



## COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS & ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE (CHRAJ)

*My dad cheats me because he only gives me 50p. It is not enough. Meanwhile when we obtain a great catch we get sales of about Gh¢50- 60*

*The people I used to work for do not allow me to attend school; I decided to work on my own so that I can go to school*

*I do not like the job I do but I do it because I need money for school and for my personal needs*

*We sometimes sleep while learning due to tiredness*

*The reason why I think perpetrators are not prosecuted is because they are the parents of the trafficked children.*

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF **CHILD LABOUR** IN GHANA'S FISHING COMMUNITIES ALONG THE VOLTA LAKE



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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

CCPC	Community Child Protection Committee
CHP	Community Health Posts
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CRC	Child Rights Clubs
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DCD	Department of Community Development
DCE	District Chief Executive
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit
EP	Evangelical Presbyterian
GES	Ghana Education Service
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Migration Organisation
ISD	Information Services Department
JHS	Junior High School
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
LI	Legislative Instrument
MCE	Municipal Chief Executive
MCPC	Municipal Child Protection Committee
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MELR	Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
NCCE	National Commission for Civil Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
NPA	National Plan of Action
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
RC	Roman Catholic
SFP	School Feeding Programme
SMCs	School Management Committees
SPIP	School Performance Improvement Programme



SSSC	Social Service Sub- Committee
STDs	Sexually-Transmitted Diseases
TLMs	Teaching and Learning Materials
UEW	University of Education, Winneba
WiLDAF	Women in Law and Development in Africa

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# Chapter One

## 1.1 Introduction

This research study was conducted by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) on the basis of the Commission's mandate to promote and protect the fundamental human rights of persons in Ghana including children engaged in labour and its worst forms.

Child labour is defined as any work that threatens the development of a child<sup>1</sup> whereas its worst forms<sup>2</sup> constitute slave like conditions, illicit activity or any work that is likely to harm the health, safety and morals of a child. Child labour and its worst forms violate the fundamental human rights of a child<sup>3</sup>.

The worldwide number of children involved in child labour dropped dramatically, according to the fifth edition of ILO's (International Labour Organisation) quadrennial report series on Global Estimates of child labour from 2000-2016. The 16-year period starting in 2000 saw a decline in the number of children engaged in child labour by 94 million. This progress however slowed down from 2012 to 2016 according to the estimates.

Contrary to major regions in the world where child labour has declined from 2012-2016, the Africa region has experienced an increase within the same period, and along with the Asia Pacific region, hosts nine out of every ten children involved in child labour in the world. Africa ranks highest among other regions both in the percentage of children in child labour (one-fifth), and the absolute number of children in child labour (72 million).<sup>4</sup>

Progress against child labour therefore appears to have stalled in Africa, despite the targeted policies implemented by African governments to combat child labour<sup>5</sup>.

The Ghana Living Standards survey held in 2014<sup>6</sup>, cited by the National Plan of Action on Elimination of Child Labour review report, estimated the prevalence of child labour in Ghana at one-in-five children with 21.8 percent of persons between 5 and 17 years. The report also noted

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<sup>1</sup> *The Children's Act, 1998, Act 560, Section 12; Section 87 (2).*

<sup>2</sup> *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182.)*

<sup>3</sup> *These fundamental human rights reflect the Sustainable Development Goals 1,3-5, 10, and 16 on eradicating extreme poverty for children of all ages; ensuring the promotion of health, education, reducing other forms of inequality as well as promoting access to justice for children of all ages.*

<sup>4</sup> *ILO, Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016.*

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Regionsandcountries/Africa/WCMS\\_618949/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Regionsandcountries/Africa/WCMS_618949/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>6</sup> *GSS (2014), Ghana Living Standards Survey, Round 6.*



that more children in the rural areas were engaged in child labour (30.2%) as compared to those in the urban areas (12.4%)<sup>7</sup>. Children in Ghana were engaged in activities such as domestic work, small scale mining, quarrying, *kayayei*, commercial sex exploitation, cash crop agriculture and fishing<sup>8</sup>.

The Agricultural sector accounts for the highest number of child labourers, accounting for 71% of all children engaged in child labour, according to the 2016 Global Estimates of Child Labour. However, studies of child labour with a focus on fisheries found evidence that child labour in fishing may be higher than other agricultural sectors<sup>9</sup>; though, internationally, data on the incidence of child labour in fishing and aquaculture is not readily available<sup>10</sup>. Other studies showed that child labour in this sector is most common in informal and small-scale operations of fishing, aquaculture and post-harvest fish processing, distribution and marketing (ILO/IPEC Ghana, 2013<sup>11</sup>; CHRAJ<sup>12</sup> 2010, 2013).

Studies carried out by CHRAJ in 2013<sup>13</sup> also established that approximately sixty-five percent (65%) of heads of institutions interviewed indicated that the highest level of engagement of working children was in the fishing sector.

Fishing is considered by the ILO as a potentially hazardous occupation (ILO, 2007<sup>14</sup>) because it is a physically demanding work often carried out for long working hours in precarious conditions. Yet, despite the prevalence of child labour and its worst forms in the fishing sector as well as the everyday hazards that confront working children, not much has been done to address child labour and its worst forms. Children who work in fishing often work as unpaid family labourers or under contract for an employer. In some cases, they are victims of trafficking or forced labour. In performing these activities, these children are exposed to dangers, hazards and injuries which often have serious health implications.

Studies have been carried out with respect to the situation of children in fishing and trafficking in

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<sup>7</sup> Review of the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana (NPA: 2009-2015) 2nd Draft Report.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (MESW) (2009), National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana (2009-2015).

<sup>9</sup> Ratner, B. D., Asgard, B. & Allison, B. H. (2014). Fishing for justice: Human rights, development, and fisheries sector reform as cited in *Global Environmental Change* 27 (2014) 120–130.

<sup>10</sup> ILO document/31st January 2012. Fishing and aquaculture, [www.ilo.org/ipecc/areas/Agriculture/WCMS\\_172419/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/areas/Agriculture/WCMS_172419/lang-en/index.htm). Accessed 30th July, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> ILO/IPEC (2013). Analytical study on child labour in lake Volta fishing in Ghana.

<sup>12</sup> CHRAJ (2010). State of Human Rights (SOHR) report.

<sup>13</sup> CHRAJ (2013). State of Human Rights (SOHR) report.

<sup>14</sup> Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188).

Ghana<sup>15</sup>. Such studies cover a wide range of issues across a number of fishing communities in Ghana and Africa.

Supported by empirical evidence, this qualitative research complements such previous efforts as well as contributes practical perspectives to the understanding of the socio-economic as well as cultural conditions encountered by working children in fishing communities. These practical perspectives constitute children's own viewpoints as well as that of formal and informal actors.

The first phase of this specialized research, supported by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) was carried out in 2014. The second phase, carried out in 2016 was sponsored by the Government of Ghana.

The key objective of this research study was to unearth children's own views as well as that of other formal and informal actors in terms of children's engagement in fishing. Specifically, the study sought to assess the following in the target communities:

- Nature of child labour and its related hazards;
- Reasons that accounted for children's engagement in fishing;
- Provision of formal education;
- Interventions against child labour;
- Enforcement of child labour provisions in Ghana's laws.

This research was commissioned in 2014 and data pertaining to the first component of the research was collected that same year. Due to some structural constraints, it was only possible to complete data collection in 2016. This gap, however, allowed for the analysis of data which resulted in the review of some research questions and thematic areas, thereby giving rise to differences in reporting structure and format of the two components.

A team of officers in the month of September, 2014 and October/November 2016 interviewed formal and informal actors from three districts as well as two municipalities in the Greater Accra, Volta and Central regions. Formal actors constituted officials from the respective District/Municipal Assemblies, the Ghana Education Service (GES), Department of Community and Social Development, Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) as well as Head Teachers and Teachers. Representative of some NGOs working in the area of child

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<sup>15</sup> ILO/IPEC (2013). *Analytical study on child labour in Lake Volta fishing in Ghana*.

protection were also interviewed. Informal actors included parents and guardians of working children, fisher folks, chiefs, opinion leaders as well as working children.

The five fishing municipalities and districts were selected, first and foremost, on the basis of studies by international<sup>16</sup> and local<sup>17</sup> institutions which showed that child labour was prevalent in communities in those areas. Secondly, the Commission had previously implemented activities relating to eliminating child labour in the selected areas between 2007 and 2009 as part of an ILO/IPEC-CHRAJ project. Thirdly, the communities within these areas met a key requirement of the study, that is, they either sent or received working children. Lastly, some communities were selected based on the recommendations of formal actors interviewed.

In all, views of 229 respondents in five districts/municipalities were sought. This number comprised 141 respondents from Kpando Municipality, 35 from Ada East district, 24 from South Dayi/Afadjato South Districts and 29 from Effutu Municipality. Fifteen different focus group discussions, comprising 165 respondents were held and 64 individuals were interviewed one-on-one.

The research team gave prior notice to formal actors, traditional and opinion leaders of the respective communities to inform them about the research activity. Various actors were informed about the objectives of the study and researchers obtained the consent of head teachers and parents as well as working children before interviewing them. Even though the relevant consent was sought, it was observed in some communities that parents kept their children indoors and prevented them from being interviewed. It came to the fore during the course of the field work that attempts to obtain information about children's involvement in fishing endeavours in some respects were seen as a threat to the livelihood of communities. Representatives of some institutions, opinion leaders, parents as well as employers regarded such information as sensitive and were therefore cautious about attempts to provide information about their activities and their associated hazards. Researchers partly foresaw this challenge stemming from relevant literature review of the subject<sup>18</sup>.

Appropriate methods that primarily depended on qualitative methods<sup>19</sup> were employed. Questions were framed loosely and open to re-structuring. For instance, when responses to

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<sup>16</sup> ILO/IPEC (2013). *Analytical study on child labour in Lake Volta fishing in Ghana*.

<sup>17</sup> CHRAJ (2009 & 2010). *State of Human Rights (SOHR) reports*.

<sup>18</sup> ILO/IPEC (2013). *Analytical study on child labour in Lake Volta fishing in Ghana*.

<sup>19</sup> Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.



certain questions and non-verbal indications suggested that a sensitive area had been touched, it was possible to shift to another question, until rapport and trust was partly established before returning to the sensitive issue. The methodology or the philosophy underpinning this research recognised various interviewees including working children as rights holders as well as social actors who were capable of processing their everyday fishing activities and experiences differently at different times. Such methods gave due regard to variations that were likely to arise from interview responses on account of the varying working contexts of children. For instance, interviews with working children at the lakeside might induce different responses from children at home or in school. Such differences which connoted the “how’s” of everyday analysis and processing by actors would have been lost if there were sole reliance on quantitative methods based on definite research questions.

Even the use of language brings to doubt, issues of validity when structured questions are employed. For instance, the word *fofonye*, in other Ewe dialects implied ‘my father’ and yet the same word referred to ‘an elder brother’ in the Tongu dialect. Also, the terms “Akosombo” and “Yeji” frequently used by respondents in the Ada East District and Effutu Municipality respectively referred to receiving communities and not specific towns. Thus, besides the appropriateness of qualitative methods to sensitive human rights issues, such methods also made room for such practical discrepancies that emerged from the field.

