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Working Paper No.4 - Ghana: The Economic and Social Impact of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

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1 Introduction

Once hailed as a model for development in West Africa, Ghana faces multiple crises triggered by falling global commodity prices, power shortages and massive public debt. Nonetheless, the country has a legacy of two decades of stable political leadership and hopes remain that it will emerge from its current turmoil into a new phase of economic stability.

The problem of violence against women and girls (VAWG) is not often associated with economic development in Ghana. The issue has been highlighted and addressed by national and international civil society actors who share a concern for human rights and public health. Very little data is available to indicate the negative role that VAWG plays in limiting sustainable development across all sectors of society and the economy.

This working paper is an introduction to the analysis of the social and economic impacts of violence against women and girls in Ghana. What Works Component Three is a three-year multi-country project that estimates the costs of VAWG, both social and economic, to individuals and households, businesses and communities, and states. It breaks new ground in understanding the impact of VAWG on community cohesion, economic stability and development, and will provide further evidence for governments and the international community to address violence against women and girls globally. While it is widely recognised that VAWG constitutes a significant human rights and public health emergency, there is less detailed understanding of the multiple ways in which violence affects and holds back social and economic

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development. This paper outlines the nature of VAWG in Ghana, and the social and economic context in which it occurs.

The paper begins with an introduction to the status of women in Ghana, and the prevalence and types of VAWG. It explores the various contexts that are affected by violence: economic, social and political, and discusses the action that has been taken to address violence to date. It goes on to identify some literature on the costs of violence to society and the economy, and to highlight the gaps in the literature, which this project aims to fill.

2 Status of women in Ghana

Ghana ranks 59th out of 144 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, and 11th in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Economic Forum 2016). These statistics point to a traditional society with strong cultural values and a diversity of gender-related attitudes and behaviours. While changes are underway in the status of women across Ghanaian society, many of these underpinned by policies in favour of gender equality, there are nonetheless exceptions and some egregious examples of inequality and abuse.

Many commentators identify a traditional, patriarchal mind-set in Ghanaian society and culture, which has not changed significantly in many years (eg Amoakohene 2004, Archampong 2010, Cantalupo et al. 2006, Coker-Appiah and Cusack 1999). Amoakohene (2004) asserts that male dominance in Ghanaian society cuts across all facets of life, irrespective of education, social status or the level of affluence of the individuals involved. According to her, Ghanaian culture demands that women not only be submissive to their husbands, but also be respectful, dutiful, and serviceable to the extent that revolting against or challenging abuse may be interpreted as attempting to subvert the authority of the man.

Social norms continue to construct men as the natural authority and heads of family, while women and girls are often perceived as belonging to the male, either husband or father. The continued practice of bride price reinforces such views. While the Ghanaian population is primarily Christian, there is a significant Muslim minority, and indigenous religions are also present. Approximately one quarter of women in Ghana are in polygynous unions, which are legal in Ghana under Customary Law (Archampong 2010: 329). Such marriages, particularly given Ghana's high rate of divorce, may also impact on women's vulnerability to poverty, given the complexities of dividing property in a polygamous union (ibid.) Polygamous marriages tend to be correlated with higher levels of poverty, and lower levels of education, particularly for women (Amo Adjei: 61).

In spite of its "male-dominated society" (Archampong 2010), Ghana has an active movement for women's rights with growing political support. After elections in 2012, the proportion of women Members of Parliament rose marginally from 8.3% to 10.9%, without the assistance of any affirmative measures such as electoral quotas. What policy provisions there are in place to promote gender equality and particularly to tackle violence against women are largely thanks to a women's movement which

emerged around the time of the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995 (Manuh and Anyidoho), and growing political support for this movement. Nonetheless, Manuh and Anyidoho (2015) describe a tension between women's rights activists and others, and suggest that while women's empowerment and gender non-conformity is accepted at the individual level, demands for universal women's empowerment are still frowned upon. This tension illustrates both the progress made by women's rights activists, and the challenges facing them to bring about lasting change.

The cultural inequality discussed above has material impacts. In a study tellingly entitled "Men are poor but women are poorer", Wrigley-Asante (2008) points to deeper gendered dimensions of poverty. For example, in situations of economic collapse, men typically have an escape valve in rural-to-urban migration, while women are almost invariably expected to fulfil traditional roles, staying at home to provide care for the young, the elderly and the infirm. Remittances from family members are unreliable, and few women report them to be part of their income, leaving those women economically insecure, and reliant on what money they can raise for themselves in highly constrained circumstances.

Inequitable gendered social norms in Ghana result not only in widespread discrimination but also in violence against women and girls, as section 3 below outlines.

3 Violence Against Women and Girls in Ghana

Like all countries in the world, Ghana experiences a wide range of types of violence against women and girls. As is usually the case, the most common form of violence is intimate partner violence, although other forms are present, shaped by the social, cultural and economic forces at play locally. Forms of violence against women and girls reported in Ghana include: sexual violence; intimate partner and domestic violence; sexual harassment; forced and early marriage; female genital mutilation; and other forms of harmful cultural practices (see, for instance, Amoakohene (2004: 2375); Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2014)).

