Change begins at home

Rutgers

Power to You(th) Ghana

In Ghana, especially in the northern regions, many women and girls face serious challenges like domestic violence, rape and harmful practices like female genital mutilation. These issues happen because of deep-rooted inequalities, unfair cultural traditions, poverty and a lack of access to justice and support. By standing up for equality, creating safe spaces and ensuring everyone has access to the help they need, we can build a future where every girl and woman feels valued, safe and empowered to thrive.

A model for change and transformation

To address the high prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence and unintended pregnancies in these communities, the Power to You(th) programme in Ghana introduced the Model Gendered Household initiative to amplify young women and girls' voices in family decision-making, transforming spaces where their participation had previously been limited.

Households are supported to challenge traditional gender roles, stereotypes and responsibilities, such as the division of care and economic decision-making. Families are encouraged and supported to take decisions and share resources together, assist each other with household chores and unpaid care work, jointly run a business or make financial decisions. The model is improving women's economic independence as it can free up their time to engage in economic ventures; due to the support from the family other roles and responsibilities are taken care of.

Embracing new role

The Model Gendered Household initiative has equipped community members with knowledge, tools and support to foster fairness and equality in daily life. Volunteer families led the way in challenging harmful gender norms and traditional roles. They embraced shared decision-making, adopted gender-neutral roles at home and promoted equal opportunities for their children, inspiring change in their communities and beyond.

> **My home no longer looks like a cat and dog relationship, but rather a positive partnership as everyone plays a role in chores. I am also able to move to nearby communities to use the experiences I gained as an MGH to mediate and resolve issues at people homes; that way, they are also able to practice the MGH structure. It has transformed our relationship from one of conflict to one of partnership. That brought joint decision-making processes in my household and farming together.**
>
> Mr. Seidu, MGH father in Kpasera community, under the Central Gonja District of the Savannah Region

"During our meetings members were taught they each had equal rights and were entitled to opportunities for empowerment", Lamnatu Adam, executive director of Power to You(th) consortium partner Songtaba, explains.

> **Both men and women together can take control and improve their lives. Neither the man nor woman exerts power over the other. They make decisions together.**
>
> Lamnatu Adam, executive director Power to You(th) Ghana consortium partner Songtaba

Change for generations to come

"The concept uses community members themselves to influence change and transform the norms that exist among them", says Mathilda Yineboma of Norsaac, the national coordinator for Power to Youth in Ghana.

"We felt it was a good approach that would break some stereotypes and bring together community participation in the change process", she adds.

"We were intentional about what age children should be part of model gender households. Once a child grows up with a certain orientation, it automatically spreads to the generations that come."

> **Change starts with self, then trickles down to other people. It's actually more influential coming through peers than from civil society organisations.**
>
> Mathilda Yineboma, national coordinator for Power to Youth in Ghana, Norsaac

The initiatives shows how important values like care and harmony can help to promote gender equality and spark positive change in the community and across generations.

Reduction in gender-based violence

The standout achievement of the model gendered households is a marked reduction in cases of sexual and gender-based violence and unintended pregnancies in some communities.

> **We have seen relationships improving and a reduction of gender-based violence within homes and even communities. One person's behaviour has influenced other families into doing something better.**
>
> Lamnatu Adams, executive director Power to You(th) Ghana consortium partner Songtaba

An MGH facilitator in the Kpasera community said: "Before the model gendered household initiative, intimate partner violence cases could be recorded up to ten cases in a year but has reduced to less than two or not at all in recent years in the community. As a result of the best practices we barely experience these cases."

POWER TO YOUTH CHANGE STARTS WITH YOU(TH) norsaac GHA SRHR Alliance for young people Songtaba

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