



# Significant Change Stories on Child Protection in Ghana: Phase I (Northern Ghana)

The Collection and Analysis Stories from Regions,  
Municipalities, Metropolitans, Districts, Communities in Ghana

(The Synthesis Report which is based on the Phase I and II MSC  
Assessment Reports is available on the website of UNICEF Ghana)





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**Canada** 



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About Associates for Change (AfC): AfC is a research and consulting firm based in Ghana focused on social development, child protection, education, health, gender equality, agriculture, project management and evaluation in Africa. AfC's mission is to generate policy relevant research and high-quality consulting services in the socio-economic governance and development sectors in order to influence social change, equity and policy reform in Africa.

Canada 

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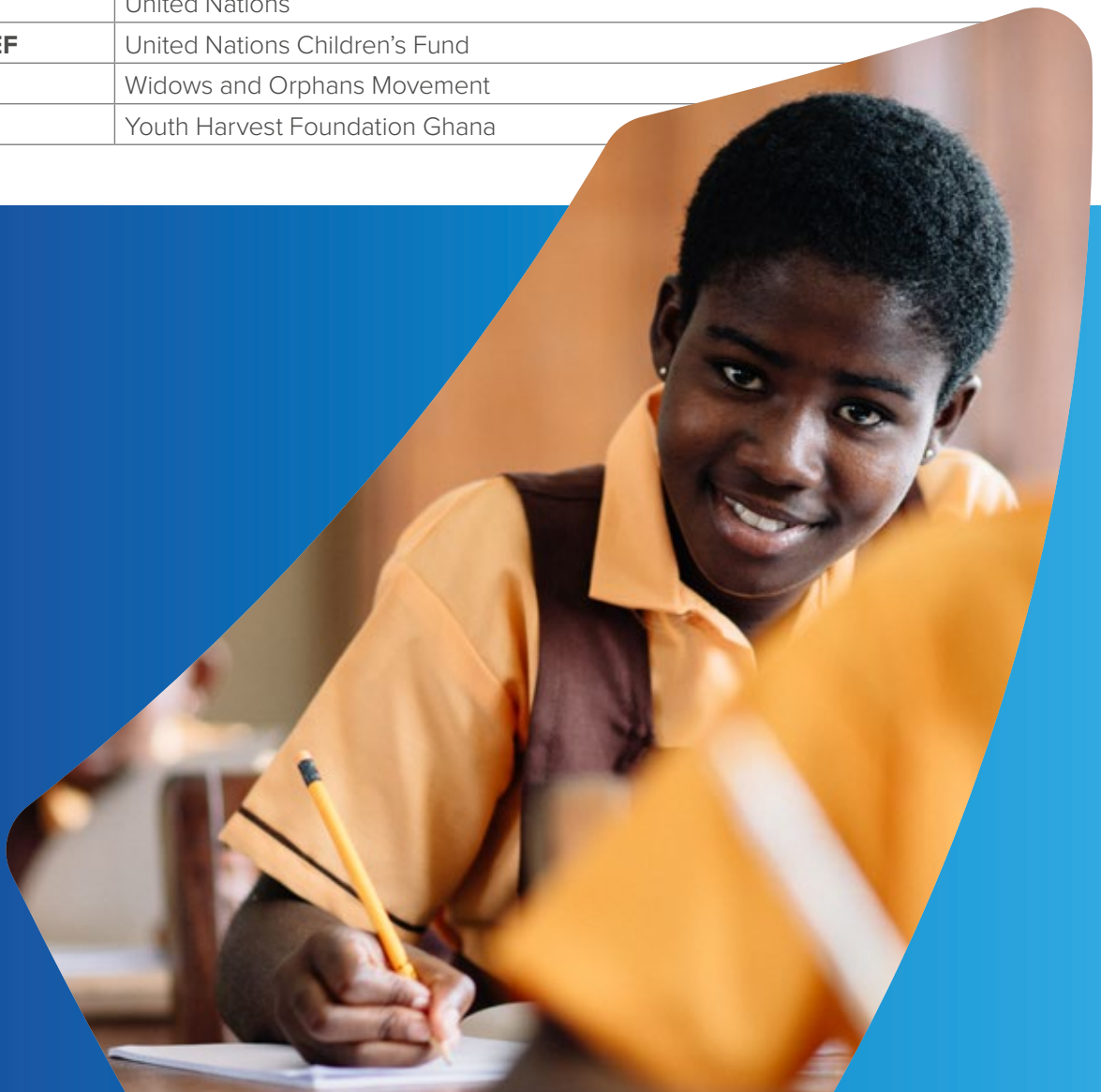
Finally, we would like to thank the Government of Canada for providing the financial support to through Global Affairs Canada to first implement the community led initiatives at the local level to address child protection, and sexual and gender based violence related issues and then to collect the most significant stories.



# List of Abbreviations

<b>AfC</b>	Associates for Change
<b>ATCWAR</b>	Advocacy and Trainers for Children and Women Advancement Rights
<b>BCDP</b>	Baptist Child Development Programme
<b>BECE</b>	Basic Education Certificate Examination
<b>CAMFED</b>	Campaign for Female Education
<b>CBE</b>	Comprehensive Basic Education
<b>CCFC</b>	Christian Children Fund of Canada
<b>CCMC</b>	Children against Child Marriage Clubs
<b>CHRAJ</b>	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>CRI</b>	Child Rights International
<b>CRS</b>	Catholic Relief Services
<b>DA</b>	District Assembly
<b>DCDSW</b>	Department of Community Development and Social Welfare
<b>DCPC</b>	District Child Protection Committees
<b>DOVVSU</b>	Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GES</b>	Ghana Education Service
<b>GHS</b>	Ghana Health Service
<b>G-PASS</b>	Girls Participatory Approaches to Student's Success
<b>GoG</b>	Government of Ghana
<b>HH</b>	Household
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IDC</b>	Integrated Development Centre
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>JHS</b>	Junior High School
<b>LEAP</b>	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MoGSP</b>	Ministry of Gender and Social Protection
<b>MSC</b>	Most Significant Change
<b>MVP</b>	Millennium Villages' Project
<b>NCCE</b>	National Commission on Civic Education
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NHIS</b>	National Health Insurance Scheme
<b>NORSAAC</b>	Northern Sector Action on Awareness Creation

<b>PEF</b>	Protective Environment Framework
<b>PhD</b>	Doctor of Philosophy
<b>PPAG</b>	Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana
<b>POWER</b>	Promoting Opportunities for Women’s Empowerment and Rights
<b>PTA</b>	Parent-Teacher Association
<b>RAINS</b>	Regional Advisory Information Network Systems
<b>SADA</b>	Savannah Accelerated Development Authority
<b>SC</b>	Significant Change
<b>SHS</b>	Senior High School
<b>SMC</b>	School Management Committee
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
<b>SPRING</b>	Strengthening Partnerships, Results, and Innovations in Nutrition Globally
<b>STD</b>	Sexually Transmitted Disease
<b>UDS</b>	University for Development Studies
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>WOM</b>	Widows and Orphans Movement
<b>YHFG</b>	Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana



# Executive Summary

There has been considerable effort made to address child protection issues in Ghana including child protection programmes that seek to address the full spectrum of risk factors in the lives of children and their families. The impact of these interventions are usually not explored in terms of their effectiveness in order to fully understand the outcomes of these interventions. UNICEF is developing the use of the Most Significant Change (MSC) stories as a participatory monitoring and evaluation tool to gather qualitative stories and turn them into quantifiable measures.

The overarching objective of the Most Significant Change (MSC) stories assessment is to contribute to the strengthening of monitoring and measuring of results including evidence generation while also demonstrating social behavioural change at national and sub-national levels. Associates for Change carried out the assignment tasks in order to achieve the MSC assessment objectives of:

1. Collecting high quality MSC stories to feed into programme management and reporting processes;
2. Leading the story selection and reflection process at the community, district and regional level;
3. Building the capacity for MSC in five (5) regions; and
4. Testing and refining the analysis and reporting structures and templates developed by UNICEF and the Department of Community Development (DCD).

Several initial steps were taken to sensitize all levels of key stakeholders, including the Department of Community Development. Consultations were initiated on a multi-level platform starting from the national level with UNICEF, the DCD and Social Welfare (DCDSW) in the lead in April, 2017. Regional consultation workshops were organized in Bolgatanga, Upper East Region and Tamale, Northern Region, on 9 May and 10 May 2017, respectively. These regional consultations were aimed at creating awareness within the key child protection institutions. The regional consultations further assisted in identifying the selection criteria as well as the prospective communities where MSC stories would be collected. The criteria for selecting the regions and districts for the assessment of Phase 1 were established.

The Upper East and the Northern Regions were selected because they have had a higher number of district engagement processes with UNICEF focussed on child protection, including the roll-out of the child protection toolkit. The criteria for selecting the research districts and communities were:

- i. Participation in the 2014 MSC training;
- ii. Recipient of the roll-out of child protection toolkit;
- iii. Length of work engagement by DCD/SW in the district; and
- iv. Area of UNICEF/GoG project collaboration.

## Training and Capacity Building at Field Level

One of the objectives of the assessment was to build capacities on MSC among key child protection agencies and NGOs in Ghana, with specific focus on UNICEF partners implementing projects with UNICEF financial and technical support. The target of the capacity building was primarily to work with DCD staff who had earlier received MSC training in 2014 and 2015, although additional district level personnel from the key agencies and NGOs were included. The focus of the capacity building was to bring staff on board who had potential interest and commitment to use MSC in their work. These training workshops were carried out at the regional and districts levels. The general objective of the training was to equip the partners with MSC skills to aid in the collection, documentation and analysis of MSC stories. This was to enable them to assess the impact of UNICEF implemented interventions on child protection in beneficiary communities. AfC developed a Ghana MSC training manual extensively based on existing MSC manuals, integrating the local context and institutional structures as part of the MSC assessment project. The manual provided the detailed analytical tools including the key domains and thematic areas for the analysis process and reporting process. Aside from the MSC training at the regional and district levels, the MSC trainees were enjoined to participate in the story collection at the district and community levels. This allowed them to test the MSC tools and to obtain coaching/feedback from AfC senior field staff.

## Selection of MSC Stories through the District Child Protection Committee

The MSC story selection process was conducted at two levels, namely: i) story rating by the District Child Protection Committees (DCPC); and ii) ranking of the rated stories using an excel computer model. After the story collection across the four districts, the AfC team, with the support of the respective DCD/SW, organised and facilitated a two-day MSC story selection process. In each district, eight to 10 members of the DCPC gathered for two days to assess each story collected from their respective districts. They deliberated on the reasons for these ratings with the aim of influencing each other's assessment until they came to a consensus. A score of 1 - 5 was attached to every story based on set criteria. The criteria used for assessing the stories was based on a series of consultations during the MSC training workshops at regional and district levels. The selection criteria included the following:

- (a.) Magnitude of change as shown in the comparative situation before and after the child protection intervention;
- (a.) The sustainability of the change;
- (a.) Scope of the change (individual, family or community level);
- (a.) Explanation of activities that initiated the change process;
- (a.) Gap bridged by the intervention; and
- (a.) Impact of the change (positive or negative) and the change agents.

A district specific template was designed in excel for the compilation of the scores of the MSC stories for each district. This template automatically tallied the scores for each story that was assigned by the District Child Protection Committees (DCPCs) during the story selection workshops. The software used the total scores to rank the stories in descending order (highest score was assigned first). The first 50 to 60 ranked stories were then selected as the top-ranked stories from each district.



## Limitation and Challenges in the Field

The MSC assessment process (Phase 1) was faced with some limitations that can provide lessons for the planning and implementation of the Phase 2 MSC Assessment in Southern Ghana. Some of the challenges were the:

- a) Low level of cooperation from trained district and community development officers during the story collection despite the institutional agreements with DCD;
- b) Limited time and resources for the implementation of MSC Assessment Phase I: this did not allow for a more comprehensive MSC story selection process; and
- c) Difficulty of recall of stories by some community members.

## Light Touch Quantitative Analysis of Stories

The MSC stories were collected from two regions - Northern (Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts) and Upper East (Talensi and Bawku West Districts). A total of 356 MSC stories were collected across the four districts, out of which 220 (62%) were selected by members of the District Child Protection teams following a review and selection process. The light touch analysis carried out on the collected stories revealed that 100 stories were collected from each of West Mamprusi and Bawku Districts, while 76 and 80 stories were collected from Talensi and West Mamprusi Districts respectively. The majority (53%) of the MSC stories were collected from female story tellers. Similarly, the majority (50.3%) of the stories were collected from children between the ages of 12 to 17 who were mostly students.

## Analysis of Key Findings Based on the Child Protection Domains

The MSC stories collected cut across the following child protection domains:

- child labor;
- child marriage;
- sexual reproductive health and teenage pregnancy;
- child abuse and neglect;
- children in conflict with the law and child delinquency;
- child migration and trafficking;
- automated birth registration;
- empowerment, livelihood and voice of beneficiaries;
- rights to education; and
- exposure to negative media.

Stories were found to have cross-cutting child protection content and were classified under the term “multiple domains”. The MSC light touch analysis of the stories collected showed that the most dominant child protection domain was: sexual and reproductive health rights and teenage pregnancy (20.9%), child labour (14.5%), empowerment, education and voice (12.7%), and child abuse and child neglect (10.5%). Other significant child protection areas were children in conflict with the law and child delinquency (7.7%), child marriage (7.3%) and child migration and trafficking (5.5%). There were also a large number of stories in the domains of exposure to negative media, automated birth registration, and multiple domains.

## Domain 1: Child Migration and Child Trafficking

There were no clear MSC stories collected in the area of child trafficking; an analysis of the MSC stories revealed that, at the pre-intervention stage, child migration was prevalent in the two regions although

it was observed mostly in the Northern Region. Two migratory patterns involving children emerged from the MSC study: migration from one village/community to another; and migration from one region to another (usually from the northern regions to the southern regions of Ghana, particularly Accra and Kumasi). Poverty and the desire to ‘copy’ the lifestyle of returned child migrants were commonly cited to be the main driver of child migration across all 34 communities visited. Children often cited migrating in order to engage in menial labour activities such as head porters or “kayaye” in the city centres and markets.

State and non-state actors implemented various interventions aimed at curbing child migration in the communities and districts. Notable institutions and NGO’s actively working on child migration in the four districts included: the Department of Community Development/ Social Welfare, NCCE, Afrikids, NORSAAC, Baptist Child Development Programme, CCFC, and CAMFED. These institutions mainly used community sensitization techniques to create awareness about the effects of child migration and trafficking in all the four districts across the two regions. These activities resulted in increased awareness and knowledge about the hazard of child migration. Consequently, some communities recorded a reduction in the movement of children to the southern sector as child migrants due to these sensitisation campaigns.

## **Domain 2: Child Labour**

Child labour stood out as a major issue that was affecting the children across all four MSC intervention districts. Children were engaged in different forms of child labour related to activities for both commercial and domestic purposes. These child labour activities included, but were not limited to, children working on the farms for their parents, children serving as ‘shepherd boys’ to monitor cattle and goats, children carrying heavy loads from the farm to their homes, working on “galamsey” sites, children doing what is termed as “by day” where they work on people’s farms or on construction sites for a daily fee. Some of the children also travelled to the southern part of the country, mainly Accra and/or Kumasi, to work as head porters popularly referred to as “kayaye”. While some forms of child labour were peculiar to some districts, others were general in nature and were recorded in all the four districts visited.