The prevalence and severity of these different types of violence varies from type to type and also across geographic regions. Certain traditional practices, while not widespread, are particularly troubling because of the extent to which they undermine women's humanity, and the attitudes that underpin them. Such practices include "forced and early marriage, the stigmatization of widows and widowhood rites, female genital mutilation, the denial of inheritance rights to women, the enslavement of young girls in trokosi shrines and violence against girls and older women believed to be witches" (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women 2014)

There has been a growth in recognition of the scale and severity of VAWG in Ghana since the latter years of the last century, and recently there has been an increased focus on gathering accurate prevalence data. In 2016, a national study on domestic violence was undertaken by the Institute for Development Studies and Ghana Statistical Agency with support from DfID; it is referred to in this paper as the Ghana

Family Life and Health Survey (GFLHS) (IDS et al. 2016). The study involved surveys of 4995 men and women, boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 60. A major finding of the study was that 28% of women and 20% of men reported experiencing domestic violence (including economic, social, psychological, physical and sexual violence) in the past 12 months. Women were more likely to experience physical and sexual violence than men (6.0% versus 2.1% and 2.5% versus 1.4% respectively). The national study provides insights into the patterns of domestic violence in Ghana including the key role of poverty, economic shocks, and unemployment as important determinants of domestic violence. More importantly the report highlights that domestic violence has a profound impact on daily life and ultimately well-being of survivors and their families:

“Domestic violence was found to have adverse consequences on daily life in terms of ability to work, go to school or do domestic work, ability to concentrate on daily activities, levels of confidence and feelings of living in fear. The effects were larger for women than for men, and for physical violence than for other types of violence. The qualitative data highlighted how domestic violence experienced in the home was overwhelmingly felt to have both short- and long-term impacts on children’s health, education outcome, economic and social well-being.” (IDS et al. 2016: 13)

The current project is dedicated to detailing the economic and social costs of violence against women and girls, with an emphasis on intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. What follows is an outline of a wider range of types of violence, recognising that all forms of gender based violence are connected by unequal gendered social norms, and are thus mutually reinforcing.

3.1 Intimate Partner Violence

The 2015 GFLHS documents prevalence of domestic violence: this is defined as economic, social, psychological, physical and sexual violence perpetrated on men and women, boys and girls by family members. While providing rich and valuable data on domestic family violence, the study does not provide a specific figure of violence by partners only, and is not broadly comparable to prior surveys of domestic violence in Ghana (IDS et al. 2016).

The 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey included a module on domestic violence. However, since domestic violence represents a single module out of a total of 14 health-related modules, we can expect lower rates of reporting from participants than would be the case in a dedicated survey on violence (UNDESA 2014). The questions asked are not based on the WHO violence against women instrument, so it is difficult to compare them directly with international data on prevalence of VAWG.

The 2008 DHS found that 36.6% of women aged 15-49 reported experience of physical violence since age 15; 15% of women said their first sexual experience was forced or against their will; 27% of women experienced psychological abuse at the hands of a partner; and almost a fifth (18.8% of women aged 15-49) reported some experience of sexual violence.

The 2016 study shows, using comparable categories of physical violence, that domestic physical violence against women in the last 12 months decreased from 17.2% in 2008 to 10.3% in 2015. It shows that the most common form of domestic violence reported by women in the 12 months prior to the survey was economic violence (12.8%), followed by social violence (11.6%), psychological violence (9.3%), physical violence (6%) and sexual violence (2.5%). In total, more than a quarter (27.7%) of women in Ghana had experienced at least one type of domestic violence in the 12 months prior to the study (IDS et al. 2016).

Prior to this, in 1999, the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre carried out a widely-cited in-depth national study on violence against women and children in Ghana (Coker-Appiah and Cusack 1999). This groundbreaking report had comparable or even worse findings than the DHS, including that approximately one third of women had experienced physical violence by a past or current partner, three in ten women had experienced forced sex by a male partner and 27% had experienced psychological abuse including threats, insults and destruction of property (quoted in Cantalupo et al. 2006: 535).

Official or semi-official reports of incidents of violence are on the increase. Annual reported cases of violence against women rose steeply from 360 in 1999 to 3,622 in 2002 (WAJU, 2003), while in 2010, the National Coordinator of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit in Ghana reported that her outfit recorded about 109,784 cases of violence against women and children (Ghanaweb 2010). It is likely that the increasing statistics are evidence of growing acknowledgement that violence is a problem, rather than evidence of increasing incidence.

Taking these different data into account, it is fair to say that Intimate Partner Violence is a widespread and continuous problem in Ghana, affecting people over the course of their lifetime, and persisting in the present.

