



III WORLD CONGRESS AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
25-28 November 2008

UNICEF Ghana - Good Practices:

FIGHTING THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN GHANA

The issue: There is significant evidence that sexual exploitation is a problem in Ghana. Records of the Domestic Violence Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Police Service indicate that every year quite a number of children and adolescents go through series of sexual abuses.

Table A: Reported Child Abuse (2002-2006)

Case	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Rape	181	150	259	267	345
Defilement	820	755	671	670	1427
Indecent Assault	106	90	75	116	138
Incest	20	17	13	29	11
Compulsion of Marriage	-	2	1	1	7
Abduction	153	175	192	237	320
Unnatural Carnal Knowledge	1	3	1	-	16
Attempted Rape	23	33	17	23	52
Attempted Defilement	1	-	-	4	4

Source: DOVVSU Records, 2007.

The commonest forms of sexual exploitation that gets to the attention of DOVVSU include unnatural carnal knowledge, defilement, rape, incest, indecent assault among other forms of sexual abuse as indicated in Table A (2002-2006).

There is not much statistical data available on children involved in commercial sex work in Ghana even though evidence abounds that it is gaining grounds in the country. Some of the major causes of child prostitution in Ghana are lack of parental support which stems from poverty, broken marriages and parental irresponsibility and peer pressure. Media reports indicate that most children involved in prostitution consider their trade as short-lived rather than a permanent profession.

Action: Some of the important steps taken by Ghana to fight sexual exploitation include passage and strengthening of the legislative environment, intensification of public education through the media, identification, counseling livelihood skills training and reintegration.

Action 1: Legislative Environment

Ghana has reformed its legislations extensively to cover areas that relate to violence, exploitation and abuse against children. The passage of the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 650), The Criminal Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29) (Revised Edition) and the Juvenile Justice Act, 2003 (Act 653), Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732), the Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694) and the Persons with Disability Act 2006 (Act 715) are examples of legislations in place to protect children and other young people from violence and abuse. Children are protected by law from all forms of abuse and neglect. The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 1998 (Act 554) now Criminal Offences Act Amendment, 1994 (Act 484), criminalizes the abandonment or exposure of a child to danger (section5), abduction of a child (article 7), and a range of sexual offences including rape, forced marriage, indecent assault, incest, defilement, procurement, causing or encouraging the seduction or prostitution of a child under 16, custody of child under 16, and allowing persons under 16 to be in brothels (articles 11-13).

Action 2: Strengthening and Establishment of Institutions

Ghana has strengthened some state institutions and established new ones to increase capacities in fighting sexual exploitation and other child-related concerns. The establishment of the DOVVSU and the progressive expansion of its offices and desks all over the country has made it easier for children and their families to have access to the Police and Justice. Currently, DOVVSU has 79 offices nationwide in addition to the National Secretariat. Other institutions include the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, which has two main Departments (Department of Children (DOC) Department of Women (DOW). MOWAC is decentralized at the 10

administrative Regions. The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) has also gone through significant structural transformations and as a result is well resourced than a decade ago. The following are other key institutions and committee set up or strengthened to enable Government deliver services related to sexual exploitation:

- Ghana AIDS Commission (GAC)
- Shelter for Abused Children
- Shelter for Trafficked Children
- Multi-Sectoral Committee on Child Protection

These government agencies collaborate with civil society groups to identify, counsel, offer livelihood skills training, reintegrate or resettle children involved in prostitution.

Action 3: Information Collection and Documentation

There is very little data on sexual exploitation, however, the last decade has seen considerable improvements in research and information management concerning sexual exploitation, child labour and trafficking. The amount of data collected and managed on sexual violence through surveys, for instance, has increased. DOVVSU has created a simple data base on child abuse and other domestic violence incidents.

In the future a comprehensive study will be carried out to ascertain the scope and magnitude of the problem to enable government to make the necessary interventions. However, attempts have been made to gather relevant data based on case studies. For instance in 2002 UNICEF supported Professor C. K. Brown to conduct a Study on Sexual Abuse in Schools in Ghana. UNICEF also commissioned a Commercial Sex Exploitation/Mapping in 2003 and has provided financial support to the DOC and the Children and Youth in Broadcasting (CURIOS MINDS) to conduct a study on children's perceptions on corporal punishment in Ghana. The study includes aspects of sexual exploitation of children in school.

