

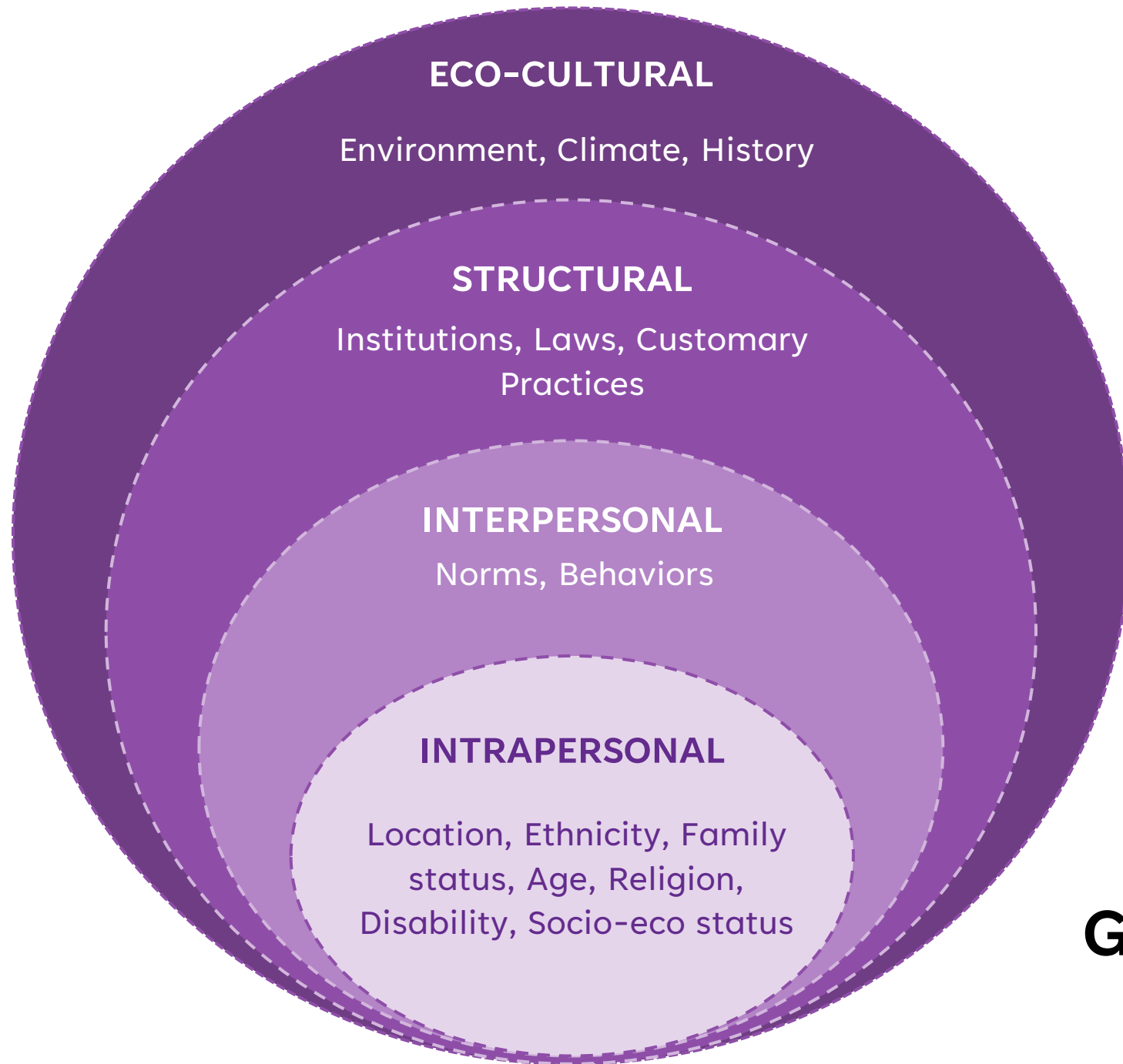


# A question of respect: gender-based violence, power dynamics, and agricultural resilience in northern Ghana

Cécile Poitevin  
INTERFACES Colloquium, 26.04.2026

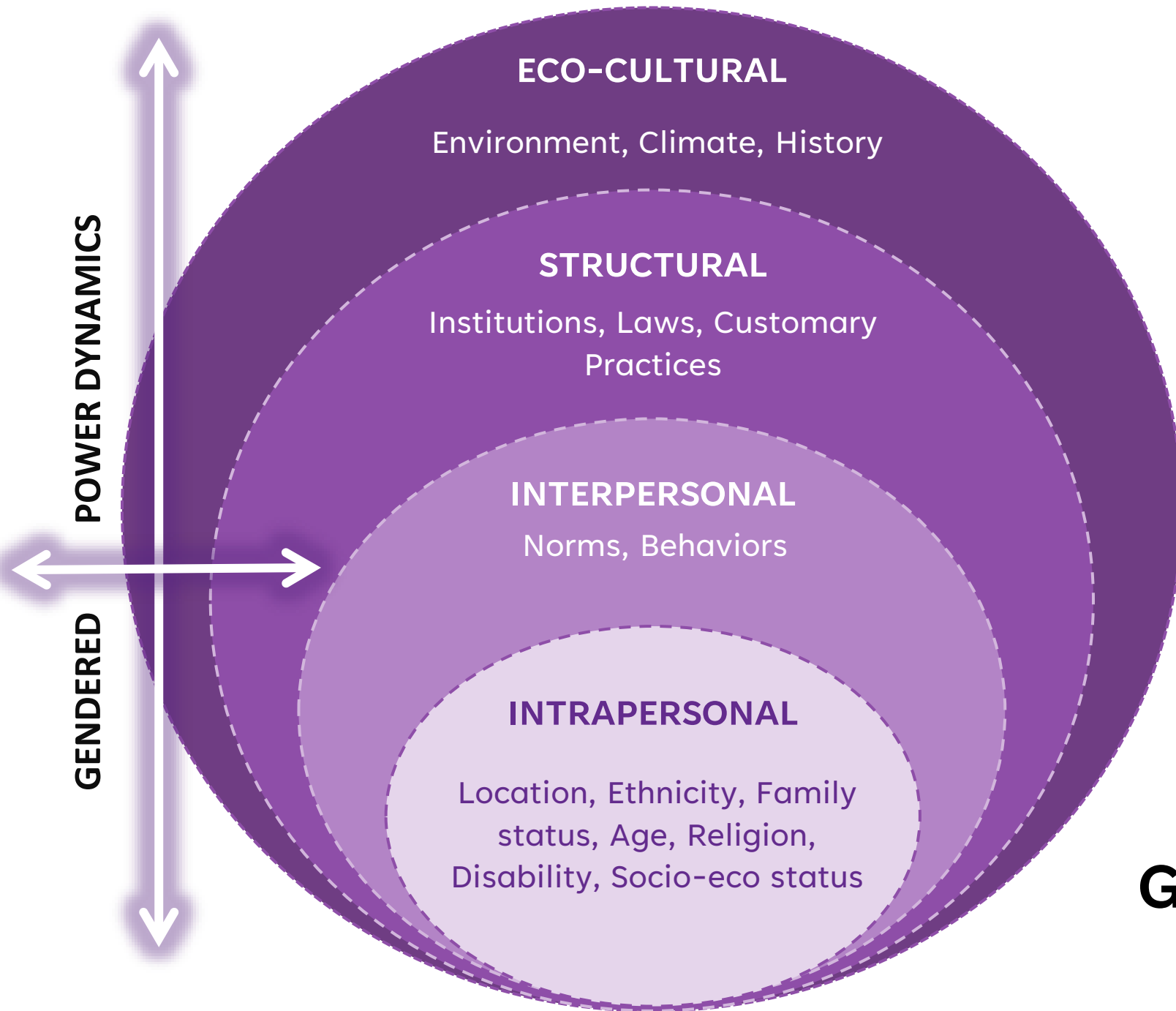


**An incident,  
A taboo,  
A link.**



Gendered agrarian system

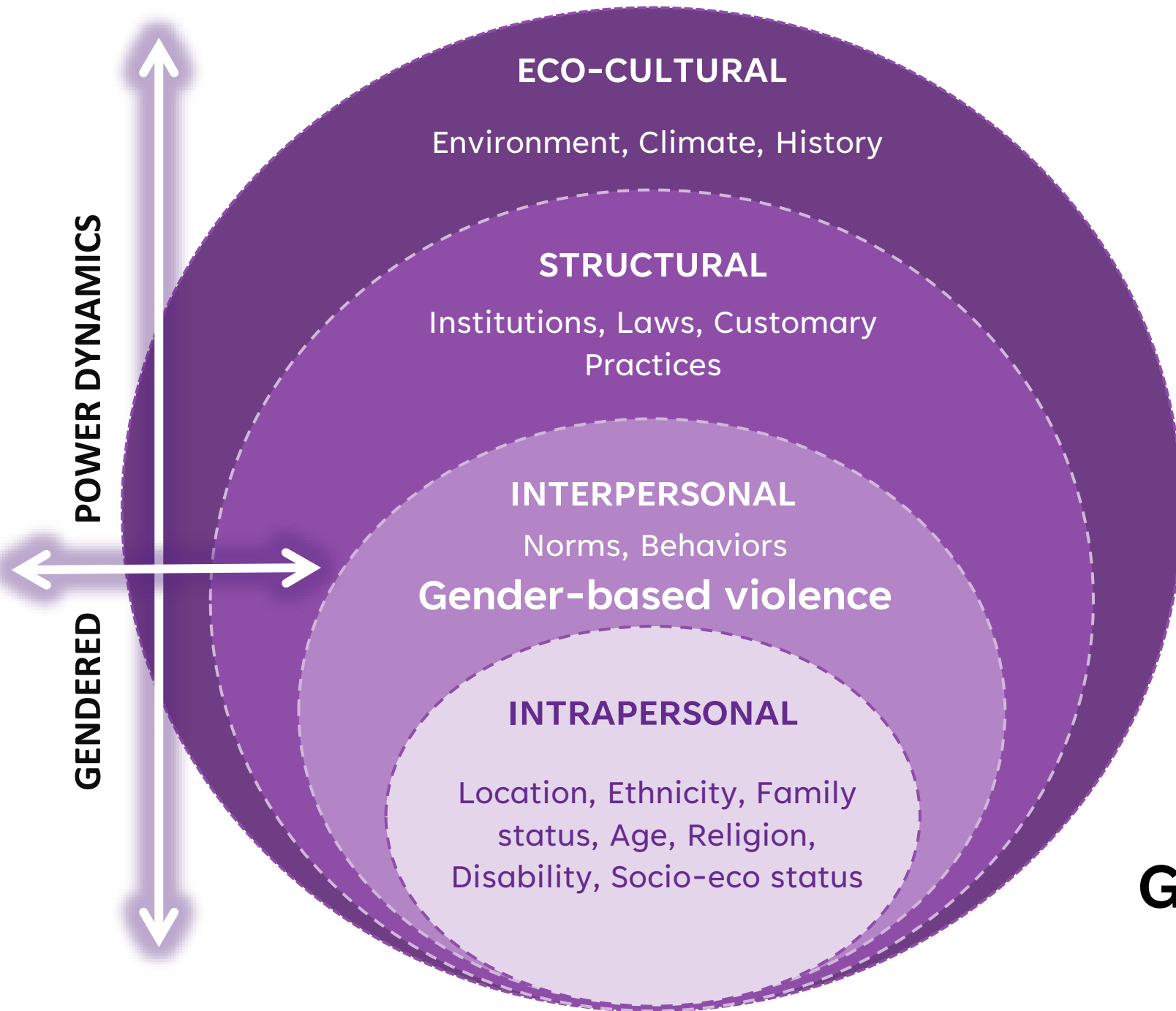
