

PROJECT TITLE: PROMOTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH POPULAR ARTS IN KUSAAL-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES IN GHANA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One in every three females in Ghana has experienced gender-based violence (physical, sexual, psychological, economic and social violence, harassment and forced confinement (Domestic Violence Act 232, 2007, GSS, 2016). Notwithstanding government and NGOs' mitigation efforts, social and economic violence against women persist due to the local populations' unyielding adherence to their cultural values and norms. In 2020, about 6,533 teenage pregnancies were recorded in the Upper East Region of Ghana among girls aged 10 to 14 representing a 38-percentage increase of 103 from 2019 to 142 in 2020 (Ghana Health Service). According to the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Network in the Upper East Region; poverty and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic among other things, have fuelled high rates of unintended teenage pregnancies and child marriages in the Region (myjoyonline.com 2021). Gender-based violence (GBV) is still rife in Kusaal-speaking communities of the Upper East Region of Ghana (the least urbanised region with over 79% rural population). Kusaal communities with population of about 24,658,823 are found around latitude 11.050000° N and longitude - 0.233333°N with land space of 2,100 to 2,300 square kilometres. They have long seasons of drought, poor road networks, lack of potable water and electricity, instances of schools under trees and only one government hospital (GSS, 2012). Notwithstanding these challenges, research on the Kusaal language is gradually gaining attention in the literature (Abubakari 2018; Musah 2018; Eddyshaw 2019 among others).

However, there is an emerging generation of young educated people who have begun questioning and resisting the efficacy of practices such as child marriage, polygamy, female genital mutilation, teenage pregnancy, sexual, physical and psychological abuse. Thus, the outcomes of this project will empower women and girls to speak out as well as pursue education and or training aimed at making them self-sustaining economically in line with SDG 16.

The project's main aim is to explore and analyze how GBV practices particularly child marriage, is represented in selected folktales, proverbs and songs among six Kusaal-speaking communities (Zebilla, Bawku, Garu, Tempani, Pusiga and Binduri) in Ghana.

The planned activities included:

1. Capacity building training for field assistants on project ethics and safeguarding.
2. Field trips to the six (6) Kusaal-speaking communities to gather interview data.
3. Partnership with local artistes: Fati Osman (Singer) and local film producer - Winimi Productions, to produce songs, docudramas and short videos to create awareness and educate people against GBV.

The main intended outcome is to educate, empower and promote women's participation in peacebuilding and social transformation.

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CHAPTER 1 – BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

- The project's aim is to explore and analyze how GBV practices, particularly child marriage and related issues - teenage pregnancy, female genital mutilation, verbal and sexual abuses are represented in selected folktales, proverbs and songs of the Kusaasis. Data were gathered from the six district capitals of the language-speaking communities (Zebilla, Bawku, Garu, Tempani, Pusiga and Binduri) in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Through interviews, we will interrogate how GBV concepts are framed by the indigenous people. The project intends to deploy appropriate short local films or docudramas and songs as tools to mitigate the practices. By using a website, GBC Rural Radio that broadcasts in five languages including Kusaal, as well as local community-based artistes, the productions were available and accessible to the rural communities, so that women and children can be educated and empowered to resist the practices. This strategy will complement efforts such as hotlines, safe spaces created by the government, the Ministry of Gender, Women and Children and NGOs to mitigate GBV-related practices in Ghana. These aims and objectives align with CUSP Network Plus' main aim of enhancing the popular arts and arts of rural communities in ways that promote women and girls' participation in peacebuilding and social transformation.
- The specific objectives are to:
 - a. Explore how local popular arts frames GBV-related issues among the Kusaasi people.
 - b. Examine the uses of popular arts and gratifications derived by the local people.
 - c. Enlighten, educate and empower women and girls for social transformation.
- The results will arm NGOs, local media, peer mentors, artistes and opinion leaders (particularly women and girls) with information on how to frame useful and gratifying popular arts so they become reference points for the identification and transformation of GBV-related social conflicts, coercion and injustice.

Research Questions

- i. How do local popular arts in Kusaal-speaking communities frame the GBV narrative on child marriage?
- ii. What uses and gratifications do local people put to and derive from their popular culture
- iii. How can local popular cultures be communicated effectively to educate women and girls for social transformation?

Scant information exists in the literature on how GBV related narratives on child marriage are framed through folklores and other oral literary genres among the Kusaasi people of Ghana. These questions highlight the research problems and the answers will equip stakeholders with alternative tools of resistance against GBV practices.

CHAPTER 2 – METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Data Collection and Research Activities

The project will adopt a purely participatory and interpretivist qualitative approach. With the support of translators, interviews and selected folktales, songs, docudramas and proverbs in archival documents were transcribed and translated from Kusaal to English Language for documentary analysis. Further, open-ended semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected people in each community. It is expected that each interview session will last not more than 45 minutes. Interviews were conducted at the preferred location of our participants.

