



Funded by
the European Union



Report: A Compilation of Social Norms in Fishing Communities



Funded by
the European Union



This publication is available electronically on the Hen ' Mpoano's website at www.henmpoano.org

For more information contact:

Hen Mpoano
38 J. Cross Cole Street
Windy Ridge Extension, East Tanokrom
Takoradi, Ghana

Stephen Kankam, Deputy Director
Email: skankam@henmpoano.org
Tel: +233 312 293 869

Author:

Josephine Opare-Addo
Email: jobelladdo@gmail.com
Contact: +233 55 309 6301

Please cite this report as:

CEWEFIA (2023). Women in Fisheries Against Violence (WIFVEs): Narratives on social norms in fishing communities. Hen Mpoano, East Tanokrom, Takoradi, Western Region.

Cover Picture: Fish processor expressing her view to validate responses during a focus group discussion (Picture Credit: CEWEFIA, 2023)

Disclaimer:

This publication was produced with financial support from the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of CEWEFIA and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Project Summary

Project Name	Women in Fisheries Against Violence
Project Acronym	WiFVEs
Number & title of lot	CTR 429-210
Dissemination Level	Public
Nature of Document	Workshop Report

Document Summary

Title of Document	Report: Activity 5.1 Document narratives on social norms in fishing communities
Version	I
Expected Delivery Date	June 2023
Authors	Josephine Opare-Addo , CEWEFIA Samuel-Richard Bogobley, Hen Mpoano



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



Table of Contents

Project Summary.....	3
Document Summary	3
Executive Summary.....	7
Introduction	8
Objectives of the Activity	9
Methodology.....	10
a. Focus Group Discussions.....	10
b. Key Informant Interviews	10
c. Organisation of the Report	11
Social and Cultural Norms Influencing Perception, Incidence, Avoidance, and Remediation of GBV.....	12
a. Power Dynamics and Gender Roles.....	12
Marriage and Dating Norms	13
Household Leadership and gender roles.....	14
Marital infidelity and divorce	16
b. Access to Resources.....	17
c. Norms related to Sexual and Reproductive Health	20
Family Planning and Contraceptive Use	20
Living with Persons Suspected of Contracting Sexually Transmitted or Communicable Diseases	20
d. Traditional Beliefs and Cultural Norms on Reporting and Addressing Gender-Based Violence.....	21



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



e. Norms for Special Cases.....	23
Adoption of children.....	23
Children from extramarital affairs.....	24
Widowhood rights.....	26
Worker Recruitment for fishing-related businesses.....	27
Conclusion.....	28
Recommended Next steps.....	30
References.....	33
Appendices.....	34
a. Appendix I: Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussions.....	34
Power Dynamics and Gender Roles.....	34
Access to Resources.....	36
Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.....	37
Traditional Beliefs and Cultural Norms on Reporting and Addressing Gender Based Violence	37
b. Appendix II: Picture Gallery from Engagements in the Central Region.....	39
a. Appendix III: Picture Gallery from Engagements in the Western Region.....	43



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



Table of Figures

Figure 1: Focus Group Discussion for women at Anomabo in progress.....	10
Figure 2: Focus Group Discussion for men at Anomabo in progress.....	11
Figure 3: Fisherman contributing to discussions at an FGD at Cape 3 Points	11
Figure 4: Fisherman expressing his opinion at a FGD for men at Otuum	16
Figure 5: Fish Processor expressing her views at an FGD at Cape 3 Points.....	19
Figure 6: Submissions from women being validated at Dago	23
Figure 7: Fish Processor explaining how men interact with women in family-run businesses....	26
Figure 8: A fish processor from Dago, disputing a submission from a fisherman	27



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



Executive Summary

The report is based on the outcome of focus group discussions and key informant interviews conducted in communities where the WiFVEs Project is being implemented. The participants were selected based on their involvement in the WiFVEs project and their experiences of violence in fishing communities.

Three different groups of respondents were identified for engagement in FGDs; Men, Women, and Community leaders. Fifteen (15) participants, men and women each, were drawn from each community and engaged in a separate discussion session in each community. After the discussions, the outcomes were validated in a joint discussion. Key informant interviews were also conducted with community leaders, government officials, and other stakeholders involved in addressing violence against women in fishing communities.

The report highlights the various forms of violence that men and women in fishing communities face, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. It also identifies the social norms that perpetuate this violence, such as gender inequality, patriarchal attitudes, and cultural beliefs.

The report found that gender inequality is a major factor contributing to violence against women in fishing communities. Women are often seen as inferior to men and are subjected to various forms of abuse as a result. Patriarchal attitudes also contribute to violence against women, as men are often seen as having more power and authority than women. Cultural beliefs also play a role in perpetuating violence against women in fishing communities.

The report provides valuable insights into the experiences and social norms that impact the prevalence of GBV against women in fishing communities. The report's findings highlight the need for a multi-faceted approach that involves community-based interventions, education and awareness-raising campaigns, and legal and policy reforms.



