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# A Study of Alternative Measures in Resolving Cases of Child Sexual Abuse among the Ga Community in Accra, Ghana

Many children continue to be sexually abused worldwide. In Ghana, relatively high figures of child sexual abuse (CSA) are reported by the police daily. Although there are laws that seek to protect children from sexual abuse, in reality, there is a wide gulf between legislation and practice. This paper explores why this is so by examining the measures adopted in sanctioning perpetrators of CSA in the Ga community in Ghana. The study uses a qualitative approach to collect data from parents and guardians through in-depth interviews. The study revealed that, generally, traditional rather than legal sanctions are adopted in handling CSA cases. This paper thus interrogates the consequences of the obvious contraventions of the law as traditional interventions are resorted to. We posit that CSA can be minimised only when child protection laws are enforced by the police and victims are reoriented to appreciate the benefits of seeking legal redress. © 2021 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

## KEY PRACTITIONER MESSAGES:

- Conscious efforts must be made to destigmatise child sexual abuse.
- Sensitisation programmes should be organised periodically by stakeholders to educate community members on child sexual abuse.
- The police in partnership with the media must also lead the campaign to educate the populace that choosing traditional options of redress and non-disclosure of incestuous acts against children is a clear violation of the law and the rights of the child.

KEY WORDS: child sexual abuse; child protection legislation; Ghana

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## Introduction

The World Health Organisation (1999, p. 15) defines child sexual abuse (CSA) as:

‘The involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to: the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.’

It is estimated that about 15 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have experienced forced sexual intercourse in their lifetime (United Nations Children's Fund, 2017). Studies show that CSA is more prevalent in Africa than in Europe (Pereda *et al.*, 2009) with the majority of victims being females (Stoltenborgh *et al.*, 2011). According to Stoltenborgh *et al.* (2011), collectivist cultures largely inhibit CSA disclosure in order to prevent stigmatisation of the child's family whereas individualistic cultures may support and encourage a CSA disclosure.

In Ghana, CSA is classified into defilement and sexual exploitation. Defilement, according to the Criminal Code Amendment Act 1998 section 101 sub-section 2, is the ‘natural or unnatural carnal knowledge of a child below 16 years, with or without his or her consent’ (p. 554). Sexual exploitation is regarded as sexual activities that expose a child to physical or emotional harm such as pornography (Ghana NGOs Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC), 2015). Persons who commit sexual offences against children in Ghana shall be liable to a number of convictions including imprisonment for a term of not less than seven years and not more than 25 years (Criminal Code Amendment Act 1998). Ghana's estimated population in July 2018 was 28 102 471; 37.83 per cent of these were children below 15 years (Ghana Demographic Profile, 2019). Studies show that cases involving CSA in Ghana are rarely reported due to cultural reasons (Boakye, 2009; Markwei and Osei-Hwedie, 2019; Tetteh and Markwei, 2018). Thus, the official records are usually a small percentage of the reality. Where reports are made, the first point of call is the police. In September 2020, the Director of the Domestic Violence and Victim's Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service reported an increase in defilement cases from 730 cases in 2017 to 1270 cases in 2019 (Ola-Morris, 2020).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990 states that all states should protect children from all forms of abuse (Twum-Danso, 2009). In most African societies, including Ghana, there are traditional laws which work alongside modern ones to ensure social control. Traditional African religion plays a very important role in sanctioning negative behaviours in Africa because people strongly believe that offences are surely punished by ancestral spirits and gods (Nukunya, 2003). Hence, some victims and relations of victims of CSA rather defer judgement to them. For example, in October 2017, there was a public outcry in Ghana when the perpetrator who allegedly

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**‘There are traditional laws which work alongside modern ones to ensure social control’**

sexually abused a four-year-old girl at Assin Adadientem in the Central Region was freed by the chief because he claimed the gods had declared him innocent (Ibrahim, 2017). This case brought again to the fore the debate surrounding the interference of tradition and traditional leaders in child protection. This incident engendered a national anti-child abuse campaign by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Ghana.

