

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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FIDA-Ghana is dedicated to addressing discriminatory practices in the society, and promoting and protecting the rights of women and children in Ghana. To this end, FIDA-Ghana believes in providing free legal services to indigent families; Advocating for law reform of harmful traditional practices that are inimical to the advancement of women and children; Educating the public particularly women and children on laws affecting them; Providing an environment for achieving personal excellence and growth for all their employees; Integrating quality service, education and research to make the organization innovative and responsive to its key stakeholders' needs; and Collaborating with other civil society organizations to provide resources and skills to enhance their mandate in a cost-effective way.

In short, FIDA believes in empowering all women to claim their capacity to access justice thereby protecting their rights. Since its inception in 1968, FIDA has made great gains in its activities, awareness-raising and capacity-building. 2009 was no exception.

FIDA's Legal Aid Programme in Accra, Kumasi, Koforidua, Tamale and Bolgatanga continues to earn immense credibility and popularity. FIDA is now taking steps towards the creation of a Victim's Support Fund which will enable expanded court representation to our clients as well as create funds available for medical emergencies and transportation stipends for our clients who struggle to afford travel and transportation costs.

FIDA-Ghana recognizes that the current political, economic, and social environment present complex challenges that require the assurance that the momentum and reach of its work is sustained. The organization will continue to devote its services to promoting women's political enfranchisement and participation in the decision-making process. Research efforts have strengthened the vision for a future direction and efforts will be made to continue to mobilize resources to use findings to advocate for policies that will improve the lives of women and children. The satisfying reports and feedback we continue to receive from clients, paralegals and interns provides a sense of renewable energy that will continue to flourish in 2010.

## **KEY OBJECTIVES**

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FIDA-Ghana's key objectives include:

- a) To promote the principles and aims of the United Nations in their legal and social dimensions.
- b) To enhance and promote the welfare of women and children, realizing that the happiness of the home and the strength of the society depends on this.
- c) To address the situation of women in Ghana as participants and beneficiaries of the development process.
- d) To explore possible opportunities to mobilize resources on a sustainable basis.
- e) To develop the capacity of various groups and organizations to be able to identify human rights violations in the area of gender, governance HIV/AIDS and advocate for the protection of the rights of women.
- f) To strengthen the institutional and human resource capacities of FIDA - Ghana for marked improvement in service delivery.

FIDA-Ghana, in furtherance of these objectives, has been active since its inception in initiating and sponsoring the review of laws and traditional practices which negate the development and aspirations of women and children in the civil, educational and business fields.

## **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

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# **LOOKING AHEAD: PLANS FOR 2010**

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## **Women In Politics:**

FIDA believes that women's access to justice and the promotion of women's rights can be achieved in part through greater representation of women in politics. After the 2008 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, FIDA-Ghana was disappointed to see the percentage of women in parliament decline from 10.9% to 7.89% i.e. women occupied 18 out of the 230 seats in Parliament. This decline emphasizes the need for FIDA to continue to fight and lobby for greater representation of women in politics. [More information on what FIDA intends to do under the District Assembly elections.](#)

## **Capacity Building and Advocacy:**

FIDA-Ghana will continue to champion the cause of women in the fight against all forms of discrimination against them and to advocate for the socio-economic empowerment and advancement of women. FIDA will also continue to build the capacities of community, traditional and religious leaders across Ghana in order to enable them identify human rights abuses in their communities. Such leaders would, as usual, undergo training concerning certain pertinent laws and advocacy strategies that would enable them influence behavioural changes, especially in adolescents. FIDA is also committed to enhancing the capacity of other local NGOs, particularly in the Northern region, to make more women accessible to justice.

## **Promotion of Women's Rights and Empowerment in the Northern and Upper East Regions**

## **Public Relations & Communications**

See Grap under Marketing

# STRUCTURE OF FIDA-GHANA

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FIDA-Ghana functions through three bodies: the Executive Board, the General Assembly and a Secretariat. The Executive Board consists of the President, Vice President, immediate past Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer, Historian, Parliamentarian, Senior Member Representative and a Junior Member Representative. The Executive Committee meets once a month.

The General Assembly includes all members of the Federation. These members also meet once a month to discuss matters pertaining to the Federation and other matters referred to it by the Executive Board. Decisions of the General Assembly are arrived at by a simple majority vote.

The Secretariat, which is located in Accra, has now grown to include the Executive Director, Administrative/Media Officer and Program Officer (Legal aid), Accountant, an Accounts Assistant, two Administrative Staff, and three Support Staff. The Secretariat is also supported by members of FIDA who volunteer their services to the organisation and also Interns from within and outside Ghana.

In addition to its office in Accra, FIDA-Ghana also has an operative office in the Ashanti region. This office is located in Kumasi under the management of an Administrator (a qualified female lawyer), two support staff, and approximately 6 volunteer lawyers. Moreover, FIDA Ghana has two paralegal centres in Koforidua, -the capital of the Eastern region, and Tamale in the Northern Region. Trained paralegal officers and their assistants staff these centres.

## **A. LEGAL AID SERVICES PROGRAMME**

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The Legal Aid Services programme is FIDA-Ghana's core project. FIDA-Ghana established the first Legal Aid Programme in the country in January 1985 and a second one in Kumasi in 1997. Services are provided in the following areas: Alternate Dispute Resolution and court representation; Child maintenance and paternity of children; Custody of children and child marriages; Enforcing inheritance rights of adolescents who will otherwise fall prey to exploitative sexual activities for reasons of survival; Enforcing the inheritance rights of HIV/AIDS orphans; Enforcing the property rights of spouses, particularly upon divorce.

Through this programme, individuals receive free or reduced-cost legal advice and dispute mediation by volunteer lawyers in Accra, Kumasi and Koforidua. The individuals who utilize the programme are usually those who cannot afford the filing fees required to appear in court, much less a lawyer. The impact of the Legal Aid programme continues to be considerable.

The Legal Aid Programme is vital to promoting good democratic governance by expanding access to justice for women and children in Ghana. The program provides legal, social and emotional redress from blatant abuses and crimes, such as rape, defilement, domestic violence and harmful traditional practices. It also serves as a tool for creating awareness amongst clients concerning their rights thereby empowering them. FIDA-Ghana offers Legal Aid services three days a week: Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays. Contributions from supporters such as the UNDP have been vital to FIDA-Ghana's efforts to fill the gaps left by the Ghanaian legal system.

# **ACCRA STATION REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Accra's Legal Aid program runs three days a week providing free Legal Aid and dispute mediation by volunteer lawyers. From January to December 2009, 1302 cases were reported to the Legal Aid centre. Marital cases are the highest of cases so far received followed by Maintenance, Estate, Legal Advice and Compensation. Within the period under review 121 cases were referred to the police and public institutions, Legal Aid, DOVVSU.