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



Introduction

Gender-based violence is significantly shaped by prevailing social norms, exerting a profound impact on its occurrence. The theory of social constructionism suggests that these norms are not inherently fixed or natural but are constructed through social interactions and shared meanings (Gergen, 2014). Within this framework, traditional gender norms, rooted in patriarchal structures, perpetuate unequal power dynamics between men and women, resulting in the normalization of violence against women. The concept of hegemonic masculinity further contends that dominant forms of masculinity, characterized by aggression and control, are valued and reinforced in society, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of gender-based violence (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

These constructed societal expectations play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of violence and discrimination against women, both within and beyond the fisheries sector. The Social Ecological model provides a framework for understanding the multifaceted factors influencing gender-based violence. It highlights that individual, relationship, community, and societal factors interact to shape behavior and perpetuate violence (Heise, 1998). For instance, at the individual level, beliefs and attitudes that support gender inequality and violence, such as rigid gender roles, contribute to gender-based violence in the fisheries industry.

Gender-based violence is an entrenched concern within the fisheries industry, with ramifications extending far and wide. Women in fishing communities often face various forms of violence, including physical assault, sexual harassment, and emotional abuse. The intersectionality theory helps us understand that gender-based violence isn't solely a product of gender norms but also influenced by intersection of social identities, such as race, class, and ethnicity (Crenshaw, 1991). Women from marginalized groups may experience multiple forms of oppression, exacerbating their vulnerability to violence in the fisheries sector.

The implications of gender-based violence on fisheries extend beyond the immediate victims. Violence and the associated fear create a hostile work environment, affecting the mental and

physical well-being of individuals in the industry. The Human Capital theory suggests that gender-based violence hinders the growth and utilization of human resources, leading to reduced productivity and economic losses. Moreover, gender-based violence perpetuates gender inequalities, hindering efforts toward gender equity and social development in fisheries. It reinforces discriminatory practices, unequal power relations, and limited women empowerment and leadership opportunities.

Addressing gender-based violence in fisheries requires a holistic approach that challenges harmful social norms. The theory of Social Change emphasizes the importance of collective action and social movements in transforming norms and fostering gender equality. Interventions should involve multiple stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, fishing communities, and the private sector. Education and awareness campaigns, informed by the theory of planned behavior, can help challenge stereotypes, raise awareness about GBV, and promote respectful and equitable relationships.

The goal for the Project is to promote equity, preserve culture, guide policies, enable community-led initiatives, provide education, and facilitate collaboration for sustainable development. Documenting social norms within fishing communities is essential for understanding their cultural, economic, and gender dynamics. This preserves traditions, identifies inequalities, informs policies, and empowers marginalized individuals.

Objectives of the Activity

The activity sought to document social norms that validly influenced perception, incidence, avoidance and remediation of GBV, especially against women in the fishing communities.

The activity's objective was to systematically record the social norms that authentically impact the perception, occurrence, prevention, and addressing of gender-based violence (GBV), with a particular focus on women within fishing communities.



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



Methodology

The activity sought to gather primary data using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews in selected fishing communities where the WiFVEs Project is implemented. In the Central Region, communities engaged included Dutch Komenda, Anomabo, Otum and Dago. In the Western Region, communities engaged included Cape Points, Ankobrah and Metika.

a. Focus Group Discussions

Three different groups of respondents were identified for engagement in FGDs; Men, Women, and Community leaders. Fifteen (15) participants, men and women each, were drawn from each community and engaged in a separate discussion session in each community. After the discussions, the outcomes were validated in a joint discussion.



Figure 1: Focus Group Discussion for women at Anomabo in progress

b. Key Informant Interviews

Community Leaders and Women Leaders within the community were interviewed to provide information to augment the data collated from the FGD to ensure that documented social norms validly influenced the perception, incidence, avoidance, and remediation of GBV, especially women in the fishing communities.



Figure 2: Focus Group Discussion for men at Anomabo in progress

c. Organisation of the Report

The collated data is presented under the following themes;

Power Dynamics and Gender Roles: This theme examined the social dynamics within fishing communities related to power distribution and gender roles. It explored how decisions are made within households, the responsibilities assigned to men and women, expectations of obedience and support, and the division of labor within the family.



Figure 3: Fisherman contributing to discussions at an FGD at Cape 3 Points

Access to Resources: This theme tried to understand how resources are distributed among fishing communities, especially by looking at the dynamics of property ownership and decision-



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



making. It explored the breadth of options and rights accessible to both men and women in terms of resource management and use. This included critical resources like land, money, and other things they required for their sustenance and general well-being.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: This theme delved into the experiences and challenges individuals within fishing communities face regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights. It explored issues such as family planning, decision-making around childbirth, access to healthcare services, and the influence of cultural norms and beliefs on sexual and reproductive health practices.

Traditional Beliefs and Cultural Norms on Reporting Cases of GBV: This theme examined the cultural beliefs, traditions, and norms that shape the reporting and addressing of gender-based violence (GBV) within fishing communities. It explored how cases of GBV are perceived, the role of family and traditional authorities in resolving such cases, and the potential impact of cultural norms on the reporting, disclosure, and prevention of GBV.

Norms for Special Cases: This theme examined distinct norms within fishing communities. It explored adoption practices, complexities surrounding children from extramarital affairs, widowhood rights, and worker recruitment processes. These norms were found to be influenced by cultural, gender, and economic factors, shaping relationships and dynamics within the communities.

Social and Cultural Norms Influencing Perception, Incidence, Avoidance, and Remediation of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

a. Power Dynamics and Gender Roles

In fishing communities in Ghana, power dynamics and gender roles play a significant role in shaping relationships and social norms. They were generally found to promote misconceptions, restrictions and inequity. Traditional gender norms have an impact on parenting, career decisions, and family duties.