A. Data Analysis

The research design will in the first stage of the analysis, comprise literary and linguistic analysis of translated folklore and then for the second stage, thematic analysis of semi-structured open-ended interviews with the target group and partners such as the local artistes. Using the transcribed and translated folktales, docudrama, songs and proverbs; we will analyse the ways speakers and artistes deploy language, linguistics and literary techniques to communicate GBV-related issues in order to evoke adherence or resistance by natives to the culturally accepted norms of early child marriage and GBV. It was observed that literary devices including euphemism, imagery, anaphora, repetition and contrast as well as linguistics tools including rhetorical questions, sentence variation and sentence structure, among other tools, facilitate understanding of cultural narratives and help rural folks to identify with the themes of the selected popular cultural performances. In the second stage of the analysis, the interviews with chiefs, queen mothers, opinion leaders, victims and selected educated youth were analysed using thematic content analysis covering GBV-related themes indicated in our proposal. The results of the thematic and literary analysis will then be deployed through the Change Theory for the development of manuscripts towards the production of local songs, short films and docudramas against GBV to create awareness and empower victims to resist GBV related practices such as child marriage. This will go a long way to resolve the many conflicts within households and families which result from child marriage, sexual and verbal abuses as well as teenage pregnancies.

Further, by employing the Framing Approach and Uses and Gratifications Theory of Communication together with the Change Theory in Management, processes of content development, production and communication of the local popular media such as songs and docudramas will also be interrogated to determine how/motivations that influence producers and artistes to frame GBV-related issues. Furthermore how through interviews, the project will also interrogate how the target group use these cultural artifacts and the gratifications they derive from using them. It is expected that the project

outcomes will bring change though these desired changes may not be seen immediately but ultimately, in the long term.

B. Pilot Study

Assin Fosu in the Assin Municipality of the Central Region was purposively selected for the pilot-testing of the instruments because the Central Region has similar characteristics as the project communities selected for inclusion in the study. Villages and small towns within the Assin Fosu municipality are purported to have high incidents of child/early marriage among other incidents of GBV. The main aim of pre testing the instrument was to ensure that interview participants for the project understand the questions and the items are also relevant.

i. Development and pre-testing of research instruments

Based on the aim and objectives of the study, research instruments were developed around the following variables – *Framing of GBV and Popular Art, Cultural and Linguistic tools, Utility and Gratifications, Popular arts and Communication, Popular Culture, Education and Social Transformation*. The instruments were

administered in the pilot phase to the selected community.

The following questions were used to pre-test the study:

I. Socio-cultural Context of GBV

- i. What are the circumstances (cultural/social/moral) that lead to GBV related practices in your community?
- ii. Which specific incident(s) of GBV have you suffered from?
- iii. What challenges are you faced with as a result of GBV?

II. How Popular Arts Frame GBV

- i. How do local popular arts in Bamahu frame the GBV narrative on child marriage in your community?
- ii. What themes do the popular arts (songs, proverbs, docudramas) in your community cover?
- iii. How do local popular arts frame the GBV narrative on child marriage in your community?
- iv. What cultural and linguistic tools can be deployed to resist the popular arts on GBV narratives?

III. Uses and Gratifications of Popular Arts

- i. What do you use your popular arts for?

- ii. What gratifications (benefits/satisfaction) do you obtain from your popular arts?
 - iii. How does popular arts influence your personal/family values?
- IV. *Framing of Popular arts on GBV for education and social transformation*
- i. How can local popular arts be communicated effectively so it is understood by both males and females?
 - ii. How can local popular arts be communicated so it is owned by both males and females?
 - iii. How can local popular arts be communicated effectively to promote change in GBV-related practices?
 - iv. How can local popular arts be communicated so as to build peace and ensure social transformation in your community? (Ask opinion leaders and artistes).

Answers to the questions will inform finalisation of the research instruments before they are administered on the field for the main study.

C. Sampling

Through purposive sampling, four people were selected for inclusion in the sample in each district as follows: one chief or one queen mother or their representative; an educated elderly woman or opinion leader who is a native of the town and is averse to the practice of child marriage and is willing to partner with this project to support young girls to resist child marriage in culturally constructive ways; an educated young person and a child marriage victim (within the ages of 10 -19) were selected for inclusion in the study.

CHAPTER 3 – FINDINGS

Preliminary Findings of Documents Review

As part of preparatory work carried out since the 2nd of August, 2021, the Investigators studied extensively documents related to gender-based violence and popular arts from the global perspective, through to continental, to national policies, organisational and regional information.

Documents perused included the OECD (SIGI 2019) *Social Institutions and Gender Index* publication on Ghana, policies such as the National Gender Policy and other GBV-related materials published by both academics and gender-based NGOs. The national entity tasked to advance women's holistic welfare in Ghana is the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (previously the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs). The Ministry is mandated to "ensure compliance with international protocols, conventions and treaties in relation to children, gender and social protection" (OECD, 2019, pp.1).