**Four Hundred and Ninety-Seven (497)** Marital Cases representing **38.2 %**, of the total number of cases were documented at the centre during the period under review. This has been the trend since 2007, where increasingly Marital cases have topped Maintenance Cases at the Legal aid centre. This was followed by **Three Hundred and Thirty-Nine (339)** Maintenance cases representing **26.04%** of the total cases. Estates and Property Cases were **Two Hundred and Two (202)** representing **15.5%**. Referrals were **One Hundred and Twenty-One (121)** in number representing **9.3%**; while **One Hundred and Eight (108)** Legal Advice Cases were recorded which represent **8.3%**. Compensation Cases recorded were **Thirty-five (35)** in number representing **2.7%** of the total number of cases for the year 2009.

## **COURT CASES:**

**Twenty five (25)** cases were sent to various courts such as the Family, Juvenile District and Circuit courts for maintenance, custody, payment of school and medical bills and accommodation. Other cases concerned application for Letters of Administration. Nine (9) other cases are still pending before the family courts.

Currently, with the support of OSIWA, the organization is better placed to assist women, particularly HIV/Positive women to take up cases in courts.

## CASE PROFILE FOR JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2009

**Table 1.0**

MONTHS	MAINTENANCE /CUSTODY/ PATERNITY	MARITAL	COMPENSA- TION	ESTATES/ PROPERTY	LEGAL ADVICE	REFERRALS	TOTAL
JANUARY	35	20	6	16	6	9	92
FEBRUARY	32	43	1	15	5	7	103
MARCH	38	51	2	16	9	11	127
APRIL	39	28	6	13	9	10	105
MAY	23	35	4	13	6	11	92
JUNE	20	66	7	17	7	14	131
JULY	34	37	1	19	10	10	111
AUGUST	22	52	2	16	8	13	113
SEPTEMBER	29	54	4	27	11	8	133
OCTOBER	29	37	2	20	14	15	117
NOVEMBER	26	42	-	14	14	8	104
DECEMBER	12	32	-	16	9	5	74
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>1302</b>

### EMERGING ISSUES

- a) Domestic violence cases; one involving the pouring of acid on a spouse, were reported to the centre. This is the second acid case that has surfaced at the Legal aid centre.
- b) Many men are saddled with the heavy responsibility of maintaining more children than they can afford to cater for. The practice of multiple fathering, especially by persons within the low-income earning group accounts to a large extent, for the high incidence of default in complying with settlements arrived at by FIDA-Ghana in such cases as well as maintenance orders issued by the courts.
- c) This year has seen an increase in reports from women in Ordinance Marriages reporting abandonment and neglect of their families by male spouses who have traveled abroad to seek greener pastures.
- d) Paternity disputes and the problem of refusal to name children have also emerged strongly during this year. This arises within the context of informal

or casual unions, where the male partner feels no commitment to the women and by extension to the child or children born out of such associations. Generally, fathers who deny paternity automatically refuse to name the children and consequently refuse to maintain them. This often requires court orders to determine fatherhood in order to ensure that the children are maintained.

- e) There have also been increasing requests from female spouses for divorce, due to varying reasons. This is a disturbing trend since women are denied any interest in property jointly acquired during the marriage. This often results in accessing the courts in order to obtain their share of property. Since FIDA-Ghana is now able to assist such women, there has been an increase in the number of divorce cases pending at the courts.
- f) In cases where women have custody of the children, it becomes a constant battle to get the man to contribute adequately to the maintenance of the children, particularly in cases where the woman initiated divorce proceedings. Often the man is reluctant to give the women money, alleging that may not use it for the maintenance of the child. This affects the maintenance of the children especially where the woman is responsible for providing clothing and food for the children or contributes towards the payment of the child's school fees.
- g) Women have been reporting of unfair termination of appointments. This is a growing concern as it has implications for the survival and development of their children particularly in cases where there are no unsupportive male partners or spouses.

### **IMPACT**

The Legal Aid provided to women and children helps to improve the individual lives of this vulnerable section of society. This year, FIDA-Ghana identified a lot of cases that were initially reported but were not pursued by the complainants. Follow-up on the clients indicated that as soon as invitees were served with letters from FIDA, particularly on maintenance issues, the male partners decided on their own accord to begin maintenance payments for their children. It has also been observed that maintenance payments for children have also improved. This we measured by the frequency at which some make their

payments at the Legal aid centers. This can be attributed to the availability of a lawyer to send defaulters to courts.

FIDA's partnership with Women Initiative for Self Empowerment (WISE) ensures that women receive counseling which indirectly benefits their children. The organization has been able to document certain trends, notably; that taking cases to courts sends strong signals that women's rights cannot be abused with impunity.

Most importantly legal aid cannot be provided without the active support of other law and public enforcement agencies. Good relationships with them ensure that when cases are referred by FIDA to them or from them to FIDA, they receive prompt response and clients are not taken through secondary trauma.

### **COUNSELLING**

Total number of clients provided with counseling at FIDA during the year was **Two hundred and six (206)** with marital cases being the highest recorded. Women were counseled on marital problems, psychological problems, and compensation whilst men received counseling on marital and maintenance issues.

Two adolescent girls and one teenage boy who were having relationship problems with their fathers who had been absent from their lives benefited from the counseling services offered by WISE. Eight women benefited from group counseling sessions. Such sessions provides a platform for survivors to share experiences in small groups and support each other in the healing process.

No cases were recorded from the month of September to December because the WISE office was undertaking some restructuring exercises.

### **SUCCESS STORIES**

a) In one case, the client was forced to leave her marital home when her husband discovered she was HIV-positive. Because the husband refused to

honor the invitation to FIDA to participate in mediation, the case was sent to court. FIDA is providing the client with legal representation and the case is currently pending.

- b) FIDA successfully helped one client negotiate fair compensation for four years of live-in child-care.
- c) Another case referred to DOVVSU concerned the custody of the children of a woman whose spouse lived abroad. As a result of marital conflicts, the estranged husband who returned home for holidays picked up their children from his mother-in-law with the excuse that he wanted the children to come and spend some holidays with him. He left the children in the care of a housemaid he wanted to marry, and left instructions that his estranged wife should not be allowed to have access to the children. The case came to FIDA's attention and was referred to DOVVSU. Client now has access to her children.
- d) A widow and her children came to report that their deceased father had not been buried because the family members insist that the children should submit all documents concerning their father's properties before funeral arrangements are made.

All efforts to get the family members to meet at FIDA to mediate on the case proved unsuccessful. Finally FIDA sought police assistance to enable the children and the widow bury their father and husband. FIDA has also assisted them to apply for Letters of Administration to enable them dispose of their father's property.

- e) In another case, the first wife and dependents of a deceased man were cheated out of their share of properties by the second wife who had taken over all the properties. The first wife and her children reported the matter to FIDA and after mediation the children and wife now have received their share of the deceased husband's and father's property.
- f) Another interesting case where a client has a child with a diplomat, who works with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (U.N.H.C.R.), said he wanted custody, before he will take care of the child. The mother of the child refused to do so, because when the child was in the custody of her father, she was taken to a "prayer camp" and chained for allegedly being a

witch. The diplomat has refused to respond to FIDA's invitation and FIDA sent a petition letter to the Commissioner of the U.N.H.C.R. two weeks ago. We are yet to receive a response. FIDA intends to follow up on this case to ensure that the child is maintained by her Father.

