5. In the above example, the individual in question was criticized as not having it harder because of hard times but instead criticized for failing to follow-through with the requirements of manhood – to take on responsibility to protect and provide.

As indicated earlier, most of the female respondents agreed with Osman. To some of these women, masculinity is no more a responsibility than 'womanhood', pointing out that most women do contribute significantly towards family welfare. One of them was Zaratu Alidu, the 33-year-old Civil Engineer and mother of two:

It is true that men have bigger responsibilities than women within families but women also contribute a lot. I will say it is difficult for both, not the men alone. It is manageable if both the husband and wife are working; then they can support each other. But if the whole family is depending on one person's salary, whether it is the woman or the man ... it is going to be difficult, especially in these hard times. So it is better for both to have something to do. Some men are suffering because of pride. They want to be in charge of everything even when they can't afford it.

The case of one female respondent properly illustrates the apparent reality that most married women perform the role of the breadwinner in their families. Rasheeda's education was cut short after her father died. Her mother was an unemployed stay-at-home spouse who had no financial means. She was eventually adopted by an extended family member, her aunt, who took the responsibility of raising Rasheeda. While living with her aunt, Rasheeda never got the opportunity to go back to school, having only completed grade five. Instead, she worked

as a housemaid and did all kinds of household chores for her aunt's family. Rasheeda got married and moved in with her auto-mechanic husband, with whom she has three children, boys, aged 5, 9, and 14. Rasheeda is a member of a women's credit union in Tamale which provides financial capital and training for female entrepreneurs. The union helped Rasheeda to develop a business plan and gave her the loan she used to establish her roadside restaurant. Even though her husband works as a mechanic and earns income, Rasheeda says she gets no support towards her upkeep and the welfare of her children:

It is rather us women who are struggling because of responsibilities at home. Like I said before, the men sometimes don't know where the food in the house comes from. They are just men by name but in reality, it is the woman who will do her best to make ends meet. If there should be any help, it should go to the women. When a woman gets money, she will bring it home for the whole family. The first thing a man will think about is to marry a second wife. When it comes to family, women contribute more than men based on my experience.

Ayisha Damba, the 39-year-old university administrator and mother of three echoed Rasheeda's view about her own financial obligations as a married woman:

I pay my children's school fees sometimes and buy them clothes. I also buy food for the house with my salary. At the end of the month, I spend more than half of my salary on my family. My husband doesn't take care of everything for me so we are all contributing. As for the hardship, it is women who face it more.

Zaratu Alidu, the 33-year-old Civil Engineer shared a similar experience, emphasizing that men still earn more and enjoy privileges that are not available to women:

It is not only men who find it difficult. I will even say it is women who are facing difficulties because men are those who have employment and control the resources. They occupy the big

positions and have power to do what they want. Is that what you call suffering? It is rather women who are suffering from abuse and discrimination.

There were at least two married women who said they often spend their own income on their family needs but still credit the source to their husband. One of them, 45-year-old mother of four Amina Yiri explained why it was important for her:

The way people see your man is important for every woman, you want people to believe that your man [husband] is capable. People don't respect a man who can't perform his responsibilities. You want to show that everything is well in the family even if that is not the case. Sometimes when you [Amina] will use your own money but you won't say this to outsiders because I want to protect his image ... his pride as a man.

The experiences of men as explained in this section demonstrate the challenges and stress men encounter and the additional burdens arising from economic hardship. The men's struggles, 'suffering', and hardship exemplifies the irony of how patriarchy oppresses and complicates the lives of men who subscribe to its tenets. Noteworthy is the fact that the men who lend themselves to non-hegemonic masculinities appeared to enjoy better and stable family lives, compared to the conservative men. The hardship and stress are connected to the expectations on the men to live up to their responsibility as 'breadwinners'. This responsibility is linked to patriarchal ego in the sense that the responsibility fulfils the desire of the men to gain 'control' over their families and to command 'respect' from them. Despite their challenges, it is important to point out that the men still enjoy different forms of privileges and freedoms that remain unavailable to women, especially women who do not have support from men. For instance, men continue to wield decision-making power in both public and private spheres; they can marry multiple wives, but women get blamed for divorce

even if it is not her fault; and men take the lion share in circumstances of inheritance while women only receive minor items from deceased parents.

### **Balancing Roles and Responsibilities**

To further buttress their point, most of the women highlighted the multiple burden they shoulder in having to navigate between productive work (earning income to support family) and reproductive work (caring for children and elders, carrying out housework, cooking, errands, cleaning, valuing the spouse, being a good housekeeper), and other communal obligations (helping to cook food in social gatherings such as weddings and funerals, helping other community members. These are often invisible and reflect the unequal division of labour between men and women. Even though women have stepped up to take the financial burden off their families (a fundamental responsibility of men in patriarchal logic), it appears that most men remain unprepared to reciprocate in taking a fair share of the reproductive responsibilities. Seven (4) out of the eleven (11) women said their partners would not entertain the idea of sharing household work of any kind. Three (3) of the women said their partners would agree to do minor works like laundry, changing light bulbs, or home repairs, but not chores such as cooking, changing diapers, sweeping, washing dishes etc. The other four (4) women said their partners said their partners do help with household chores but only occasionally. One of the women, Zaratu (the Engineer) blamed the disproportionate workload for women on a skewed understanding of culture:

... our culture is different. They see it as a bad thing for a man to be helping his wife with the house work. They would gossip about it and he would stop. Sometimes the community is a problem. The mentality of people is not right.

Ayisha, the school administrator echoed this view:

... my husband would never do the household chores. The culture here makes that impossible. I can't even joke about it ... that he should cook or wash the dishes.

A significant majority of the men seemed to have corroborated the sentiments and narratives expressed by the women in the interviews and focus group discussions. Fourteen (14) out of the Twenty-Five (25) men said they will not subscribe to household chores of any kind. For such conservative men, 'home care' and 'being a good wife' is a cardinal responsibility of women. One of them is Ziblim, the 43-year-old blacksmith. In his view, a person's biological sex predisposes him/her/them towards specific tasks, insisting that the sexual division of labor is supported by "wisdom":

That is not possible. Why will a man do a woman's work like cooking? There are some things I will never do as a man. Cooking is one. If you say your wife is equal to you in a marriage how can you teach her what is right or wrong? A good woman would never allow her husband to do certain things. How can I clean or change diapers for babies and children? How can I breastfeed a child? Some of these things are impossible. Allah created man and woman to play different roles and our history, we have learned from our elders about the proper place of a man and a woman in a household. If you try to change that, then you are inviting trouble.

They used wisdom to make those decisions and whether you like it or not there are certain works that a woman cannot do. Especially when it is about physical work.

Some men will not agree to share housework with their wives. That will create serious issues in the family. I think we should just leave it the way it is but if a woman wants to contribute that is good. But it will be an issue to make that compulsory.

Another respondent Nurudeen shared a similar view, adding that any renegotiation of the current gender norms or sexual division of labor will only lead to a decline in moral standards:

How would you respond to the suggestion that men and women should share these responsibilities equally? Our tradition is ancient and old, and nothing has changed. They [outsiders] envy our rich culture and always try to destroy it. They have even used money, but it will not work. You cannot change culture.

Ziblim, who sounded the most conservative of all the respondents, added:

It is not only Dagbon culture. Even Adeeni (Islam or religion) has called for that division. In society, there is a place for women and a place for men. Trying to change the positions will cause serious moral problems. I don't think any true man will do things like bathing the children, cooking and all that. I won't do such a thing.

Hardship and challenges, when viewed through the lens of men's experiences, tend to focus on economic opportunities and financial burdens. For women, however, the economic burdens are further compounded by the triple burden of labor. Women's contributions to household income have not been met with – or balanced out by – a more equitable distribution of other household responsibilities or demands. The mounting workload for women, who are now often working outside the home or running businesses is a significant burden they are enduring.

### **Alternative Masculine Ideas Support for Household Work**

It is worth highlighting that six (6) out of the remaining eleven (11) men said they will commit to 'helping' their partners with reproductive (or care) work, albeit to a limited extent.

One of them was Wumbei , the 32-year-old nurse:

I don't mind helping with some of the work like cooking. I know how to cook even though I will not do so in public or when people are around. I also like cleaning so I help with that sometimes. But there are certain things I cannot do as a man; like cleaning the children, washing the dishes. I'll also not do any of such work in front of people [in public].

Manan, the seasonal farmer and butcher (*nakoha*) made a similar comment:

I can do some of the work. I don't mind cleaning especially when I am home on the weekend. But there are certain tasks I cannot perform; like I don't know how to cook. And my mother will not be happy to see me doing women's work when my wife is there.

The other four men were Ibrahim , (28) and Danaa (32), both High School Teachers, Osman the 35-year-old State Prosecutor, and Jaato the 41-year-old Accounts Clerk. These four men said they support equal division of labor without sexual discrimination. Osman observed that a proportionate division of household work would allow more women to earn more income for the family in the face of the current economic hardship:

In the olden days when women didn't have money and used to depend on their husbands it would not have been possible to tell a man to do women's work. But now a lot of women have certificates and are workers. So if my wife is qualified to work and will use part of what she earns to support the family it is natural that I will want to support her with her work.

Ibrahim said his household is flexible with the distribution of chores reaffirming the obvious fact that it takes mutual cooperation and support between men and women to grow a healthy and successful family:

I don't think there is something like men's responsibility and women's responsibility. It is the people in the relationship and how they see

each other. If the man is working and has money to take care of the family that is fine. But if the man is not well to do and his wife has money, she should help. This is my idea. We both work together to achieve something. That is how I live with my family.

Rahman and Abdulai also echoed this view in support of equal division of household work between men and women. To achieve gender equality would require both men and women to be flexible in their mindsets and find a good balance between performing household roles and responsibilities, whereby they support each other to grow together, ensuring that both male and female members of the family function to their full potential without social barriers. As heard in the interview excerpts, many women are increasingly becoming *de facto* ‘breadwinners’ with men being unable or unwilling to provide due to hardship or irresponsibility in some cases. Based on these findings, there is evidence of diverse perspectives to sharing the workload. However, the support offered by husbands remains a small contribution and almost always on their terms: men provide the support they feel comfortable providing, regardless of the support that might actually be needed.

### **Willingness to Change and Barriers to that Change**

Another major theme that emerged from the responses was the apparent stress most men face in their daily attempts to strike a good balance between their masculine expectations and privilege. Out of the 25 men in the study, 19 reported “family responsibility” and “hardship” as the main source of stress and anxiety in their lives. Twelve (12) of these men specifically used words such as ‘psychological trauma’ and ‘depression’ to describe the enormity of their responsibilities as ‘men of the family’. Yirifa, a 51-year-old father of 11 said more than half of his monthly salary goes into paying a bank loan he secured to take care of the ballooning needs of his large family, leaving him in constant financial crisis even though he is one of a

few people who had a government job. Yirifa said his financial circumstances have often caused him to wish that he had fewer children:

It is not easy to take care of 11 children. The school fees, the medicine you buy for illness and sometimes hospital. Every day is hot. There is always a problem waiting before my salary even arrives.

Even though Yirifa is suggesting that only men feel the stress of the family's wellbeing, in reality, as some of the women also pointed out, women/mothers also feel this stress acutely. Societal expectations may place the responsibility on men but it cannot be any easier for the women from a stress perspective. The stress that both mothers and fathers experience is compounded by the internalized pressure men put on themselves to be providers and protectors as part of the societal masculinist norms. Yirifa used to follow a popular Sunni philosophy suggesting that "it is Allah who provides" for a child and not necessarily the child's parents/guardians, the very religious philosophy which has been used by hardliners to undermine contraception use and Family Planning initiatives in Tamale.

Like many other men in his shoes, however, Yirifa said his practical limitations forced him to rethink his steps and adopt family planning measures to stop having more children. This reinforces the main findings in this study: the fact that some men are willing to recalibrate their sense of masculinity in order to adapt and re-align with the prevailing socio-economic practicalities. More men (like, Osman, Danaa, and Abdulai, in this research) are beginning to take on masculinity which are non-hegemonic, despite being aware of the privileges, authority, and power associated with the position of a breadwinner. Non-hegemonic here refers to alternative masculinities which do not glorify masculinity even in traditionally male dominated cultures. The current economic crises, structural adjustment programs, urbanization and their attendant consequences challenge Dagomba men in their construction of traditional routes to masculinity, consistent with similar findings that men's experience of

continued distress and despondency tends to evoke new ways of re-establishing their identity. Difficult situations lead to changes in mindsets when given the opportunity for families to make better decisions that will reduce stress loads.

### **Challenging Masculinist Norms and Alternative Training for Boys**

Family training and upbringing were some of the major points respondents highlighted when talking about their views on performing masculinity. Seventeen (17) of the twenty-five (25) participants (or 72%) suggested that their own upbringing was unnecessarily rigid and often inadequate and partly blamed this for their challenges or limitations as adult men. Of them, Wumbei, said he felt limited as a boy because he was not allowed to express his true emotions:

We were trained to be brave and to not show too many emotions. Even when you're feeling pain, they will say a man does not cry. We were not allowed to freely express our views on issues especially when parents and adults are involved or else you would be beaten.

Manan (the seasonal farmer and butcher) echoed this view:

We were asked to show bravery even when one is playing with other boys; they expect you to be brave and aggressive. There was no room for emotions or acting like a 'girl'. Even till now I find it difficult to freely express my emotions.

