

# Ghana

## Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

The Ghana Statistical Service estimated that approximately 27.2 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in Ghana were working in 2001.<sup>1716</sup> The majority of working children are unpaid workers on family farms or family enterprises.<sup>1717</sup> In rural areas, children can be found working in picking, fishing, herding and as contract farm labor.<sup>1718</sup> Children also work as domestics, porters, hawkers, miners and quarry workers, and fare-collectors.<sup>1719</sup>

In urban centers, street children work mainly as truck pushers, porters, and sales workers.<sup>1720</sup> The fishing industry on Lake Volta has a high number of children engaged in potentially hazardous work like casting and drawing nets in deep waters.<sup>1721</sup>

*Trokosi*, a religious practice indigenous to the southern Volta region, involves pledging children and young women to atone for family members' sins<sup>1722</sup> by helping with the upkeep of religious shrines and pouring libations during prayers.<sup>1723</sup> *Trokosis* live near shrines, often with extended family members, during their period of service, which lasts from a few months to three years.<sup>1724</sup>

There are reports of children being given away, leased, or sold by their parents to work in various sectors.<sup>1725</sup> Children were also reportedly sold into involuntary servitude for either labor or sexual exploitation.<sup>1726</sup>

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<sup>1716</sup> Another 48.5 percent of children ages 15 to 17 years were also found working. See Ghana Statistical Service, *Ghana Child Labour Survey*, March, 2003; available from [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simdoc/ghana/report/gh\\_rep.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simdoc/ghana/report/gh_rep.pdf). For more information on the definition of working children, please see the section in the front of this report entitled *Statistical Definitions of Working Children*.

<sup>1717</sup> Sudharshan Canagarajah and Harold Coulombe, "Child Labor and Schooling in Ghana," in *Child Labor and Schooling in Africa: A Case Study of Ghana, Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia* Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1998; available from [http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/HDNet/HDdocs.nsf/globalView/chapter%203.pdf/\\$File/chapter%203.pdf](http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/HDNet/HDdocs.nsf/globalView/chapter%203.pdf/$File/chapter%203.pdf). Children are inadequately compensated for their work, and often endure physical abuse and receive little or no health care. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices- 2003: Ghana*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27730.htm>.

<sup>1718</sup> Line Eldring, Sabata Nakanyane, and Malehoko Tshoedi, *Child Labour in the Tobacco Growing Sector in Africa*, 21, 2000; available from <http://www.fao.no/english/>.

<sup>1719</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*, Section 6d.

<sup>1720</sup> Ghana Statistical Service, *Ghana Child Labour Survey*.

<sup>1721</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*, Section 6d. See also *afrol News*, *Progress in freeing Ghanaian slave boys*, *afrol News*, [online] 2003 [cited October 26 2004]; available from [http://www.afrol.com/News2003/gha008\\_labour.htm](http://www.afrol.com/News2003/gha008_labour.htm).

<sup>1722</sup> *Trokosis* are most often young girls. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*.

<sup>1723</sup> U.S. Embassy Accra- official, interview, July 21, 2005.

<sup>1724</sup> US Embassy Accra estimates that as of early 2005, there are fewer than 50 individuals serving in *trokosi* shrines.

<sup>1725</sup> *Ibid.*

Ghana is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficked children.<sup>1727</sup> Internationally, children are trafficked to neighboring countries for forced labor, and young girls are trafficked to the Middle East as domestic workers and to both the Middle East and Europe for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation.<sup>1728</sup> Internally, boys are trafficked from the Northern region to fishing communities in the Volta region or small mines.<sup>1729</sup> Girls are trafficked to Accra and Kumasi to work as domestics, assistants to traders,<sup>1730</sup> and *kayayeis*, porters who trade goods carried on head loads.<sup>1731</sup>

Education is compulsory for children of primary and junior secondary age, the equivalent of grades 1 to 9.<sup>1732</sup> The authorities do not enforce school attendance, however, and parents rarely face penalties if their children do not attend school.<sup>1733</sup> Education can also be costly for poor families who must pay school levies each term, as well as buy textbooks and uniforms.<sup>1734</sup> In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 81.4 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 60.2 percent; both rates were higher for boys than for girls.<sup>1735</sup> Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Recent primary school attendance statistics are not available for Ghana. In 2001, the primary school repetition rate was 5.2 percent. Although 64.3 percent of working children attended school in 2001,<sup>1736</sup> there has been an increase in the school dropout rate, partly because of economic hardship leading to rural-urban migration.<sup>1737</sup>

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<sup>1726</sup> Boys ages 10 to 12 years are reported to work for fishermen in exchange for yearly remittances to their families, a practice commonly condoned by impoverished parents. See *Ibid.* Section 6d.

<sup>1727</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 6f. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Ghana*, Washington, D.C., June 13, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2004/33189.htm>.