### **EVALUATION OF CLIENTS ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES IN ACCRA**

Nearly all the clients interviewed were happy with the services they are getting from FIDA and only a few said they could not comment, as they had not seen any fruits of the services.

During the evaluation, clients persistently complained about the amount of time spent at the legal aid centre. In other words, Clients still feel that the mediation process is too slow and matters take too long to be resolved. This is often due to the fact that some cases are complicated and/or difficult to resolve and also due to the unavailability of lawyers to take up cases. FIDA intends to secure funding to print pamphlets that have guidelines addressing or explaining the stages in mediation which can be given to clients so that they will have a clearer understanding of what to expect. Also, there is the need for more lawyers to handle cases.

Some women still feel that invitees renege on agreements because they do not take FIDA seriously. It has been observed that reasons why some men default in maintenance payments is as a result of economic circumstances where the men may lose their jobs or as a result of low economic status. Clients did admit that despite this issue FIDA's assistance makes a substantial contribution towards providing an improved lifestyle for them and their dependents.

Increasingly, FIDA-Ghana has recognized the importance of improving upon the evaluation of the legal aid program by actively involving clients to assess the impact and performance of the legal aid program on their lives as well as their children. The organization is also able to pick up valuable inputs/information from the clients to inform decision on advocacy, design the right messages for legal rights education through its mobile outreach programs as well as the production of information and educational materials.

Assessing the outputs of the programs has made FIDA aware of the need to strengthen collaboration with existing government agencies in order to make a significant impact on the lives of women and children.

FIDA-Ghana has also recognized the need to engage in court watch to follow up on cases referred to DOVVSU for prosecution.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

- Maintaining good relations with the police, particularly DOVVSU, can also help in facilitating the arrest of perpetrators of rights abusers and also ensures prompt response from law enforcement agencies concerning issues of domestic violence.
- It has also been realized that even those who are unable to read or write can be trained to facilitate the promotion and protection of women rights if given the needed training and support in their local language.
- Evaluation of its clients which began this year has provided insights on how to provide better and improved services to clients.

### **CHALLENGES**

- The inability of WISE to station a counselor at the centre for well over three months (i.e. beginning from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter up till the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter) meant clients were denied of the ability to seek assistance for psychological problems.
- There are still reports that criminal cases such as rape and defilement are allowed to be settled at home by Law enforcement agencies. This is a serious challenge to efforts at providing legal assistance to women and children. There is a need for increased sensitization for law enforcement agencies. There is a need for increased sensitization for law enforcement agencies.
- Refusal of parents to pursue criminal cases in courts. FIDA recognises that continuous advocacy is needed to encourage parents or family members to report criminal cases to law enforcement agencies for redress

- The practice whereby estranged fathers travel abroad for economic reasons continues to be a major challenge to maintenance of children. FIDA-Ghana in addressing this situation has resorted to writing letters to fathers, pointing out their responsibilities. This is still a difficult issue as response is poor and maintenance payments are irregular or is not paid. There is a pressing need to advocate that men who have relocated outside Ghana continue to maintain their children.
- Frequent adjournment of cases results in unnecessary delay of cases at the Courts.
- There are high expectations of the Legal Aid program, and when these expectations are frustrated due to the slow process of the justice system and delays, clients are discouraged and discontinue their cases.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Legal Aid Program equips women with critical knowledge, access to services, and avenues to advance the interests of their children. They are able to obtain justice when their legal rights and that of their children are violated. Apart from assisting children secure maintenance; we have discovered that female beneficiaries of legal aid gain confidence, because due to their background many of them cannot speak for themselves.

This increase in confidence results when women see their capacity to effect change in the lives of themselves and their children. This has also dispelled fears about court environment always being intimidating, as many more women are now willing to pursue their cases in court. The availability of a lawyer to provide court representation is also a contributory factor.

This calls attention for the need to constantly review the Legal Aid Program to make it more relevant to the needs of women and children.

In an effort to ensure that the Legal Aid Program is more efficient and effective, FIDA-Ghana would have to pursue Court monitoring of cases referred to DOVVSU as women have made some complaints concerning DOVVSU's handling of criminal cases such as Domestic violence and defilement. Findings of such an exercise will provide the organization with information to share with

DOVVSU, in order to ensure an effective service to women and children. It will also provide appropriate data for advocacy purposes.

If FIDA is successful in securing funding to produce and publish mediation procedures, it envisages that it will enable clients to appreciate the time involved in handling cases, and at the same time will transfer knowledge and information to clients.

The organization also intends to mobilize funds to undertake an evaluation of its Legal aid programs at all its five centers in Accra, Kumasi, Koforidua, Tamale and Bolgatanga. This is intended to record milestones, identify gaps, the limitation of FIDA' s services over the past four -five years and how effective its services has been to children, young and older women as well as men.

# **KUMASI STATION REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Kumasi office of FIDA-Ghana is under the administration of an Administrator, who is a Lawyer by profession. She is assisted by staff strength Program Assistant and a paralegal. Currently 5 volunteer lawyers assist with the Legal Aid Clinic. The FIDA-Ghana Legal Aid Service Centre in Kumasi continues to perform its core functions to the women and children (and men) in the Ashanti Region and surrounding towns.

The types of cases that continue to come to the centre are in the areas of maintenance, paternity, estate, marital/matrimonial issues/custody, among others. The Centre handled a variety of cases from January to December 2009. The bulk of cases dealt with Marital issues (**46 cases**). The next most reported cases concerned Compensation (**16 cases**). **Twelve (12)** legal advice cases were recorded while **Ten (10)** estates/property cases were reported. **Fourteen (14)** cases concerning Maintenance/custody and paternity were received. **The Unit therefore recorded a total of Hundred (100) cases.**

FIDA-Ghana intends to organize more outreach, media and public communications planning to make more people aware of its services.

## **CASE PROFILE FOR JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2009**

**Table 2.0**

MONTHS	MAINTENANCE /CUSTODY/ PATERNITY	MARITAL	COMPENSA- TION	ESTATES/ PROPERTY	LEGAL ADVICE	TOTAL
JANUARY	-	6	-	-	2	8
FEBRUARY	1	9	2	1	-	13
MARCH	-	5	1	2	-	8
APRIL	-	4	2	-	1	7
MAY	-	4	2	-	1	7
JUNE	4	2	1	1	2	10
JULY	2	3	1	1	2	9
AUGUST	2	3	1	-	-	6
SEPTEMBER	1	6	2	-	1	10

<b>OCTOBER</b>	2	2	1	2	3	<b>10</b>
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	2	2	1	2	-	<b>7</b>
<b>DECEMBER</b>	-	-	2	1	2	<b>5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

### **TRAINING, WORKSHOPS, LECTURES AND SEMINARS**

FIDA-Ghana's Kumasi Legal Aid Centre organized a Paralegal Training Program on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2009 in Sunyani.

