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**Survival and Rights: Use of Children in the fishing industry on the Volta Lake in
Ghana**

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Abstract

The menace of using the labour of children as a resource for income generation still remains a concern for both intellectual discourse and policy design. Academic interest has waned, primarily, due to lack of data and the changing face of the phenomenon within and between different geographical settings. This study attempts to describe the situation in Ghana with a particular focus on the degree of children involvement in labour along the fishing lake. Due to the ambivalent nature of the degree and acceptability of the practice, the study avoids narrowing down on a particular type of the phenomenon. Inquiries into the nature and what constitute child help, labour, worst forms of child labour and child trafficking remained as concerns for the current study. The study further attempts to identify the drivers for the phenomenon and also the knowledge base of the actors with regards to the legal implications from a human right perspective.

Field investigation covered fishing communities along the Yeji Volta Lake, in the Brong Ahafo Region, an area with a high incidence of the use of labour of children in the country. Data for the study experienced a wide variation between the expected and actual number of respondents. Respondents in the category of parents, intermediaries and final beneficiaries of the labour of children were virtually unavailable. Some findings associated wide media publicity and intervention from both government and non-governmental association to this outcome. Data on children and from traditional rulers were quite substantial for analysis. This outcome responds positively to one of the initial research questions as to whether the use child labour prevails. While some of the children asserted that the practice was hazardous since some colleagues had lost their lives, the few beneficiaries interviewed were of the opinion that the need for training, discipline and earning some income outweighed the thought of the associated danger.

The study showed that ignorance and poverty were the main drivers of the practice. Although parents, intermediaries and beneficiaries had heard of the legal implications of engaging the labour of a child in a hazardous economic activity they were not convinced that it superseded the present and pressing need of easing economic hardships. The most agonizing part of the debate was why the government and some non-governmental organizations were dictating to parents on how to use their property (children). Poverty as a result of lack of opportunities and competition for scarce resources in the fishing sector also compelled the use of child labour with the aim of minimizing cost. Most of the respondents including children alluded that the practice of this underground or non market service of child's labour at present was the best alternative dealing with the issue of poverty.

The socio-cultural definition, perception of child up bringing, ownership of child and poverty places the concept of child labour in a contentious context. This is likely to mar any attempt to contextualize the practice from a human right perspective.

Key Words: *Child, Labour, Human rights, Poverty and Economic Activity*

Introduction

The pronouncement “we will spare no efforts to free our fellow men and women and children from abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty” (UN Millennium Declaration, 2000) brings to fore the need to revisit the several and generic approaches that have been adopted by most developing countries. Available data suggests that 20 per cent of women and 5 to 10 per cent of men suffered from sexual abuse as children worldwide, (WHO, 2003). Heightened interest in this direction is how the marginalized or the vulnerable group (women, people living with disabilities and children) have received their portion of the global cake (in terms of freedom and access to resources) in this world of global competition and scramble for territorial property. The promising literature on globalization has been fraught with wide per capita income variations among nations, disguised coercion and force and deepened inequity among the populace of nations. Hardly hit by this menace are children who are not part of research, policy design, advocacy and implementation.

Until recently, issues concerning children especially their rights were sparsely found in both national and international policy documents either directly or indirectly. A sharp turn around in recent time is the advocacy role and campaign by a number of international bodies and governments on the rights of children. A typical example of an international policy is the set of United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2 and 4. A review of the MDGs shows that goal numbers two and four (achieving universal primary education and reducing child mortality) directly deals with children. Through the building of capabilities and ensuring lower morbidity and mortality of children, further credence is accorded to MDG number seven where environmental sustainability emerges as an international quest.

To ensure synergy for a balanced-success in all the MDGs there is the need to refocus thought on the scale of what had happened in the past, what is happening currently and what will happen in the future. For the achievement and sustenance of the MDGs, children are placed in the fulcrum where all other international and national development policies must be reshaped in that context. Building capacities of children in this context through education and access to other resources is then a right to the child and not a need of the child. The success of the first MDG which seeks to halve extreme poverty relies extensively on human capacity. Poverty is the failure of basic capabilities to reach minimally acceptable levels (Sen, 2003). This definition necessitates efforts geared towards empowering humans with skills that will generate income on a sustainable basis rather than filling in gaps from the perspective of physical deprivation.