Marriage and Dating Norms

The initiation of marriage is predominantly in the domain of men, while women hold the authority to approve marriage proposals. Marriage itself was viewed as a union between two families, emphasizing the communal nature of these unions.

After women accept proposals from men, the immediate family of both parties expect to be informed in the dating stage. When the couples are ready, the 'man's family approach' the woman's family and then plans the marriage rites together.

Throughout the marriage process, certain customs and practices are followed. Men are responsible for paying the knocking fees, which served as an announcement of their intention to marry, and subsequently, pay a marriage dowry to finalize the marriage rights. It was expected that the families of the couple intending to marry, conduct thorough investigations into the character of the prospective spouses. Additionally, these families were seen as the point of contact for receiving complaints regarding the couple's actions.

Marriage and Dating Norms

- Men initiate marriages and women approve marriage proposals.
- Marriage is seen as a union between two families.
- Men pay knocking fees and marriage dowry to finalize marriage rights.
- After women accept proposals from men, the immediate family of both parties expect
- Families investigate the character of the couple intending to marry.
- Families receive complaints about the couple's actions.

Inter-racial and inter-faith marriages

Interracial and inter-faith marriages were perceived to promote peace and stability of local communities. However, differences in family structure, reporting mechanisms, and prescribed roles could lead to conflict and potentially result in gender-based violence if not addressed amicably.



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



Arranged marriages versus Contemporary marriages

In arranged marriages, the families of the couple initiate the engagement. The man assumes the provisioning role till the marriage. The couple's families were more involved compared to engagement led by individuals. It was perceived that arranged marriages lasted longer than modern marriages. It was also perceived that arranged marriages had more mutual respect but were more difficult to annul. Arranged marriages require a detailed investigation of the couple and their 'family's character before accepting marriage. These investigations could result in the marginalization of families suspected to carry bad omens or perceived to have lousy character, even if the individuals may not have a history of bad behavior.

Arranged marriages versus Contemporary marriages

- It was perceived that arranged marriages lasted more than modern marriages.
- It was also perceived that there was more mutual respect in arranged marriages
- Men who are seen to be performing women's roles in the family are seen to be foolish/useless.
- Inter-racial and inter-faith marriages were perceived to promote peace and stability of local communities.
- Women who perform roles associated with men are seen to be industrious and are held in high esteem

Household Leadership and gender roles

Within the household, men were generally considered the heads of the homes. They were expected to provide for the family regarding food, shelter, and income. Women, on the other hand, occupy the role of second-in-command to their husbands. They were expected to support their husbands' visions for the family and obey their instructions. In some cases, women were also expected to leave their faith and family behind to join their husbands' side. Men who were seen to be performing 'women's roles in the family were seen to be foolish/useless. Women who were seen to be performing roles for men were seen to be industrious and were held in high esteem.

The division of labor was quite distinct in these communities. Women were primarily responsible for caring for the children, providing food, and performing various domestic duties within the



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



household. Interestingly, in Akan-dominant communities, the lineage of the children was traced through the woman's family, while in non-Akan communities, the opposite was true.

Regarding child-rearing, children were expected to actively participate in running errands and supporting their parents in their activities whenever possible. They were also taught to accept any corrective or punitive actions from their parents and other adults within the community. Children were instilled with a strong sense of obedience, where they were expected to follow all instructions as commands. Furthermore, it was culturally expected that children not turn down legitimate errand requests from older people, even if they were unfamiliar.

Men have important roles in the fishing business in Ghanaian fishing villages. They generally engage in fishing operations, such as boat repairs and maintenance. Their knowledge was

essential when they traveled out into the vast sea, throwing nets and gathering the day's catch. Young men and boys regularly engage in fishing expeditions, where they learn vital skills passed down through centuries. Men also displayed skill in making long-lasting fishing boats and sophisticated ovens, such as the Ahotor, used to smoke fish. These jobs highlight men's essential contributions to preserving traditions and supporting Ghana's fishing industry.

Household Leadership and gender roles

- Men are considered the head of the homes and responsible for providing food, shelter, and income.
- Women are second-in-command to the husband and expected to support his vision and obey his instructions.
- Women are expected to leave their faith, family, and join the man's side.
- Women take care of children, provide food, and perform domestic duties.
- Lineage of children in Akan communities is traced through the woman's family.
- Women typically initiate divorce proceedings.
- Women are allowed to work for extra income.
- Children run errands and support parents, obeying instructions as commands.
- Children are expected to accept corrective actions from parents and adults.
- Children are not to refuse errands from the elderly, even if unfamiliar.
- Divorce is completed when the woman's family returns dowry items.
- After divorce, children are usually cared for by the woman, but the father provides for them.



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



Women have important roles in Ghanaian fishing villages, contributing to the growing fishing sector. They play an important role in fish processing, doing duties such as cleaning, gutting, and preparing fish for eating and sale. Many women start their fish processing enterprises, demonstrating their entrepreneurial drive and fostering economic progress in their communities.



Figure 4: Fisherman expressing his opinion at a FGD for men at Otuam

Furthermore, women have critical roles in sales and marketing, expertly navigating crowded marketplaces, negotiating pricing, and promoting the different seafood options. Their excellent customer involvement and contribution to commerce were critical to Ghana's coastal fishing sector. These many professions emphasize the essential contributions of women along the value chain, from processing to marketing, while promoting empowerment and gender equality within fishing communities.