On 4<sup>th</sup> March 2009, the Kumasi Office again organized a Research Findings Dissemination Workshop in Sunyani. In November FIDA-GHANA facilitated a workshop on the proposed Property of Spouses Bill as well as the amendment to the Intestate succession Law on behalf of LAWA and AWLA.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME FOR THE ADMINISTRATOR**

2009 was an important year for building the capacity of the administrator at the Kumasi Legal Aid Clinic at FIDA-Ghana. The Administrator attended several workshops and seminars as part of capacity building. These include:

- Gender-based violence/Domestic Violence (MOWAC) on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009 organised by MOWAC;
- Rights of persons with disabilities organized by Ghana Society of the Physically Disabled on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2009;
- Marriage laws in Ghana organized by Family Web Counselling Center on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2009
- Health laws, human rights & research ethics organized by the Committee on Research Ethics & Publications on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2009.
- Regional seminar on recent research findings on Gender norms, domestic violence and women's vulnerabilities to HIV/AIDS organized by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2009.
- Marriage laws in Ghana organized by the Men's Fellowship of Suame SDA church on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2009.
- Enrollment in a Master's of Science programme in Development Policy and Planning at the Department of Planning, KNUST from June 2009.

In addition, the staff attended various lectures, television and radio discussions on topics ranging from the Representation of Women in Politics, Sexual Offences against Women, Maintenance of children, Domestic violence, Land-lordship & Tenancy on Boss FM and Kapital FM. These programs served as important training opportunities for staff to build their knowledge and capacity.

### **EMERGING ISSUES**

- a) Slow nature of justice delivery is impacting negatively on women who send issues relating to maintenance of children, divorce and estate matters to court.
- b) Violations of the rights of women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS were identified.
- c) The issue of disclosure of the status of the HIV positive person also emerged because currently there is an invitee who is spreading the disease to unsuspecting women.

### **SUCCESS STORIES**

A number of cases which could not be settled at the centre through Mediation was sent to court and five of such cases had very good and satisfying outcomes.

**a) Kwaku Nicol vrs. Rita Adu Nsiah:**

The Respondent Rita Adu Nsiah sought the services of FIDA to compel the Applicant to maintain the three children he had borne with her out of wedlock. The Applicant refused to maintain the children requesting the Respondent to avail herself of DNA test for the children before he would maintain the children if any. The Applicant subsequently instituted action at the family tribunal requesting the court to order a DNA test to be conducted on the children. The Respondent refused to have the DNA test conducted primarily because she had voluntarily subjected the children to such a test previously and the results had been that there is a high probability that he is the father.

The judge at the family tribunal ruled that the DNA test should be conducted and the Respondent appealed against the decision and court upheld the appeal. The court advised that for peace to prevail the Respondent and the children should subject themselves to another DNA test at a laboratory of choice of the Applicant. The Respondent complied and the results came back that the probability that the Applicant is the father of the three children is 99.9996%.

Currently the Applicant has filed an appeal at the Court of Appeal and we are awaiting the outcome of the appeal. FIDA-Ghana was assisted in the conduct of this case by the current High Court judge sitting at Agona Swedru, His Lordship Justice Anthony Yeboah. Whilst the matter was pending one of the children has acquitted herself creditably at the JHS level and is currently pursuing SHS at St. Roses Secondary school and the Respondent has seen the need to upgrade her educational level and make herself economically viable to singlehandedly maintain and educate the three children.

**b) Emelia Afriyie vs. Mr. K. Fosu**

The Client (Petitioner) is HIV positive. The invitee (Respondent) threw the client out of the matrimonial home and sent the only child of the marriage to an undisclosed location. The couple had four children and only one child was alive.

The Divorce petition was issued after mediation failed at FIDA-GHANA. Thereafter an application for custody pending the determination of the substantive case was filed. The custody application was granted and the court ordered the bailiff of the court and police to accompany the Respondent to ensure that he hands over the child to the Petitioner, and the order has been complied with.

The case was scheduled for hearing on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2009, but the Respondent failed to turn up. The suit has been adjourned to 9<sup>th</sup> November 2009 subject to hearing notice being served on the Respondent. Cost was awarded in favour of the Petitioner. The suit came up for hearing on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2009. At that hearing the Respondent informed that court that he wants reconciliation with the Petitioner. The court adjourned the suit to 17<sup>th</sup> December 2009 to ensure that the Respondent provides adequately for the Petitioner and the child during the Christmas period. The Respondent turned up in court and has since

complied. The suit has been adjourned to January 2010 for the parties to effect reconciliation.

c) **Patience Owusu Boadi vrs. Owusu Boadi Achaw**

The Respondent was HIV Positive and was subjecting the Petitioner who had not contracted the disease to all forms physical and psychological violence. The Respondent was of the view that once he had contracted the disease, he was not ready to die alone. The Petitioner was stuck in a nightmare not of her own doing because she was unemployed and untrained for any kind of job. The client was walking to FIDA-Ghana due to lack of funds. When mediation failed a divorce petition was filed. An application for restraining orders was applied for. A further maintenance application and provision of accommodation for the Petitioner and her two children was applied for. The Court granted the restraining orders and asked the Respondent to provide for the upkeep of the children as well as provide money for accommodation.

The Respondent failed to comply with these orders. An application for Contempt proceedings was filed in another court and the court ordered the Respondent to purge himself of contempt. The Respondent has paid the money for the accommodation and is maintaining the children. In this particular case the capacity of the client has been built such that she was able to use legal means on her own to recover her deceased brother's furniture from a carpenter who was bent on defrauding the estate of her brother. This is how FIDA-Ghana has impacted positively on the life of the client in her own words." I did not have a life before coming to FIDA. I could not sleep at night because I was afraid my husband would try to infect me with the disease. With the intervention of FIDA-GHANA I now have safe accommodation, my children are being maintained by their father and I am engaged in petty trading now."

What have been the successes that the FIDA-Ghana has chalked in the three cases used as illustrations? All three clients have something in common, at the end of the period the women have had their capacities built legally and economically. Most of them were unemployed when their issues came to FIDA-GHANA and apart from having their legal issues being addressed they have also been empowered to enhance themselves economically. The cases sent to court are not limited to the three stated above. There was a case where FIDA

intervened to stop a client from being subjected to a widowhood rite which was dehumanizing; the client was being asked by the deceased husband's family to wash the deceased husband with her bare hands, and the husband had died from HIV/AIDS. When she refused to do that the family said she would not be recognized as a wife of the deceased. The matter is currently pending in court for the determination of whether or not she is a wife of the deceased or not. The client has also filed an application requesting that the family members currently staying in the matrimonial home should vacate same and that application is yet to be determined.

Another success is the fact that more women have been empowered to take the issue of violations of their rights for redress at the appropriate quarters.