# Gender in agriculture



Power relations

Gendered agrarian system

# Gender in agriculture



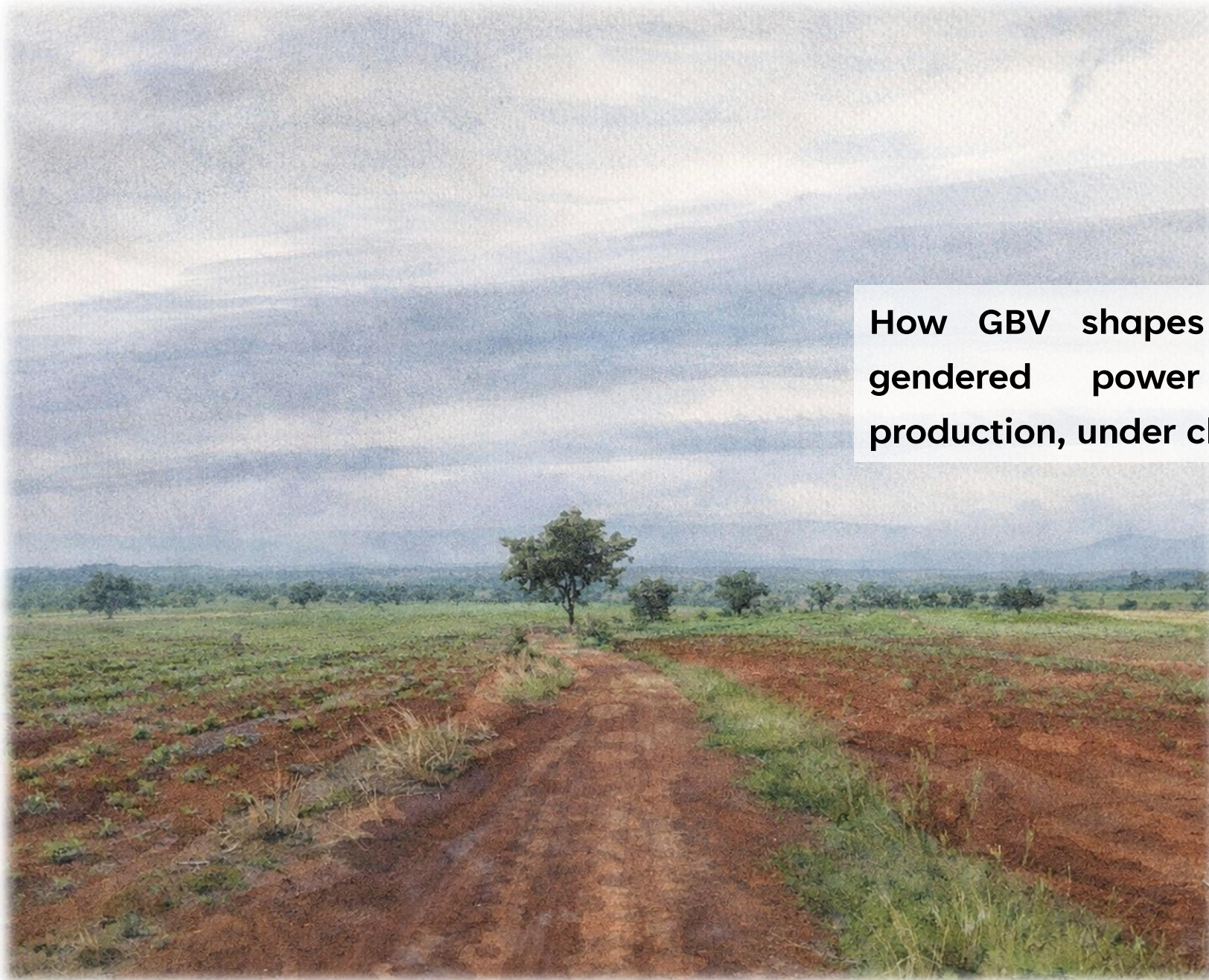
Gender-based violence

Power relations

Gendered agrarian system

# Gender in agriculture

**How GBV shapes interpersonal dynamics and gendered power relations in agricultural production, under climate change.**



**How GBV shapes interpersonal dynamics and gendered power relations in agricultural production, under climate change.**

- explore the forms of GBV prevalent locally;
- analyze their impact on interpersonal relationships in farming;
- interrogate what these dynamics reveal about broader structures of power in agrarian societies.

