

# Ghana

## Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Ghana became a member of ILO-IPEC in 2000.<sup>1519</sup> To oversee Ghana's participation in IPEC, the government created a National Steering Committee to address child labor in 2000.<sup>1520</sup> The steering committee is comprised of members representing the government, the Trade Union's Congress, the Ghana Employer's Association, the media, NGOs, and international organizations.<sup>1521</sup> The committee's work resulted in the publication of the "National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Ghana 2001-2002."<sup>1522</sup> With technical assistance from ILO-IPEC's SIMPOC and funding from USDOL, the Ghana Statistical Service conducted a national child labor survey in 1999-2000.<sup>1523</sup> Ghana also participates in a nine-country ILO-IPEC regional project in West and Central Africa, funded by the USDOL, to prevent trafficking in children and rehabilitate trafficking victims.<sup>1524</sup> In October 2001, the Government of Ghana hosted a regional Economic Community of West African States conference on trafficking in persons, and established a national task force on trafficking in March 2002.<sup>1525</sup>

In 1997, the government initiated a program to improve basic education.<sup>1526</sup> Between 2.5 and 3 percent of GNP is spent by the Government of Ghana on education, with roughly two-thirds of that amount put toward basic education.<sup>1527</sup>

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<sup>1519</sup> ILO-IPEC, *All About IPEC: Programme Countries*, [online] August 13, 2001 [cited November 13, 2002]; available from [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/countries/t\\_country.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/countries/t_country.htm).

<sup>1520</sup> U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*, October 2002.

<sup>1521</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1522</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1523</sup> ILO-IPEC, *IPEC Highlights 2000*, Geneva, October 2000, 12 [cited September 27, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/publ/imp99/report2000/draft7.htm>.

<sup>1524</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Combating the Trafficking of Children for Labor Exploitation in West and Central Africa (phase 1)*, project document, RAF/01/P53/USA, 5. See also ILO-IPEC, *Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC)*, project document, 3.

<sup>1525</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2002: Ghana*, Washington, D.C., June 5, 2002, 53 [cited December 12, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2002/10679.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*.

<sup>1526</sup> Association for the Development of Education in Africa, *A Review of "Successful African Experiences: Country-Led Coordination of Aid in Ghana"*, (Newsletter), [online] March 14, 2001 [cited August 26, 2002], Vol. 9, No. 3; available from <http://www.adeanet.org/newsletter/Vol9No3/ghana-eng.html>.

<sup>1527</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices- 2001: Ghana*, Washington, D.C., March 4, 2002, 321-27, Section 5 [cited August 26, 2002]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/af/8379.htm>. See also U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*.

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2000, the ILO estimated that 12 percent of children ages 10 to 14 years in Ghana were working.<sup>1528</sup> In 2000, the Ghana Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare<sup>1529</sup> estimated that 800,000 children worked nationwide, while 18,000 children were working in Accra, specifically.<sup>1530</sup> Of the national estimate, 70 percent of working children had no formal education whatsoever, and 21 percent had only a primary-level education.<sup>1531</sup> Rural-urban migration, caused by economic hardship, has led to significant increases in the school drop-out rate and the numbers of working children.<sup>1532</sup>

The majority of working children are unpaid workers on family farms and in family enterprises.<sup>1533</sup> Street children in urban centers work as cleaners, waste disposal workers, vendors, beggars, and shoe shiners.<sup>1534</sup> Children as young as 7 years old work as porters, domestic servants, street vendors, rock breakers, farmers, small-scale miners, and in the fishing industry.<sup>1535</sup> Girl children migrate from rural areas to urban centers to serve as *kayayooos*, porters who trade goods carried on head loads.<sup>1536</sup> The fishing industry in Lake Volta has a high number of child laborers who are engaged in potentially hazardous work.<sup>1537</sup>

Although the Government of Ghana has outlawed the practice of *trokosi*, reports indicate that there are more than 2,000 girls enslaved by the practice.<sup>1538</sup> *Trokosi* has its origins in indigenous religion

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<sup>1528</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2002.

<sup>1529</sup> The ministry's name has changed since the publication of these estimates. The Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare is now called The Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment. For reference to this change, see U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*.

<sup>1530</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Ghana*, 327-32, Section 6d. <sup>1531</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1532</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1533</sup> Sudharshan Canagarajah and Harold Coulombe, *Child Labor and Schooling in Ghana*, background paper for World Bank Economic and Sector Work, Washington, D.C., 1997, 10.

<sup>1534</sup> ILO, *Child Labour Surveys: Results of Methodological Experiments in Four Countries, 1992-93*, Geneva, 1996, 16 [cited August 26, 2002]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simpoc/stats/child/surveys.pdf>.

<sup>1535</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Ghana*, 327-32, Section 6d.