3.1.1 Attitudes towards domestic violence

Like Amoakohene (2004), Tenkorang et al. (2013), highlight attitudes towards domestic violence. They point out that married women were once socialized into believing that marriage confers the 'right' of sexual access to husbands no matter how violent. Anecdotal evidence suggests that until recently, rapes involving family members and incest were carefully concealed in arranged marriages if they resulted in pregnancy (Amoakohene 2004: 2383). Indeed, Coker-Appiah & Cusack's earlier study found that among almost 700 adults and adolescent victims of domestic violence who had also been raped, just one in three had disclosed the experience to anybody, and none had reported to a formal authority.

Consistent with earlier quantitative studies, the GFLHS finds that women are on average more likely than men to find wife-beating acceptable: 23.1% of women and 13.8% of men were found to condone wife-beating in at least one circumstance. This is a drop from the findings of the 2008 DHS, when 36.6% of women and 23.1% of men condoned wife-beating. The figures remain highest in the Northern and Eastern regions. (IDS et al. 2016). When it comes to rape, 65.3% of women and 56.2% of men agree that women are to blame for rape if they wear revealing clothes (IDS et al. 2016).

There is evidence that women endorsing or justifying wife beating is positively and significantly associated with victimisation for physical, economic and sexual abuse (IDS et al. 2016, Tenkorang et al. 2013: 774). Tenkorang et al. (2013) also present evidence that high levels of controlling behaviour by husbands is related to physical and sexual IPV in Ghana. Women with greater levels of education and wealth tend to be more accepting of justifications for IPV (Amo Adjei: 62). Meanwhile, women who are likely to challenge accepted gender norms appear to be at greater risk for domestic violence (IDS et al. 2016).

Given the extended family system of Ghanaian cultures, perpetrators of domestic violence include not just male intimate partners but also other household members (males and females). Bortei-Doku Aryeteey and Kuenyehia (1998) cited occurrences in the typical Ghanaian household where domestic workers and non-nuclear family relatives such as cousins and nieces are prone to suffer from sexual harassment. The definition of family violence thus extends beyond violence committed by the intimate partner, although IPV is a distinct (and prominent) category within this.

3.2 Other forms of VAWG

While it is globally the case that IPV is the most common type of violence, many other types occur, mediated by social, cultural and economic factors.

Very little reliable data is available on non-partner sexual violence (NPSV) in Ghana, with evidence suggesting that most forms of violence against women and children are not reported to formal authorities. A study conducted by the Gender Centre on Violence against Women and Children in Ghana, found that 95% of women who admitted having been raped did not lodge a formal complaint with the police (Coker-Appiah and Cusack 1999). The 2008 DHS explores the perpetrators of sexual violence: It identified 459 women who reported ever having experienced sexual violence, among whom 69% were abused by their intimate partner; 24.3% were by a family member or friend; while 16% were at the hands of a stranger or professional (Ghana Statistical Service et al. 2009, p308).

The law prohibits defilement, which is defined as sex with a child younger than 16 years with or without consent; incest; and sexual abuse of minors. In 2012, DOVVSU received 1,111 complaints of suspected child defilement and 15 cases of attempted defilement. However, the true number of cases was thought to be much higher. Sexual and other types of abuse of young people at the hands of teachers is also a significant issue: in the 2008 DHS study, roughly 10% of men and women reported having ever experienced violence at the hands of teachers, while press accounts suggest that sexual abuse and harassment of female students by male teachers is commonplace, although the power dynamic involved makes reporting almost unthinkable.

In Ghana, sexual harassment outside of the home is common: in one study, 74% of female employees reported experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace (quoted by Okertchiri and Turlue 2014). Harassment and forced and transactional sex have also been recorded in educational institutes (ibid). In spite of its high prevalence, there are

no specific laws against sexual harassment. Sexual violence by partners is part of the definition of violence in the Domestic Violence Act but no comparable legislation on sexual harassment has been passed.

There are a range of harmful traditional practices which are distinct and even unique to parts of Ghana. These practices vary in prevalence and severity, but they share the fact that they are embedded in informal cultural norms rather than formal ones; and for this reason they tend not to be reported or documented. Quantitative evidence about their prevalence is notoriously hard to gather.

Forced and early marriages are perhaps the most common harmful traditional practice. According to the 2011 Multiple Indicator Cluster Study, parts of the country (the Upper East) display up to 50% of marriages where the wife was married aged under 18.

Female Genital Mutilation continues to be practiced in Ghana, although it has been criminalized and appears to be on the decline. One report suggests that prevalence is at 5%; still a significant problem, but far from endemic (Essel 2013).

Widowhood rites occur across rural Ghana, where the precise traditions vary. The basis of all widowhood rites is a ritual cleansing of a partner in the aftermath of the death of their spouse – it is far more commonly practiced against women than against men. While some rituals are relatively trivial, others involve the humiliation and disgrace of widows, through stripping them naked, applying pepper to their eyes, or forced sex acts (which carry with them risks related to sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy).

