

ADVOCACY FOR BETTER IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GHANA

July 2002



ADVOCACY FOR BETTER IMPLEMENTATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN GHANA

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Foreword

This Advocacy for Better Implementation of Women's Rights in Ghana was drafted by WiLDAF -GHANA under the supervision of the WiLDAF/ FeDDAF Sub-Regional Office for West Africa. It is designed within the scope of the "*Sensitisation and capacity building of judicial and extra judicial stakeholders for the effective implementation of the rights of women in West Africa*" project, which aims at contributing to improve the effectiveness of women's rights in Ghana as well as in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.

Easy to get to grips with, this document is designed first and foremost for medical doctors, traditional rulers and religious leaders, and will be useful during the national sensitisation and information days organised for them. We are counting on the trained stakeholders to in turn, circulate it among their peers. It can also be profitably utilised by Magistrates, lawyers, and police officers who may find the general views of women's rights and the gender perspectives outlined here helpful to enable them better understand and take account of the needs of women who solicit their services.

WiLDAF/FeDDAF in producing this material, wanted people to understand and admit that today, the respect and effective implementation of women's rights really contribute to the betterment of all and that all of society should strive to achieve a human-faced and sustainable development with the effective participation of women. The acceptance of this vision is the fruit of the protests of women's rights organisations that demanded and obtained recognition of the fundamental rights granted to every individual at the international and national levels. The evidence of this is the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 and ratified by all West African States.

For over two decades now, this Convention has been implemented and successes chalked, however women in reality continue to face difficulties pertaining to the effective enjoyment of their rights. The analysis reveals that this situation does not solely depend on them and women's rights organisations, but also, to a large extent, on other stakeholders who intervene in the legal or informal settlement of conflicts generated by the violations they suffer. These stakeholders are those targeted by the project within which scope this document has been produced.

By devoting the document to issues that affect women in their everyday lives, the document is supposed to be an advocacy tool for the implementation of women's rights recognised under the laws. We hope that it will not leave any readers indifferent but rather incite them to join their energy and determination with those of other actors to take up this challenge of a society free of discrimination among the sexes and based on the search for the well-being of all.

Kafui ADJAMAGBO-JOHNSON
Sub-Regional Coordinator of WiLDAF/FeDDAF
For West Africa



INTRODUCTION

GENERAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN GHANA:

Women in Ghana are recognized under law as having equal rights with men in all spheres of life. The 1992 Constitution recognizes equality of all persons before the law and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion etc. Ghana, as a member of the United Nations, African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, is also signatory to a number of international and regional Human Rights instruments, which reinforce the human rights of women. Indeed, Ghana has signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) since 1980, an indication of the government's commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of women.

The law also affords women and men equal access to education, employment and health and equal opportunity to participate in political and social activities of the country. In spite of these constitutional and legal guarantees, the reality on the ground does not quite measure up to the rights provided under the laws. For example, whilst both women and men have equal access to education, one finds that a lot more men are educated than women. Indeed the literacy rate for men is 60% as opposed to 30% for women. Although the gap at the primary level between boys and girls is relatively small and sometimes even equal, it is found that by the time they reach the tertiary level, the gap is very wide indeed. The reason for this situation is that when families are faced with economic difficulties, they find it easier to withdraw the girls because it is felt the girls do not need as much education as the boys. In fact, the societal roles assigned to women is to marry and have children and therefore the perception is that these girls and women would end up in the kitchen and therefore it will be a waste of the family's resources to educate the girl to a high level.

Again, sometimes the policies in place with regard to education are not supportive of girls continuing to stay in school. Previously, when a girl got pregnant, that was the end of her education. She was dismissed whilst the boy who impregnated her was allowed to carry on with his education without any sanctions whatsoever.