Osman, the Lawyer said it was wrong to teach boys to not express their emotions:

As a boy they teach you to show your 'capability'. Even if you are hurting inside, you have to show that you're a real man ... you have to keep it inside. As an adult, I think that was a mistake because showing emotion is part of human beings - both men and women have emotions and can get hurt.

These respondents perceive their upbringing 20 or 30 years ago was unnecessarily rigid and ‘old-school’. More than half of the male participants (17/25) agreed with the suggestions that the current generation of boys would require a different training and progressive social skills to succeed when they become adult men. As Osman points out, parents and guardians must commit to training boys and girls in cognizance of their changing realities:

I raise my two boys with a different approach. Like I said, I force my boys to learn how to cook and I train them to not feel shy to do any work. They might leave home one day to go somewhere where they do things differently, so I train them to be prepared for this future.

Abdulai, the High School Teacher, shared a similar opinion:

As a parent today, I believe in giving both sexes equal opportunities in life. Both sexes should be given the opportunity to chase their dreams without any strings attached. That should be the same in their roles in the house irrespective of their gender. My reason is that most of the strings that were attached to my upbringing left undesirable marks in my life that I am not proud of. I am also training my son to be free to do what he wants. If he wants to help his mother to cook or if he wants to sit and play with his sisters, I have no problem with that. Maybe he will learn something that will help him one day. You go to Accra you will see men doing work that people here say is women's work. Men carry things on their head to sell on the streets. It is not a shame to do work that will help you to earn money but people have a wrong mentality here. It has contributed to unemployment because some men refuse to do certain jobs because they think it is for women.

Manan agreed with both Abdulai and Osman:

The world is changing and the training should change too. If the only work available is for women and you are a man who doesn't have a job, why not take it? These are some of the things I will teach my children. It is important for me because I want my children to be successful so they need to have positive thinking.

One participant, Ahmed, said he will teach his children to be express themselves freely in order to reach their potential:

I will train them to be more opinionated about issues affecting their welfare than we got as children. We were silenced from expressing ourselves and it has affected many of us emotionally in our adulthood. It is important for children to be given the chance to express what they can do without gender discrimination. This is important because irrespective of gender children should have a voice in order to become responsible citizens.

Ibrahim (the high school teacher) said he will not beat his children or expose them to any form of violence:

I will not lead a life that my kids will associate me with violence. I have also learned from growing up that sometimes parents may not necessarily teach a child how to behave, but the relationship between the mother and father have a lasting impact on the values children learn. I would also be less violent towards children to assert my authority as a man. This is important because of my experience of abuse of my father towards me and our mother. I love my children, I want the best for them. I want them to attain success so I have to be mindful of them and take interest in their activities.

There was a group of seven men who disagreed with the view that today's boys need a different kind of mentality to succeed. One of them was the blacksmith. He was adamant that boys must learn to take care of responsibilities which he calls 'tradition':

I learned, at an early age, to be responsible and to support my family. I will teach my children to do the same, especially my two sons. They are the pillar of my family's future. It is important for a boy to have mental toughness. I agree that times change but certain things don't change like that because it is our cultural practice that a man is the leader.

Another respondent Musah said he will consider some elements of modernity - such as education, good social skills, and progressive thinking when training his children. However, he adds that any modern training would be underpinned by traditional values:

There will be some differences but the values are the same. All my children will be raised in the Islamic way. They will have some freedom but I must ensure that they grow up with good morals. I believe the training I had from home as a boy really taught me that as a father the discipline of your boy child is as important as getting a soul to heaven. If my parents didn't keep a close eye and enforce discipline in me, and the fear of God I may have ended up irresponsible in my adulthood. And so, I am in a better position now as an adult to imbibe the same discipline in my Children.

It can be discerned from the above that men respond differently to the pressures shaping the practice of masculinity. Some of them retreat into hardline traditionalism, while others adopt more balanced gender roles. It is imperative for both men and women to be flexible in their mindsets and find a good balance between performing household roles and responsibilities, whereby they support each other to grow together, ensuring that both male and female members of the family function to their full potential without social barriers. As read in the transcripts, many women are increasingly becoming *de facto* 'breadwinners' with men being unable or unwilling to provide due to hardship or irresponsibility in some cases. Suffice it to say that it is only a matter of time before conditions compel more men to evolve towards

gender equitable behaviors, in the same way the industrial revolution affected gender norms in post-industrial Europe. COVID19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have triggered a global economic decline which will most certainly get worse before it gets better. Such a landmark change presents a unique opportunity to strengthen and reinforce the transnational commitments to promoting gender equality. It further presents an opening for implementing organizations to reach out to more men and boys and strategically engage them, as more men have the will to adapt but simply lack courage.

### **PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN GHANA**

One of the major findings in this research is the fact that gender equality programming in Ghana has evolved significantly from the past. Programs have shifted from the approach that focused primarily on ‘empowering’ women and girls. The shift has complemented women’s empowerment initiatives with other strategic advocacy and engagement tools, such as social lobbying and community networking. The focus is now about mobilizing stakeholders, including men and boys, community leaders, religious groups, and educational institutions, whose support and cooperation are crucial to the individual and collective attitudinal change that is required for GEWE measures to succeed. Of the twenty-five (25) men who participated in this study, nineteen (19) said they were familiar with the concept of gender equality. Ten (10) out of the nineteen (19) men said they were engaged in gender equality work by local NGOs in formal settings such as workshops and community meetings. Two (2) of these men said they studied tertiary education courses (at college/university) in which gender equality was part of their syllabus. Two (2) other men said they have been engaged at least once at a Jummah Prayers (Friday Congregation) in the Mosque. Only four (4) men said they were not familiar with the concept and have never been engaged at any level to talk about gender equality.

From these discussions with male respondents who had some degree of understanding of the term gender equality, several different views were expressed. Some held positive views, some men were unsure, while others expressed concerns. The men who held positive views were mostly middle-class/educated young professionals (people who earn monthly salary or have a consistent source of income) some of whom have life experiences outside the northern region. These men had higher gender consciousness and understanding of fundamental human rights principles, and they were more likely to support feminist intervention measures without hesitation. The second group supported gender equality (which they define as women's economic empowerment and opportunities for women), but not 'feminism' which they define (albeit erroneously) as LGBTQ+ advocacy, and which is considered to be a 'Western' phenomenon incompatible with African values. Noteworthy is the fact that some of the men in this second group were equally educated and fall within the category of 'middle-class by Ghana standards. The only difference is that most of these men have had all their education and training within the northern region where patriarchal values are the norms rather than an exception. The men in the third group are the conservative voices who have low or no education and therefore have zero gender consciousness. Neither do they have an appreciation of the idea of fundamental human rights, nor an understanding of the past discriminations for which gender equality measures must be women-centered.

### **Positive Views About Gender Equality**

Respondents' views as to whether they support gender equality initiatives can be categorized into three (3) key findings. The first group were those participants who said they completely support and have no reservations about gender equality initiatives. There were only three (3) of such men among the respondents. One of those men was Danaa, the High School teacher.

In his view, most of the challenges men and women face in their daily lives would be resolved:

Relationships between men and women will be better. Because if gender equality is well applied, both males and females will get a good life and remove barriers to any gender ... they will complete school with equal qualifications and can compete for equal jobs and earn equal income which will mean progress for the family.

Abdulai said he was willing to participate in gender equality programs because it would help to improve and advance his relationship with women in his life. Ibrahim Wumbei was also one of the respondents who saw significant value in gender equality. Like Abdulai, Ibrahim, a father of two girls, said he wanted a better future for his daughters and will support any progressive initiative that would make life better for them:

I believe in the philosophy that the gender of an individual must not be a determinant of the direction the individual goes in life. I have a daughter myself and will not feel good if someone denies her a chance just because she is a woman. So I think it is a good concept that people should support.

The third man Manan, the seasonal farmer and butcher, shared a similar view:

I believe women have different talents than men in doing some things and men also have talent in doing certain kinds of work. But that doesn't mean that they cannot be treated equally. Both women and men should be free to choose what they want in life without discrimination. Relationships between males and females will be better, since all parties are the same and contribute to the sustenance of these relationships. Because if gender equality is well applied, both males and females will go to school without any unproportionate barriers to any gender,

they will complete school with equal qualifications and can compete for equal jobs and earn equal income.

These three men and a few others in the next category found an intrinsic value in gender equality and would agree to participate in initiatives that are tailored towards promoting gender equality. For some of them, like Sidi Abuba, an accounts clerk, the idea of gender equality has the potential to advance the social lives of both men and women. Sidi said participating in gender equality initiatives helped him to unlearn some of the hyper masculine ideas he learned growing up:

I agree to participate in equality programs because I want to be better at my relationship with females in my life. I will also get the opportunity to correct some values I learned from the environment I grew up in.

Another respondent Hamdan echoed this view, adding he supports the concept because he wanted a better future for his own daughters:

I have a daughter myself and will not feel good if someone abuses her or denies her a chance just because she is a woman. So I think it is a good concept that people should support. It has more benefits because it is about justice and human rights. Every human being deserves to live with freedom. It has helped many women. Like I said, there are more female doctors now than when I was growing up. So that is an improvement, and it is also a benefit.

Apparent from the above is the fact that the responses of these men varied greatly, mitigated by level of education, social/economic class, age, and exposure to foreign places and cultures. The men who expressed positive views about feminist intervention (like Osman the Lawyer, Abdulai the high school teacher, Sidi the accounts clerk) shared one thing in common, which is the fact that they were mostly highly educated and thus were more likely to have what

Catherine Harnois calls “gendered political consciousness” (Harnois, 2017: 141). Gendered political consciousness involves three multidimensional elements: (1) being aware of gender inequality, (2) viewing this inequality as illegitimate, and (3) supporting collective efforts to bring about greater gender equality (Harnois, 2017). The gender conscious men in this study went to tertiary education institutions outside the northern region. All three of the men are under 60 years of age; they each have daughters; they are all employed in the formal sector; they are mobile; and they have had exposure to cross-cultural settings.

### **Men who Support Gender Equality, but With Reservations or Concerns**

The second category of responses were men who support gender equality and the idea of human rights more broadly but also have reservations about ‘certain aspects’ of the idea that in their view profoundly contradict their religious or cultural beliefs. Sixteen (16) out of the Twenty-Five (25) male respondents fell into this category. Some of these men would support gender equality initiatives but with cultural considerations. Osman, the Lawyer, was one of the men in this category:

Gender equality is good as long as it is not broad or overreaching. I mean, there are some campaigns in gender equality that run contrary to our long-standing customs and traditions. Balancing it would be good.

Another respondent, Issah, echoed this sentiment:

It is not a bad idea to help women to start businesses and to support their families. But to teach them to make themselves equal to men? That is what causes gender-based violence.

Several other men agreed with Osman and Issah on the point of ensuring cultural consideration in gender equality programs. For these men, certain aspects of gender equality,

such as LGBTQI rights and same sex marriage, are damaging to culture and tradition. These sentiments were succinctly captured in the words of Hamdan, the nurse:

I mean it [gender equality] should take our culture and heritage into consideration and not say things like ‘making women leaders and removing men from leadership.’ I think they should help both men and women. Also, they should not try to impose homosexual life in our culture because that one is an abomination.

Views like the one expressed by Osman represents a feeling of anxiety and apprehension by men afraid of what change holds for them. The social adjustments necessary for gender equality, such as equal division of household work, can be difficult for some men for multiple reasons. Some of the reasons mentioned include pride, feeling inappropriate to do certain chores, and social pressure. Ranking high above all these, though, was the fear of losing power and control. This fear permeated the words of many of the men in this study. An example was Wumbei who was concerned about ‘commanding respect’ from his wife:

I support the idea of women's economic empowerment and preventing domestic violence. However it is also important for women to respect their husbands no matter what. That is what our religion and tradition teach us. The character of men is different from that of women so there is no equality.

Some respondents were specifically concerned about issues such as sharing domestic work which is a crucial component of gender equality. Some men said they would support gender equality so long as they would not be required to do what they call ‘women’s work’. One of such men was Danaa, the 54-year-old Teacher at the Tamale Senior High School. In the view of Abdulai, women have ‘physical limitations’ that do not allow them to perform certain tasks efficiently:

As an educated person, I know both males and females can do the same work for equal pay. But then, if I consider labor intensive jobs like mason laborer jobs, most men are more comfortable and able to do it than their female counterparts. I think that if the job description is intellectual, both genders can equally do it. But those that rely on physical strength puts males a little ahead of females.

Some work is suited for women; like cooking, taking care of the children, cleaning, and all those things. How can a man do these things? That is why, in our culture, an adult man who is not married eventually loses his respect from people because he would be reduced to doing what a woman should have been doing for him.

Another male respondent, Alhassan Baako, raised a similar point in one of the focus group discussions:

I do support that, but we all know that there are limits to the work a woman can do sometimes. For example, a work that is too physical might be difficult for some women. When it comes to freedom, we already have freedom in our culture. Both religion and culture have demarcated the place of a woman in the family, I will not support anything that will change this heritage.

Others, like Musah, argue the temperament and physicality of men makes them suitable for other tasks other than domestic chores, which in his opinion is women's responsibility. Even though Musah is not averse to the idea of helping his wife from time to time, he simply could not envision himself taking it up as a responsibility:

Even though I can do everything in keeping my house, some chores are mostly cared for by the females of the family. Like cooking or preparing kids for school. I will

do all that in a situation that the female in my family is ill or is not able to do. She could be busy with her work duties; I can do those chores when she is not able to do them. But typically, it will not be cool to be forcefully instructed to do them.