A number of practices can be clustered together as operating under customary law specific to certain tribal groupings, and serving as part of very localized community structures. The practice of *trokosi* or female ritual slavery is a case in point. In the practice of *trokosi*, a female, usually a virgin, is selected to atone for crimes committed by other members of the family (Ameh, 2001) by being given as a concubine to a local religious leader (known as a fetish shrine priest). According to Amoakohene (2004), *trokosi* is practiced mainly among the Ewe ethnic group in the Volta region of Ghana. On June 12, 1998, the government of Ghana outlawed the *trokosi* practice by passing a law that banned all forms of ritualized forced labour and made it an offence punishable by a minimum of three years in jail. It is alleged that the practice still persists in shrines in certain parts of Ghana.²

Witch camps are sites populated by women who were banished from their villages for the supposed crime of witchcraft. There are estimated to be about a thousand accused women living in over ten witch camps in northern Ghana, populated at times by generations of women who have been exiled, stigmatized and now live in deep poverty without any social services. Younger female family members are sometimes sent to the camps to serve and assist the accused women; these girls in turn become stigmatized by the mark of witchcraft, and are prisoners in the camps.

² <http://newsghana.com.gh/ritual-servitude-still-being-practised-in-shrines-in-parts-of-ghana/>

The harmful traditional practices described above have all been criminalized, and are routinely denounced by civil society, government and the international community. They are embedded in strong localized traditions which frequently resist compliance with the rule of law. They indicate pockets of pronounced oppression of women, especially powerless women.

3.3 Patterns of incidence

Tenkorang et al. (2013) reviewed patterns of incidence of IPV in Ghana, to understand which women were most affected by the problem. Their results indicate that wealth, occupation, age, and ethnicity are not significant predictors of both physical and sexual violence among married women in Ghana. However, the recent GFLHS study finds that young women are substantially more likely to have experienced domestic violence in the past 12 months than are older women. Women aged between 15-19 years were between 1.4 times and 4 times more likely to experience any form of domestic violence than women aged 30-39 years. Location does have an impact: those in the Northern and Upper West regions of Ghana were significantly more likely to experience high levels of domestic violence compared to women in the Greater Accra region (Tenkorang et al. 2013); although the authors of the GFLHS study suggest that this can be wholly attributed to levels of socio-economic development (IDS et al. 2016).

Other salient factors in incidence of domestic violence include exposure to violence in childhood; low asset levels; and unemployment: all of these factors are correlated with higher levels of victimisation for domestic violence (IDS et al. 2016).

The 2008 DHS finds that in the case of sexual violence (by any perpetrator, though the majority are intimate partners), the likelihood of experiencing sexual violence increases with women's educational attainment—from 13 percent among women with no education to 22 percent among women with secondary or higher education. This is consistent with the findings of the 2016 GFLHS, which found that women with no education were between 0.5 and 2.5 times less likely to experience any kind of domestic violence than women with some level of education. This finding may be due to the higher likelihood of women with education defining their experience as violence and reporting it (IDS et al. 2016).

The CEDAW committee has drawn attention to the fact that harmful traditional practices including early marriages are particularly prevalent in rural areas (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women 2014).

4 Development in Ghana: Social, political and economic context

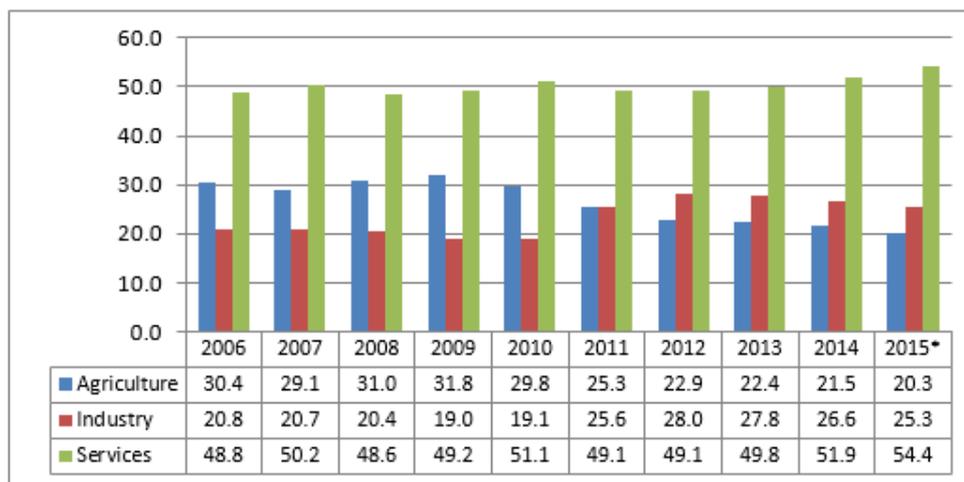
4.1 Economic context

From the early 1980s until about 2013, Ghana was viewed as one of the most successful economies in Sub Saharan Africa (National Development Planning Commission and United Nations Development Programme 2015). More recently,

increasing inflation, a growing budget deficit and a weak currency mean that the country is poorly positioned to negotiate a challenging external environment. The external conditions in which to build an inclusive, diverse economy are not present, and state action to boost economic growth is now highly constrained. Violence against women is barely acknowledged as a challenge that the country faces if it is to be placed on a path to sustainable economic recovery.

