

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

The Government of Ghana has been a member of ILO-IPEC since 2000.¹⁸¹⁷ To oversee Ghana's participation in IPEC, the government created a National Steering Committee to address child labor in 2000.¹⁸¹⁸ 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.¹⁸¹⁹ The committee's work resulted in the publication of the "National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Ghana 2001-2002."¹⁸²⁰ USDOL has funded several projects that were implemented by ILO-IPEC, including a national project to eliminate child labor in 1999,¹⁸²¹ and a national child labor survey in 1999-2000, which was conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service with technical assistance from IPEC's SIMPOC.¹⁸²² The Government of Ghana is also one of nine countries participating in a ILO-IPEC regional project in West and Central Africa to prevent trafficking in children and rehabilitate trafficking victims.¹⁸²³ It is also participating in an ILO-IPEC regional project to combat child labor in commercial agriculture, especially cocoa, and in an ILO-IPEC regional project to build capacity of governmental and nongovernmental organizations to combat child labor.¹⁸²⁴ With funding from the World Bank, the government is setting up projects to raise awareness on child labor, withdraw children from work,¹⁸²⁵ and assist street children.¹⁸²⁶ The Government of Ghana established a National Commission to Combat Trafficking in March 2002,¹⁸²⁷ and the latest national budget includes provisions for a police-led program to combat child trafficking.¹⁸²⁸

The Government of Ghana partnered with the IOM in a project to return and reintegrate children trafficked to the fishing sector in Yeji.¹⁸²⁹ USAID is also supporting projects in Ghana to improve the working conditions of children working in the cocoa industry, as well as raise public awareness about the dangers of hazardous work for children.¹⁸³⁰

¹⁸¹⁷ ILO-IPEC, *All About IPEC: Programme Countries*, [online] August 13, 2001 [cited June 23, 2003]; available from http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/countries/t_country.htm.

¹⁸¹⁸ U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*, October 2002.

¹⁸¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸²¹ ILO-IPEC, *National Programme for the Elimination of Child Labor*, Technical Progress Report, March 31, 2003.

¹⁸²² ILO-IPEC, *Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC)*, project document.

¹⁸²³ 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, *SIMPOC*, project document, 3.

¹⁸²⁴ ILO-IPEC, *West Africa Cocoa/Commercial Agriculture Programme to Combat Hazardous and Exploitative Child Labour (WACAP)*, project document, RAF/02/P50/USA, Geneva, September 2002. See also ILO-IPEC, *Building the Foundations for Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Anglophone Africa*, project document, RAF/02/P51/USA, Geneva, September 2002.

¹⁸²⁵ ILO-IPEC, *IPEC National Programme, Ghana*, 4.

¹⁸²⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2003: Ghana*, Washington, D.C., June 11, 2003; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2003/21275.htm>.

¹⁸²⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices- 2002: Ghana*, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2003, Section 6f; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18206.htm>. Legislation to convict traffickers with specific penalties has been drafted, but not yet submitted to Parliament. See U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*. See also ILO-IPEC, *IPEC National Programme, Ghana*.

¹⁸²⁸ ILO-IPEC, *IPEC National Programme, Ghana*, 2.

¹⁸²⁹ IOM, *Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Ghanaian Children Victims of Trafficking for Labour Exploitation in Yeji Fishing Communities (LEYE)*, [online] [cited June 20, 2003]; available from <http://www.iom.int/iomwebsite/Project/ServletSearchProject?event=detail&id=GH1Z005>.

¹⁸³⁰ The Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity, *Combining Sustainable Agricultural Development and Basic Education to Combat Child Labor and Trafficking*, Creative Associates International, [online] [cited June 20, 2003]; available from http://www.beps.net/child_labor/labor_ghana2.htm. See also Basic Education and Policy Support Activity, *Conducting a Planning Analysis to Develop Intervention Strategies for Abusive Child Labor in Ghana*, Creative Associates International, [online] [cited June 20, 2003]; available from http://www.beps.net/child_labor/labor_ghana4.htm.