Because the majority of women do not have higher education or marketable skills, they are unable to obtain good jobs in the formal sector. Therefore we find the situation where the majority of women in employment are in the informal sector, or even when employed in the formal sector, they are in the lowly paid jobs. They do not earn enough in these jobs to allow them to be economically independent and therefore find themselves most of the time in a situation of economic dependency on the man. This dependency reinforces their low status in the society and therefore makes them susceptible to control by the men, violence and other forms of maltreatment and discrimination.

Women's low status is often supported by societal structures such as religion, marriage and cultural norms. In most of our cultures and

traditions, women are often considered as inferior to men and because of that women are prevented or prohibited from undertaking some activities. In some places, women are not allowed to speak at public functions where there are men. If they do not speak, their needs and concerns are not heard. Consequently, they do not participate in decisions that affect them. Some of the specific issues that need to be addressed are discussed in following sections.

SECTION 1

INHERITANCE RIGHTS

Before 1985, inheritance of property, for the majority of Ghanaians, was regulated by the customary law of the person who has died or by the type of marriage the deceased contracted during his life time. If an Akan man died, his property was inherited by his sister's children (usually the boys) or his own brothers by his mother, that is members of his maternal family. The wife and children of the deceased were not considered part of his maternal family and therefore were not entitled to any of his property. This customary law did not take into account the role and or the contribution of the wife and or children in the acquisition of the deceased's property. What happened in such situations was that the wife and children were deprived of any share in the deceased's property and were in some cases thrown out of the family home, thus becoming destitute in the process. Very often the nephew or family member who inherited the deceased's property may not have contributed in any way to the acquisition of the property.

In patrilineal communities, that is, those communities who inherit through the male line, even though the children of the deceased are the ones to inherit, the real situation on the ground is that it is only the sons who inherited. The daughters were denied their share of such property because they were either married or would marry and therefore if allowed to inherit, the property would go to some other family. In situations where the children were very young when the father died, the property is given to a brother or other male relative of the deceased to manage until the children come of age. During this period, the successor is expected to look after the surviving children and their mother but there have been several instances where these successors have failed to carry out their obligations and by the time the children grow up, the property would have been mismanaged or totally dissipated.

Wives, under patrilineal law, were also not considered part of the husbands' families and here again were denied a share of the deceased's property as happened to wives under matrilineal law. In the case of wives under patrilineal system, it was thought that if her children, that is, sons, inherited the property, then she could have access to the property. Again, the wife's contribution was not recognized nor taken into account. Customary law did not take into account the situation where the sons who inherited may not be the natural children of the surviving wife. In such a case, there is no guarantee that the wife would enjoy any of the property if there is no legal guarantee of the wife's right to the deceased husband's property.

Husbands, under either matrilineal or patrilineal systems of inheritance could not inherit their deceased wives' property as they were not considered part of their wives' families.

These inequities in inheritance under customary law, informed the Government's decision to pass a uniform system of inheritance law to

apply to all Ghanaians, irrespective of whether one belonged to a patrilineal or matrilineal family, the type of marriage contracted or one's religion. The Intestate Succession Law, PNDC Law111, which came into effect in 1985, make it possible for children, both sons and daughters, as well as wives to inherit property of the deceased husband. In the same way, a husband, together with the children can inherit the property of a deceased wife.

In recognition of the changes in the family structure from extended family to a nuclear one of husband, wife and children, the provisions of the Intestate Succession Law gives a greater portion of the deceased's property to the surviving spouse and children. The law makes provision for one house, personal effects, household chattels, such as furniture, fridge, cooker, television, radio, etc. as well as any private cars to go exclusively to the surviving spouse and children. The distribution of any remaining property, for example, if there is more than one house, businesses, commercial vehicles, is done in a way that gives a portion to the surviving parents of the deceased as well his customary family.

The law also makes it an offence for any person to deprive a beneficiary, in this case the surviving spouse and children of the property of the deceased. A person found guilty of such an offence may be imprisoned for a maximum period of six months, or fined ₵500,000 or imprisoned and fined at the same time.