Marital infidelity and divorce

In the past, increased family involvement in marriage ceremonies ensured couples did not engage in adultery. Stringent punishment such as fines and cultural punishment with traditional swearing of oaths added layer of deterrence.



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



Cases of infidelity were handled based on whether there has been a formal introduction to the family.

It was worth noting that most divorce proceedings in these communities were perceived to be typically initiated by women. However, the process was only considered complete when the woman's family returned the items purchased as part of the marriage dowry, usually in the form of dowry drinks. The money paid during the marriage rarely gets returned.

After divorce, it was common for the children to be handed over to the care of the women. However, the father is expected to provide for the sustenance of the children, ensuring their well-being even after the marital separation.

Marital infidelity and divorce

- Increased family involvement in marriage ceremonies ensured couples did not engage in adultery
- In cases of infidelity, issues are handled based on whether there has been a formal introduction to the family or not.
- Most divorce proceedings in these communities were perceived to be typically initiated by women
- Divorce is completed when the woman's family returns dowry items.
- After divorce, children are usually cared for by the woman, but the father was still required to provide for them.

b. Access to Resources

Access to resources within fishing communities in Ghana is influenced by gender dynamics and decision-making processes that shape the distribution and ownership of property. While men and women technically have equal rights to purchase and own property, the decision-making power regarding various aspects of resources tends to favor men.



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



In these communities, men hold significant authority when making decisions about crucial matters such as where the family should reside, which business ventures to engage in, the desired number of children to have, and how to finance their businesses. These decisions were typically made by men, with limited input from women who may be consulted.

Property acquisition was another domain where men typically wielded more decision-making power. Men were more likely to decide which properties to acquire and where to acquire them, although they often seek input and consider their wives' perspectives. It was common for property owned by men to be regarded as collectively owned by the nuclear family, emphasizing the interconnectedness of family units.

Contrastingly, the management of property owned by women follows a different pattern. Women often retained sole control and property management until they decided to include them as part of the family's collective assets. This suggests a level of autonomy and agency for women in managing their resources.

The significance of a legally recognized will becomes apparent in the event of the death of either the man or the woman. In cases where the man passes away, his family may choose to repossess his property, particularly if they perceive that the wife did not adequately cater to his needs

Access to Resources

- Men have more decision-making power in determining where to reside, business ventures, and family size.
- Men typically make decisions regarding property acquisition, while considering the opinions of their wives.
- Property owned by men is often considered collectively owned by the nuclear family.
- Women retain sole control and management of their properties until they decide to include them as family assets.
- In the absence of a legally recognized will, the man's family may repossess his property upon his death, assuming custody of the children.
- In the event of a woman's death, her property is usually passed down to her children unless stated otherwise in her will.
- Women's property is generally managed and controlled by themselves, but rare instances of repossession by extended family have been observed.



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



during his lifetime or if they suspect foul play in his demise. In such situations, the family assumes custody of the children and assumes responsibility for their well-being.

In the case of a woman's death, the distribution of her property differs. Unless her will explicitly state otherwise, all the property accrued by her typically passed down to her children. This highlights the importance of a woman's will in determining the allocation of her assets after her passing. While instances of repossession by the woman's extended family were rare, they have been observed, emphasizing the need for clarity and legal documentation to protect women's property rights.



Figure 5: Fish Processor expressing her views at an FGD at Cape 3 Points

Access to resources within Ghana's fishing communities demonstrates power imbalances and decision-making disparities between genders. These dynamics can have implications for economic empowerment, inheritance rights, and vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence within these communities. Understanding and addressing these norms and practices was vital for promoting gender equality and ensuring the well-being of individuals in these contexts.



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



c. Norms related to Sexual and Reproductive Health

Family Planning and Contraceptive Use

Cultural and religious beliefs influenced community norms surrounding sexual behaviours, contraception, and family planning. Issues on reproductive health were usually thorny issues to discuss. Women were perceived to be unilaterally making decisions that affected men and were perceived to generate conflicts that often led to various forms of violence on both sides.

Culturally, men were expected to lead in deciding when to bear children in marriages. Men were expected to approve family planning procedures before women accepted/implemented the procedures. However, interactions with fishing communities indicated a general dissatisfaction among men because women underwent contraceptive procedures and this was perceived to lead to emotional, sexual, and physical violence when the couple failed to resolve the issues amicably.

Family Planning and Contraceptive Use

- Women were perceived to be unilaterally taking decisions that affected men and was perceived to be generating conflicts
- Men were expected to lead in deciding when to bear children
- Men were expected to approve of family planning procedures before women accepted/implemented the procedures
- Perceived complications associated with using family planning procedures also contributed to men's opposition
- If women went ahead despite their husband's objections, it usually resulted in GBV

Perceived complications associated with using family planning procedures also served as a disincentive that resulted in ' 'men's opposition to family planning procedures. If women went ahead despite their ' 'husband's objections, it usually resulted in GBV even if the decision was based on medical reasons.