One important point worth highlighting from these responses is the role of intersectionality in how respondents perceive gender equality. Acceptability of gender equality or progressive ideas was mitigated not only by sex, but also by age, social class, and largely, religion. For example, young people had higher tolerance to progressive gender norms, than older respondents. Similarly, respondents with high education qualification had higher acceptability of progressive gender norms than respondents with low or no education, except when it comes to homophobia: educated people do not sound any different from uneducated when framing LGBTQI+ issues. Homophobes often say the same kind of things regardless of their race, culture, class, ethnicity, sex or any other form of human differences. Respondents who have experience of living outside of northern Ghana have better understanding of the concept of equal distribution of household chores, compared to those who have never left the north. More importantly, respondents with high religious inclinations were less tolerant about the concept of gender equality, compared to those who consider themselves as not religious.

### **Concerns for Power and Control**

One consistent theme throughout the responses of the men in this study was their apparent fear of losing power and the patriarchal dividends they enjoy in both private and public spheres as a result of the discriminatory gender norms. About Twelve (12) of the Nineteen (19) men who expressed conditional support for gender equality initiatives raised concerns about women empowerment initiatives ‘taking power from men’. For Osman, it is important for gender equality initiatives to address the fears of men:

I would advise that the implementation of a feminist assistance program should be centered on assisting females to attain their full potential, with the inputs or involvement of males. The implementation should not position males as though they are antagonizing females. Males should be made to understand that feminism is not targeting to reduce or devalue them, but to empower women to be as equally strong and contribute to development as much as women will.

Abdulai, the 54-year-old teacher made a similar point of engaging men and boys in gender equality programs:

One problem I find in the implementation of feminist programs is the tendency to antagonize males, and make it seem as though feminism is meant to fight, disrespect or kind of ‘dehorn’ men. This I believe will be problematic because if the attention of males is not well courted to the idea of feminism, it could lead to men feeling left out or targeted. I believe feminism must be centered on the good of women and how everybody, males and females can work together to support women achieve their dreams and attain maximum potential.

For some other respondents, gender equality initiatives should only involve women’s economic empowerment and to not attempt to completely overhaul prevailing gender norms.

One of them was Ibrahim:

I would advise that the implementation of a feminist assistance program should be centered on assisting females to attain their full potential. With the inputs or involvement of males. The implementation should not position males as though they are abusing females. Males should be made to understand that feminism is not targeting to reduce or

devalue them, but to empower women to be as equally strong and contribute to development as much as women will.

Jaato shared a similar view:

I think those programs should be modeled in line with our customary order. They should not make it look like someone has by default done something wrong because of the fact that they are born male, and for that matter not qualified to benefit from these social intervention programs.

During the group discussions, some male informants expressed reservations about what they call 'aggressive feminism' which in their view is radical and inconsistent with local cultural norms. One of them was Hafiz Mohammed, a 27-year-old dressmaker in the Tamale Central Market area:

Without proper enlightenment feminism is likely to result in more women being mistreated by men. It is a good concept, but they have to take their time and not force it down on men if not that it will not succeed. The men will sabotage it. That is why when a woman says she is a feminist, it becomes hard for her to find a husband to marry. Men don't like such women.

Abdulai, the schoolteacher, agreed with Hafiz:

As it looks, it is too radical an approach to change everything at once. In as much as it is desirable to have gender equality, some aspects of our culture may not allow it to thrive. It is therefore important to be more diplomatic and cooperative in the approach, being aware of the existing cultural barriers. The target should not be women alone; they must pay attention to men and boys too because we also have challenges.

### **Expressions Of Concern and Examples Of Resistance To Gender Equality**

The third category of men were those inclined to reject gender equality as foreign to the local culture and therefore not worth pursuing as a social goal. These men - only six (6) of them in this study - see no value in gender equality and said they will resist gender equality measures in their homes or workspaces. Some of these men have internalized hegemonic masculine arrogance that promotes a sense of entitlement on the part of these men. They feel they 'deserve' to be respected and served by their women like their 'forefathers', something they constantly referred to as culture or tradition which obliges men to take up leadership and 'take care' of the feminized, women and younger/weak males. Ziblim, the 43-year-old Blacksmith highlighted this point:

It [feminist programs] is a destruction to the social order.

Don't get me wrong, I support justice for women, but every society has a way they handle social issues. In our society, the man is the head of the family, not the woman. It is good to support women to succeed but to say women and men are equal, that is not true. If we take that path, it will cause a lot of problems in families because no man likes to be belittled. The way they approach the issue of gender equality, it is looking like they want to take power away from men and give it to women. I don't support that, but I support that women should be helped to make a good living too.

One of the other five (men), Issah expressed a similar conservative opinion about gender equality initiatives. In his view, gender equality is a zero-sum concept designed to disempower men. I asked him to explain what he meant by 'disempower':

When that [gender equality] happens, it means a woman can disrespect a man and the man can do nothing about it. You cannot discipline your wife or your child.

I asked Issah to explain what he meant by ‘disrespect’ and ‘discipline’:

It means your woman can talk to you as if you are her colleague. I hear some of them hold high positions and control men around. If they use that on their husband by mistake and try to treat him like a small boy, what do you think he will do? A man is always a leader no matter what. So, you must show him that respect as a woman.

One other conservative respondent, Zaachi, agreed with the point that men must be ‘respected’ by women:

A man does not like to be disrespected. If you disrespect a man, it will bring the real man out of him. Some women are stubborn, especially these young, educated girls. They claim they are educated and know their rights. Some of them do not respect.

Some women have overstepped boundaries even in their matrimonial homes seeking equality in authority. Some of them also use their position in governance or in the corporate circles to undermine men. Women seeking equality in authority in the home contradict the beliefs in culture to some extent where man or husband is given the authority of headship.

Each of the other three (3) men in this conservative group of respondents did not see any real value in feminist intervention initiatives. One of them, Baaba Moli, a petty trader at the Aboabo Market in Tamale. Baaba accused NGOs of colluding with foreign donors to impose Western culture under the guise of gender equality:

In the Western society, it is normal for a woman to control men but for us it is not the normal way. It says women should have freedom of expression, even if it offends their husbands physically or emotionally. These women empowerment programs are going to create imbalance in the future where men will be made powerless. It is the marginalization of the male child.

The most vehement rejection of gender equality came from Abdul Aziz, an Arabic Instructor in one of the primary schools in Tamale. Abdul said:

I do not think gender equality is good for our religion and culture. We have our own way of life and within that there are best practices about how to treat women with respect. But the meetings they call to lecture the women about rights; to teach them to report their husbands to the police. How can that be good for our society?

In contrast to the progressive voices, these conservative men who oppose feminist intervention (Like Zaachi the butcher, Abdul, and Ziblim the blacksmith) have low education or are not educated at all; they belong in the low-income category of the population; they probably have never lived anywhere outside Tamale. These differences, in contrast to the first group, are significant in multiple ways. First, it shapes the resources these men draw upon when enacting masculinity. Secondly, they structure the social contexts in which masculinity is understood/performed, and thirdly, the intersectionality among men shapes their gender consciousness and the extent to which they benefit from the prevailing gender order (Harnois, 2017). While progressive-thinking men are excited at the transformative potential of a gender-equal society, the conservative ones see gender inequality and patriarchal norms as the status quo: one that benefits men socially, economically, and/or politically. Some men are apprehensive of what the change to gender roles would mean for them and have concerns for the privileges they may lose from the change. Conversely, men who are marginalized due to

their sexuality, race, ethnicity, and/or class do not have equal access to the power and privileges of masculinity offered in a patriarchal setting and are therefore not invested in maintaining the status quo.

### **Practitioners' Perspectives on the State of Gender Equality**

A significant majority of the gender equality implementation officers interviewed in this study generally agreed that the inclusion of men and boys is valuable and leads to positive effects on project outcomes. Nine (9) out of the thirteen (13) programs officers agreed that gender programs that included men and boys were more likely to be received positively by community members than programs that solely focused on women and girls. Three of the officers who shared this view were male, while the other six were women. Some of the officers explained that the participation of men and boys helps to cool male anxiety and dispel misinformed perceptions that the goal of gender equality programs was to undermine men. One of the respondents who made this point was Adisa, a 51-year-old programs evaluation officer with one of the partner organizations. Adisa who has more than 20 years' experience in promoting gender equality emphasized the importance of getting men and boys on board:

In our work, perception is a key thing ... especially what men think. African men don't like to be left in the dark about what is being discussed with their spouses at meetings and workshops. Without their [men's] participation some of them develop negative feelings about the program and it can affect the way the community views or receives the project itself.

Another female programs officer, Abigail, 39, concurred with her colleague:

Some men are suspicious because they don't want someone to brainwash their spouses with negative ideas that will destroy

their homes. A lot of men in this town used to think this way about gender equality programs. With their [men and boys] little involvement now, we are getting the message across and it is helping to avoid misinformation.

It is worth highlighting that the extensive gender equality training and their higher educational attainment means these programs officers have high gender consciousness. This is very crucial for project implementation officers who are the ‘foot soldiers’ of the transnational partnerships to achieve development targets on gender equality. These men and women are flag bearers of the local feminist resistance which has always existed in Ghana’s political landscape. Their perspectives contradict the conservative propaganda that feminism is a Western import.

The development practitioners offered examples of effective practice in gender equality, pointing to the benefits of including men in gender equality programming and supporting alternative masculine values. In the experience of the nine (9) program officers who support engaging men and boys, men with progressive masculine behavior helps to erase a peculiar stigma which often prevents most men from exhibiting their alternative masculine attributes. The story of one of the five (5) male officers, John, succinctly illustrates this point. About twelve (12) years ago when John first began his job as gender equality project implementation officer, he was often inundated with questions from his community members who found it strange that a well-educated and ‘successful’ man like him would ‘reduce’ himself to a kind of work ‘talking about women affairs’. To most family and close friends at the time, John’s self-professed support for women rights had simply gone too far. His habit of helping to do domestic work was considered unacceptable, but his involvement in the women's rights campaign was disturbing to some of his family members and close friends. A 37-year-old university graduate and father-of-two sons, John defied family and peer pressure

and refused to ditch his “soft masculine” inclinations, and now, John says he is reaping the social benefit of his progressive mentality:

I can say I have the most stable family life among most of my age mates in this town,” said John. “Even though I have only two children, they are both doing well and we are a more stable family than the ones with multiple wives and many children. Some of them who said they are living ‘traditional-man life’ are suffering from poverty and all that ... it is the lack of family planning.

Even though John was a rights activist before he became a husband and father, his desire to support his partner and to be a good role model for his two sons, partly influenced his inclination to adopt soft masculine skills. John says he is raising his two sons to follow in his footsteps to become socially progressive and responsible adults. The immediate success story of John’s family has motivated most of his friends to rethink gender and sexuality in ways that inclines them towards adopting alternative masculine norms for its socio-economic value.

In the view of Neena, a 53-year-old gender equality program officer, men like John hold a significant social capital and are well positioned to motivate other men who may have been held back by fear and stigma:

When it comes to changing the mindset about gender, men are the best role models for other men. If we have more men supporting gender equality and showing responsible male behavior, it can easily influence other men to join because it is coming from one of their own [male]. So, if we get more men to join the gender equality mindset, it will automatically bring more men.

Some of the implementing officers expressed optimism about the effectiveness of involving men more systematically as fathers, husbands, sons, uncles, teachers, religious and opinion leaders have a transformative potential, and can positively advance the gender equality dimensions of development programming. Respondents observed that these men are indispensable to the gender equality campaign because they hold a leverage by their social positions, and if brought on board, their social influence can be effectively utilized to reach out to more men and women within households, communities and other gendered institutions. All the nine (9) officers who supported the idea of involving men and boys highlighted this point as crucial to increasing the acceptability rate of gender equality among the populations. One of them, Comfort, explained the importance of getting influential men to join the gender equality campaign:

Some men have a big influence on other people ... people respect them and their opinions carry weight. Some of those men do not support women abuse or gender discrimination. But you have to approach them with respect and ask for their participation as a project. In my experience when such men endorse a message, other people will also accept that message because of them.

For Neena, one of the other female officers, influential men are indispensable to the process of any meaningful social change such as advancing gender equal norms:

Before a change can happen, some particular men have to be part of it. Some of them are chiefs, some of them are politicians, and religious leaders or even wealthy individuals in the communities. They have the power to change the way people think about something.

As noted above, 9/13 of the officers supported the idea of engaging men and boys. There were four (4) respondents in this category who did not see any value in engaging men and

boys. Two (2) of those respondents were male, aged 32 and 54 (both university graduates), while the other two were female, aged 49 and 35. These respondents gave various reasons for their reservations. One of the dissenting female officers, 54-year-old Jamila, expressed concerns about what she called “masculine ego”, which could cause distraction and consequently derail the momentum and gains made through gender equality programming:

African men want to be in charge, they want to control things. You see that because of egos men have ... if we are not careful with the way we handle the issue of bringing men on board it can cause us challenges in future.