Given the suitability of qualitative methods to the type of research embarked upon, triangulation in terms of data, methods as well as researcher was employed to guarantee reliability across various sources. The essence of such triangulation was not merely about reaching consistency across the requisite sources. Rather, the variedness and differences on the same or similar themes<sup>20</sup> provided in-depth information that enriched the data.

The challenges encountered with this research activity were usually those associated with qualitative methods. They were time consuming at all stages of the research process (i.e. planning, execution, analysis and report writing) and were resource dependent. This was in terms of researcher skills as well as the necessary material and logistical support.

The study was undertaken in two phases, the first in 2014 and the second 2016. The first phase of the study was undertaken in one district and one municipality in two regions. Communities visited were Lolonyakope, Azizanya and Otrokpe, all in Ada East District in the Greater Accra

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<sup>20</sup> Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

region, and Dafor Tornu, Kpando Torkor and Awatey Tornu in the Kpando Municipality in the Volta region. The three communities of the Ada East district were located in the south of Ghana along the Gulf of Guinea whereas the communities in the Kpando Municipality were located in the north along the Volta Lake.

In the second phase, field visits were made to three communities in two districts and a municipality in the Volta and Central regions respectively. The communities visited included Kpeve Tornu in the Afadjato South district, Dzemeni in South Dayi district located along the Volta Lake as well as Woarawobeba and Akosua Village both in the Effutu Municipality.

The findings of this research have brought to the fore issues of security, safety and human rights pertaining to working children in fishing communities. The research has established that Children are interested in schooling, but they also ought to fish to survive. Seeking to remove children from hazardous activities when such endeavours constitute their key source of livelihood can be challenging as communities tend to choose survival and livelihood over children's involvement in fishing which is usually characterized by inhumane conditions and human rights abuses. Where applicable, practical arrangements such as the one by the Dzemeni Roman Catholic Primary School could be considered. The Dzemeni Roman Catholic Primary School in collaboration with the PTA allowed early closures for children to engage in fishing related activity on market days and this seemed to have yielded some positive results. The school, despite early closures, emerged as the best performing school within the district. Such practical considerations must however be carefully considered as combining schooling and fishing can be detrimental to the child's health and wellbeing.

While we grapple with the everyday intricacies of survival and livelihood versus the human rights of the working child in fishing communities, the Commission is optimistic that these findings would:

- motivate practical discussions amongst relevant formal and informal actors regarding a holistic assessment of children engaged in fishing;
- yield realistic recommendations that would inspire inter-sectoral initiatives, aimed at addressing the practical challenges raised by this research.

## Chapter Two

### Findings: Kpando Municipality and Ada East District

#### 2.1 Kpando Municipality

##### 2.1.1 *Demography*

Kpando municipality shares boundaries with Biakoye District in the North, Afadzato South District to the East, and North Dayi District in the South. The Volta Lake which stretches over 80km of the costal line, demarcates the Western boundary<sup>21</sup>. The district covers a total land area of 820 square kilometres representing 4.5% of the Volta Region with almost 30% of the land being submerged by the Volta Lake. The population of the Kpando district as at 2010 stood at 53,736<sup>22</sup> according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census. The indigenous inhabitants who live in the Municipality are mainly Ewe-speaking people. The major occupation of the people in the municipality is agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing and hunting.

##### 2.1.2 *Socio-economic background of families of working children*

According to the views of both formal and informal actors, children lived primarily with family relatives, some of whom were biological parents. Parents and guardians of these children were predominantly fishermen, crop farmers and traders. In the communities researched, parents offered their children to relatives who assumed responsibility for their welfare. Some parents also traded their children for money because they were simply unable to care for them. The only work available once children were in the custody of relatives, was fishing. Household sizes were very large with as many as 26 members. The majority of children (6 to 17 years) at Dafor Tornu lived with their grandparents who were old and unable to fend for themselves. Interviews revealed that children also lived independent of adults, and rented their own rooms and cared for themselves; some of these children assumed responsibility for their younger siblings. Whereas such working children visited their families during weekends, holidays or vacations, others lost contact with their families. Children found mostly in Kpando Torkor migrated from island<sup>23</sup> communities to take up semi-permanent residence in inland communities<sup>24</sup> to attend school. Most island communities had no schools; the few established schools did not have

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<sup>21</sup> 2010 Population and Housing Census. District analytical report. Kpando municipality Ghana Statistical Service, October 2014, [www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010\\_District\\_Report/Volta/Kpando\\_Municipal.pdf](http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010_District_Report/Volta/Kpando_Municipal.pdf). accessed 21th November, 2017

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

<sup>23</sup> Island communities are communities that are completely surrounded by a river or a lake.

<sup>24</sup> Inland communities are those communities on the main land.



adequate facilities and personnel to run them effectively.

Working children together with their families, reportedly migrated from communities along the Volta Lake and the seas including Winneba, Akatsi, Dzodze, Effutu, Dambai mainly to fish in the Kpando municipality. Families also migrated to other communities along the northern part of the Volta Lake which include Dzemeni, Kpeve, Nkonya and Kwamekrom. There were other instances where working children migrated from Mepe, Battor, Agave, Ningo, Sogakofe, Winneba and Gomoa to stay with relatives other than parents so as to school or to engage in fishing. Most of the people that engaged children in fishing in the communities visited were relatives.

According to some informal actors, parents of these working children were either divorced or in polygamous marriages and the majority of the mothers interviewed were single mothers. Parents and guardians of most working children had little or no formal education.



*Focus group discussion with parents and guardians of working children at Kpando Torkor*

### **2.1.3 Nature of work and related hazards**

Children usually engaged in fishing-related activities such as casting and disentangling nets, paddling canoes, diving, scooping water, mending nets, preparing bait and laying hooks. Children of different ages and sexes did various kinds of work. Interviews revealed that boys aged between six and seven often scooped water from the canoe; nine (9) to 10-year-olds often paddled and cast nets for fish; while those beyond 10 years operated boats and directed canoes to their destinations. Ten-year olds and above also dived into the lake to remove entangled nets. Others went in the evening to position their baits in order to trap fish. The average age of the oldest child on the lake, according to a formal actor, was 15. Children above 15 years were usually self-employed. This assertion was confirmed when informal actors were asked about the nature of work the children did.

Children engaged in fishing activity anytime of the day. Most children said they did not work on shift basis. Some children worked before and after school while others worked overnight from 11pm until the following day. Many of these children also worked during weekends, but on Saturdays, from 6am to 6pm.

Fishing on the lake was mainly done by boys. Girls were involved in fishing-related activities such as mending nets, removing scales and gills, salting, smoking, frying and packaging of fish.



*A girl mending net during school hours at Awatey Tornu*

Working children often did not break or rest while working. Children either ate after work or while on the job. Children worked under all kinds of weather conditions - rainy, sunny, cold and windy. The majority of children worked either naked or in their underwear without life jackets or other safety gears. Children had no formal training in fishing, they acquired skills on the job through observation.

There were varied answers to the question “which type of work should be considered safe?” Some children were of the view that paddling, scooping water from the canoe, hook fishing, scaling tilapia constituted safe work. Some parents of working children shared some of these views that scooping water out of the boat and drawing of net was safe.

Primarily, children interviewed noted that the entire work was dangerous. Some children categorised dangerous work as diving, working on catfish, paddling of the canoe and casting net. A parent noted that the most dangerous work for the child is “ *xadede*”, which entails the pulling of the basket-like material used for fishing from the lake. The “ *xa*” becomes very heavy when it is full of fishes. While the ‘ *xa*’ is being pulled from the water, it can pull the child back into the water because of its weight.



*A photo of “exa” used to trap fish*

On the nature of payment, the majority of children said they were paid daily by their masters and payment depended on the quantity of fish caught. Most children were dissatisfied with the amount received; a working child commented on his meagre wages:

*“There is no agreement. I fish with my senior brother who gives me GH10.00 (\$2.9)<sup>25</sup> for a great catch and GH5.00 (\$1.5)<sup>26</sup> for a lesser catch. However, I have to use this money for a number of days because we don’t fish every day”*  
Kwesi, Kpando Torkor, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

Another child shared a similar view:

*“I get money after fishing and selling. My father gives me 50p (\$0.15) after every fishing activity. My dad cheats me because he only gives me 50p (\$0.15). It is not enough. Meanwhile when we obtain a great catch, we get sales of about GH50 - 60 (\$14.5-17.4)<sup>27</sup> but on very bad days, we don’t get any catch”*  
Yaw, Awatey Tornu, 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

Principally, formal actors were of the view some activities were hazardous and children ought not to be engaged in them. According to them, when children dived into the lake to remove entangled or trapped nets, water entered their eyes, noses and ears leading to infections and diseases such as bilharzia. Some children are not good divers and therefore drown in the process.

According to informal actors, in the event of a windstorm, fishing could be wearisome, demanding more energy to paddle and to direct the boat. Boats could capsize during a

<sup>25</sup> The cedi-dollar exchange rate as at September 2014 was GH 3.4525 to \$1.00

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

windstorm and the lives of people on the boat could be endangered when they are unable to paddle fast. Some children suffered headaches as a result of the long exposure to direct rays of the sun on the lake. During the dry season children often lost their bearing on the lake and could not be traced; such children were later found dead or alive at the bank of the lake in other communities. Children also stood the risk of being shocked or stung by *electric fish* that were in the lake.

Tree stumps abound on the lake, resulting in accidents. When canoes were at full speed and hit a stump, cavities are created in the boat resulting in water seeping into the boat and eventually leading to sinking and drowning. In the event of a leakage, working children were required to scoop water from the boat until arrival at the bank.

A working child said:

*"The boat we usually use is spoilt so it's difficult operating it yet we have to ride it because we need money. It easily sucks water and so we continually have to scoop the water out"* Kofi, Awatey Tornu. 26th September, 2014.



*A picture of a canoe full of water usually used for fishing at Awatey Tornu*

#### **2.1.4 Gender-based roles**

Culturally, girls engaged in gendered type fishing related work such as scaling and marketing of fish, therefore the amount of money earned compared to boys was generally minimal. Consequently, some girls were compelled to rely on fishermen for additional income and in the process tended to trade sex for fish in order to survive.

Families that migrated to overbank<sup>28</sup> communities for fishing, gave birth to more children with

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<sup>28</sup> Overbank communities are communities that are situated across a river or lake



sizes as big as 26 for the purpose of increasing their labour capacity. Additionally, early marriages were often prevalent in these communities as a means of encouraging rapid reproduction and thereby increase the productive labour force. Girls were seldom independent economically, given the scanty incomes they earned from fishing related activities, their reproductive role contributed to a productive force and also to the economy of such fishing communities, thereby sustaining gender-based violence and female subordination.

### ***2.1.5 Reasons for engaging children in fishing***

Working children cited various reasons for engaging in fishing. The majority of working children, regardless of whether they worked on their own initiative or not, were motivated to fish, on account of the income they earned from fishing and related activity. Interviews with most actors revealed that children utilised the income they received from fishing to support their education and family. A working child remarked:

*“The people I used to work for do not allow me to attend school; I decided to work on my own so that I can go to school”* Yaw, Kpando  
Torkor, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

Some parents also considered children’s engagement in fishing a means of skills acquisition. It was imperative for them as parents to pass on relevant skills to their children so they could grow up to become professional fishermen. Such parents considered it normal to employ children’s assistance in whatever work they did, especially given that their livelihood depended on it.

Most actors attributed children’s engagement in fishing to the general poverty in the communities. They claimed without the children’s involvement, that they could not take proper care of their children or pay their school fees.

