

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In recent months, AWDF has noticed with deep concern, a rise in the frequency of violence-related deaths and injuries, and domestic violence cases being reported by the various Ghanaian mediahouses. Not only does it seem that violence has increased, it also seems that it comes in a wider variety of instances, some increasingly brutal and others startlingly fatal.

In reaction to this, three of our staff put together [this](#) personal blog piece on a call to action against violence against women very recently. Barely two weeks after, the Ghanaian celebrity representative to the popular South Africa-based Big Brother Africa, a very visible and internationally broadcasted reality show, slapped a fellow female housemate in a shocking act of violence which had them both expelled from the show, and left the entire continent debating. Our Communications Officer, Nana Sekyiamah issued an emphatic disapproval of this action of violence by a male against a female, and this was captured on leading radio stations and by Big Brother's website.

These events have prompted us on the need to always ensure the availability of educative and preventive materials for victims and potential victims as well as perpetrators, on Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women. Hence, this resource paper on what defines Domestic Violence and places to go to for safety, counselling, protection and violence-related support in several countries all over the continent of Africa.

Violence rates are rising everywhere, for a variety of reasons, and as Mr. Freeman Tettey, DOVVSU (Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit) Public Relations Officer said in an interview with *The Times* newspaper in Accra in March this year, there were 15, 495 reported cases of violence against women last year in Ghana, and 2,474 cases of woman-to-man violence cases in the same period. It is about time we increase public awareness and education of this negative situation in our societies.

What is violence?

Violence does not refer to common household arguments or conflicts. People can argue without one party having more power or control than the other. If anyone chooses to use this power in harmful ways, the result can change from some of the more subtle forms of violence to severe injury or death.

What is domestic violence?

It includes all forms of violence within families: children being harmed by parents or caregivers, by older siblings or relatives; women being harmed by their partners, sons or daughters; men being harmed by women; older family members being harmed by their offspring. It can be physical, sexual, psychological, social, or economic. Violence generally refers to behavior which results in humiliation, damage or injury to another person and/or which results in someone living in fear of another person's behavior.

What kinds of behavior does it include?

- Physical abuse – pushing, slapping, hitting, shoving, pulling hair, twisting limbs, strangling, breaking bones, property damage, use of weapons, denial of basic human needs.
- Verbal/Emotional abuse – threats, blackmail, perjorative speech, name-calling.
- Sexual abuse – attempt to force a partner to have sex or perform sexual act against their will; physically attacking sexual parts of partner's body; treating a partner like a sex object; making demeaning and humiliating sexual comments or jokes.
- Social abuse – enforced social isolation; social control preventing partner from having social contact; strict controls on any social contact' limiting what partner does, sees, reads, does.

Are victims always women?

The overwhelming majority is women. Domestic violence is about power and control, and is a symptom of oppression of women. In Ghana and most other parts of Africa, many women are socially and/or financially dependent upon their partners, which makes them more vulnerable.

Impacts

- Fear
- Low self-esteem
- Internalised Oppression (sustenance of violence)
- Internalised Blame
- Isolation
- Mood swings
- Anger

What can I Do? When in Danger/Attacked

Safety Planning:

Safety plans must be specific to each individual and must be flexible. Plans must change as the circumstances merit alternation. Review your plan as often as possible in order to plan the safest way to leave your abuser.

- Do you have a safe place for you and your children to stay?
- Spoken to your children about the violence, safe places to go to?
- Do you have your own bank account/finances?

Pack a bag with the following items so you are always ready to leave the violence area:

- Money
- Important documents for you and your children (passport, birth certificates, custody papers, driver's licence, property ownership papers)
- Keys to house
- Medication
- Clothes
- Phone and Phone numbers (of doctor, family and friends, Shelter or Crisis Centre)

If you think your partner will become violent:

- Plan a way to escape from the house, for example go to a door if you sense anger growing
- Plan a safe place to go
- Stay away from places where there are weapons when anger is becoming apparent

If you choose to leave home:

- Leave at a time when partner is not at home or not expected for several hours
- Do not divulge where you are leaving to.