One of the two male officers, Mohammed, a founder of a small women’s organization, also shared a similar concern. In his experience, some men attend gender equality programs expecting material gains such as financial support, and end up frustrated once their expectation is not met:

Some of them [men] attend our programs thinking they will get financial help or benefit directly from the project. I have experienced situations where some men get disappointed because they expected to be given the same support schemes women benefit from our projects. That can cause negative feelings and resentment by the men but we have no funding for that.

For Hardi, a 35-year-old male with ten years' experience development practitioner, the lack of specific funding for programs that engage men and boys more deeply and broadly, means it was too early to involve men and boys:

I think we have to take it slow because a lot of the funding sources have dried out. About 70% to 80% of the funding is specifically meant to be used to improve the conditions

of women who have been neglected for long. If we have to bring men on board, we first need to have funding for that.

### **Views About Feminist Aid Policy**

There were mixed and more nuanced responses from the officers with regards to their views on the feminization of foreign aid which is linked with the direction of programming. Some foreign governments and major international donors have adopted a feminist approach to aid. Respondents in this study were mainly positive about that development but also express reservations about some aspects of feminist values that, in their estimation, contradict their faith or tradition. For instance, eight (6) of the officers - five (4) female and three (2) male - said they would support a feminist aid policy that does not include the promotion of LBGTQI+ rights. Another four (4) of these respondents (one female and three male) rejected the concept of LBGTQI+ for being inconsistent with their belief system or values, while the other three (3) - two female and one male) were simply afraid it would be impossible to implement without putting themselves in danger due to public apathy and disgust for LBGTQI+. Three (3) respondents - two (2) male and one (1) female reject the idea of feminist aid for religious and cultural reasons. One of these respondents, Mohammed, who described himself as a devoted Sunni Muslim said he would not participate in any program that involves LGBQI+:

I have been doing this work for several years because I have a passion to help people who are in need but I can't support homosexuality. The idea of foreign aid is good but when it is tied to conditions that are not in line with my faith, I will not be part of it. I have said this in meetings and workshops.

The other respondents sounded almost the same as Mohammed. Hardi said he supports gender equality measures such as girls' education and financial support for poor women, and other social interventions often associated with foreign aid:

I think gender equality is not the same as feminism. Gender equality is good because it is about showing respect to women. I support that women and girls have rights and must be given equal opportunity. But feminism is pushing it too far to impose foreign ideas like homosexuality. We can't practice that because it is a taboo in our culture.

The aversion to the word “feminism” is an important finding. In this example, the study participant notes concern he has about feminist values that extend beyond gender equality and women’s empowerment as he defines it. Gender equality, then, is viewed in a binary with no support for recognizing diverse genders. Furthermore, concerns about homosexuality, expressed as Western or foreign ideas, are noted in his comments.

In the northern region and throughout Ghana, and many parts of West Africa, the conjunction of patriarchal legacies, post-colonial moralities, populist governments, as well as aggressive, transnational (but mostly American) evangelism, has often created scathing homophobia in both private and public institutions, culminating in heteronormativity and a harsh repression of lesbian and gay lifestyles. Heteronormativity is defined as the extensive privilege of heterosexuality, including in institutional contexts (Berlant et. al., 1998; Jolly, 2011). Jolly (2011) uses the concept to identify trends and instances where development work has perpetuated inequalities related to gender and sexuality. She argues that international development work itself can inadvertently reinforce heteronormativity and perpetuate the exclusion of sexual minorities. Heteronormative culture perceives a family unit to consist of a male head of household, married with (sometimes multiple wives in Tamale where polygamy is generally revered) children. There is also an implicit cultural expectation to be heterosexual, to marry at the appropriate age, and to produce offspring, preferably male children. A non-normative expression of sexuality might result in social exclusion in ways that exert an impact on livelihoods. According to Drucker (2009), GE programming has often

had an impact on how families are constructed, with the desirable household envisioned as one where women have gained opportunities to earn an income and have some status within the family, but nevertheless the family remains a hetero nuclear one. Such household models still form the basic unit for much gender equality programming at both local and international levels. In many instances, and throughout my interviews with gender equality program staff, the existence of sexual minority groups like LGBTQI was flatly denied. A senior female officer Hawawu, 51, was asked to comment on the heteronormativity in development work:

As for homosexuals, we don't have them here. It is not the kind of problem we face here because the local people don't talk about it. Our main aim is to increase opportunities for women, that is our priority as an organization.

Even as development workers, the respondents said they do not regard LGBTQI as a natural phenomenon, and deny the existence of LGBTQI individuals, despite a significant presence of LGBTQI activists in the country. Rather, they consider homosexuality to be either an immoral lifestyle choice or an illness which requires a different solution other than what gender equality programs can offer. Some respondents also emphasized that their strain of gender equality does not include LGBTQI advocacy, whereas non-binary sexualities are categorized as psychological dysfunction. Another male program officer, Thomas, elaborated on this point:

Homosexuality is not in our culture or religion, so it is not our priority area. It is even hard to see someone openly present themselves as gay in this community.

Even though these assertions partly reflect some of the public views, and mainstream stereotypes associated with LGBTQI, they are inconsistent with the overall reality especially when contrasted with some basic truths and facts about the region, where I grew up. Even

though the laws in Ghana do not explicitly criminalize homosexuality, a person who openly identifies as belonging to the LGBTQI or who is caught in the act risk police arrest or instant justice by way of public lynching. A cursory look at the crime data from the Ghana Police Service reveals more than 70 cases involving men of various backgrounds who have been accused of committing anal sexual acts and have been charged with the rape and defilement of underage boys (Ghana Police Service, 2019). During my days as a boarding student at the Northern Senior High School, there were several rumors of all-boys and all-girls sexual relationships, understandably because living away from their parents' home and coming to boarding school provided a rare safe cover for young adolescents to navigate their sexualities thanks to their new-found freedom. It would be easy to assume that homosexuality does not exist in Tamale or Ghana because the people in that community engage in self-denial or suppress their real sexualities for safety reasons and also to conform to the heteronormative cultural norms and values. Contemporary gender equality programming, at least by the participants in this study, reinforces the idea of binary sexuality, thereby inadvertently excluding non-binary sexual minorities who have been silenced by fear of persecution. Yet the evidence suggest that homosexual practices are common in many African cultures, albeit with language being deployed to mitigate the stereotypes and hostilities associated with homosexuality in the West. Gaudi (2009) explores linguistic and bodily performances that challenge the arguments of Islamic reformists, African nationalists and others who insist that 'Islam' or 'African culture' is inherently hostile to, or devoid of, gender and sexual minorities. The author revealed a thriving social world of men (*yan daudu*) who acknowledged and acted upon their sexual attraction to other men, even though the details of the social lives of these men differed in important ways from gay life in the West. They rather use codified language to identify as men who do not see homosexuality as incompatible with heterosexual marriage or parenthood. Similarly in post-colonial Ghana, Dankwa (2021)

noted the use of language by young women to frame intimate same-sex relationship as friendships, where “they have been doing everything together: bathing together, washing together, cooking together, sleeping together, and eating from the same bowl” Pg. 19.

According to the author such same-sex intimacies exist alongside and beyond sexual rights politics:

They invoke a spectrum of sensual and sexual intimacies that defy the analytical boundaries drawn between kinship, friendship, and sexuality. This ethnography pushes us to perceive the vibrancy of everyday same-sex intimacies that have not been captured in the language of sexual identity (Dankwa, 2021:19).

## **Resistance**

Despite considerable success in supporting gender equality in Ghana to date, gender equality initiatives can sometimes provoke hostilities and resistance from a small, but often influential, group of people at the community level where programs are implemented. In fact, the progress being made in promoting gender equality, and the increasing donor commitment to combat gender inequality, have pervasively provoked hostilities and resistance by a minority, but loud, conservative community who can be viewed as patriarchal gatekeepers in Ghana. As observed from the interviews, conservatives often invoke culture and tradition as the pretext to reject gender equality and women’s empowerment as alien impositions by Western powers. The Resistance towards feminist initiatives can take different forms, such as internal or external, or as active or passive. Internal resistance is fueled by actors within the partner organizations. It mostly involves men using their position of power and influence to undermine gender equality initiatives overtly or covertly, sometimes working against the same progressive ideas that enhance equality between men and women at the workplace. Elizabeth Bawa, a 51-year-old Program Coordinator at one of the organizations explained this problem:

Some of the men in the office are pretending. They only support it [gender equality] on paper but in reality, they would still say ‘you are the woman, and you must do this and that.’ They are part of the programs and wear the t-shirts but deep inside they still belittle women. They don’t practice it in the office, and I don’t think it is different in their homes.

External resistance takes place at the community level where the patriarchal socio-economic and political structures and those who profit from the discriminatory structures oppose equality measures and the transformative change they promise. Most of the opponents of gender equality initiatives are religious and cultural fundamentalists, people with flawed understanding of gender equality and the human rights principles that serve as its foundations. One of the respondents in the case study, Ziblim Mahama, believes gender equality initiatives are externally imposed by “jealous” Western powers and their citizens who “want to tarnish the beautiful ‘African culture’”. The active form of resistance involves openly challenging the goal or relevance of GE, putting forward alternative facts and arguments against it, and often trying to persuade others to join the opposition. The following comments by Nuuru, a 50-year-old community member, exemplifies statements which could potentially be interpreted to mean active resistance:

There is too much focus on women empowerment and if we don’t take time one day men will also be suffering from gender equality. Every day we hear about women and girls’ empowerment. Give women this and give women that; what about the boy child and men? We have more problems which are equally important to us. We have our own challenges and

gender equality is not our problem. Our women here are not looking to be equal.

The passive form of resistance is often difficult to detect, and even goes unrecognized or undetected sometimes, depending on the resistor's proximity to power. It may take time to discover passive resistance against implementing gender equality programs because the people involved are often part of the gender equality project but pretend to be supporters of gender equality, when in fact, in their deeper feelings oppose the idea. Some of them apply their subtle acts of resistance in their own work within the organization, and quietly undermine or sabotage the implementation of gender policies or programs. Others, like Zaachi in this study, say they support gender equality but point out that there are more urgent and pressing priorities to be addressed first. Regardless of the nature or form it takes, resistance to gender equality is grounded in hegemonic masculine behaviors and patriarchal propaganda based on a particular narrow and largely uninformed or uneducated claims of culture and traditions, willfully ignoring systemic inequality. It is worth emphasizing that these conservative perspectives are not only misinformed, but they also reveal a limited understanding of the need for gender to be women-focused to a significant extent. They lack understanding of the systemic inequality and how it disproportionately leads to discrimination against both men and women. Understanding the dynamics and nuances of these hostilities is important to inform better education and awareness about women's rights and feminist principles, as the resistance can be viewed as the manifest reaction of patriarchy to the potential changes in gender relations, which is often felt as disruptive in people's lives as well as local beliefs and customs.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In the first section, we learned about the background of the 11 respondents who shared their life histories in order to shed light on circumstances that shape their

perceptions of gender and performing masculinity. Seven of the respondents were male while four were female. Four of the LH participants have university degrees, another three had post-secondary diplomas. Of the remaining four, two had high school qualifications while the other two were uneducated. In the second section, the men in this study revealed the training/upbringing they received conditioned them to see themselves different from girls. Some of the respondents said they were specifically required to remain different from girls as much as possible. The pathway to manhood was viewed among men to consist of gender norms and practices that include limited interactions with women and girls and to show a strong ethic of hard work. This distinction of 'becoming a man' was deemed necessary because, even in their early ages, boys were expected to demonstrate a genuine interest in the rudiments of masculinity, often learning from a 'father'. To live up to the requirements of the social category of a boy means internalizing, knowing, and externalizing the value of what it means to be a 'boy' who must remain different from a 'girl.' It is not enough to know the value, but one must be ready and willing to face the repercussions of any form of deviation, or failure to match up to the standards of boyhood. The respondents perceived masculinity to be linked to three key responsibilities. First and foremost among them is a responsibility to provide for a family. The second is responsibility to protect, and finally to sacrifice one's own life for the family.

Ongoing economic crises, cuts in social support programs, rapid urbanization, neoliberal consumerism, and their attendant consequences have challenged Ghanaian men in their construction of traditional routes to masculinity defined by the three responsibilities - to protect, to provide, to sacrifice. These responsibilities have become the fundamental marker of 'masculinity' among respondents; yet conditions have complicated men's ability to properly perform this version of masculinity, evoking a

sense of failure in some men. Other men (two in this study) and almost all the women in this study disagreed with the suggestions that life has become difficult for men. For most of them, it is men who have put themselves into difficult conditions. Some of the women pointed to the multiple burdens they shoulder in having to navigate between productive work (earning income to support family) and reproductive work (caring for children and elders, carrying out housework, cooking, errands, cleaning, valuing the spouse – good housekeeper etc.) This reproductive work is often invisible and the division of the workload between women and men remains disproportionate. Even though women have stepped up to take the financial burden off their families (a fundamental responsibility of men in patriarchal logic), it appears that most men remain unprepared to reciprocate in taking a fair share of the reproductive responsibilities.