Figure 1 below shows developments in the sectoral breakdown of the economy in the early years of this century. Ghana has been dependent on primary commodity export for the duration of its history (both pre- and post-colonial), As the country has modernised, the service sector has grown to consistently represent half of annual GDP, while agriculture has decreased steadily in significance from 29.1% in 2007 to 20.3% in 2015. While industry has shown an overall increase, this has slowed immensely in recent years, a worrying development given policy commitments to industrialisation (Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research 2014: 12).

Figure 1: Sectoral Contributions to National Output, 2006-2015* (% of GDP; at basic prices)



*Provisional (annual)

Source: GSS, 2016

Ghana’s economic history can be summarised as one of primary commodity dependence, with all of the risks that come with this. The country exports cash crops including cocoa, oil palm and cotton, as well as minerals including gold, bauxite, manganese and diamonds. Indeed, Ghana has the second highest mineral production on the continent of Africa, after South Africa. The commercial exploitation of oil, which began in 2011, has accounted for an increasingly important share of the country’s exports since its discovery in 2009: contributing roughly 40% of all export income in 2012, up from just 0.3% in 2010 (World Bank, 2014, cited in Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research 2014).

Owing to its commodities reliance, the Ghanaian economy is vulnerable to the highly volatile global commodities markets. Total earnings from cocoa beans and gold, for instance, fell by 26.5% and 12.0% respectively in 2013, after rising by 13.4% (in the case of cocoa beans) and nearly 15% (in the case of gold) the previous year.

Notwithstanding this volatility, primary commodities make up almost all exports, with gold accounting for 36.0% of export value in 2011, followed by crude oil at 28.5% and cocoa beans, at 12.0% (Government of Ghana 2014: 14). Connected to these fluctuating prices is the fact that very little value addition is carried out in Ghana on any of its export commodities. According to one commentator:

“Many donors consider the government to have squandered the boom years of high cocoa and gold prices and failed to build a diversified economy that would be resilient to subsequent falls in commodity prices, and that could have avoided a balance of payments crisis and the opening of negotiations with the IMF in late 2014.” (Phillips et al. 2016: 35)

Meanwhile, by far the majority of economic output occurs in the informal sector, poorly integrated into the overall national economic framework. There is a risk that investment in globalising production and employment may lead to increasing inequality in development outcomes. This in turn has a knock-on impact for human capital development as well as social progress. This is discussed further in section 4.2.

While the macroeconomic context appeared promising as recently as 2011, Ghana has experienced a precipitous decline in macroeconomic indicators. Key indicators such as consumer inflation and the budget deficit, were on an upward trajectory until 2012, when they steadily began to deteriorate. By the middle of 2015 inflation had reached 17%, undermining many of the macroeconomic gains made in the preceding two years (Government of Ghana 2014). Alongside the rise in inflation has been a growth of the country’s budget deficit. While government aimed to reduce the overall budget deficit from 12.1% of GDP in 2012 to 9% of GDP in 2013 through improved revenue mobilisation, they were unsuccessful, and spending has consistently exceeded revenue collection (Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research 2014). Meanwhile, owing to Ghana’s re-designation as a lower middle-income country in 2010, overseas aid fell from 6.09% of GDP in 2009 to 2.8% in 2014 (National Development Planning Commission and United Nations Development Programme 2015: 12).

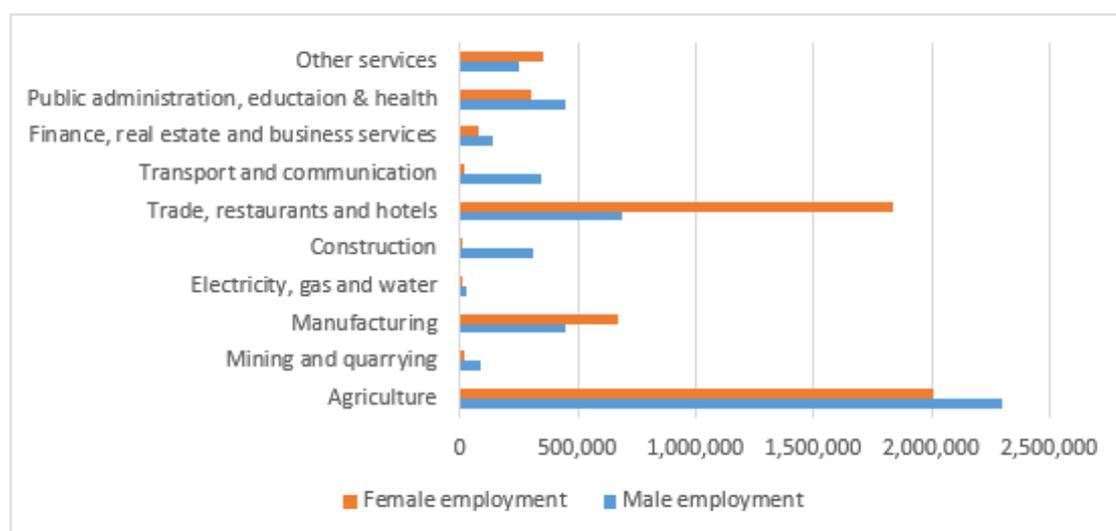
By 2014 the budget deficit accounted for 10.4% of GDP, (Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research 2014), although according to the Ministry of Finance, this had reduced to 6.3% by December 2015. The debt-to-GDP ratio in January 2016 stood at 70% (Matthews 2016). Mounting debt levels led the International Monetary Fund to introduce a \$918 million three-year assistance programme in April 2015. Meanwhile, beginning in 2012, power outages have become a regular and ongoing feature of daily life, devastating economic and social activity. According to Ghana’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry, by May of 2015 around 3,000 people had lost their jobs due to the electricity cuts, with a further 5,000 jobs at risk (Associated Press 2015).