Increasingly it is becoming common for people both men and women to consult particularly over the phone when they even instituting divorce proceedings at home to assess the respective rights of both parties. There is basically more awareness which has been created in the Ashanti Region about the rights of the Ghanaian women and the issues relating to violence against women.

### **CHALLENGES**

- a) The main challenge is the current location of the FIDA-Ghana office in Kumasi. It is not easily accessible. A way of addressing this challenge is to have directional signs at prominent areas in the Kumasi Metropolitan area. Quotations from a company show that it would cost one thousand four hundred Ghana Cedis (GH C 1,400.00) to address this challenge.
- b) Another challenge is the lack of logistics such as photocopiers.
- c) Another challenge is the lack of funds to take up the filing fees of some of the clients in court.
- d) Another challenge is that fact in the past three years legal literacy programmes have been conducted in districts which are outside the immediate range of the Kumasi office. In order to address this challenge, more legal literacy programmes should be held in districts within the range of the office.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

Though women in the Ashanti Region are more aware of their rights, a lot more needs to be done. The Judicial system is very slow and this impacts adversely on women who take up their issues in court.

## **CONCLUSION**

The year has been good and in the ensuing year there is the need to step up education on the proposed property of spouses' bill as well as the amendment to the intestate succession law.

# **KOFORIDUA STATION REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Paralegal Unit at Koforidua has handled a variety of cases from January through December 2009. The bulk of cases dealt with child maintenance and custody issues (34 cases). The next most frequently reported cases dealt with marital issues (12 cases). 14 cases were referred to other institutions while the remaining 5 cases were Estates and Legal Advice issues. The Unit recorded a total of 67 cases.

FIDA-Ghana intends to organize more outreach, media and public communications planning to make more people aware of its services in Koforidua and its environs.

## **COURT CASES/COUNSELLING**

Since the FIDA office in Koforidua is staffed by paralegals, the unit lacks the necessary skills required to handle court cases or specialized counseling. Consequently, all specialized counseling services are offered by WISE. Similarly, cases that require hearing in Court are often referred to Legal Aid and DoVVSU.

## **NATURE OF REPORTED CASES**

Women formed the majority of clients. Cases reported at the office focused mainly on Child Maintenance i.e. situations whereby a man (or woman in some cases) refuses to contribute towards the upkeep of his/her child/children. Maintenance cases are 34 in number.

Other categories of cases were reported to the Unit. These included cases concerning Estates/Property, Marital Issues and Legal Advice. The Unit referred more serious cases of domestic violence and defilement to Legal Aid and DoVVSU,

The nature of cases reported to the Unit suggests that FIDA is considered a haven for women's rights.

## CASE PROFILE FOR JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2009

Table 3.0

MONTHS	MAINTENANCE /CUSTODY/ PATERNITY	MARITAL	COMPEN SATION	ESTATES/ PROPERTY	LEGAL ADVICE	REFERRALS	TOTAL
JANUARY	5	-	-	1	-	1	7
FEBRUARY	1	1	-	1	2	1	6
MARCH	9	-	-	-	-	2	11
APRIL	3	3	-	-	-	3	9
MAY	2	2	-	-	-	2	6
JUNE	2	-	-	-	1	1	4
JULY	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
AUGUST							
SEPTEMBER	6	1	-	-	-	-	7
OCTOBER	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
NOVEMBER	2	2	-	-	-	4	8
DECEMBER	3	1	-	-	-	-	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>67</b>

### SUCCESS STORIES

Some significant case stories that were handled by the Unit have been summarized below.

- a) In one Child Maintenance case, a client reported that her ex-husband had not been supporting her and their three children for the past six years. Our paralegals met with both parties and the matter was resolved. Our client's ex-husband agreed to pay GH 30.00 per month to the mother as maintenance fee.
- b) One notable case was reported by a client whose deceased daughter's husband refused to cater for his child i.e. the client's grandchild. He has shirked all parental responsibilities towards his child thereby burdening our Client. As the child was not yet eight-years-old, the Unit advised the husband to care for the child until that time, after which the client would obtain custody. The matter was settled amicably.

- c) Another case was reported by a Good Samaritan, who was caring for a runaway girl. The Unit learned that the girl had run away from her caretakers for beating her with a stick used to prepare banku. The Unit met with the caretakers and provided shelter for the girl until her mother could come for her.
  
- d) One assets case was reported by a man. He was preparing to marry his girlfriend when he discovered that she was seeing someone else. Therefore, he would like to end the relationship and take back his refrigerator. The Unit invited the pair, and the woman agreed to return the refrigerator.

## **CONCLUSION**

While the Centre's services are limited due to the presence of only paralegals (i.e. lack of lawyers), the Unit is nevertheless a place where people in the community can come with their legal problems. Even if the paralegals cannot handle some cases directly, the Unit is able to refer cases to the appropriate places for clients to obtain the help they deserve. The Paralegal centre is gaining visibility as a place in the community where women in particular can visit with their legal problems.

# **TAMALE STATION REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is increased recognition of the FIDA's Paralegal Centre in Tamale and Bolgatanga due to the sensitization and advocacy programmes that are ongoing in the project area by FIDA-Ghana and partners. With the introduction of Victim Support Fund and a retainer, some complex issues are being pursued in court. A number of cases have also been successfully addressed at the paralegal centre and by the Sister Watch Groups and paralegals at the target communities. From **January to October 2009, fourteen (14) cases** have been handled at the paralegal centre with a greater number resolved while few are still pending. 31 were recorded in the communities. The type of cases includes inheritance, assault and battery, maintenance, access and custody of children, marriage, etc. The statistics of cases from the intervention communities and the paralegal centre are as follows:

### **Statistics of cases at Paralegal Centre and Communities from January 2009 - October 2009**

	<b>Period</b>				<b>Total number of cases</b>
	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2009</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2009</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2009</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2009</b>	
Paralegal centre	3	5	2	4	14
Communities	5	10	9	7	31
<b>Total</b>	8	15	11	11	45

### **Breakdown of records**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Number of cases</b>
Paralegal centre	11
Gblehagu	7
Nyanshegu	10
Karaga	5
Gbelo/Kaplsi	1
Yong	-
Saakuba	2
Lahagu	1
Mbanayili	-
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Quarter</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>

### Breakdown of cases

TYPE	NUMBER
Marriage reconciliation	6
Family reconciliation	4
Inheritance/Land	2
Denial of pregnancy	3
Divorce	1
Child maintenance	5
Girl child education	3
Betrothal	1
Battery/Assault	4
Accusation of witchcraft	2
Apprenticeship	3
Education	1
Employment	2
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>

### COURT CASES

- a) A Client by name Mrs. Monica Afriyie reported to the Centre about a shooting incident at Kamina Barracks where her husband, daughter and she were shot. Her husband died shortly after the incident while our Client was maimed. Mrs Monica Afriyie and her daughter came to FIDA so they would be assisted to seek compensation for the injuries they sustained. The Client was assisted by the Centre to claim her deceased husband's money that was deposited in his bank account for their upkeep. She was also assisted to claim her husband's pension of GHC 7,000.00 of which she benefited GHC 4,000.00 where GHC 1,200.00 has been deducted to cover a loan she took leaving GHC 2,800. As part of the Court procedures to seek compensation for the Client, the retainer requested for the medical report to determine the extent of damage on the client and her daughter. After the report is obtained the matter will be settled in court.
- b) A land case between a client and a Pastor was reported to the Tamale Paralegal Centre and has been forwarded to court by our Paralegals for legal action. The case has previously been reported to various chiefs but the dispute surrounding the piece of land has still not come to an end. The

Pastor has required the services of a Lawyer to take legal action. The Client who said she could not afford the services of a lawyer reported at the FIDA office for legal representation. The Centre has since appointed a Lawyer to represent the Client in court.