Living with Persons Suspected of Contracting Sexually Transmitted or Communicable Diseases

Stigma related to communicable and sexually transmitted diseases was also observed to predispose victims to GBV in fishing communities. Fear of contracting the diseases could lead to rejection segregation of victims and even impact the ability of persons suspected to be infected



Funded by
the European Union

Hən Mpoano



to secure jobs or access quality healthcare. It was also perceived that people living with the diseases could intentionally transfer the diseases to others. However, men were more open to working with people suspected to be infected if they were sure it could not be easily communicated.

d. Traditional Beliefs and Cultural Norms on Reporting and Addressing Gender-Based Violence

In fishing communities in Ghana, traditional beliefs and cultural norms play a significant role in shaping how gender-based violence is reported and addressed. These norms reflect a combination of family involvement, community authority, and established practices.

Within these communities, the family of the couple was typically the first point of contact for complaints related to any form of violence occurring within the relationship. This places a certain level of responsibility on the family to address these concerns and seek resolutions. However, it was to note that children's reports may receive less attention unless corroborated by an adult, underscoring the need for adult validation and support.

Reports of gender-based violence from women tend to be taken more seriously

compared to reports from men, indicating a recognition of women's vulnerability and potential

Reporting and Addressing Gender Based Violence

- Complaints of gender-based violence are initially brought to the family of the couple.
- Reports from children are taken more seriously when supported by an adult.
- Women's reports of violence are given greater consideration than men's reports.
- Rape cases can be handled by the victim's family or traditional authorities, resulting in fines and allowances for hospital bills.
- Victims or their families may choose to involve the police for legal prosecution.
- Cases of spousal abuse are first reported to a designated family member responsible for addressing marital complaints. Persistent cases may lead to divorce and police involvement.
- Physical abuse of children should be reported to a trusted family relative, who presents the complaints to family elders for assessment.
- Depending on the circumstances, perpetrators may receive warnings, cover medical expenses, or provide financial support for the child's future.



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



harm within these communities. In cases of rape, the victim's family or traditional authorities often assume a role in addressing the matter, with resolutions typically involving fines and the establishment of an allowance to cover the victim's hospital bills.

Alternatively, the victim or their family may refer the matter to the police for legal prosecution, recognizing the importance of involving formal law enforcement agencies in severe cases of gender-based violence.

Instances of physical abuse between spouses follow a specific reporting process. Initially, such cases were reported to a designated family member entrusted with receiving and addressing complaints within the marriage. If the abuse persists and proves unresolvable, the marriage may be dissolved, and the case can be escalated to the police for further action.

When it came to cases of physical abuse against children, a distinct reporting mechanism was followed. The incidents were expected to be reported to a trusted family relative assigned to handle such complaints. This relative then presented the complaints to family elders, who assessed whether the assault was a disciplinary action or an intentional act causing harm. The perpetrators may receive a warning, be asked to pay for the victim's medical expenses, or, in some cases, provide financial support for the child's apprenticeship or as seed money to start a business.

These traditional and cultural norms underscore the importance of community involvement and accountability in addressing gender-based violence. While some cases were resolved within the family or by traditional authorities, others require the involvement of legal authorities for appropriate prosecution. Understanding and respecting these norms was crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems to address gender-based violence and provide necessary assistance to survivors within fishing communities in Ghana.



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano





Figure 6: Submissions from women being validated at Dago

e. Norms for Special Cases

Adoption of children

In fishing communities, the decision to bring another child into the home was typically vested in the hands of men. This cultural norm reflects the patriarchal dynamics within these communities, where men hold authority over matters concerning the family unit.

When a family or couple contemplates adopting a child, the customary practice entails approaching the child's parents or, in their absence, the closest family member responsible for their care. This crucial step was necessary to discuss and negotiate the terms of the adoption. It serves as a form of

Adoption of children

- Men typically make the decision to bring another child into the home within fishing communities.
- The customary practice involves approaching the child's parents or closest family member responsible for their care to discuss and negotiate the terms of the adoption.
- Once an agreement is reached, the child may be released to the adopting family, marking the start of their new life in the household.
- The responsibility for the child's well-being typically falls upon the family relative who facilitated the adoption process.
- Limited resources and geographical distance often pose challenges for the family relative in fulfilling their caregiving role effectively.
- Support mechanisms and community-based resources are crucial in ensuring the well-being of adopted children in fishing communities.



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



consent-seeking, ensuring that all parties involved are in agreement with the child's placement in a new home.

Upon understanding, the child may be released to the adopted family, symbolizing the start of their journey in the new household. However, it was necessary to note that the responsibility for ensuring the child's well-being falls upon the family relative who facilitated the adoption process. This individual assumes the duty of overseeing the child's care, acting as a guardian and provider of support.

While this traditional approach to adoption highlights the importance of involving the child's family or closest relatives, practical challenges often arise. Limited financial and material resources can impede the family relative's ability to fulfill their caregiving role adequately. Additionally, the geographical distance between the adopting family and the child's original family or relatives may further complicate the dynamics, making it challenging for the family relative to participate in the child's upbringing and welfare.

Children from extramarital affairs

Within fishing communities, children born from extramarital affairs introduce a range of complex dynamics, often shaped by cultural norms and individual circumstances. These situations require careful navigation and understanding to ensure the well-being of the children involved.

When children are born outside of a marriage, whether before or after the marriage, the decision regarding their custody typically lies with the man involved. The man had the authority to determine whether to take the children into his care or allow them to remain with their mother. This decision holds significant implications for the children's upbringing and the involvement of both parents in their lives.