In 1997, the government initiated a program to improve basic education, which will run through 2005.¹⁸³¹ In 2002, the Government of Ghana expended approximately 5 percent of GNP on education, with roughly 64 percent of that amount put toward basic education.¹⁸³² UNICEF works with the government to improve the Ministry of Education's capacity, as well as provide incentives for girls to complete their schooling.¹⁸³³ In June 2002, the Government of Ghana became eligible to receive funding from the World Bank and other donors under the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, which aims to provide all children with a primary school education by the year 2015.¹⁸³⁴

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

In 2001, the Ghana Statistical Service estimated that approximately 27.7 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in Ghana were working.¹⁸³⁵ Rural-urban migration, caused by economic hardship, has led to significant increases in the school dropout rate and the numbers of working children.¹⁸³⁶ The majority of working children are unpaid workers on family farms and in family enterprises.¹⁸³⁷ Street children in urban centers work as cleaners, waste disposal workers, vendors, beggars, and shoe shiners.¹⁸³⁸ Children as young as 7 years old work as porters, domestic servants, hawkers, farmers, miners, quarry workers, and fare collectors.¹⁸³⁹ Girl children migrate from rural areas to urban centers to serve as kayayeis, porters who trade goods carried on head loads.¹⁸⁴⁰ The fishing industry in Lake Volta has a high number of child laborers who work casting and drawing nets in deep waters.¹⁸⁴¹

¹⁸³¹ 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 June 23, 2003]; available from <http://www.adeanet.org/newsletter/Vol9No3/ghana-eng.html>. See also *Mission Statement*, Ministry of Education, youth and Sports, [online] [cited June 20, 2003]; available from <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/government/ministries/social/education/php>.

¹⁸³² U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*.

¹⁸³³ *Girls' Education in Ghana*, UNICEF, [online] [cited June 20, 2003]; available from http://www.unicef.org/programme/girlseducation/action/ed_profiles/Ghanafinal.PDF

¹⁸³⁴ World Bank, *World Bank Announces First Group Of Countries For 'Education For All' Fast Track*, press release, Washington, D.C., June 12, 2002; available from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20049839~menuPK:34463~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424,00.html>.

¹⁸³⁵ The survey found that 16.7 percent of children ages 5 to 9 and 38.7 percent of children ages 10 to 14 were engaged in economic activity at the time of the survey. See Ghana Statistical Service, *Ghana Child Labor Survey*, March, 2003, xiii.

¹⁸³⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*.

¹⁸³⁷ Sudharshan Canagarajah and Harold Coulombe, "Child Labor and Schooling in Ghana," in *Child Labor and Schooling in Africa: A Case Study of Ghana, Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia*, ed. Sudharshan Canagarajah and Helena Skyt Nielsen Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1998, 37; available from [http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/HDNet/HDdocs.nsf/globalView/chapter%203.pdf/\\$File/chapter%203.pdf](http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/HDNet/HDdocs.nsf/globalView/chapter%203.pdf/$File/chapter%203.pdf).

¹⁸³⁸ ILO, *Child Labour Surveys: Results of Methodological Experiments in Four Countries, 1992-93*, Geneva, 1996, 16; available from <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simpoc/stats/child/surveys.pdf>.

¹⁸³⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*, Section 6d. See also U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*.

¹⁸⁴⁰ Seema Agarwal et al., *Bearing the Weight*, Centre for Social Policy Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, May 1997, 1-3. UNICEF administers *Operation End Kayaye* in Ghana. The goal of the project is to remove 2000 kayayei girls from cities and return them to their villages, where they will participate in skills training.

¹⁸⁴¹ U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*. See also *Progress in freeing Ghanaian slave boys*, *afrol News*, [online] 2003 [cited December 17, 2003]; available from http://www.afrol.com/News2003/gha008_labour.htm.