Sensitization was the main strategy used to create awareness on a wider basis related to child protection issues. There were also multiple child protection interventions implemented in some communities to help solve the prevailing child protection concerns. The key institutional actors involved in the implementation of child protection interventions included: CAMFED, NORSAAC, DCD/DSW, CCFC, RAINS, NCCE and SADA in the Northern Region, and Afrikids, Action Aid, Youth Harvest, DCD/SW and NCCE in the Upper East Region.

The changes that emerged as a result of the implementation of the interventions were more of behavioural and attitudinal change on the part of adults (parents/guardians) towards their children. These attitudinal and behavioural changes reflected positively in higher school attendance rates for children. The reduction in child labour activities was a result of parents deciding to limit how they engaged their children in child labour activities because of the sensitization they received from these NGO’s and Government institutions.



### **Domain 3: Child Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (Teenage Pregnancy)**

The problem scenario related to sexual and reproductive health rights of children was fairly common across the two regions under consideration. The organization of dance events in the community called “jams” was believed to be the strongest cause of teenage pregnancy in all four districts. Lack of parental care and peer pressure was also a key factor. Community members were fully aware of the negative outcomes of teenage pregnancy. More importantly, teenage pregnancy led to withdrawal of girls from school and sometimes the boys who were implicated; sometimes, the girls would reintegrate especially when parents were sensitised. There were misconceptions, negative beliefs and a general lack of knowledge about reproductive health issues in several of the districts visited across all the districts visited.

In order to solve the problem of teenage pregnancy, key state and non-state actors have put in place various interventions aimed at dealing with the problem. At the organizational level, the MSC assessment findings reveal that the state and non-state actors have mainly used sensitization to create awareness on implications and factors leading to teenage pregnancy. Where PPAG is involved, the sensitization is focussed on family planning. State actors such as NCCE, the Girls’ Education Unit of GES, and non-state actors such as CAMFED, NORSAC, and Afrikids used the school based approach such as the formation of child right clubs, reproductive health clubs, counselling and the provision of basic school needs such as fees, uniforms, and other school supplies to support mainly girls to stay and be retained in school. At the individual level, parent led interventions were conducted through parent child communication/ home visits to discuss issues of teenage pregnancy.

The analysis of MSC stories across the four target districts found that keeping girls in school through the counselling and provision of basic school needs was the most effective way to prevent teenage pregnancy. The provision of school supplies and, in some cases, the payment of school fees reduced the drop-out rate and increased enrolment. Knowledge on teenage pregnancy was a factor that increased the community and parental sensitization of the issues. The challenge found in the study was that children were being given sex education on teenage pregnancy but not being educated on the broader reproductive health issues such as abortion, HIV/AIDS, the use of contraceptives and family planning.

### **Domain 4: Child Marriage**

Child marriage was mentioned as one of the prevailing child protection issues in almost every community with varying causes. Child marriage is driven by push factors at the individual or ‘micro’ level such as poverty and parental beliefs. Other factors that were found to be related to socio cultural beliefs such as: once a girl (school going) is ‘impregnated she should be quickly married off’ and other factors related to the enforcement of the law (e.g. legal age for marriage is 18). The MSC study found a trend in some communities where children were opting to enter into early marriage themselves with partners of their choosing in order to avoid being forced into marriage by their parents.

The MSC team identified several intervention processes that communities, traditional leaders and organizations were using to address/prevent child marriage. The communities used by-laws, the formation of child protection clubs, and sanctions and bans on child entertainment activities such as access to video houses and dance events. The intervention strategies common to state and non-state actors included sensitization campaigns and school based approaches. Non-state actors such as CAMFED, Afrikids and NORSAC, and the GES Girls’ Education Unit / GPASS have used school based

approaches such as the provision of scholarships, school supplies and the formation of school clubs as their main intervention strategies to protect girls from early marriage.

The individuals interviewed and the beneficiary communities reported during the MSC story collection that they have seen significant changes due to some of these interventions. Financial considerations are no longer a challenge or lout by men in the communities where girls are provided with their basic school supplies and scholarships. There are also changes with reporting patterns. Child marriage is becoming easy to track as victims are reporting directly to child protection related offices such as GEU/DCD and CHRAJ due to the widespread child rights awareness of the specific risks and harm caused by child marriage.

## **Domain 5: Children in Conflict with the Law and Child Delinquency**

There were no recorded stories of change related to children in conflict with the law in any of the four districts across the Northern Region and Upper East Region. There were, however, stories of deviant and delinquent behaviours, truancy and indecent dressing among children recorded mainly in Tolon and Bawku West Districts. The pre-intervention level analysis showed that children were generally abusive towards their parents, teachers and elders in the communities. Other forms of delinquent, deviant and maladjusted behaviour of children were truancy and absenteeism from school. Some communities reported that children were engaged in other negative behaviour such as stealing, gambling, indecent dressing and roaming aimlessly at night, and visiting cinemas and dance clubs where they are exposed to negative/pornographic media.

At the intervention level, state institutions and NGOs including the Department of Community Development/ Social Welfare and NCCE, CCFC, NORSAAC and World Vision embarked on parental sensitization on how to raise their children so that they do not become delinquent. The NCCE formed child protection clubs in various schools. Children were educated on child protection issues in addition to social behaviour norms through school club activities. The changes resulting from the sensitization interventions the communities resulted in behaviour and attitudinal change. Parents have adopted new ways of dealing with their deviant children and managing their home life in a more effective manner.

## **Domain 6: Child Abuse and Neglect**

Several stories of change collected in the field were focussed on child neglect: factors contributing to child neglect were related to the fact that children were left on their own without their parent's supervision, support and guidance. Several children who reported neglect would leave home in the morning and return late in the night without any form of cautioning and punishment. As a result, some children dropped out of school. The girls often became pregnant and eventually dropped out of school as well. Some children, especially the boys, became involved in "*galamsey*" activities. Children reported being abused verbally and physically. Parents admitted that their relationship with their children "*was not the best*" because they often used abusive words towards their children.

There was no specific intervention focused on tackling child abuse or child neglect, rather the interventions were on general child protection issues. Four organisations carried out activities aimed at tackling child abuse and neglect issues. These organisations were: Brave Aurora and CAMFED in the Northern Region; and Afrikids, World Vision, NCCE and CAMFED in the Upper East Region. The Department of Community Development used the child protection toolkit to educate community members on the dangers of child abuse and child neglect.

Through the interventions of Brave Aurora and CAMFED, some children who dropped out of school as a result of parental neglect were able to reintegrate back into school. These changes were largely attributed to community sensitization, education and awareness creation that led to behavioural change in parents and other adults.

## **Domain 7: Child Exposure to Negative Media**

Many parents, during the MSC story collection, complained about their children staying out late to watch videos and movies, going to dance “jams” and other types of dances organized during traditional funerals. Some children had become addicted to the usage of mobile phones and were not monitored regarding the use of social media sites. The parents interviewed complained that their children “were now disrespectful to them because they had mobiles phones and they did not”. Stories on the exposure of children to foreign television dramas were a source of discontent among parents. Parents reported that children were influenced by drama programmes because they copied what they saw on TV and/or watched on their mobile phones.

The Department of Community Development (DCD) organized community durbars to talk to the community about issues affecting children in the community. They educated the children on the importance of attending school and encouraged them to study more and participate in activities that would be of benefit to them. At the community level, there was a general ban on funeral dances and what is locally known as “*spinning*”, which was put in place by some traditional leaders: offenders were sanctioned and fined. Some chiefs and their elders have made by-laws to punish boys who impregnate girls.

The MSC analysis revealed that the key change that came about due to these interventions was the improvement in academic performance of students. The intervention strategies employed by the change agents such as the DCD, Afrikids, NORSAAC, and NCCE were found to have a positive impact on the lives of the people in the four districts analysed. Students were performing better in school and good habits were being practised in communities where regulations to limit social media and television access among children were put in place. Other outcomes of these interventions were that some communities reported that teenage pregnancy had decreased because the usage of negative social media was found to be largely intertwined with peer group influence and teenage pregnancy. Some of the girls who accepted phones from boys were pressured by their friends to engage in sex.

## **Domain 8: Automated Birth Registration**

The pre-intervention situation of the two districts (West Manprusi and Tolon) where birth registration stories were recorded was generally focussed on the barriers to access and a general lack of education regarding birth registration. Findings from the MSC story collection process suggest that state institutions (Birth and Death Registry) and some NGOs have put in place various interventions to increase birth registration and make it accessible. As part of the intervention process, the registration service was integrated into one service--- the community health centres. They can now register births and parents do not have the burden of additional costs of travelling to another centre to register. Community volunteers who are health workers, help to mobilize unregistered children so that they can be properly registered. Interviews with key stakeholders and community members suggest that a great deal of sensitization in communities by some NGOs about the need to register their births has increased the registration at birth.

As a result of these intervention processes, people have gained a fair knowledge about the need to register their children for birth registration. Community members have had access to birth certificates and are able to register their births. The sensitization process has influenced individuals and, in some cases, their communities who now know the benefits of birth registration. Some individuals who could not tell their real ages due to the inability of their parents to register them at birth have decided to register their new born babies. Some parents take advantage of the cost of free registration at the time of birth and before the timespan of the 'cost free' lapses. The people interviewed knew the importance of birth registration and subsequent certification as a pre-condition to educational and social protection opportunities along with ensuring access to NHIS and LEAP. Despite these successes, there are some loopholes that include targeting only adult stakeholders with their intervention sensitization and not including schools as part of the services that can be integrated. There are lapses in the community sensitization that do not link wider child protection issues to the reasons why parents need to register their births.

## **Domain 9: Children Rights to Education**

The stories in this category mainly focussed on the challenges regarding girl child education, school drop-out, enrolment, completion, school attendance and retention. At the pre-intervention stage, stories revealed that the dominant issues in the communities were the children's lack of access to education due to the absence of school facilities, resulting in school drop-out, restricted school attendance, and poor academic performance. Due to poverty, some children engaged in child labour activities, like 'galamsey' - small scale illegal mining, to the detriment of their education, while in the case of girls, they became victims of early marriage and/or teenage pregnancy often resulting in school drop-out.

Three key areas of interventions were introduced by various actors (state and non-state institutions) to address the child's right to education. These interventions included community sensitization and awareness creation, which provided education to parents, children and the community leaders on the importance of supporting their wards in school along with discussing the roles and responsibilities of parents. There was the provision of educational support (facilities and materials) to ensure children's access to education and improve their schooling and academic performance. There was yet another area of intervention, where parents and community members were supported in terms of income generating activities, provision of farming inputs, and animals for rearing in order to cater for the educational needs of their children.

MSC stories on the right to education suggest that sensitization interventions had resulted in increased awareness among parents and community members on the rights of children to access and complete basic education. There were significant changes in the lives of children due to the support given to children by providing their basic needs such as school fees and exercise books etc. Finally, interventions on income generating activities led to increased access to income, food and income security among families: this resulted, in some cases, in sustained change in families. Overall, higher educational attainment by children and learning outcomes was identified as the most significant change across the stories of change in this domain. These changes were implemented and made effective through the active engagement of both state and non-state actors in all the four districts.

## Domain 10: Empowerment, Livelihood and Voice of Beneficiaries

The MSC research findings show that women were more affected by the issues of empowerment, lack of voice and livelihoods compared to their male counterparts. The stories in this domain focussed mainly on socio-cultural factors that were influenced by issues of power and decision-making. Almost all the stories under this domain were collected from females. The problem scenario was such that girls in these communities were left out of education because of the belief that an educated woman will, in the future, try to compete or “stand shoulder to shoulder” with the men in the society. Despite the recent adaptation of modern trends in some societies, it still remains a “silent taboo” for women to acquire property or engage in lucrative businesses: the women were left to take care of the children with limited support from their husbands.

The empowerment and livelihood intervention programmes that caused significant changes were those that equipped women with skills to engage in business. Some of the programmes aimed at educating the women and men on the importance of living in harmony at home and educating their children. Other programmes were aimed at educating and empowering children to stay in school in spite of the challenges. The significant changes that have been recorded include improvement in the skills and competencies of beneficiaries. Women especially have become increasingly independence, confident and aware of their rights. Some men are gradually adapting to the idea that women should be involved in business. Some men have started engaging in parental care towards their children in their homes, which was initially believed to be a space for women only.

## Domain 11: Multiple Cases of Child Protection Issues

The child protection situation at the pre-intervention stage across the multiple domain category of stories, depict children and communities as a whole with numerous child protection challenges in one story. The stories usually have issues of child neglect, poverty, child marriage and teenage pregnancy all embedded in one story. The issues are intertwined in such a way that one child protection issue has an effect on another, often resulting in other additional problems in the lives of children and their families.

Some of the interventions across the multiple domain stories and designed by community actors included setting up by-laws, placing bans on dancing and directive to religious leaders such as Imams not to officiate the outdooring of teenage births. The state actors carried out sensitization in the schools and in the communities. Some of the non-state actors supported children with school supplies to enable them to enrol and be retained in school. Some parents sent their children back to school as a result of these sensitization campaigns. As a result of the by-laws, there was a reduction in child protection issues such as deviance, teenage pregnancy, and child marriage in some communities. Through the awareness creation efforts, individuals and communities have been awakened to the dangers of negative practices against children.

## Key Lessons Learned from Phase 1 of the MSC Assessment

The national team, which included both AfC staff and Department of Community development staff, assisted the district teams at field level reflect on the key lessons learned before completing the MSC Phase 1 story collection and selection process. The following were some of the key lessons learned gathered from these reflection meetings:

- The number of days allocated for the regional MSC training workshop (two days) and district training workshops (one day) were not adequate. It was recommended that we hold a regional training for the AfC and DCD core team members well in advance of the field work focusing on the MSC story tools/ instruments, and techniques to generate stories using qualitative techniques of open ended questioning.
- The selected districts in Phase 2 should be close to each other in order to facilitate travel and transport in the project sites with limited reliance on vehicles.
- During the MSC story selection process, it was observed that the NGOs' representatives who were part of the story collection team was biased when it came to the selection of stories particularly those that included their own interventions.
- A half-day orientation should be held for the selection team (District Child protection teams) in order to fully train them on how to conduct the story selection and assess the stories.
- Significant changes in the lives of children, families and communities were being supported through the interventions of the Government, UNICEF and its partners such as: NORSAAC, CCFC, Afrikids, Brave Aurora and Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana. Other interventions through the support of NGOs such as CAMFED, World Vision, Right to Play, 4-H-Ghana, PPAG and a host of other NGOs contributed to the positive changes in child protection in the districts visited.
- Child protection committees at community levels and even at district level were either non-existent or inactive in almost all the target areas visited: these committees need to be reorganized/ reactivated and possibly motivated to work effectively.
- Some community leaders contributed to perpetuate/institutionalise/legalize the practice of some harmful practices against children including child marriage; for instance, the leaders and chiefs in some communities are unable to stop the practice because they are themselves deeply involved in child marriage and its promotion.
- Most community members, including the leaders, have misunderstood the concept of child rights to mean non-exercise of basic control over their children and have allowed them to develop deviant behaviours. Parents are afraid these children will send them to the police/authorities if any attempt is made to discipline them.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the analysis of the prevailing conditions in the communities before the introduction of the various child protection interventions paints a very challenging picture for Northern Ghana. The MSC study revealed a break down of socio-cultural norms and practices that have prevented several harmful practices against children from taking place such as teenage pregnancy, child labour, child deviancy, child neglect and abuse. The MSC findings suggest that the breakdown of cultural norms and institutions at the family and community level to protect children have contributed to the rise of child neglect, teenage pregnancy and child migration. Lack of female empowerment, voice and livelihoods contributes to the weak environment for child protection at the community and family level.