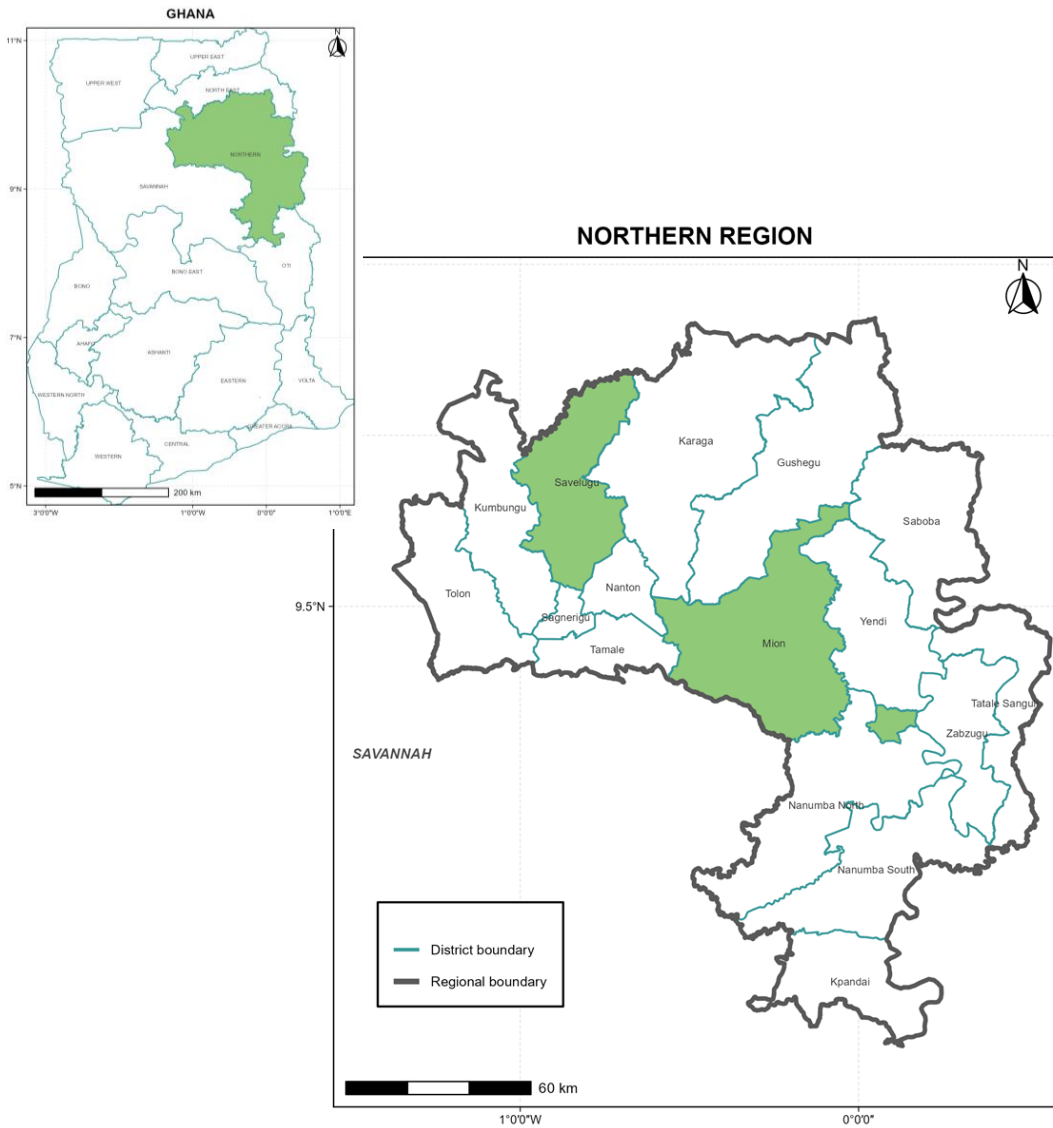


Fig. 1. Study area : Savelugu and Mion Districts, Northern Region

# Method

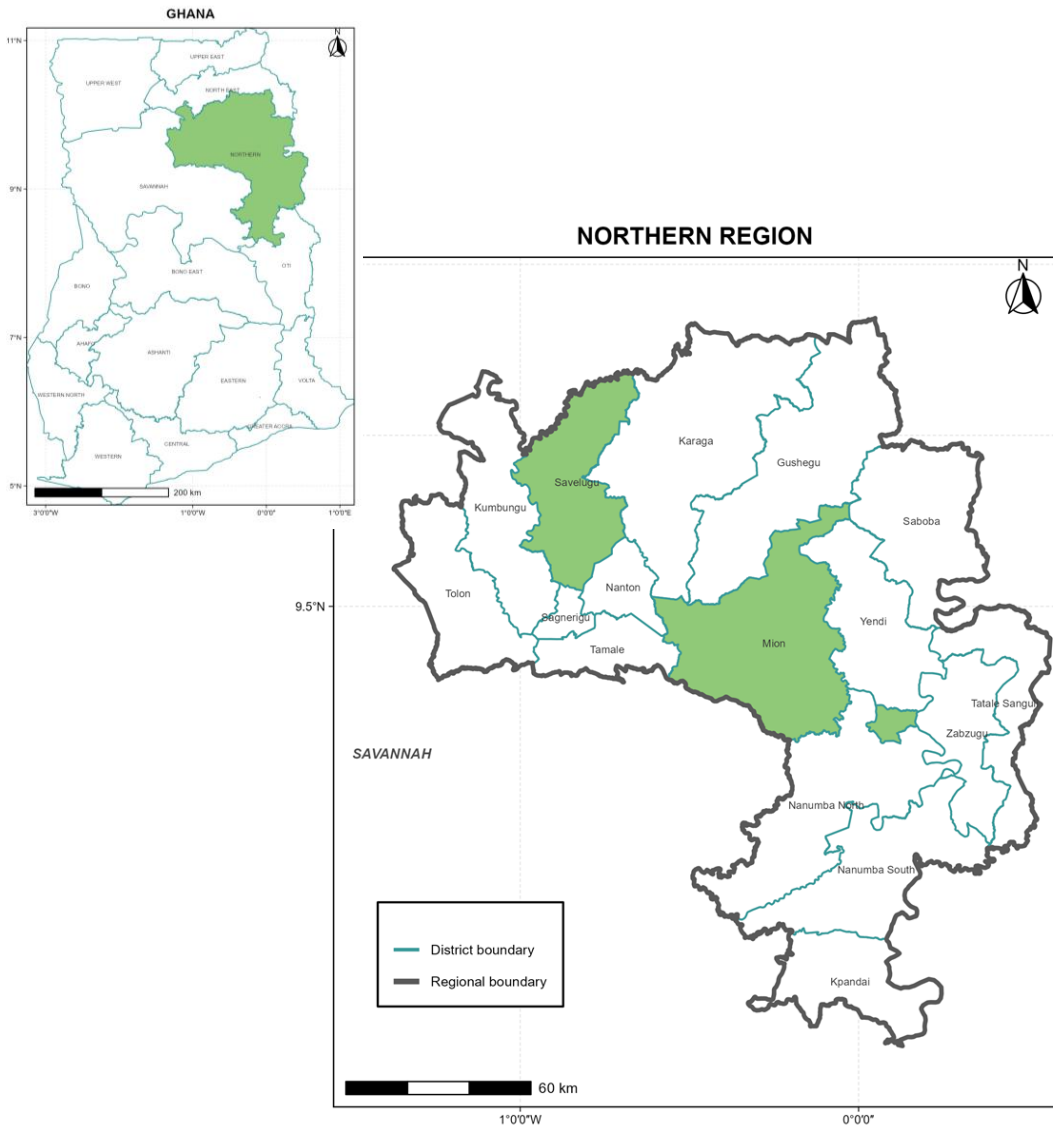


Fig. 1. Study area : Savelugu and Mion Districts, Northern Region

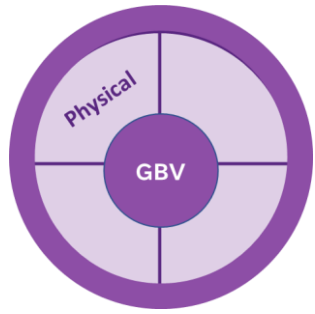
	Men	Women
Key Informants	7	11
Photovoice	22	39
In-deph Interviews	31	37
Focus-Group Discussions	35	54

Tab. 1. Participants' distribution in qualitative research methods

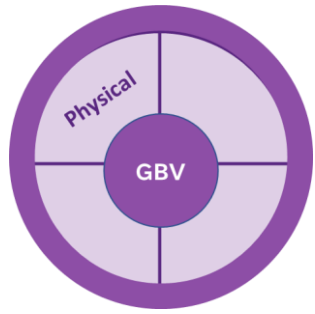
# Method



## Forms of GBV



Physical violence  
**Forms of GBV**

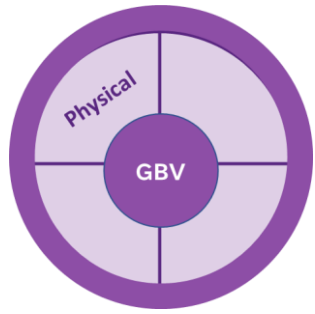


*“When I came here, my husband was already old and couldn't do anything, only lying on his skin (mat). (...) I was the one struggling for everything, including farming and cooking for everybody in the family.”*  