The paradigm shift from monetization to non-monetization of what and who constitutes poverty and a poor person has not only deepened the understanding of poverty but also changed the approach in tackling poverty. The United Nations Development Programme in 2003 defined the social plague as “Poverty and extreme poverty are at the origin of the violations of the right to life in numerous ways , and they violate the right to decent standard of living, the right to housing, the right to education, the right to work, the right to health, the right to the protection of the family, the right to privacy, the right to

recognition as a person before the law, the right to justice, the right to take part in political affairs and the right to participate in social and cultural life”.

This conceptualization emanates from earlier discourse on morality perspectives. In the 18th century, Adam Smith in his book “Theory of Moral Sentiments” published in 1759, placed morality in the context of actions that impairs the livelihoods of others or makes others worse-off either in the short-run or in the long run. This perspective is derived from the egalitarian and libertarian philosophical concepts. The respective ideologies are equal and fair distribution of global and national income and freedom from coercion or force and association or participation. The latter has experienced successful implementation around the globe and more especially in developing countries over the past decades through the shift from military regime to democratic regimes. The equal and fair distribution of the global and national cake by all is yet to experience adequate conceptualization and implementation. The sequel of this inadequacy with regards to equality and fairness engenders denial and violation of human rights. The actions and/or inactions by a section of the populace in the global world that denies others from enjoying access to fundamental livelihood lifestyles and freedom therefore constitutes acts of immorality.

An emerging paradigm in the social sciences is the concept of human rights and it has been suggested by the United Nations Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights in 2001, defined poverty as *“a human condition characterized by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights”*. In this context the Human Rights Approach stresses on the fact that poverty is either a denial or a violation of human rights and as such the discourse on poverty reduction should be redirected or answer the question –to what extent does the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in most developing countries like Ghana perceive poverty as a human right issue and if so what is the level of awareness, enforceability and ability to claim such rights.

Current Programmes, Practices and Context

Government’s Policies and Programmes for the Protection of Children

Developing countries, since the turn of the millennium have followed some broad guidelines embedded in respective poverty reduction strategy papers. Among the specific issues addressed in the second phase of Ghana’s Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper are:

- Restructuring of the educational system with emphasis on education at the basic levels. Some of the programmes include the Capitation Grant and the Feeding Programme all focused on achieving universal basic education for children.
- Deepening democracy through identification of good governance as one of the three main policy directions in the GPRS II.
- Microfinance schemes to ease accessibility to credit facilities by the poor
- Women empowerment activities such as encouragement of girl-child education and sensitization of communities on gender issues

- Education on reproductive health issues such as education on family planning and education on HIV/AIDS
- Management capacity building
- Skill development
- Training for agricultural productivity and adaptation of improved farming system
- Enhancement of capacity of health delivery institutions and
- Improvement of social amenities such as schools, roads, water among others.¹

In Ghana, a consensus is emerging on the link between child labour/trafficking and poverty, especially when viewed from the perspective of widening economic and social disparity. The use of child labour by poor fishing communities is not only regarded as a coping mechanism but also a culturally accepted form of informal training. However, children who engage in labour for a greater part of their childhood are denied access to basic education, predisposed to high vulnerability of work at a younger age and face high job insecurity due to inadequate bargaining power.

Child labour and poverty are mutually reinforcing. Thus, apart from viewing child labour as a crime against children, it is also necessary to consider such practices as a destructive force that contributes to the social vulnerability and instability of poor communities. Thus individual and community vulnerabilities are both outcomes of the use of child labour. This research, therefore, assesses the situation of the use of children in the fishing sector and the motives for such practice. Within the Ghanaian and African context studies on child labour have been extremely impaired by the cultural and social definition of informal training, family apprenticeship and pursuance of parental trade or service.