In contemporary times, both international and national legislation that seeks to address the phenomenon of CSA is regarded as taking precedence over traditional laws. While these laws have yielded significant results in the West, countries like Ghana are still struggling to make them work due to the strong influence of tradition and culture (Boakye, 2009). Thus, Ghana, like other African countries, is faced with the paradox where, though legal frameworks exist on CSA, people in the communities take a different position from that of the law.

Thus, despite the explicit position of the law in Ghana, several studies (Abotchie, 1996; Boakye, 2009; Brown, 2002) have identified that concerns with stigma, especially where the perpetrator is family, are among the reasons for non-reporting or withdrawal of reported cases from the police for 'settlement at home'. This study presents empirical evidence of (in)actions of parents and guardians whose children were victims of sexual abuse in the Ga Community in Ghana. The Ga are the indigenous ethnic community in Accra, which is the largest city and most populated region (4 943 075) in Ghana (Population and Housing Census, 2019). In this paper, we interrogate parents' preference for traditional instead of legal approaches in addressing the abuse of their children. This study is relevant in highlighting the challenges associated with the use of legal channels of redress and making recommendations to facilitate and encourage their use.

## Theoretical Framework

This paper is discussed through the lens of Goffman's theory of stigma. Stigmatisation is used to characterise a person who is deemed as unwholesome and regarded as discounted and tainted by society (Goffman, 1963). According to Goffman, stigma deeply discredits a person who may be viewed as a failure or an outsider in the eyes of people. The concept of 'stigmatisation', as used in this text, refers to a situation where a person is discredited for having a marked condition or experience. It involves exclusion, discrimination and ascription of blame. This paper addresses 'felt' stigma, which a victim perceives, and 'enacted' stigma, which refers to actions upon the individual or group (Goffman, 1963; Parker and Aggleton, 2003; Schur, 1984). The Ghanaian individual is completely merged within his/her community and does not have an identity distinct from his/her family or clan (abusua). Thus, any act that taints one, taints the whole family. Hence, the fear of stigmatisation makes members of either the victim's or the offender's family spend more time worrying about the potential social backlash, not just against the perpetrator but also against the entire family (Boakye, 2009). This is usually captured in the adage that says, 'Do not wash your dirty linen in public'. In the African context, this admonition applies as much to private, individual matters as it does to both nuclear and extended family matters (Boakye, 2009). Thus, the

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efforts to use traditional methods to sanction perpetrators of CSA are mostly driven by the need to protect the identity of victims and their families and sometimes even perpetrators depending on their relationship with the victim and their status in society. It is obvious then that efforts must be made to destigmatise the victims to enable them feel safe to use legal child protection legislations and services.

### Study Site

The study was conducted in the Ga community in Accra, the capital of Ghana. The choice of Accra for this study was informed by the relatively large incidence of CSA cases (1466 in the first nine months of 2014) reported by the DOVVSU (2014) of the Ghana Police Service. Further, the Ga community was selected because the traditional Ga community provides the context to explore how ‘meanings, interpretations, and experiences are created and impacted by the community within which one finds himself’ (Tetteh and Markwei, 2018, p. 3). Irrespective of modernity, the Ga community has preserved many of its traditions which include a decentralised traditional political system, religious beliefs and practices (Brukum *et al.*, 2009). Modernisation and migration have made the Ga traditional area ethnically heterogeneous (Wellington, 2002). These changes notwithstanding, few improvements have occurred, ‘with many Ga settlements suffering from increased poverty, overcrowding, and a generally poor infrastructure’ (Brukum *et al.*, 2009, p. 165). With regards to housing, every ‘w3’ (house) had two areas, the male and the female sections (Azu, 1974, p. 20). The compound for the women was made up of the ‘wives of the men in the “hiiamli”, the unmarried daughters of the women, daughters who were not first wives, and sons under the age of seven’ (Azu, 1974, p. 22) while the male unit was made up of male members who belonged to the same patrilineage and lived in rooms which were previously occupied by their fathers (Azu, 1974, p. 21). Wives usually came to sleep at night along with their children who were below four years old (Azu, 1974). According to Azu (1974, p. 20), during the rainy season, ‘boys who slept on the sheltered compounds were permitted to sleep in their fathers’ rooms on mats spread on the floor while their parents occupied the single beds in the room’. As a result of this arrangement, it is believed that children were usually aware of their parents’ sexual activities (Field, 1940, p. 9) creating an avenue for them to perhaps practice what they observed.