### **SUCCESS STORIES**

- a) In yet another case, a man who had impregnated a girl and was denying responsibility was reported to the Sister Watch Group of Gbelo/Kpalsi. The case was further referred to the Paralegal Centre. When the man was invited to the Centre, he quickly agreed being responsible for the pregnancy and assured the girl and Paralegal of remittance. He asked the girl to go and live with his parents till she delivered because he was working outside Tamale.
- b) In another case, an uncle of a young girl was forcing her into marrying a suitor of his choice. The girl ran away to avoid marrying him but was found and brought back to her uncle. The matter was reported to the chief of Saakuba who advised the girl's uncle to allow her to marry the man of her choice, making reference to the law that prohibits force marriages. He further reminded him of FIDA's intervention programme in the community and warned that if he did not heed to his advice, he will refer the matter to the paralegal centre in Tamale for him to face the full rigors of the law.

### **CHALLENGES**

- a) Despite the successes chalked by the FIDA/CORDAID project the challenges still remain that a lot of women are still suffering in silence. The intervention is limited to only few communities, except through radio whereby the education reaches a lot of people but addressing the right violations through mediations and court representations at the far communities is not possible.
- b) There is also the challenge of getting funding for the CAGs and SWGs to continue their monthly outreach activities as was done in the first phase of the project. This new phase makes room for quarterly durbars in one community each.

## **LESSONS LEARNT**

**Specific strategies that are helping to advance the project include the following;**

- a) FIDA's collaboration and networking, no matter how little it is, is helping in the charting of an apt course for the improvement of the rights of women. This became clear when a FIDA trained paralegal visited a community far from our intervention communities and had the opportunity to share his experience with literacy volunteers who happen to be using the FIDA legal literacy materials as their course books.
- b) The partnership with other organisations has also revealed that the intervention has gone beyond just the intervention communities to other areas which would otherwise not be reached by FIDA

## **CONCLUSION**

# **BOLGATANGA STATION REPORT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The total number of cases handled at the Bolgatanga Paralegal Centre in 2009 were 43. The table below shows the details of cases recorded in Bolgatanga at the paralegal centre, with non-maintenance forming the highest percentage of cases recorded at 30%, followed closely by assault cases at 26%.

### **Bolgatanga Statistics of cases at Paralegal Centre JANUARY 2009 - NOVEMBER 2009**

<b>UNIT</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarters</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 4<sup>th</sup> Quarters</b>	<b>Total Number of Cases</b>	<b>Number Resolved</b>	<b>Number Pending</b>
<b>PARALEGAL CENTRE</b>	16	8	24	23	1
<b>COMMUNITIES</b>	14	6	20	20	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>TYPE OF CASE</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>STATUS OF CASE</b>
Assault	5	Resolved
Domestic dispute	2	Resolved
Domestic abuse	1	Resolved
Maintenance	3	Resolved
Ejection from home	1	Pending
Seizure of child	2	Referred to DOVSSU
Total	14	

### **CASES RECEIVED BY SOCIAL WELFARE (BOLGA) - JANUARY-OCTOBER, 2009**

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
Maintenance	64
Paternity	14
Child custody	11
Child neglect	1
Threat of death	1
Assault	4
Total	95

### **SUCCESS STORIES**

- a) A 75 year old woman was driven away from her home after the roof to her only room was removed by a step son who accused her of being a witch. FIDA paralegals in Balungu intervened and reported the case to the paralegal centre in Bolgatanga. With the assistance of the Chief and DOVVSU the perpetrator was made to re-roof the room of his step mother. Follow up visits to her has revealed that she is comfortable and has not suffered anymore harassment. We see this as a landmark achievement, because many witchcraft cases have been difficult to resolve and particularly reintegrated into the family.
- b) A widow was also driven away by her husband relatives for allegedly being the cause of the death of the husband. She was also seriously assaulted and prevented from having access to her two children for two years. She sought refuge in Accra. She returned home and attempted suicide. The CAGs became aware of the incident and intervened. After several meetings with the family, she was allowed to meet with her children at the paralegal office in Bolgatanga. Further counseling and mediation has resulted in the family being reunited.
- c) Two young men in Sumbrungu who were known drug peddlers also agreed to put a stop to their drug trade following the intervention of the paralegals in Sumbrungu. One of them has cut of his dreadlocks off to signify his transformation.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

- a) Objectivity in issues concerning women in polygamous marriages has enhanced the creditability of the work. All wives of a perpetrator of abuse are given equal protection under the program. Even where the second or first wife is at fault with another wife, the issue receives equal attention just like when a man abuses a woman.
- b) Collaboration and network remains an important tool for the realization of project objectives. This has prevented duplication and has ensured that resources are directed to areas of need.

- c) The institution of the victim support fund is helpful as it has been instrumental in pursuing complex cases in the courts. The victim support fund is therefore helping a lot in encouraging paralegals report of cases to the paralegal centre.
- d) Door-to-door publicizing of the outreach programs created massive awareness of the program and laws promoting women's rights.

### **CHALLENGES**

- a) Enforcement of certain decisions remains relatively difficult because of the pluralistic legal environment. Issues of plurality arise from the co-existence of customary law principles on marriage, Divorce, and the practice of customary law succession. These present its challenges as In Bolgatanga, for example, the desire of a woman from a town called Fao to divorce her husband has been frustrated due to the fact that the marriage must first be dissolved at the customary level, where the woman's family must return the dowry of cows. The difficulty is that the women cannot customarily divorce the husband. It is only the brothers, uncles or father who can do so on her behalf and the family cannot afford to repay the dowry of cows. This is a great hindrance to the right of women to re-marry a man of choice. The problem has created a situation where many women are held in marriages that they do not like, this calls for reforms of the customary laws on divorce
- b) CAGs in all the areas have reiterated their call for bicycles to reduce the difficulties involve in walking long distances for meetings, cases and outreaches. Attempts have been made to access some bicycles, but this has not been successful.
- c) There seems to be a general acceptance that negative traditional practices needs to be modified but there seems to be a lack of political will on the part of the Traditional chiefs and ritualists to effect permanent change. This calls for more vigorous engagement with the ritualists, as regards to the negative practices surrounding widowhood rites.

d) Law enforcement agencies like DOVVSU and Social Welfare are severely handicapped in term of resources and this is affecting staff moral and efficiency.

