

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ghana Ngo: African Women Lawyers Association (AWLA)

1. Ghana ratified the CEDAW and it means that the state bound by the articles and obligations in the Convention.

New and emerging trends of violence in Ghana is the defilement of children and even babies. As old as 80 years old men defile children as young as 6 years old girls. Since polygamy is customarily practiced in my country it is amazing why elderly men would not get older women but children.

The key issues requiring the attention of decision makers and the traditional authority is the usage of law as a tool for reform. There is the Domestic Violence Bill pending in Parliament which has been publicized so much that it has been termed "marital rape" bill. Men are afraid of the passage of the bill into law because it will give wives a higher leverage over them because they assume it results in wives refusal of sex with their husbands.

Another law which needs to be passed by Parliament is the law providing distribution of property at divorce. What is practiced now is that judges request for a woman's contribution to property acquired within marriage before she gets a share of the property. This situation is very difficult and until Parliament passes a law on property rights at divorce, many women will continue to stay in violent marriages for the fear of losing everything if they should divorce.

There are however the good practice of the Women and Juvenile Unit under the Police Service, which handles cases involving violence against women

and children. It has helped to encourage reportage so far. However the WAJU centers need technical and professional assistance to be effective and efficient. A few ngos are assisting victims with counseling and refuge centers.