Section five illustrates the fact that gender equality programming in Ghana has evolved significantly from the past. We learned that programs have shifted from the approach that focused primarily on ‘empowering’ women and girls, to using other strategic advocacy and engagement tools, such as social lobbying and community networking. The focus is now about mobilizing stakeholders, including men and boys, community leaders, religious groups, and educational institutions, whose support and cooperation are crucial to the individual and collective attitudinal change that is required for gender equality measures to succeed. Among the participants who had some degree of understanding of the term gender equality, several different views were expressed, some of them positive views, some were unsure, while others expressed concerns. The men who held positive views were mostly middle-class/educated young professionals some of whom have life experiences outside the northern region. These men had higher gender consciousness and understanding of fundamental human rights principles; they were more likely to support feminist intervention measures without

hesitation. The second group supported gender equality (which they define as women's economic empowerment/ opportunities for women), but not 'feminism' which they define (albeit erroneously) as LGBTQ+ advocacy or considered to be a 'Western' phenomenon incompatible with African values. These findings constitute the basis for the analysis to follow in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX – ANALYSIS

This chapter presents an analysis of the views and perspectives expressed by research participants. It begins with introspection of the meaning men and women made of their own upbringing and how those perceptions affect the way they view feminist intervention programs. The first section of this chapter problematizes aggressive masculinities as an impediment to gender equality, while also detailing how it costs men and women. The role of family and other social forces in the production and enactment of masculinity has been discussed with reference to how they underlie local resistance to feminist intervention. Men's perception of successful masculinity has been discussed with a focus on their struggles and the declining opportunities to attain traditionally celebrated masculinity.

The chapter also discusses how culture and religion have been misused and narrowly interpreted to undermine and deny the connection between feminism and African culture/tradition. The chapter concludes with suggestions on how to use culture as a mobilizing force and not destabilizing for progressive change. The effectiveness of transnational partnerships and commitments have been emphasized in this study as being capable of transforming global gender norms and achieving Goal 5 of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

### **Hegemonic and Aggressive Masculinity - a Perilous Union**

The cultural upbringing of boys in Dagbon to be 'breadwinner' husbands and 'brave men' in defense of their families and communities has become an obsolete and counter-productive model, because it is inconsistent with the needs and social realities of boys and men in the 21st century. With disputes about chieftaincy, traditional territorial boundaries, religion, and political conflicts persisting in Tamale and much of the north today, the area is always at risk of a full-blown civil war, a situation which constantly demand families, communities, and sectarian groups to reserve a traditional army of men who can be called

upon at any time to perpetuate violence. In Tamale, as in many other patriarchal areas, assuming a breadwinner role, or to be seen as a potential fighter is normatively considered to be an honorable pathway into credible manhood (Dery, 2021), and ‘warrior-hood’ is equated with manhood (Eichler, 2012) and at the same time contrasted against feminized ‘women and children.’ Traditional Dagomba households and communities valorize aggression and violence in order to induce young men to risk their lives in the service of their household or community. Rudimentary masculinity is therefore associated with demonstrating a potential for aggression, courage, a capacity for violence, and sometimes, a willingness to take risks when faced with difficult decisions (Young, 2003; Eichler 2012;2015;2016; Sjoberg, 2013).

This condition poses three specific challenges. First, it breeds a culture in which boys internalize violence and aggression due to physical and psychological demands on them to practice a version of incipient masculinity which constantly tests their aggression, ability to suppress pain and emotions, and nerve to confront danger. Second, it leaves many men and boys unable to openly express their emotions, thereby exposing them to the risk of negative emotional outbursts that have been linked to gender-based violence, intimate-partner violence, and even organized crime of any kind. It also breeds a culture of unhealthy ego problems that undermine personal and professional growth, because men feel ‘too big’ to be ‘bossed’ around by anybody, and the ego skyrockets especially if the other person involved is a woman. The fourth problem is a hyper-masculine upbringing: the tendency of men and boys to use violence or aggression to express their emotions in their interpersonal relationships. They also face difficulty in adapting to the realities of the modern world which demand alternative norms such as respect for women, civility, patience, co-existence, equality, cooperation, and mutual respect.

The economic hardship in Tamale was dire in the months preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, unmitigated by high youth unemployment and consistent rises in the prices of

basic goods and services such as fuel/gas, transport food and livestock. Despite specific interventions of successive governments since independence, the development gap between the northern and southern part of Ghana keeps widening, partly because of the violence and insecurity that have characterized the north's past. Politicians in Accra and local government officials often complain that resources meant for development and other social investments in the north have been channeled into maintaining peace and security which remain fragile even in the present day. In Tamale and the north most of the beautiful homes and big businesses are owned by non-indigenous residents of the city, largely from the south. Productivity is generally low in Tamale. From building tradesmen to office workers, skills are deficient, due in part to the British colonial policy which restricted the north from access to progressive ideas. Until the early 1980s most indigenous Dagombas were still reluctant to enroll their children in any form of formal education (both boys and girls) and were still apprehensive of the colonial roots of the concept and having to take orders and instructions 'like a slave' (Brukum, 1999; MacGaffey, 2013). Even today, many Dagomba boys have no education (either having dropped-out or never enrolled in school) or employable skills partly because they hated to be disciplined in school or at the apprenticeship, especially by a female teacher.

The egotistic mentality of boys/men stems partly from the traditional masculine upbringing of boys to valorize aggressive behavior as desirable, a quality which has left many boys with a sense of ego and superiority which would not be tolerated in a teaching and learning environment. Out of the 35 men who participated in this study, only 13 had a tertiary education qualification (University/College graduate), another 11 completed Senior High (Grade 12 grads). The remaining group either never enrolled in school or dropped out before Grade 6. It is worth mentioning that a lot of these men expressed regrets when they talked to me about how their lack of education deprived them of a sustainable livelihood. They vowed to raise their own children differently from their own traditional upbringing. The

unemployment rate remains high among the indigenous population, exacerbated by the fact that many of these unemployed men possess no skills beyond subsistence agriculture and manual labor, and unfortunately, these livelihood opportunities have declined considerably due to inconsistent rainfall patterns and climate change.

### **Men and Boys as Allies in Promotion of Gender Equality**

Despite the concerns or resistance noted above, there is evidence of change over time. One encouraging point worth highlighting in this study is the increased engagement of men and boys as potential allies towards promoting gender equality, for which the NGOs and civil society deserve a special commendation. With the help of transnational partnerships, feminist donor policies and the strategic implementation of gender equality programs at the local level, the Ghanaian government, the NGOs, and civil society have targeted and succeeded in penetrating the very social structures – family/household, education curricular and system, religious institution, traditional leadership, etc. – through which patriarchal gender order is produced, reproduced, and enforced. These institutions play significant roles in modeling the attitude and perceptions of their followers, and therefore important partners and stakeholders in the promotion of the attitudinal and mental adjustment that boys and men must make for gender equality to become a reality.

During the interviews, the male respondents (19/25) in this study did indicate that they have participated in at least one public event in which the promotion of gender equality was the focus. At least 10 of the 28 men – all of them high school and college graduates – said they learned gender equality in school as part of the education system, while another 13 said they have been engaged in the Mosques on multiple occasions during the weekly Friday Jummah prayers, which provide a platform to reach out to the Muslim/Dagomba community who constitute the majority of the city's inhabitants. Most of these respondents had positive

comments about participating in gender equality programs. Programming has often had an impact on how families are constructed, with the desirable household envisioned as one where women have gained opportunities to earn an income and have some status within the family, but nevertheless the family remains a hetero nuclear one. Such household models still form the basic unit for much gender equality programming at both local and international levels. In many instances, and throughout my interviews with gender equality program staff, the existence of sexual minority groups like LGBTQI was flatly denied. Even as development workers, some project staff said they did not regard LGBTQI as a natural phenomenon. Rather, they consider it to be either an immoral life choice or an illness which requires a different solution other than what gender equality programs can offer. Some respondents also emphasized that their strain of gender equality does not include LGBTQI advocacy, whereas non-binary sexualities are categorized as psychological dysfunction.

A few points deserve to be highlighted here, first, respondents make a clear distinction between ‘African feminism/s’ which, in their view, is about women and girls’ empowerment and only oppose LGBTQ+ matters which they perceive to be associated with “Western feminism”. This misunderstanding exemplifies the perspectives Nnaemeka (2004) invites Western feminists and policy makers to acknowledge and build on to create the feeling of ownership for all. In her view, transnational partnerships must forge cross-cultural interaction and communication that encourages “participative and democratic process where stakeholders’ imagination, values, and worldviews are considered while mitigating stakeholders’ alienation, which could result from the invalidation of their worldviews and values (Nnaemeka, 2004:377). The most important contribution of nego-feminism, in my view, is the acknowledgment of the need for a “third space” where these cross-cultural interactions and lived experiences could dictate theory. Nnaemeka describes the “third space” as a cross-cultural environment “where borderless territory and free movement authorize the

capacity to simultaneously theorize practice, practice theory, and allow the mediation of policy. The third space, which allows for the coexistence, interconnection, and interaction of thought, dialogue, planning, and action, constitutes the arena where I have witnessed the unfolding of feminisms in Africa” (Nnaemeka, 2004:360).

One of the other qualities of nego-feminism is its acknowledgement of negotiation as imperative to achieving desired goals and outcomes on gender equality. According to Nnaemeka (2004), nego-feminism stands for “no ego” feminism to represent “feminism of negotiation”, which is guided by the principles of negotiation - give and take, compromise, and balance. For Nnaemeka (2004), negotiation has a dual meaning: “give and take/exchange” and “cope with successfully/go around” (p. 378). An understanding of such duality allows nego-feminism to challenge patriarchy through negotiation and compromise - strategic resistance which knows where, when, and how to resist or negotiate. Significantly, nego-feminism offers a roadmap to bridge the cultural gaps that breed disagreements between Western and African feminisms by considering the “possibilities, desirability, and pertinence of a space clearing that allows a multiplicity of different but related frameworks from different locations to touch, intersect, and feed off of each other in a way that accommodates different realities and histories (Nnaemeka, 2004:362-363).

### **Deconstructing History, Tradition, and Culture**

One theme that emerged from the responses is the accusation that those who identify with feminism or implement feminist projects are excessively Westernized, do not understand local problems, and hold to priorities that are irrelevant to local culture. Resistance to gender equality programming and entrenchment of heteronormativity are often premised on these and other claims such as cultural heritage and religion, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (Deveaux, 1994; Hoy, 2004; Bazz et. al., 2018; Ratele, 2013). Such criticisms lend

themselves to ethnic reductionism and create a hierarchy of 'local' and 'foreign' norms, thereby offering conservative voices the power to determine development priorities through the interpretations of culture and religion in a way which obscures the existence of multiple competing readings and interpretations of culture (Ratele, 2013).

Even some of the most ardent supporters of gender equality initiatives have the tendency to agree with the claims made by conservative voices (mostly men in power) that feminism is a Western cultural import. The only difference between the two (those who support and those who oppose gender quality initiatives) is that the latter, while regarding feminist programming and activism as foreign, also consider certain aspects of it to be necessary to bring about the needed progressive and transformative social change. This study therefore finds it imperative to unpack this loaded paternalistic claim. Digging deeper into the history of sexualities in Ghana, as well as a careful consideration of the position of Islam and Christianity on matters of sexuality and feminism. To proceed, two important points are worth noting, namely, (1) the fact that gender equality, feminism, and homosexuality are conflated and often used interchangeably or placed into the same category by respondents, and (2) the fact that I will limit my theological inquiry to Islam because it is the most dominant point of reference respondents made in this study. All respondents in this study identified as practicing Muslims.

It is important to start by considering the very definition of culture and its normative characteristics, because in doing so, one can expose the naivety and perhaps the hypocrisy which underlies the invocation of culture as a basis to resist gender equitable measures. The definition or meaning of culture is as diverse as the practice of culture itself. One of the leading academics in the field of cultural studies, Geert Hofstede, defines culture as patterns of shared values and beliefs that over time produce behavioral norms that societies adopt in solving social problems (Hofstede, 1998). In his view, shared values consist of beliefs or

assumptions such as how to approach social behavior, how to interpret events, what it is valid to question, what answers are acceptable, how to behave toward others, and how to do things (Hofstede, 1998; Middleton, 2002). Edgar Schein defines it as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Hofstede, 1998). Several authors have noted the fact that culture is a fluid concept that has no fixed boundaries and can mean different things depending on the context (Gjerde, 2004; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2012). Causadias (2020), following Haack (1998), argues that a fuzzy concept like ‘culture’ has many layers of significance, changing its meaning according to situations (Haack, 1998).

To find a definition which best captures the essence, fluidity, and complexity of culture, Causadias (2020) offers the “5p-model” in which culture is defined as a system of people, places, and practices, for a purpose such as enacting, justifying, or challenging power. These, when considered collectively, reveal the true nature of culture and its diverse manifestations across time and space (Causadias, 2020). Culture is a dynamic system that creates and is created by people, places, and practices (Causadias, 2020). The system and its components are inseparable and engaged in mutual determination: the whole organizes the parts, and the parts organize the whole (Causadias, 2020; Overton, 2010). There is a preponderance of evidence suggesting important generational differences in culture due to exposure to times of economic scarcity at various stages of the evolution of a particular social group with a shared history. Thus, people create culture through shared practices in places, and culture shapes how people engage in practices and build places. Culture is not static, but rather rooted in and dictated by time, as different generations are exposed to unique

influences that shape the values they support and the practices in which they engage (Gentile et al., 2014).

