



In this issue:

▶ EDITORIAL	1
▶ FEATURE ARTICLE	1
▶ NPC'S DESK	2
▶ REGIONAL & NATIONAL BRIEF	2
▶ CALENDAR OF EVENTS	2
▶ FLASH BACK	3
▶ SUCCESS STORIES	3
▶ QUOTATIONS	5
▶ Q & A	5



Editorial:

The WiLDAF Ghana e-News Letter, *The WiLDAF Voice* is the result of a conscious effort to connect our numerous partners, beneficiaries, benevolent Donors and the general Public to our many activities and programmes that have carved a niche for us in promoting and advancing the cause of women. WiLDAF Ghana continues to vigorously work towards achieving its vision of a Ghana where women's rights are respected promoted and protected. By using the Law as a tool for empowerment and development, WiLDAF has worked to create safe spaces for the effective participation and representation of women at the local national and international levels. The success stories from our two main programmatic areas of Women's Access to Justice and Women's Participation in Democratic Governance summarize how we have been able to influence society positively towards a re-orientation of cultural practices, customs and policies which were obstacles to the advancement of women.

The main objectives of *The WiLDAF Voice* is first to inform all that social positive change for women is possible with a concerted effort.

As the news of the wave of change in Women's leadership roles and their impact as Agents of Change sweep across various Conti-

nents, we feel encouraged to pursue the empowerment and Advancement of the cause of women. We are particularly excited about the historical win of Hon Samia Yaaba Nkrumah, the first female Chairperson of a Political Party in our country. We also feel challenged to deepen our efforts at educating, and building the capacities of women in diverse fields in order to bridge the inequality gaps.

We are mindful of the rough and sometimes hostile socio-economic terrain within which we operate. However our consolation is in the fact that change is a process that demands persistent and sustained drive for the

needed transformation. This is why we remain committed to the cause of women and appreciate the successes no matter how small. We believe that *"the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life"* (UN Women's conference, Beijing 1995).

We sincerely appreciate your connecting with us by reading this piece. More importantly, we invite you to join us in whatever capacity to ensure that women's voices are heard, and their rights are indeed respected, promoted and protected.

Have a relaxing reading.

-Mercy C. Adjabeng



Feature Article: Samia Yaba Christina Nkrumah's Historic Win –

Samia Yaba Christina Nkrumah, daughter of Ghana's first president, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, made history this past September the 10th, 2011, when she was elected as the first female chairperson of the Convention People's Party (CPP) and the first female to lead any Political Party in Ghana's political history. Samia first entered Ghanaian politics in 2008, when she successfully contested and won the Jomoro constituency seat, winning nearly 50% of the votes. Her foray into politics coincided with the founding of the "Africa Must Unite" Association, an association that supports projects in various sectors (health care, education etc..) in order to achieve equal economic and social conditions for Ghanaians. Samia Nkrumah, as well as Africa Must Unite share their core values with Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's pan-African movement, which envisioned an economically, racially, socially and politically unified Africa. The Association has been focusing its efforts in Jomoro, a region known to be among the poorest regions in Ghana. Samia's vision to improve Ghana starts from improving the living standards of all Ghanaians. Her grass roots efforts have won the hearts of many Ghanaians. Her historic win is a significant feat for women's leadership in Ghana, making many hope that a Female Presidential Candidate is not far fetched.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS:



- ▶ LUNCH MEETING WITH WOMEN EXECUTIVES OF POLITICAL PARTIES 4TH OCT
- ▶ 3RD NETWORK MEETING & LAUNCH OF ADVOCACY TOOL KIT ON MDGs 6TH OCT
- ▶ 3 DAY LEGAL LITERACY CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP 17TH OCT
- ▶ LEGAL AID MONITORING VISITS 20TH OCT

From the NPC's Desk:

It has been an immense pleasure to be part of the driving force behind the WiLDAF experience. We owe these achievements to the commitments, encouragement and resilience of the WiLDAF network, Board, Staff, volunteers and our generous Donors.

We are very pleased to connect and share our change stories. Our work with women, seek to politicise the exclusion, marginalization and discrimination of women through overt and covert mechanisms, some backed by laws. In our view the third Millennium Development Goal on gender equality and empowerment of women which

speaks to the status of women has relevance to private and public decision making spaces.