Contextualizing poverty, Amartya Sen's pre-occupies any intervention with enhancing capacity and capabilities. The cardinal principle of any poverty reduction strategy is to ensure, among other things, provision of social amenities, empowerment and above equipping individuals with sustainable, peculiar and highly marketable skills. Poverty, in this regard, is a comprehensive violation of human rights in the sense that it denies the poor and the vulnerable a stake, a voice and protection in society. Thus for effective discharge of obligation it is the responsibility of the state and all other stakeholders to provide an enabling atmosphere which will take care of the underprivileged. Moser and Norton (2001), identified three human rights obligations by the state; to respect, to protect, and to fulfill. Consequently, both human rights and the fight against poverty, underpin a common factor; human dignity.

Current Legal and Judicial Framework

Although the Government of Ghana has increasingly demonstrated awareness of the connection between child labour and poverty and, realization of the problem of working children in recent years, Ghana's policies with regards to child labour have been incoherent. To strengthen, boost, promote and co-ordinate the activities and programmes of children in the country, Ghana took a giant step by establishing the Ghana National

¹ (Ibid)

Commission on Children (GNCC) in 1979. Its main duties include advocacy for children as well as carrying out of social surveys with regards to children's needs.

Ghana, again, was among the first countries that ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) adopted at the end of the World Summit for Children in November, 1989. The CRC came into full force in September 1990. As an effort to achieve and to sustain the goals of the convention, a programme of action dubbed "The Child Cannot Wait" was introduced in June 1992. The programme provided among other things policy framework, strategies and programmes that aim at the protection, survival and development of children in the country.

In relation to child trafficking, Ghana is yet to ratify the 2000 protocols on trafficking and smuggling, although she was a signatory to both migrant worker and refugee conventions (Black *et al*, 2004). In 1998, the Parliament of Ghana approved a comprehensive Children Act, Act 560 of 1998 which prohibit children under the age of 15 from working and in 2000 the country adopted the ILO Convention on Worst Forms of Child Labour. Recently, Ghana's Vision 2020 adopted a more human-centered approach to development by laying more emphasis on issues concerning social welfare namely: issues bordering on child labour, poverty and hunger. To deal with the human trafficking situations in the country, Ghana has currently, passed The Human Trafficking Act in 2005 that criminalizes the act of offence and mandates the establishment of a Human Trafficking Fund to support protection of efforts.

National Poverty Reduction Strategy

As an attempt to provide strategic programme framework to combat child labour and its worst form, the Government of Ghana in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) identified a number of interventions that are of national priority. These areas were outlined in the Government's "Policy Focus for Poverty Reduction" launched in 1996. The intervention strategies which form part of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme are focused on improving the living standard and effective interventions to the benefit of the poor.

The components of the Poverty Reduction Strategy of the country that aim to provide strategic programme framework for the elimination of child labour and its worst form are namely:

- Macro-economic stability;
- Increasing development and provision of basic services;
- Programmes for the vulnerable and excluded and;
- Good governance (ILO/ IPED, 2004).

Thus to adopt a multi-dimensional approach to the elimination of child labour and its worst form, each of these components in the GPRS is supposed to facilitate the protection and development of children in the country.

The creation of Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs by the government affirm the government's commitment to the protection and development of children in the country.

Programme of Action of NGOs in Protection of Child Rights

In addition to these policies and programmes of actions aimed at curbing child labour and its worst form and child trafficking, there are also tremendous efforts being made by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the country to curb the phenomenon. NGOs such as:

- *International Organisation for Migration (IOM)* for instance has involved itself in the return and reintegration of a large number of trafficked children in Volta and Central Regions and, along the Volta Lake. To enhance the sustainability of the exercise, measures are also taken to offer loans and credit facilities to parents of the trafficked victims. The employers of the trafficked children also benefited from this package.
- *The Ghanaian-Danish Community Programme* has also launched numerous projects in the country with the aim at stimulating community development through poverty reduction. Some of the projects to that effect include: A pilot vocational training programme for those girls who migrated to the south for work but later returned to their place of origin.
- *Action Aid, Ghana* through donor funding also established and runs a home for street children in the Capital of the Northern Region, Tamale and provides training and other activities such as; recreational, vocational as well as formal and non-formal education. Other services in terms of health and loan to parents and guardians are also provided.
- *Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS)* in collaboration with the *Salvation Army* provides and operates clinic for street children for free. They also provide educational and vocational training for children.