There were several cases of school drop out due to poor quality of education, teenage pregnancy and lack of parental support for schooling. Among adult community members, poverty and financial challenges were listed as key factors in the breakdown of parenting; problems such as the lack of income generating opportunities were identified by parents as the cause of their loss of parental control and inability to support their children with their basic needs in school. This often resulted in drop-out and other social vices.

The MSC study reveals that most communities lack the awareness in most of the key child protection domains and have a superficial knowledge regarding the consequences for their children and families particularly regarding negative social media and child migration. Consequently, institutions, both state and non-state alike, implemented various interventions aimed at improving the situation in the communities but were not found to be working in synergy with one another. One of the key findings suggest that ensuring children remain in school and are provided with financial support, peer or clubs, and counselling was the main way to prevent teenage pregnancy along with child migration and other risky behaviour among children and youth. Sensitisation drives for parents and caregivers was a successful intervention when working in harmony with interventions focussed on the child.

The key state institutions involved in the child protection processes were the: Department of Community Development (DCD), NCCE, GES and CHRAJ; while the non-state institutions were dominated by NGOs, some of whom were supported by UNICEF including: Afrikids, CAMFED, NORSAAC, CCFC etc. In most cases, children and adult women were seen as target beneficiaries, although adult males benefited from some of the programmes. The core interventions were focussed on sensitization and awareness campaigns, the use of the child protection toolkit to raise awareness, the provision of “tangible support” to beneficiaries such as school materials, scholarships, sanitary pads, shoes, and income generating activities for adults.

The significant changes resulting from the key child protection interventions was largely in terms of increased knowledge and awareness of community members, resulting in changes in their attitudes and behaviour towards their children. Various forms of violations, child abuses and risky behaviour among children themselves were reduced in some communities as a result of these sensitization campaigns. Adult community members who had reliable sources of income, enabling them to directly provide for their children’s needs helped to prevent them from falling into early sexual activity with boys, and being susceptible to teenage pregnancy. The stability of women and family members in relation to livelihoods and income generation was critical to reducing child neglect and other child protection issues. In communities and among children who benefited from direct support for schooling, authorities reported regular school attendance, improved academic performance, and high retention and completion outcomes. In some cases a few girls who got pregnant while in school were able to re-enrol after giving birth, due to the support they received from the NGO sector.

## Key Recommendations

There is a need for the DCD to make stronger links/ relationships with the Ghana Education Service, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and other key stakeholders in order to develop a more strategic child protection programming plan that can ensure children remain in school, in order to reduce harmful practices, risks and ensure child protection. The Girls’ Education Officers should be involved as key actors in the DCD child protection programming. There is a critical and urgent need for more coordination of child protection interventions led by DCD across the districts in order to strengthen the child protection protocols and their visibility, particularly among children.



Other recommendations from the MSC study include:

1. A stronger coordination and information sharing of best practices on child protection among organizations and actors working on child protection at the district and community levels is needed to foster greater synergy and draw on the comparative strengths of each organization<sup>1</sup>.
2. Child Protection Committees at district and community levels need to be reorganized/ reactivated and motivated to work more effectively. The membership of these committees should proscribe, at minimum, a gender balance in order to ensure that prominent women in the district and community have a voice and representation on these committees.
3. The formation of school-based clubs should be strengthened in terms of their pscho-social role in protecting children: this should not be limited to pupils in junior and senior high schools but include children in primary schools.
4. The DCD working on child protection issues needs to be better resourced financially and capacitated technically in order to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities. The DCD should work more closely with the NGOs in the districts to strengthen their complementarity in functions and intervention delivery.
5. DCD with the child protection committees should strengthen the district wide laws and regulations enacted by the District Assembly that infringe on the rights and welfare of children. These should be widely publicised among traditional leaders at the community level.
6. Much more work is needed at district level to create an enabling environment for child protection among and across key stakeholders including the civil society sector.
7. DCD should select and train more community members who will be part of the sensitization activities to ensure sustainability and community ownership of the child protection toolkit.
8. More sensitization is needed on automated birth registration as an intervention that links with other child protection issues in order to enhance visibility /adoption among community members.

More work is needed to strengthen the child rights and protection environment through the on-going work of UNICEF and its partners in Ghana. Key areas where further breakthroughs could be made are: child marriage, reducing teenage pregnancy and sexual exploitation of particularly girls; if given more focus these cross cutting strategies that focus on girls and mothers through education, school retention and livelihood empowerment could make even more significant change in communities across Ghana.

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<sup>1</sup> This MSC study Phase 1 could be a starting point for sharing the key findings, lessons learned and recommendations.



# 1.0 Most Significant Change Process across UNICEF's Child Protection Programmes (Phase 1)

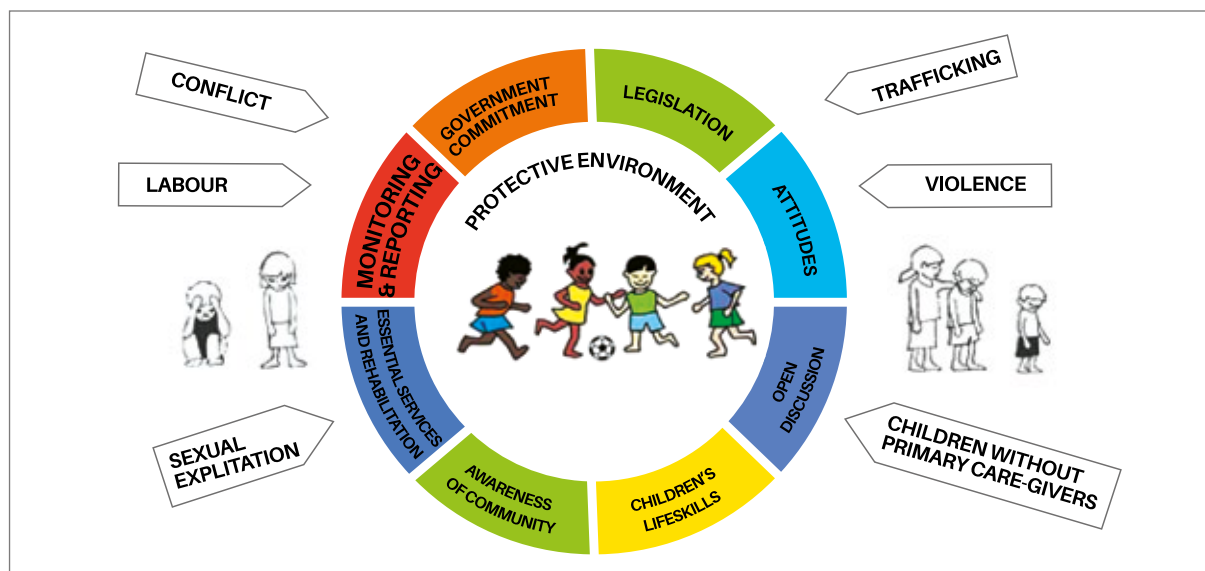
Millions of children worldwide across all ages, socio-economic backgrounds, religions and cultures suffer violence, exploitation and abuse every day. Millions more are at risk, some more vulnerable than others because of their gender, race, ethnic origin or socio-economic status. In Ghana, children have become victims of exploitation and abuse, and many more remain vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, child labour, gender-based violence, bullying, cyber-bullying, gang violence, female genital mutilation, child marriage, physically and emotionally violent child disciplinary practices, and other harmful forms of abuse (UNICEF, 20112). However, most of the cases of child abuse are not formally reported to the authorities but are settled within the family or at the community level, often using traditional decision-making structures. There have been many efforts to address child protection issues in Ghana including UNICEF's Child Protection Programmes that seek to address the full spectrum of risk factors in the lives of children and their families. Over the past decade, there have been many interventions geared towards addressing and minimizing social norms that result in violence, exploitation and abuse in order to promote change.

The impact of these interventions are usually not explored and the lessons learned are not often gathered to better understand the outcomes of these interventions, expected and unexpected, positive and negative. UNICEF is introducing and developing the use of the 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) stories in Ghana as a short term participatory monitoring and evaluation tool in order to gather qualitative stories and turn them into quantifiable measures. The objective of the Most Significant Change (MSC) stories assessment is to contribute to the strengthening of monitoring and results measurement including evidence generation while also reporting on social behavioural change at national and sub-national levels. This MSC study documents the processes and results generated on child protection by Associates for Change (AfC) in the implementation of Phase I of a two (2) phased UNICEF-funded project applying the MSC approach to selected districts and regions in Ghana.

## 1.1 UNICEF Child Protection Framework and Implementation in Ghana

In 2002 UNICEF developed a strategy in its Operational Guidance Note that aims at reducing children's exposure to harmful practices by accelerating actions that strengthen the protective environment for children in all settings. The Protective Environment Framework (PEF) (Figure 1) outlines eight critical elements that need to be effectively developed or strengthened, and harmoniously executed to ensure a safe and protective environment for children. This framework provides the necessary guidelines for governments and other institutions that need to be empowered and adequately resourced to promote and ensure child protection. The framework suggests key strategies needed to tackle child vulnerabilities such as: conflict, violence, labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking. With a human rights approach, this framework is oriented towards reducing disparities in access to information, technical advice and services.

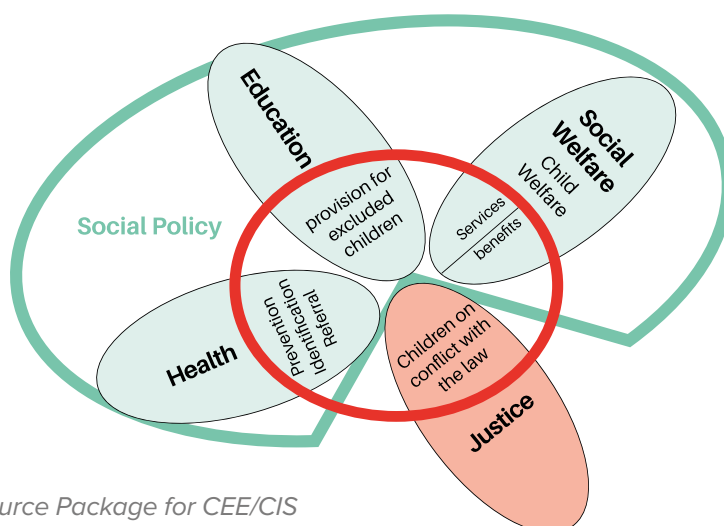
Figure 1: The Protective Environment Framework



Source: *Child Protection in Emergencies UNICEF, ProCap Training 2007*

Complementing the PEF, UNICEF envisions a Child Protection System (Figure 2) that situates child protection within a four-pronged service extension that includes social welfare, education, health and justice. Prime to child protection is a well-established social welfare system. However, the basic needs of children need to be met for proper growth and development. Education plays a pivotal role in children’s mental and social development and in keeping the child from falling prey to social vices and abuses, as well as exploitations such as child labour and child marriage. Health is another important element to the child protection framework. Children need to be given the appropriate nutritional foods and supplements they need for growth and development. Apart from these, the justice system has an important role to play in enforcing, protecting and defending the rights of these children who are often marginalised and not included in decisions affecting their lives.

Figure 2: Child Protection System



Source: *UNICEF Resource Package for CEE/CIS*

Apart from international conventions and treaties, it is the duty of states and local governments to enact laws and policies as well as execute them in creating a safe and protective environment for children's growth and development. "A protective environment for children boosts development progress, and improves the health, education and well-being of children and their evolving capacities to be parents, citizens and productive members of society. Harmful and abusive practices against children, on the other hand, exacerbate poverty, social exclusion and HIV, and increase the likelihood that successive generations will face similar risks" (UNICEF, 2008: 2).

UNICEF Ghana is responding to the various forms of child abuse, violations and exploitation, through close collaboration with local partners that include the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection (MoGSP), the Department of Community Development and Social Welfare (DCDSWSW), National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE), Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, and a host of non-government organizations. The core programme areas of UNICEF's child protection interventions are: child marriage, child labour, and automated birth registration. Other child protection interventions implemented under the auspices of UNICEF include the child protection community facilitation toolkit, social workforce strengthening, child care and welfare policy, juvenile justice, and an alternative care pilot.

## **1.2 Most Significant Change (MSC) Approach**

The Most Significant Change Approach, proposed by Davies and Dart (2005), ensures a participatory form of monitoring and evaluation. The approach provides a way to measure intangible qualitative indicators like 'child protection' or 'child empowerment' through the systematic collection and analysis of stories provided by programme participants, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. The MSC technique is participatory because many stakeholders are involved in collecting and analysing the data. MSC is a form of monitoring because it occurs throughout the programme cycle, and is also a form of evaluation because it provides data on impact and outcomes that can be used to help assess the performance of a programme.

## 1.2.1 The Guiding Steps to Conducting MSC

According to the MSC Guide by Davies and Dart (2005), they propose ten (10) key steps to implementing MSC by organisations and individuals. The steps are listed in Figure 3 below and were used by the Department of Community Development and Associates for Change teams in the Phase 1 MSC process on child protection in Ghana.

Figure 3: MSC Guiding Steps



Davies and Dart identified steps 4-6 as being fundamental to the implementation of the MSC, whereas steps 1-3 and 7-10 are subject to the discretion of the implementing organization as well as the purpose and context in which it is being used. Annex 3 outlines the key steps in more detail. The next section will elaborate on each of the implementation steps of the MSC approach that were used in the Ghana MSC Child Protection assessment.

## 2.0 AfC MSC Assessment Approach and Methodology

The overarching objective of the Most Significant Change (MSC) stories assessment was to contribute to the strengthening of monitoring and measuring of results including evidence generation while also demonstrating social behavioural change at national and sub-national levels in Ghana.

### 2.1 Key Assessment Objectives

Associates for Change partnered with the Department for Community Development to carry out the following assignment tasks in order to achieve the MSC assessment objectives:

- Collect high quality MSC stories to feed into programme management and reporting;
- Lead the story selection and reflection process at the community, district and regional level;
- Build capacity for MSC in five (5) regions; and
- Test and refine the analysis and reporting structures and templates developed so far.

### 2.2 Sampling Framework and Sample Size

The assessment employed a multi-stage sampling technique to select samples that were representative of characteristics (intervention regions, districts and communities). Consultations were initiated on a multi-level platform starting from the national level with UNICEF, the Department of Community Development and Social Welfare (DCDSW) in the lead. Regional consultation workshops were organized in Bolgatanga, Upper East Region and Tamale, Northern Region, on 9 May and 10 May 2017, respectively. These regional consultations were aimed at creating awareness within the child protection institutions and to assist the MSC team set up the institutional framework for ensuring the MSC continues to be an on-going strategy within the department. These consultative workshops and meetings assisted in identifying the selection criteria as well as the prospective communities where MSC stories would be collected.