As we focus on women's equal representation and participation in the decision-making spaces, which ultimately trickles down to affect other rights, and facilitate women's engagement and access to justice, we are highly optimistic about improved lives and livelihood for women.

We sincerely appreciate your partnership and anticipate a society where women's rights are cherished Human Rights, and hence promoted and protected.

Bernice Sam,
National Programme Coordinator
WiLDAF Ghana



I have had the good fortune to intern with WiLDAF in the capacity of web page developer through Canadian Crossroads International, one of WiLDAF's many partner organizations. With only a month of my mandate left, I have had some time to reflect on the wonderful experiences accrued whilst being part of WiLDAF Ghana's dedicated team, and am sad to see the end of my nine month contract soon approaching.

Canadian Crossroads International (CCI) is a Canadian international development organization that partners with over two dozen non-government organizations in 8 different countries, including Ghana.

I graduated with a Masters degree in Biomedical Communication from the University of Toronto. This program taught me to combine visual design, communication theories, science and medicine to promote health, medical and scientific education.

Regional & International Brief Kataryna Nemethy; Canadian Crossroads International Intern

You may be wondering how this relates to an internship with a Women's Rights NGO; As a "communicator", I am trained to render information accessible to specific audiences through the mediums of technology and art. So, I have been assisting WiLDAF in making information more accessible to specific audiences through their website. You can visit WiLDAF's updated site at www.wildaf.org.

Interning with WiLDAF has been incredibly rewarding. I have participated in a handful of the many workshops, trainings, meetings or conferences run by WiLDAF, and as such, have met and been inspired by women from all walks of life! On several occasions, I have been approached by LLVs or CoWIGs who have expressed their appreciation for all that they have learned through the efforts of WiLDAF. Aye-koo WiLDAF-Ghana, and thank you for a wonderful experience!

-Kataryna Nemethy



Success Stories:

In response to the large number of women who undergo egregious forms of customary rites when they lost their husbands, the 1992 Constitution provides that ‘all customary practices which dehumanise or are injurious to the physical and mental well-being of a person are prohibited’. Subsequently a law was passed in 1998 that abolished widowhood rites which were cruel. It is a criminal offence to force any woman to undergo such a practice.

Sadly due to ignorance of the laws, many women undergo widowhood rites some of which are demeaning and dehumanising. Emelia Biney, an Nzema, was a victim.

Following a capacity building workshop on family laws in the District by WiLDAF, Emelia narrates her ordeal when her husband passed away.

“I am happy to hear today that the law does not allow anyone to cause pain to anyone, or force someone to undergo any unlawful cultural practices like widowhood rites. I weep today because when my husband

Emelia’s Resolve to keep her Children away from Cruel Widowhood Rites

died, I was made to go through some painful customary practice; who was I to have refused to undergo those rites when everybody saw it as an obligation. I went through some rituals as a widow and it grieves my heart whenever I remember what I had to endure. Among other things, I was made to sit on a small stool for three days; next they put heavy chains around my waist and locked it with a small padlock. Symbolically,

this meant that my vagina had been locked for the whole year and I dared not have sex or enter into any love relationship with any one because I was mourning my husband. My mother, my only source of comfort, encouraged me to go through the rites because it was a custom”.

Emboldened by her knowledge of the ‘family laws’, she vows to protect her children from such practices. “Today with this legal rights education from WiLDAF, as long as I live, I will ensure that none of my three daughters goes through this inhuman practice. I will also report to the police if I hear that anyone is forcing any woman to undergo such inhuman practices”.

FLASHBACK



▶ SEMINAR WITH PROSECUTORS ON DV, APRIL 2011



▶ SKETCH PERFORMED BY LLV’S IN COCOA GROWING AREAS IN THE EASTERN REGION, APRIL 2011

21 year-old Fulera Gariba reflects on her new role as an Assembly Woman in Elmina Zongo

It’s been only a little over six months after being sworn into Office as the Assembly Woman of her community and Fulera has already won the hearts of her community members.

It was a historical and unprecedented occurrence in the Zongo community when Fulera Gariba, a 21 year- old former graduate of Edinaman Senior High School, was elected as the Assembly Woman of the Elmina Zongo Electoral area in the Komenda Edina Eguafu-Abrem Municipality in the Central Region.