<sup>1536</sup> Seema Agarwal et al., *Bearing the Weight*, Centre for Social Policy Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, May 1997, 1-3. UNICEF operates *Operation End Kayaye* in Ghana. The goal of the project is to remove 2000 *kayayeei* girls from cities and return them to their villages, where they will participate in skills training. See ILO-IPEC, *National Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour in Ghana*, technical report No. 7, GHA/9/05/060, Geneva, March 2002, 5.

<sup>1537</sup> U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*.

<sup>1538</sup> Reports on the number of women and girls in the shrines vary. According to other international observers, there are no more than 100 girls serving in the *Trokosi* shrines in the Volta region. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Ghana*, 321-27, Section 5.

and involves the pledging of young girls to fetish priests by their families who fear retribution if they fail to make this sacrifice. Young girls often work for the priest for years without compensation and may be sexually abused.<sup>1539</sup>

Ghana is also a source, transit, and destination country for trafficked children.<sup>1540</sup> The most common forms of internal trafficking involve boys from rural areas who are taken to work in fishing communities in the Volta region or in small mines, and girls trafficked to Accra and Kumasi to work as domestics, porters and assistants to traders.<sup>1541</sup> Children are also trafficked to neighboring countries to work as laborers, domestics or on farms.<sup>1542</sup>

Education is compulsory for children of primary and junior secondary age, which are the equivalent of grades one to nine.<sup>1543</sup> Although schooling is compulsory, attendance is not enforced by the authorities, and parents rarely face penalties if their children do not attend school.<sup>1544</sup> Education can also be expensive; families must pay school fees each term, as well as buy textbooks and uniforms.<sup>1545</sup> The Government of Ghana is currently working to provide basic education to all children by the year 2005.<sup>1546</sup> In 1996, the gross primary enrollment rate was 75 percent.<sup>1547</sup> Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Ghana. While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.<sup>1548</sup>

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Children's Act sets the minimum age for general employment at 15 years, and sets 13 years as the minimum age for light work.<sup>1549</sup> The Children's Act prohibits children under 18 from engaging in hazardous labor, including work in mines, quarries, manufacturing, with machinery, at sea, in

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<sup>1539</sup> Ibid. See also Obenewa Amponsah, *The Trokosi: Religious Slavery in Ghana*, [online] [cited August 26, 2002]; available from <http://www.anti-slavery.org/global/ghana/>. See also Rachel Levine, *Free the Trokosi!*, Fresh Angles, [online] [cited August 26, 2002]; available from <http://www.freshangles.com/realtime/international/articles/20.html>. See also Nirit Ben-Ari, *Liberating girls from Trokosi*, United Nations, Africa Recovery Online, [online] December 2001 [cited August 26, 2002]; available from <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/>.

<sup>1540</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Ghana*, 327-32, Section 6f. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2002: Ghana*, 53.

<sup>1541</sup> U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*.

<sup>1542</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Ghana*, 327-32, Section 6f.

<sup>1543</sup> Ibid., 321-27, Section 5.

<sup>1544</sup> Ibid. See also U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*.

<sup>1545</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Ghana*, 321-27, Section 5.

<sup>1546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1547</sup> Net primary enrollment rates are unavailable for Ghana. World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2002*.

<sup>1548</sup> For a more detailed description on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

<sup>1549</sup> Light work is defined as work that is not harmful to the health or development of a child and that does not affect the child's attendance at school. See Government of Ghana, *The Children's Act, Act 560, 1998*, Part V, Employment of Children, Sub-Part I, Child labour.

bars, or in any job that involves carrying heavy loads.<sup>1550</sup> The legislation allows children aged 15 years and above to work in an apprenticeship if the employer provides a safe and healthy work environment, training, and tools.<sup>1551</sup> Employers who operate in the formal sector must keep a register with the ages of their employees, and failing to keep this register can result in a fine of 10 million cedis (USD 1,235.27).<sup>1552</sup>

The Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment has more than 100 labor inspectors responsible for monitoring companies' labor practices, but the inspectors do not monitor the informal and agricultural sectors.<sup>1553</sup> Law enforcement authorities, including judges, labor officers and police officers, lack adequate resources or training, but there have been some arrests of traffickers.<sup>1554</sup> The Government of Ghana is developing a national action plan on trafficking.<sup>1555</sup>

The Government of Ghana has not ratified ILO Convention 138, but ratified ILO Convention 182 on June 13, 2000.<sup>1556</sup>

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<sup>1550</sup> Ibid., Part V, Employment of Children, Sub-Part I, Section 91, Child Labour.

<sup>1551</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Ghana*, 327-32, Section 6d.

<sup>1552</sup> U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*. For currency conversion, see FX Converter, [online] [cited November 14, 2002]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

<sup>1553</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2001: Ghana*, 327-32, Section 6<sup>d</sup>

<sup>1554</sup> U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*.

<sup>1555</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2002: Ghana*, 53.

<sup>1556</sup> ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited September 27, 2002]; available from <http://ilolex.ilo.ch:1567/english/newratframeE.htm>.