The criteria for selecting the regions and districts for Phase 1 of the MSC assessment included the following criteria—history of MSC training at regional and district levels, interest in pursuing MSC based on evidence (existing collected stories etc.). The Upper East and the Northern Regions were selected for Phase 1 based on the relatively high number of district training events with UNICEF child protection projects, and partners including the roll-out of the child protection toolkit.

The criteria for selecting MSC research districts and communities were:

- Participation in the 2014 MSC training;
- Recipient of the roll-out of child protection toolkit;
- Length of work engagement by DCD/SW in the district;
- Area of UNICEF/GoG project collaboration; and
- Presence of UNICEF supported NGO partners.

Table 1 shows the sampling framework for the research.

**Table 1: MSC Assessment Sampling Framework**

Region	District	Number of MSC Target Communities	Target No. of Stories Per District
Upper East	Talensi	10	60
	Bawku West	10	60
Northern	Tolon	10	60
	West Mamprusi	10	60
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>240</b>

## 2.3 Training and Capacity Building

One of the objectives of the assessment was to build MSC capacities among key child protection agencies and NGOs in Ghana, with specific focus on UNICEF partners who are implementing child protection interventions. The targets groups for the capacity building were primarily the Department of Community Development (DCD) officers and other child protection agency staff who had received MSC training in 2014 and 2015. Additional district level personnel from the key agencies and NGOs were included, particularly those who had interest and demonstrable commitment to use MSC in their work.

One of the principles of the Child Protection assessment was to build on the previous work by UNICEF on the use of MSC in the child protection arena. As part of the assessment, AfC organised and facilitated an MSC training workshop for key personnel of government agencies and NGOs who were implementing UNICEF funded child protection projects in the Northern and Upper East Regions. These trainings were conducted at the regional and districts levels based on a manual that was developed for the project. The general objective of the MSC training was to equip the partners who were engaged in the implementation of the UNICEF Child Protection programme with MSC skills to aid in the collection, selection, and analysis of MSC stories. This was to enable them to assess the impact of UNICEF implemented interventions on child protection across beneficiary communities. AfC developed a Ghana MSC training manual extensively based on existing MSC manuals, integrating the local context and institutional structures that were part of the MSC assessment. The manual provides the detailed analytical tools reflecting the key domains and thematic areas for the analysis process and reporting process.

Aside from the MSC training at regional and district levels, trainees were enjoined to participate in the story collection process at the community levels, allowing them to test their newly-acquired skills, and obtain feedback from AfC staff and experts.

## 2.4 Selection of MSC Stories through the District Child Protection Committee

The selection process was conducted at two levels, namely: i) story rating by the District Child Protection Committees (DCPC); and ii) ranking of the rated stories using Excel. After the 8-9 days of story collection across the selected communities in the four districts, the AfC team, with the support of the respective DCDSW, organised a two-day MSC stories selection process. In each district, eight to 10 members of the DCPC gathered for two days to assess each story collected from their respective districts, and deliberated on the reasons for these ratings with the aim of influencing each other's story assessment until they come to a consensus. A score of 1 - 5 was attached to each story based on set criteria. The criteria used for assessment was developed over a series of consultations including the MSC training workshops at regional and district levels. The selection criteria included:

- » Relevance of story content in relation to child protection issues;
- » Magnitude of change as shown in the comparative situation before and after the intervention;
- » Sustainability of the change;
- » Scope of the change (individual, family or community level);
- » Explanation of activities that initiated the change process;
- » Gap bridged by the intervention; and
- » Impact of the change (positive or negative) and the change agents.

The final process of selection was conducted at the national level by the AfC team. A district specific template was designed in Excel for the compilation of the MSC story scores across each district. This template automatically tallied the scores for each story that was assigned by the DCPCs. The software used the total scores to rank the stories in descending order (highest score was assigned first). The first 50 - 60 stories were then selected as top-ranked stories from each district and used in the qualitative analysis process.

## 2.5 Team Composition

All the field researchers/data collectors AfC deployed to the field had at least a first degree qualification with a few second degree and PhD holders. Data collectors were in groups of four accompanied by a supervisor who was an AfC senior researcher or consultant. On the whole, the quality of the data collected showed that the training provided to the story collectors provided them with the necessary skills and competencies needed to conduct the MSC research. In a few cases more qualitative interview skills were needed to probe more deeply with the story tellers.

## 2.6 Limitation and Challenges in the Field

The assessment was faced with some limitations that can provide lessons for the planning and implementation of the MSC Assessment Phase 2. Some of the challenges were:

### ***(a). Low level of cooperation from district and community development officers during the story collection despite the institutional agreements***

The goal of promoting the MSC approach as a useful M&E tool will not be achieved if the targeted stakeholders do not see MSC as integral to enhancing their on-going child protection work; more emphasis has to be placed on bringing on board DCD officers to ensure that they fully participate in the

capacity-building process. This participation in the MSC Assessment Project needs to be clarified to all district level staff by senior regional DCD management in order for the approach to be strengthened for the next Phase and beyond. The DCD National Director has taken initiative to make it clear that this process is part of the on-going DCD operations.

**(b). *Limited time and resources for the implementation the MSC Assessment: Phase I did not allow for more comprehensive MSC story selection***

The conduct of story selection had to follow immediately after the story collection period due to limited financing and timing. This schedule did not allow adequate time for preparing the collected stories in readable format for the story selection process. There was no allocated time to train the selection committee members on the story selection technique. Some district child protection committees did not provide their full cooperation during the process; demanding allowances for their work and reducing the review period.

**c) *Difficulty of recalling stories by some community members***

Many community members were unable to recall child protection interventions and identify changes that were more behaviour-oriented rather than tangible output-oriented such as infrastructure for their community. Interviewers had to use frequent probing in order for participants to remember and describe pre and post-intervention situations that were related to the change process.



## 3.0 Implementation of Training on the MSC Story Collection and Selection

The Regional MSC Story Training took place on 7th and 8th June, 2017 in Tamale, Northern Region. A total of 39 participants from 13 organizations participated. The organizations represented were DCDSW, Ghana Education Service (GES), and National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE); and from NGOs, Afrikids, Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana (YHFG), NORSAAC, Christian Children Fund of Canada (CCFC), University for Development Studies (UDS), Brave Aurora Ghana and RISE Ghana. Trainees were facilitated through an overview of the MSC process, reflections on MSC institutional experiences, discussions on the MSC story collection field instruments, discussion of guidelines on conducting gender sensitive interviews, the MSC story selection process and, finally, the roll-out plan for the MSC story collection where district teams were established and roles and responsibilities for community entry strategy deliberated on.

The district training sessions covered the same aims and modules as the regional training, although this was on a limited scale since only one (1) day was allocated for district training. Participants from the regional training were to be in attendance at the district training but this did not always occur. The organizations represented at the district level training reflect those who participated at the regional training although, in some districts, there were also representatives from the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and a few different NGOs (e.g. Baptist Child Development Programme). The difference between the district training was in relation to the level of participant capacity and responsibility. For instance, most of the district level participants were field level workers and community liaison officers between the DCD and community; they were expected to be more in touch with community members and have a strong knowledge of the communities to be visited, thus, more suitable in collecting the MSC stories.

The district trainings sessions were implemented simultaneously in the four (4) districts on the 9th June, 2017 and had the following number of participants:

- Tolon District 20
- West Mamprusi District 15
- Talensi District 34
- Bawku West District 19

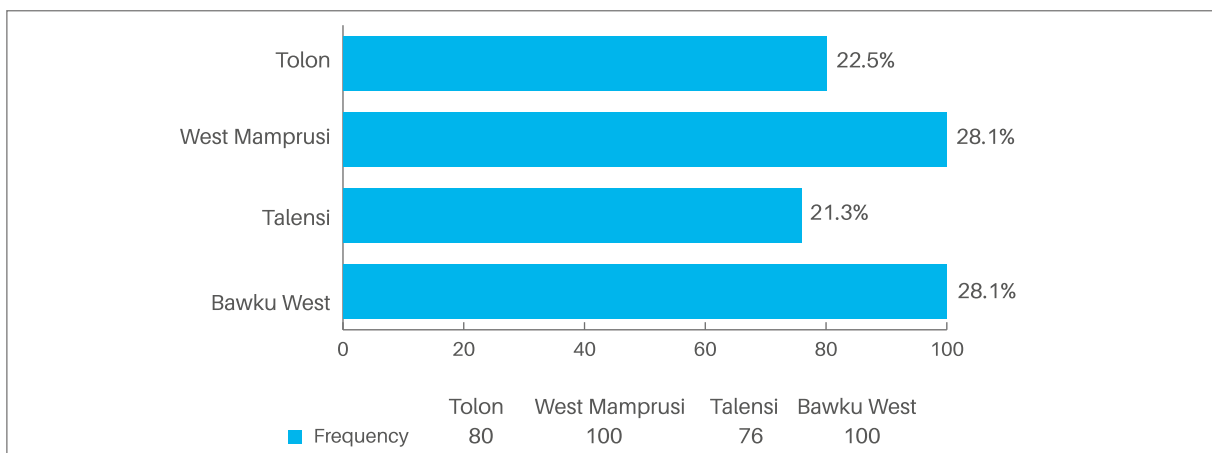
The regional and district training reports were compiled and submitted to UNICEF and are available on request. The MSC assessment provided the opportunity for at least ten (10) DCDSW officers to participate at the field work level after the training. This number included two (2) officers from the district levels along with other NGO reps. Some of the national officers were involved in the analysis stages of the data processing. At least four (4) of the participating NGOs deployed field officers to collect MSC stories alongside AfC and DCD team members, building their capacity in the process. These NGOs were Afrikids, Brave Aurora, CCFC and RISE Ghana.



## 4.0 Light Touch Quantitative Analysis of MSC Stories

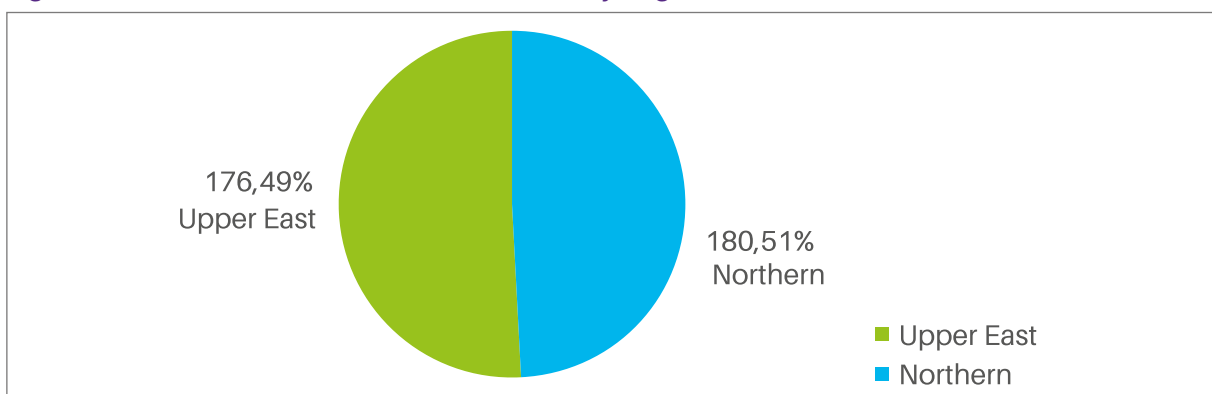
A total of 356 stories were collected from the four MSC study districts, which included Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts in the Northern Region and Talensi and Bawku Districts in the Upper East. Figure 4 below presents the distribution of the collected stories across the target districts. One hundred stories were collected in Bawku West, Upper East and 100 stories were collected in West Mamprusi, Northern Region representing 28.1% respectively. In Tolon District, 80 MSC stories were collected representing 22.5%, while 76 stories were collected from Talensi District representing 21.3%. The difference in the number and percentage of MSC stories collected per district was a result of the availability of willing storytellers. Where participants were readily available including children, more stories were collected at the community level. The level of story collection depended on the capacity of the team to maximize their time in the communities.

**Figure 4: Distribution of MSC Stories Collected by Districts**



By region, 176 stories were collected from the Northern Region, representing 49%, while 180 stories (51%) were collected from the Upper East Region (see Figure 5)

**Figure 5: Distribution of MSC Stories Collected by Regions**



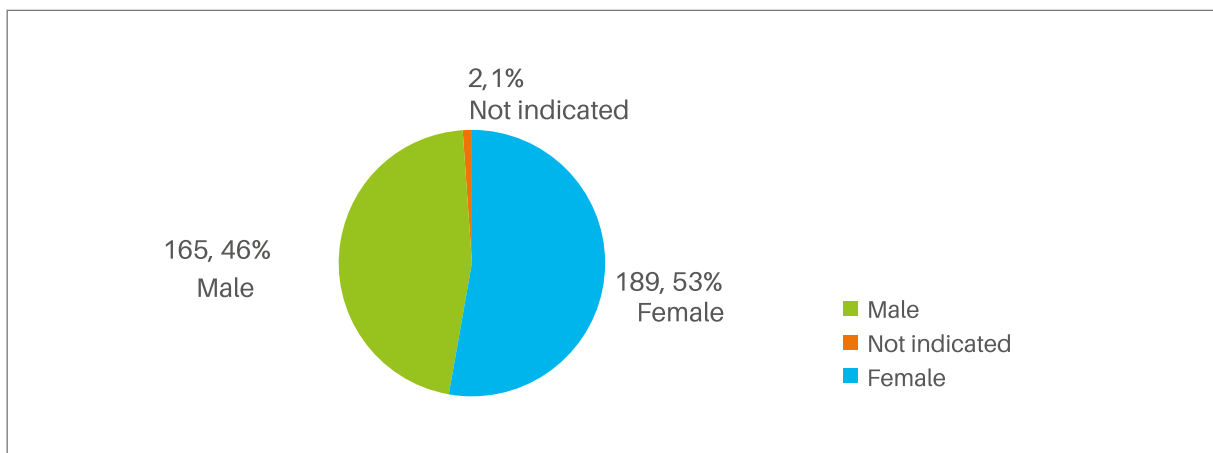
## 4.1 Analysis of Total Collected MSC Stories

This section presents the light touch quantification and analysis of the MSC stories collected during the two-week fieldwork phase in June 2017 across the two northern regions. The presentation captures demographic characteristics of participants (storytellers) who shared their stories including their: gender, age, region and district. The participants are grouped on the basis of story source, that is, whether the storyteller was a child or an adult. The section also provides an analysis of the key child protection domains identified and presents the analysis on a regional and district basis.

### Gender Distribution of Participants

Out of the 356 MSC stories collected, 165 (46%) were gathered from male participants and 189 (53%) from female participants. The gender difference is partly a result of the purposive preference for more female participants due to their vulnerability and understanding of child protection issues. Only two respondents out of the cohort (representing 1%) did not indicate their gender. Figure 6 below gives a summary of the distribution by gender of participants from the stories collected.