## **CONCLUSION**

## **B. CAPACITY BUILDING AND ADVOCACY**

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### **PARALEGAL TRAINING FOR 26 COMMUNITY MEMBERS OF THE NANUMBA SOUTH DISTRICT**

A Paralegal Training was held in Tamale for 26 Community members from the Nanumba South District. Participants comprised of teachers, sub chiefs, representatives of NCCE, NADMO, Community teaching assistants, head teachers, a gender desk officer of the Department of women and CBO's focused on women and children issues. This project aimed to promote women's rights through a sustainable means of enhancing community legal literacy. This is to be achieved through the establishment of skilled and knowledgeable community leaders to engage in community advocacy and raise awareness and sensitize the community on SRH rights of women and well as other laws such as the DV laws in promoting and protecting the rights of women. Resource persons gave presentations on harmful cultural practices and women's development, Gender and sex, sexual and reproductive health rights and the Domestic Violence Act. The sessions were interactive thereby giving the participants opportunities to clarify all doubts and confusions.

### **PARALEGAL TRAINING FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM ZABZUGU AND TATALE DISTRICTS**

A four-day paralegal training aimed at improving women and children's access to justice was also held in the Zabzugu Tatale District of the Northern Region of Ghana. The four-day paralegal training workshop for 30 participants was carried out to equip participants with knowledge on the basic laws of Ghana that protect the human and sexual reproductive health rights of women and children.

As usual, it is anticipated that the trained paralegals after being exposed to the laws, will use their knowledge to create awareness and sensitize the community members on the issues of women's rights, Domestic violence and Sexual and reproductive Health rights.

The topics discussed included demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Zabzugu/Tatale and harmful cultural practices, the rights of women and

children, the Intestate Succession Law, the Wills Act, the Domestic violence Act, Marriage Laws in Ghana, Gender and sex, Sexual and Reproductive health rights, basic legal terminologies, counseling and mediation. The selection of the participants was done in consultation with the district assemblies and the leaders within the district. This was done to ensure that the participants were a true representation of all the main communities and the interest groups and institutions.

A five-member executive was set up at the end of the training session to coordinate the activities of the paralegals in the communities. A follow-up durbar was organised in the community to introduce the paralegals to the community members.

### **ADVOCACY MEETINGS**

A three-day advocacy workshop was organized for 91 Traditional, community women and religious Leaders in three project districts in the Eastern corridor of the Northern Region (i.e. Nanumba South, Sababa and Zabzugu) on laws on the rights of Ghanaian women, sexual and reproductive health rights, laws on marriage and divorce, the interstate succession law (P.N.D.C. Law 111), Gender Based Violence. The participants will ensure implementation of the Domestic Violence Law which was passed in 2007 and also ensure stakeholder consultation with opinion leaders.

## C. LEGAL LITERACY PROGRAMMES

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### **LEGAL LITERACY EDUCATION IN THE AGORMANYA AND ASESEWA DISTRICTS IN THE EASTERN REGION ON THE 20<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2009 AND 21<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST 2009 RESPECTIVELY**

Legal Literacy Education Projects are a part of FIDA-Ghana's innovative programs to contribute to women's long-lasting and social empowerment. FIDA's Legal Literacy Programmes are involves the simplification, interpretation and translation (into principal local languages) of legislation particularly those that affect women and children. These programs are held in all ten regions of the country and, with an increase in funding, can be extended to all districts. FIDA-Ghana aims to expand access to justice through legal literacy that seeks to continue the translation and publications of its handbooks hoping to educate the public at large, but women in particular. FIDA's legal literacy programmes are aimed at bringing to the doorsteps of community members an awareness of their rights which will ultimately result in their development.

This year the project targeted the Agormanya and Asesewa Districts within the Eastern Region of Ghana. Since FIDA has a Paralegal Centre located in Koforidua, there is a need to provide literacy education through mobile outreaches in all the surrounding districts, communities, suburbs and rural areas and to give visibility to the center to enable women take advantage of the services and thereby improve their access to justice.

The project received full support and backing from the chiefs, queen mothers, assembly members, opinion leaders, religious leaders, teachers as well as members of the communities. Participants were educated on the following legal topics and cultural practices:

- Marriage laws in Ghana
- Intestate succession law
- Wills Act
- Domestic Violence Act
- Female Genital Mutilation, Widowhood Rites, Honor Killings etc.

As the resource persons gave the presentations on what the legal provisions are pertaining to women and children's rights, participants were able to assess and become aware of all cases of rights abuse in their lives and that of their children. Interactive sessions offered community members an opportunity to receive clarifications on legal issues.

## D. STRENGTHENING THE RESEARCH

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Dissemination of research findings W/K

## E. CAPACITY BUILDING OF STAFF

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FIDA is working towards establishing an environment where every year, two members of staff will be assisted to improve upon their skills and develop competencies to enable staff progress towards achieving their personal career plans as well as strengthen their capacity to achieve the strategic objectives of the organization.

During the period under review two members of staff, one in Accra was supported to undertake a grant proposal writing course, whilst the Kumasi staff is being supported to pursue a sandwich Development Course at the KNUST.

The expertise of staff was further strengthened with technical assistance from WOMANKIND to its accounts and programs staff by transferring know-how and training on fund raising and communication strategies as well as participatory learning techniques to sustain future work. A member of Staff was encouraged to attend the FIDA biennial conference in Italy. This exposed the staff It also presented an opportunity to network with other women groups, share experiences and learn from their successes. Practical experiences shared by some of the women's groups will be replicated in our programs to enhance our service delivery.

## F. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE/ BOARD MANAGEMENT**

Every month, FIDA Board meetings are held. These meetings have been the guiding principles in assisting the organization in making strategic decisions and providing strategic direction. In June 2009, a new board was elected and inaugurated as the term of office of the old board had expired. It is anticipated that this new and vibrant team would be the driving force behind new perspectives and innovative ideas that would move the organization to greater heights.

### **STRATEGY/ PLANNING/ DECISION-MAKING/ KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

Regular monthly meetings are held to provide staff with the opportunity to discuss effective ways to implement activities that will help achieve strategic objectives. At such meetings, Staff are able to come up with measures to better achieve organizational objectives. During one such meeting, for instance, staff identified the critical attributes of well-formulated Indicators that could be used as a monitoring tool. These tools will be implemented to sample studies of women both within and outside project areas, to ascertain the number of women who do not have access to legal aid services, those who are turned away as well as the numbers of women the organization has been able to reach to give an indication of the relevance of the organization's services and its positive impact on women. This has been an unexpected benefit as it has turned out to be a valuable professional development opportunity for Staff and the organization.