### Methods

A qualitative method was used and considered appropriate because it allowed the researchers to capture the subjective views and unique experiences of research participants (Neuman, 2007). Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select 19 participants, made up of parents and guardians of sexually abused children from selected communities in the Ga community. This population was purposively targeted because sexual abuse

**‘Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select 19 participants, made up of parents and guardians of sexually abused children’**

cases are first reported to them, and they subsequently decide the actions to take for redress. Respondents were identified through pre-established networks who led the researchers to some participants (Ulin *et al.*, 2002), who also led us to others. The pre-established networks were family heads and community leaders who are regarded as gatekeepers and had information on key happenings in the community. The number of participants was arrived at as a result of data saturation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants at places identified by the respondents themselves to facilitate privacy. Interviews were predominantly in Ga, because respondents were fluent in it. Participants were asked to describe what happened to their children and the actions they took and the reasons for them. Participants' anonymity was ensured during the interviews and reporting with the use of codes and pseudonyms, respectively. An indigene who was knowledgeable in traditional customs, had good communication skills and was well-known in the community was engaged as a research assistant (Markwei and Tetteh, 2020) and was trained well in methods and ethics by the researchers. Participants had the right to refuse to answer some questions or withdraw from the study if they found any questions distressing to them. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour and were recorded with the permission of participants. All the interviews were subsequently translated verbatim into English by a translator in consultation with the authors to maintain the authenticity of the meanings produced from the narratives.

The data were analysed thematically in tandem with the six steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) by first familiarising ourselves with the data. Next, initial codes were generated followed by the collation of the codes into potential themes and the gathering of data relevant to each theme. Afterwards, the themes were reviewed, then defined and named, and finally written into a research report. Interviews were crosschecked with participants and also transcripts of the audio recordings to verify the consistency and validity of the data. The researchers downplayed their educational level by dressing down and speaking Ga during the interviews. The researchers were all female and mothers; this assisted with the interviews as participants deemed the interviews as conversations with fellow mothers. Participants were aged between 46 and 56 years with the majority (16) being Christian, two being traditionalists and one not belonging to any religion. Nine participants had never been to school, eight attained primary education and two went to junior secondary school. Eleven of the participants were either divorced or separated, six were single and two were married. Three of the participants were unemployed, eight were fishmongers and eight others were petty traders.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research (IRB-NMIMR) of the University of Ghana. Ethical considerations related to voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy and preventing harm, and confidentiality.

This study is limited by its small sample size, which makes it difficult to generalise findings. Further, the victims of CSA were not included in the study because decisions concerning actions to be taken concerning the abuse of a child are often taken on by parents or guardians and the child tends to have no voice in that decision.

**'Family settlement was the most preferred option of redress by parents and guardians whose children had been abused'**

## Findings and Discussions

The analyses showed that a lot of consideration is given to whether an incident of CSA would be reported to the police or dealt with using traditional approaches. On many occasions, cases that are reported to the police are withdrawn and 'brought home' for redress. In some instances, the case does not go to the police at all but is dealt with using a three-pronged process observed to include family settlements, child marriage or inaction. We explore the reasons that underpin each of these choices by parents to handle incidents of their children's sexual abuse.

### Family Settlement

Family settlement was the most preferred option of redress by parents and guardians whose children had been abused. This is to avoid stigmatisation of the sexually abused child. Girls who got pregnant in the Ga community without husbands are labelled as children who lacked morals and their families blamed for not instilling good morals in them. In view of this, the family of a girl who got pregnant outside marriage sends a delegation to the man's family to inquire about the pregnancy (Anarfi and Fayorsey, 1999). Such men were regarded as having been caught stealing, *amole dzulo* (Azu, 1974), and would have to pay a fine. In line with this, respondents stated that when they discovered the sexual abuse of their children, they '*sama*' (summoned) the '*weku*' (family) of the perpetrator to seek answers.