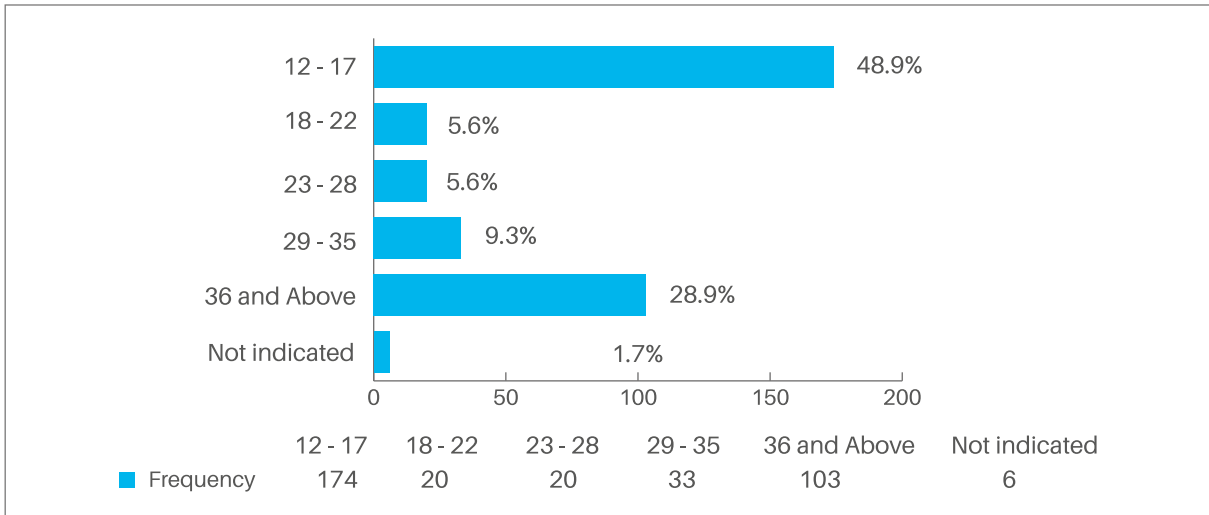
**Figure 6: Gender Distribution of Participants**



### Age Distribution of Participants

Information on age distribution of participants included participants who were targeted for individual interviews and did not include those in the focal group discussions. The highest number of story tellers falls within the youngest age cohort of 12 to 17 years, numbering 174 or 48.9%. The next highest range age cohort was between 36 years and above, numbering 103 story tellers or 28.9%. Figure 7 shows the characteristic of the participants in terms of age. The distribution is skewed in favor of children between 12 to 17 years because the study attached priority to collecting stories from this age grouping due to the nature of the study and the need to capture the voices of children and pre-youth as story tellers of change.

**Figure 7: Age Distribution of Participants**

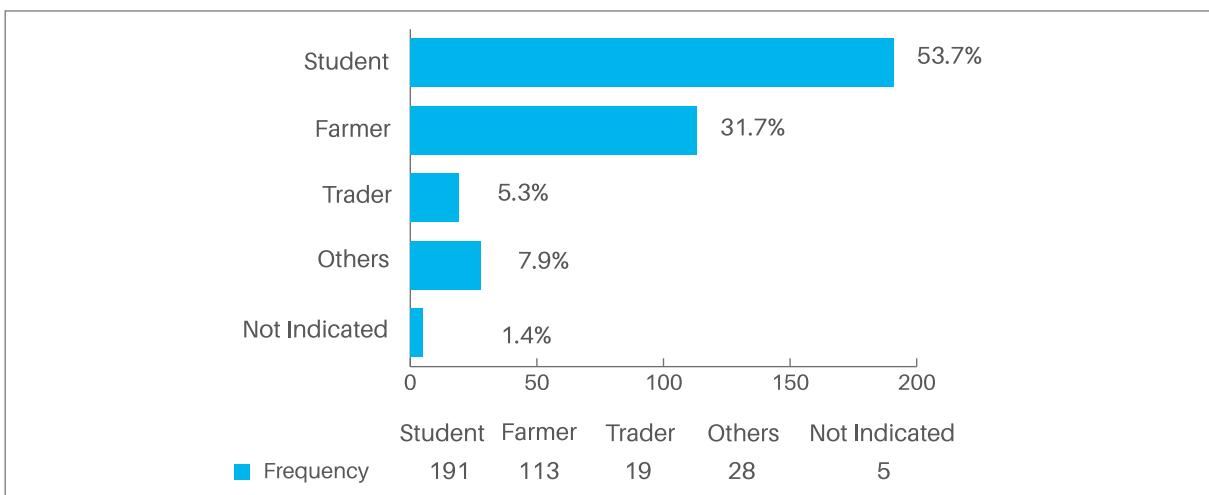


### Distribution of Participants by Occupation

The vast majority of participants (53.7%) involved in the MSC story collection were children in school-students. This was largely as a result of the purposive sampling among junior youth and youth aged (12-17): purposeful methods were also used to solicit stories from SHS students in the target districts.

Farming was the most dominant occupation of most participants (31.7%). This was expected because the communities visited in the target regions were pre-dominantly subsistence farming communities. Another 19 participants (5.3%) were petty traders. The rest of the 28 participants (7.9%) fall under varied occupational categories that include business women and men, shea-butter processors, apprentices, housewives, teachers, weavers, mechanics, welders, seamstresses, fire officers and pito brewers. Four people did not indicate their occupation. It must however be noted that where participants had multiple occupations, only the dominant occupation was distinctively categorized. Figure 8 presents the distribution of participants by occupation.

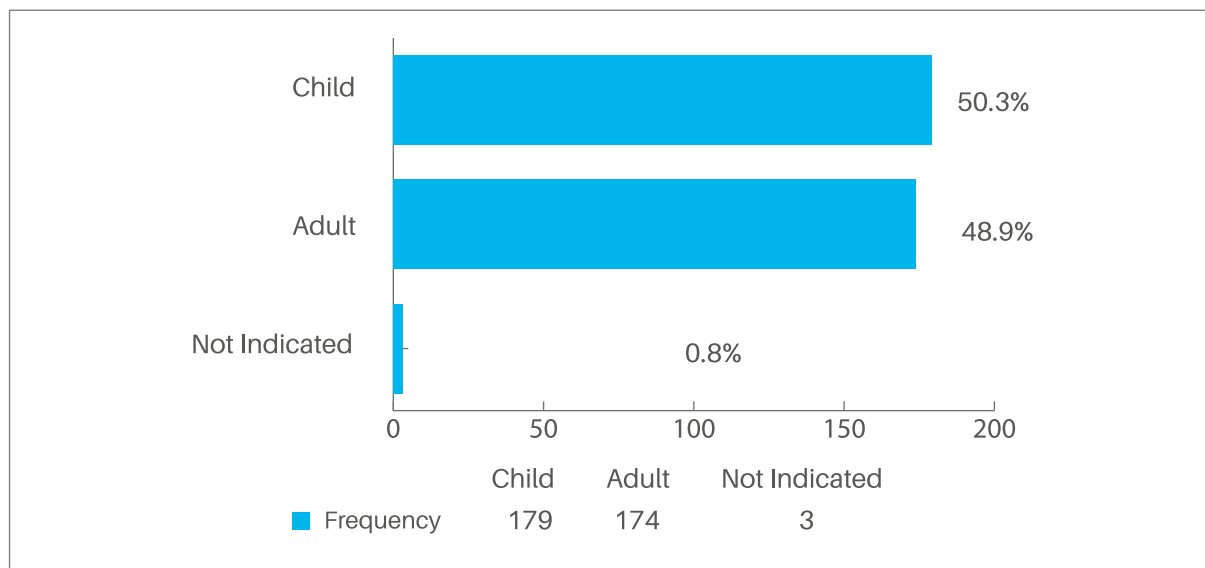
**Figure 8: Distribution of Participants by Occupation**



Sources of MSC Stories

The participants were further categorized with respect to the person providing the story i.e. whether the MSC story was from a child or an adult. In this regard, all stories collected from participants below 18 years of age were classified under the “child” category while those collected from persons above 18 years were classified under the “adult” category. The analysis shows that the majority of the MSC stories (179 or 50.3%) were collected from children, while 174 (48.9%) were from adult sources. Figure 9 below illustrates the source of the MSC stories.

**Figure 9: Sources of the MSC Stories**



### Child Protection Domains

A number of child protection domains were targeted for story collection based on the UNICEF child protection framework. Additional domains were identified during the analysis phase based on the stories collected. In placing stories under a child protection domain there were stories that contained multiple child protection themes because of the complex interlocking issues brought out in the participant’s pre-intervention situation. These types of complex stories are categorized as ‘multiple domain’ stories. Eighty of such stories were collected representing 22.5% of the total 356 stories collected. Another 21 stories (5.6%), which could not be categorized under any specific domain and were insignificant in number, were grouped under the category “others”. The stories under “others” included issues of poverty, anti-social behavior, fosterage/alternative care for children, health and sanitation, self-esteem and self-confidence.

The majority of the MSC stories collected included the following child protection domains: empowerment, education and voice (13.2%), child labor (12.6%), sexual exploitation and reproductive health rights and teenage pregnancy (12.1%), and child abuse and neglect (10.9%). The lowest number of MSC stories collected was under the domain of: child marriage (8.7%), children in conflict with the law and child delinquency (6.2%), child migration and trafficking (3.4%), exposure to negative media (3.1%), and automated birth registration (1.7%). Table 2 shows the MSC stories collected under these child protection domains.

**Table 2: Number of Collected Stories by Child Protection Domains**

Child Protection Domains	Frequency	Percent (%)
Multiple domains	80	22.5
Empowerment, education and voice	47	13.2
Child labour	45	12.6
Sexual exploitation, reproductive health rights and teenage pregnancy	43	12.1
Child abuse and child neglect	39	10.9
Child marriage	31	8.7
Children in conflict with the law and child delinquency	22	6.2
Child migration and trafficking	12	3.4
Exposure to negative media	11	3.1
Automated birth registration	6	1.7
Others	20	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Child Protection Domains by Districts and Region

The guidelines provided to the AfC team was to collect stories across all the identified UNICEF child protection domains. The result, as earlier presented, was very positive since the 356 stories covered seven (7) of the UNICEF child protection domains. The story analysis stage identified two (2) more major domains: empowerment, education and voice as well as exposure to negative media. A few more themes were identified and placed under “others”.

The number of child protection domains varies across districts and regions. Table 3 presents the distribution of collected stories by domain across the four (4) districts. The results of the story collection will be difficult to use for assessing the relative incidence of child protection issue across the four (4) districts since we did not use a random sampling approach. The results are interesting for the purposes of linking the incidence of the problem with the interventions aimed at addressing the issues and relating this possibly to the level of impact (or lack of it) associated with the interventions, as told by storytellers.

The greater number of multiple domain stories were collected from Bawku West District (35%) followed by Tolon District (27.5%). The highest number of stories collected under exclusive domains fall under the domain of empowerment, education and voice, with Talensi producing the most number of stories in this domain-- 59.6%. Child labour stories were the second highest domain with Tolon and Bawku West Districts contributing 33.3% and 31.1%, respectively. Stories on sexual and reproductive health rights and teenage pregnancy were highest from West Mamprusi (Northern Region) and Talensi District (Upper East), each district contributing 30.2% to the total 43 stories under this domain. The majority (59%) of the child abuse and neglect stories were collected from West Mamprusi District in the Northern Region.

Child marriage stories were mostly collected from the Northern Region districts, with Tolon and West Mamprussie Districts each contributing 38.7% each to the total stories collected. Similarly, child migration and trafficking stories came mainly from the Northern Region with Tolon and West Mamprusi

Districts contributing most to this domain at 41.2% and 50%, respectively. The opposite is found with the domain on children in conflict with the law and child delinquency where the majority of stories (total 22 cases) under this domain came from the Upper East Region with Talensi and Bawku West Districts contributing 40.9% and 45.5%, respectively.

The eleven (11) cases of exposure to negative media were from Tolon, West Mamprusi and Bawku West Districts in almost even proportions. No cases of negative media exposure were recorded in the Talensi District. Although automated birth registration was one of the primary areas of child protection investigated, only a few stories fell within this category. A total of six stories were recorded, most of them were from Tolon District (66.7%). The stories classified as “others” were 21 in number including 11 stories (52.4%) collected in Bawku West and seven (33.3%) in West Mamprusi District.

**Table 3: Number of Collected Stories by Child Protection Domains and By District**

Child Protection Domains	District				Total
	Tolon	West Mamprusi	Talensi	Bawku West	
Multiple domains	22	10	20	28	80
	27.5%	12.5%	25.0%	35.0%	100.0%
Empowerment, education and voice	4	10	28	4	47
	8.5%	21.3%	59.6%	8.5%	100.0%
Child labour	15	12	4	14	45
	33.3%	26.7%	8.9%	31.1%	100.0%
Sexual exploitation, reproductive health and teenage pregnancy	7	13	13	10	43
	16.3%	30.2%	30.2%	23.3%	100.0%
Child abuse and child neglect	4	23	2	10	39
	10.3%	59.0%	5.1%	25.6%	100.0%
Child marriage	12	12	4	3	31
	38.7%	38.7%	12.9%	9.7%	100.0%
Children in conflict with the law and child delinquency	2	1	9	10	22
	9.1%	4.5%	40.9%	45.5%	100.0%
Child migration and trafficking	5	6	0	1	12
	41.2%	50.0%	0	8.3%	100.0%
Exposure to negative media	4	4	0	3	11
	36.4%	36.4%	0.0%	27.3%	100.0%
Automated birth registration	4	2	0	0	6
	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Others	1	7	2	10	21
	4.8%	33.3%	9.5%	52.4%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>356</b>
	<b>22.5%</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>




## 4.2 Light Touch Analysis of Selected MSC Stories by Domain

The analysis contained in this section of the study is based on the final MSC stories that were selected by the District Child Protection teams. Out of the **356** MSC stories collected, 220 (62%) were selected after review by the DCPT teams. The analysis provides insight into the overall distribution of the selected MSC stories based on the key child protection domains. The distribution is further assessed on a district and regional basis.

### Child Protection Domains

The categorization of selected stories across the key child protection domains was based primarily on the pre-intervention situation of the storyteller, particularly pertaining to the child-oriented issues emerging from the story and challenges faced. This approach allowed for analysis across program interventions per domain as well as the analysis of significant changes from the initial problematic or challenging situation, as represented by the respective domains. The list of domains started with UNICEF's framework on child protection issues, and was later enriched with the themes emerging from the stories collected and selected.

Out of the 220 stories selected, the majority fall under the exclusive domain sexual and reproductive health rights and teenage pregnancy, representing 20.9%, which is significant. This was followed by child labour and empowerment, education and voice that had 14.5% and 12.7% of the stories, respectively. Table 4 shows the relative distribution of the selected stories across ten (10) exclusive child protection domains. One of the selected stories falls under the theme of negative effects of child rights protection. This story, from Tolon, represents a negative effect of child protection interventions. Although this is only one story, the possibility exists that there are more communities where some member believe that raising the awareness of children on their legal rights has created indiscipline and attitudes of disrespect among children towards their parents/ guardians. Such perceptions signal the need for deepening awareness-raising in communities, to ensure that no one misunderstands the education drives on child rights and protection.