In many cases, the responsibility for raising the children falls upon the mother. She assumes the daily care and nurturing of the children, taking on the role of primary caregiver. Meanwhile, the



Funded by
the European Union

Hən Mpoano



father was expected to provide financial support periodically and when urgent needs arose. This financial assistance was crucial for ensuring the well-being and proper upbringing of the children.

Unfortunately, some women may exploit the situation, using the children to extort money from the father. They may leverage the emotional bond between the children and the father to manipulate him into providing additional financial support. This form of emotional abuse can create strained relationships and further complicate the delicate situation.

On the other hand, some fathers abandon their responsibilities when faced with the mother's insistence on keeping custody of the children and demanding financial support. This abandonment can have significant implications for the well-being

and upbringing of the children, as they may lack the emotional and financial support they deserve.

Children From Extra-Marital Affairs

- Custody of children was decided by the father involved, who can choose whether to take them into his care or allow them to remain with their mother.
- In most cases, the mother assumes the role of primary caregiver, responsible for the daily care and nurturing of the children.
- The father is expected to provide financial support periodically and in times of urgency to ensure the well-being and proper upbringing of the children.
- However, some women may exploit the situation by using the children as a means to extort money from the father, leveraging the emotional bond between them.
- Conversely, some fathers may choose to abandon their responsibilities if faced with custody disputes and financial demands from the mother.



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano





Figure 7: Fish Processor explaining how men interact with women in family-run businesses

Widowhood rights

In fishing communities, widowhood rites play a significant role in providing support and protection to widows during a crucial transition period. These rites serve multiple purposes, including allowing the widow time to grieve and ensuring that the family knows if she has conceived a child with her deceased husband.

When a woman becomes widowed in these communities, widowhood rights was initiated, typically lasting at least three months. During this time, the widow was allowed to mourn and come to terms with her loss. It was a time when she could lean on the support of her late husband's family,

Widowhood Rites

- Widowhood rites are practiced in fishing communities to support and protect widows during their transition.
- These rites allow the widow, time to grieve and ensure awareness if she has conceived a child with her deceased husband.
- Widowhood rights typically last for at least three months, providing the widow with a period of support and mourning.
- During this time, the widow is under the care of the deceased spouse's family, who take responsibility for her well-being.
- The widow is not expected to engage in strenuous economic activities, allowing her time to heal and adjust.
- Abuse of widows is strictly prohibited in these communities.
- However, the level of support may vary based on the widow's relationship with the deceased family.
- Widowhood rites aim to safeguard the widow's dignity and foster community support during a challenging phase of their lives.



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



who would take on the responsibility of caring for her well-being.

Essentially, the widow is not expected to engage in demanding economic activities. This understanding acknowledges the emotional toll of her loss and provides her with the necessary space and time for healing. By alleviating the burden of strenuous work, she can focus on her emotional well-being and adjust to the challenges of widowhood.

Furthermore, the mistreatment or abuse of widows was strictly prohibited within these communities. They believed that widowhood rights were designed to safeguard the widow's dignity and protect her from harm. However, the perception of the widow's relationship with the deceased family can influence the level of support and acceptance she receives. In cases where conflicts or strained relationships exist, the implementation of widowhood rights may differ.



Figure 8: A fish processor from Dago, disputing a submission from a fisherman

Worker Recruitment for fishing-related businesses

Within fishing communities, the recruitment of crew members for fishing activities falls under the responsibility of boatswains. These individuals were tasked with selecting suitable candidates based on swimming ability, knowledge of fishing operations, trustworthiness, and loyalty. These qualities were crucial for ensuring the smooth functioning of fishing activities and fostering a sense of unity within the crew.

Compensation for crew members was based on a daily payment structure determined by the quantity of fish harvested and the financial capacity of the fishing activity's financier. Payment settlements typically occur within a week to a month, depending on the profitability of the fishing operations during that period. Failure to fulfill payment obligations may result in the matter being reported to the chief fisherman, who holds the authority to impose penalties such as fines, confiscation of fishing gear, or suspension of the canoe from future fishing activities.

In fish processing and trading tasks, women generally prioritized individuals willing to work under reasonable payment terms, with less emphasis on specific skill requirements. Personal connections and familiarity play a significant role, as some women prefer to recruit family members or individuals with close ties to their families. Assigned roles can range from fish processing to financial management, based on the level of trust established over time.

Conclusion

Exploring social norms and practices related to gender-based violence (GBV) within fishing communities in Ghana has provided valuable insights into the dynamics that shape the lives of individuals within these contexts. Various themes have emerged through interviews and focus group discussions, shedding light on power dynamics, access to resources, cultural norms on reporting and addressing GBV, and specific issues like adoption, children from extramarital affairs, and widowhood rights.

Worker Recruitment for fishing related businesses

- Recruitment of crew members for fishing activities falls under the responsibility of boatswains
- Compensation for crew members was based on a daily payment structure, determined by the quantity of fish harvested and the financial capacity of the fishing activity's financier
- Failure to pay workers may result in the matter being reported to the chief fisherman
- Women generally prioritize individuals who were willing to work under reasonable payment terms, with less emphasis on specific skill requirements
- Some women prefer to recruit family members or individuals with close ties to their family



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



The findings reveal a complex interplay of cultural traditions, gender roles, and societal expectations that influence the lived experiences of individuals within fishing communities. Power dynamics and gender roles often reinforce traditional norms where men were considered the head of the household, while women were expected to support their vision and assume domestic responsibilities. Despite some progress in allowing women to work and contribute to the family's income, traditional expectations persist, shaping gender dynamics and decision-making processes.