<sup>1728</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Ghana*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*, Section 6f.

<sup>1729</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Ghana*. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*, Section 6f. In February 2004, Gambian authorities cracked a child trafficking ring bringing young people into Ghana to work for Ghanaian fishermen, see Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Gambia-Ghana: Sex slave children trafficked by Ghanaian fishermen*, February 26, 2004; available from <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=39717>.

<sup>1730</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Ghana*.

<sup>1731</sup> Seema Agarwal et al., *Bearing the Weight*, Centre for Social Policy Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, May 1997. According to local NGOs, these children were subjected to dangerous working conditions, sometimes resulting in injury or death, see U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*, Section 6d.

<sup>1732</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*.

<sup>1733</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1734</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 5. Ghana's constitution prohibits the central government from charging school fees, yet individual districts continue to charge levies. See U.S. Embassy- Accra official, email communication, June 23, 2005.

<sup>1735</sup> World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004.

<sup>1736</sup> Ghana Statistical Service, *Ghana Child Labour Survey*.

<sup>1737</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*, Section 6d.

## Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Children's Act sets the minimum age for general employment at 15 years, and sets 13 years as the minimum age for light work.<sup>1738</sup> The Children's Act prohibits children under 18 from engaging in hazardous labor, including work in mines or quarries, at sea, in bars, in manufacturing that involves chemicals or machinery, or in any job that involves carrying heavy loads.<sup>1739</sup> Employers who operate in the formal sector must keep a register with the ages of the young people they employ. Failing to keep this register can result in a fine of 10 million cedis (USD 1,121)<sup>1740</sup> or 2 years in prison.<sup>1741</sup>

The Ghanaian Constitution and labor law forbid forced or bonded labor by anyone, including children, but the practice reportedly occurred in the country.<sup>1742</sup> Act 29 prohibits the prostitution of women under the age of 21, with more severe penalties for children under 14.<sup>1743</sup> Ritual servitude is illegal,<sup>1744</sup> but the practice of *trokosi* is not illegal because it is voluntary.<sup>1745</sup> Although there is no specific law against child trafficking, the government has legal grounds to prosecute traffickers under laws against slavery, prostitution, rape, underage labor, child stealing, kidnapping, abduction, and the manufacture of fraudulent documents.<sup>1746</sup>

Child labor laws are not enforced with any effectiveness or consistency.<sup>1747</sup> Labor authorities carry out routine annual inspections of every workplace in the formal sector, but seldom monitor the informal sector where working children can be found, and there was no record in 2003 of any prosecution for a violation of child labor law. Other law enforcement authorities, including judges and police, lack adequate resources and are largely unfamiliar with child protection laws.<sup>1748</sup>

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<sup>1738</sup> Light work is defined as work that is not harmful to the health or development of a child and that does not affect the child's attendance and performance at school. The legislation allows children aged 15 years and above to work in an apprenticeship if the employer provides a safe and healthy work environment, and training. See *The Children's Act, Act 560, 1998*; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/E98GHA01.htm>.

<sup>1739</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 91.

<sup>1740</sup> *The Children's Act, Act 560, 1998*; available from <http://natlex.ilo.org/txt/E98GHA01.htm>.

<sup>1741</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1742</sup> FXConverter, in Oanda.com, [online] [cited September 25, 2004], Section 6c; available from <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

<sup>1743</sup> *Penal Code, Act 29, 107 (1) and 108 (1), (1960)*; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/GhanaF.pdf>.

<sup>1744</sup> U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 2657*, October, 2002.

<sup>1745</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*.

<sup>1746</sup> *Penal Code, Act 29, 107 (1) and 108 (1), (1960)*; available from <http://209.190.246.239/protectionproject/statutesPDF/GhanaF.pdf>.

<sup>1747</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Ghana*.

<sup>1748</sup> U.S. Embassy- Accra official, email communication, June 23, 2005.

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

In 2004, the Government of Ghana in collaboration with ILO-IPEC, international and non-governmental organizations, continued institutional capacity-building efforts begun in 2001 under the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Child Labor in Ghana. These efforts include training and sensitization workshops for police, labor inspectors, local governments, and community members.<sup>1749</sup>

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments		
Ratified Convention 138		
Ratified Convention 182	6/13/00	✓
ILO-IPEC Associated Member		✓
National Plan for Children		✓
National Child Labor Action Plan		✓
Sector Action Plan (Trafficking)		✓

In addition, 2004 saw the launch of the 6-year, USD 5.1 million ILO-IPEC Timebound Program, which sets time frames for progress on the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in Ghana. Several Ghanaian government ministries are partners in the program, which aims to strengthen Ghana's legal framework against child labor, mobilize Ghanaian society against child labor, expand apprenticeship and skills training systems in the country, and develop an integrated policy framework and institutional and technical capacities for addressing child labor issues effectively and sustainably.<sup>1750</sup>