Tradition and culture occupy a significant yet largely misrecognized role in the lives of boys and men, as well as women and girls (Jackson & Na, 2013; Moolman, 2013). Tradition or culture signal self-reflexive symbolic resources through which subjects act as members of in- or out-groups. Accounts of culture or tradition reference how experience, in the context of life with others and shared pasts, is authorized, contested, transmitted, inherited, interpreted, and reinvented (Ratele, 2013). Such accounts are often encountered in gender work involving boys and men (Flood, 2010; 2019; Ratele, 2013; Morrell, 2013). Yet many of the criticisms of African feminism(s) come from a similar mindset to that of the nationalist movements against colonialism, which sought to protect African traditions and cultural values: for such nationalists, feminism was divisive, diversionary, and Western-inspired (Ratele, 2013, Morell, 2013). Most critics of feminist intervention hold the erroneous notion of 'African sexuality', as if there were a coherent set of values and practices about sex - a sexual culture - that presumably prevails throughout the time and space inhabited by African people. This is the case, especially in a world where culture and tradition have come to occupy a significant place in struggles for power, resources, national freedom, nationhood, and citizenship (Flood, 2013; Morell, 2011; Ratele, 2013; Messerschmidt, 2018). Tradition and culture are often embraced as resources by both men and women, as well as boys and girls who may not have access to other vehicles to assert their own power and agency. In many of the debates on masculinity in Africa, tradition is often invoked as a basis to assert the 'originality' of hegemonic masculinity and heterosexuality.

## **Revisiting the Homosexuality Denial**

As observed by Epprecht (2000) the existence of homosexuality particularly poses a fundamental challenge to hegemonic masculinity. The practice has often been denied in Africa, despite it having been documented in many places throughout the continent. Politicians and ordinary people find it useful to insist that homosexuality is alien and a non-African perversion, in what is an apparent indication that the notion of diverse forms of sexuality is extremely threatening to the patriarchal power and the heterosexual norms that reinforce it (Epprecht, 2001; 2013). According to Ratele (2013) these relativist contestations should be understood as men trying to speak with authority, to defend what they may have inherited, and to justify how they arrive at their interpretations of the world around themselves. In his view, accounts that reference tradition and culture were indicative of subjects' self-consciously positioning themselves in relation to a less understood set of beliefs. Hence, examining the accounts of and contestations around culture and tradition may be useful in working with men and boys, especially in contexts where tradition and culture are historically colonized or rapidly changing. In sum, culture and tradition are not fixed. Like masculinities and sexualities, traditions and cultures are being reinvented over time, continually being performed, remade, contested, and changed (Rateel, 2013).

Historians, anthropologists, and literary scholars have produced evidence of the colonial origins of the myth of 'heterosexual Africa' and have made considerable progress in explaining why it has become such a potent and virulent feature of public discourse in many African nations (Bleys, 1995; Murray & Roscoe, 1997; Hoad, 2000). Many sexual practices that were acceptable in pre-colonial, pre-Islamic and pre-Christian Africa were encoded with the distinctive tags of 'deviant,' 'illegitimate' and 'criminal' through the process of proselytization and acculturation. The process of proselytization also subverted, overthrew, and demonized African Traditional Religions (ATR), which formed an integral part of

African sexual culture. African sexualities were thus reduced to a universalized, essentialized culture and integrated into the wider 'enlightened' culture (cite). Murray & Roscoe (1997) characterize the notion that homosexuality was absent in 'traditional' African societies as a 'myth' created by Europeans. Similarly, Epprecht (2001) argues that the idea of 'heterosexual Africa' emerged from colonial attitudes and policies, with the Victorian legal and moral code being applied on British colonies. Most scholars agree that the notion of a monolithic 'African sexuality' is both empirically and theoretically untenable, but the concept endures thanks to the many social actors - political, ecclesiastical, and scholarly - who have found it helpful to their social and political goals.

Epprecht (2001) argues that European colonizers wanted to create the impression that Africans did not subscribe to sodomy: a notion that reified in making the case for heterosexuality. The Abrahamic faiths, especially Christianity and Islam, played a crucial role in weaning Africans from their roots and pacifying them for a new order. Islam, which had made incursions into Africa at an earlier date, was equally insidious and destructive of local sexualities. Bennett (2001) emphasizes how diverse national and regional histories make the meanings of 'African sexuality' highly variable across space and time, pointing out that across the continent (Saharan Africa, much of North Africa, the Sudan, what is now northern Nigeria, Niger, and Mali), Arab and Islamic influences were woven into African histories for many centuries prior to the 1884 Berlin Conference (Oyěwùmí, 2003; Tamale, 2011). This particularly resonates in the case of Tamale and northern Ghana where Islam had immersed itself into the local culture long before European colonization. To this end, it is critical to examine how religion and culture can be legitimately transformed to accommodate issues of human rights and constitutionalism. Given how much African people are entrenched in their traditional and religious beliefs, it is particularly important that any attempts to pursue reform

be adapted to local people's conviction and agency. This would be a crucial step towards social change.

### **Gender Equality, Tradition, and Pluralism in Dagbon**

Post-colonial scholars have long identified orientalism, colonial anthropology, and ethnography as partly responsible for misrepresenting and altering the cultural identity and heritage of previously colonized territories like northern Ghana (Mcgaffey, 2011). The received history of Dagbon combines elements of drum chant with material derived from colonial anthropology. According to Mcgaffey (2013) a limited number of publications about the history of the kingdom are themselves colonial products, whose contents have entered the oral tradition, the prime source of history in Dagbon culture. Drummers are considered the historians of Dagbon, but as Mcgaffey points out, drum chants in the modern sense give highly questionable dates stretching back to 1400 or even further. As the story is recalled from the chapter on Country Context, the indigenous people succumbed to socially more advanced invaders from the northeast because the concerns of their leaders, the *tindanba* (Earth priests, most of whom were women), were spiritual rather than political. The *tindanba* were replaced by chiefs in a new, hierarchical, and military political system. This new system ushered in a hegemonic masculine environment which caused a reduced role for women in leadership and decision making. Contemporary research has shown that contrary to the notion that acephalous societies, or "tribes without rulers," were anarchic, they had their own forms of government, ones that could even be admired for their freedom from the despotic imposition of centralized rule (Kirby, 2003; Mcgaffey, 2013).

Whereas some of the earth priests of the indigenous population were often women due to matrilineal descent, the new system established by the invaders (occupied today by their descendants, the Nam), laid the foundation for the patriarchal system which prevails in

much of Dagbon today (McGaffey, 2010; 2011; 2013). In this sense, what is now considered to be 'indigenous' was once 'foreign,' whereas what is considered traditional today was 'modern' once upon a time, thereby reinforcing the fluidity of culture. The indigenous system, according to both oral and written history, was matrilineal, whereby kingship was passed on from a mother to a son or daughter, or from a maternal uncle to a nephew or niece. There was no gender bias in the processes because it was primarily guided by ancestors, an arrangement which demanded obedience and total submission since priests were messengers of ancestors who, even though deceased, provide guidance for the living. The new system also utilizes spiritual guidance (Staniland, 1975; McGaffey, 2013), but the institution itself is political and subject to customary practices that subordinate women to men. There are still female chiefs who hold privileged traditional roles (McGaffey, 2013), but their offices are often subordinate if not ceremonial, with no political power or the resources (such as land) ordinarily available to chiefs or a traditional leader.

Because the several versions of the drum history are generally congruent, their truth has been accepted, but modern critiques of evolutionary anthropology and recent research in Dagbon call their accuracy into question (McGaffey, 2013) and suggest a new perspective on both the remote past and the present constitution of Dagbon (Brukum, 1999; Dickson, 1968; Ewusi, 1976, Songso, 1979; 1983). The received history talks of two civilizations of different origin and composition in terms of kinship vs. kingship, matrilineal vs. patrilineal descent, *tindana* vs chief, states and the stateless, invader and aborigine etc. These binaries have loaded moral implications, implying relations of superiority and inferiority to which northerners today remain sensitive (McGaffey, 2013). Local investigations reveal inconsistencies in the heroic narrative and suggest alternative stories which cast doubt on the 'warrior invader' narrative as no less political than history recited by the praise-singers of the chiefs because the fundamental legitimacy of the chieftaincy today resides in the

conqueror/conquered narrative. When British officials arrived in the north, like the representatives of other imperial powers worldwide, they regarded the states, founded, according to tradition, by immigrants like themselves, as superior to village networks, which they saw as primitive (Brukum, 1999; Dickson, 1968; Ewusi, 1976). The ‘primitive’ people were regarded as passive, anarchic, and religious, or merely superstitious, while advanced races had an inherently greater political capacity, evident in centralized government and in acts of conquest (Staniland, 1975; Kirby, 2003; McGaffey, 2013). These alternatives are linked and ranked, so the received story tells us that Dagbon and other states were created by a superior, politically competent patrilineal group that conquered a disorganized, matrilineal people whose leaders had merely religious capacities. This anthropology thus legitimated British rule as the next stage in a natural sequence.

One of the tragic legacies of British colonization is the existence of dual and parallel political institutions which emerged from the colonizer’s indirect rule system (Mamdani, 1996). With it is an inherent political and cultural tension characteristic of plural societies; that is, those in which two or more social systems, or institutional sets, are incorporated in a political framework dominated by one of them (Mamdani, 1996). During the reign of one of the Kings, Yaa-Naa Abdulai (1920–38), the British in the Northern Territories of what was then the Gold Coast adopted the policy of indirect rule. Their stated aim was to ‘restore’ kingdoms such as Dagbon to the state of authority and administrative efficiency that they thought had prevailed in the nineteenth century, and which would lend itself to incorporation in the government of the colony (Lentz, 2000; Nugent, 1995; Owusu, 1989). By 1946 though, the colonizers had lost faith in chieftaincy and had begun to introduce the new political system which is now the primary administrative instrument of the state. The dualism built into the state by colonial rule left post-colonial governments to face alternative sources of power and legitimacy (McGaffey, 1982; 2013; Mamdani, 1996). It also resulted in the new

states being divided into fragmented tribal communities, designated as ‘traditional areas,’ each claiming a distinct and immutable culture, thereby making it difficult to forge a consensus, especially on issues pertaining to universal human rights and national interest.

The question of the relationship between ‘modernity’ and indigenous culture (represented by the traditional chiefs) often provokes intense debate between progressive and conservative Ghanaians’ (Agyekum, 2002). On matters regarding the future of chieftaincy and so-called tradition, the progressives supported by civil society groups and NGOs declare that it is outdated, undemocratic, and an impediment to development (Agyekum, 2002; McGaffey, 2008). The conservatives on the other hand argue that because chiefs have overwhelming power over their subjects and are revered by them as repositories of knowledge, it is essential that heritage be kept intact and used as a tool for mobilizing people for socially transformative change (Boafo-Arthur, 2002). The so-called conservatives ignore the fact that chieftaincy and its political contexts have fundamentally changed since the nineteenth century.

We know, for instance, that the chieftaincy institution, which is the foundation of patriarchal social order in Dagbon, is an imitation of what it used to be in precolonial times; democracy, secularism, and universal rights have stripped the powers of chiefs, and their essence is now symbolic rather than real. Whereas a chief in the olden days could banish a person from the community or condemn them to a summary execution with no questions asked, the creation of constitutional courts has diminished such despotic use of power. A chief could impose taxes or enslave any wrongdoer. Colonization, democratization, and globalization have reduced the importance of chieftaincy and compared to their ancestors; present day chiefs are less powerful. The power and wealth of chiefs now depends largely on their ability to influence the outcome of elections and to convert land to capitalist uses (Lentz, 2000; Nugent, 1995; Owusu, 1989). Before the 1900s, the selection of chiefs and earth priests

in Dagbon was determined through divination, but today, that has been replaced by a select-committee, whose legitimacy resides in a so-called ‘Dagbon Constitution’, a document which was drafted at a meeting convened at the instance of the British Colonial administration. As pointed out by McGaffey, (2013), the content of the document is a canon in Dagbon today. The British thought a ‘constitution’ was needed to guide the selection of chiefs, but that document is partly responsible for the chieftaincy crisis that has held the people of Dagbon back since independence.

Still on the evidence of foreign influences on culture and tradition, residue of Arab and Hausa influence on Dagbon culture can also be found in the Dagbani language itself, the primary symbol upon which the legitimacy and authenticity of oral tradition is founded. For example, the original names of all the Days of the Week have been completely forgotten and replaced entirely by Arabic. Dagombas call Monday ‘*Atani*’ which is the pidgin for Day Two in Arabic (*Thaani*), Tuesday in Dagbani is ‘*Atalaata*’ which is Day Three in Arabic (*Thulathaa*), Wednesday is ‘*Alaarba*’ in Dagbani, and ‘*Arbaa*’ in Arabic, meaning Day Four. The Hausa version sounds the same as the Arab and Dagbani dialects *mutatis mutandis*. I asked more than 20 traditional elders (including praise-singers) in Tamale, and no one could give any convincing reason as to why such an important detail of our history could be lost and forgotten so easily without any trace. The three main traditional calendar festivals in Dagbon are *Damba*, *Eidul-Fitr* (*Chugu Bla*), *Eidul-Adha* (*Chugu Titali*), and *Bugum* (Fire Festival); all these festivals have their roots in Arab and Islamic culture.