The Government of Ghana has outlawed the practice of trokosi, and reports indicate that the number of girls sent by their families to serve in religious shrines has significantly decreased.¹⁸⁴² Trokosi has its origins in indigenous religion in the southern part of the Volta region. The custom involves the pledging of young girls for training and service to priests by their families who either seek atonement for sins committed by family members, or who fear retribution if they fail to surrender a daughter to priestly service.¹⁸⁴³ Young girls typically perform domestic work for the priest for a period ranging from three months, or, in some cases, for three years. In the vast majority of cases, after the service is completed, the girls return to their families with no particular stigma attached to their prior service. While instances of sexual or physical abuse have occurred, there is no evidence of sexual or physical abuse as an engrained or systematic part of the practice.¹⁸⁴⁴

Ghana is also a source, transit, and destination country for trafficked children.¹⁸⁴⁵ 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.¹⁸⁴⁶ Children are also trafficked to neighboring countries to work as laborers, domestics or on farms.¹⁸⁴⁷

Education is compulsory for children of primary and junior secondary age, which is the equivalent of grades one to nine.¹⁸⁴⁸ The authorities do not enforce school attendance, however, and parents rarely face penalties if their children do not attend school.¹⁸⁴⁹ Education can also be costly for poor families who must pay school fees each term, as well as buy textbooks and uniforms.¹⁸⁵⁰ In 2000, the gross primary enrollment rate was 80.2 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 58.3 percent.¹⁸⁵¹ Primary school attendance rates are unavailable for Ghana. In 1999, 66 percent of children enrolled in primary school reached grade 5.¹⁸⁵² While enrollment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect children's participation in school.¹⁸⁵³

¹⁸⁴² 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. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*, Section 5. See also Rachel Levine, *Free the Trokosi!*, Fresh Angles, [previously online] [cited August 26, 2002]; available from <http://www.freshangles.com/realtime/international/articles/20.html> [hard copy on file].

¹⁸⁴³ Electronic communication from Labor Officer to USDOL official, February 23, 2004.

¹⁸⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*, Section 5. See also Electronic communication from Labor Officer to USDOL official, February 23, 2004. See also Obenewa Amponsah, *The Trokosi: Religious Slavery in Ghana*, [online] [cited November 3, 2003]; available from <http://www.anti-slavery.org/global/ghana/>. See also Levine, *Free the Trokosi*. See also Nirit Ben-Ari, *Liberating girls from Trokosi*, United Nations, Africa Recovery Online, [online] December 2001 [cited November 3, 2003]; available from <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol15no4/154troko.htm>.

¹⁸⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*, Section 6f. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2003: Ghana*.

¹⁸⁴⁶ U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*, Section 6f.

¹⁸⁴⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*, Section 6f.

¹⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Section 5. See also *Education Act, 1961*.

¹⁸⁴⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*, Section 5. See also U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*.

¹⁸⁵⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*, Section 5.

¹⁸⁵¹ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2003* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2003.

¹⁸⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵³ For a more detailed discussion on the relationship between education statistics and work, see the preface to this report.

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.¹⁸⁵⁴ The Children's Act prohibits children under 18 from engaging in hazardous labor, including work in mines, quarries, manufacturing that involves chemicals, with machinery, at sea, in bars, or in any job that involves carrying heavy loads.¹⁸⁵⁵ The legislation allows children aged 15 years and above to work in an apprenticeship if the employer provides a safe and healthy work environment, and training.¹⁸⁵⁶ Employers who operate in the formal sector must keep a register with the ages of the young people they employ, and failing to keep this register can result in a fine of 10 million cedis (USD 1,214.61) or 2 years in jail.¹⁸⁵⁷

The Ministry of Manpower Development and Employment has more than 100 labor inspectors responsible for monitoring employers' labor practices, but the inspectors do not monitor the informal sector and do not specifically investigate child labor.¹⁸⁵⁸ Law enforcement authorities, including judges, labor officers and police officers, lack adequate resources or training.¹⁸⁵⁹

The Government of Ghana has not ratified ILO Convention 138, but ratified ILO Convention 182 on June 13, 2000.¹⁸⁶⁰

¹⁸⁵⁴ 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 *The Children's Act, Act 560, 1998*, Section 90; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/E98GHA01.htm>.

¹⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Section 91.

¹⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Articles 98 and 100.

¹⁸⁵⁷ U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*. For currency conversion, see FXConverter, in Oanda.com, [online] [cited June 25, 2003]; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

¹⁸⁵⁸ There are no recorded cases of prosecutions as a result of these inspections. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*, Section 6d.

¹⁸⁵⁹ U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2002: Ghana*, Section 6d.

¹⁸⁶⁰ ILO, *Ratifications by Country*, in ILOLEX, [database online] [cited June 25, 2003]; available from <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/newratframeE.htm>.