Access to resources, including property ownership and decision-making, was primarily controlled by men, although consultation with the wife was often involved. The collective ownership of property by the nuclear family tends to favour the man's assets, while the woman's property remains separate unless she decides otherwise. The absence of legally recognized wills can lead to uncertainties regarding property distribution after death, with implications for widows and their children.

Traditional beliefs and cultural norms significantly affect how GBV is reported and addressed within fishing communities. While reports from women were generally taken more seriously than men, the involvement of family or traditional authorities in resolving cases of rape or physical abuse can lead to fines or allowances for medical expenses. Children's complaints were expected to go through specific channels within the family structure and community, where disciplinary actions were considered a means of teaching rather than intentionally causing harm.

The findings also shed light on the challenges children born from extra-marital affairs face. The custody decision lies with the man involved, with the mother typically assuming primary caregiving responsibilities. Financial support from the father was crucial, but issues of exploitation, abandonment, and emotional manipulation can arise, further complicating the well-being and upbringing of these children.

Widowhood rights intended to provide widows with support and protection, allowing them time to grieve and heal. During this period, the widow was under the care of the deceased spouse's

family, and engaging in demanding economic activities was not expected. However, the level of support can be influenced by the widow's relationship with the deceased family. However, care must be taken to ensure that women are not emotionally and physically abused.

In conclusion, this research has highlighted the intricate social fabric within fishing communities in Ghana, where traditional norms, power dynamics, and cultural beliefs shape the experiences of individuals regarding gender-based violence and related issues. Understanding these nuances was crucial for developing targeted interventions and policies that promote gender equality, protect the rights of women and children, and address the underlying cultural factors that perpetuate GBV. By fostering dialogue, raising awareness, and engaging the community, progress can be made toward creating safer, more equitable environments within fishing communities and beyond.

Recommended Next steps

Based on the findings, it is evident that addressing the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in fishing communities requires a multifaceted approach that considers the specific cultural context and challenges faced by individuals within these communities. Here are some suggested next steps:

Community Engagement and Awareness: Initiating community-led campaigns and awareness programs can help challenge harmful social norms and raise awareness about GBV. Engaging community leaders, influential figures, and local organizations can promote dialogue and education and encourage community members to participate in preventing and addressing GBV actively.

Gender Sensitization and Empowerment: Conducting gender sensitization workshops and trainings can help challenge traditional gender roles and promote gender equality. These programs should empower women and girls, promote their rights, and foster a supportive environment that encourages their active participation in decision-making processes.

Strengthening Legal and Support Systems: Enhancing legal frameworks to protect victims of GBV and ensuring their access to justice is crucial. This involves providing adequate resources, training, and support to law enforcement agencies and establishing specialized GBV units within police stations. Strengthening support services such as counselling, shelters, and helplines can provide survivors with the necessary assistance and protection.

Education and Prevention Programs: Integrating GBV prevention education into school curricula can play a vital role in addressing the root causes of violence and promoting respectful relationships from an early age. Comprehensive sexuality education should also be provided to empower individuals with knowledge about consent, healthy relationships, and reproductive health.

Economic Empowerment: Enhancing economic opportunities for women in fishing communities can reduce their vulnerability to GBV. Initiatives such as vocational training, microfinance programs, and income-generating activities can enable women to gain financial independence, challenge traditional power dynamics, and enhance their decision-making autonomy.

Strengthening Child Protection: Prioritizing child protection within fishing communities is essential. This includes raising awareness about child rights, ensuring access to quality education, and establishing child protection mechanisms to prevent child abuse and exploitation. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including schools, community leaders, and child protection agencies, is crucial in creating children's safe and supportive environment.

Research and Data Collection: Continued research and data collection on GBV prevalence, root causes, and the effectiveness of interventions are essential. This will inform evidence-based strategies and allow for the monitoring and evaluation of interventions, ensuring that efforts to reduce GBV in fishing communities are targeted and effective.

By implementing these suggested steps and fostering collaboration among community members, local organizations, government agencies, and international partners, progress can be made

towards reducing the prevalence of GBV, promoting gender equality, and creating safer and more inclusive fishing communities for all individuals.



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



References

- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). *Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept*. *Gender & Society*, 19(6), 829–859.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
- Gergen, K. J. (2014). Social construction and the transformation of identity politics. In R. A. Ritti & R. J. Sherwin (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on transitional justice: From international and criminal to alternative forms of justice* (pp. 31–45). Oxford University Press.
- Heise, L. L. (1998). *Violence against women: An integrated, ecological framework*. *Violence Against Women*, 4(3), 262–290.



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



Appendices

a. Appendix I: Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussions

Power Dynamics and Gender Roles

Relationship and Marriage Norms

1. What are the traditional expectations and norms surrounding relationships and marriage in this community?
2. How do community members view the importance of arranged marriages versus love marriages?
3. What are the prevailing attitudes towards interfaith or intercultural/inter-ethnic marriages in this community?
4. What are the expectations and norms regarding marital fidelity and extramarital relationships in this community?
5. How does the community view the roles and responsibilities of spouses within the household and in the broader community?
6. How are issues such as domestic violence, marital rape, or emotional abuse addressed or ignored within the community?
7. What are the norms and expectations surrounding divorce and separation in this community?
8. How do social and cultural factors influence the choices and agency of individuals in forming and maintaining relationships and marriages?