Most socio-cultural practices in Tamale, and much of Dabon today, have their origins in Arabic and Hausa, a product of a pre-colonization which happened long before European incursion into West Africa. As a native researcher who has stayed outside of the cultural domain of Dagbon for a long time, one of the cultural shocks I often experience in conversations with people was the poor quality of spoken Dagbani even among non-educated

Dagombas. People who have no education can still manage to mix random English vocabulary such as “*easy*” as in “*di bi ning easy*” which means “it is not easy” or “*di ning fine?*” which means “is it fine.” An average person in Tamale would mix basic English words like “okay” when speaking the Dagbani dialect. People use English words such as ‘problem,’ ‘news,’ “thank you” etc. All these reinforce the fact that Dagbon tradition and culture have evolved through several changes throughout history. Customs and norms are subject to enormous external pressures, and they change rapidly, even much more rapidly than people are aware of. The content or details of culture is less important to people, in some contexts (they say ‘*we don’t know the details; the elders know*’): its fundamental value is to provide a basis for particularistic claims. This is the motivation behind recurrent arguments that gender equality measures or policies must be designed to operate within the comfortable norms of tradition and culture. The complexity of promoting gender equality in Ghana and other African countries, therefore, exemplifies the inherent political and cultural tensions characteristic of plural societies. Two or more social systems, or institutional sets, are incorporated in a political framework dominated by one of them, leaving post-colonial governments and state institutions to deal with alternative sources of power and legitimacy (Mamdani, 1996), a situation which continues to complicate progressive social measures such as promoting gender equality.

Activists and civil rights groups have referenced the development challenges of the north as a typical example of the challenges associated with the coexistence of ‘dual powers,’ those of civil and traditional governance. It remains the case that the norms, practices, and values of the one (tradition, for example) are often radically incompatible with those of the other (civil/constitutional rule). Some elements of traditional rules are radically incompatible with the modern state which guarantees freedoms, equality, and basic human rights. All countries on the African continent have pluralistic legal systems where codified law –

formally or informally – operates side by side with customary laws (Mcgaffey, 1982; 2013; Mamdani, 1996). Even where it is not explicitly stated that tradition has the force of law, native subjectivities and values find expression in the legal codes of most jurisdictions (Mcgaffey, 2011). In post-colonial states, pluralism is a matter of contrasted institutional systems, in which all citizens participate to some degree, and in which many people manipulate the values and structures of the one to gain advantage in the other (Mcgaffey, 2013; Mamdani, 1996).

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In sum, the themes emerging from the findings of this study illustrate three broad points. Resistance is significant in gender equality work in Ghana and in many parts of Africa. This resistance must be understood in relation to culture and tradition which have a significant influence in the way men and women perceive or practice gender. Culture itself must be viewed as a complex political and ideological struggle, where the power dynamics can distort truth/reality with fabrications. It is therefore imperative to scrutinize culture to separate truth from hegemonic inventions. As noted by Nnaemeka (2004), culture “derives its meanings, evolution, and reformulation from people’s encounter with and negotiations in it in the context of historical imperatives” (p.374), making it imperative to revisit, properly investigate and test the validity of the distinct lines separating cultures.

Another important finding in this research is the fact that change is taking place, particularly for educated men, those working in the development sector, and those who see opportunities for alternative masculinities. The first category is a group of men who are inclined to the concept of fundamental human rights and have attained higher gender consciousness through higher education and/or through their experience working in development. The second category are men who are looking for alternatives to traditional

masculinity. The latter has become increasingly unrealistic to attain due to changes in socio-economic and political conditions; its pursuance has become a source of constant anxiety and frustration for many men, forcing some of them to consider alternative masculinities. In my observation, men who aspire to the traditional path to masculinity tend to enjoy less stability compared to men who subscribe to alternative masculinity. Some men, having recognized the negative impacts toxic masculinity inflicted on them, choose to train their boys to adopt alternative masculinities, motivated by a parent's desire for a better future for his child.

In the spirit of leveraging the current momentum for change, gender equality programs must be context-specific and linked to strategies of negotiation that are culturally relevant. In other words, gender equality does not have to mean the same thing in all places at all times. Gender equality and empowerment are both processes and not an end point. Therefore, gender equality can exist in some communities that appear different than in the West. This is imperative to deal with the local hostilities to gender equality initiatives and to counter the conservative narrative that feminism is Western inspired. Succinctly put in the words of Nnaemeka (2004), transnational feminist partnerships must build the indigenous to create "the feeling of ownership that opens the door to a participative, democratic process where stakeholders' imagination, values, and worldviews are taken into account while mitigating stakeholders' alienation, which could result from the invalidation of their worldviews and values" (p.377).

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this dissertation was an exploration of masculinity, poverty and development in the north of Ghana, an area within the still developing literature on masculinity and development in sub-Saharan Africa. The research evidence calls for gender equality programs to pay more attention to the role of men and masculinities, especially from Africa. This call has never been more urgent than now, when situational challenges have forced the vast majority of men to be looking for answers. Material and psychosocial conditions created by the global political disorder, colonial legacies, economic and labor market transformation, neoliberal capitalism, and social changes have challenged and potentially disrupted patriarchy in most postcolonial African states, particularly in recent times. This presumably is an opportunity for policymakers and development practitioners to redouble the efforts to engage men as their lives have been complicated by the wide-ranging perceptions that men always need to prove their masculinity by being heteronormative breadwinners. Without challenging this culturally grounded understanding of masculinity, gender equality initiatives would encounter challenges to deconstruct and transform the current social order. Most men still hold greater social, economic, symbolic, and political power and cultural hegemony over women in most societies across the world, including Africa, and it is imperative to study dominant notions of masculinity and how such notions reproduce gendered and less equitable power relations between men and women. It is also important to observe, as this study has done, the changes that can take place over time. Cultural norms are dynamic and not fixed. Attitudes and ideas change over time. Several factors may contribute to these changes including economic realities, education, exposure to other ways of living, etc.

The Gender Equality (GE) programming in Ghana has indeed evolved significantly from the past. Programs have shifted from the approach that focused primarily on

‘empowering’ women and girls. The shift has complemented women’s empowerment initiatives with other strategic advocacy and engagement tools, such as social lobbying and community networking. The focus is now about mobilizing stakeholders, including men and boys, community leaders, religious groups, and educational institutions, whose support and cooperation are crucial to the individual and collective attitudinal change that is required for GEWE measures to succeed. A senior project officer in one of the organizations, 45-year-old Sayeba, explained the importance of widening the scope of programs targets. The strategies deployed in contemporary GE programming coalesce around challenging the underlying assumptions of social, economic, and political structures. Their designs are guided by neo-feminist principles that support the integration of men, women, and other sexual minorities into ongoing development efforts. Elizabeth Yaaya, a female gender equality officer working with an international NGO in Tamale says the new paradigm has yielded "quick results" because it is “in line with our African culture.” Wumbei Sayeba adds: “You cannot do anything well or successfully if men are against it because they are the community leaders”.

### **Prioritizing Gender Equality as a Development Goal**

The partner organizations deliver programs that lend influence and authority to struggles to advance women’s rights in the north. Local belief systems, values, attitudes, and behaviors require women to be subordinate or inferior, which hinders their participation in household decision-making and their representation in political and governance positions. Families think of boys as future breadwinners and therefore invest in their education and training in anticipation of the responsibilities that await them. Girls on the other hand are often regarded as “outsiders” within their own nuclear families because they will soon join the family of their future husbands, and for that reason there is no incentive for families to invest in their future (Alhassan, 2013).

Discrimination against women and girls is reinforced by a particular hegemonic masculine culture which automatically confers leadership responsibilities on men. This logic creates a necessity to prepare boys for such responsibilities. In low-income families, the education and development of girls are sacrificed in favor of boys, a trend that has produced and reproduced generations of poor women. The nature of gender equality programming in the region is fundamentally intended to break barriers and glass-ceilings that often hold women back from living successful, happy, adult lives. A lot of the initiatives involve engaging families, communities, and stakeholders to change the mindset of the local people and move them away from the negative cultural stereotypes that justify female subordination. This does not mean that change has to mimic approaches in other parts of the world or reflect a western vision of gender equality. Nego feminism – or feminism of negotiation – offers a new lens for considering compromise in gender relations that satisfies men and women.

### **Success in Engaging Men and Boys to Promote Gender Equality**

Scholars and development practitioners have advanced convincing arguments for involving men and boys in the gender equality dimensions of development programming. This resonates with the work of NGOs in Tamale and the north generally, where decision-makers in project communities are mostly men who have the capability to subvert development efforts focused on women's empowerment. Thanks to these NGOs, gender equality has assumed prominent status, with a preponderance of initiatives not only to engage men and boys, but also to reform the patriarchal socio-economic and political structures that entrench patriarchal hegemony. Endemic poverty is one of the obstacles that hinder men from living up to the onus of hegemonic masculinity rooted in successful breadwinner and provider. Changes in the economy, in social structures and household composition have challenged men's assured role as breadwinner and provider of the family and have

necessitated a new approach to family incomes that involves both men and women bringing in funding.

The decline in socio-economic conditions that reinforce traditional masculinity is increasingly compelling some men, particularly the young generation of men, to recalibrate the meanings of masculinity to accommodate the volatility of life in the postmodern world. This, according to Thomas Pang, creates an opening or an opportunity to engage men. The other reason for some men adopting more gender equitable roles is that they have important relationships with women as wives, daughters, mothers, sisters etc., and would like a better future for them. Some of these men belonged in an alternative social class and peer group that reinforced a progressive notion of masculinity. However, it is worth noting that altruism alone (men caring about women in their families) is inadequate for the purpose of promoting gender equality: gender equality requires that women be treated as equals not because they are an extension of the love of a man but rather because they are worthy of rights and value independent of their relationship to men.

### **Negotiation, Collaboration, and Decolonizing North-South Partnership**

The positive views expressed in this study with regards to feminist aid policies reinforce the fact that transnational partnerships that are designed to accomplish a common social goal like gender equality, and involve multiple cultural groups, have the potential to break down barriers that separate diverse ethnic and social groups. Although challenges remain in how the cross-cultural interaction between the North and the South is structured, the Southern voices presented in this study contradict post-colonial and neoliberal critiques (Cook 2007; Baaz 2005; Georgeou & Haas, 2019; Georgeou & Engel 2011; Lyons et al., 2012; Simpson, 2004; Heron, 2007). Post-colonial and neoliberal critiques may inaccurately characterize Southern partners as powerless and passive recipients of Northern aid tied to a

Western conception of being (Tiessen, 2018; Lough, 2011; Lough, 2013; Lough, 2019).

Some scholarships place the focus on power inequality between the Global North and Global South, ignoring the agency, voice, and social capital of those positioned in the Global South (Loiseau et al., 2016; Perold et. Al., 2013; Tiessen, 2018). They inherently presume Western privilege as an obstacle to multicultural solidarity work, leaving no space for discussions on how solidarity may be harnessed, even across race, class, national, and other forms of difference. Partner organizations, beneficiary communities, and local feminist groups do not necessarily regard their partners and their aid policies as an impediment. On the contrary, and as read in the interviews, some of the Ghanaian organizations consider feminist aid as an opportunity to strengthen local and transnational alliances in the struggle against patriarchal resistance towards gender equality, which is partly fueled by critical scholarship. Women's empowerment has contributed significantly to improving women's skills, understanding of their rights, and decision-making power. This coincides with the targets set in SDG5 which has been ratified by governments of all member countries of the United Nations.

The partnerships forged through feminist aid create transnational spaces across the local–international divide that are crucial to achieving international targets and realizing commitments to gender equality. To effectively harness the potential in these partnerships, researchers and development workers must recognize and acknowledge both the perception of dominant Westernized narratives surrounding the imposition of gender equality, as well as the opportunity for new knowledge production and contributions to solidarity movements. Nego-feminism offers a viable lens through which one can make sense of transnational partnerships to promote gender equality. The application of this lens examines the relationship between the politics of location and accountability, and the politics of knowledge production by examining the histories and hierarchies of power and agency. Nego-feminism advocates the need to rise above history which may “limit us to questions of origins,

genealogy, and provenance” (Nnaemeka, 2004:361). Nnaemeka calls on feminism to focus more on the immediate “moment of action that captures both being and becoming, both ontology and evolution” (Nnaemeka, 2004:361). Some feminist scholars have also defined the transnational in relation to women’s cross-border organizing (Mindry, 2001; Mohanty, 2003), and as a spatialized analytic frame that can account for varying scales of representation, ideology, economics, and politics, while maintaining a commitment to difference and asymmetrical power (Radcliffe et al., 2003).

The “space” offered by nego-feminism facilitates reciprocity and mutuality that can narrow the cultural gap and strengthen North-South relations. Direct contact among people from divergent backgrounds has the potential to make people more comfortable with each other’s differences, to reduce anxiety, and to lead to mutual understanding and respect (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Feminist-specific aid helps to increase the material and human resources of local women and feminist groups. It will enable partner organizations to increase skills, information, and knowledge in training gender equality staff and improving the overall organizational capacity building which is necessary for the successful implementation of programs.