Ghana has a reasonably high labour force participation rate, at 70.2% overall. Due, however, to the slow pace of growth in the labour-intensive sectors of the economy (such as manufacturing in general and agro-processing in particular), most new labour market entrants end up in the informal sector. The 2010 census places 86.2% of the

labour force in the informal sector, which is characterised by low levels of skills, investment and by extension low productivity and incomes (Government of Ghana 2014).

The relatively high labour force participation masks some gender disparities, which have an impact both on the economy and on wider development outcomes. Ghana has a relatively small gender gap in overall LFP, with male participation reaching 72% and female participation at 68% in 2014, according to the World Bank. However, there are disparities in the sectors in which men and women are employed, the jobs they do and the wages they are paid, as figure 2 below illustrates.

Figure 2: Employment by Sector & Sex distribution (2010)



Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2010 Population and Housing Census

Unlike in many low income countries, women do not dominate in the agricultural sector. The chart clearly illustrates the dominance of female labour in hospitality work within the services sector, and in manufacturing. These are industries which are likely to be affected by the impact of VAWG on the productivity of victims or survivors: on absenteeism and presenteeism of women. Typically, jobs in trade, restaurants and hotels are less secure and more poorly remunerated than those in more established industries where men dominate, such as transport and communication, construction and public administration, education and health.

4.2 Human development, poverty and inequality

Ghana successfully achieved four of the eight millennium development goals (MDGs). Although there are regional disparities (see below), the country halved the total proportion of people living in extreme poverty in 2006, well ahead of the global target. Significant progress has also been made on universal primary education, which has not quite been achieved, but stood in 2014 at 89.3% net enrolment rate. Gender parity has been achieved at kindergarten, and is on track at primary and high school level. Other indicators on gender equality are improving slowly, so although Ghana has not

achieved MDG 3 (the gender equality target), it is deemed to have made significant progress. On the other hand, MDG 5 of improving maternal health was not achieved, and maternal deaths, although they dropped from 503 per 100,000 live births in 2005 remain high at 350 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 (Ghana Statistical Service et al. 2015).

A lower middle income country, the poverty from which Ghana continues to suffer limits the country's ability to drive diversified economic development. As the national growth strategy acknowledges, "Poor households are exposed to multiple shocks without adequate coping mechanisms" (Government of Ghana 2014: 6). At the local level, we see serious disparities in the levels of poverty and wealth, cutting across numerous, often predictable dimensions. Wrigley-Asante (2008) points out that studies on poverty in Ghana have shown that on the whole, women experience greater poverty than men, have heavier time burdens, lower rates of utilization of productive resources, and lower literacy rates (Brown 1994; Government of Ghana 2003). Wrigley Asante further illustrates the concrete differences in men's versus women's poverty, highlighting men's greater access to waged work than women's (30% vs 12%), and men's higher earning power: on average, women in Ghana earn 65% of men's hourly income. Because women cannot inherit land on the same basis as men, they are excluded from crucial economic decisions, for example which crops to cultivate and what to market.

Gender is not the only line along which resource distribution varies; a briefing paper by Unicef (2014) draws attention to dramatic regional disparities in poverty reductions, such that in 2011, the World Bank claimed that Ghana's success story in poverty reduction is the success story of its southern and urban areas only (Unicef 2014). Ghana's final MDG report shows that the country successfully halved the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015, although the poverty figure stood at 8.4% nationally, compared to 45.1% in the Upper West, and 22.8% in the Northern province. At the same time, across numerous key indicators (eg under-5 mortality; skilled birth attendance; access to water), the gap between the poorest and the richest wealth quintiles actually widened between 2006 and 2011 (Unicef 2014). According to this analysis, rising inequality reduced the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction. Had inequality been tackled, the paper argues, Ghana could have achieved the MDG target of reducing poverty years earlier.