A working child said:

*“There is no one to help financially and so I am sometimes forced to fish for my parents”* Kwesi, Dafor Torkor. 24th September, 2014.

Interviews revealed that parents also traded their children for money because they were unable to care for them. The supposed relatives who ‘bought’ these children, resided on island and overbank communities. The only work available once children were in their custody was fishing.

Families that migrated to other communities for fishing purposes had very little regard for education and did not promote the education of the children they employed. Such migrant families had very large household sizes and considered their numerical strength advantageous to their fishing vocation.

The absence of the appropriate technology also contributed to children's involvement in fishing activity. Informal actors were of the view that fishing activities were demanding, numerous and could not be the responsibility of one person, hence the use of children to provide assistance. Children confirmed that the type of fishing activity they embarked upon was manual and devoid of technology and equipment.

Generally, there was a preference for child labour instead of adult labour. Most formal actors indicated that children were easy to employ and offer cheap labour. They were smart, energetic, dutiful, malleable and seldom complained under bad working conditions. Besides, children were better skilled than adults at diving and paddling and could paddle for long distances.

Working children expressed ambivalent views about the fishing work. Most working children interviewed said they got fulfillment from fishing activities, because "fishing is fun particularly when we obtain a great catch".

Other working children thought otherwise. A working child said:

*"I do not like the job I do but I do it because I need money for school and my personal needs. My grandparent whom I live with farm to put food on the table whiles I also fish to support the family".* Kwesi, Dafor Tornu. 24th September, 2014.

A working boy also commented:

*"I don't enjoy it because it is very difficult and risky. It demands much strength than we can provide or meet".* Kwabena, Awatey Tornu. 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

Others thought that fishing was not only tedious and dangerous but also impeded their schooling. Whereas some fishermen agreed that the fishing activity was hazardous and children ought not to be engaged, others held variant views. According to some, in the absence of the appropriate technology to meet the demands of the activity they had no option but to engage

children. Others did not see anything wrong with engaging children in fishing activities. To such, children were not forced into the trade but the children themselves knew that their welfare must be cared for.

### ***2.1.6 Provision of formal education in fishing communities***

With regard to provision of formal education, the research sought to consider factors that influenced children's involvement in fishing. These included school infrastructure, attendance, TLMS as well as implementation of relevant policies and programmes such as School Feeding, Free School Uniforms, Capitation Grant etc.

#### ***A. School infrastructure and other material resources***

Interviews with relevant educational actors revealed that at least one primary school had been established in each of the fishing communities. The only school at Awatey Tornu ended at primary five. Thus, upon completion of their primary education, pupils were compelled to migrate to other communities to further their education.

Basic facilities in most schools were inadequate. All schools in the communities visited with the exception of Kpando Torkor, were without toilet facilities. Teachers in Kpando Torkor lamented about the inadequacy of tables and chairs for the pupils. This was confirmed by a pupil during an interview:

*“The school building is okay but there are only few tables and chairs. We sometimes have to share a single desk. This makes us feel uncomfortable”.*

Kwame, Kpando Torkor, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

None of the schools had an infirmary; children were often sent home when they fell sick or were injured. The nearest clinic's services were accessed only when conditions were very serious. None of the schools had an ICT unit at the time of visit, yet pupils had to be taught and examined on ICT without access to computers. Some children interviewed said the lack of amenities or otherwise did not affect their decision to go to school.

Teaching was less attractive for teachers as materials for teaching were usually in short supply. Most teachers resorted to improvisation or obtained these materials at their own expense. A teacher explained:



*“Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) are not available to us. We don’t have any syllabus, text books etc. It makes teaching very difficult. The syllabus has been revised but we don’t have any. Teaching and learning therefore look abstract to the children”* Awatey Tornu, 26th September, 2014.

Also, textbooks for use by children were equally inadequate. The supply of textbooks to children in some schools was in the ratio of 1:3 instead of 1:1. Pupils also lacked access to textbooks in their homes.

### ***B. School attendance, retention rates and performance***

In all the communities visited, the majority of both formal and informal actors indicated that working children combined schooling with fishing. A very common reason why children usually went fishing before school was to make some money to care for their basic school needs such as examination levy, exercise books and learning materials. According to a working child:

*“I work to get money for school and to be able to visit my parents who live overbank”* Kwabena, Kpando Torkor, 25th September, 2014.

These children fished at midnight until 10am. On return, such people prepared and attended school afterward. Since school starts at 8am and ends at 2pm each day, children missed out on some lessons and their attention span was also adversely affected. Some pupils were just too tired on arrival and skipped school as a result. Others would also skip school on market days or when they happened to fish the whole day. Teachers were concerned that children missed school for days, weeks, months and sometimes a whole term.

A child who lived with his stepfather and mother at Kpando Torkor, said he was sometimes asked by his parents to abandon school and go fishing against his will. Interviews revealed that some children feared punishment for being late and sometimes missed school. Most educational actors complained about poor retention rates due to children’s involvement in fishing. Rampant migration and movements were also contributive factors. Some children stopped schooling so as to enter full time fishing. School dropout was most evident at the stage of primary three (3). The drop-out rate for girls was equally as high due to their involvement in fishing related activities. Girls involved in fishing-related activities were more likely associated to fishermen probably due to their socio-economic status. Girls as young as 12 years were impregnated by adults in the community.

Most fishing communities encouraged large families predisposing children to the risk of getting pregnant. Consequently, such girls dropped out of school to avoid shame and stigma. Performance of working children in schools according to most formal actors was often below average. Children were often tired, dizzy, sleepy, played truancy and had low levels of concentration in class. They were unable to do school assignments that they took home.

In as much as teachers wished to see their pupils excel in their schools, an informal actor noted that teachers were more concerned about obtaining certificates for themselves than teaching. The respondent mentioned that the head teacher of a school was a politician and he was never at post yet always marked present.



*Focus group discussion with teachers of EP Primary, RC Primary and MA JHS at Kpando Torkor*

None of the schools visited was a beneficiary of the School Feeding Programme (SFP) as at the time of visit. Most parents did not provide their wards with feeding allowance during school hours. Other parents believed that their children's schools were beneficiaries of the programme and yet in practice they were not. The majority of the teachers indicated that hunger was a major problem that pupils encountered.

The majority of schools were expected to receive the Capitation Grant, but the grant which was woefully inadequate never arrived on time as the process for accessing it was too cumbersome. All the schools at the time of field visit had not received the grant for the 2013/2014 academic year. Schools such as Awatey Tornu Primary School had never accessed the Capitation Grant since its establishment. They mentioned that they needed to fill a School Performance Improvement Programme (SPIP) form; present cash books as well as receipts and invoices before they could access the grant. They were reportedly tossed to and fro in their quest to

access such grant. The process was therefore very cumbersome and rendered access to the fund very difficult.

Some head teachers and staff lauded provision of free school uniforms in some schools which had led to an increase in school enrolment. This increase, according to them, however placed high demands on an already feeble educational infrastructure.

### ***2.1.7 Health challenges***

The majority of working children interviewed were not registered under the NHIS and some had little or no knowledge about the scheme. Some children said they did not have money to register whereas others who were registered had their registration expired.

Most children in the event of illness depended on herbal or traditional medicine which they either prepared themselves or bought from nearby chemical shops. Hospitals were resorted to when their health condition deteriorated.

A working child said:

*“They (the people I work for) use hot water and herbal medicine when I get injured”* Kwesi, Dafor Tornu, 24th September, 2014.

A father of a working child at Awatey Tornu commented that often they had to plead with a returning boat to send a sick child home. Interviews however revealed that at Dafor Tornu, first aid boxes were provided in canoes to administer treatment to children who fell sick or got injured while fishing. Children reportedly suffered from all kinds of health conditions ranging from sight and hearing problems to bilharzia as a result of the nature of work.

### ***2.1.8 Child trafficking***

According to the formal actors, working children moved from one community to another. They cited Ada, Sogakope, Abotoase, Dambai, Accra, Ningo, Kpando Torkor, Aveme, Wusuta, Awrokorsi, Busume, Gabla Todzi, Sremkpo, Agbasiagba, Adzaboso, Hanyikpo and Kpeve as sending communities. A section of them stated that a 33-seater Benz bus loads children during long vacations from the sending communities mostly from southern part of the Volta Lake to the northern part of communities along the Volta Lake. Some children refuse to return to their communities after their holidays.

The receiving communities, on the other hand, were Dzemeni, Kpeve, Kpando, Nkonya,

Dambai, Atiwlame, Catapilla Tornu and Kwamekrom. Interviews revealed that fishermen usually travelled to sending communities to negotiate with the families for the release of children to be engaged in fishing for a number of years. An agreed amount of money, cattle or other provisions were made available to such parents. Sometimes parents also used agents (middlemen) to bargain on their behalf. These children many a time did not return to their communities, but schooled or engaged in fishing elsewhere. A formal actor noted that more boys were trafficked into fishing than girls; approximately 80% were boys, whereas 20% were girls.

Interviews revealed children were increasingly used for fishing on the islands because there were no established schools in most islands communities which were difficult to access by the Child Labour Committees. As a result, children as well as their employers who were usually untracked and unmonitored were motivated to engage in full time fishing. During the interactions, it was noted that for fear of arrest, employers moved to overbank and island communities where children were usually trafficked to. Trafficking for fishing purposes was seemingly linked to the lack of educational structures.

Formal actors explained that in addition to the lack of education, poverty was often a cause of child trafficking. Some parents did not know what their children go through at the hands of these fishermen. They thought their “masters” sent them to school however, that was not the case as there were no schools on most of these islands and overbank communities. Allegedly, some of the masters themselves were once trafficked children and so to them, the tradition must continue. Informal actors supported the above views on trafficking. According to an opinion leader, trafficked children embarked on fishing; working day and night.

According to persons interviewed (both formal and informal), the agreements to engage children in fishing which were often verbal were between the fishermen and the parent of the child, although written agreements also existed. The amount of money paid to the parent was determined by the age, physique, and fishing experience of the child. Children were usually examined by the middleman in the presence of the parents and then the price was negotiated.

A chief fisherman said between GHC200.00 (\$57.9)<sup>29</sup> and GHC400.00 (\$115.9)<sup>30</sup> was charged depending on the number of years the child was to serve. Sometimes, agents took a lot of money from the fishermen and gave very little to the parent without the knowledge of the child. They

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<sup>29</sup> The cedi-dollar exchange rate as at September 2014 was GHC3.4525 to \$1.00

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

(agents) bargained with the fishermen to their own advantage. According to some teachers, most parents were unable to contact their children once verbal agreements were reached and payments done. Parents apparently had little idea what children were engaged in and could hardly trace their children as trafficking routes were seemingly altered and children as well as parents were unable to trace each other.

### ***2.1.9 Enforcement***

Interviews revealed that after the police had made arrests, perpetrators would only be cautioned and released without being prosecuted. A formal actor indicated that prosecution of employers of children was dangerous because the lives of staff who worked in the communities were often threatened. Prosecutions were carried out only when community members reported such cases. Individuals who filed reports stood the risk of being ambushed since no personal protection or police protection was available. However, some progress was made over the years; ten cases were settled out of court because of security reasons. At the time of visit, the Community Child Protection Committee (CCPC) had arrested five traffickers with the last prosecution, reportedly, dating back three years.