Based on these findings, there are a number of key recommendations moving forward to guide gender equality programming in northern Ghana. The first recommendation is to begin with an inclusive approach to gender equality that includes men’s and boys’ participation in changing gender relations to support women’s and girls’ empowerment. The nego-feminism approach offers a useful starting point. Emphasizing the significance of “negotiation” and “compromise” as a common and indispensable principle of African feminisms, Nnaemeka (2004) articulates this vision of feminism which is common of the diverse cultures of the African continent:

It knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines. In other words, it knows when, where, and how to negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts (p.378)

The second recommendation is to create opportunities for more critical reflection on norms and values of masculinity that are held by some men. This is required in order to critically examine the potential negative impacts. It would also enable us to forge new ways to support alternative masculinities that build on cultural values, but simultaneously support peace and other social or political values held by the community. A third recommendation is that development organizations and government institutions would benefit from revisiting their international commitments to gender equality and to find new ways of enacting these policies. This requires further engagement and deepened cooperation with aid recipients, guided by the principles of nego-feminism. 'Nego feminism' complements transnational feminism in offering specific ideas about how to further narrow the differences between Western and African feminisms, through negotiations, no ego, and the importance of 'space clearing' to allow different but related frameworks to intersect and reinforce one another to advance multidirectional theorizing.

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## **APPENDIX ONE: QUESTION/INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **SECTION A: REFLECTIONS ON INCIPIENT AND ADULT MASCULINITIES**

Describe what it looked like growing up as a boy, e.g. How did you often feel about yourself when you were growing up?

What are some of the situations in your childhood that made you sad?

What other activities did you do? E.g., school, formwork, apprenticeship, playing etc.

What were some of the ideas you were taught specifically because you were a boy?

How did you learn if your father was not always around? \*

How did your upbringing differ from what your sisters were though?

What specific things were you taught not to do as a boy?

Did you ever do anything against these teachings?

What were the consequences if one did? What kind of punishment did you receive and who was responsible for enforcing the rules?

Did you ever experience any form of violence against you or others? Please give as many details as you can remember.

What would you consider to be appropriate/successful masculinities when you were growing up?

### **SECTION B: COUNTING THE COST**

From our group discussions and in one of our pre-interview chats, some respondents said it is difficult to be a man these days, how true is this statement?

When you talk about responsibilities making things hard, what responsibilities do you consider to be connected to masculinity?

But a lot of women here in Tamale do some of the things you just mentioned. Some women also do it on daily basis. Why must it take a man to do all these?

How would you respond to the suggestion that men and women should share these responsibilities equally?

From your position as an adult, what do you think of the training you received? How has that shaped/impacted your life?

As a father, how would you raise your own children? For instance, how similar or different will you be as a father? Why is this important to you?

### **SECTION C: PERCEPTIONS ON MASCULINITIES AND VIOLENCE**

What do you think about the relationship between the performance of masculinity and violence; for instance, a lot of NGOs here are engaging men and boys to end gender-based violence; do you see any connection between men and violence? Please explain.

Based on what you think of yourself as a man, what do you think about aggressive masculine behavior towards others?

Under what circumstances will you say violence is acceptable? Have you ever been involved in such a situation that you will describe as violent?

Have you had such an experience involving a woman? Under what circumstance will you consider aggression (beating, shouting, rape) against your intimate partner?

### **SECTION D: PERCEPTIONS ON MASCULINITIES AND GENDER EQUALITY**

How familiar are you with the concept of gender equality?

What do you think about the concept of gender equality?

Some gender equality programs are designed to address problematic masculinities; would you agree if you were asked to participate in such an initiative? Why?

Have you ever participated in any event/program that was designed to engage men/boys in gender equality programming?

What do you think about sexual division of labor between men and women? Do you think a person's sexuality affects what work they can do or cannot do?

Are there some works (domestic/productive) that you would or would not do because of your sexuality? Can you give examples and why?

What do you think about polygamy and gender equality? E.g., can there be gender equality in a polygamous relationship?

Do you believe in the concept of women rights? E.g., to own property, to do work of their choice, to marry whom they choose, to enjoy the fundamental freedoms that are applicable to your community?

When you say culture (values) what do you mean?

## **SECTION E: PERCEPTIONS ON FEMINISM AND FEMINIST INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**

What is your understanding of feminism?

In your view, how helpful/detrimental is feminism?

How will you react to a suggestion that feminism is part of our culture? For example, some aspects of Dagomba traditions (kali) such as (mayili-biya), (ting-daan paga), (magaaziya), (Pag-Naa) are all important cultural provisions that encourage feminism? There has been an

instance where men assume Nam by virtue of matrilineal affiliation? All these contradict the claims of absolute patrilineality.

Some foreign governments and major international donors have adopted a feminist approach to aid; what do you think about feminist intervention programs?

What concerns or reservations would you have about feminist intervention assistance program?

**APPENDIX TWO (2) - LIST AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS**

**LIFE HISTORIES**

#	NAME	AGE	SEX	EDUCATION	OCCUP.	MAR. STATUSES	INTERVIEWS & (FGD) DATES	COMMUNITY
1	Wumbei	32	M	Diploma (Post-Secondary)	Midwife	Married	2	Choggu, Tamale North
2	Rasheeda	43	F	Primary 5	Roadside Food Seller	Married (co-wife)	3	Bulpiela, Tamale South
3	Ibrahim	32	M	Undergraduate Degree	Teacher (High School)	Married	3	Kpawum o, Tamale North
4	Ziblim	43	M	No Formal edu.	Blacksmith	Married (2 wives)	9	Kanvili, Tamale North
5	Zaaratu	33	F	Undergraduate Degree	Civil Engineer	Married	2	Zogbeli, Tamale Central
6	Abu	61	M	No formal edu.	Farmer/Butcher	Married (3 wives)	8	Tishigu, Tamale Central
7	Ayisha	39	F	Higher National Diploma (HND)	Office Administrator	Married	1	Sagnerigu, Tamale
8	Jaato	50	M	Higher National Diploma (HND)	Accounts Clerk	Married	4	Kanvili, Tamale North
9	Danaa	51	M	Undergraduate Degree	Teacher	Married	4	Sahakpali gu, Tamale North
10	Osman	32	M	Undergraduate degree/ Law degree	Lawyer	Married	2	Lamashe gu, Tamale South

11	Katuume	25	F	Undergraduate Student	Student	Single	0	Vittin, Tamale South
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### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND FGDs

#	NAME	AGE	SEX	EDUCATION	OCCUP.	M. STATUS	INTERVIEWS & (FGD) DATES	LOCATION
1	Manza	31	M	Junior High School	Mechanic	Married	16 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 10 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Warizehi, Tamale Central
2	Nashirudeen	43	M	Diploma (post-secondary)	Business Owner	Married	11 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 13 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (15 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Moshie-Zongo, Tamale Central
3	Mohammed	34	M	Junior High School	Trader	Married	23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2019; 10 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Lamashegu, Tamale South
4	Adnan	52	M	Primary Five	Farmer	Married	20 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 14 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (26 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Baayawaya, Tamale South
5	Maaliya	40	F	Junior High School	Trader	Married (co-wife)	5 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 25 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (26 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Sakasaka, Tamale Central
6	Sadiya	35	F	Diploma (post-secondary)	Teacher	Married	15 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 12 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (15 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Choggu, Tamale North
7	Ayisha	52	F	Senior High School	Business owner	Married	14 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 18 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (26 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Gurugu, Tamale North
8	Fatima	27	F	Undergraduate (Engineering)	Engineer	Married	16 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 10 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (15 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2019)	Lamakaraa, Tamale South
9	Issah	52	M	No formal education	Farmer	Married	10 <sup>th</sup> August. 2019; (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Aboabo, Tamale Central
10	Gbanzaba	29	M	Senior High School	Athlete	Single	16 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; 10 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2019; (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Gumbihini, Tamale central
11	Saaka	33		Junior High School	Bus driver	Engaged (bride)	16 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 10 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Mohifong,

						price paid)		Tamale Central
1 2	Baba	28		Diploma	Teacher	Married	16 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2019; (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Changli, Tamale Central
1 3	Wumbi	32	M	Diploma (Post-Secondary)	Midwife	Married	20 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 14 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; February 12, 2021; D26 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Choggu, Tamale North
1 4	Sanatu	28	F	Junior High School	Trader	Married	23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2019; 4 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (26 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Gumani, Tamale North
1 5	Azeeza	39	F	Diploma	Nurse	Married	15 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 11 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (26 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Tishigu, Tamale Central
1 6	Rasheeda	43	F	Primary 5	Roadside Food Seller	Married (co-wife)	21 <sup>st</sup> August 2019; 10 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; March 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2021 (26 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Bulpiela, Tamale South
1 7	Mutawakilu	29	M	Diploma	Business owner	Married	8 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 14 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (27 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Vittin, Tamale South
1 8	Adam	53	M	Junior High School	Farmer	Married (3 wives)	21 <sup>st</sup> August 2019; 12 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (27 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Zujung, Tamale South
1 9	Ibrahim	32	M	Undergraduate Degree	Teacher (High School)	Married	12 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 17 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; 17 <sup>th</sup> March 2021(27 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Kpawumo, Tamale North
2 0	Jamila	41	F	Diploma	Teacher (Elementary School)	Widow	2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2019; 14 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Yong- Dakpemyili, Tamale South
2 1	Razaq	26		Senior High School	Mason	Married	11 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 13 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Kanvili, Tamale North
2 2	Ziblim	43	M	No Formal edu.	Blacksmith	Married (2 wives)	20 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 14 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; 11 <sup>th</sup> February 2021(15 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Kanvili, Tamale North

23	Abukari	40	M	Junior High School	Butcher	Married (2 wives)	21 <sup>st</sup> August 2019; 13 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (15 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Poloya-Fong, Tamale Central
24	Zaratu	33	F	Undergraduate Degree	Civil Engineer	Married	10 <sup>th</sup> August. 2019; 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2021 (15 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Zogbeli, Tamale Central
25	Muna	50	F	No formal education	Trader	Widow	14 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 18 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (26 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Warizehi, Tamale Central
26	Fataw	33	M	No formal education	Farmer	Married (2 wives)	22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2019; 10 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Sabongida, Tamale Central
27	Manan	61	M	No formal edu.	Farmer/ Butcher	Married (3 wives)	20 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 22 <sup>nd</sup> Sep. 2019; 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2021 (26 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Tishigu, Tamale Central
28	Mufti	32	M	University student	Student	Engaged	8 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 14 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (15 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Kalpohim, Tamale North
29	Napari	35	M	Junior High School	Security guard	Married	12 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 15 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (15 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2019)	Poloyafong, Tamale Central
30	Salia	30	M	No formal education	Farmer	Married	21 <sup>st</sup> August 2019; 10 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (15 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2019)	Kalpohim, Tamale North
31	Ayisha	39	F	Higher National Diploma (HND)	Office Administrator	Married	8 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 14 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; 23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2021 (15 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2019)	Sagnerigu, Tamale
32	Jaato	50	M	Higher National Diploma (HND)	Accounts Clerk	Married	12 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; 15 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2019; (27 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Kanvili, Tamale North
33	Ishawu	43	M	Junior High School	Farmer	Married	11 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; 3 <sup>rd</sup> Oct. 2019; (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Sakasaka, Tamale Central
34	Nazeeru	29	M	No formal education	Trader	Engaged	22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2019; 14 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (26 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Gumani, Tamale North
35	Abass	40	M	No formal education	Blacksmith	Married	3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2019; 11 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; (27 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Warizehi, Tamale Central

36	Danaa	51	M	Undergraduate Degree	Teacher	Married	2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2019; 18 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; 10 <sup>th</sup> March 2021 (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Sahakpaligu, Tamale North
37	Osman	32	M	Undergraduate degree/ Law degree	Lawyer	Married	14 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; 13 <sup>th</sup> Oct. 2019; 17 <sup>th</sup> March 2021 (10 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Lamashegu, Tamale South
38	Katume	25	F	Undergraduate Student	Student	Single	15 <sup>th</sup> August 2019; 20 <sup>th</sup> Sep. 2019; 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2021 (15 <sup>th</sup> Nov. 2019)	Vittin, Tamale South

### EXPERT RESPONDENTS

#	NAME	AGE	SEX	WORK TITLE	YEARS IN GENDER WORK	DATE/PLACE OF INTERVIEW
1	Adisa	51	F	Gender Equality Program Director	11	7 <sup>th</sup> August 2019/ Gumani, Tamale
2	Abigail	39	F	Gender Desk Officer	5	16 <sup>th</sup> August 2019/ Gurugu, Tamale
3	John	37	M	Program Administrator	7	9 <sup>th</sup> August 2019/SSNIT Area, Tamale
4	Neena	53	F	Director, Gender Programs	12	8 <sup>th</sup> August 2019/Catholic Guest House, Tamale
5	Comfort	52	F	Program Coordinator	10	11 <sup>th</sup> September 2019/ Tamale Central area
6	Jamila	54	F	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	20	15 <sup>th</sup> September 2019/ GIDIPAS, Tamale
7	Mohammed	41	M	Assistant Program Director	10	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2019/ UDS Campus, Tamale
8	Hardi	35	M	Founder, Programs Director, Gender	8	9 <sup>th</sup> August 2019/ SSNIT Area, Tamale
9	Awal	54	M	Program Coordinator	15	5 <sup>th</sup> August 2019/ Tamale Central Business Area
10	Thomas	43	M	Gender Officer	12	16 <sup>th</sup> August 2019/ Near Tamale Teaching Hospital
11	Elizabeth	51	M	Gender Desk Coordinator	20	25 <sup>th</sup> July 2019/ Near Police Headquarters, Tamale

12	Abena	36	F	Gender Programs Administrator	11	16 <sup>th</sup> September 2019/ Near Tamale Central area
13	Munkai la	32	F	Assistant Dender Officer	7	25 <sup>th</sup> August 2019/ Warders Canteen, Tamale