

PRESS BRIEFING BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE ON
EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL WELFARE AND STATE ENTERPRISES

DATE: 25TH MARCH, 2015

VENUE: PARLIAMENT HOUSE, ACCRA



On 25th March, 2015, the Parliamentary Select Committee on Employment, Social Welfare and State Enterprises held a Press Briefing on Child Labour at the Parliament House, Accra. The Briefing was meant to update the media on the progress made in the fight against child labour as well as the renewed commitment of government and parliamentarians to eliminate child labour in Ghana. The Briefing was attended by members of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Employment, Social Welfare and State Enterprises, members of the National Steering Committee on Child Labour, journalists and other stakeholders in the fight against child labour. The event began at 10:30am with a statement from Hon. Joseph Amenowode, Member of Parliament for Afadjato and Chairperson of the Parliamentary Select Committee after which journalists asked questions and were duly answered by the Hon. Member of Parliament.

STATEMENT ON CHILD LABOUR: HON. JOSEPH AMENOWODE, MP, AFADJATO AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL WELFARE AND STATE ENTERPRISES

In his statement, Hon. Amenowode noted that:



➤ The press briefing was being held in the wake of the new child labour data released by the Ghana Statistical Service as part of the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) and the recent launch of the Association of ECOWAS Parliamentarians against Child Labour, a platform

to engage sub-regional MPs in the FACL;

- The Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) allows children to do work that does not impair their health, education and personal development, consequently, not all work done by children is child labour;
- The forms of child labour prevalent in Ghana include quarrying, illegal mining, commercial sexual exploitation of children, child domestic servitude, portering of heavy loads etc.;
- The recent GLSS data reveals that the total number of children in child labour has increased over the last decade by 500,000 children. 1.9m (22%) of the 8.7m children between 5 and 17 years are in child labour, while 14% of all children are involved in hazardous work;
- Parliament contributes to the FACL by passing legislation, serving on the NSCCL, scrutinising plans and budgets on child labour, and holding government accountable for progress in the fight;
- In November, 2014 in Turin, Italy, a Platform of ECOWAS Parliamentarians against Child Labour was launched and Ghana, represented by himself [Hon. Amenowode], was nominated as the first Chair. The objective of the Platform is to network ECOWAS parliamentarians; advocate for child labour to be given attention with the view of

passing legislation and budgets at local and national levels; encourage bilateral/multilateral collaboration on specific issues and sectors; stimulate research and understanding on the root causes of child labour and the best routes to address it; garner support to implement the *West Africa Regional Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labour*; and promote cooperation among parliaments and parliamentarians for improved outcomes in eliminating child labour;

- Ghana's Parliament is willing to learn from good practices from other parliaments in the sub-region. A second meeting of the Platform will be held in May, 2015 in Accra;
- Notwithstanding the several policy initiatives and constitutional provisions that protect the child, parliament, and indeed all stakeholders need to do more to save Ghana from the pervasive effects of child labour.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Following his statement, the Hon. Amenowode solicited questions from members of the press present. The following questions were asked and answered.



QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
<p>What is the difference between “ordinary” child labour and the worst forms of child labour?</p>	<p>The worst forms of child labour are those that have increased risk, or are hazardous and injurious to the child’s psychological and physical development and interfere with the child’s education. These are the areas that the government and stakeholders have prioritised in the National Plan of Action.</p>
<p>What is the evidence of the efforts made so far in eliminating child labour?</p>	<p>Previously, people did not admit there was child labour in Ghana. Through advocacy, that has changed. Previously, people were not clear about what child labour actually means. Now, it is becoming clearer. Change is occurring but at a slower pace than should be. The statistics are not changing in our favour, that is why parliament is stepping up its efforts. Initially, NGOs alone did all work, but ILO has recommended that parliament should be involved. Even if it is reduced in Ghana but it is prevalent elsewhere, the ripple effects will be felt in Ghana that is why collaboration with regional partners is crucial. On 27th and 28th March, Parliamentarians without Borders (an association of MPs around the world against child labour) will meet to discuss child labour issues. This is one of several initiatives parliaments across the world are taking.</p>
<p>What specific roles should the public expect MPs to assume so their efforts can be monitored?</p>	<p>The primary role MPs will play is advocacy. They are well-positioned to do this because they are government’s primary representative in their constituencies and they have the respect needed at the local level to influence change. People can report cases to MPs who will then forward their concerns to District and Community Child Protection Committees.</p>
<p>Despite all the interventions, why are children still seen on the streets engaging in activities deemed to be child labour?</p>	<p>The efforts in the past have obviously not culminated in the total elimination of child labour, hence this press briefing to enhance media involvement and get the country’s attention to the need for increased efforts. It is when child labour becomes a matter of public concern that the right commitment will come from all quarters.</p>

<p>Has the Parliamentary Select Committee identified some specific places in Ghana where child labour is prevalent? Why are there no interventions in these communities?</p>	<p>Indeed, since the year 2000, extensive research has been done and several communities have benefitted from interventions from several local and international donor-funded projects. ILO has been at the fore-front of this. A National Plan of Action on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour has been operational since 2010, and child labour has been tackled in agriculture, mining, quarrying, commercial sexual exploitation etc.</p>
<p>Are there specific sanctions for perpetrators of child labour?</p>	<p>Trafficking attracts a minimum jail term of five years and hazardous work, a minimum of one year or a fine.</p>
<p>Why do rescued children go back to work in child labour?</p>	<p>Child labour is complex. Poverty is usually the poster reason, but other reasons include ignorance and bad attitude towards children. Law enforcement also ought to be stepped up. Sometimes, culprits are let go because of community sympathy. In Sefwi Wiawso, a man arrested for using 4 children on his farm during school hours, currently has his case pending indefinitely before the courts because the community itself is pleading for him. Child labour persists also because families do not understand the worth of education. In rural areas, because the quality of education is low, children have little interest in continuing beyond Junior High School. Parents think the best thing is to make children learn hard farm skills for instance. Unless these root causes are tackled, withdrawn children are likely to relapse.</p>

The Press Briefing ended at about 11:30am following the questions. Hon. Joseph Amenowode thanked the members of the NSCCL, the MPs and the media men for their presence and contribution. He enjoined the media to step up their advocacy by providing rich, well-researched content on child labour to increase public awareness and commitment to eliminate child labour.