*Your organization with your child right rhetoric has rather made our children wayward and out of proper training. Since they know they have the rights to do as they please we shall continue to have these challenges. The funds that you are spending on all these child rights could have been used to take care of some other issues (Male Adult with negative MSC story, Tolon District)*

**Table 4: Child Protection Domains Based on Selected MSC Stories**

Child Protection Domains	Number of Stories	Percentage (%)
1. Sexual and reproductive health rights and teenage pregnancy	46	20.9
2. Child labour	32	14.5
3. Empowerment, education and voice	28	12.7
4. Child abuse and child neglect	23	10.5
5. Children in conflict with the law and child delinquency	17	7.7
6. Child marriage	16	7.3
7. Child migration and trafficking	12	5.5
8. Exposure to negative media	7	3.2
9. Automated birth registration	4	1.8
10. Negative effects of child protection	1	0.5
11. Multiple domains	34	15.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Not all stories fall under an exclusive domain. Multiple domains characterize thirty-four (34) stories, representing 15.5% of the total selected. These multiple domains consist of combinations of the ten (10) domains as already listed. Observably, child labour figures in most of these multiple domains categories indicate the extent of child vulnerability in relation to this child protection issue. Table 5 breaks down these multiple domains.

**Table 5: Child Protection Multiple Domains Based on Selected MSC Stories**

Child Protection Domains	Number of Stories	Percentage (%)
Child Labour + Child Abuse and Neglect	4	11.8
Child Labour + Child Marriage	1	2.9
Child Labour + SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy	2	5.9
Child Labour and Automated Birth Registration	1	2.9
Child Labour + Child Marriage + Child Migration & Trafficking	2	5.9
Child Labour + Child Marriage + SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy	1	2.9
Child Labour + Child Abuse and Neglect + Child Marriage	1	2.9
Child Labour + Child Abuse and Neglect + Ignorance of SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy	1	2.9
Child Labour + Children in Conflict with the Law & Child Delinquency	1	2.9
Child Labour + Children in Conflict with the Law & Child Delinquency + Child Migration	1	2.9

Child Protection Domains	Number of Stories	Percentage (%)
Child Labour + Child Marriage + Ignorance of SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy + Non-Registration of Birth	1	2.9
Child Labour + Child Migration & Trafficking	1	2.9
Child Labour + Limited Household Access to Livelihood & Income	1	2.9
Child Abuse and Neglect + Ignorance of SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy	2	5.9
Child Abuse and Neglect + Ignorance of SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy + Limited HH Access to Livelihood & Income	1	2.9
Child Abuse and Neglect + Limited HH Access to Livelihood & Income	1	2.9
Child Marriage + Limited HH Access to Livelihood & Income	2	5.9
Child Marriage + Child Migration and Trafficking	1	2.9
Child Marriage + Child Migration & Trafficking + Ignorance of SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy	2	5.9
Child Marriage + Ignorance of SRHR Teenage Pregnancy	1	2.9
Child Marriage + Ignorance of SRHR Teenage Pregnancy + Limited HH Access to Livelihood & Income	1	2.9
Child Migration & Trafficking + Ignorance of SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy	1	2.9
Children in Conflict with the Law & Child Delinquency / Ignorance of SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy	2	5.9
Ignorance of SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy + Limited HH Access to Livelihood & Income	1	2.9
Ignorance of SRHR & Teenage Pregnancy + Exposure to Negative Media Content	1	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.0</b>

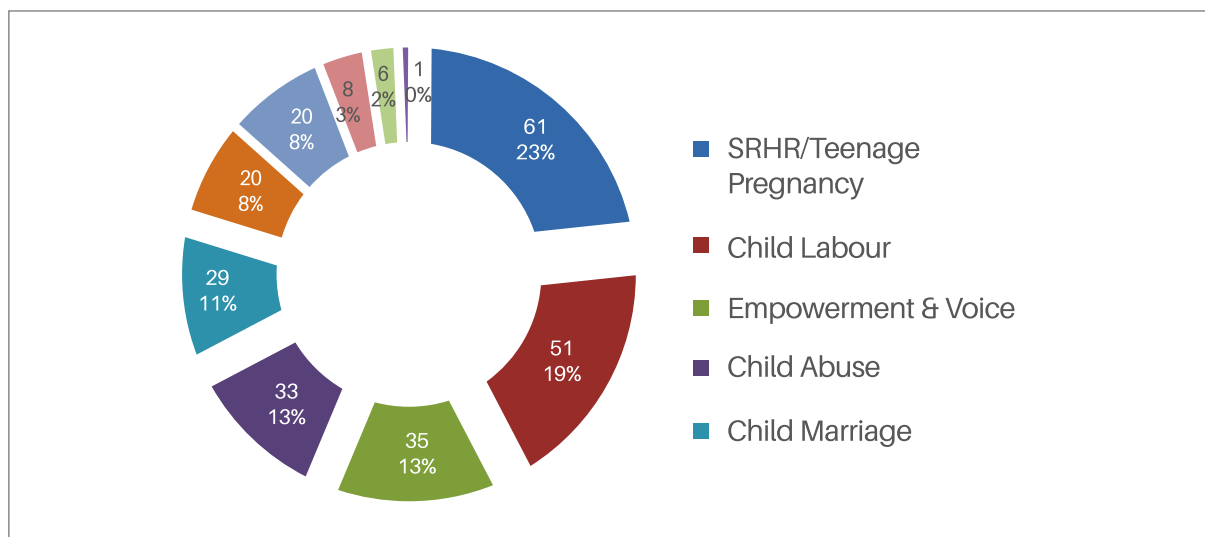
For the purposes of further analysis of data, stories that belong to the category multiple domains could be counted multiple times according to the number of domains associated with them. For instance, Story A that falls under the domains of child labour and child migration, will be counted as belonging to each of the categories. This method ensures that data analysis reflects the complex nature of the stories as told by participants. Figure 10 presents the actual distribution of stories collected according to the respective domains, using the principle of allocating stories across its multiple domain elements. Annex 1 shows the detailed listing of selected stories per child protection domain, also grouped by district, while Annex 2 presents the same data by region.

Across the four (4) sampled districts, the most frequently occurring stories fall under the following categories:

1. Sexual and reproductive health rights and teenage pregnancy (23.7%)
2. Child labour (23.2%)
3. Empowerment, education and voice (15.9%)
4. Child abuse and child neglect (15%)
5. Child marriage (13.2%)

Among the UNICEF’s priority child protection issues most stories reflect the priority areas where UNICEF and DCD have been focused. There were a few exceptions where very few stories were captured under the domains on child migration/trafficking, children in conflict with the law/child delinquency, and automated birth registration. Since the story collection approach had deliberately targeted UNICEF-supported project beneficiaries, this outcome may reflect the nature of UNICEF projects in the selected pilot districts. Phase II of the MSC Assessment should use this lesson to ensure that the locations of program interventions under these three (3) domains are given even more attention for story collection.

**Figure 10: Number of Stories Falling Under the Child Protection Domains**



### Child Protection Domains Grouped by District and Region

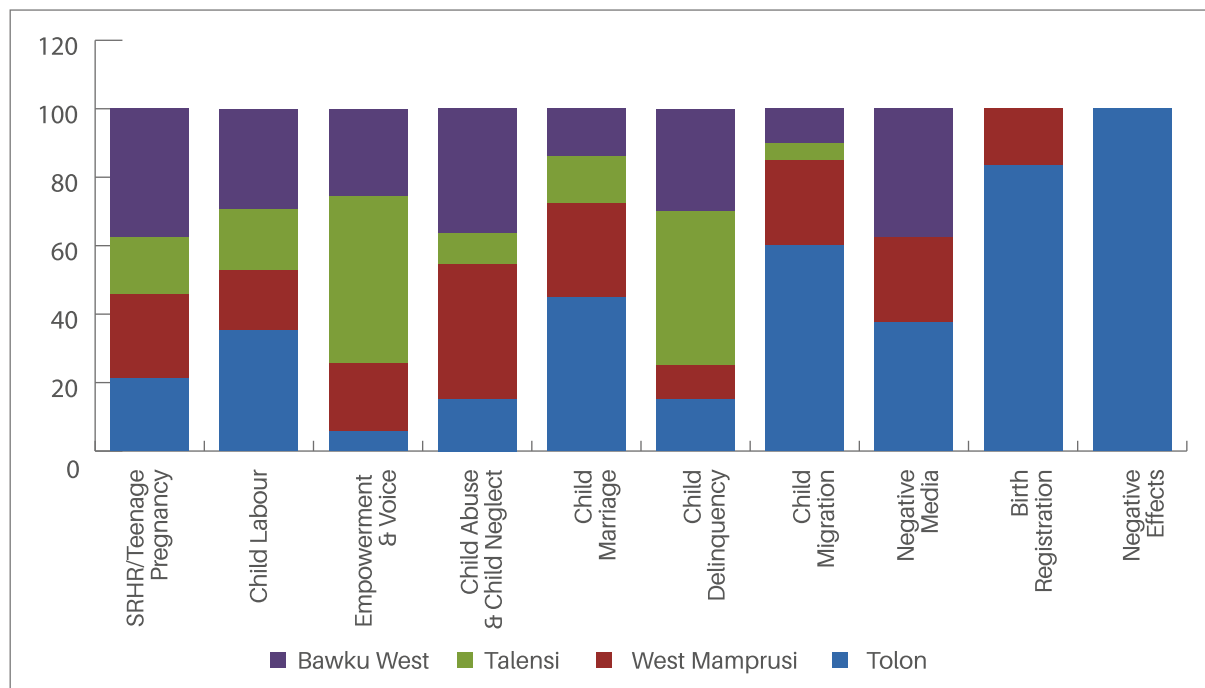
An average of 55 stories were selected per district based on the procedure for MSC selection by the respective District Child Protection Committees. After they rated each of the total number of stories collected, the top ranking 50 to 60 were considered as MSC stories selected and they deliberated on the assessments. The highest number of multiple domain stories came from Tolon District with 16 or 47% of the total number of this story type. Table 6 presents the breakdown of stories by domain and how many of these stories were collected per district.

**Table 6: Distribution of Selected MSC Stories By Child Protection Domains by District**

Child Protection Domains	Tolon	West Mamprusi	Talensi	Bawku West	Total Per Domain (%)
Sexual and reproductive health rights and teenage pregnancy	6	14	9	17	<b>46</b> <b>(20.9%)</b>
Child labour	6	8	8	10	<b>32</b> <b>(14.5%)</b>
Empowerment, education and voice	1	7	14	6	<b>28</b> <b>(12.7%)</b>
Child abuse and child neglect	2	13	3	5	<b>23</b> <b>(10.4%)</b>
Children in conflict with the law and child delinquency	2	1	9	5	<b>17</b> <b>(7.7%)</b>
Child marriage	5	7	2	2	<b>16</b> <b>(7.3%)</b>
Child migration and trafficking	6	4	0	2	<b>12</b> <b>(5.5%)</b>
Exposure to negative media	3	2	0	2	<b>7</b> <b>(3.2%)</b>
Automated birth registration	3	1	0	0	<b>4</b> <b>(1.8%)</b>
Multiple domains	16	2	5	11	<b>34</b> <b>(15.4%)</b>
Others	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b> <b>(0.5%)</b>
Total Number of Stories Per District (%)	<b>51</b> <b>(23.2%)</b>	<b>59</b> <b>(26.8%)</b>	<b>50</b> <b>(22.7%)</b>	<b>60</b> <b>(27.3%)</b>	<b>220</b> <b>(100%)</b>

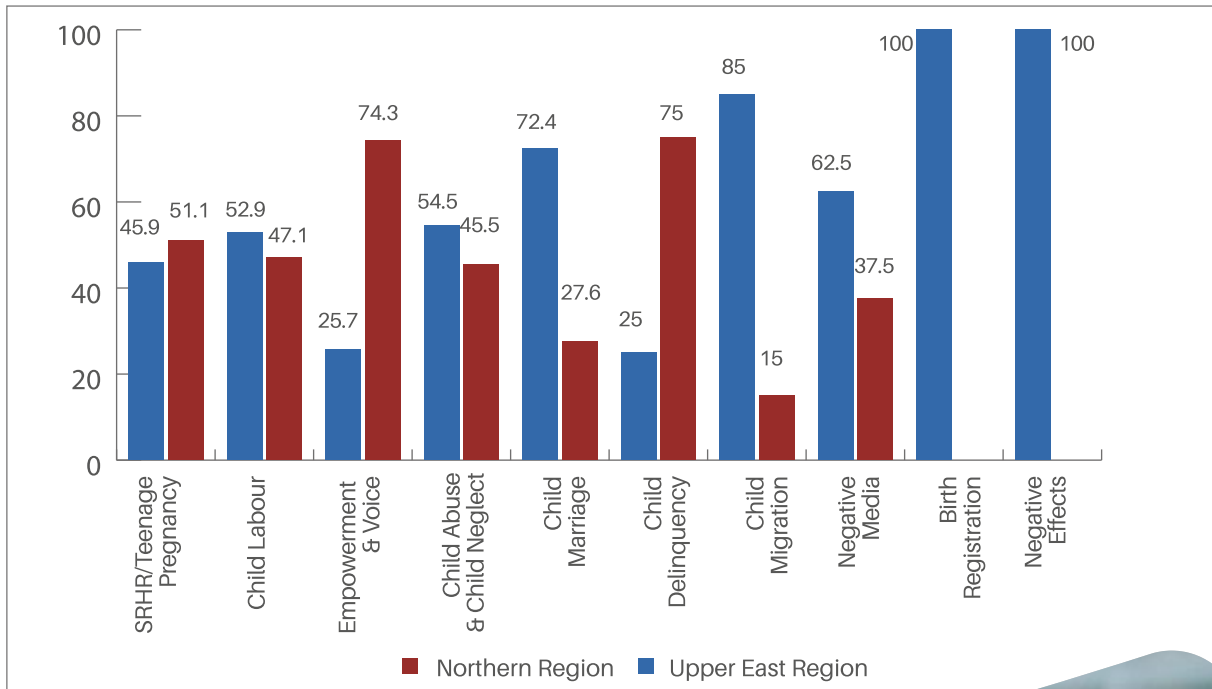
Figure 11 shows the percentage distribution of selected stories by district under the child protection domains. The values already include the allocation of the relevant stories under each of their multiple domains. Annex 1 shows a more detailed breakdown. Under the highest ranking domain, sexual and reproductive health rights and teenage pregnancy, the majority of the stories came from Bawku West (37.7%), followed by West Mamprusi District (24.6%). The most child labour stories came from the Tolon (35.3%) and Bawku West (29.4%) districts. Empowerment, education and voice stories came mainly from Talensi (48.6%). Child marriage stories were mainly from Tolon (44.8%), followed by West Mamprusi (27.6%). Despite the limited number of stories on child migration and trafficking, as well as automated birth registration, it is worth noting that both domains have stories mainly originating from Tolon District, which contributed 60% of the stories on child migration and trafficking, and 83.3% on automated birth registration. This is a district very close the regional capital of the Northern Region where services are more available along with being a focal center for transportation out of the region.