Gender Roles in Family

9. What are the traditional gender roles assigned to men and women within families in this community?
10. What is the decision-making processes within families?
11. How do community members perceive the division of labor within households and the allocation of resources based on gender?
12. What are the expectations regarding male breadwinning and female homemaking in this community?



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano



13. How do community members view the role of fathers in child-rearing and nurturing within families?
14. What are the attitudes towards men's involvement in traditionally female-dominated tasks and women's involvement in traditionally male-dominated tasks?
15. How do gender roles within families intersect with other social identities, such as class, ethnicity, or religion?
16. How do community members perceive and respond to challenges or resistance to traditional gender roles within families?

Gender Roles at Work

17. What are the predominant gender roles and expectations regarding work in this community?
18. How are certain occupations or industries perceived as more suitable for men or women in this community?
19. What are the barriers and challenges faced by women in accessing and advancing in traditionally male-dominated professions?
20. What are the barriers and challenges faced by men in accessing and advancing in traditionally female-dominated professions?
21. How are leadership positions and decision-making roles distributed based on gender within workplaces in this community?
22. How do community members view the balance between work and family responsibilities for men and women?
23. Can social and cultural factors shape the occupational choices and career trajectories of men and women in this community?
24. What support systems or initiatives exist within the community to promote gender equality and challenge gender stereotypes in the workplace?
25. How do community members perceive the benefits and challenges of promoting gender equality at work, both for individuals and the community as a whole?

Gender Roles in The Community

26. How are traditional gender roles defined and perceived within this community?



27. What are the expectations regarding the behavior, appearance, and attributes associated with masculinity and femininity in this community?
28. How do community members view the roles and responsibilities of men and women within the community?
29. What are the prevailing attitudes towards gender equality and the empowerment of women within this community?
30. How do community members perceive and respond to individuals who challenge or deviate from traditional gender norms?
31. What are the community's views on gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination, and how are these issues addressed within the community?
32. How do community norms influence educational opportunities and career choices for individuals based on their gender?
33. What role do community leaders, institutions, and cultural practices play in reinforcing or challenging gender roles and norms?
34. How do cultural and religious beliefs impact gender roles and norms within the community?
35. How do community members perceive the benefits and challenges of promoting gender equality within the community?

Access to Resources

36. What are the community's perceptions of access to resources based on gender, socio-economic status, age, ethnicity, or other relevant factors?
37. How are resources allocated and distributed within the community?
38. What are the prevailing norms and practices surrounding this process?
39. What role do community leaders and influential individuals play in regulating access to resources, and how are their actions perceived by community members?
40. What are the community's expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of individuals and families in obtaining and managing resources?
41. What are the traditional or cultural norms that control access to resources, and how do they differ across different groups within the community?



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



42. How are decisions related to resource allocation made within community institutions and organizations, and what factors influence these decisions?
43. How do social networks and community relationships influence access to resources within the community?

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

44. How are sexual and reproductive health and rights understood and perceived within the community?
45. How do cultural and religious beliefs influence community norms surrounding sexual behaviors, contraception, and family planning?
46. What are the community's perceptions of access to reproductive healthcare services, including family planning, prenatal care, and safe abortion services?
47. How do community members view the rights of individuals to make decisions about their own bodies, including decisions regarding contraception, pregnancy, and abortion?
48. What are the norms and practices regarding child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, and other harmful practices affecting sexual and reproductive health?
49. How do community members view gender equality and the empowerment of women in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights?
50. What are the community's perceptions of and attitudes towards sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and the practices surrounding prevention and treatment?
51. How do community members view the role of community and religious leaders in shaping sexual and reproductive health norms and practices?
52. What are the community's expectations and practices regarding sexual consent, gender-based violence prevention, and the rights of survivors?

Traditional Beliefs and Cultural Norms on Reporting and Addressing Gender Based Violence

53. How are cases of gender-based violence reported in this community?
54. What are the traditional dispute resolution mechanisms or alternative justice systems that exist within the community, and how do they handle cases of gender-based violence?
55. What punitive measures can be implemented in cases of gender-based violence in this community?



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



56. How do privacy, honor, or shame impact the willingness of individuals to report cases of gender-based violence?
57. What are the perceived barriers and challenges faced by survivors of gender-based violence when considering reporting the incidents? And How are they addressed?
58. How do community members view the role of law enforcement and the justice system in addressing cases of gender-based violence?
59. How do community members view the support and resources available for survivors who report cases of gender-based violence?
60. How do religious or spiritual beliefs influence attitudes towards reporting gender-based violence and seeking justice?
61. What are the cultural norms and expectations regarding the role of family and community members in responding to and resolving cases of gender-based violence?



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



b. Appendix II: Picture Gallery from Engagements in the Central Region



Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano





Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano





Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano





Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano



a. Appendix III: Picture Gallery from Engagements in the Western Region



Funded by
the European Union

Hɛn Mpoano





Funded by
the European Union

Hen Mpoano