However, despite all these initiatives, the involvement of child labour, its worst form, and child trafficking is still pervasive in the country. There is, therefore, the need for examination of the current initiatives and serious rethinking of an alternative and effective approach/framework, through poverty reduction strategy, to combating the phenomenon in the country.

Table 1 provides a view of the child labour situation in Ghana by sector in the various regions. The situation in Ghana shows that the agricultural and fishing sector is the sector that mainly uses children and this is dominant in the Northern and Eastern regions of the country. The Volta and the Eastern regions emerged as the highest regions for the use of children in the fishing sub-sector

Table 1: Estimated number of children in Economic Activity by Region

	Agric/ Hunting/ Forestry	Fishing	Mining and Quarrying	Manufac- turing	Whole- sale and Retail trade	Hotel and Restaurant	Transport/ Storage/Com- munication	Other Community Activities	Private House-holds	Other Total
Region										
Western	162,600	1,851	370	8,902	69,368	11,863	740	2,591	0	1,480 259,765
Central	63,291	1,480	0	9,993	50,706	8,513	370	3,701	0	370 138,424
Gt. Accra	30,038	8,143	5,552	14,863	63,972	17,922	740	2,240	7,052	2,221 152,743
Volta	139,442	20,028	740	28,964	46,818	7,898	1,110	370	370	1,110 246,850
Eastern	212,668	15,833	0	15,338	57,300	6,292	760	1,870	0	390 310,451
Ashanti	131,632	0	370	10,480	68,977	16,837	740	2,221	1,110	3,073 235,440
Brong Ahafo	100,636	370	0	2,240	27,993	3,701	370	370	390	370 136,440
Northern	272,539	370	0	19,312	30,411	6,701	1,851	740	740	0 332,664
Upper East	82,050	370	3,173	11,493	10,402	1,851	1,480	0	529	370 111,718
Upper West	44,785	740	370	4,071	5,182	740	0	0	0	370 56,258
ILO Project Document (2004)										

Socio-spatial variations of poverty in Ghana

From the two most recent poverty surveys, the general pattern that has emerged on the poverty situation in the country demonstrates a broad north-south divide, in the levels of well-being. While aggregated data shows a reduction in poverty levels, some regions experienced an increase in the incidence of poverty. Results from the 1991/92 and the 1998/99 surveys, showed that the overall incidence of poverty declined from 52% to 42% and among the very poor, (less than ₵700,000) the incidence of poverty declined from 36% to 27% (Table 2.1). Using the 1974/75 household survey, Assefa (1980) argued that rural areas had more poor people than urban areas. For instance, the urban sector with only about 33% of the total population accounted for 45% of total national expenditure. Ghana Statistical Service, (2000) in support of this, also reports that poverty in Ghana remains, a major, rural phenomenon. In support of this assertion Table 2 shows that two out of the three northern regions (Northern and Upper East) which are predominantly rural in nature experienced an increase in poverty levels in the 1990 decade.

Table 2.

Region	Poverty Trends in Ghana by Region (in Percentages)					
	Extremely Poor			Poor		
	1992	1999	2006	1992	1999	2006
Western	42.0	13.6	7.9	59.6	27.3	18.4
Central	24.1	31.5	9.7	44.3	48.4	19.9
Greater Accra	13.4	2.4	6.2	25.8	5.2	11.8
Eastern	34.8	30.4	6.6	48.0	43.7	15.1
Volta	42.1	20.4	15.2	57.0	37.7	31.4
Ashanti	25.5	16.4	11.2	41.2	27.7	20.3
Brong Ahafo	45.9	18.8	14.9	65.0	35.8	29.5
Northern	54.1	57.4	38.7	63.4	69.2	52.3
Upper West	74.3	68.3	79.0	88.4	83.9	87.9
Upper East	53.5	79.6	60.1	66.9	88.2	70.4
Total	36.5	26.8	18.0	51.7	39.5	----

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- Poverty was measured through expenditure pattern.
 - Lower Poverty Line [Extreme Poor] 1992 & 1999 = ₵700,000; 2006 = ₵2,884,700
 - Upper Poverty Line [Poor] 1992 & 1999 = ₵900,000; 2006 = ₵3,708,900

Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2000 & 2006.

