

RELIGION AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: DOVVSU PERSPECTIVE

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1. Overview of DOVVSU

- a) The unit was established as Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) in October 1998;
- b) It was renamed Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) in 2005;
- c) It is a specialised unit under the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Ghana Police Service to handle domestic violence and child abuse issues;
- d) It Operates in the eleven (11) regions of the service, with about one hundred and ten (110) offices and desks nationwide.

2. Objectives

- a) Investigate domestic violence and child abuse cases;
- b) Handle cases involving Juveniles;
- c) Provide support for victims of abuse;
- d) Arrest and prosecute offenders/perpetrators.

3. Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

GBV is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender or sex. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm.

Women, men, boys and girls can be victims of gender-based violence, but women and girls are the primary victims everywhere.

4. Types of Cases handled at DOVVSU

- a) Rape
- b) Defilement
- c) Incest
- d) Indecent assault
- e) Forced marriage

- f) Assault by Imprisonment
- g) Unnatural carnal knowledge (sodomy)
- h) Bigamy
- i) Causing harm
- j) Causing Damage
- k) Offensive conduct/verbal abuse
- l) Harassment
- m) Assault/Physical abuse
- n) Failing to provide the necessities of life /Non-maintenance
- o) Failing to name a Child
- p) FGM/C (Female circumcision)
- q) Deprivation of Property
- r) Child stealing
- s) Criminal abortion
- t) Child abuse
- u) Threat of harm or death
- v) Stealing
- w) Abandonment of a child
- x) Etc.

5. DOVVSU: Nationwide Data

Year	Name of Cases Reported
2008	14,799
2009	17,021
2010	12,706
2011	17,965
2012	17,655
2013	18,795
2014	17,778

2015	16,091
2016	12,377
2017	14,332

6. DOVVSU Accra Data

Year	Name of Cases Reported
2014	5,520
2015	4,956
2016	4,324
2017	4,511

7. Legal Framework

- a) The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992;
- b) The Juvenile Justice Act, 2003 (Act 653);
- c) The Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732);
- d) The Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694);
- e) The Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560);
- f) Criminal Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29);
- g) Etc.

8. What is DOVVSU doing?

8.1 Proactive Measures

- a) Sensitization programs – churches, mosques, schools, communities, etc.;
- b) Capacity building for personnel on case management, prosecutions, human rights, customer care, electronic evidence, etc.;

- c) Coordination/collaboration with others- MGCSP/CSOs/UN Agencies etc to implement strategies on violence prevention activities.

8.2 Reactive Measures

- a) Investigations;
- b) Prosecutions;
- c) Protection of victims/vulnerable adults (shelter);
- d) Counselling services.

9. Challenges

- a) Difficulty in breaking through the walls of religion/belief/culture or tradition;
- b) Delay in reporting abuse because a pastor/imam/traditional leader says it is against their belief;
- c) Some victims/survivors fear their marriage will break up when an abuse is reported to the Police;
- d) Some perpetrators refer to reporting of abuse as the reason for ending their relationship;
- e) Stigmatisation within the community and especially churches-when some victims/survivors are made to sit on the back row in church for a stipulated period of time;
- f) Family members also push for relations to seek for divorce when a report of abuse is made against their brother or sister;
- g) Complainants, victims and witnesses refuse to appear and testify in court during prosecution.

10. Conclusion

- a) Let's make the available space we have a safe place for abused women, children and men to seek help or support;
- b) Don't be quick to condemn or judge the individual because what the person may need at that time or moment is care;

- c) Continue educating the public to prevent Gender-Based Violence or report any if we happen to hear about such abuses because if we do not, it may lead to serious injury or death of someone.

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