The process often began with a delegation sent to the alleged perpetrator's house, to confront him about the abuse. Should he deny the accusation, insults were traded between the two families until a compromise was reached. However, should he accept responsibility, he invites his family to go with him to ask for the forgiveness of the girl's family with some money and drinks. Should the girl be pregnant, he is obliged to care for her in order to gain the right to name the child when s/he is born (Anarfi and Fayorsey, 1999). For instance, Mamaa Abi, whose 11-year-old daughter was abused by a neighbour, said:

'When I realised my daughter was pregnant, I got very angry and took her to the man's house. The man initially did not want to accept responsibility so I dealt with them very well. I insulted them and they realised they were in for trouble... Later, with his family, he came to ask for forgiveness and took responsibility for the pregnancy and promised to care for the child when he is born. This was what happened and the matter was resolved amicably.'

Further financial demands are made when an abused child sustains serious injuries during the act. This is to compensate for the irreparable damage done to them. In the words of Auntie Kor, whose 12-year-old daughter was sexually abused:

'I went to meet the family of the man who abused my daughter together with the elders of my family and we made sure to keep the information among family members in order to avoid stigmatisation. The man accepted the responsibility and paid all her medical bills and said they would take care of my daughter until all her wounds are healed. They were also to pay for anything that the child needed to be happy. If they are doing all this, why should I report him to the police where the whole community will get to know about what happened?'

The case dies a natural death when the perpetrator agrees to comply with the family's demands of taking care of the medical and financial needs of the victim and an unborn child. It was, however, discovered that this acceptance of responsibility was just a ploy by some perpetrators to avoid legal action. Shortly after making the pledge, some of them abscond from the community. According to Maa Mary, whose 13-year-old daughter was sexually abused at La:

'When he agreed to take care of my daughter, I was very happy and said there was no need for us to go to the police station. After some weeks, he relocated from this community and we have not seen him since.'

Family settlement was also mostly preferred when the perpetrator was a relative. Incest is a taboo in most communities in Ghana and the act taints the entire family for many generations (Ahiadeke, 1997; Boakye, 2009; Nukunya, 2003). The stigmatisation associated with incest is serious to the extent that families do not agree to marriage into such families (Nukunya, 2003). As a result, cases involving incest are rarely reported. This is seen in the words of a parent whose daughter was sexually abused by her husband's brother:

'How can I report such a person to the police? This will bring disgrace to the family. Moreover, I would not want the person to die in jail but I would not mind if he is disgraced "small" by the family elders. As a result, I just reported him to his family who invited him over and disgraced him. He was cautioned never to do that to any child in the community. If I report a family member who abuses my child to the police, my whole family will be a mockery in this community.'

Such incestuous cases were settled among family members in order to prevent stigmatisation and disgrace to the victims as well as to the entire family.

### *Child Marriage*

In the Ga community, when sexual abuse of a child results in pregnancy, the perpetrator is forced to begin the marriage process. This he does by presenting drinks and cash to the girl's family, declaring his intentions to marry the girl. The man gains the right after 'knocking' to continue having sex with the pregnant girl in order to ease labour pains (Anarfi and Fayorsey, 1999). Marriages under such circumstances are performed to secure the child's future as abused and stigmatised girls may be unattractive to other men as potential wives. Lamiley narrates:

'When my daughter got pregnant, I got angry and went to meet my uncles. After that, they all went to the man's family and forced them to perform the marriage rites. They listened to us and did the "knocking". This made us happy because the child would not have difficulty getting a husband in future. A lot of people do not like women who already have children so this is good for the child.'

Similarly, Asisi narrates that:

'When my daughter was sexually abused by one of our neighbours, my only worry was about her being called "born one". When you get pregnant out of wedlock in this community, it is very disgraceful. My family convinced the perpetrator to at least do the "knocking" so

**'When sexual abuse of a child results in pregnancy, the perpetrator is forced to begin the marriage process'**

my daughter would be secured. He did that and we were comfortable with that. We do not want any disgrace in this family.'