In 1998, the government instituted the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU). It is a unit within the Ghana Police Service mandated to respond to and enforce legislation that addresses gender, women and children and that responds to sexual and gender-based violence, child abuse and child protection. The Unit also responds to the protection of all vulnerable persons from abuse and to investigate allegations of sexual and gender-based violence (In Replies of Ghana: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - CEDAW Country Report, 2014). In May 2015, the government of Ghana published a National Gender Policy which seeks to mainstream gender equality in development processes through targeted interventions and improvements to the legal, social, political, cultural and economic conditions of Ghanaians, particularly women, girls and children. The five main policy commitments in the document are: (1) to improve women's rights and access to justice (2) to improve women's empowerment and livelihoods (3) targeted improvement to accountable governance structures and women's leadership and participation (4) improve women's economic justice and interrogate; and (5) improve gender roles and relations. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection is tasked with operationalizing this policy through a Strategic Implementation Plan and the plan makes clear the protocols and guidelines to be followed by relevant Ministries (National, Gender Policy, 2015)

Regarding forced and child marriages, the relevant legislation includes the Children's Act, 1998 and the Criminal Code, 1960. The Children's Act provides for legislative protections against forced and child marriage by defining a child as someone under the age of 18 (section) and setting the minimum age that one can be married also at 18 (section 14). Article 14 also goes on to state that no one can force a child to be

betrothed, be the subject of a dowry transaction or to be married (Children's Act, 1998). The Criminal Code 1960 also prohibits compulsion in marriage by making void, a marriage that is the result of "a female [being] compelled to marry another person by duress" (section 100). Section 109 goes on to criminalize the act of forcing someone into a marriage where someone found guilty of that offence will be charged with a misdemeanour (Criminal Code, 1960). Despite these legislative protections, there are still reports that girls and boys as young as 16 have been married with the consent of their parents (Girls Not Brides, 2017 in OECD 2019).

The 2014 CEDAW Shadow Report mentions the customary practice of "marriage of elopement" that occurs in the northern parts of Ghana where women are forced to marry their abductors. In 2014, the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection created an Ending Child Marriage Unit that with the support of civil society and NGOs would directly intervene in communities. Under the purview of the Ministry, an Advisory Committee on Ending Child Marriage was established to provide technical expertise and guidance on appropriate interventions to the Unit (National Framework, 2016). These changes helped to build towards the 2016 launch of the 2017-2026 National Strategic Framework for Ending Child Marriage in Ghana. Ending early marriage remains a priority for Ghana as the report notes that pregnant child brides are more unlikely to receive proper medical care than adult women which increases the chances of both maternal and foetal mortality (National Framework 2016).

A 2016 Government study on domestic violence in Ghana revealed that women are largely blamed for the violence they experience (Domestic Violence Study, 2016). In its Concluding Observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ghana, the CEDAW Committee stated deep concerns towards, "the persistence of adverse cultural norms, practices and traditions, in addition to patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, which contribute to the persistence of violence against women and harmful practices" (CEDAW, 2014).

The Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732) is the overarching piece of legislation that addresses domestic violence in Ghana. The law provides specific provisions for the investigation of allegations and the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators. The definition of domestic violence in the Act covers physical, sexual, psychological, economic and social violence and covers harassment and forced confinement; deprived access to food, water, clothing, and shelter from former partners and from within the family. A 2016 national study highlighted the main challenges and characteristics of domestic violence in Ghana. Age, class and a range of socio-economic factors where education levels, asset levels, tensions over property, money, unemployment, poverty and economic shocks were named as key determinants of domestic violence (Domestic Violence Study, 2016). The study found that the most common forms of domestic violence experienced by women were economic violence followed by social then psychological, physical and then sexual (Domestic violence Study, 2016). However, not

all respondents agreed with what was understood to be violence in the study. For some respondents, some of what was described as violence was seen to them to be coping mechanisms and accepted social norms and ways of resolving conflict (Domestic Violence Study, 2016). The study reiterated that harmful social norms and attitudes underpin and normalize domestic violence. Many instances of domestic violence may go unreported, unrecognized and may even be denied due to persons not wanting to report “private” matters and out of fear of not being believed (Domestic Violence Study, 2016).

Thus, this is the situation report in terms of GBV in the country.

- *Results of the desktop study reveals a number of limitations including the following:*
- The National Gender Policy does not address the issue of direct and indirect forms of discrimination against women and verbal and bodily harassment of women accruing to indecent assault.
- Female Genital Mutilation, although on the decline in Ghana, is also not addressed in the National Gender Policy.
- Other relevant literature accessed also indicated the provision of safe spaces and helplines for victims of GBV.
- The literature does not also address the issue of participatory and inclusive actions to mitigate GBV at the community levels using popular arts such as local films and docudramas as well as relevant indigenous music.

In terms of dissemination of results after the study, the following shall be executed:

- Locally, the results will be shared with the Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection in Ghana. It will also be disseminated to child-rights NGOs based in the Upper East Region with specific reach in the project communities to equip them with information on strategies to curb GBV.
- Further, the songs and docudrama to be produced will also be shared with GBC Rural Radio and the artistes as well as queen mothers and influential women for dissemination to the communities and the region long after the project ends.
- The results will also be developed into research manuscripts for publication in social science/cultural-based journals such as *Language and Communication* (by Elsevier indexed in Scopus) to inform scholarship and encourage further research on using arts and culture as tools for GBV resistance, peacebuilding and social transformation. They will also be presented at a relevant international conference to enlighten the global research community.

- The outcomes will be measured against the aims and objectives of the project.

