

PRESS RELEASE

**BY THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE
(CHRAJ)**

**IN COMMEMORATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS' INTERNATIONAL HUMAN
RIGHTS DAY, DECEMBER 10, 2016**

On the occasion of the anniversary of the international human rights day, which is observed on December 10 of every year and, indeed, is being observed in Ghana this December 10, 2016, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) wishes to extend its warmest gratitude and appreciation to all human rights defenders particularly individuals, state and civil society organisations (CSOs).

December 10 commemorates significant milestone chalked in the quest by humanity to promote and protect fundamental human rights and freedoms of all persons regardless of gender, race, colour, place of origin, religion or creed, political opinion, social or economic status.

The United Nations' theme for this year's human rights day anniversary "**stand up for someone's rights today**" is consistent with the obligation of state parties' primary responsibility to protect, promote the fundamental human rights and freedoms (political, social and economic) and to ensure that all persons under its jurisdiction, individually and in association with others, are able to enjoy those rights in practice. This theme resonates aptly with the statement of Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary-General thus:

"Upholding human rights is in the interest of all. Respect for human rights advances well-being for every individual, stability for every, and harmony for our interconnected world".

As a national human rights institution (NHRI) imbued with the mandate to promote and protect human rights of all persons in the country, CHRAJ has within the reporting year (2016), stood up for the rights of all persons in Ghana, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalised in the society.

In this regard, CHRAJ has relentlessly championed human rights in the following areas:

Child, early and forced marriage (CEFM)

CHRAJ, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, is collaborating with traditional leaders (chiefs and queen-mothers, etc.) with a view to eradicating early and forced marriages in Ghana in the context of the 2015 Kigali Declaration on of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) aimed at combating the menace of child, early and forced marriage. In this regard, CHRAJ has been creating awareness among traditional leaders, especially in the 3 northern regions of Ghana (Northern, Upper East and Upper West) where there is high prevalence of the practice of CEFM. The awareness programme aims to empower the traditional leaders and other opinion leaders with the requisite knowledge and skills, including learning from best practice from other countries and cultures regarding successes and challenges associated with the fight against CEFM.

Right of the child

CHRAJ has carried out extensive investigation (research) into abuse of children's rights, particularly in the area of child labour and child trafficking, which affect the child's right to education and development generally. CHRAJ's investigation/research was carried out in fishing communities in the Volta and Central regions respectively namely Dzemeni, Kpeve-Tornu, Esuakyir and Woarabeba. CHRAJ is finalising its findings and would submit its recommendations to relevant state institutions for appropriate remedial action.

Women's right

CHRAJ has been championing the rights of women with regard to Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 3 – ie promoting gender equality and empowering women - as restated in the 2013 UN Development Agenda (Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) – ie achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In this regard, CHRAJ has contributed and advocated for enactment of the Affirmative Action Bill, which is currently before Parliament. The Affirmative Action Bill seeks to empower women in terms of their active participation in the governance process.

Sexual orientation and gender identity and expression

CHRAJ notes with concern that, in spite of the provisions of Article 17 of the 1992 Constitution (Constitution) regarding equality and non-discrimination based on stated grounds, there is real and perceived discrimination borne out exclusively on cultural stereotypes and prejudices which tend to stigmatise people perceived to have sexual orientation, particularly described as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people. These cultural prejudices can potentially affect the rights of this vulnerable and marginalized group in the society.

Rights of migrants and refugees

CHRAJ has been involved in the fight against statelessness or persons at risk of statelessness. In collaboration with the Ghana Refugee Board (GRB) and other stakeholders, CHRAJ has been implementing a national action plan (NAP) aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of migrants and refugees and, ultimately, stateless persons. CHRAJ, in collaboration with the Office of UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Representation in Ghana, has commissioned a base line study into the gaps in terms of the law, policies, processes and practices affecting statelessness. A consultant has been hired for the study and has begun the study.

Conclusion

CHRAJ has stood up for the vulnerable and marginalized and, on this occasion, we are calling on the state institutions as duty bearers and CSOs alike to stand

up to protect and promote the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Ghana. Specifically, we call on the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) and the National Council on Disability, Ghana Federation of the Disabled to intensify their fight for the protection of the vulnerable and most marginalized in our society.

Finally, we commend Cabinet for approving the National Migration Policy and further call upon the Government of Ghana to accede to the two (2) statelessness Conventions – ie the 1954 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

Joseph Whittal

Deputy Commissioner