An informal actor at Kpando Torkor, however, expressed his misgivings about the way perpetrators were released by the police for reasons he could not understand. The research team observed at Kpando Torkor that some perpetrators had been arrested by the Child Labour Committee waiting to be sent to the Social Welfare Officer in Kpando.

A key informant from an orphanage said:

*“My outfit attempted an arrest but the family pleaded and bailed him out of the police cells. The family was subsequently made to pay for the cost of money that had been used to rehabilitate the child”.* Kwame, Kpando, 27th September, 2014.

When asked what should be done to perpetrators of child labour and child trafficking, most respondents (both formal and informal actors) said perpetrators should be educated whereas others were of the view that they should be fined. Some working children also could not spell out what should be done to perpetrators. The majority of them saw nothing wrong with the act since the work they did is also the source of their livelihood.

### ***2.1.10 Challenges in the prevention of child labour in fishing***

- Many of the formal institutions in the district suffer from low staff strength, inadequate logistics and financial support, and therefore, they found it difficult to do effective monitoring on island and overbank communities where fishing thrives;
- The absence of marine police makes arrest of traffickers difficult and risky, since some of the fishermen possessed deadly weapons;
- Owing to the wide coverage local and international media give child labour and related issues, there is a general hesitance, particularly by informal actors, in releasing information on child labour;
- Parents are extremely poor and rescued children prefer living elsewhere than with their parents;
- The absence of state-owned shelter homes to rehabilitate rescued victims encourages the practice of child trafficking and serves as a disincentive to response and preventive efforts. Sometimes rescued children are cared for by the police officer until the end of the trial period.

### ***2.1.11 Interventions***

Interviews established the following interventions put in place by government, NGO's, Fishermen, amongst others, to eliminate child labour and child trafficking in the district;

- In 2007, the Kpando Municipal Assembly set up accounts in which monies were deposited to address child labour issues in the municipality;
- The Department of Social Welfare collaborates with CCPCs at Kpando Torkor, Ghana Navy, Ghana Immigration Service, CHRAJ, Labour Department and Zoil Services Limited<sup>31</sup> in tracking trafficked children;
- CCPCs in close collaboration with the District Social Welfare officer, monitor fishing activities, arrest perpetrators, and rescue children. Some rescued children were reportedly integrated in schools in Accra. The parents of these children were made to sign a bond with the schools. Children were integrated in schools in communities other than where they resided previously so as not to get attracted to fishing again;
- NGOs such as 'Madanfo Ghana' and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) had provided assistance in the communities by putting rescued children in school;
- NGOs provided education on child labour and child trafficking in the district

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<sup>31</sup> Zoil Services Limited is a subsidiary of Zoomlion Ghana Limited engaged in oil spill response. Zoil is also into beach cleaning and reforestation.

employing posters and tracts. The Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694), has been translated into some local languages for easy understanding;

- Fishermen in the fishing communities formulated by-laws that checked child trafficking and child abuse. For instance, Dafor Torno has sanctions in place where persons found culpable were summoned to the palace and fined GHC20.00 (\$5.8)<sup>32</sup> for abusing a child.

According to teachers interviewed from Kpando Torkor, there was very little they could do to intervene in cases of child labour or child trafficking because the community members could shoot and kill them. Similarly, teachers at Awatey Tornu were unable to prevent children from engaging in fishing activities on the lake for fear of the aggressive nature of community members. Reportedly, there were three shooting incidences, relating to a land dispute at Kpando Torkor in 2014, therefore they fear to intervene in any issue that happened in the community.

## **2.2 Ada East District**

### ***2.2.1 Demography***

The Ada East is a district located about 120 km east of Accra in the Greater Accra region along the sea and the Volta Lake. It consists of three major towns: Kasseh, Big Ada and Ada Foah and has a population of 71,671<sup>33</sup>. The study showed that the community members were predominantly Dangmes, and Krobos, who migrated from other communities within and outside the district to engage in fishing. The local language of the people in the district was Dangme though Twi and Ewe were also widely spoken. The predominant occupation was fishing, supported by trading, crop and livestock farming.

### ***2.2.2 Socio-economic background of families of working children***

Household sizes were large with an average of about eight persons in a family. The levels of educational attainment of guardians and working children were low. Working children residing within inland communities either lived on their own, with both parents, cared for by single parents or step parents. Some guardians who were also grandparents were physically frail and poor and, were unable to care for the children.

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<sup>32</sup> The cedi-dollar exchange rate as at September, 2014 was GHC3.4525 to \$1.00.

<sup>33</sup> 2010 Population and Housing Census. District analytical report. Ada East District. Ghana Statistical Service, October, 2014. [www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010\\_District\\_Report/Greater Accra/Ada East.pdf](http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010_District_Report/Greater%20Accra/Ada%20East.pdf). accessed 21/11/17.

### ***2.2.3 Nature of work and related hazards***

Children, according to interviews, were involved in diverse fishing activities such as diving (to remove unwanted materials from net), paddling boats, dragging of fishing nets as well as marketing of fish. Children sought income from alternative forms of livelihood such as oyster mining, salt winning, hawking, onion farming, kenkey moulding, cattle rearing, prostitution, hand cart pushing and head portage among others. The fishing season spanned February to December, and within this period, children were usually busily engaged in fishing. Working children as young as seven years worked from dawn to evening. Girls usually assisted their parents to sell fish until late at night. A formal actor stated:

*“Children leave home very early for fishing and are not seen by their parents till 5pm. Parents who are fishermen usually wake their girls up early at dawn to smoke fish for market”. Kwesi, Lolonyakope, 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.*

The hazards children experienced relating to their nature of work vary. Some of these children dived deep into the sea to remove unwanted materials from nets without protective gears. In the process some drowned and their bodies washed ashore after some days. Parents of such children seldom showed up to identify the bodies. A respondent noted that a child at Azizanya drowned about three years ago.

According to a formal actor, local people mostly related drowning to religious beliefs, and tended to consult prayer camps and shrines for remedy. He added however that one could not also rule out the possibilities of accidental drowning, since children dived deep into the lake without protective gears.

Most children worked on empty stomach as they set off at dawn, this made them dizzy and nauseous while at work on the lake.

### ***2.2.4 Reasons for engaging children in fishing***

The majority of respondents attributed the predominance of child labour in fishing activities to poverty. Respondents were of the view that children derived income from fishing so as to support their parents and guardians. For instance, an official of the District Assembly said that children earned income to support their parents, whereas others worked to care for themselves. Some working children interviewed said, relative to schooling, fishing is an interesting activity and they



enjoyed the chant-songs they sung at sea.

The mother of a working child during an interview posed a question;

*“What should I do with my two children whose school fees I have paid and yet they prefer to fish? When I insist, they attend school, both of them decided to move from Ada to unknown communities to engage in fishing”.*

Afua, Otrokpe, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2014.

One of the respondents attributed child labour to divorce and the subsequent breakdown of the family unit. Some of these children were mostly without parents and others were cared for by single parents and step parents. They were therefore obliged to work and support themselves at school as well as their households.

There were other contributing factors leading to child labour. These included large sized families, early marriages and familial negligence of children. Large families that did not earn enough depended on the incomes earned by working children. Families depended on child labourers which were raised by early marriages. Familial negligence forced these children to work in the fishing industry in an effort to support themselves. A 15-year-old boy in primary 4 states:

*“I went fishing the previous term at Katanga, in Togo. I fish on my own volition and give money earned to my mother- a kenkey seller. I normally drag nets and fetch water from the canoe. I am given CFA400<sup>34</sup> when we have a bumper catch. Sometimes there is no catch”.* Kofi, Otrokpe, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2014

When fishermen were interviewed on reasons for children’s involvement in fishing, they were emphatic that fishing constituted their main source of livelihood; they therefore, taught their children how to swim and fish at a tender age. A child who failed to learn this trade was considered block-headed. Fishing, according to fishermen, was a source of pride and prestige for fishing communities as it fulfilled an ancestral and cultural obligation.

### ***2.2.5 Provision of formal education in fishing communities***

There were a number of factors which, according to interviewees, influenced children’s involvement in fishing. These factors included; proximity to school, school infrastructure and

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<sup>34</sup> As at September, 2014, 400CFA was equal to GHC2.6 or \$0.75.

attendance, availability of TLMs as well as implementation of relevant policies and programmes such as SFP and Capitation Grant.

### ***A. Proximity of Schools to fishing communities***

In the Ada East district, children on overbank communities walked about seven kilometres to preferred nearby schools. Pupils therefore became very exhausted and since the lake was closer to them, they rather preferred to go fishing. Island and overbank communities were not easily reachable and so were more deprived in terms of infrastructure as well as human and material resources. It was observed, on the other hand, that schools located very close to the lakeside or the sea also encountered regular disruptions while lessons were in progress. A formal actor stated that upon hearing the shout ‘*lo ba ooo*<sup>35</sup>’, some children vacate class to pull fishing nets.

### ***B. School Infrastructure and other material resources***

It was observed that the sizes of classrooms were generally very small and overcrowded. The Azizanya D/A Basic School enrolled 437 pupils for the 2013/2014 academic year and this was seen as a major challenge confronting the schools, considering the few buildings and small sized classrooms. Despite these infrastructural challenges, some schools experienced an increase in school enrolment, which the schools attributed to the implementation of the School Feeding Programme. However, it was not effectively implemented in these schools.

TLMs such as school text books were in short supply. In one of the schools visited, the head teacher showed several photocopies made from one text book. Textbooks were in short supply and schools did not have photocopy machines and as such the already feeble budgetary supply was expended running photocopies.

### ***C. School attendance***

Most children combined schooling with work. Such children attended school three times a week and engaged in fishing related activities the remaining days. Boys went fishing early morning until 1pm without attending school. Girls, on the other hand, engaged in fishing related activities such as smoking and marketing of fish. On market days<sup>36</sup> other than Tuesdays, boys followed their parents to the sea, whereas girls smoked and sold fish.

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<sup>35</sup> Literally meaning “fish has arrived”.

<sup>36</sup>Market days in fishing communities within Ada East are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Working children were not punctual at school, skipped lessons, thus schools experienced high drop-out rates. These children were often older than the recommended age for their classes. For instance, it was observed that a 20 year old pupil was still in class 6 as a result of the reasons cited above. According to a formal actor, the lack of parental support, high poverty levels, high teenage pregnancy rates as well as the distance between schools and their houses, accounted for high school drop-outs and absenteeism in the district. The head teacher of Azizanya D/A Basic School also lamented the high drop-out rate in the area. As many as 318 pupils had dropped out in the past year from kindergarten to class six. At the Junior High School (JHS) level, 50 girls dropped out, of which 11 were the result of teenage pregnancy.

A formal actor lamented about pupils' lateness to school:

*“When school resumes, the children do not report on time and sometimes do not even report at all, with the excuse of helping their grandparents and relatives in fishing and farming. This I think impacts negatively on children’s performance, which results in repetitions of some of these children, hence, the presence of adults in primary and basic schools”.*

Otrokpe, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2014

#### ***D. Implementation of relevant policies and programmes***

The lack of implementation of the SFP was a major contributing factor to the refusal by some parents to send their children to school. Schools that implemented the SFP had higher school enrolment rate. However, it came to the fore that even in such schools, children bought their own food.

According to an official of the Ghana Education Service, schools did not regularly receive Capitation Grant due to the difficulty in processing documents. Interviews also revealed that schools did not receive regular supply of free school uniforms.