Limitations

- The risks and limitations of the framework used based on the applied methodology of social science qualitative methods of linguistic and thematic analysis could include the possibility of not getting the actual figures of victims due to the small sample size. However, this limitation was offset by the expected depth of rich information to be derived which have been non-existent in previous quantitative surveys.
- To further offset these limitations, we propose the investment of more resources of financial and time on the field so as to get a more representative results, notwithstanding that qualitative studies do not aim at generalisability but specificity. However, considering the enormity of this challenge at the national level and in some sections of the continent and in Asia, we recommend future studies to enlarge the scope of this study to include other regions in Ghana as well as in other ODC countries, for a comparative analysis of the situation in order for holistic tackling of this canker.
- Prefinancing a study of this magnitude and focus by the Investigators, notwithstanding the provision of funds by CUSP based on submission of reports per the agreed timelines, is very challenging, to say the least.

SUMMATIVE FINDINGS

The major findings of the project from the interview data captured are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: FINDINGS ON INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

	QUESTION	RESPONSE	NUMBER/FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Theme 1: Socio-cultural context of early marriage				
1	Briefly describe how you got married.	I was given out to marriage at a young age because my parent needed help	8	38.1%
		I got pregnant and was asked/force to marry the guy	7	33.33%
2	At what age did you marry	Below 18	16	76.19%

3	In your opinion what do you think about child marriage?	Not a good practice	18	85.71%
		Good practices if the man can take care of the girl. It reduces burden on girl parents	3	14.29%
4	Who are the key people who influence or implement child marriage?	Parents	21	100%
5	Are there any challenges you faced as a result?	Yes. Lose respect, no proper education, maltreatment	19	90.48%
6	Are there any benefits associated with child marriage?	No benefits	18	85.71%
		Some benefits	3	14.29%

Theme 2: How popular acts frame early marriage

	Do you know of any songs/docudrama, folktales that talk about early/child marriage	No	15	71.43%
	What are they			
	What message do the songs/docudrama, folktales that talk about early/child marriage give you on early marriage	N/A	N/A	N/A
	How popular are the songs/docudrama and folktales	N/A	N/A	N/A

Theme 3: Uses and gratification of popular arts for change

	What do you use the songs for	For festivals and other cultural occasions	19	90.48%
	What benefits do you obtain by using the songs	It gives lessons	11	52.38%
	How do the songs influence your personal family values	It helps in me to know the importance of waiting to grow before marriage	6	28.57%
	What recommendation	Girls should be	21	100%

	would you make to minimize early/child marriage	educated, advocacy on radio, tv and social media		
Theme 4 Framing of popular arts on early marriage for education and social transformation				
	What attracts you to songs docudramas/folktales on early marriage	The message in the songs	18	85.71%
	How can songs docudramas/folktales on early marriages be used to achieve peace and social transformation	It should be infused in songs so people can get on their phones, play on radios, upload on social media, and on televisions	19	90.48%

The findings on the folktales, songs and docudrama corroborate the testimonies of the participants captured in table 1 above. The transcripts and translations are captured in Appendix 1 below.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS (SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS)

Analysis and Discussion

This section presents data analysis from various interviews conducted within the study settings. The analyses were based on the research objectives and the questions. Series of sub-questions were asked during the interview. Some of these are quoted in the analysis for clarity and full understanding.

- **Research question 1**

How does popular local culture in Kusaal communities frame the GBV narrative on child marriage?

The first research question sought to explore how local culture within Kusaal speaking communities contributes to GBV within the context of child marriage. The overriding basis for this question was that, the GBV narrative on child marriage within sub-Saharan Africa stems from local culture, beliefs and practices. When interviewed about what age they got married, most of the participant indicated that they got married before attaining age 18. This was corroborated by participants # 4, # 5, # 6, # 8, # 10, # 14, # 17, and # 18. Specifically, participants # 4, # 5 and #17 were either 15 or 16 years.

When asked about the role of local culture on the prevalence of child marriage, the participants revealed that, although child marriage is gradually reducing, parents sometimes force them into child marriage. Participants # 4, # 5, # 6, # 9, # 14, #19 and #21 claim that but for their parents, they would not have married at an early age.

In addition to parents, who were found to be key initiators of child marriage within the study setting, responses from the participants revealed that traditional customs and culture play a significant role. For instance, participants # 9 and # 18 indicated that a girl-child could be betrothed to a particular family. In this case, culture allows that any male child in the betrothed family who finds the girl-child attractive could marry her. Participant # 9 continued that, in some instances, young girls who are brought to a man's house by his wife as house helps are also given out for marriage. This narrative was corroborated by participant #18.

Similarly, many of the participants cited early unexpected pregnancy as a cultural basis for child marriage, rather than suffer shame and humiliation of carrying a baby out of wedlock. According to participants # 5, # 8, # 10, # 11, # 19 and # 20, the narrative points to the situation where poverty leads young girls under 18 years to have sexual relations with adults. These adults appear to help the young girls financially and end up impregnating the young girls. Responses from the participants revealed that, when these young girls get impregnated, they are forced into getting married to the adults. Specifically, participants #10 said:

"I was learning a trade and mistakenly got pregnant and was asked to marry and I got married".

Similarly, participants #11 indicated that:

"Okay, I was in my father's house and got pregnant and ought to marry the guy and I married him. So, it was the pregnancy that made me to marry".

The responses from participants #18 and #21 indicated that, they voluntarily got married at age 16 and 17 respectively. The conversation with these participants indicated that, they did not see anything wrong with getting married as young girls at that early age. This is because the practice is imbedded within their cultural norms. Thus child marriage, to these participants (#18 and #21), has become a norm.