**Figure 11: Percentage Distribution of Selected Stories by District under the Child Protection Domains (n=220)**



On a regional basis, the two regions provided an almost equal proportion of stories on SRHR and teenage pregnancy, child labour, child abuse and neglect. Figure 12 shows the Northern Region dominating on MSC stories related to child marriage (70%), child migration (72.4%), empowerment, education and voice (74.3%) and automated birth registration (100%). On the other hand, the Upper East Region dominates in relation to MSC stories on children in conflict with the law /child delinquency (74.7%). This trend indicates the relative extent of the child protection problem in each region, suggesting an uneven distribution of development interventions to address the problem. UNICEF may wish to verify this finding in collaboration with other stakeholders. Annex 2 shows a more detailed breakdown of regional distribution of stories per domain.

Figure 12: Percentage Distribution of Selected Stories by Region Under the Child Protection Domains (n=220)









## 5.0 Socio-Economic, Programme and Intervention Context

This section presents a description of key child protection issues in the Northern and Upper East Regions, based on the MSC Assessment fieldwork. This section provides the context for programme interventions of UNICEF and its partners including both state and non-state actors. These two (2) parameters are key influencing factors to the MSC stories collected across the four (4) districts.

### 5.1 Key Child Protection Issues Based on Stakeholder Interviews at District and Community Levels

One-on-one interview with district level officials working on child protection and focus group discussions with community opinion leaders suggest that child welfare and child protection issues are major concerns across the 34 communities visited. There was consensus among stakeholders that the years of child protection interventions has brought some progress and the way forward is looking somewhat positive but only if the interventions are sustained. The key child protection issues across the four districts included: child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child labour, child abuse, and child migration.

#### Northern Region

Child labour, child migration, teenage pregnancy and high school drop-out rates were issues raised in almost all the communities in the Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts. From the discussions, it seemed girls are the most adversely affected by these practices. For instance, girls as young as 14 years old are given out to marry, mostly against their wishes. The field work suggests that often basic education needs such as a lack of uniforms can cause the girl to drop-out of school, get pregnant or migrate to the south. The key stakeholder interviews at district level suggest that girls are sometimes betrothed to a man who has been chosen by her family for various reasons including poverty. Some focal group discussions with parents in the West Mamprusi District suggest that the girls sometimes give themselves out to men to marry without the consent of their parents. This, they said, is becoming a common practice that is threatening the future of their girls. The West Mamprusi District Girls' Education officer confirmed this, adding that elopement or abduction of girls for marriage is a common practice in some of the communities. These trends indicates a breakdown of cultural norms and parental control in these communities.

Child migration is another key problem in Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts in the Northern Region, where girls migrate from their communities to the southern part of the country to work as head porters popularly referred to as "*kayaye*". The girls usually travel to the south during vacation times or immediately after writing their BECE to work and earn some money to buy items for school and pay their admission fees to SHS if they passed their BECE. Interviews with key district stakeholders suggest that "their fate can include getting pregnant without knowing who the father was", affecting their life and that of their children.

Teenage pregnancy is another issue that the communities are faced with. Girls often find themselves getting pregnant at Junior High school level and are compelled to drop-out. Some of the drivers of teenage pregnancy among school girls was their inability to provide for themselves at school; community

members interviewed attributed the phenomenon to *“immoral”* lifestyles of the boys and girls who *“prefer to organise night time jams/dances than reading their books”*. It was reported that a lot of girls usually got pregnant before writing the BECE thereby not completing Junior High school. According to the West Mamprusi District Director of NCCE, 38 BECE candidates were pregnant in 2015. There is also a trend whereby girls who get pregnant before the results of the BECE ‘destroy’ their chances for higher education. It seems that the post-school period where there is a lull in activity exposes the youth to social vices partly due to lack of education, guidance/counselling and parental support.

## Upper East Region

In the Upper East Region the key child protection issues in the communities are child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child labour, child migration, school drop-out and child abuse. Child marriage and teenage pregnancy are interrelated because one leads to the other. In some communities, if a teenage girls get pregnant, she is then married to the boy or man *“who got her pregnant as a way of saving the girl’s family from shame”*. This was revealed in a focus group discussion in a community in the Talensi District: *“When children involve themselves in pre-marital sex and get pregnant we marry them out”*. The prevalence of teenage pregnancy is attributed to the parents’ inability to cater for the needs of their children so the children are left to fend for themselves. This leaves the girls vulnerable to men and boys who take advantage of them by providing for needs in return for sexual favours---transactional sex. According to an officer of the Department of Community Development in the Talensi District, teenage pregnancy is prevalent in the mining areas of the district because boys and men are earning from galamsey or illegal mining, so they can lure girls into *“giving them sexual favours in return for providing for the girls’ material and/or financial needs”*.

Child marriage is prevalent in Talensi and Bawku West Districts but takes different forms. Sometimes it is as a result of teenage pregnancy that compels the parents of the girl to demand that the person who got her pregnant marry her. Parents upon suspicion of their girl being in a relationship with a boy decide to marry her out to the boy so that the girl does not get pregnant when she is not married. It is interesting to note that some parents force their children into marriage because of the financial benefit they will derive from the potential husband: some see the girl child as a burden to them so they try to quickly give her out for marriage.

Child labour is very prevalent in mining areas in the districts in the Upper East Region. Boys prefer working in mining sites rather than going to school in order to earn money for themselves and their families. Some of the boys are compelled to work on people’s farms to make money to cater for their needs. The child labour in the mining sector results in poor academic performance and dropping out of school. Parents were found to engage their children in their farms, as it is seen as a normal practice in several communities. Child labour among girls is mostly in the form of domestic chores that interfere with their school activities (e.g. food preparation, taking care of younger siblings and fetching water/firewood).

## 5.2 Community Interventions to Address Child Protection

Information from the various focus group discussions and storytelling by individuals showed that community leaders and individuals are taking initiatives to curb the incidences of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and the adverse effects on the children. The following child protection interventions were found in the communities visited:

- » a) Chiefs and traditional leaders had approved by-laws that:

- Make child marriages and impregnation of underage girls illegal;
- Bans were put on “night jams” and teenage dances; and
- Parents not sending their children to school are to pay a fee to the chief.
  - » b) Youth associations and vigilante committees were formed to assist in the control of deviant behaviour among school-going age individuals including migration, use of mobile phones for watching pornographic materials, and relationships that threatens girls’ education.

These initiatives may not exist in all communities, but at least 20% of storytellers explicitly shared this description of interventions that were confirmed during focus group discussions with community leaders. However, a few of the storytellers mentioned that these by-laws had been difficult to enforce.

### 5.3 UNICEF and Non-UNICEF Programme Interventions on Child Protection across the MSC Target Districts

In response to the various forms of child protection, UNICEF Ghana has, in collaboration with its state and non-state partners, implemented a number of child protection interventions with the aim of reducing or eliminating these challenges. The core programme areas of UNICEF’s Child Protection interventions are: child marriage, child labour, and automated birth registration. Other child protection interventions implemented under the auspices of UNICEF include the child protection community facilitation toolkit, and social workforce and policy support in the arena of child protection. The MSC Assessment obtained information on non-UNICEF programmes that address or were addressing child protection issues in the districts/communities visited. Table 7 lists the government and non-organizations that were implementing programme interventions that address child protection in the communities visited in the four (4) districts. The organizations are categorized as a UNICEF partner or non-UNICEF partner.

**Table 7: Organizations Implementing Child Protection Interventions**

Organizations	Tolon	West Mamprusi	Talensi	Bawku West
<b>UNICEF Partners – GOG</b>				
DCDSW				
NCCE				
Birth and Death Office				
<b>UNICEF Partners – NGO</b>				
NORSAAC				
CCFC				
Brave Aurora				
Afrikids				
Youth Harvest Foundation				

Organizations	Tolon	West Mamprusi	Talensi	Bawku West
<b>Non-UNICEF Child Protection Partners – GOG</b>				
Ghana Health Service				
Ghana Education Service-CBE				
Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection				
<b>Non-UNICEF Partners – NGO</b>				
World Vision				
CAMFED				
Girls' Education Unit ---G-PASS/				
4-H Ghana				
Right to Play				
Discovery Learning Alliance				
World Food Programme (WFP)				
Baptist Child Development Programme				
Sung Foundation				
RAINS				
SADA				
CRS				
School for Life - Comprehensive Basic Education				
PPAG				
Wulugu Projects				
ActionAid				
BONATADO				
ZOOTTA				
Widows and Orphans Movement (WOM)				
Operation Smile Ghana				
USAID-SPRING, RESULT, ADVANCE Programmes				
YES Ghana				

### 5.3.1 UNICEF GOG Partners

The DCDSW has embarked on community sensitization and awareness creation on child protection using the child protection toolkit. The child protection toolkit is a more participatory method of awareness creation because it uses flash cards with pictures of the various child protection issues as an entry point for discussing the problems in the community. In a durbar setting, DCDSW can cover general child protection issues such as child marriage, child labour, teenage pregnancy, child abuse, and school drop-out, which is targeted at parents or adults who are the primary perpetrators of these acts against children. The roll-out of the toolkit is an on-going programme across several districts including the four (4) MSC districts that started in 2016. However, in West Mamprusi District, most communities were only introduced to the toolkit approach in 2017; some communities as recently as April, 2017, two months before the stories of change were collected.

The NCCE is into awareness creation and capacity building on child protection but are focused on children in schools. NCCE forms school clubs known as the Civic Education Clubs in Junior High Schools with a teacher of a school selected and trained on child protection to serve as the patron of the club. The patron is responsible for organising meetings for members of the club where children are educated on the harmful effects of these issues so that they will be empowered to speak against these practices. In Tolon and Talensi Districts, the formation of the clubs was mostly at the basic school level (JHS) while in the Bawku West District, the clubs were more active at the Senior High School level.

The Births and Deaths Office in some of the districts were found to have gone to communities and promoted registration of births, especially for new-born babies and young children.

### 5.3.2 UNICEF NGO Partners

UNICEF's NGO partners carried out several sensitization and awareness creation exercises in the communities and some provided direct support to children in the form of scholarships and school materials. NORSAAC, for instance, has formed Children against Child Marriage Clubs (CCMC) in the Tolon District schools and operational communities aimed at educating the children on their rights and responsibilities as well as empowering them to be more confident in communicating with their parents. The Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC) provided educational materials and school uniforms to needy schools and pupils in the Tolon District. Brave Aurora provided alternative care for orphaned children and children who have been neglected by their parents or children whose parents cannot provide them with their basic needs. They also provide reproductive health education to children in schools. Afrikids formed school clubs where the children are educated on child protection issues and trained as trainers as peer educators on these issues. Afrikids sponsor the needy but brilliant students at the SHS level. Sexual reproductive health rights are implemented by Afrikids with sponsorship from Comic Relief. The Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana is currently implementing a child marriage project embarking on community sensitisation on the responsibilities of parents towards their children as well as children's rights to education.

### 5.3.3 Non-UNICEF Partners

The AfC team of researchers mapped out other government and NGOs implementing interventions in the MSC districts, aimed at protecting children but who may not be partners to UNICEF. One of these programmes operated by the MOE/GES in three of the MSC target districts was the Girls- Participatory Approaches to Student Success (G PASS) programme that provides scholarships, gives training on relationships, personal hygiene, and protection against pregnancy<sup>3</sup>. They also supported with funds to take review classes for the Mock BECE, along with needed stationeries, uniforms and math sets. The Ministry of Gender and Social Protection is supporting some participants under the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme, which assists parents to ensure that they support their children's education. The Ghana Health Service (GHS) organizes Saturday Health Clubs where the youth discuss sexual and reproductive health rights. GHS organizes mother-to-mother and father-to-father support clubs that serve as a platform to discuss spousal and parental responsibilities. The Ghana Education Service (GES) is implementing the Comprehensive Basic Education (CBE) through NGO partners like School for Life, Action Aid and CARE that provides afternoon classes for children. The CBE programme supports out of school youth to obtain literacy and numeracy classes in the afternoons in areas where the children work in the morning and are out of school.

<sup>3</sup> The programme operated in Talensi, Bawku West and West Mamprusi districts

NGOs like CAMFED, World Vision, RAINS, Baptist Child Development Programme, 4-H Ghana, SADA-MVP and PPAG carried out sensitization and awareness creation in communities and provided direct support to children in the form of scholarships and school materials. CAMFED is a girl centred organisation promoting girl child education. Their intervention cover the provision of scholarships and supply of school uniforms, bags, books and shoes to girls to sustain their interest in school. PPAG provide reproductive health education to the teenagers and their parents in some communities in West Mamprusi. World Vision embarked on community sensitisation on the responsibilities of parents towards their children, and children were educated on their rights.

Some of the NGOs mapped out at district level address the other basic needs including livelihood education and income generation programming. These interventions provide indirect support to child protection since, without the child's basic needs being addressed, they becomes more vulnerable. ActionAid provides livelihood skills training and start-up capital in the form of livestock and other resources to widows in Talensi District. World Vision provides livelihood support to parents at the same time that they support children with school fees and materials. The Savannah Accelerated Development Authority provides boreholes that address the constant unavailability of water in the community forcing children to travel long distances in search of water, which often takes them away from schooling.

## 6.0 Qualitative Analysis of Key Findings Based on the Child Protection Domains

This section provides detailed qualitative findings based on the selected MSC stories across the child protection domains.

### 6.1 Child Migration and Child Trafficking

Child migration or «children in migration or mobility» is the movement of people ages 3-18 within or across political borders, with or without their parents or a legal guardian, to another country or region. Children migrate for diverse reasons, some include economic reasons, educational aspirations, reasons related to gender or culture, personal motivation as well as emergencies, natural disasters, persecution and humanitarian crises. Child trafficking, on the other hand, is defined in the UN Trafficking Protocol of 2000 as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation.

#### Pre-Intervention and the Prevailing Situation

There were two types of child migration that emerged from the data gathered from FGDs and the individual stories. Across the study sites, there is migration from one village/community to another, commonly known as *kura* and then migration from one region to another (usually from the northern sector to the southern sector), particularly Accra and Kumasi. Migrants become head porters (*kayaye*), construction labourers, street hawkers, beggars and domestic helpers. The MSC data suggests that the common form of child migration in the two study regions is the movement of children from one community to another community for farming and mining purposes; other out migration cases to the south were with children migrating to work as porters and domestic servants. Child migration especially *kayaye* was discussed as a major concern for community members during FGDs with the opinion leaders and the students in both regions of the study.

Poverty was cited as the main cause of child migration in all the communities. Children migrate to the south or transfer to another farming community in the hope of improving their standard of living. These travels interfere with their studies and those who return are not able to catch up with the rest of their colleagues in class; often dropping out or performing poorly in the Junior High School Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Some successful BECE candidates travel to the south to earn money to finance their tuition, uniforms, and books for SHS. Below are some of the storyteller's responses on the issue.