Elderly woman, Dagomba community

Forced labour

**Physical violence**

**Forms of GBV**



*“When I came here, my husband was already old and couldn't do anything, only lying on his skin (mat). (...) I was the one struggling for everything, including farming and cooking for everybody in the family.”*  
Elderly woman, Dagomba community

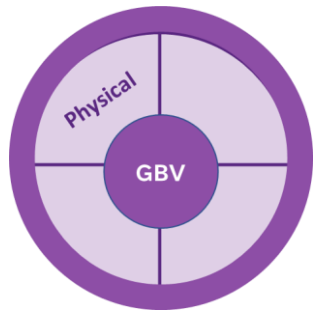
*“He beat me even to the extent he hit me with a metallic object that gave me this mark, so I decided to leave the marriage and not die.”*  
Mother, Konkomba community

Heavy beating

Forced labour

## Physical violence

# Forms of GBV



*“When I came here, my husband was already old and couldn't do anything, only lying on his skin (mat). (...) I was the one struggling for everything, including farming and cooking for everybody in the family.”*

Elderly woman, Dagomba community

*“He beat me even to the extent he hit me with a metallic object that gave me this mark, so I decided to leave the marriage and not die.”*

Mother, Konkomba community

*“If you don't send him water early, he feels angry or upset, and when that happens, and for those men who cannot control their anger, will end up insulting you or beating you the woman.”*

First wife, Konkomba community

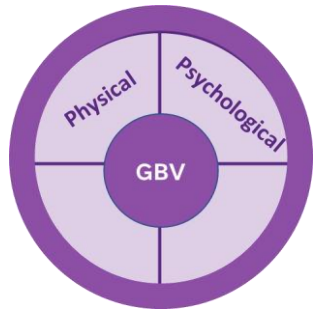
Cruel punishment

Heavy beating

Forced labour

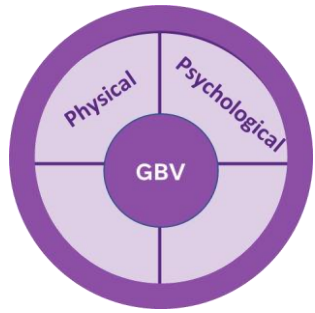
**Physical violence**

**Forms of GBV**



**Psychological violence**

# **Forms of GBV**

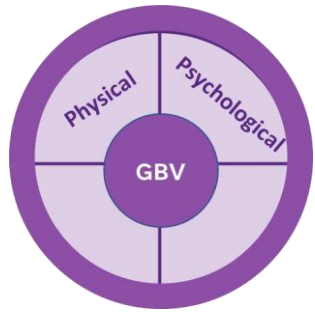


*“We had no problems because she knew she had to respect and fear me.”*  
Mother in law, Dagomba community