From another cultural perspective, participant #17 narrated an age-old custom which requires that young girls are given out in marriage to the traditional priest or any relative of the herbalist. She indicated that, when married women find it difficult to give birth, they seek help to enable them conceive from the traditional priest or herbalist (native doctors). The cultural practice is that, when the traditional priest or herbalist is able to help a married woman to give birth, the first girl-child is given out for marriage during infancy. Participant #17 further revealed that she was given out from her father's house at an early age of five years. The herbalist came to take her away at the age of five (5), and she eventually got married to the grandson of the herbalist when she was 15 years.

When asked about whether there are any benefits associated with child marriage, the data revealed mixed reactions. While some indicated that child marriage has no benefit to the young girls, others gave reasons to justify the practice that to some extent, it is beneficial.

Participants #1, #2, #3, #4, # 8, # 10, # 11, # 17, # 19 , # 20 and #24 indicated that child marriage results in the young girls being maltreated by their husbands. This is usually because, the young girls do not love the men to whom they are either forced or

betroted to them to marry. The participants further indicated that child marriage results in situations where they young girls, due to less experience are unable to take proper care of their babies.

Participants # 8, # 10, # 11 and # 17 indicated that, child marriage curtails some freedom and liberties of the child. They indicated that child marriage denies a young girl of the opportunity to learn a meaningful trade or successfully complete formal education. Participant #11 said

“I was in primary four when I got married and stopped schooling. It is worrying me because I don’t have work today because I married [as a] child”.

From the perspective of participant #10, she had this to say about the challenges that child marriage brings:

“Oh, when you are in your father’s house, you have your liberty to go and do all that you want but if you are in your husband’s house, you can’t do that because you don’t have your freedom. Child marriage is difficult. There is also stigmatization in child marriage. I couldn’t continue learning a trade because my colleagues were always teasing and making mockery of me that I was a married woman”.

On the other hand, some of the participants alluded to some benefits that come with child marriage. The participants who alluded to benefits in child marriage indicated that, due to poverty, some parents are unable to cater for their children, therefore as means of getting money and other forms of compensation, they give their girl-child out for marriage. Participant #3 indicated that if the man is capable of taking good care of the

girl-child, then it is beneficial since it also reduces pressure on parents. In the case of, participant # 2, she had this to say,

“The only benefit I know is that if the husband can take care of you, it eases the burdens of your parents. This is because many child marriages are linked to poverty. So, when your parents are poor and cannot take care of you, it’s better they give you out to someone who can take care of you”.

Participant #12 also indicated that child marriage is good because, if girls are allowed to grow into their late teens, they usually get pregnant before marriage. Most often, it is difficult to get men owning up responsibility for the pregnancy, hence creating a burden to the family members. Therefore, if young children (girls) are given out for marriage at an early age, it reduces the tendency of girls getting pregnant out of wedlock.

Research question 2

What uses and gratifications do local people put to and derive from their popular culture?

The research question two sought to examine how the use of popular culture contributes to child marriage. Specifically, it examined how messages in songs, proverbs, folktales and docudrama talk about marriage.

Concerning songs and folktales many of the participants indicated that they have neither heard nor do they remember any proverbs or songs that promote child marriage. Very few of the respondents indicated that they have heard songs and folktales that implicitly promote child marriage. These were participant #2, #3 and #6.

For instance, when asked if they have heard of any song or folktales that talk about child marriage, participant #2 had this to say:

“Yes, I know a short folktale that says girls (wives) should be patient and stay with their husbands”.

In the case of participant #3 she indicated that

“Yes, I know this popular song that says a to-be wife does not disrespect her to-be mother-in-law. The song promotes tolerance and respect between the to-be wife and the family of the groom”.

The implication is that although most of the participants did not readily have songs and folktales in their minds that promote child marriage, the responses from the few ones illustrated that some songs, proverbs and folktales present child marriage as something normal. Concerning docudrama and videos, the participants indicated that although they have some that talk about child marriage, the message in them does not promote child marriage but rather discourages child marriage.

Research question 3

How can local popular culture be communicated effectively to educate women and girls for social transformation?

The third research question examined how popular culture in the form of songs, proverbs and folktales could be used to promote social change among women and girls in the study areas. It also sought information from the participants on how the problem of child marriage could be mitigated. The question stemmed from the presumption that

people are mostly glued to their culture. Therefore, when same culture is used as channel for transformational change, it would have greater impact.

The participants were asked how songs and folktales as well as proverbs could be used as a medium of communication in reducing child marriage. The responses from the participants indicated that children and adults are attracted to songs and so when the dangers of child marriage are channeled through songs and folktales, it gives useful pieces of advice to young girls and their parents.

Participants #9 and #10 contended that if the song is full of moral lessons teaching about the dangers of child marriage, it will attract many people to listen to it. And that will even help more than the pieces of advice; because the children like listening to songs more than the pieces of advice. Similarly, participants #2, #14, #17 and #21 intimated that, songs in their local dialect are easily assimilated, therefore if the songs are converted and become downloadable, people can download or copy the lyrics onto their phones and listen to the songs. They can also play them in the radio stations for people to listen to them.

Giving further explanations on the importance of songs in reducing child marriage, participant #15 made the following comments:

“The benefits are derived from the explanations of the songs. This one explains how to take proper care of your girl-children and also explains how people get into child marriages. Those who were not aware that child marriage was bad and how to avoid it, got to know it through the song”.

