



PRESS RELEASE IN COMMEMORATION OF WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR, 12TH JUNE 2023

The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) joins hands with all relevant stakeholders nationally and globally to commemorate this year's World Day Against Child Labour.

The World Day Against Child Labour was first instituted in 2002 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to raise awareness of the plight of children engaged in child labour and to rally global support for its prevention.

This year's celebration is under the theme, '**Social Justice For All. End Child Labour**'. The theme aims to highlight the link between social justice and child labour; the need to ensure children everywhere are given the fair opportunity at education and to grow into adults with decent income and stable employment.

Globally, an estimated 160 million children are engaged in child labour, that is 1 in every 10 children.¹ The situation in sub-Saharan African is even dire. Every 1 in five children are in child labour with an absolute number of 72 million children, followed by the Asia and Pacific region with 62 million children engaged in one form of child labour or the other. In Ghana, twenty-one percent (21%) of children aged 5 to 17 years which translates to approximately 1.9 million children are child laborers. Out of this number, fourteen percent (14%) are engaged in hazardous labour².

Internationally, Ghana is party to various legal frameworks aimed at addressing child labour such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) and its Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict; ILO Convention on Minimum Age, 1973 (Convention No. 138) and Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (Convention No. 182); African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; The Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons and relevant ECOWAS protocols. These have been augmented by national laws and policies that have been put in place to ensure the prevention and implementation of various programs aimed at addressing causes of child labour in Ghana. Firstly, the 1992 Constitution protects children from abuse and any form of work that threatens their holistic development. Others include the

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-day-against-child-labour>

² UNICEF

Children’s Act, 1998 (Act 560)³, the Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732), the Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694), the Criminal and Other Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29) and the Criminal and Other Offences (Amendment) Act, 1998 (Act 554).

With regards to policies, the Commission notes the development of the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Human Trafficking in Ghana (2022-2026) focused on preventing, protecting and prosecuting perpetrators of human trafficking in Ghana; Minerals and Mining Policy of Ghana which prohibits child labour in the mining sector; Hazardous Child Labour Activity Framework; Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP); School Feeding Programme (SFP); Basic Education Capitation Grants and the Child Labour Free Zones Protocols and Guidelines which is being piloted in some selected communities by the government through the Child Labour Unit at the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations.

The Commission on its part is actively involved in promoting and protecting children’s rights, including protection from child labour. For instance, the Commission serves on the National Steering Committee on Child Labour which coordinates all efforts towards the elimination of the menace in Ghana. Also, the Commission conducted a qualitative study on child labour in Ghana’s fishing communities along the Volta Lake⁴ and in 2022, a total of 722 sensitization programmes on child labour through its regional and district offices across the country.

There have been considerable efforts in terms of the enactment of various legal and policy frameworks to address child labour in Ghana. Relatedly, some results were achieved such as the increase in number of investigations and prosecutions of child labour crimes and the provision of shelters for children affected by the worst forms of child labour. Unfortunately, however, some gaps still exist which have been exacerbated with the worsening economic crisis experienced by the country and its impacts on many families in this post-pandemic era.

Undoubtedly, poverty and lack of access to quality education are major contributory factors that put many children at risk of child labour. However, insufficient resource allocation by government has impeded the effective implementation of some of the social protection policies such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education, the School Feeding Programme and the Free Senior High School policy intended to help alleviate poverty and encourage the enrolment and retention of children in schools. There is the urgent need to prevent the occurrence of child labour, as it deprives affected children especially from poor households the equal opportunity at education for better future and to prevent intergenerational poverty.

No matter the social background of children, none of them deserve to be left behind in child labour and its associated human rights abuse.

Thus, CHRAJ encourages government to evaluate/review these social protection policies and especially increase resource allocation to aid in their effective implementation in alleviating poverty and reducing cost opportunities to primary and secondary school enrolment and retention. This will ensure all children especially from households with limited or declining household incomes, the equal opportunity to access quality education and be protected from physical and psychological abuse.

³ Sections 89, 91 and 92 specifies the minimum age for work and hazardous work to be 15 and 18 years respectively.

⁴ <https://chraj.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Child-Labour-REPORT.pdf>

In addition, CHRAJ calls on government and relevant ministries, departments and agencies to work assiduously towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 target to eliminate the worst forms of child labour including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as to end all forms of child labour by 2025. In addition, the government of Ghana is entreated to ratify the UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography to help protect children from commercial sexual exploitation; which is categorised as a worst form of child labour.



Joseph Whittal
Commissioner