#### ***2.2.6 Health challenges***

Reportedly, working children as well as their parents were registered under the NHIS, though some stated their cards had expired. Others claimed they never required to use NHIS cards because they were always fit and in good health. Further interviews revealed to the contrary that, children were often taken ill as a result of the nature of work as well as the social context within which they operated. In fact, reportedly, apart from the harsh conditions under which

children worked, they were often subjected to physical abuses and beaten frequently by their employers or parents. Such children when taken ill were offered herbal treatment or self-medication. In terms of the latter, *paracetamol* was often administered.

### **2.2.7 Child trafficking**

Ada East was regarded as both a sending and receiving community though more children were trafficked out more than they were brought in. Children were trafficked from there to receiving communities, sometimes referred to as ‘Akosombo’, in exchange for money and other gifts. Interviews revealed that trafficking thrived in all fishing communities and trafficked children suffered all kinds of abuse. An official with the District Assembly noted that a 33-seater bus usually conveyed children twice a week to ‘Akosombo’ during vacation periods. According to some actors, children were trafficked under the guise of acquiring apprenticeship and source of livelihood. One respondent cited an instance in which three children who were being trafficked died as a result of an accident.

Boys were trafficked more than the girls as boys were considered stronger and more energetic than girls and therefore more suitable for fishing purposes. Girls who were trafficked, usually worked as prostitutes and stood the risk of contracting Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).

According to a respondent of a media house, some of the children engaged in fishing in Ada were not indigenes, but settlers. Some of these children relocated from sending communities such as Teshie and Nungua and eventually became ‘natives’ of that land. During vacation these children travelled to visit and assist their guardians.

### **2.2.8 Enforcement**

The study revealed that some respondents had knowledge on laws prohibiting child trafficking because of the extensive media coverage. However, complainants would withdraw cases for home settlement after lodging same. Informal actors were of the view that all members including children in the community were same kinfolks and so whatever affected one child affected the whole community; they normally say ‘*tseko bi nyeko bi*’ literally translated ‘my uncle’s child, my auntie’s child’. Thus, whatever happens to one, affects all and attempts to cause the arrest of one member of the community distresses the entire community. As a result, communities would seldom wash their dirty rags in public.

### **2.2.9 Interventions**

At the initiative of some state actors and civil society, certain interventions were made. These include:

- Enactment of by-laws against child labour and trafficking by the Social Service Sub-Committee of the District Assembly;
- Distribution of lantern to children;
- Distribution of free exercise books by civil society organisations;
- Distribution of solar panels to schools;
- Flexible school hours were attempted for overbank schools by the District Assembly but it did not favour both teachers and school children.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Findings: Effutu Municipality, South Dayi and Afadjato South Districts**

#### **3.1 Effutu Municipality**

##### ***3.1.1 Demography***

The Effutu municipality in the Central region of Ghana, is bordered to the north by the Agona Municipality, the north-east by the West Akim Municipality, to the south by the Gulf of Guinea and to the east by Gomoa District. Winneba is the capital of the Municipality. The population according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, stood at 68,592 with 32,795 males and 35,802 females<sup>37</sup>. The municipality covers a total land area of 95 square kilometres. The predominant occupation of the people in the municipality is fishing, which is carried out along the coast of the municipality. The inhabitants in the municipality speak mainly the Effutu language. Other languages such as Fante, Ga and Ewe are spoken by the inhabitants given that majority are migrants.

Most families of working children migrated and settled in communities along the coastal areas. Children found in the Effutu Municipality were mainly indigenes of Biriwa, Winneba, Woarawobeba, Essuekyir, Mankoadze, and Gomoa all in the Central region, whereas some hailed from communities outside the region such as Yeji, Ada, Keta, and Accra. Others came from outside Ghana, particularly Cote D'Ivoire.

Working children lived in households with sizes ranging from four to twenty-three. Some of the women in this municipality gave birth to as many as ten children. Fathers of these children had children with several women. Many of these children lived with either a single parent, both parents, grandparents, relatives or guardians, whereas some lived on their own because they had lost both parents. Some of the children were compelled to fend for themselves as a result.

##### ***3.1.2 Livelihoods and household income***

The inhabitants of the Effutu municipality engaged in numerous economic activities such as fishing, wholesale/retail trade, services, manufacturing, salt mining, crop farming and agro processing. The fishing occupation was, however, prominent in the coastal communities of

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<sup>37</sup> [www.ghanadistricts.com/District.aspx?dist=Effutu%20Municipal&r=68](http://www.ghanadistricts.com/District.aspx?dist=Effutu%20Municipal&r=68). Accessed 30th November 2016.

Winneba, Akosua Village and Woarawobeba.



*Some fisherfolks pulling fishing ropes at the shores of Akosua Village*

In a typical household, the male members (both adults and minors) engaged in fishing on the high seas, assisting in hauling the catch onshore and mending fishing nets for income. During the lean season, others engaged in peasant farming for a living. Children below six years often stayed at home to help cook for those who went fishing. The females, on the other hand, engaged in the processing and marketing of fish. Their livelihood activities mostly included scaling and smoking of the fish for market. They also engaged in the sale of fish in the local market or markets in adjoining towns and villages.

The study revealed that the household income from these livelihood activities varied and according to season. The average household income was about GHC350 (\$88.8)<sup>38</sup> per month. Higher earning households were usually those with their own fishing canoes while the lower earning households worked for the former. During the lean fishing season, incomes were usually lower than the observed average. It emerged from the interviews that lower earning households depended on loans to supplement their incomes during the lean season.

*“When my parents don’t have enough money to fend for the family, they borrow money from canoe owners and in return work for them for a year to pay off with interest”.* Kwamena, Essuekyir Methodist Primary, Effutu.

1<sup>st</sup> November, 2016.

Children who worked to supplement family income, were employed by others with the consent of their parents or were self-employed. The money earned from the fishing activity according

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<sup>38</sup> The cedi-dollar exchange rate as at November, 2016 was GHC3.941 to \$1.00.

to the children interviewed, was either given to their parents or guardians to provide their needs or used to buy the things they needed.

### ***3.1.3 Reasons for Engaging Children in Fishing***

Formal and informal actors attributed the involvement of children in fishing to poverty. Such children were either neglected by their parents or were from broken homes. They went fishing to fend for themselves and support their families. Some parents also had many dependants and so relied on some of their children to aid them in fishing. For instance, one parent said he had to take care of eight dependants; the male dependants helped him in fishing so he could use the proceeds from the sales to take care of the family. Children living with their grandparents had to work to support the family.

*“The aged grandparents were unemployed and have lost the strength to work for themselves; hence they depend on and demand children to work in order to support the family.”* A GES official, Effutu Municipality. 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2016.

Parents also held the cultural belief that children must take after them in the fishing business to maintain the family tradition. Moreover, children provided cheap labour. Most of the children often found at the beach mainly assisted their parents.

Formal actors also revealed that large family sizes, failure of fathers to take care of their children, as well as mothers' inability to provide the basic needs of children caused parents to give their children out to agents for an amount ranging between GHC5(\$1.3) and GHC50(\$12.7). The agents in turn sent them to boat owners who engaged them reportedly in fishing.

Parents, sometimes, borrowed money from boat owners to take care of their families especially in lean seasons when they struggled to make ends meet. During such seasons, children sometimes did not go to school because of lack of money.

One of the children interviewed stated:

*“When my parents don't have enough money to fend for the family, they borrow money from canoe owners and I work for them in return for a year to pay off with interest”.* Kwasi, Essuekyir Methodist Primary, Effutu. 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2016.

It was also noted that some of the children were into fishing because of debt bondage. According to some informal actors, some parents borrowed money from people (boat owners) anytime they



were in need. The children were expected to serve these boat owners until the debt was fully paid.

Not all children were driven to fish due to poverty or the inability of parents to cater for their needs. The sheer proximity and accessibility of the sea attracted them to fish. Other children engaged in fishing as a result of peer influence.

According to a teacher at Essuekyir:

*“Some children have the natural desire to fish, even though their parents provide their needs, they still go fishing” A teacher, Essuekyir Methodist Primary 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2016.*

Also, poor knowledge on worst forms of child labour issues and laws was evident among some of the respondents to the extent that some of the formal and informal actors did not know that such laws existed. Some respondents appeared unaware of the prevalence of child labour and trafficking.

### **3.1.4 Enforcement**

Formal and informal actors interviewed noted that perpetrators of child labour and trafficking were scarcely reported, arrested and prosecuted. In the rare event of an arrest, culprits were often detained for few hours to act as a deterrent to others. Such culprits were not prosecuted because, in some cases, they were the parents of the children. An interviewee at Essukeyir Methodist Primary/JHS commented:

*“The reason why I think perpetrators are not prosecuted is because they are the parents of the trafficked children. I know of a father who was arrested for giving his 15year- old son to an agent. The man was, however, set free.” Ewurakuwah, Essuekyir Methodist Primary, Effutu. 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2016.*

As at the time of the interview<sup>39</sup>, the DOVVSU office in the municipality had received only one case of child trafficking since January, 2016.

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<sup>39</sup> This interview was held on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2016 at the DOVVSU office, Effutu.

### ***3.1.5 Educational infrastructure and services***

In the targeted communities, kindergarten, primary and junior high schools were built with the support of government and donor agencies. Some of the schools were equipped with basic facilities such as classroom desks and study materials. Other schools lacked facilities such as ICT centres, libraries and toilet facilities, and equipment such as computers, TLMs etc. The Essuekyir Methodist Primary in the Effutu Municipality, for instance, had classrooms, inadequate furniture and no toilet facility. In some classrooms three children shared a desk.

One child noted:

*“If we don’t have the books and we don’t understand the things taught in class, we will definitely not pass well. Unavailability of computers and science labs make understanding of the subjects very difficult.”* Efua, Essuekyir Methodist Primary, Effutu. 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2016.

The academic performance in public schools in the Effutu municipality was generally poor. According to the Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), since 2013, the Municipality had been placing second from the bottom of the intra-regional ranking in academic performance. Because of the presence of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), some teachers posted to the Municipality saw it as an opportunity to further their education at the expense of the children. Some teachers abandoned the classrooms to further their education.

### ***3.1.6 Implementation of relevant policies and programmes***

All schools visited in the Effutu Municipality benefited from the SFP, Capitation Grant, Free Uniform, Free Text Books and Free Footwear programmes. The implementation of these policies encouraged more children to be in school. However, Essuekyir Methodist Primary and Methodist A/B Primary, both mission schools did not make use of the free school uniforms because they preferred to wear the church prescribed uniform.

With respect to the SFP, pupils complained that the food quality was bad. For instance, one child explained that sometimes, the *banku* was either too soft or the dough used for cooking had a very bad smell. Sometimes, the *gari*-and-beans was not well cooked and often inadequate. As a result, some of children refused to eat food provided by the caterers.

### ***3.1.7 Combining schooling with fishing***

According to some of the formal actors, children in the Effutu municipality hardly go fishing during school hours. Community leaders interviewed also noted that school children were only allowed to undertake fishing activities on weekends and during vacations.

In contrast, other formal actors indicated that some working children engaged in fishing during school hours. According to them, fishermen often arrived from their fishing expedition around 10am, which coincided with the break time of primary schools in the area. During this period, some children left school to work for the fishermen so they could make money. Others went on weekdays when there was bumper harvest or when their parents or guardians did not have money.

