

Mr. Chairman, His Excellency, all Organization here represented participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

## **WOMEN AS AGENTS FOR PEACE IN GHANA**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In Ghana and Africa as a whole, women have most of the time been at the receiving end of victimization and discrimination. As if they have no voice, they have been left out of decision making processes, suffered violence at the hands of their husbands and male counterparts, and generally been marginalized in society. This is particularly true in small towns and villages where cultural practices, traditions and beliefs have over time relegated the important role of women to the background.

An eminent scholar of the land. Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey once said "If you educate a man, you educate an individual; but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation". He could not have hit the nail right on the head in any better way than this.

### **BACKGROUND:**

EI-Shiloh Foundation, of which I am the Founder and C.E.O, was formed in November 2005, as a non-governmental organization with the aim of mobilizing, training and equipping women and the youth to be relevant to society.

In pursuing this agenda it was realized that promoting peace especially in war-torn and conflict areas was very paramount if any success stories were to be told. The fact is in any conflict situation, it is the women and the children who are the most vulnerable, and as a result, we have been doing the two - i.e. peace promotion, and mobilizing and training of women and the youth.

### **METHODOLOGY/APPROACH:**

Our approach to achieving our objectives has been varied. They include the following:-

- a) Marriage seminars
- b) Workshops
- c) Counseling
- d) Medical outreach programmes

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#### e) Interactions with security agencies

We have noted that using religion and the worship of God has also accelerated the peace process especially because people in most cases become sober where religion and God are concerned, and are prepared to listen and reason.

In Ghana, in pursuit of our objectives, we have visited certain conflict areas in the Brong-Ahafo, (like Techiman, Tuobodom, Wenchi), Greater Accra, Upper East and Nigeria the Ghanaian communities. In all these areas the approach has been on arrival, to:

- a) Report to the Chief/opinion leaders/elders of the town or village
- b) Inform him/them of our mission
- c) Impress upon them to organize a durbar/forum
- d) At the forum, inform the indigenes/ethnic groups about our mission
- e) Appeal to the people to eschew violence and/or conflict
- f) Educating them about the negative effects of conflicts/war
- g) Encouraging the women in the communities to form peace groups to spread the message.

In addition we have helped some of the women with finance in an attempt to enable them commence some trading/business activities to earn some income to support their families.

The students have also not been left out in our visit to these areas. As leaders of tomorrow, it is important for them to understand the message of peace at this early stage in their lives so that as they grow the spirit of peace will be part of them in their dealings and deliberations with their fellow men.

We therefore visited a lot of Senior High schools and interacted with them, stressing the need for them to be at peace with one another at all times, and that this was among others a pre-requisite for national development.

#### **CHALLENGES:**

There are many and include:-

- a) People taking entrenched positions and not prepared to alter their stance
- b) Mistrust among feuding parties
- c) Marital problems - some husbands seeing their wives merely as baby making machines, and not interested in caring for their families, thereby raising unnecessary tensions in homes
- d) Economic challenges - when people are impoverished, they become "short-sighted" in

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their thinking

e) Resistance to change - when a group of people have done things in a particular way for a long time, it is difficult for them to accept to change their way of doing those things.

f) Funding.

In addition, lack of compliance whether partial or full, with previously agreed terms and conditions have also undermined peace efforts in the past.

### **ACHIEVEMENTS:**

Our modest achievements include the following:-

- a) Supporting women with short-term loans to build up their businesses. This has resulted in the reduction of tension in some families
- b) Providing counseling and restoring relationships
- c) Training over 50 youth groups to work for and promote peace
- d) Establishing peace building projects and advocacy groups
- e) Granting scholarships to some women to develop themselves.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The whole world needs peace but conflict and war in some areas have made the attainment of peace a near impossibility. As a means of spreading the message of peace across the world, due consideration should be given to the following:-

- a) Establishment of more peace advocacy groups
- b) Intensification of peace efforts
- c) Regular follow-ups to conflict zones to ensure sustenance of peace
- d) Intensification of education of various ethnic groups on the effects of war and conflicts, which include deaths, impoverishment, destruction, escalation of crime
- e) Lack of development

### **MAY GOD HELP US IN OUR QUEST FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD**

**You never know how much peace you have until there is war.**

### **Solidarity SONG-**

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