Similarly, talking about use of songs and folktales in reducing child marriage, Participant #2 stressed that:

“They should be inculcated in our social gatherings such as funerals, festivals, and especially during cultural activities in our schools. They can also be communicated through the media such as radio stations”.

Furthermore, participant #17 through the interview sang a song which when translated means that the woman didn't prepare well before coming to marry so, she doesn't know how to manage her home and they have to send her back to her own family. In the case of child marriage, when you are forced to marry someone that you don't like and you are not patient, you could also misbehave so that they sack you to go back to your parents. Highlighting the implication or lessons from the song, participant #17 stated that the song has been ...

“...able to educate people to know that forcing girl-children to marry men they are not interested in was bad and that when they learnt that could lead to broken marriages, some stopped doing it”.

Narrating lessons learnt from docu-drama and songs which has enlightened her on why child marriage should be stopped, participant #15 after recounting the lyrics in one of the local songs stated that,

“I think this song helped me because, it made me see the difference in the lifestyles of those who took care proper care of the children and those who did not. Those who took

proper care of their children are now enjoying because their children are now in big positions and are now taking care of them as well, while the others did not get this opportunity. It also enables me to know that when my daughter is going to school, I should get money for her on daily bases such that she won't demand money from elsewhere which can lead them to bad situations such as sleeping with men they are not married to".

From the perspective of videos, the participants narrated that the growth of digital technology could be leveraged to communicate issues on child marriage. Participants #2, 12, #13 and #15, indicated that, a lot of people are using various media channels. So, if lessons on child marriage are channeled through the radio and television stations and other social media channels, they will be spread widely for people to listen to them and change their minds. Other participants like #17, #19, and # 21 also indicated that the use of WhatsApp and Twitter could be used as a medium of communication.

Specifically, participant #12 stated that

"In the videos, they often show the difference in someone who married as a child and someone who married at the right time. The one who marry at the right time might have a career, working and earning money and leaving a good life but the one who marries child will not have all these things and will be suffering in the marriage. So, it teaches us the differences between child marriage and getting married at the right time".

The participants were also asked about how songs and folktales could be communicated to achieve peace and transformation and recommendation for reducing child marriage. The findings revealed that, the use of radio, television, social media

tools/platforms like twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp as communication media would educate a lot of people about child marriage and its associated dangers. Furthermore, the participants alluded to the intervention of NGO's and the government to initiate educational programmes aimed at highlighting the dangers of child marriage in order to bring transformational change. Participants #6, #8, #11, #12, #15 and #19 indicated that with proper investment in girl child education, early unexpected pregnancies would be reduced. Similarly, through quality education, many of the traditional folks would be enlightened and such enlightenment would invariably be transformed into social changes including child marriage.

Participant #6 specifically recommended that,

“Every girl-child should resist child marriage and rather take their studies and other skill training serious. This is because if you marry without any work, you will suffer greatly in the marriage. So, if you are a student or an apprentice, you should make sure that you complete your schooling or the training before you get married”.

Seconding the position of participants #6, and #11 contended that such resistance as recommended by participant #6 could only be fruitful when the girl child is well educated. Such education would empower the girl child to stand up for their right, protect their interests and aspire for greater things in life.

Discussion of Project Findings

The findings on analysis from promoting women's participation in social transformation through popular arts in Kusaal-speaking communities in Ghana are presented in this section. The findings revealed that child marriage is still prevalence among the Kusaal-speaking communities in Ghana. Some of the children are given out for marriage as early as 15 years. To 16 years. The findings further revealed that traditional customs, traditions like giving the first girl child to a male native doctor for marriage, poverty, parental and family coercion were the culturally based practices that contributed to child marriage.

The findings on giving first girl child to traditional priest are consistent with that of Abass-Abaah. The author intimated that when a woman is unable to give birth within some years after marriage, a shrine priest is consulted in such instances and promised a child to be brought and affiliated to his shrine, thus becoming a bondage '*dabit*' child. A child who is conceived in such a situation, if a boy, is required to offer sacrifices to the deity throughout his life and in the case of a girl, she is given in marriage to the priest from birth and may move to live in her new home from the age of ten. She may marry the priest at the age of puberty or given to his siblings or children for marriage. Similarly, a woman who suffers neonatal deaths and consults a priest for assistance, a girl child who will be born with the assistance of the priest is taken to the shrine and married to the priest or any member of his family. In all these the girl child has no right to free and full consent. This practice was confirmed by one of the participants who intimated that

she was taken away for marriage at age 5 and later given to a grandson of the traditional priest.

The finding on coercion, and unexpected teenage pregnancy which force children into marriages is consistent with previous studies by studies. For instance, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2020), 20 percent of adolescent girls reported having experienced sexual violence such as rape and coercion within the past 12 months, while 14 percent of adolescent girls aged 14 to 19 years have had a live birth or are currently pregnant with their first child and almost twice of this figure, who are pregnant, are in rural areas. Furthermore, in 2020, about 6,533 teenage pregnancies were recorded in the Upper East Region of Ghana among girls aged 10 to 14 representing a 38-percentage increase of 103 from 2019 to 142 in 2020 (Ghana Health Service, 2021). The statistics are confirmed by the number of participants who indicated that they got pregnant at younger age (16 and 17years) and were forced to get married against their wish.