This cultural practice contravenes Ghana's Act 544 which criminalises adults having sex with children below 16 years. Although members of the community studied considered child marriage as a 'solution' to child abuse, it is not a solution in itself. Placing children in marriage after they have been abused is in itself abusive as children's views are not sought in these instances. They end up in loveless marriages often with men far older than them, and their childhood truncated. This situation is similar to an earlier study conducted in South Africa where the cultural practice known as '*inhlawulo*' and '*ukugeza*' allows a man who impregnates a woman outside of wedlock to make payments of either money or livestock to the woman's father or guardian as a token of recognition of responsibility and good faith (Magwaza, 1997). According to Magwaza, this practice encourages perpetrators to sexually abuse children. This narrative distinguishes between children who are sexually abused and do not get pregnant and those who do get pregnant. It is the latter group that these arrangements of settlement or marriage are made. The lingering question is, what is the redress for abused children who do not get pregnant; and does marriage in itself provide the appropriate compensation for the pregnant ones?

### *Inaction*

The findings also show that in most instances, especially where the perpetrator is a relation, no action is taken by the family of the child. Parents often remain silent about these kinds of abuse because they do not want to bring disgrace to the family as incest is a taboo. Besides, because of the rules of exogamy and endogamy, it may even be culturally unacceptable for such perpetrators to marry the girl (Nkunya, 2003). Such abuses are, thus, shrouded in secrecy. For example, Naa Kwaley, a 45-year-old woman whose daughter was abused by her father said:

'We did nothing because we did not want anyone to hear of what happened. It is her father, so if something happens to him it would affect the child. We are just praying he does not repeat the action again. It is a very disgraceful situation so it is only the close family members who are aware and they have been warned not to disclose it to anyone.'

This is similar to a study by Jones and Jemmott (2010) in the Caribbean where no sanctions were imposed for acts that were incestuous but concealed under a cloak of silence. This is a major hindrance to curbing the menace of CSA.

In many instances where children's testimonies were not believed, nothing was done. In the words of Naa Awoo:

'I did not believe what my daughter told me because I know how she can tell lies sometimes. She is a bad girl and she can do anything. When I realised that what she was saying was true, it was too late to do anything about it.'

Disbelieving children's experiences of sexual abuse may deter other children from opening up about their experiences. This situation is attributed to the cultural norm which makes it difficult for a child's word to be easily believed

**'In most instances, especially where the perpetrator is a relation, no action is taken by the family of the child'**

(Mathoma *et al.*, 2006). Children in such social settings are likely to be abandoned and made to suffer the outcomes of their experiences silently and alone.

Some participants also claimed they did nothing to the perpetrators because they believed they had been negligent and failed to provide the basic needs of their girls. Princess, whose 13-year-old daughter was sexually abused, said:

'I did nothing to the man who abused my daughter because I felt very bad as a parent. I was unable to provide her basic needs, this was why the man who provided for her needs forced and had sex with her... I abandoned her and did not take care of her because I had no money to do so. I would feel very shy to even walk to the man's house and accuse him of abusing my daughter.'

Thus, poverty among families affects children to a large extent, making them vulnerable to sexual abuse (UNICEF, 2001). Similarly, Jones and Jemmott (2010) found in the Eastern Caribbean that poverty played a key role in the sexual abuse of their children.

### ***Reporting to the Police***

This study found that reporting CSA to the police was the last approach resorted to by parents and guardians when perpetrators refuse to settle or marry the young girls. The participants explained the complexity and difficulty associated with seeking redress in the law courts as the reason this option was least preferred. One female interviewee disclosed that:

'I told a friend about the sexual abuse of my daughter and she suggested we reported the case to the police, which I did. The perpetrator was then arrested by the police and we were told the case would be sent to court. We were happy about it but the police did not commit to pursuing the case, we believed he was bribed. We went to the police station several times without any positive outcome so we stopped pursuing the case.'

Other victims withdrew their cases from the police due to the pressure put on them by community members. One of the participants, Adjoa, states:

'I was insulted by the community members when I decided to report the case to the police. They called me all sorts of names and said I was a very wicked person. I did not want to listen to them because the man destroyed my only daughter's life. Later, I could not bear the pressure anymore and looking at the slow pace at which the police was handling the case, I had to withdraw it from the police for us to settle it at home...'