During the fishing season, which falls between July and August, classrooms were often deserted. Attendance was normally very low on market days, which fell on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Children who often combined fishing and schooling were unable to concentrate in class. They often appeared tired in class and complained of hunger. They also complained they did not have enough rest but were forced to work. To curb such incidence, the GES advised parents through Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings to desist from the practice, but the advice, reportedly, was unheeded.

### ***3.1.8 Health***

Akosua Village and Woarawobeba had no easy access to health facilities, most people resorted to the use of traditional medicine when they fell sick because they were not able to afford the prescribed medicines. Few people could afford to register under the NHIS.

### ***3.1.9 Nature of work and wages***

The study found child labour and trafficking to be prevalent in the communities visited. Children between ages 10 and 18 were engaged directly or indirectly in some form of child labour and its worst forms within the local fishing industry. The type of work, wages received, gender differences, hours spent in the fishing activities and reasons underlying this form of labour were not only complicated but interwoven into the fabric of social life and livelihoods of the communities.

Formal actors said fishing was done at sea and along the shores. On the sea, some of the children worked with small boats whereas others worked with big boats powered by out-board motors. Children who worked with big boats engaged in deep fishing; they travelled far distances to fish. On the other hand, those who worked with the smaller boats often did not engage in deep fishing; they simply cast and set nets to trap fishes. At the shores, other children either pulled rope attached to the cast nets, or begged for fish or simply stole them. Other activities the children engaged in included, pulling boats out of the water unto the dry land upon arrival, pushing boats in when setting off for fishing, scooping and carrying basins of harvested fish from boats, removing scales and fins, sorting as well as smoking and frying of fish. Informal actors added that children repaired nets and picked stones from the dragged nets.

Contrary to the assertion that some children engaged in deep fishing, informal actors asserted that children were not allowed to engage in deep fishing because it involved spending many days at sea. They indicated that fishing was done near the shores in communities such as Boat yard, Aboadze, Eyipe and Penkye. This was affirmed by a working child interviewed at Essuekyir Methodist Primary, Effutu:

*“We the children are not allowed to go deep into the sea. We only fish near the shore. The elderly people go deep fishing without-board motors; they spend days on the sea.”* Kofi, Essuekyir Methodist Primary, Effutu. 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2016.

Formal and informal actors interviewed agreed that both males and females were involved in fishing but more boys than girls were engaged, because males were perceived to be stronger than females, hence, the use of boys in pushing heavy boats into the sea from the shore. Work done by the boys was often directly related to the fishing expedition whereas that of the girls comprised activities that were carried out in the aftermath of fishing.

Generally, responses from children with respect to the number of hours they worked varied. Whereas some of the children could tell the hours they spent, others could not. Children interviewed indicated that they only fish during weekends and after school. On a typical weekend, when children go fishing, they often set off between 5am and 6am and returned between 12pm and 1pm. Their time of return depended on the strength of the waves; whenever the strength of the waves was high, they needed more energy to pull the nets which took time. But, whenever the strength of the waves was weaker, pulling of the nets demanded less time.

The children were normally offered fish as their reward, which they mostly sold. People preferred to buy from these children because they sold it cheap.

Formal actors also noted that some parents willingly gave out their children to fishermen in order to be paid an agreed amount. In addition, many of these fishermen promised to provide basic needs such as education, feeding and clothing for the child but failed to fulfil their part of the agreement. It was also revealed that some of the children did not see their parents ever again once they were given out.

Some of the children, mainly boys worked for organised groups, commonly referred to as ‘company’. Members of the group were paid a yearly amount that ranged between GH¢150 (\$38.1)<sup>40</sup> and GH¢250 (\$63.4)<sup>41</sup>. They were rarely given money aside the yearly payment, however, whenever there was bumper harvest, they were given some of the fish. The boys who did not belong to any ‘company’ worked with boat owners and were given fish after each expedition.

### ***3.1.10 Hazards encountered by working children***

Working children encountered hazards, some of which were life threatening. According to the children interviewed, during the process of setting nets, when they entered the sea, they do not wear safety gear. As a result, salty water and stone particles entered their eyes which causes a lot of pains and could eventually lead to drowning. In addition, strong sea waves could capsize boats and cause children who were unable to swim to drown.

Non-life-threatening hazards included pulling of rope attached to nets, processing of fish, and non-usage of safety equipment. It was revealed that during harvesting of fish, children pulled ropes attached to nets and tied them to the stems of coconut trees. This activity caused the drying up and hardening of palms, as well as pains in the shoulders. The rope sometimes breaks off while being pulled, resulting in injuries.

Children who carried heavy loads of fish complained of body pains. The processing of the fish for frying and smoking was also considered by some children as not safe; they were either hurt by the fins or cut their fingers during the process. The girls interviewed also mentioned that

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<sup>40</sup> As at November 2014, the cedi-dollar exchange rate was GH¢3.941 to \$1.00.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

smoke that emanated from smoking fish hurts their eyes.

The study also revealed that working children sometimes wore only under-wears, shorts or even went naked while working. Children sometimes got hurt by “*ananatsi*<sup>42</sup>” or were infected by bacteria in the sea, leading to skin diseases.

Working children also suffered abuses at the hands of those who engaged them. Some of the children were either beaten or insulted when they went contrary to the instructions of their employers. They were slapped and beaten with paddles or a type of lean fish known as “Tantre” which hurt badly.

Some working children were also subjected to sexual abuse and parental neglect. According to one of the head teachers, most of the girls had been sexually abused by either their step-fathers or fishermen.

### ***3.1.11 Interventions***

Both Government and civil society had made various interventions to address the issue of child labour and trafficking. There had been few arrests of persons for trafficking children in the district, but the perpetrators were mostly parents. There were instances where DOVVSU detained some parents who engaged in such acts.

Another intervention was the formation of Municipal Child Protection Committee (MCPC) and CCPCs. Challenging Heights and International Needs Ghana, both NGOs, made a number of interventions. In rescuing trafficked children, for instance, officials of Challenging Heights would accompany fishermen on the Volta Lake to gather intelligence about trafficked children and their ‘slave masters’. The rescue operation was normally planned and carried out with the support of the police and could last for a week. As many as 60 children could be rescued in a year.

An official of Challenging Heights shared a personal experience of a rescue operation in 2014. According to him, upon a tip-off that children were in the process of being trafficked from Ada to Yeji, he joined one of the buses. The bus, which had about 70% of its occupants being children, used the Ada-Osino-Techiman road. He said, he resorted to “WhatsApp” to

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<sup>42</sup> *It is a local name for a particular fish found in lakes and sea.*

communicate with the Head of the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit at Koforidua about the movement of the bus. With the collaboration of the Unit, police were deployed, resulting in 33 children rescued. The rescued children were rehabilitated and reintegrated into the community.

International Needs Ghana also operated a child trafficking project funded by the United States government at the time of the visit. Fourteen communities in the Central region benefitted from the project. The interventions made by these NGOs led to the reduction in the use and trafficking of children.

The Department of Social Welfare and Community Development rescued a boy who was trafficked to Kpando and collaborated with International Justice Mission to re-integrate him into his family. The mother of the child was given GH¢500 (\$126.9)<sup>43</sup> to trade in smoked fish in order to raise enough money to care for the child.

### ***3.1.12 Prevention***

Government and NGOs have put in several measures to address child labour and trafficking. The GES, for instance, sensitized children on the risk and dangers of child labour and trafficking. Parents were also educated at PTA and School Management Committees (SMCs) meetings.

The Municipal Assembly in collaboration with agencies such as NCCE, CHRAJ and the Information Services Department sensitized the public on child labour issues. As of the time of visit, the Assembly was contemplating expanding the School Feeding and Free Uniform Programmes to reduce poverty, as a way of tackling child labour in the community.

Furthermore, International Needs Ghana was implementing a 3-year protection project dubbed “Promoting an enhanced safe and protective environment for children (PESPEC), in Effutu Municipality, Gomoa East and Gomoa West Districts which was due to end 2017. Under this project, CCPCs were formed in all the communities selected for this project to put the spot-light on good cultural practices as part of their educational programmes. Child Rights Clubs were also established or strengthened in schools as a means of educating children on child labour and prevention measures. Children were encouraged to report any form of abuse to the Child Rights Clubs and the CCPCs. In addition, International Needs Ghana had also developed a child labour tool which was used in educating children.

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<sup>43</sup> As at November 2014, the cedi-dollar exchange rate was GH¢3.941 to \$1.00

## **3.2 South Dayi District**

### **3.2.1 Demography**

South Dayi District is in the Volta Region of Ghana and was established by Legislative Instrument (L.I) 1753. It shares common boundaries with North Dayi and Afajato South Districts to the north, Ho West District to the east and Asougysaman District to the South, while the Volta Lake forms the Western boundary. The administrative capital of the District is Kpeve. The population of the District according to 2010 population and housing census stood at 46,661 with 22,132 males and 24,529 females. The District covers a total area of 1,000 Km<sup>2</sup> with about 20% of its land covered by the Volta Lake. Ewe is the predominant language of the inhabitants in the communities visited in the Volta region<sup>44</sup>.

Families of working children were mostly migrants from Ada, Kwamekrom, Abotoase, Afram Plains, Dodi Island, Gbodzikofe, Battor, Bakpa, Ketekofe, Gedzokofe, Sokode, Ningo, Akatsi, Dzakeli and Mepe. Some were settlers from overbank communities such as Avudzegakofe, Kedekofe, Bluben and Havorkofe.

### **3.2.2 Livelihoods and household income**

Their main economic activities were crop production, animal husbandry and fishing. Though river fishing was predominant, fish farming was gradually gaining grounds in some communities along the Volta Lake. Typically, male adults and minors engaged in fishing for income and resorted to canoe carving and peasant farming during the lean fishing season.

The females, on the other hand, engaged in the processing and marketing of fish. Their livelihood activities included scaling and smoking of the fish for market. Females who were not into fishing engaged in petty trading and peasant farming. Some of them do not earn much money and so become susceptible to being lured into early sexual relationships, as a source of monetary support.

Sources of income among people in the district varied. Some male children from low-income level households fish in order to save money to purchase motor bikes which they used as commercial transport to supplement household income.

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.ghanadistricts.com/About-District-Details.aspx?distID=193&distName=South>. Accessed 1st March, 2017.



### ***3.2.3 Reasons for Engaging Children in Fishing***

A number of factors accounted for children accompanying their parents or guardians to fishing. According to some informal actors, parents upheld the cultural belief that children must take up after them in the fishing business to maintain the family occupation. Children were therefore, expected to follow their parents to fish whenever the need arose.

Another factor, according to some formal actors, was poverty. The family of fishers engaged their children in fishing activities to supplement family income. Children also provided cheap labour and more labour hands which helped reduce financial burdens at homes. They were of the view that if they did not go fishing to help their parents and guardians, their school fees could not be paid or they would not be served fish on their food. Those who are self-dependent considered fishing as a source of income to support their schooling.

Peer pressure and proximity to the lake were other factors that led children into fishing. Children interviewed were also of the view that despite the hazards associated with fishing, meeting their basic survival needs depended on fishing. According to the children, by engaging in fishing, they were able to feed themselves and also utilised some of the proceeds from their sales to meet other needs as well as pay their school fees.

A child remarked:

*“Fishing is good because we get fish for cooking food”* Kokuvi,  
Dzemeni Roman Catholic Primary School. 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2016.