Threatening behavior

**Psychological violence**

**Forms of GBV**



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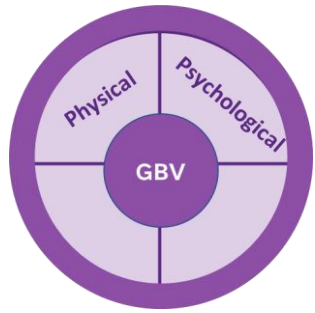
*“If you complain too much, your husband will beat you and people will blame you again.”*  
Women group discussion

Verbal abuse

Threatening behavior

**Psychological violence**

**Forms of GBV**



*“We had no problems because she knew she had to respect and fear me.”*  
 Mother in law, Dagomba community

*“If you complain too much, your husband will beat you and people will blame you again.”*  
 Women group discussion

*“Some nights, my husband will call my co-wife to stay with him. (...) Whenever I complained about it, he says he was already with her before he got married to me and hearing that from him hurts.”*  
 Second wife, Dagomba community

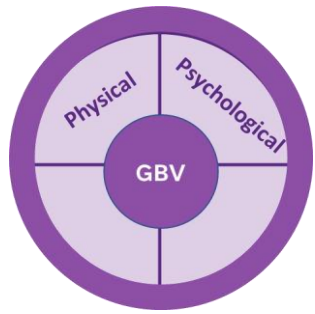
Objectification

Verbal abuse

Threatening behavior

**Psychological violence**

**Forms of GBV**



*“We had no problems because she knew she had to respect and fear me.”*  
 Mother in law, Dagomba community

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 Women group discussion

*“Some nights, my husband will call my co-wife to stay with him. (...) Whenever I complained about it, he says he was already with her before he got married to me and hearing that from him hurts.”*  
 Second wife, Dagomba community

*“Women have no understanding, so leaving her will be the best option so that she will advise herself.”*  
 Polygamous man, Dagomba community

Infantilization

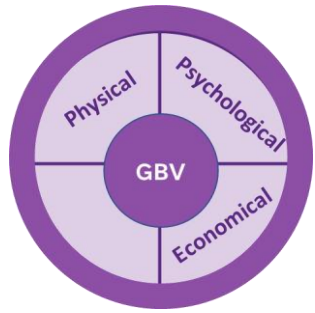
Objectification

Verbal abuse

Threatening behavior

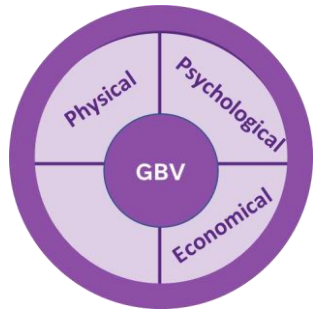
## Psychological violence

# Forms of GBV



**Economical violence**

# **Forms of GBV**



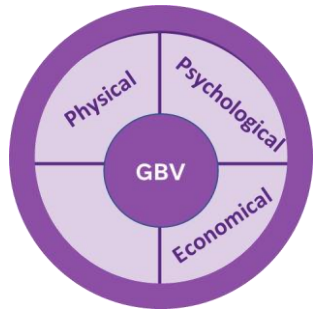
*“We had a fight in one particular year, and he asked me to pack and go. But because of my children, I decided I would not leave, and he took away the land from me so I couldn’t farm on it.”*

Third wife, Konkomba community

Control

**Economical violence**

**Forms of GBV**



*“We had a fight in one particular year, and he asked me to pack and go. But because of my children, I decided I would not leave, and he took away the land from me so I couldn’t farm on it.”*

Co-wife, Konkomba community

*“They hardly give us, they tell us they don’t have money more times than they actually give us money.”*

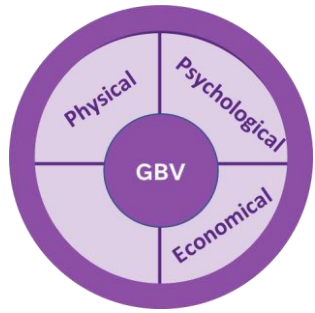
Monogamous woman, Dagomba community

Neglect

Control

**Economical violence**

**Forms of GBV**



*“We had a fight in one particular year, and he asked me to pack and go. But because of my children, I decided I would not leave, and he took away the land from me so I couldn’t farm on it.”*

Co-wife, Konkomba community

*“They hardly give us, they tell us they don’t have money more times than they actually give us money.”*

Mother, Dagomba community

*“No, you have to pay for it yourself. Even if it’s the same plot that both of you farm on, you’ll have to bring your share of the full payment.”*