As seen in the above narratives, some parents or guardians were compelled by societal pressure to withdraw the cases from the police. Thus, considerations for good neighbourliness feed the pressure to not go to the police and/or to withdraw cases after they had been reported. Besides, because of the extended family system and the community built through intermarriages, people are careful not to make a report to the police only to subsequently realise some familial connection with a perpetrator. For example, in the case of Eugenia, whose daughter experienced incest with her uncle, the family was pressured by the police official to settle the case at home because it involved a relative and they did not want to be stigmatised. She explained that:

**'Reporting CSA to the police was the last approach resorted to by parents and guardians when perpetrators refuse to settle or marry the young girls'**

‘When we went to the police station, one of the policemen who knew my family convinced me to withdraw the case and settle it at home. He said my uncle would be jailed for many years if we go to court. He said it would not be good for the family. I was not happy about it but my husband agreed to what the policeman said.’

It can be gleaned from these narratives that not only community members but also sometimes the police put pressure on families who reported their cases to them, to withdraw them in order to maintain peaceful cohabitation in the community. Seeking legal action was viewed as wickedness as perpetrators are likely to be jailed.

Non-reporting was also due to the cumbersome processes associated with following up on a case with the police and in the courts of law. Thus, in some instances, victims were compelled to withdraw cases and settle out of court due to the frustration with the court delays. For example, according to Francisca, a mother whose 11-year-old daughter was abused:

‘My brother made us report the man at the police station and he was arrested. The case was transferred to DOVVSU and we were very happy. After a day, he was granted bail and we were asked to be reporting at DOVVSU every day. Later, we got tired because it took all our time and money... my brother even lost his job. I am so angry at the police because they did not help us at all.’

Also, most parents and guardians preferred out-of-court settlements to the legal system because they could not communicate proficiently in the English language. Maa Weley, whose daughter was sexually abused by a neighbour, said:

‘Most of us have never been to school so we cannot go to the police station. When you go to the police, they would ask you to write a statement in English. I cannot write so I do not like going to the police station...’

However, despite respondents' reservations and challenges experienced with using the legal route of redress, they assert that it is the best option when the child has suffered injuries from the abuse and stiffer punishment needed to be meted out.

### Conclusions and Implications for Policy

This paper identifies the measures used in finding redress to incidences of CSA in the Ga community. The preference for out-of-court settlements was to avoid the stigma associated with using the legal system, which tends to make the offence public. Pressure to preserve familial relationships, poverty, power dynamics, collusion of often male police, lack of enforcement and language barriers are among the challenges that make using the legal option unattractive for many victims. These traditional pathways chosen to redress CSA have dire implications for victims and the perpetuation of the problem. Out-of-court settlements tend to let perpetrators off the hook and give them the bravado to often continue in their ways. It is important to destigmatise CSA as it is the imagined or actual experience of stigma that makes victims choose the traditional approaches of redress. Stigma, where necessary, must be

**‘These traditional pathways chosen to redress CSA have dire implications for victims and the perpetuation of the problem’**

re-directed towards perpetrators and not victims. This way, stigma can become a functional tool to deter potential perpetrators, and indeed, discourage those who go to plead on behalf of these perpetrators as they also stand the risk of being stigmatised as accomplices.

Massive educational campaigns are also needed to sensitise the citizenry about children's rights and the workings of the legal system. The campaigns must explain the ways in which non-disclosure/reportage of CSA, especially incestuous acts, violate the rights of children and are not in the best interest of the child. These campaigns can be led by the media with support from community leaders. Legal reforms that obligate anyone with knowledge or reasonable suspicion of CSA to report to the authorities and enforcement of the law on child marriages are critical to bridging the chasm between legislation and the reality on the ground.

The curricula for police training must include knowledge on child rights and skills for handling sensitive cases such as CSA. The police service must sanction officers who take bribes and/or compel or encourage victims to withdraw reported cases of abuse. This would build public trust in the police and reduce the number of out-of-court settlements for CSA cases.

Special courts must be created to swiftly handle the cases of abuse against children to reduce the unpleasant back and forth victims and their parents experience while seeking justice; this can be achieved through legal reform. Communication in these specialised courts should include local languages like Ga to meet clients' needs. Specialised courts are relevant sources for data on CSA and may well be a main avenue to access victims, parents and guardians, and perpetrators for education.

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