Prior to her remarkable achievement, Fulera would not participate in public activities or contribute to social discussions among her Muslim colleagues due to socio-cultural barriers. There was however a complete turnaround when

she participated in a governance training workshop by WiLDAF Ghana. She says “I am indebted to WiLDAF for the capacity building training I received prior to the district assembly elections. We were trained in lobbying, negotiation and advocacy skills which were key strategies in my campaign. The knowledge I gained on governance and the importance of women’s participation and representation in decision- making equipped me get the support of the electorates who were made aware of the benefits a woman can bring to the community. This is what put me ahead of other contestants”.



In an interview with WiLDAF’s Communications Officer, Fulera recounts that “the initial stages were very frustrating for two reasons; we had not been officially sworn in and the community members had high expectations. Things began to ease after a Capacity building training by the Ministry of Local Government”. She however states that the many achievements so far are attributable to the different Trainings organized by WiLDAF Ghana for her and her

colleague Assembly members. According to her, they have had Trainings in Aid Effectiveness, Advocacy strategies, Gender as well as Community Engagement and Communication Strategies.

“These have made us very informed and confident about our responsibilities. We have built a good rapport with the Assembly, and engage Policy makers on developmental and budget issues to ensure relevant projects for our communities. We constantly dialogue with the Coordinating Directors to input or even review programmes and budgets in favour of the Community”.

Certainly, Fulera Gariba’s story is an example of the significant change many young women can achieve in leadership roles, particularly politics when their capacities are built.

In the Dangme East District of the Greater Accra region, which is predominantly agrarian, the custom is that women are not permitted to solely own land or property. Women are rather encouraged to own land jointly with men in order that they can get assistance with clearing the land and cultivation. Additionally, a woman cannot have access to land unless that access is jointly with a man. This is because women are not physically strong enough to cultivate large tracts of land. Women in communities within the district therefore showed little interest in acquiring property individually or jointly with other women, making them financially dependent on the men.

When WiLDAF took a number of women through legal literacy training, they gained knowledge on the right to own property individually or jointly as provided for by the 1992 Constitution. Subsequently, some women from Amuyawkope, a community in the District, appealed to the Chief for

Chief releases land to women for farming; Changing tradition.

portions of land for farming. As this request was against the tradition, the Chief refused.

The women held meetings with a team from WiLDAF to strategise on how to convince the traditional leaders to provide land for farming. Subsequently, WiLDAF organised a consulta-

tive meeting with the traditional leaders to specifically discuss women's access to and ownership of land. The traditional leaders were convinced that the customary practice had to change to enable women earn an income to support their men. Following that meeting, Nene Amuyaw (Chief of Amuyakope) called the women and offered them six acres of land for farming without taking money from them.

These women from Amuyakope grow foodstuff which are sold in nearby markets for an income, thus reducing their dependency on men.

Improving maternal & neo-natal health in Amasaman

The idea of an African Women's Decade (2010-2020) was first conceived in 1975 at the United Nations First Conference on Women held in Mexico City. It was subsequently proposed by the Ministers of Gender in the African Union and received endorsement by the Heads of States of the AU and was consequently launched on the 15th of Oct., 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya under the theme "Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment".

Even though many African Countries are signatory to numerous declarations that seek to promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, very little has been done in the last three decades to ensure their realization. This is what makes the dedication of a decade for African Women a necessity. The underpinning objective of the decade is to mobilize and accelerate the achievements of these previously established international, regional and sub-regional treaties, protocols and conventions by linking up with women at the grassroots. Significantly, the major areas of concern/attention as provided for in the various declarations have formed the basis for the ten thematic areas of focus for the decade.



In line with the 2011 theme of Addressing Women's Health, Maternal Mortality and HIV & AIDS, WiLDAF Ghana organized a two day Training Workshop on Women's Health to Prevent Maternal and Neo-Natal Mortality in the Ga West Municipality of the Greater Accra region.

Participants at the training included Legal literacy volunteers, staff of the Municipal Assembly, Traditional heads, Women's Groups representatives, Traditional Birth Attendants and Community Health Nurses. The overall objective was to reduce maternal and neo-natal mortality by improving the quality of Health Care delivery and creating awareness on Women's Reproductive Health Rights. Below are views some participants expressed after the training.