Although there has been a decline in the incidence of poverty between 1991/1992 and 1998/99, the rates still appear to be high. Also, using mean percentages, the incidence of poverty reduced only marginally in some areas, such as the rural savannah and rural coastal belts with rates of 70 per cent and 45 per cent in 1998/99 compared to the 1991/1992 values of 73 and 52 per cent respectively. In 1998/99, the three northern regions (Upper East, Upper West and Northern) recorded the highest values of 88 per cent, 84 per cent and 69 per cent respectively (Ghana Statistical Service, 2000). Along the coastal belt, the Central Region experienced an increase in poverty in the 1990s. This

is an area where tourism has been promoted as a sector for growth since 1989. The Greater Accra Region recorded the lowest index of just about 5 per cent.

Research Results

Research Methodology

The “cause and effect” argument for poverty and the clandestine nature of the involvement of children in labour make it imperative for the use of multiple study types. Both observational and to some extent participatory study designs were adopted for the study. Data collected were as well captured for both quantitative and qualitative usage.

Study Area

The worst forms of child labour (hazardous child labour)² in Ghana encapsulate activities such as “Kayayee” (head porters), Trokosi system (ritual servitude), commercial sexual exploitation of children, fishing and commercial agriculture, child domestic servitude, quarrying and galamsey (small scale mining) and street children. This study limits the focus to children working along the fishing lake. The rationale is embedded in the argument of cultural dynamics influencing why children are engaged in certain activities. The push factors and the characteristics widely vary across geographical boundaries and this explains why each dimension of it requires an independent study into its prevalence, nature, causes and strategies to reduce the impact. Children engaged in hazardous labour along the fishing lake are ranked second in terms of prevalence by the Ghana Child Labour Survey and International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (GSS, 2003). This suggests that the study area was purposely selected in view of the geographical and cultural variations and the prevalence rate. Within Ghana, the involvement of children in labour runs across the coast but earlier studies have shown that it is predominant along Volta Lake at Yeji.

The study area, Yeji fishing community, is located in the far northern part of the Brong Ahafo Region in the middle belt of the country. The community represents the district capital of the Pru district and shares borders with Atebubu district to the south and the Volta Lake to the north and north-west. Sene district lies to the east. The Volta Lake separates the town from the Northern Region.

The 2000 Population and Housing Census put the population of Yeji at 18,593, making it the 11th populous settlement in the Brong Ahafo region and the 2nd in the then Atebubu district. This figure comprised 8,747 males and 9,846 females, giving a sex ratio of approximately 89 males to 100 females. The town has a significant number of migrant workers as a result of its land and water resources. Fishermen from far and near work in Yeji. Dominant among the migrant population is the Ewe people of the Volta Region. Others are the Fantes and the Adas.

² Synonymous to the meaning of child trafficking.

The age structure of the population of Yeji might not differ significantly from that of the Brong Ahafo region. According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census, the Brong Ahafo region has a median age of 18.3 years for males and 18.6 years for females with a total under-15 population of 781,779. This was 43% of the total population of the Brong Ahafo region at the time. By implication, Yeji's under-15 population as at 2000 was likely to be 7,995.

Yeji is a vibrant community in terms of economic activity. Fishing and farming are the main economic activities. Yam cultivation is the dominant farming activity in the community. This activity, coupled with the inland fishing activities make Yeji a vibrant market centre. On market days (Sundays and Mondays), people from all part of the country transact business at the town. As a result, other auxiliary activities such petty trading has caught up with the indigenous people.