Strategies for protecting women's rights under PNDCL 111

Role of Traditional rulers

The Intestate Succession Law has been in existence since 1985 and many organizations have been disseminating the provisions of the law through various means and yet the law is still not applied in many places, in cities, peri-urban as well as rural areas.

Whereas surviving spouses and children in some cities who are deprived of their inheritance can get help from legal rights NGOs, widows and children in rural areas cannot have access to such services. Most often, these widows and children will appeal to the traditional rulers in their communities. Traditional rulers, as custodians of the customs and traditions, have an important role to play in ensuring that the law is implemented and the rights of surviving spouses, especially widows, and children are protected. Traditional rulers have a responsibility to ensure that when cases are referred to them, that the property is distributed in accordance with the law. Where family members are recalcitrant, the traditional rulers are to ensure that the law is implemented by having the matter reported to the Police.

Traditional rulers can play an important role in the dissemination of the contents of the law by collaborating with organizations such as WILDAF, FIDA, CHRAJ to undertake legal education on the provisions of the law in their communities.

Role of Religious leaders

Religious leaders, as shepherds of their congregation play an important role in the lives of their members. These leaders serve as counselors, confidantes and indeed play numerous roles in the day to day activities of the members. In life, as in death, religious leaders are an influencing factor on their congregations. Therefore, religious leaders have a responsibility in ensuring that on the death a member, his estate is distributed in accordance with the Intestate Succession Law. Indeed, some religious bodies, being aware of the hardships that women and children face when it comes to inheritance, had before the introduction of the Law, their own rules of intestate distribution which at least gave some recognition to the surviving widow. Religious leaders can also collaborate with the organizations listed above to undertake legal education for their congregations during service time.

The Police

As already stated above, the Intestate Succession Law makes it an offence for any person to deprive any beneficiary of his or her share in the deceased person's property. This means that the police have a critical role in ensuring that the provisions of the law are adhered to. Very often, when it comes to issues affecting women, the police tend to trivialize it or send it back to the family to be settled. The Police are being called upon to change their attitude towards women and to recognize that women have as much right as men to protection under the law.

SECTION 2

RIGHTS IN MARRIAGE

In Ghana, there are three forms of marriage recognized by law. These are Marriage under the Ordinance, which is monogamous in nature, customary marriage which is potentially polygamous and marriage under Islamic rites which is also potentially polygamous in nature. Couples have the right to choose the type of marriage they want to contract but nearly all Ghanaian marriages are customary marriages. Even couples who contract the monogamous marriage first go through the customary marriage. This is because under our customary laws, marriage is a union between two families as opposed to a union between two individuals under monogamous marriages. Ghanaians are very much influenced by their culture, especially in the area of family laws and hence this very interesting combination of two systems of marriage.

Marriage as an institution is highly esteemed by Ghanaian culture and women especially are expected to get married and stay married. In fact marriage and children confer a certain value and status on women in society, which is why women are not encouraged to attain the highest level of education as it is thought this will reduce their chances of getting husbands.

Women's rights within marriage are shaped by the system of patriarchy that gives the male supremacy and the right to exercise power and control over the female. It is also influenced by **the marriage rites where the man gives some items to the woman's family for the marriage to be concluded. This ceremony has been interpreted over time to mean that the man has bought the woman and therefore the woman is his property to be dealt with any way he likes. This idea of a wife as property is one of the contributory factors that lead to domestic violence and reinforces the low status and the unequal partnership between her and her husband.** The **increasing high cost of the marriage rites** also contributes to the notion of the wife having been bought. It is believed that the exchange of gifts in the marriage was to serve as evidence of the marriage having taken place, in the days when our ancestors could not write and did not have any way of documenting events that had taken place.

Sometimes, parents see their daughters as a means for gaining wealth and therefore push their daughters into marrying men who are much older than they are only because those men are wealthy. Early and forced marriage of girls is usually justified by parents who claim that the girl had been betrothed to the man when she was young and that the man had spent money looking after her while she was growing up.