With the active participation of several Ghanaian Government ministries, ILO-IPEC also continued to implement additional programs. The West Africa Cocoa/Commercial Agriculture Program (WACAP), a USD 6 million program, aims to build institutional capacity, promote public education and mobilization, and develop a long-term child labor monitoring system. Among the program's achievements in 2004 were a training manual for farmers, new policy measures from the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs aimed at improving access to basic education, and a pilot test of a child labor monitoring and reporting mechanism in five cocoa-producing districts.<sup>1751</sup> The Building the Foundations for Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Anglophone Africa is a 4-year, USD 5.3 million project to build technical skills and organizational capacity in government, workers' and employers' organizations, and to identify and disseminate child labor best practice information at the sub-regional level.<sup>1752</sup> Other ILO-IPEC projects include skills training in the urban informal sector in five African countries, and a nine-country study on child exploitation.<sup>1753</sup>

With funding from the World Bank, the government implements projects to raise awareness of child labor, withdraw children from work,<sup>1754</sup> and assist street children.<sup>1755</sup> The Government of Ghana also has a

<sup>1749</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Ghana*.

<sup>1750</sup> U.S. Embassy- Accra, *unclassified telegram no. 1720*, August 24, 2004.

<sup>1751</sup> The program is slated to run through 2005. See *Ibid*.

<sup>1752</sup> *Ibid*. See also ILO-IPEC, *Support for the Implementation of Time-Bound Measures for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana*, project document, Time-Bound Measures, project document, Geneva, September 3, 2004.

<sup>1753</sup> ILO-IPEC, *West Africa Cocoa/Commercial Agriculture Programme to Combat Hazardous and Exploitative Child Labour (WACAP)*, technical progress report, Geneva, September, 2004.

<sup>1754</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Building the Foundations for Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Anglophone Africa (CBP)*, technical progress report, Geneva, September, 2004.

<sup>1755</sup> ILO-IPEC, *IPEC action against child labour: Highlights 2004*, report, October, 2004.

National Plan to Combat Trafficking, and the Ghanaian Parliament and various government agencies have highlighted the issue of trafficking in special events and community education campaigns.<sup>1756</sup> The government also works to bring children who have been sold back home, by offering various financial incentives to parents, such as business assistance and help with school fees and uniforms.<sup>1757</sup>

Ghana is one of nine West and Central African countries participating in a 3-year, USD 4.3 million ILO-IPEC project to prevent trafficking in children and provide rescue and rehabilitation services to child trafficking victims.<sup>1758</sup> In 2003, The Women and Juvenile Unit of the Police Force implemented trafficking awareness campaigns in the Volta region.<sup>1759</sup> The government is also partnering with the IOM in a 21-month project to return and reintegrate children trafficked to the fishing sector in Yeji.<sup>1760</sup>

Through 2005, the Government of Ghana will continue to implement the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education program, aimed at providing basic education to all school-age children, promoting efficiency, quality, access, and participation.<sup>1761</sup> The government has cooperated with USAID in the implementation of its Education Quality for All (EQUALL) project, which focuses on increasing access to primary education, improving reading instructional systems, and improving education management systems.<sup>1762</sup> Other Ministry of Education efforts include support for “informal” NGO-sponsored schools and increased vigilance over students’ progression to higher grades. The Ghana Education Service is implementing activities under its Five-Year Action Plan for Girls’ Education in Ghana 2003-2008, including science and mathematics clinics around the country, scholarships for girls, incentives to attract female teachers to rural areas, and awareness-raising activities.<sup>1763</sup> Ghana also has been slated to receive funding from the World Bank and other donors under the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, which aims to provide all children with a primary school education by the year 2015.<sup>1764</sup>

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<sup>1756</sup> ILO-IPEC, *List of all non-USDOL projects, Annex 1*, report, Geneva, 2004.

<sup>1757</sup> In 2003, over 1,000 children were repatriated to Ghana. ILO-IPEC, *National Programme for the Elimination of Child Labor*, technical progress report, March 31, 2003.

<sup>1758</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Ghana*.

<sup>1759</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1760</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1761</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Combating the Trafficking of Children for Labor Exploitation in West and Central Africa (LUTRENA / Phase II)*, technical progress report, Geneva, September, 2004..

<sup>1762</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Ghana*.

<sup>1763</sup> IOM, *Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Ghanaian Children Victims of Trafficking for Labour Exploitation in Yeji Fishing Communities (LEYE)*, [online] [cited September 26, 2004]; available from <http://www.iom.int/iomwebsite/Project/ServletSearchProject?event=detail&id=GH1Z005>.

<sup>1764</sup> *Ghana's Education System*, Republic of Ghana Ministry of Information, [online] n.d. [cited September 26, 2004]; available from <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/studying/education/index.php>.