### ***3.2.4 Enforcement***

Formal actors noted that child labour laws were very important but practically very difficult to enforce because most of the perpetrators were community members and no one in the community was willing to volunteer information on child labour offenders. As a result, no case of arrest pertaining to child labour or trafficking was made.

Some informal actors indicated that community members were ignorant of the law and did not think perpetrators should be arrested. Children interviewed had no knowledge of the child labour laws. Even after explaining the law to them, they were not in support, they felt fishing was normal despite the hazards associated with it.

### ***3.2.5 Educational infrastructure and services***

The South Dayi district had Primary and Junior High schools built by government and supported by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). For instance, the Landing Beach Committee of Dzemeni in the South Dayi district supported government to build two 3-unit classroom blocks with ancillary offices for the Roman Catholic (RC) Primary. The Committee also put up an ICT centre for its JHS, a 3-unit teachers' common room block and an office for the Evangelical Presbyterian (EP) JHS. The committee was also building a 3-unit classroom for the Islamic School as at the time of visit. The abundance of schools in Dzemeni had led to an increase in the number of pupils in the community, most of whom come from overbank communities such as the Afram Plains to attend these schools.



*A 3-unit classroom block built by the Landing Beach Committee of Dzemeni in collaboration with Government for the Roman Catholic (RC) Primary*

However, some schools lacked facilities and equipment such as computers, computer laboratories, libraries and toilets. At the Salvation Army Basic School in Kpeve Tornu in the Afadjato South district, for instance, provision of Ewe textbooks was woefully inadequate and the school had no toilet facility for children. According to the District Director, she had written several times for logistics from the Ministry of Education (MoE) but their department had not received any response.



*Toilet facility for staff members of the Salvation Army school at Kpeve Tornu*

Despite the lack of educational facilities, academic performance in public schools around fishing communities was generally good. According to the district's GES, most teachers accepted posting to these communities because the environment enabled their wives to engage in commercial activities.

### ***3.2.6 Implementation of relevant policies and programmes***

With respect to the SFP, the head teacher of Dzemeni D/A RC Primary School told the research team that the school did not benefit from the programme. The Salvation Army School in Kpeve Tornu, on the other hand, was a beneficiary of the programme.

With regards to the free uniform programme, the Dzemeni D/A RC Primary School and the Salvation Army school did not accept free uniforms because it did not match their prescribed uniforms. Nonetheless, both schools were beneficiaries of the free text books programme and the Capitation Grant.

With reference to school feeding, some pupils complained that the food served was inadequate. According to one working child, the quantity of food was not enough for him,

*"I receive only one ladle of food".* Abia, Salvation Army, Kpeve Tongu. 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2016.



*Pupils of Salvation Army school being served beans and gari as lunch under the SFP*

### **3.2.7 Combining schooling with fishing**

In South Dayi, most of the working children in the district combined schooling with fishing. Focus group discussions with children revealed that some children engaged in fishing during school hours and others worked before and after school hours. They woke up as early as 1am, worked until 5am and returned 7am to prepare for school. According to one working child, by the time they arrived in school, they got tired and were unable to concentrate fully. Sometimes, they missed school because of fishing. They only went to school when they returned before 1pm.

Another working child said they tried to do their homework early at home before they go fishing and studied when they returned from fishing, done all their house chores and taken supper. According to him:

*“We sometimes sleep while learning due to tiredness”.* Kuma, Kpeve Tornu,  
25<sup>th</sup> October, 2016.



*A pupil on the shores of the Volta River at Dzemeni during school hours*

School attendance was generally low on market days, usually Thursdays and Fridays. According to the head teacher of Dzemeni Roman Catholic Primary School, the school administration in consultation with the PTA decided to release children at 12 noon on market days to either help their parents market their wares or engage in fishing-related activities. Both the school and families benefited as a result of this arrangement as families enjoyed the assistance of the children during the working week. However, academic performance was not affected adversely, in spite of the early closure since the school was one of the best performing schools within the district.

### ***3.2.8 Health***

In Kpeve-Tornu, there was accessible Community Health Posts (CHPs), but most people including children resorted to the use of traditional medicine because they were unable to afford the medicines prescribed by the health officials. Not many were registered under the NHIS as they could not afford the cost of registration. Those whose NHIS cards had expired could also not afford the cost of renewal.

### ***3.2.9 Nature of work and wages***

The study found that throughout the South-Dayi district, most migrant families had children working within the fishing community. The majority of children within the district were engaged in some form of child labour and its worst forms. Wage, nature and type of work were dependent on criteria outlined by fishing employers and personal circumstances. The prominence of child labour within this community could not be easily explained nor attributed to a single influence. Rather, child labour and its practices were deeply imbedded in the cultural traditions and socio-economic conditions of those involved.

Fishing in the South-Dayi district was generally done inland and was much more convenient to fishermen because it took just a day whereas fishing overbank would take three to four days. Fish farming, according to some respondents was also carried out in the district and normally undertaken by the elderly.





*Fish farms on the Volta Lake - Kpeve Tornu*

Children were involved in different forms of activities during fishing expeditions. They were engaged to scoop water from boats, paddle boats, settle nets, mend nets and inspect nets for fish, drag nets and dive into the lake to remove nets entangled to tree stumps. Children cooked *akple* and place it at the base of a cone shaped trap in order to trap fish. They also caught fish using various methods such as hook and line, “*pampro*”<sup>45</sup> “*dokaka*”<sup>46</sup>; “*dohehe*”<sup>47</sup>; “*Atidzaxaxa*”<sup>48</sup> and “*Gbedzi ha*”<sup>49</sup>.



*A child helping to mend fishing nets before fishing at Dzemeni*

<sup>45</sup> It is a type of fish trap made out of bamboo sticks.

<sup>46</sup> Spreading the fishing- net in a certain format.

<sup>47</sup> Harvesting fish from the “*akple*” trap.

<sup>48</sup> Setting a trap for fish, this involves putting particular leaves which serve as food within the trap.

<sup>49</sup> Bamboo trap.



*Children pushing a cart along the shores of the Volta River at Dzemeni*

With respect to remuneration, the working children were paid either in cash or in kind, depending on the volume of catch. In instances of bumper catch, they were paid partly in kind and in cash, with no standard amount paid; cash payments ranged between GH¢1.00(\$0.25)<sup>50</sup> and GH¢10.00(\$2.5)<sup>51</sup>. There were instances where parents, through formal agreements, contract their children to employers and collect the wages. In Dzemeni for instance, the mother of a working child contracted her son to work for a co-tenant in return for an amount of GH¢5.00 (\$1.3) after every fishing expedition.

### ***3.2.10 Hazards encountered by working children***

Working children encountered hazards, some of which were life threatening. According to the children interviewed, some children drowned as a result of fishing, which was often caused by storms on the lake and stumps in the river.

They sometimes encountered storms and strong winds on the lake and were asked to continue work depending on the strength of the storm. Children who were not skillful in swimming drowned in the process. In some cases, the wind could be so strong such that the boat could capsize; so they usually dragged the boat to a nearby land and looked for a safe structure to hide. In situations where they could not find any such structure, they locate a safe ground, turn the boat upside down and hide underneath. The storm sometimes drifted the boat to other locations where the children had to trace their way back home.

Another possible cause of drowning was diving in the lake to disentangle nets from tree stumps. A

<sup>50</sup> The cedi-dollar exchange rate as at November 2016 was GH¢3.941 to \$1.00.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

child could easily have his legs trapped in the nets and drown in the process. Besides, the act of pulling ropes of fish traps out of the lake was dangerous, as they had to support themselves by kneeling against the boat to enable them pull the traps. In the process, they could tumble into the lake and drown.

Some of the non-life-threatening injuries and diseases working children suffered included pains in the eyes and ears, bruises in the palms and the contraction of water-borne diseases. The pains in the eyes and ears were as a result of injuries they suffered from diving into the lake in order to disentangle nets. Bruises in the palm, on the other hand, were caused by the dragging of the nets. Working children were exposed to water-borne diseases such as bilharzia, typhoid and dysentery as a result of the pollution of the lake. They sometimes suffered from bleeding nose and burning sensations in the eyes which was as a result of smoking fish.

### ***3.2.11 Interventions***

Various interventions were put in place by the GES, NGOs and the community members to address issues of child labour and trafficking. The GES periodically monitors the attitude of pupils and gather information on child abuse through the head of schools. Girl Clubs were established in the various schools to educate girls on child rights. Apart from this, various scholarship schemes were set up by NGOs in the district to assist pupils. About six pupils had so far benefited from the scheme as at the time of visit.

Cross Over International, an NGO, rescues trafficked children and sensitizes the community on various issues including dangers associated with child labour in fishing. Nneka Youth Foundation, another NGO, organises camping activities for school children during long vacations which takes their minds off fishing.

Some communities also had watchdog committees that monitored trafficked children. For instance, during 2016 long vacation, upon a tip off by the Committee, the police arrested a man and rescued six school children, aged between six and eight who were being trafficked from North Tongu to Kwamekrom.

### ***3.2.12 Prevention***

Several measures were put in place to curb child labour and trafficking in the district. Public education programmes were conducted by the schools through PTA meetings. Parents were sensitized on the importance of education and the dangers associated with child labour in fishing.



Some teachers were also given special trainings by Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) on how to handle complaints of abuse and forced labour. Moreover, the Landing Beach Committee of Dzemeni had set up a task force to enforce laws on the lake to replace the Naval Base sent by the government to patrol the lake.

## **Chapter Four**

### **4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **4.1 Conclusion**

This study acknowledges the efforts of the Government of Ghana in the formulation and implementation of the National Plan of Action (NPA) for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana. Notwithstanding these advances, worst forms of child labour are still prevalent within communities that engaged the attention of this research. Working children, according to this research, embark on fishing activities for many hours and work under dangerous conditions detrimental to their physical, social and mental wellbeing. The prevalence of child labour in communities visited is likely to defeat SDG 8.7 which requires all state parties, to among others, take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour and end child labour in all forms by 2025.

The findings of this research have brought to the fore issues of security, safety and human rights pertaining to working children in fishing communities. Rights-based approaches demand the entitlement of working children to their fundamental human rights, without discrimination. The minimum core obligation of the State under Article 10 (3) of the ICESCR requires State Parties to provide special measures of protection and assistance on behalf of all children and young persons without any discrimination for reasons of parentage or other conditions; Children and young persons should be protected from economic and social exploitation; their employment in work harmful to their morals or health should be punishable by law. For children who are legally qualified to engage in work, the minimum core obligation of the State under Article 7 (b) of the ICESCR requires State Parties to recognize the right of everyone (including children) to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work which ensure, in particular: safe and healthy working conditions.

On the contrary, the findings of this research have established numerous rights abuses and violations by both formal and informal actors. This research established that children were exploited because of economic and social factors. Moreover, children did not work in safe and healthy conditions.

Fishing communities upheld the cultural belief that children must take up after them in the fishing business to maintain the family occupation. Children were therefore, expected to follow their parents to fish whenever the need arose. Peer pressure and proximity to the lake served as motivation for fishing. Children were of the view that despite the hazards associated with fishing, their basic survival needs depended on fishing.

Fishing, according to this research, endangers the child's physical, mental and moral well-being. Child labourers are at a high risk of illness, injury and even death due to a wide variety of biological, physical, psychosocial hazards, long hours of work and poor living conditions. Fishing communities, defy the security, safety and educational needs of children under the guise of basic survival, socio-economic and cultural needs of their families.