The findings further revealed that, some popular culture like songs, folktales and proverbs, though minimal, contains certain messages which fuels gender-based violence – child marriage. However, on a broader perspective, most of the songs and folktales as well as docudramas give lessons about dangers of child marriage. Most of the respondents indicated that they were attracted to these songs, most especially when sung in their local dialects. The findings pointed to the direction that art, drama and songs are important transformational tools that could be used in empowering adults and children to understand the need to indulge in practices that will reduce teenage

pregnancies and avert the possibility of child marriage which is sometimes a consequence of teenage pregnancy.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the use of mass communication, television radio, social media, could reduce child marriage. This finding is supported by Abubakari (2022) and Morrell et al., (2012). These authors contended that increase the efforts in communication for social and behaviour change in schools, communities and through national media and social media directed at adolescent girls and boys, as well as at families and adult men, especially targeting rural areas and poor households, to further reduce the rate of adolescent pregnancies and to address the issue of older men using their position of power for the sexual coercion of adolescent girls and child marriage.

Analysis of the folktales, songs and the docudrama indicate the prevalence of GBV (particularly teenage pregnancy and child marriage) in the selected communities. The folktales are symbolic of the culture and tradition of the Kusaug people and serve as a window to their perception and world views. Comparing folklore regarding marriage and courtship among the people, it was revealed that the types of marriages practised by the Kusaas are reflective of the types of marriages expressed in their folktales. In trying to identify causes of child marriage and teenage pregnancies in Kusaug and to verify whether there were linkages with certain cultural practices, the folktales on marriage and the discussion of same with community members reveal that age is not a major factor in deciding when a girl can be married off or betrothed. Child marriage is a customary practice and indigenous rural folks see it as very normal. This leads to the assertion that the increase numbers in teenage pregnancies in rural Kusaal speaking communities could have bearing on the practice of child marriage.

The project also found that folktales are great sources of entertainment to the people although there is dwindling interests on this genre among the youth. The need to revitalise and rekindle interest in folkloric entertainment need not be overemphasised. The people admit that the moral lessons in folktales help them identify taboos and live accordingly with the bye-laws of their community. Thus, it is recommended that folktales and other forms of popular culture: songs, docudrama among others be created to serve as channels for educating rural folks on the need to abandon cultural practices such as child marriage, that have outlived their significance and are now being abused to the detriment of women and girls. The people should be encouraged to re-narrate and reinvent folktales that reflect current situations and address current societal problems for peaceful socio-cultural transformation.

Regarding songs, the project found that the cultural practice of the Kusaas allows for girls below the age of 18 to be married. Notwithstanding the uses and gratifications to be derived by stakeholders through child marriage, the song emphasises that the demerits are so grave, that the practice is not worth the risk. The effects of teenage pregnancies as indicated earlier and as advocated in the song through the advice of health professionals can be offset through purposeful communication as done through the googi performance, on the potential for education to bring about the needed behavioural change over time. The performer, Alembood Akidago, highlights some key issues by tracing the root causes of early marriage and teenage pregnancies to the culture where girls can be betrothed as soon as they were born and are allowed into marriage before they are 18, with associated cultural and familial gratifications.

However, in spite of these gratifications, she equally explains that teenage pregnancy poses major health risk and calls on everyone to help fight the menace. She further explains that early marriage and teenage pregnancy are major causes of poverty in the region. The teenage girls are often unemployed and if they get impregnated by a man who refuses responsibility, then they become a burden on their parents who may also not be meaningfully employed.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS (SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS, RESULTS THAT FOREGROUND THE PROJECT; POTENTIAL IMPACT AND MAIN DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS)

The results of feedback from the interviewees indicate that child marriage has a cultural correlation as it is perceived to be a better alternative than being pregnant out of wedlock or outside the context of marriage. The typical contractual age for the phenomenon ranges from 15 to 18 years. Notwithstanding the cultural, social and economic gratifications of child marriage, the study finds that the cost incurred in behavioural terms in terms of societal transformation and the development of girls far outweighs the present perceived material and social benefits. This is attested to in literature as well as from the testimonies of the victims. The voices of the queen mothers and male opinion leaders who were interviewed also lend credence to the demerits of the practice and to the need for the local populations to desist from the practice.

The framing of the docudrama speaks very loudly on scenarios that generate situations leading to child marriage as well as the outcomes of such marriages in the long term, although there could be perceived short term material benefits. This popular art form portends a viable tool for dissemination in the areas under study and other kusaal-speaking areas for strategic cultural resistance that can lead to social transformation aimed at building strong social institutions such as families and nonformal educational efforts.

Folktales are great sources of entertainment for the people although there is dwindling interests on this genre among the youth. The need to revitalise and rekindle interest in folkloric entertainment need not be overemphasised. The people admit that the moral lessons in folktales help them identify taboos and live accordingly with the bye-laws of their community. Thus, it is recommended that folktales and other forms of popular culture: songs, docudrama among others be created to serve as channels for educating rural folks on the need to abandon cultural practices such as child marriage, that have outlived their significance and are now being abused to the detriment of women and girls. The people should be encouraged to re-narrate and reinvent folktales that reflect current situations and address current societal problems for peaceful socio-cultural transformation.