"As a chief, many cases come before me for settlement. Recently, I received a complaint about a physically challenged mother of four who had been assaulted by the father of her children. As a result of not maintaining the children, the mother allowed the children to approach their father to request for some money for their up-keep. After the man angrily sent the children away, he beat up their mother mercilessly. I am sad this training didn't come to me early but now that I have learnt about Women's Reproductive rights I am well informed about the rights of that physically challenged mother and the maintenance of her children. I definitely know what to do after this training, I'm really happy for being part of this training." -Nii Akraman II

"The information given at this training is precisely what the community members need to take care of their health needs. Most of the women do not take proper care of themselves, especially during pregnancy. They neither attend ante natal nor consider prenatal health care. They also do not practice family planning, resulting in many unplanned pregnancies with its attendant health and economic challenges. This training is a timely intervention. We the community health nurses who participated in the training are ever ready to support the legal literacy volunteers to continue the education on women's health needs in the community because it is our work to do so." -Gifty Ampem, Community health Nurse.

Until this training, I had no idea how to handle the issue of a lactating mother whose family had dumped her at the premises of a herbalist. From this training, I can confidently say that woman is suffering from postpartum depression. I therefore want to appeal to the Community Health nurses who are experts in the field to accompany me after this training to ensure that the woman is sent to the hospital for better care. This is because I have learnt that pregnancy has related illnesses that need to be treated as a health rather than a spiritual issue". -Naa Osamea, Onyansana.

QUOTATIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS & BENEFICIARIES

"Ignorance, for me is the main cause to women's poverty levels in this district. Ignorance of their rights makes them less powerful to rise to their full potential in the community. This programme is laudable and its goal to educate the poor women on the domestic laws in Ghana to access their right could not have come at a better time".

Chief of Butre -Nana Amoa Gyebu V

"I am very happy to be here today to witness the launch of such a project. Women have indeed suffered from discriminatory practices and the patriarchal nature of our culture makes it all the more difficult for them to access rights available to all. For me this project is in the right direction to help our women. I only pray for sustainability for the programme to achieve its objectives." **Nana Ndede Wusu V (Gyasehen of the Ahanta Traditional Council).**

"The simplified DV Act would be very helpful to bring the issues closer to the grassroots especially as it contains illustrations" **Adwoa Bame, Executive Director, WISE**

"We appreciate the efforts of WiLDAF and their partner AUSAID for giving such opportunity to learn new things. We are encouraged to push the agenda of increasing women's access to justice in the community. The new Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) techniques will help me greatly to mediate on marital cases and the welfare of children which are a major problem within our communities". **Elizabeth Quarshie, Headmistress Boekrom JSS, CRC**

"The LLV's educational series on the radio with the lawyer has been a source of information and learning series for our entire family. It has been one reliable channel you could always switch to for legal prescription. Our local stations have adopted some of the catch phrases within the laws we speak about as their signature tunes and this has helped the communities to imbibe whatever we teach". **Mr. Jacob Kojo Anderson**

"Ignorance, for me is the main cause to women's poverty levels in this district. Ignorance of their rights makes them less powerful to rise to their full potential in the community. This programme is laudable and its goal to educate the poor women on the domestic laws in Ghana to access their right could not have come at a better time". **Chief of Butre -Nana Amoa Gyebu V**

The workshop on gender has been very useful for me. I now understand gender and women should not be little themselves. Women have rights and can participate in decision making. At Assembly sittings, I listen and give a response. Since I came back from the training I have been interacting with women to discuss marital issues like property rights at dissolution of marriage and at death of a spouse". **Beatrice Mensah Boekrom JSS, CRC**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



► WHY HAS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NOT CEASED COMPLETELY DESPITE THE SENSITIZATION PROGRAMS GEARED TOWARDS EDUCATING THE COMMUNITIES ON THE MENACE?

Reported cases show that indeed people are becoming more aware of the menace and perhaps more advocacy should be directed towards stiffer punishments in order to stop people from engaging in domestic violence.

► HOW DOES THE SECURITY SERVICE ENSURE PROTECTION FOR VICTIMS WHO REPORT SUCH CRIMES TO THE POLICE? They have the full protection of the law. Arrests are conducted and based on the nature of the crime suspects may be detained

► HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN THE COURTS ?
Evidence must be taken and sometimes victims are subjected to clinical tests.