The Judiciary is also going through the process of computerising its operations to facilitate monitoring of types and number of cases. UNICEF and other donor agencies also continue to build the capacity of judges to deal with child victims and help the Courts with the management of these cases.

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) has also increased its collaboration with Ministries, Departments and Agencies working with vulnerable groups to harmonise research methodologies and also encourage comprehensive reliable data approaches for national development. Currently, the GSS with support from the Africa Development Bank is examining ways and means of strengthening the Nation's Statistical System (NSS) in the on-going National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS).

Action 4: Role of the Media

The role of the media has been very instrumental in focusing public awareness on child abuse, labour, trafficking and sexual exploitation with specific references to women and children. At present, there are about a hundred and twenty (120) FM Stations nationwide, and these stations have specific programmes on child related issues such as child labour, pornography, paedophilia, and abusive traditional practices. Many of them carry out advocacy programmes which have been held at the national, regional and district levels to disseminate information on trafficking and sexual exploitation through a cross section of stakeholders and civil society groups.

The television media has also contributed immensely through the broadcast of news items, announcements, movies and other entertainment and educational messages that focus on child pornography, trafficking and sexual exploitation. These programmes have increased public awareness and helped shape opinions on violence targeted at children.

The print media also publishes newspaper items on trafficking and commercial sex exploitation. Other publications such as newsletters, magazines, and books carry stories with specific focus on children and minors as victims of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. Newspapers solely devoted to children issues are gradually emerging on the news stands.

Action 5: International and Regional Protocols

The government of Ghana has limited structures and resources to prevent, detect, investigate, prosecute and punish offenders of sexual exploitation that occur across the boundaries of Ghana. Even though, there is reliable information that children are trafficked both in and out of Ghana, there is some difficulty in preventing, detecting and even prosecuting largely due to difficulties in cross-border co-operation and the weak capacity of law enforcement agencies. The protocol allowing for the free movement of persons (as long as they have authorised and valid documentation) between ECOWAS states has contributed to regional growth but has also encouraged the growth of trans-national crimes, including trafficking and sexual exploitation. Some corrupt and inept border officials allow people to cross frontiers without documentation and their movements go unrecorded. In spite of the difficulties, the Government of Ghana has made some significant strides to control trafficking and

sexual exploitation through legislation, multinational, and regional protocols, which include the under-mentioned:

- Ghana has acceded to the ECOWAS Protocol on trafficking (2002-2003)
- Ghana has signed bilateral agreements with Gambia to return trafficked persons back to their countries

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Ghana is signatory to enjoins all state parties to fight child trafficking and sexual exploitation

Action 6: Five-Year Action Plan on Violence Against Children

Ghana has developed an action plan on VAC spanning the period 2008-2012. The Five Year Action Plan on Violence against Children is a comprehensive plan for suppressing violence with measurable targets and indicators in which every Ghanaian, at all levels has a role to play. The aim of the plan is to create a safe environment that protects children from all forms of violence wherever they occur including the home, school, institutions, work place, and community. It also aims at increasing the efficiency in law enforcement and policy implementation.

Partnership: Fighting sexual exploitation requires a great deal of partnership and collaboration. The MOWAC, DOVVSU and the DSW, which are the lead Government agencies in the campaign have forged collaborative ties with other partners, both governmental and non-governmental, to carry out their mandates. As a result, a number of their projects have received varying supports from development partners such as the UN Systems (specifically UNICEF), DANIDA, the World Bank, Save the Children Fund, Plan International, European Union, and other Diplomatic Corps. With support from UNICEF, a Child Abuse Network has been established to provide a comprehensive, child friendly, sustainable system which prevents and responds to all forms of physical and humiliating abuse of children in Ghana.

Impact, Lessons Learnt and the Way Forward: On the whole, the fight against sexual exploitation in the last decade has been fairly successful in Ghana, even though there is a lot of work left to be done to improve upon the current status. Significant gains have been made to improve data collection and information documentation but there is more room for improvement. Much more publicity and awareness creation need to be done to complete the agenda set by the media to improve knowledge and attitudes pertaining to sexual exploitation. Government institutions must strengthen their collaboration and do more networking than what exists presently. UNICEF and other development partners have been very supportive in providing various supports to both government and non-government institutions. This relationship must be maintained and strengthened. Finally, the issue of Sexual exploitation must be given more focus by government, implying that the MOWAC, DOVVSU, DSW, the law enforcement agencies and legal systems must be allocated requisite budgets that would enable them carry out their mandates.

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