



**STATEMENT BY NIYI OJUOLAPE, UNFPA REPRESENTATIVE**  
**AT THE EMERGENCY MEETING WITH TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS**  
**AUTHORITIES ON HARMFUL PRACTICES**  
**FRIDAY, 7<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2020 AT KEMPINSKI HOTEL, ACCRA**

**PROTOCOL OBSERVED:**

- **Hon. Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection**
- **The Chief Director of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection**
- **Honorable Representatives of the National House of Chiefs**
- **Representatives of Traditional and Religious Bodies**
- **Distinguished Representatives of government and government agencies**
- **Development Partners,**
- **Representatives of the NGO/CSO/FBO Community**
- **Distinguished Invited Guests**
- **Friends from the Media**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

First of all, I would like to say good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to brief you today and thank you also for the initiative in organizing this event aimed at engaging religious and traditional leaders at the forefront of community engagement

For us at UNFPA, we work to eradicate gender based violence in all forms and harmful traditional in order to ensure that no one is left behind in terms of socio economic development.



While Ghana has made several strides in advancing the rights of women, the recent lynching of Akua Denteh in Kafaba in the East Gonja Municipality of the Savannah Region has shaken us as Ghanaians to the core. Witchcraft accusations are not new in our society. They violate the human rights of the aged and could lead to banishment into witchcamps, physical harassment and murder.

We join our voices to those of the President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, The Ministry of Gender, Women and Social Protection (MoGCSP), Traditional Council of Chiefs, CSOs and human right advocates including Friends of UNFPA who have publicly condemned this act and called for immediate investigations and persecution of all involved.

About 25 years since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its Program of Action, the Beijing Declaration that highlighted women's empowerment and gender equality in achieving sustainable development, UNFPA has worked globally to harness the demographic dividend and address the challenges of gender inequality.

The UNFPA Ghana Country Office (CO) has thus been working with stakeholders (families, communities, Government, CSOs, Development Partners, the private sector, traditional and religious leaders) in Ghana towards three transformative goals:

- Ending Unmet Needs for Family Planning
- Ending Preventable Maternal Deaths
- Ending Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices.



Ageing is a triumph of development. People are living longer because of better nutrition, sanitation, health care, education and economic well-being. This achievement should not be marred by inequalities based on gender, social or economic lines. The gruesome lynching of Grandma Akua, should therefore serve as the foundation on which we develop comprehensive systems and actionable goals to protect our most vulnerable in society.

I am confident that this meeting would set the ball rolling as we strengthen systems and policies to protect our most vulnerable in society while opening up opportunities for new partnerships and coalitions to promote the rights of all women and girls to live free of violence and abuse. We would also like to call on all the state institutions and partners gathered here, to support interventions aimed at protecting our vulnerable and marginalized girls and improving their access to better services.

We renew our continuous commitment to working with national partners, the government and the people of Ghana to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence as it is deeply rooted in our shared responsibility and investment to protect and empower women and girls to ensure inclusive development. We congratulate the Government of Ghana, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and everyone involved in eradicating violence against women and girls in Ghana, for the achievements chalked thus far, and particularly for today's meeting.



In conclusion, I am sure our concerted efforts will not only benefit vulnerable women and girls but the entire population as addressing gender inequalities fosters sustainable development. So, I wish you successful deliberations and all the very best.

Thank you very much for your attention.