It has a community secondary school and many public and private basic schools. In spite of the availability of these facilities, it is common to see children of school going age loitering during school hours, either selling ice water or indulging in head potterage (*kaya yei*). According to the Head teacher of one of the public basic schools, they are usually compelled to allow the children to indulge in these activities on market days at the expense of classes based on the realization that some of them cater for themselves in school. The market days thus become the only days that the children in the area can make some money to cater for their needs. The community is, however, blessed with a hospital built by the Catholic Church.

Study Instruments:

Data gathered was basically primary with minimal concentration on secondary data. The latter type of data was reviewed for content analysis with the motive of identifying the extent to which human rights issues had been enshrined in poverty related documents. While newspaper and interventional reports were available, data to support these were not readily available. The nature of the practice which is basically hidden partially explains the non-availability of the data.

Primary data collection was mainly by structured questionnaires and focused group discussions depending on the type of agent on the "scale of agents" involved in the usage of the labour of children. The study identified four different agents on the spectrum of engaging the labour of a child. These were; parents or guardians of the child, children involved in labour, the end users of the child labour and intermediaries who liaised between the parents and the end users. Some community members and NGOs in the locality that either positively or adversely influenced the prevalence of the use of child labour were also interviewed. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the type of instrument used on each category of agent on the "scale of agents" using child labour and the number of instruments that were fully administered.

Table3: Type and Number of Instruments Administered/ Agent

AGENTS	Questionnaire		Focused Group Discussion		In depth Interview	
	Intended	Actual	Intended	Actual	Intended	Actual
Parents	100	3	-	-	-	-
Children	100	88	-	-	8	4
Beneficiaries	60	-	-	-	-	-
Intermediaries	60	3	-	-	-	-
Traditional Rulers	-	-	6	4	-	-
Non-Governmental Organizations	-	-	-	-	10	2

**All three intermediaries interviewed responded to the questionnaire for beneficiaries.*

The research at the stage of proposal writing intended to undertake the research with a rigour statistical approach which implied that numbers for the sample size should be adequate. A reconnaissance survey at the time revealed that the intended figures stated above constituted about 10 per cent of the anticipated population who were involved at various stages of using the labour of a child as an economic resource. The values for parents, children, beneficiaries and intermediaries questionnaires were arrived considering a 5 per cent error margin. These values would have been enough for most statistical analysis. About a year after the proposal when the actual research was conducted there was a wide variation between the intended values and the actual values as depicted in table 3. Among the reasons accounting for the variance between the actual number of instruments that were administered and the intended are; heavy interventions in the area over the past three years, hidden nature of the practice, and legal consequences of the practice. The interventions by both the government and non-governmental organizations primarily targeted parents and intermediaries. Among the three interviewed in the capacity as intermediaries they served a dual purpose by responding to the questionnaire for beneficiaries. This was possible since two out of the three were currently users of children as an economic input while the third respondent used to be a fisherman who also bought and sold children but currently is “unemployed”. This suggests the wide gap between the numbers at the proposal writing stage and the actual field work. Children on the hand were not operating under cover since they either did not know or were cautioned or threatened to operate under tight lips. Based on legal definition of a child, the cut-off age for children was 15. The findings of the paper therefore relied greatly on responses from the children and further supported that with data from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

To attain the actual values indicated above the researchers adopted a participatory approach, observed all community entry protocols and all levels of ethical issues. This facilitated the attainment of the fraction of the intended instruments. Besides the traditional motive of attaining an in-depth understanding through observation of children involvement and what happens at the various stages in fishing, the participatory approach became a pre-requisite to embark on the study. The respondents indirectly requested the researchers to get engaged in some of their activities for a period of time with the

intension of knowing them better. This became necessary through consultations at various levels with community leaders and members. The method, further, assured the respondents that information collected was not intended for prosecution at a latter date. This provided the initial finding of the study that at least some awareness creation of the illegality engulfing their practice had been established.

Issues covered in all the instruments were categorized into three sections. The first section looked at background issues of the respondents or the group of respondents and issues such as sex, level of education, current employment and marital status were elicited. The second section concentrated on issues surrounding working characteristics, knowledge of child involvement in labour and practices, while the third section underscored human rights related issues. Among some of the concerns about human rights were level of awareness, institutions responsible and implications for the denial and violation of human rights.