ANNEX C

FULL PRESS STATEMENT

**STATEMENT BY HON. JOSEPH AMENOWODE, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR AFADJATO AND
CHAIRPERSON OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL
WELFARE AND STATE ENTERPRISES AT A PRESS CONFERENCE ON CHILD LABOUR IN GHANA**

I welcome the press this morning to a briefing to talk about child labour in Ghana and the efforts that the Committee on Employment, Social Welfare and State Enterprises and the National Steering Committee on Child Labour are making to combat the menace. Indeed, this statement has become imperative with the backdrop of the new child labour data released by the Ghana Statistical Service as part of the Ghana Living Standards Survey round six (GLSS 6) and the recent launch of the Association of ECOWAS Parliamentarians against Child Labour, a platform to enhance the engagement of Members of Parliament in the elimination of the canker from the sub-region.

It is important to note that not all work done by children is classified as child labour. The Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) allows children of a particular age range to do work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling.

Work done by children in its most extreme forms, referred to as the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL), involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves.

The forms of child labour prevalent in Ghana include stone cracking/quarrying, agriculture, illegal mining (galamsey), commercial sexual exploitation, child domestic servitude, portering of heavy loads mostly referred to as "kayayei", street hawking and begging. Some of these children are trafficked and exploited under very dangerous conditions, contrary to the Human Trafficking Act (Act 694) passed by this noble house in 2005.

Sadly, the 2012/2013 sixth round of the Ghana Living Standards and Labour Force Survey (GLSS6/LFS) by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), revealed that the total number of children engaged in child labour has increased over the last decade by about half a million children. The prevalence rate of one-in-five children engaged in child labour in Ghana has not also changed since the 2003 survey. The report estimates that, 1.9 million out of the total population of 8.7

million children between 5 and 17 years are in child labour, representing approximately 22%, while 1.2 million representing 14% of all children were involved in hazardous work.

Parliaments play very important roles in our sub-region and beyond. A declaration of the ECOWAS/ILO tripartite symposium on child labour in 2013 highlighted the role of parliaments and called on parliaments to monitor progress in their National Action Plans and hold governments to account for adequate progress to meet targets.

The Parliament of Ghana is engaged in efforts to address issues of child labour. Apart from passing legislation, Parliament is represented on the National Steering Committee on Child Labour (NSCCL), the highest coordinating body on national child labour issues, chaired by the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations, Hon. Haruna Iddrisu with the Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment, Social Welfare and State Enterprises, Hon. Joseph Amenowode, as a member. This august house also scrutinises and approves government plans and budgets to address child labour, and holds government to account for progress. Parliament also receives statements from government on 12th June every year on the World Day against Child Labour, followed by a debate.

I am happy to announce to this august house the launch of a Platform of ECOWAS Parliamentarians against Child Labour. The Platform was launched in November, 2014 in Turin, Italy with the support of the ILO. At the launch, Ghana, represented by me was nominated as the first chair of the Platform.

The objective of the Platform is to:

- Establish a South-South network of parliamentarians in the West African sub-region in the fight to eradicate child labour;
- Advocate for child labour to be given attention, particularly in passing legislation (especially regarding ILO Convention C138 on Minimum Age, C182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour, C189 on Domestic Workers, C29 Protocol on Forced Labour), budgets and at national and local levels;
- Encourage bilateral/multilateral consultations, exchanges and reporting mechanisms within the region on specific issues such as child trafficking, child labour in domestic work and child labour in specific sectors such as cocoa, fishing, domestic work and mining;

- Stimulate research and understanding of the root causes of child labour and the best means of addressing it;
- Encourage ECOWAS member states and the ECOWAS Commission to implement the *West Africa Regional Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labour*;
- Promote cooperation at local, national, regional and international levels amongst parliaments and parliamentarians for improved outcomes on eliminating child labour.

Ghana's Parliament is willing to share – in the spirit of South/South cooperation by providing and learning from good practices from other parliaments in the sub-region. As a first step to consolidating the Platform, the Parliament of Ghana in collaboration with the National Steering Committee on Child Labour will in May, 2015 host the second meeting of the Platform in Ghana.

It is true that child labour interventions receive significant space in Ghana's policy initiatives and it is underpinned by a constitutional provision under Article 28 (2) that "every child has the right to be protected from work that jeopardizes his health, education and development". Various national and sub-national policy frameworks, including legal instruments and developmental plans, have incorporated both implicit and explicit interventions to deal with the scourge. However, given that child labour continues to be pervasive in our country, I call on this august house to support this laudable initiative and join this noble fight, to save the future of our great nation.

Child labour, no matter its form is undesirable and needs to be eliminated.

I thank you for the opportunity and for your attention and commitment.