After leaving:

- Your partner may still become violent if he sees you
- Avoid places you used to visit often
- Change your residence if possible
- Ask co-workers, neighbours, relatives, friends to inform you if they see your partner nearby.
- Consider informing the police if your partner continues to harass you
- Change the locks on your doors if you are living in the same house

Survival Tips for Battered Woman

- Contact the nearest police station or if in Ghana, DOVVSU. There are stations and points in several locations. Insist on having your statement recorded and action taken by the Police. If this is difficult to do, report to DOVVSU or a Crisis Centre.
- Keep any evidence of physical abuse – torn clothes, bruises and injuries
- Call a female-shelter centre or Crisis Centre or any agency or persons who work with survivors of violence and use resources available to you – care, support, protection, even legal support.
- Know where you can go to for help and keep those phone numbers where you can easily find them.
- Tell someone you know and trust about what is happening to you
- If you are injured and police station, Crisis Centre or DOVVSU is far away, go to a hospital, doctor, or community health officer and tell them what happened to you.
- Support may also be available through a church, mosque, traditional ruler, and legal institutions (especially those on women's rights)

(Details culled from the Ark Foundation Ghana site http://www.benakconsult.com/arkfoundation/about_us.php)

Who to contact:

INSTITUTION & COUNTRY	PHONE NUMBERS	E-MAIL	LOCATION
Any police station Any DOVVSU centre (Police-administered Domestic Violence Unit GHANA	191		Every major neighbourhood has a police station
The Ark Foundation GHANA	+233(0)302 511610	thearkgh@yahoo.co.uk	No. 13, Bluegate Haatso – ECOMOG Rd Legon, Accra.
Women's Initiativement for Self Empowerment (WISE) GHANA	+233(0)302 781003 +233(0)302 781002	info@wise-up.org	22 Sir Arku Korsah Road Roman Ridge, Accra P.O. Box CT5604 Cantonments-Accra
FIDA (Women Lawyers) GHANA	+233(0)302 229283	info@fidaghana.org	Hse No. C734/3, 4 th Crescent Link, Asylum Down, Accra
Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) Nairobi Women's Hospital KENYA	+254(0)202726821 +254(0)202712886 +254(0)20254722	tomondi@nwch.co.ke gvrcc@nwch.co.ke ikiama@nwch.co.ke	P.O. Box 10552-00100 Nairobi Kenya

Nairobi Peace Initiative KENYA	+254(0)204441444	fmpaayei@npi_africa.org	NPI-Africa P.O. Box 14894-00800 Kenya
Busia Community Based Services (BUCOSS) Project	+254(0)733901922	bucoss@yahoo.com	P.O. Box 711-50400 Busia-Kenya
FIDA (Women Lawyers) UGANDA	+256(0)41530848 +256(0)31226971 +256(0)772505152	fida@fidauganda.or.ug	P.O. Box 2157 Kampala - Uganda
Abasa for Empowerment Project RWANDA	+250(0)08763715	burizihizarose@yahoo.fr	Icyeru Cell, Mukara Sector Huye District, Southern Province BP 33 Butare Rwanda
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International Centre for Reproductive Health & Sexual Rights (INCRESE) NIGERIA	+234(0)66223118 +234(0)8034500714	increase@lycos.com darlyndotty@yahoo.com	1E Bosso Road Minna Nigeria
Gender Awareness Trust (GAT) NIGERIA	+234(0)62419923 +234(0)8033146543	gat_org@yahoo.com	F.3 Barnawa Shopping Complex, New Extension Kaduna-South, Nigeria
Women Solidarity Inc. (WOSI) LIBERIA	+231(0)6593728 +231(0)5935716	wosi_lib@yahoo.com	C/O P.O. Box 5873 One Gurley's Place Corner of Benson & Mechlin Street
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Phoenix Child and Family Welfare Society SOUTH AFRICA	+27 031 500 3671	childw@iafrica.com	10 Featherstone place, Whetstone, Phoenix P. O. Box 309 Mount Edgecombe, 4300 South Africa
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Rural Women's Movement SOUTH AFRICA	+27 33 3434147 +27 73 8405151	ruralwomensmovement@gmail.com	20 St. Michaels Road Winterskloof P.O.Box 1326 Hilton South Africa
Fynex Family Support Services ZIMBABWE	+237 77 778305	fynex1962@gmail.com	43-4th Street Paradise Park, Marondera Zimbabwe
Women in Action		wacamngo@yahoo.com	P.O.Box 363

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FIDA (Women Lawyers) Cameroon	+237 333 2517 +237 996 9136 +237 532 0253	fidacam@yahoo.com	BP 126 Limbe Limbe, Fako Division South West Province Cameroon
Comite d'Assistance a la Femme Nécessiteuse du Cameroun CAFENEC CAMEROON	+237 99993820 +237 79975259 +237 22092473	cafenec@hotmail.com info_cafenec@yahoo.fr	Bastos, Rue 1957 P.O.Box 7915 Yaounde
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