Sampling of respondents was non-probabilistic and purely accidental in nature. Respondents had to be reached through a focal person among the group or an earlier interviewee who really had brought in the idea that there were no legal consequences underpinning the study. The snow-balling technique was mainly used to arrive at the respondents. Some of the interviewers in some instances had to spend days in administering a questionnaire with the presence of other colleagues for fear of possible lynching. Though this provided heavy constraints for data collection, the zealotness and determination of the researchers led to reaching a proportion of the targeted respondents. Actual primary data collection spanned over an eight week period through activities such as reconnaissance survey, actual field work and mopping-up.

Desk and Document Study (Secondary Data)

To provide a standard study and an invaluable information backdrop, a wide range of referenced and bibliographic sources, such as refereed articles and reports of research into child and human trafficking in general, within the study area and beyond were examined. This part of the study³ necessitated liaising with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Institutions and International Organizations spearheading the abolition of child trafficking either directly or indirectly.

Estimation Technique

Data collected were edited, coded and electronically inputted using the STATA software. Descriptive statistics formed the crux for the study analysis. In contrast to the initial objective of using a rigour quantitative statistical technique the paper resorted to reliance on qualitative information due to the outturn during data collection.

³ Relying on existing published materials both in print and on the internet.

Research Findings

Quantitative Data

The data on children revealed that 96 per cent (n = 88) were male and 41 per cent were aged less than 10 with 59 per cent aged between 11 and 15. In terms of education only 48 per cent had ever attended school and out of this, only 33 per cent were currently in school. Of this proportion 93 per cent were still at the primary level which implied that either going-school-age had been delayed or most children between the age brackets of 11-15 terminated school at about age 10 which is assumed to be the terminal age for completing primary education.

All the children interviewed had never heard of human rights and vehemently opposed to any attempt to identify flaws with what their masters were doing to them. About 90 per cent of the children were of the opinion that fishing was the only option for survival and had the motive of following it during their adulthood. Though some of the respondents desired to pursue education if the opportunity was available, they maintained that poverty could inhibit achieving this objective. A little over 10 per cent of the children responded in the affirmative that the opportunity of going fishing was golden and would have died if they had stayed with their biological parents.

In lieu of the above, 78 per cent of the children respectively indicated that their engagement was difficult and also received beatings as a corrective measure when they went wrong. Sixty-six per cent of the children interviewed indicated that they receive rewards in diverse forms any time they work. Out of this number another 66 per cent received cash as a form of reward for their labour used. Seven per cent received their rewards in kind which constituted either food or clothing while 29 per cent received their rewards both in cash and in kind.

The end users played a dual role in both negotiating for the children and engaging the labour of the children themselves. The respondents identified were used for both instruments. The disclosure of this dual scenario emerged after a couple of weeks of interaction and was dependent on factors such as cost involved and the healthiness of the child. All three respondents indicated that they used the children mostly during school going hours and were quick to indicate that receipt of children for either sale or use directly was mainly supply-driven. This meant that parents of the children moved in to plead for the use of their children or dependents. In most cases the intermediaries or the beneficiaries did not need to travel in search of child labour. One reason which accounted for the abuse of the child usage was the excess supply over demand for children. Suggestively, poverty was the driver for parents to push their children in to labour. Regarding the illegality associated with their activity it had well been diffused in the community and as such they were aware. Attempts to comply have been difficult at two levels. In the first instance parents of the children bring them on offer and virtually threaten to leave them and secondly, the high cost associated with hiring the labour of an adult. Human rights issue was completely new to all the respondents and had never heard of any declaration in connection with child rights. The cultural context from their view point did not allow a child to own a right.