A married woman in Ghana has the same rights as a single woman to acquire property in her own name and yet most married women assist their husbands to acquire property which he puts in his name and not their joint names. This is why when there is a divorce women most times are left with nothing. This situation is due to society's perception of men

and the socialization of women who see them as the providers and the ones to acquire property for the family. Currently, there is a lot of advocacy going on for legislation to be passed for the equitable distribution of property on the dissolution of marriage to give effect to article 20 of the 1992 Ghana Constitution, which provides:

(2) Parliament shall, as soon practicable after the coming into force of this Constitution, enact legislation regulating the property rights of spouses.

(1) With a view to achieving the full realization of the rights referred to in clause (2) of this article –

(a) spouses shall have equal access to property jointly acquired during marriage;

(b) assets which are jointly acquired during marriage shall be distributed equitably between the spouses upon dissolution of marriage.

Strategies:

Role of traditional rulers:

As already pointed out, the exchange of gifts during customary marriage is to serve as evidence of the marriage having taken place. In the olden days, only small amounts of money and drinks were given by the man to the woman's family. These days the cost of marriage has become prohibitive. There are instances where a man has had to borrow money to be able to provide all the things that the woman's family demands, things that can in no way be deemed to be cultural, such as perming cream, microwave oven, pressing iron etc.

Just as traditional rulers in certain instances have been able to regulate and insist on the strict application of customary laws, traditional rulers are being called upon to ensure that the original customary rites for marriage are adhered to. For instance, in an effort to cut down the cost of funerals, traditional councils in certain areas have been known to regulate how much donation citizens should give to a bereaved family and also that the bereaved family should not serve drinks for the citizens. There is evidence that these regulations have been strictly adhered to in those areas. What we are trying to say here is that the way customary marriage rites are performed currently has gone beyond the traditional requirements and therefore steps should be taken to bring them back to conform to the traditional rites.

Traditional rulers are also being asked to help end early and forced marriages. There have been cases when young girls have been withdrawn from school and forced into marriage. We believe that there is an obligation on the part of traditional rulers to educate their citizens on the need to give the girl an equal opportunity for education and to let them know that an educated girl is of more benefit not only to her children and the larger family but to the community and the nation as well. Moreover, the Children's Act, 1998 has set the age of marriage at 18 and also makes

it an offence to force any person into marriage if she is under 18 or without her consent.

Traditional rulers are sometimes asked to sit in on divorce cases and in such cases play a key role in the compensation that is paid to the divorced woman. It is known that most often, compensation paid to divorced women is not commensurate to their contribution to the acquisition of the property. We are calling on traditional rulers to ensure that in cases of divorce, due recognition is given to the woman's contribution and therefore ensure that the property is distributed in an equitable manner, especially where it is known the woman may have contributed a lot to the acquisition of the property. Traditional rulers are also being called upon to support any new legislation that will be proposed to give effect to Article 20 of the Constitution.

SECTION 3

Domestic violence

As stated in the introduction to this publication, violence against women is one of the results of male supremacy and the low status of women within the family. Male supremacy is supported by social institutions such as marriage, religion and culture whilst these same institutions reinforce women's low status.

Under customary marriage, the man gives certain specified items to the woman's family for the marriage to take effect. This procedure has been interpreted over time to mean that the man has literally "bought" the woman. With this in mind, the man feels he has a right to treat the woman as an object, which he can kick around. Among some ethnic groups even, the man is given a small cane during the marriage ceremony as an indication that he can discipline his wife when she steps out of line. All major decisions are taken by the husband with the wife not taking part in decision making, even of issues that affect her directly. Wives in this situation are put in the same situation as children over whom the man exercises power and control. The marriage becomes one not of partnership between the couple but one of a master servant relationship, with the man being the master and the woman the servant.