Staff meetings have also provided a platform for open discussions and feedback on project activities, as well as an opportunity to follow up on action items.

Sharing of conference reports and training skills have been institutionalized in the organization, and this has had its impact on project activities. Program management processes have been improved and this has reinforced staff's confidence in sharing knowledge and asking questions.

## **STAFF RETREAT**

This year, FIDA-Ghana's Staff Retreat took place from the 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> December 2009. Staff Members from all of FIDA's stations across the nation with the exception of Koforidua were present. The purpose for the retreat was to review and assess FIDA's activities over the year and come up with concrete plans for improvement and progress.

The Retreat gave Staff Members the opportunity to share their dreams and expectations about the organization all aimed at the achievement of its goals and objectives. Each FIDA Station presented its Reports and this provided the platform for challenges to be addressed and suggestions for improvement made.

By the end of the Retreat, Staff members were able to come up with a Work Plan for the ensuing year, as well as, new ideas/activities that would increase the organization's visibility and cause FIDA to emerge as the strongest voice at the cutting edge of advocating on policy issues in Ghana.

## G. PUBLIC RELATIONS

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As part of its Legal Literacy program, FIDA-Ghana is constantly seeking opportunities to disseminate information and educate the Ghanaian society in general and women in particular about their rights and obligations and to encourage them to assert these rights. In view of this, FIDA-Ghana consistently turns to the media to highlight issues on women's rights. This year FIDA-Ghana received extensive media publicity of its activities.

Local, national print and broadcast media provided FIDA-Ghana with extensive coverage of its activities. Radio and television stations also provided FIDA with the platform to highlight the position of the organization concerning the rights of women. Interviews and discussions on radio and television were organized for FIDA to participate. The print media also made Press releases congratulating the first female speaker and the Government's inability to appoint more women as Municipal and District Chief Executives were also highlighted.

In the Northern region, for instance, there were fifteen radio discussion (5) in Tamale and (10) in Bolgatanga. Representatives from the Kumasi FIDA Office also engaged in various radio programs. They focused mostly on negative cultural practices that fuel rights abuses; the Representation of Women in Politics, Sexual Offences against Women, Maintenance of children, Domestic violence, Land-lordship & Tenancy.

It is estimated that in the Northern Region alone, up to one million people were reached through these radio programs. During one such radio program in Bolgatanga, a widow who was forced to go through widowhood rites was invited to speak. She explained how her deceased husband's properties were seized by his relatives. This generated an overwhelming response of support from callers, and one of the callers pledged to contribute to the payment of the fees of the children of the widow.

The four major FM stations in Tamale and TV Africa in Accra whose coverage extends to the northern region aired a program which called for men to help in the crusade against violence against women and to change the cultural factors that give rise to gender based discrimination and violence. TV Africa announcement was done in five local languages including Dagbani which is

widely spoken in the northern region whilst the four radio stations gave the announcement in four local languages. We are therefore optimistic that the message is getting to so many people from both far and near and is likely to influence people's behaviour and thinking towards the abuse of women.

FIDA also participated in a G-Rap RAO Convention where an exhibition was held. Some of FIDA's publications were sold to members of the public and other CSOs.

Dissemination of literacy materials in the local dialects, has been extensively distributed to community members in Bolgatanga (namely Ve, Gowrie, Balungu, Sumbrungu, Kulbia, and Kandiga) to provide information on and increase awareness of women rights. The content of the books were used in focus group discussions during night classes of non formal education programs. So far, one hundred women beneficiaries have been able to access information on laws protecting women's rights through this program. The literacy materials have become reference points for the beneficiaries who it is expected will filter the information to the grass root communities.

## H. NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

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FIDA-Ghana is committed to improving and developing partnerships with organizations that have parallel interests in order to enhance the impact of its mission of enhancing the status of women in our society. FIDA-Ghana is also committed to educating and advocating for justice for women and children.

### **FIDA/WISE/OSIWA**

This year, FIDA and the Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment (W.I.S.E) collaborated on working towards a comprehensive response to psychosocial and legal support to abused women and children in Ghana i.e. The SGBV Project. The project was also supported by OSIWA.

FIDA-Ghana's overall objectives under the SGBV Project are:

- a) To build the capacity of community members to provide legal assistance to communities and advocate for the promotion and protection of women:
- b) To sharpen the proficiency of community paralegals to design intervention strategies and create greater awareness to enhance the rights of women at the community level;
- c) To document stories, in the form of photographic expositions of 50 women who have been denied access to justice in their communities through the collection and publication of such stories for planned advocacy and engagement activities:
- d) To provide legal aid and court representation to indigent women in order to assist them to access justice for rights violations.

Under this project, FIDA is expected to embark on a series of activities all aimed at improving women's access to justice.

### **FIDA & CAMFED**

This year, FIDA collaborated with Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) Ghana (an NGO) to multiply girls' access to education and accelerate the

benefits to individuals, their families and communities. The partnership is centered on child rights promotion and protection through provision of rights awareness training to CAMFED members, teachers, mentors and Committee members in order to increase access to and retention in schools in beneficiary communities.

Over 244 people from 14 Districts of the Northern region have been trained on child rights by the FIDA paralegal centre with the sponsorship of CAMFED.

By the use of the programmatic approach to development, FIDA in collaboration with Northern Sector Action on Awareness Center (NORSAAC) with support from Acton Aid Ghana and in partnership with like-minded organizations such as National Population Council (NPC), Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU), National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) and PAGBILA are carrying out a six month long radio discussions to create awareness among the public on violence against women, cultural practices that impede the development of women, the rights of women and the need to protect those rights. This approach is meant to reach out to so many people in order to encourage the protection of the rights of women and children. Phone-in is mostly allowed for the people to contribute. The contributions from the public indicate that a lot are now in support of the development of women.

### **INVITATIONS**

FIDA-Ghana participated in an Affirmative Action Workshop which was organized by ABANTU for Development, Women in Broadcasting (WIB), and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation (FES). Its main objective was to validate Dr. Dzodzi Tsikata's paper on Affirmative Action and to develop strategies in order to implement affirmative action for women in politics.

FIDA-Ghana is committed to advocating for the welfare of women. As such FIDA-Ghana, also participated in a workshop organized by Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs which aimed at gathering supporters of women's rights in order to brainstorm ways to better implement the Domestic Violence Act.

FIDA was present at a Public Forum on women's health and mental issues organised by NETRIGHT. FIDA also participated in a Roundtable Discussion

between the Children and Parliamentarians of Ghana which was organized as part of UNICEF's 20 years celebration.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES**

One notable achievement during the period under review was the participation of FIDA-Ghana at the UN Conference on the Status of Women held in March 2009 in New York. The organisation was provided with an international platform to share its findings at two separate events on the Solutions to legal challenges facing Women infected and affected by HIV/Aids as well as a presentation on "Lessons from Africa" where FIDA-Ghana shared with the international audience, community responses to reducing violence against women and the incidence of HIV and AIDS

# CONCLUSION

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