Growing inequality is connected to the macroeconomic context, in particular the growth strategy pursued at a national level. As the national growth strategy acknowledges: "A significant part of the growth Ghana has witnessed in the recent past has been capital intensive, especially in the mining (and more recently) petroleum sectors. The high levels of automation in these sectors, which result in low demand for labour, translated into high labour productivity, which led to wages that were far in excess of the national average. By contrast, investment in other sectors, in particular agriculture and manufacturing, either stagnated or declined." (Government of Ghana 2014) It is this situation that makes it particularly difficult to see where growth will emerge for those in rural and northern areas. Indeed, Unicef argues that Ghana is now witnessing "a stratification of its society, with the richest pulling far ahead, a large section stagnating in the middle, and the poorest being almost left

entirely behind.”

4.3 Social cohesion and stability

Ghana has a reputation as “a haven of good governance in Africa” (Phillips et al: 28). Notably in West Africa, the country enjoys relative peace and low levels of crime, and considerable progress has been made towards democratic political governance (Government of Ghana 2014). Key achievements mentioned by government strategies include a successful review of the 1992 Constitution; the enactment of the Presidential (Transition) Act 2012, Act 845; and two general elections in 2012 and 2016 that have been deemed to be free and fair. Unlike other natural resource producing African countries, Ghana has “a formally liberal market economy marked by respect for the rule of law, a history of democratic transitions of power, a stable parliamentary democracy, and a ‘functioning’ civil society” (Phillips et al. 2016).

However, recent macro-economic crises create the sorts of pressures that can undermine social stability. Funding for the state has fallen dramatically, and the government has found itself confronted with a public finance crisis which could easily trigger social unrest.

Since 2012, a series of labour strikes have hit the public sector over poor wages and unpaid salary arrears. Large parts of society were affected, with a wide range of health workers, education workers at many levels, and judiciary workers all striking at different times (Laary 2015). Disaffection with the status quo is also apparent in response to the on-going electricity crisis, known as dumsor, which has left the country experiencing rolling blackouts. Numerous protests have occurred in the streets of Accra against the increasing cost of living, with food and fuel prices increasing alongside taxes following the depreciation of the cedi (Azikiwe 2014, Dzawu 2016).

At a societal level, Ghana has enjoyed peace and stability for many decades. The current economic crisis has triggered social tension, but the reaction remains peaceful, as the December 2016 elections demonstrated (Mukum 2016, Weaver Shipley 2017). Intense social pressures and an absence of coping strategies have inevitably increased the stressors and triggers for conflict, particularly in the poorest and most excluded locations. Evidence shows that gender equitable attitudes contribute to greater levels of social peace (Caprioli 2005), thus, the persistence of endemic gender based violence intensifies the threat of social conflict in Ghana in the current context.

4.4 Political and legal context

Ghana is well-integrated into international human rights law through the ratification of numerous treaties including the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on Social and Economic Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It is also party to numerous regional instruments such as the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights and the Declaration on the Disabled. These instruments provide specific

protections of human rights on the grounds of gender. The African Charter on Human and People's Rights and its Women's Protocol also contain provisions outlawing cultural practices, which discriminate against any persons, including women.

Some progress has been made in Ghana towards the development of a domestic political and legislative framework that promotes gender equality and combats violence against women and girls. Since ratifying the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in 1986, laws have been passed on inheritance rights, female genital mutilation, trafficking, and most recently domestic violence (2007).

The Domestic Violence Act criminalises acts of physical and sexual violence, economic and psychological abuse, intimidation and harassment in social relations, and can be seen as expanding on the United Nations definition of violence against women and girls. Its definition of "domestic relations" goes beyond formal marriage to incorporate the range of informal arrangements typical in Ghana. The Act emphasises the role of the judiciary in protecting domestic violence victims, including provisions for protection orders. However, the act includes no provisions related to marital rape, potentially owing to a lack of data on the prevalence of the problem (Tenkorang et al. 2013: 779). There is movement however to repeal s42(g) of the 1960 Criminal Code that will facilitate bringing marital rape under the DV act.

Outside of the issue of domestic and intimate partner violence, Ghana also has a law criminalising rape and defilement. The criminal code 1960, section 98; Act 29 of Ghana, defines rape as the carnal knowledge of a female 16 years and above without her consent; and defilement as that of a female aged under 16 (Criminal Code 1960, section 98; Act 29).

Ghana's constitution prohibits all injurious traditional and cultural practices. Article 26 (2) specifically states: "all customary practices which dehumanize or are injurious to the physical and mental well-being of a person are prohibited". Certain practices, such as trokosi, are specifically prohibited in law, although they persist outside of the formal justice system. There are no laws against sexual harassment, although in some cases it can be prosecuted under the Domestic Violence Act.