The state has not provided adequate educational infrastructure in fishing communities. Where schools are available, school infrastructure is in poor state and teaching and learning facilities are inadequate. Most children whose living conditions are poor, are further impoverished as they are deprived of social protection support such as free uniforms and free textbooks. Besides, the schools these children attend seldom benefit from Capitation Grants.

Whereas the state has a robust legislative framework that supports the rights of children in Ghana, the evidence provided by this research particularly in respect of educational infrastructure, implementation and enforcement, points to the contrary. The absence of weak state educational and related support systems for fishing communities encourage rather than repel the engagement of children in hazardous fishing activity.

Combining fishing with schooling, resulted in high school drop-outs and absenteeism. For instance, the head teacher of Azizanya D/A Basic School in the Ada East District, lamented about the high drop-out rate in the area. As many as 318 pupils, constituting approximately 75 percent of the school population had dropped out in the previous year from kindergarten to class six. This rate of drop-outs, as a result of combining fishing with schooling, could defeat SDG 4.1 which requires all girls and boys to complete primary and secondary education.

Thus, whereas children are interested in schooling, they also ought to fish to survive. An

arrangement by the Dzemeni Roman Catholic Primary School in collaboration with the PTA allowed early closures for children to engage in fishing related activity on market days and this seemed to have yielded some positive results. The school, despite early closures, emerged as the best performing school within the district.

Seeking to remove children from hazardous activities when such endeavours constitute their key source of livelihood can be challenging as communities tend to choose survival and livelihood over children's involvement in fishing which is usually characterized by inhumane conditions and human rights abuses. Practical arrangements such as the one by the Dzemeni Roman Catholic Primary School could be considered, though the demands of combining schooling and fishing on the child's health and wellbeing could be detrimental.

Clearly, communities, relevant actors and children have demonstrated the need for children to support families to supplement family income. Laws that prohibit child labour must not be implemented without this realistic context. Work that is permissible and not injurious to the child's health must be balanced with appropriately adapted educational provisions and arrangements.

While we grapple with the everyday intricacies of survival and livelihood versus the human rights of the working child in fishing communities, the Commission is optimistic that these findings would:

- motivate practical discussions amongst relevant formal and informal actors regarding a holistic assessment of children engaged in fishing;
- yield realistic recommendations that would inspire inter-sectoral initiatives, aimed at addressing the practical challenges raised by this research.

## **4.2 Recommendations**

1. The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice should continue to collaborate with the District Assemblies, the Department of Social and Community Development as well as with relevant community structures for children through public education campaigns, to encourage community members to report child labour and trafficking cases to relevant institutions;

2. The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice should initiate a dialogue among stakeholders on enforcement of child labour laws and issues of survival and livelihood;
3. The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations in collaboration with Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development should put in place programmes that would improve technological and vocational skills aimed at reducing demand for child labourers and promote sustainable livelihoods for families;
4. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in collaboration with Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection must support practical ways of promoting the livelihoods of fishing communities as well as ensuring that children do not engage in work that is detrimental to their wellbeing;
5. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development should facilitate the establishment of schools at the basic level in fishing communities, particularly, island and overbank communities;
6. The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice should collaborate with the MoE, NCCE, and other relevant ministries to establish Human Rights and Integrity Clubs in island fishing communities;
7. The Ministry of Education must ensure the prompt payment of the Capitation Grant to schools in fishing communities;
8. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection should extend the School Feeding Programme to all public schools in fishing communities not benefitting from the Programme;
9. The Ministry of Health should educate the communities on reproductive health;
10. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection should collaborate with other stakeholders to provide shelter homes.

## Appendix

**Table 1: Breakdown of respondents**

<b>District/Municipality</b>	<b>Kpando</b>	<b>Ada East</b>	<b>South-Dayi</b>	<b>Effutu</b>	<b>Total</b>
One on one interviews	31	16	8	9	64
Number of participants in focus group discussions and number of focus groups	110 in 7 focus groups	19 in 3 focus groups	16 in 2 focus groups	20 in 3 focus groups	165 in 15 focus groups
Number of working children	27	4	16	16	63
Number of adults	114	31	8	13	166
Total number of respondents	141	35	24	29	229

**Table 2: Relevant human rights laws<sup>52</sup> and their provisions**

RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND LAWS	PROVISIONS
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Article 6 (1) and (2)	<p>1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.</p> <p>2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.</p>
CRC Article 19(1) & (2),	<p>1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.</p> <p>2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.</p>
CRC Article 24 (1)	States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.
CRC Article 24(2)(b)	States Parties shall pursue full implementation of the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable

<sup>52</sup>The provisions of these laws broadly reflect Sustainable Development Goals 1,3 -5, 10, and 16 on eradicating extreme poverty for children of all ages; ensuring the promotion of health, education, gender quality, reducing other forms of inequality as well as promoting access to justice for children of all ages

RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND LAWS	PROVISIONS
of the Child (ACRWC) Article 11 (1) (2) (h) (3) (a)	<p>1. Every child shall have the right to an education</p> <p>2 (h). The promotion of the child's understanding of primary health care.</p> <p>3 (a). The provision provide free and compulsory basic education;</p>
ACRWC Article 11 (5),	States Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is subjected to schools or parental discipline shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the child and in conformity with the present Charter
ACRWC Article 12 (1),	States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
ACRWC Article 14 (1) (2) (b)(c)	<p>States Parties recognize;</p> <p>1. Every child shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health.</p> <p>2. (b) to ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care;</p> <p>(c) to ensure the provision of adequate nutrition and safe drinking water;</p>
ACRWC Article 16	<p>1. States Parties to the present Charter shall take specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse, while in the care of the child.</p> <p>2. Protective measures under this Article shall include effective procedures for the establishment of special monitoring units to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as</p>



RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND LAWS	PROVISIONS
	<p>standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures: to ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care</p>
CRC Article 28(1)(a),	<p>1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular: Make primary education compulsory and available free to all</p>
International Labour Organization (ILO) 182 (3) (a)(d)	<p>Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall specify, in a declaration appended to its ratification:</p> <p>(a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;</p> <p>(d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.</p>
ILO 138 3 (1) (2)	<p>Each Member which ratifies this Convention shall specify, in a declaration appended to its ratification:</p> <p>1. The minimum age for admission to any type of employment or work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons shall not be less than 18 years.</p> <p>2. The types of employment or work to which paragraph 1 of this Article applies shall be determined by national laws or regulations or by the competent authority, after consultation with the organisations of employers and workers concerned, where such exist.</p>
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare	<p>States Parties to the present Charter shall undertake to ensure that;</p>

RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND LAWS	PROVISIONS
	well as other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting referral investigation, treatment, and follow-up of instances of child abuse and neglect
ACRWC Article 19 (1) (2)	<p>States Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that;</p> <p>1. Every child shall be entitled to the enjoyment of parental care and protection and shall, whenever possible, have the right to reside with his or her parents. No child shall be separated from his parents against his will, except when a judicial authority determines in accordance with the appropriate law, that such separation is in the best interest of the child.</p> <p>2. Every child who is separated from one or both parents shall have the right to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis.</p>
ACRWC Article 20 (1), (1) (b),	<p>States Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that;</p> <p>1. Parents or other persons responsible for the child shall have the primary responsibility of the upbringing and development the child and shall have the duty:</p> <p>(b) to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, conditions of living necessary to the child's development; and</p>
1992 Constitution of Ghana Article 13(1)(2),	<p>(1) No person shall be deprived of his life intentionally except in the exercise of the execution of a sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence under the laws of Ghana of which he has been convicted.</p> <p>(2) A person shall not be held to have deprived another person of his life in contravention of clause (1) of this article if that other person dies as the result of a lawful act of war or if that other person dies as the result of the use of force to such an extent as is</p>

RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND LAWS	PROVISIONS
	<p>reasonably justifiable in the particular circumstances.-</p> <p>(a) for the defence of any person from violence or for the defence of property; or</p> <p>(b) in order to effect a lawful arrest or to prevent the escape of a person lawfully detained; or</p> <p>(c) for the purposes of suppressing a riot, insurrection or mutiny; or</p> <p>(d) in order to prevent the commission of a crime by that person.</p>
<p>1992 Constitution of Ghana Articles 25 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e),</p>	<p>(a) Basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all;</p> <p>(b) secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education;</p> <p>(c) higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular, by progressive introduction of free education;</p> <p>(d) functional literacy shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible;</p> <p>(e) the development of a system of schools with adequate facilities at all levels shall be actively pursued.</p>
<p>1992 Constitution of Ghana, Article 28(2), (3) &amp; (4)</p>	<p>2. Every child has the right to be protected from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to his health, education or development.</p> <p>3. A child shall not be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or</p>

RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND LAWS	PROVISIONS
	<p>degrading treatment or punishment.</p> <p>4. No child shall be deprived by any other person of medical treatment, education or any other social or economic benefit by reason only of religious or other beliefs.</p>
1992 Constitution of Ghana, Article 38(1)	The State shall provide educational facilities at all levels and in all the Regions of Ghana, and shall, to the greatest extent feasible, make those facilities available to all citizens.
Children's Act 1998 (CA), (ACT 560) Section 3,	Non-discrimination. No person shall discriminate against a child on the grounds of gender, race, age, religion, disability, health status, custom, ethnic origin, rural or urban background, birth or other status, socio-economic status or because the child is a refugee.
Children's Act 1998 (CA), (ACT 560) Section 6 (1), (2),	<p>Parental duty and responsibility. (1) No parent shall deprive a child his welfare whether:</p> <p>(a) the parents of the child are married or not at the time of the child's birth; or</p> <p>(b) the parents of the child continue to live together or not.</p> <p>(2) Every child has the right to life, dignity, respect, leisure, liberty, health, education and shelter from his parents.</p>
Children's Act 1998 (CA), (ACT 560) Section 8 (1)(2)	8. Right to education and well-being. (1) No person shall deprive a child access to education, immunisation, adequate diet, clothing, shelter, medical attention or any other thing required for his development. (2) No person shall deny a child medical treatment by reason of religious or other beliefs.
CA Section 12	12. Protection from exploitative labour. No person shall subject a child to exploitative labour as provided under section 87 of this Act.
CA Section 17	Persons to report child abuse and protection cases. Any person with information

RELEVANT CONVENTIONS AND LAWS	PROVISIONS
	<p>on: (a) child abuse; or</p> <p>(b) a child in need of care and protection shall report the matter to the Department.</p>
CA Section 87 (1) (2)	<p>87. Prohibition of exploitative child labour.</p> <p>(1) No person shall engage a child in exploitative labour.</p> <p>(2) Labour is exploitative of a child if it deprives the child of its health, education or development.</p>
CA Section 88	<p>Prohibition of child labour at night. (1) No person shall engage a child in night work.</p> <p>(2) Night work constitutes work between the hours of eight o'clock in the evening and six o'clock in the morning.</p>
CA Section 89	<p>Minimum age for child labour. The minimum age for admission of a child to employment shall be fifteen years.</p>
CA Section 90	<p>Minimum age for light work. The minimum age for the engagement of a child in light work shall be thirteen years.</p>
Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (ACT 694) S. 2 (1),	<p>A person shall not traffic another person within the meaning of section 1 or act as an intermediary for the trafficking of a person.</p>

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