Very often when the issue of violence against women is raised, most people, both men and women would want to dispute it, saying it does not exist in Ghanaian society. This is very typical of how violence is viewed all across the world. Even though it is known that violence is a disease that is festering in society, we pretend that it does not exist. When a woman has been beaten with severe injuries, she would say she fell down or hit her head or eye against a door or give some other excuse. The perpetrator, on the other hand, when accosted would say he only tapped her gently or sometimes would pass the blame on to the victim, saying if she had not behaved a certain way, he would not have beaten her.

Violence against women is influenced by social attitudes and values which see men as naturally superior to women and make it a man's right and responsibility to control women's behaviour. What is considered acceptable behaviour is determined by the man and society and failure by the woman to comply with the socially acceptable behaviour leads to violence.

Social structures such as the legal system, the community, including family and friends, educational system, mass media, religion and culture have contributed in many ways to the violent behaviour of men against women. For example, the legal system has often considered violence by men against women as a private domestic matter and therefore is reluctant to press charges, despite the fact that if this same behaviour occurred between strangers on the street, it would be treated as criminal act.

Family members and friends contribute to violence in a number of ways. They make excuses for the man's behaviour. They may refuse to believe the woman, they may pressure the woman to stay to preserve the family unit. Sometimes they blame the woman for the violence committed against her.

The education system also reflects, teaches and therefore perpetuates social attitudes and values about women. Traditionally, women have been steered towards jobs and careers that are inferior in status and remuneration. Family life education has often supported a traditional, rigid patriarchal family structure that sees the father as the head of the household and every one subservient to him.

Religion also plays a role in supporting violence against women. Over the years some religious texts have been interpreted in a way that reinforces man's superiority and that the woman must be totally submissive and obedient to man.

The mass media also perpetuates stereotypes by representing males as superior, unemotional, powerful, controlled and aloof and representing females as seductive, passive and weak. The stereotypes are harmful as they affect attitudes and expectations of others.

Violence against women takes many forms. These are physical, sexual, psychological, economic and harmful traditional practices. All of these various forms of violence have different consequences on the victim and sometimes on the children as well. Sometimes in an abusive relationship, more than one of the different forms of violence will be present. For instance, where there is physical violence, there is most likely sexual and or psychological violence as well.

Impacts/consequences of violence:

The different forms of violence have different consequences or impacts on the victim. Below is a table of the consequences. Whilst it is easy to identify the consequences of physical, sexual or economic abuse, it is very difficult to identify those of psychological abuse. Indeed, oftentimes, the impact of physical or sexual abuse has psychological manifestations. Psychological abuse often has long lasting impact, which may need professional care.

PHYSICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	SEXUAL	ECONOMIC	OTHER
Bruises Broken bones Fractures Swollen face Rashes Broken teeth Open wounds STDs/HIV/Aids Pregnancy Pain Death	Fear, anger, depression, guilty feelings, aggressive behaviour, withdrawal, mood swings, inability to learn, low self esteem, ambivalence, insomnia, internalized blame, Helplessness, hope, isolation, anxiety	Shock, frigidity, promiscuity, inability to build an intimate relationship with anyone,	Loss of income, poverty, neglect to maintain, financial dependence on men	divorce

Strategies for dealing with violence against women

Role of traditional rulers and religious leaders

In the research that was carried out by the Gender Centre, it came out quite clearly that women were not reporting cases of violence against them and that if they did, they were most likely to report to family and friends or community leaders, including chiefs and religious leaders. This means that traditional rulers and religious leaders have a role to play in ensuring effective intervention in cases of violence with the view of eliminating violence against women.

In working with the police to sensitise them to change their attitudes toward victims of violence, it has been mentioned that the police are often pressurised by family elders and community leaders to have a reported case referred back to the family for settlement. Or sometimes the woman is pressurised to withdraw the case so as not to bring disgrace to the family. In most of these cases, if the man is sanctioned at all, he is probably asked to apologise to the woman or buy a piece of cloth for her. This way of handling the case does not pass the message to the man that violence is not acceptable. The message that is passed to the man is that he can get away with it and so it encourages him to do it again and in fact this is what happens. Violent men do it over and over again and until effective measures are put in place to sanction them, they will not stop.