4.4.1 Implementation

The legal framework is thus adequate to offer some level of protection to women from many – though far from all – types of gender based violence. Despite these efforts, implementation is weak and progress on the ground is slow. Ghana has been described as experiencing a "yawning gap" between legislation and practice (Mitchell 2011).

The institutional framework for delivery of legislation and policy is led by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP). The MoGCSP was established in 2013, replacing the previous Ministry for Women and Children. MoGCSP has drafted a National Gender Policy to address gender equality, equity and empowerment of women for national development. In an attempt to deal with the most prevalent form of VAWG, domestic violence, the government of Ghana established a Domestic

Violence Management Board involving statutory and non-statutory actors to play an advisory role and to liaise with other government agencies to promote strategies to prevent domestic violence.

At the local level, the most important instrument is the Domestic Violence Victims Services Unit (DOVVSU), a unit established within the Police Service. The DOVVSU began with 40 such units spread around the country, and currently has about 180 units across several districts in the country. Established as long ago as 1998 to address issues of domestic and Gender Based Violence, the DOVVSU has a significant role to play in operationalising law and policy on GBV in Ghana. However it continues to meet logistical and capacity challenges (Essel, 2013:1). This lack of capacity translates into high attrition and poor conviction rates for cases of GBV: in 2010 out of 12,706 cases reported to DOVSSU, only 118 had reached a conviction in the courts with over 2000 cases closed without referral to trial and almost 10,000 were still under investigation (ibid. 2). Attitudes of service providers also play a role in poor implementation: Cantalupo et al (2006) note that many perpetrators are not held accountable for their violence against women and children since officials are more ready to promote mediation of criminal domestic violence cases in lieu of resolution through formal legal mechanisms.

When it comes to other forms of violence against women, specifically non-partner sexual violence, there are numerous difficulties. These include: under- or discriminatory enforcement of the criminal laws; cultural attitudes to women's sexuality; and inadequate resources for primary agencies charged with responding to criminal charges. As a result, victims of all sorts of violence find themselves without meaningful formal support of any sort. In a scathing critique, Mitchell (2011) draws attention to a range of state failures, including "insufficient provision of logistical support and other resources, absence of protocols, lack of initial and continuing training, the slow pace of justice, no state provision of compensation and the lack of specific support services such as counselling, shelter and legal advice and medical services (Mitchell, 2011:iii).

Civil society and women's rights organisations in Ghana have played an important role in lobbying for improved legislation and implementation; indeed, it has been argued that progress in the policy and legislative environment can be largely attributed to the activism of women's rights groups (Manuh and Anyidoho 2015: 24).

5 Impacts of VAWG on Ghana's society and economy

There are currently no complete studies exploring the impact of violence against women, either on Ghana's economy, or on its society as a whole. However, the 2015 GFLHS discusses the consequences of domestic violence in Ghana. According to that study, domestic violence was shown to have negative impacts on women's physical health: 43.8% of women who had experienced physical violence in the previous 12 months had been ill in the 30 days prior to the survey, compared to 31.2% of women who had not experienced this type of domestic violence. A similarly high proportion of women who had experienced psychological violence reported having been ill in the

past 30 days: 42.3% (IDS et al. 2016).

The GFLHS also found that exposure to domestic violence was strongly correlated with serious mental illness. Such violence was found to have adverse qualitative consequences on daily life, affecting the victim's ability to go to work, go to school or do domestic work, their ability to concentrate on daily activities, and their levels of confidence. Finally, the presence of domestic violence was found to have adverse qualitative effects on child development, including negative effects on children's educational opportunities and on youth deviant behavior. (IDS et al. 2016) Through the evidence in the GFLHS, we begin to see the multiple ways in which violence against women has knock-on impacts, not only on women's individual lives, but on their families and through their role in social and economic life.

Smaller studies outline other pathways of the impact of VAWG on individuals, communities, society and the economy in Ghana. The economic impact is immediate: there is evidence of women being prevented by intimate partners from going to work, or having their earnings taken away from them (Essel 2013). What's more, attempts to seek help can incur a direct cost to households. In Ghana, victims must pay a fee to doctors to fill out medical forms verifying their injuries (Cantalupo et al. 2006); at GDC50, this cost is prohibitive for many (Danso 2017). This acts as a deterrent to reporting, and also drains the financial resources of those who do make official reports. In a country with a relatively high labour force participation of women, we can expect a knock-on impact from physical and mental health impacts to absenteeism and presenteeism in businesses, not to mention the impact on perpetrator and bystander work time: this is verified in the GFLHS report.

The national strategy for development and growth contemplates the economic cost of natural resource degradation and poor environmental management to Ghana, setting this cost at a minimum of 10% of GDP (Government of Ghana 2014: 13). In as much as natural resource degradation takes an economic toll on the macroeconomy of Ghana, so too does the degradation of society through the ongoing phenomenon of violence against women. At a critical time for Ghana's development, making this cost visible will enable policy makers to make clear decisions about the value of investment in gender equality.

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