In respect of the songs, the singer calls on all traditional leaders, parents and the youth to resist the culture of early marriage and embrace education for the socio-cultural and socio-economic transformation of the people. The googi performance on early marriage is crafted using several rhetorical devices that are verbally communicated effectively to help advance the themes of the song through persuasion. The performer employs alliteration, metaphors, ideophones, repetition and repetition with variation among others instruments to make the piece very memorable and above all entertaining. In all this, the study has revealed that early marriage, teenage pregnancies and other GBV-related practices can be curbed by employing popular culture to manage and sustain peace more especially in instances where women and girls are the most vulnerable. Unwholesome cultural practices that have outlived their usefulness and impede progress, irrespective of their perceived uses and gratifications should be addressed.

To do this, the indigenes should be offered superior functional alternatives such as education, so they personally embrace the need for change and without being made to feel offended: one surest approach to do this is through the use of music, folktales and other cultural artifacts such as googi performances.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The Project concludes that popular art such as folktales, docudramas and songs should be adapted as popular tools to disseminate information regarding child marriage and teenage pregnancy. This is because, the mode of translation in terms of the context and the language are both culturally accepted. The indigenous people are comfortable with the communality that the transmission of folktales, docudramas and songs bring to them as well as a sense of shared values and belongingness. These constitute some of the pillars of an enduring traditional society.

Songs, docudramas and folktales on child marriage and teenage pregnancy aptly communicated in kusaas, is likely to engender greater receptivity among the local people because these popular art forms are vehicles of cultural transmission that they are familiar and comfortable with. Aligning this to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, feedback from the interview participants indicated the superior long-term cultural and social gratifications they derived from the songs, folktales and docudramas compared to the short-term gains of child marriage such as material wealth, fleeting security of having a home, husband and acceptance in the community. The framing of the lyrics of the songs, the textual and audiovisual content of the docudramas as well as the strong cultural reference to mythical folktales provide an irresistible tool for cultural resistance to the practice of child marriage in the face of superior functional alternatives of education in the form of self worth, respect, economic independence and the opportunity for greater social impact and transformation.

Therefore with the artillery of the songs, folktales and docudrama produced by the investigators and by deploying the Change Theory, the target audience are well armed

to resist cultural pressures that culminate into child marriage and teenage pregnancy. The study takes cognisance of the fact that change is a process that takes time. However, the strength of this change begins with education on the phenomenon thereby creating awareness of the negative consequences of child marriage and engendering a sense of responsibility by all stakeholders, particularly parents and guardians of the victims and potential victims to desist from the practice and aspire for better lives for their female children. By deploying widely used media, namely radio stations such as Dastek, Max FM and Ghana Television, the message of change would impact many more people beyond those in the six project communities.

In sum, the study indicates an unfolding of a process of change based on gratifications that goes beyond the scope of this project. The findings of the project are unique, very practical and relevant for adoption by communities in Ghana and other African countries, where the practice of child marriage is rife. The literature on mitigation of GBV and child marriage in Ghana do not have the participatory elements and foci of this project – namely popular arts of songs, folktales and docudramas. In effect, this project fills a gap in literature that can be harnessed practically to make mitigation efforts of both government and relevant stakeholders more effective. Thus it needs to be replicated and extended to other communities and countries on a wider scale through a larger project, beyond the scope of this project.

CHAPTER 7

RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW IAS-CUSP PARTNERSHIP HAS BEEN AN ADDED VALUE TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT, LESSONS LEARNED AND FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCH

Based on the findings and the conclusion, the project recommends the following:

1. That the adoption of the unique popular art forms, namely songs, folktales and docudramas and the strategic participation of queen mothers and opinion leaders in this project has addressed a gap in literature on GBV and child marriage mitigation efforts by government and other stakeholders in Ghana. Thus, future intra and intercountry projects could adapt this.
2. That tools for social resistance against child marriage and teenage pregnancy need to be familiar and accepted popular art such as songs and docudramas as they offer diversionary, entertainment and educational gratifications in order to be accepted and owned by the target populations.
3. That the vehicle for transmission of cultural resistance to child marriage need to be in the local language used within the targeted local communities. This is because, language connotes a sense of identity and belongingness. Hence when the message of change is framed using the local language, the message is more likely to be accepted.

4. Further, that role models used in cultural change communication need to be respected local people such as queen mothers and opinion leaders as they have the voice, authenticity and ability to engender trust in the local people as the queen mothers testify to the superior functional alternatives of education and concomitant benefits of economic independence, professional careers, respect and provision of a robust space through popular arts for girls and women to transform society.
5. That opinion leaders be equipped to continue educating young girls and parents on the phenomenon of child marriage as well as the superior functional alternatives and gratification to be derived by desisting from the practice.
6. That a selected group of young girls or victims be equipped with skills training and education to enable them earn decent livelihoods.
7. That IAS continues this collaboration with CUSP on a wider scale that has more potential to impact the entire country and or between countries, particularly at communities where child marriage thrives.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Excerpts

Appendix 2: Transcription and Translation of Folktales

Appendix 3: Transcription and translation of song

Appendix 4: Transcription and Translation of docudrama

Appendix 5: Project Photographs

Appendix 6: Consent Form

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