Under our laws, physical and sexual violence are dealt with under the Criminal Code, 1960, Act 29 and its subsequent amendments. Psychological violence is however not dealt with under the laws and it is hoped that new legislation on gender violence will take into account psychological violence as well as sexual harassment.

Traditional rulers are therefore being called upon:

- not to interfere in cases that have been reported to the police;
- to collaborate with the police in bringing perpetrators to justice.
- to ensure that cases that are referred to them are reported to the police and eliminate customs and traditional practices that promote violence. against women.

Religious leaders on the other hand are also being called upon to interpret religious texts in a manner that does not emphasise inferiority of women and encourage violence against women.

SECTION 4

HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

In some parts of Ghana, women are subjected to harmful traditional practices, which degrade them and are an infringement of their human rights. These traditional practices are infringed on women because they are women. Or at times even when a practice is supposed to be carried out by both men and women, it is more severe on women. For instance, a man or woman whose wife or husband dies is expected to go through certain rites. The reasons for these rights vary among the different ethnic groups. Among some groups, it is believed that undergoing these rites would prevent the deceased spouses ghost from haunting the surviving spouse. In practice, whilst widows normally perform these rites over days and months, widowers, when they perform the rites at all, do so over a relatively short period. Some of the rites are very harsh and sometimes could lead to serious health hazards on the widow. Pepper thrown into eyes of the widow could lead to blindness. A rope tied around the neck of the widow whilst she is paraded around the village, sometimes with no clothes on, is an affront to the dignity of the widow. Some of the practices, such as female genital mutilation are carried out ostensibly to ensure the morals of girls. Female genital mutilation is one such traditional practice that has been medically proven to be harmful to women.

Some of these practices reinforce the fact that when it comes to women, society controls everything that they do. Women are denied the right to take decisions, even on issues that affect them directly. The traditional practice of Trokosi is one such example. Trokosi is the practice whereby young girls, usually virgins are given in bondage to shrines to atone for a crime committed by a family member against the shrines. Whilst in bondage, these girls and women become not only free labour but also sex objects for the priests who are usually men. The question is, why girls and not boys. This is clearly because among communities who believe in this practice, girls are less valued than boys and therefore are expendable.

In other parts of the country, old women become the object of scorn and hatred and are blamed for every misfortune that befalls the community. Such women are usually accused for the untimely death of younger persons, even when it can be proved that the death was as a result of an epidemic, such as measles, cholera etc. which has befallen on the community. These old women, who are branded as witches, are often exiled from their homes and banished to live in secluded communities with no possibility of supporting themselves because of their old age. It is very sad that these women who have spent the productive part of their lives as mothers, wives and useful members of the community, suddenly become outcasts because they have attained a certain age.

There are provisions under our constitution as well as laws that deal with some of the practices described above. Article 15 of the 1992 Constitution provides as follows:

15. (1) The dignity of all persons shall be inviolable.
- (2) No person shall, ----- be subjected to –
- (c) torture, other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- (d) any other condition that detracts or is likely to detract from his dignity and worth as a human being.

Article 16 (1) further states “no person shall be held in slavery or servitude” Furthermore, Article 27 of the Constitution states: “all customary practices which dehumanise or are injurious to the physical and mental well being of a person are prohibited.

Additionally, amendments to the Criminal code have made some of these practices a criminal offence. Practices such as cruel widowhood rites, female genital mutilation or forcing somebody into ritual or customary servitude or bondage have been made criminal offences. These offences are found in section 88(a), Section 69(a) and section 314(a) of the Criminal Code as amended.

STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

These constitutional and legal provisions place an obligation on all traditional rulers to ensure that these traditional practices which reduce the dignity of women and are harmful to them as well are abolished. The institution of Chieftaincy is recognised and guaranteed under the Constitution of Ghana. Article 272 sets out the functions of the National House of Chiefs. One of the functions under Article 272(c) is: “undertake an evaluation of traditional customs and usages with a view to eliminating those customs and usages that are outmoded and socially harmful.”

Indeed there is no gainsaying that cruel widow hood rites, female genital mutilation, trokosi and other practices not identified here are clearly outmoded and our traditional rulers need to take up their constitutional obligations to help eradicate these practices.

PROFILE OF WOMEN IN LAW AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA (WiLDAF) GHANA

Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)

WiLDAF is a regional network based in Harare, Zimbabwe. WiLDAF is dedicated to promoting and strengthening action strategies that link law and development to empower women. Currently, WiLDAF has membership in 26 African countries, including Ghana. The specific objectives of WiLDAF include:

- to establish and facilitate communication among network members in the areas of legal education, law and policy reform and legal services and to further clarify and promote effective ways of using law as an organizing tool at the local, national and regional levels;
- to provide training and to advise local groups in designing and improving legal programmes and strategies and to co-ordinate the compilation of and exchange of studies and legal research;
- to establish and maintain a regional emergency response system to respond quickly to serious violations of women's rights.

WiLDAF focuses its activities on four priority issues;

- fostering rights awareness and action;
- advocating law and policy reform;
- access to and control over economic resources and
- confronting violence against women.

Membership of WiLDAF is open to individuals and organizations involved in women's rights activities. In Ghana, membership is made up of lawyers and women from other disciplines. Some of the organisation members are: FIDA Ghana, Association for Advancement of Women (ASAWA), Women's Research Group of the University of Ghana, Trades Union Congress (Women's Desk, Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), Green Earth Organisation, United Women's Front (UNIWAF), Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (Gender Centre), Abantu for Development.

2.1 Activities of WiLDAF (Ghana)

Having identified ignorance as one of the factors that hinder the development of women, WiLDAF (Ghana) has focused its activities on a rights awareness programme in the country to address some of the issues.

In line with its objectives, WiLDAF (Ghana) has since September 1992 trained over three hundred women leaders of grassroots organisations on legal education and leadership skills, with a view to:

- Helping the women articulate their needs by identifying issues which could form the basis for future planning for rights awareness programmes or law reform and
- Equip the women leaders with the basic knowledge and skills to enable them train their members and their communities to be able to make use of the laws.

These training workshops have been carried out in all but one region of the country. In order to achieve the objectives of the training, participants are:

- informed about laws affecting women in particular such that they are enabled to disseminate information to others in their groups specifically relating to Intestate Succession, Marriage and Divorce Laws, Wills and Maintenance of children and violence against women. In addition they are informed about rights under the constitution with emphasis on participation in political processes at local, district, regional and national levels;
- exposed to leadership skills and enabled to practice and internalize skills necessary for working with and managing groups;
- Enabled through personal growth exercises to raise their self-esteem and develop enough assertiveness to enforce their legal and other human rights.

These trained women, who are referred to as Legal Literacy Volunteers (LLV's) are drawn from grassroots organizations, social groupings, church groups, workplace associations, governmental and non-governmental organizations. These women come from varied backgrounds such as teachers, nurses, community development workers, agricultural extension workers, social welfare officers, nonformal educators, market women etc. The common denominator among the participants is that they all have proven leadership ability in their various groups. Young women leaders are also targeted to take part in the training with a view to encouraging them to take up leadership roles in future.

As follow-up to the training of the volunteers, WiLDAF has set up a Legal Awareness programme in two regions, Western and Volta, to provide legal aid and counseling services to those who cannot afford the services of lawyers.

WiLDAF and its network members carry out various activities in the area of advocacy for women's rights. One of such activities is the commemoration of the 16 days campaign of activism on violence against women in Ghana from November 25 to December 10 each year. WiLDAF also provides capacity building for its network members.