Women group discussion

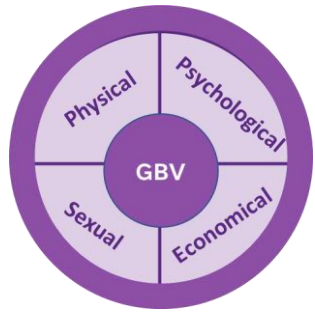
Coercion

Neglect

Control

**Economical violence**

**Forms of GBV**



**Sexual violence**  
**Forms of GBV**

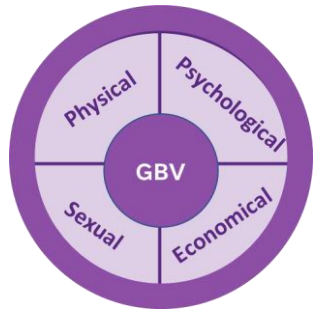


*“Women don’t say no because they might be beaten.”*  
Woman farmer

Rape

**Sexual violence**

**Forms of GBV**



*“Women don’t say no because they might be beaten.”*  
Woman farmer, Dagomba community

*“What is common is that the men usually date the ladies with the promise that will give them enough when the season is over and the lady is preparing to go back to her village.”*  
Woman farmer, Dagomba community

Prostitution

Sexual Harassment

Rape

**Sexual violence**

**Forms of GBV**



## Impacts of GBV in farming

*“Our farms are very close, but he did not want to help bring manure to my farm because people would say he loves me more than my co-wife.”  
Third wife, Dagomba community*

**Social control**

**Impacts of GBV in farming**

*“Our farms are very close, but he did not want to help bring manure to my farm because people would say he loves me more than my co-wife.”*

*Third wife, Dagomba community*

*“What we (men) don’t like is when a woman disrespects us in public. If the man does not react, people will say the woman has overpowered the man and controls him.”*

*Middle-age man, Dagomba community*

**Social control**

## **Impacts of GBV in farming**

*“I was really scared about it because even if you don’t possess any form of magic, someone who hates you may find a way to accuse you wrongly, as they did to me.”  
Elderly woman, Witch camp*

**Imposed behaviors**

**Social control**

**Impacts of GBV in farming**

*“I was really scared about it because even if you don’t possess any form of magic, someone who hates you may find a way to accuse you wrongly, as they did to me.”*  
*Elderly woman, Witch camp*

*“We must agree because they are the men and they have the decision-making power over us.”*  
*Women group discussion*

**Imposed behaviors**

**Social control**

**Impacts of GBV in farming**



# Power in agrarian societies



*Fig. 2 : Men farmers weeding as part of communal labor weeding one of their members' fields, men's photovoice group*

**Collective power and exclusion**

**Power  
in agrarian societies**



*Fig. 2 : Men farmers weeding as part of communal labor weeding one of their members' fields, men's photovoice group*

*“You'll cultivate a piece of land and work on it from planting to harvesting, and your husband won't even know where the farm is located.”*

Women group discussion

**Collective power and exclusion**

**Power  
in agrarian societies**



*Fig.34 : Capture video showing a Konkomba woman preparing her plot for planting by digging a hole with a stick. women ´s photovoice group*

**Testimonies of resistance**

Collective power and exclusion

**Power  
in agrarian societies**



*Fig. 4 : Capture video showing a Konkomba woman preparing her plot for planting by digging a hole with a stick. women ´s photovoice group*

*“They don’t even want us to farm but we still do against their will.”  
Women group discussion, Dagomba community*

## Testimonies of resistance

Collective power and exclusion

# Power in agrarian societies



*Fig. 5 : Women and men planting together, men´s photovoice group*

## Interlude



*Fig. 5 : Women and men planting together, men´s photovoice group*

*“To be honest some of the men weed and do other farm work for their wives or they pay the labourers. But some don’t do any of that so you the woman has to find a way of doing it for yourself.”  
Women group discussion*

## **Interlude**

# Gender-based violence

## Discussion

## **Gender-based violence**

- is an integral part of the gendered agrarian system, reinforcing existing social order and power hierarchies

**Discussion**

## Gender-based violence

- is an integral part of the gendered agrarian system, reinforcing existing social order and power hierarchies
- serves as a mechanism to assert social legitimacy by sustaining patterns of domination and subordination in interpersonal dynamics

**Discussion**

## **Gender-based violence**

- is an integral part of the gendered agrarian system, reinforcing existing social order and power hierarchies
- serves as a mechanism to assert social legitimacy by sustaining patterns of domination and subordination in interpersonal dynamics
- stems from the vulnerability of men and women facing unattainable social expectations and the imperative to belong, especially under current crises

## **Discussion**



**Power**

**Discussion**

## **Power**

- arises from the social recognition of group membership and the rights derived from it

## **Discussion**

## Power

- arises from the social recognition of group membership and the rights derived from it
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## Power

- arises from the social recognition of group membership and the rights derived from it
- requires meeting the expectations of the group from which it emanates
- is legitimized through performative dynamics that are imposed
- is also exercised by the less powerful through strategies of collective resistance, symbolic compliance, or solidarity

## Discussion



**Thank you !**

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