Qualitative Data

To complement the quantitative, data focused group discussion (FGD) and in depth interviews (IDI) were conducted. The community has experienced diverse interventions from a number of agencies including non-governmental organizations and government agencies. This has led mainly to integration of some of the children back to their parents. However, there still exists some difficult task to clear as deduced from the FGD with the traditional rulers and opinion leaders in the community. According to them, some of the fishermen heard of the reintegration exercise by International Organization for Migration (IOM) but managed to arrange with parents of the children to assume biological parenthood. The community has not put in place any measure to ensure the safety and welfare of the children. Thus any time a child dies in the cause of fishing expedition; it is just an accident. No frantic effort is made to investigate further, the cause of the death. Some of the children were adopted at an early age and this accounted for the inability to trace actual paternal and maternal lineage. Based on this, NGOs alone cannot solve the problem so the community, parents and government should all get involved.

Identifying intermediaries was virtually impossible since most of them knew the implications of their trade. Also most of the end beneficiaries of the labour of the children sourced for the children directly. With the few that were interviewed they alluded that poverty has perpetuated the issue of child trafficking.

“Parents are aware of the type of work their children will be engaged in but they are more interested in the money”

Another reason for the use of children by the end users is that children are obedient to work, more easily controllable and more humble unlike the elderly. Children are sometimes taken away from their parents at a very tender age and catered for until age five before the start of tapping their labour. This makes any intervention exercise extremely difficult since, in this instance, it is only the end users who can tell as to whether the child is his/her biological child or not. This unfortunate situation has implications on tracing the true parents of some of the trafficked children for reintegration.

On the issue of rights, minimal efforts had been made in the creation of awareness. Both the intermediaries, end users and the parents had been informed of the illegality characterizing their activities but they had not been made to understand why it constitutes an illegal activity. They alluded to the notion by asking;

“why are we being prevented from using the labour that they had brought to this earth”?

This accounted for high incidence of child bearing with minimal age intervals between the births. The emergence of the NGOs in the community had made quite significant impact in introducing the human right dimension of the argument but some more efforts were required for its enforcement. An in depth interview with an intermediary indicated that at the point of entering into a contractual agreement with the parent of the child, the over riding issue was acquisition of money and nothing else. Issues concerning education

and the well being of the child did not come into play. The need for follow-up to check on the child's welfare, in some instances, was only at the instigation of the mothers of the children. This raised a lot of concern for policy direction since most parents were the primary initiators of the activity but lived outside the community where the child's labour is being exploited. The need to target national interventions by educating all parents and instituting mechanisms such as strengthening the birth registry exercise that will help trace the parents of such children need to be, seriously, considered.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The positive relationship between child labour and poverty is well known by both the government and the non-governmental organizations; this has culminated in wide campaign efforts to eradicate its existence. The main task at this level is to identify how to implement this effectively. The human right approach has come in handy for this task. It requires among other things, its full and consistent fledging out in all poverty programmes and child policies, agencies that are well structured for detailed monitoring and ensuring compliance, and adequate interventions of side policies such as poverty reduction supported by educational policies. Thus replicating policies such as providing a benefit scheme for parents that do comply with educational policies such as the Capitation Grant instituted by the incumbent government. In this regard factors that perpetuate poverty such as child involvement in labour should be perceived as denial of human rights and should be enforced within this framework. Parents and all other agents involved in the process of using children's labour need to be constantly informed that children once born are the property for the global world and possess rights that are to be respected, observed and protected.

Education and information assist the poor to make their claims. Lack of access to information and education to a large extent deny the poor their claims. Both parents and children, therefore, need to be informed on the need for acquisition of basic education and training before engaging in economic activities. Access to proper education and information will not only help the poor to make decisions with a better background knowledge of the various potential risks involved in child labour, but will as well equip and guard them against it. The Government through the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) should, therefore, reinforce and institutionalize "child's rights education" in the country, especially at the community level, to create awareness on the effects and consequences of child labour with special attention to the poor and vulnerable families and individuals within the community.

Poverty reduction strategy through the framework of human rights can create enabling environment for the poor and the vulnerable through community awareness. Awareness through sensitization should aim at the fact that every individual and the society have it as a moral obligation to recognize and protect the rights of children to realize their capabilities. However, the only way this can be realized is through the reduction of number of school drop-outs in the country by making educational system more accessible, attractive and affordable to children of all walks of life.

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