*Children between ten to eighteen years also started joining the trade; they realized that they could get some money through working in the south because their parents were unable to provide them with their basic needs (Female adult from Kamanduu community in the West Mamprus District, Northern Region).*

*My community was faced with the problem of our children migrating to Accra or Kumasi to engage in “kayaye” when they wrote their BECE examination the boys serve as shop keepers and loading boys while the girls are engaged in carrying peoples load for them. This is as a result of poverty in the community, the parent are not able to provide the needs of the children so they decide to go down south to work and get some money they usually return after about five months (50 year old male adult from Zukuma community in the West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

*Last year during long holidays, my sister and myself decided to migrate to Kumasi to our step mother to stay with her while we look for a job so that we work, save money to buy my books, uniforms and other items necessary to keep us up (17yrs old female child from Siokoshi community in the Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

*Going to KURA can interfere with my studies because sometimes they stayed there for about 6 months. People will leave to “KURA” during farming/harvest and even students too. The number of students in the school will reduce (A female child from Tuyadaa community in the Tolon District, Northern Region).*

Other children migrate due to the lure of “seeming riches” their peers bring back from *kayaye* work or *kura*<sup>4</sup>. These items include: fashionable cloths, cooking utensils, makeup and other items not accessible to girls in the community. In some cases, it’s the parents who mount pressure on their children to migrate in order to obtain such “riches”. Some reasons that there is a high rate of BECE failures among girls at JHS, making their prospects for Senior High School unlikely is that they do not have the financial support for their basic needs while attending SHS. Children also run away on their own initiative to experience city life. FDGs with community members reported that most child migrant’s return to their communities with “unwanted pregnancies, sexual transmitted diseases and so on”.



*My mom used to say things that made me sad especially anytime she saw me with books. She used to say things like: You will suffer, you will not amount to anything, and the book will not do you any good. She said all the girls in the community who went to school did not amount to anything and so I should focus on learning how to cook and how to take care of the home rather than studying. This used to disturb me a lot because other women in the house supported her views. I wanted to even stop schooling and do something else, I even thought of going to Kumasi to do Kayaye (15yrs old girl from Kulegu community in the Tolon District, Northern Region).*

*These issues affect the education of our children negatively. As parents, when our children run away for Kayayo, we get upset not knowing where to find them (A 65year old male adult from Pumahigu, Tolon, Northern Region).*

*Kayaye- the youth come home with diseases and pregnancies (Men FDG at Kpalsogu, Tolon. Northern Region).*

## Key Interventions Processes

From the field work, it was revealed that important work has been carried out by individuals, communities and NGO's in tackling child migration issues across the four districts but much more needs to be done. A key findings was that, although child migration is considered a major problem for communities, most of the communities visited do not have active child protection committees engaged in consulting on solutions to the issue.

At the individual level in Tolon District, parents have been encouraged to teach their children good moral behaviour so that they *"do not follow friends and run to the south to different towns and cities in search of greener pastures"*. The parents have been asked by chiefs and elders to advice their wards on the dangers of migration with community religious leaders being involved in the sensitization process. Parents of Kulpeliga, Talensi District in the Upper East Region have been encouraged to engage their children in different trading and vocational activities during holidays so they are not "left idle", which can cause them to migrate to other communities and regions.

**As parents in the community we are encouraged to engaged our children in various ways to prevent them from traveling, such as buying them goats, sheep and fowls to rear (Men FGD at Kulpeliga, Talensi, Upper East Region).**

Sensitization programmes are mainly used by NGO's and CSO's to build awareness about the hazards and disturbing effects of child migration and trafficking in all the four districts across the two regions. The Department of Community Development together with Social Welfare (DCDSW/SW), NORSAAC, and Baptist Child Development Programme emerged as some of the key agencies involved in child migration issues in the Tolon District through their awareness creation activities.

NORSAAC, through their club "Children Against Child Marriage Club", encourages young boys and girls to stay in their various community and learn a trade rather that moving to the south in search for work. NORSAAC encourages parents to send their children back to school when they return from migrating to the south (see below).

*However with the intervention of NORSAAC sensitizing parents on the need to enrol their children; many parents have seen the need to educate their children. I refused to allow Aisha to go back and be a kayaye instead I insisted she went to school, so I put her back in school. She was re-enrolled in JHS, she wrote and made it (A 43yr old female adult, Katali community in the Tolon District, Northern Region).*

*NORSAAC is the instrumental organization in this school. They have formed 'Children against child marriage clubs (CCMCs) aimed at eradicating child marriage. NORSAAC also helps to educate children to stay at home, choose a vocation instead of travelling down south for kayayo (A male adult from Nooyili community in the Tolon District, Northern Region).*

Interventions by the DCDSW, through their child protection toolkit, addressed child migration across the four districts. The DCDSW staff use non-traditional forms of communication such as flash cards, drama and role play, which was seen as highly effective in sensitizing communities.

*Because this issue (child migration) is a problem to this community people from the district assembly this year started coming to talk to us on the issue of "kayaye" they engaged us the parents and the children and educated us on the things we can do to stop our children from going down south. We were told to be friendly to our children and that will bring them closer to us they also advised the children against travelling to Accra or Kumasi. It was our hope that the children would heed to the advice of the people from district assembly we also kept talking to them (A 50yr old male adult from Zukuma community in the West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

## Post Intervention (Significant Change)

The MSC stories of change revealed that there has been a substantial change in the area of child migration. Both regions attest to the reduction in the movement of children from the communities to the southern sector of the country. The findings suggest that this change is as a result of the sensitization programmes carried out by the various government and non-governmental organisations. Participants in some communities attest that their school going children who used to travel to other villages for kura no longer indulge in this migrant activity. This has led to an increase in school enrolment and retention.

*Most of them go to "KURA" but now it has changed. It is only those who do not go to school who go to "KURA". The students are no longer interested in it anymore. That is the change I have seen in my life and in the community (14yrs old female child from Tuyadaa community in the Tolon District, Northern Region).*

The MSC stories reveal that student migration to the south during school holidays has reduced drastically according to the storytellers in some communities. BECE leavers who used to go for Kayaye after writing their papers have stopped migrating in some communities in the Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts.

*Now it has changed drastically. None of those who sat for BECE this June has left for Kayayo. We are just waiting for time to tell (A male adult from Nooyili community in the Tolon District, Northern Region).*

*Child migration has reduced, most of the girls no more go to do “Kayaye”. The children also take the schooling more seriously (FGD with men at Salinga, West Mamprusi, Northern Region).*

The change, as experienced in all the four districts, was evident but may not be sustained given the deeper problems of poverty that drive child migration in the North and Upper East of Ghana. Strategies to stem poverty in many of the rural communities are needed to minimize child migration. Another strategy that should be strengthened is more support for youth-focussed vocational and skills development training and to formalize apprenticeships for youth who are unable to pursue basic and senior high school education.

## 6.2 Child Labour and Child Work

### Domain 2: Child Labour

Child labour is defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as “*work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development*”. Ghana is a signatory to the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, Convention 138 on Minimum Age in Employment and Convention 29 on Forced Labour. In spite of these global commitments, UNICEF (2015) estimated that **33.9%** of Ghana’s children aged between 5 and 14 years are involved in child labour including hazardous work such as fishing, mining and quarrying. Child trafficking, which is defined as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation”, is commonly identified as one of the key causes of child labour because of the exploitation of children such as sexual exploitation.

Pufaa (2013) citing Tengey and Oguah (2002) describes the phenomenon of child trafficking in Ghana as characterized by the frequent trafficking of children, primarily from the coastal fishing communities to work in the fishing industry usually in the in-land Volta Lake areas of the Volta and Brong-Ahafo Regions. These “trafficked children” are often used in exchange for money paid to their parents. Other studies in the Western and Eastern Regions of Ghana have highlighted the involvement of children in the mining and cocoa sectors (Associates for Change, 2002). In the mining sectors, for instance, children are involved in illegal small scale mining “galamsey”, where they are engaged in hazardous work, including exposure to dangerous mining chemicals and dust. In the cocoa sector, they are often used by their parents or others to carry heavy loads from the farms that can result in hazardous work and severe health issues (Associates for Change, 2002).

This section of the report analyses the Most Significant Change stories that were collected on child labour across the four MSC target districts: Tolon and West Mamprusi in the Northern Region, Talensi and Bawku West in the Upper East Region. The section presents the qualitative data on child labour at three levels, which include the pre-intervention, the intervention stage and the post intervention stage. The pre-intervention seeks to give a broad picture of the situation of child labour in the four districts before the implementation of child protection interventions to help halt the situation. The intervention stage of the analysis explains the type of interventions that were implemented, the implementing organisation, the beneficiaries of the intervention and the activities carried out under the

intervention. The post intervention stage presents the outcome of the interventions, the changes that resulted from the implementation of the intervention and the impact of the change on individuals, family, society and the community. The section captures stories from children, adults, community leaders and opinion leaders from the various communities where stories were collected. The analysis made use of information collected during FGDs with school children, opinion leaders, men's and women's groups.

## Pre-Intervention and Prevailing Situation

Analysis of the selected MSC stories from the four districts suggests a worrying situation that children face prior to the implementation of child protection interventions in these districts. Child labour stood out as a major issue that was affecting children and their families. In 34 communities visited, children were engaged in different forms of child labour related activities for both commercial and domestic purposes. These activities included, but were not limited to, children:


- working on the farms for their parents;
- children serving as “shepherd boys” to monitor livestock;
- children carrying heavy loads from the farm to their homes;
- children working on small scale mining “*galamsey*” sites; and
- children working as “by day” labourers where they work on peoples’ farms or construction sites for a daily fee.

Some of the children travelled to the southern part of the country, mainly Accra and Kumasi to work as head porters popularly referred to as “*kayaye*”. While some forms of child labour were peculiar to particular districts, others were general in nature and were recorded in all the four districts visited for the story collection exercise. For instance, in all of the four MSC study districts, children reported that they were engaged by their parents on their farms in order to support the farming activities during the farming season. This affected their school attendance and academic performance because they spent more time on the farm than they did in school. Some children reported that they could only go to school twice a week and spent the other three days working on the farm while others said they were always late to school. Below are the voices of some of the children who gave their stories:

*Our parents used to send us to help them on the farm even on week days. We were going to school late because of this practice and when I was very tired in the morning after the farm work, I absented myself from school. (A male child from Neliga community in the Tolon district, Northern region)*

*When I was in upper primary, my father made me drop out from school to take care of his germinated crops to prevent birds and animals from destroying them. I did not write my terminal exams because of the farm” (A male child from Petobila community in the Tolon district, Northern region)*

*Children in this community were made to carry loads that are beyond their strength we use to carry shea nuts from the farm to the house I used to carry some the shea nuts and firewood. (A male child from Jimagu community in the West Mamprusi District, Northern region)*




*When I was schooling at Tanga JHS/primary School, my parents use to give me a heavy load heavier than myself. They send me to do work during school hours; sometimes I go to farm with them for 4 days and one day for school. (A male student from Tito-Ganoba community in the Bawku West District, Upper East Region)*


While the boys across the four districts were reporting that they were engaged in the family farming activities for their parents, the girls said it was domestic chores that interfered with their schooling activities since it took a large part of their time away from school. The girls interviewed complained that the boys were exempted from domestic chores because their parents felt doing domestic chores such as cooking, sweeping, fetching water and washing of cooking utensils were the domain of only the girl child.

MSC story telling with the girls revealed that domestic chores affected their academic performance because they had to wake up very early in the morning to cook, sweep the compound and do other chores before going to school. This usually resulted in them being late for school and missing out on key lessons at the start of the day. Similarly, upon returning from school, the girls had no time to rest or study since they were expected to help their mothers prepare the evening meals while their male siblings had the “luxury to do whatever they wanted”. The cultural patterns and beliefs in the northern part of the country ascribes gendered roles for the boys and girls particularly in the home environment where it seen as a “taboo” for male children and youth to be engaged in domestic chores such as cooking and washing of cooking utensils. In some cases if a man is seen to be actively involved in the affairs of the kitchen he is referred to as a “woman” so most males rarely enter the kitchen. Statements to this regard are presented below:

*Female children are like donkeys doing all kinds of work even on school days, they do the work before going to school. This was affecting their academic performance at school, and all this was done because of the primitive perception that a female child will grow to be married out to a different household and therefore considered an outsider.” (A male adult from Yinduu community in the West Mamprusi district, Northern region)*



*My parents used to over burden me with a lot of roles and responsibilities at home they used to say I was matured enough to carry out these responsibilities successfully. I was loaded and burdened with the duties of fetching water, gathering and carrying of firewood as well as farming my parents did not see me as a child but a matured girl. Due to my physically imposing nature, my parents overwhelmed me with a lot of responsibilities with no or little regard for my age or as a child. (A girl child from Dunbu community in the West Mamprusi district, Northern region)*



*I do all the house chores all alone. I wake up around 4:30 – 5:00 am every morning. I set fire, sweep the compound; prepare koko for breakfast before I can prepare to go to school. The school is very far from the house so I have to walk a long distance before I get to school. I get to school when classes are on-going sometimes and this makes it difficult for me to catch up. The teachers sometimes lash me before I am allowed to join the class. When I get home after school, I go to fetch water, sweep the compound, cook supper, wash bowls after eating, mix koko for the following morning, sweep the compound, cook supper, wash the bowls after eating, and sweep the room before going to bed. These activities have affected my studies. I do not get time for personal studies which is affecting my performance. I failed two subjects last term (A girl child from Kosoyili community in the Tolon district, Northern region).*

In the Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts of the Northern Region, FGDs with community opinion leaders, men's and women's group as well as interviews with some officials of the District Assemblies and institutions involved in child protection suggested that "kayaye" was a major concern for their districts. They reported that "kayaye" or female migration to the south in search of menial work is something they believe is caused by poverty and they can do little about it. Community opinion leaders and parents reported that that, even though they are aware of the dangers involved in "kayaye", they were handicapped in stopping it since the girls who travelled to Accra and Kumasi to work **"need to get some money to pay their school fees which some parents can't afford"**. Further discussions revealed that girls were motivated to embark on the journey to the big cities to engage in "kayaye" because of what they saw with the other "kayaye" returnees who usually returned with some "goodies". When story tellers were quizzed on the period that the girls usually went for the "kayaye", they mentioned that some of the girls travelled during vacation times while others travelled immediately after writing the BECE exam at JHS level. Those who travelled after the BECE went to work to get money so that they could pay their admission fees and buy some basic items for their senior high school education.

Even though the community leaders and other district level officials saw "kayaye" as a major child protection concern because girls as young as 12 years were engaged in it, analysis of the selected MSC stories from the Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts did not highlight "kayaye" as an area where change was being made. What was discussed in the MSC stories by children were parents engaging especially the boys in farming activities and the girls being over burdened with house hold chores. It is important to note that fathers did not see anything wrong with engaging their boys in the farm even if it interfered with their academic work. They saw it as a way of training the boys and teaching them how to farm so that they will pick it up as a career. Mothers were of the view that burdening their girl child with house chores was a way of grooming them to become a good wife to her husband. Female children were not only engaged in domestic chores but they were also engaged in hawking. An interview with the District Girl Child Education Officer of West Mamprusi District revealed that the girls used to sell food deep into the night until about 10:30 pm and continued to the early morning the following day. This clearly affected their academic performance often resulting in them dropping out of school.

Whiles "kayaye" was a major issue in Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts, Talensi District was faced with the child labour issue locally referred to as "galamsey" --- or illegal small scale mining activities. Story tellers narrating how their lives were prior to receiving child protection interventions in their communities stated that hard living conditions compelled them to go and join the "galamsey" trade. The "galamsey" was lucrative so some of the children voluntarily dropped out of school to work in the mining site to earn



an income. A 13 year old child narrating an MSC story described how he was earning between GHC 30-50 a day by carrying buckets of water to the “galamsey” site. Because of the money he was earning from the “galamsey” activities, he did not see the need to go to school. Story tellers recounting the pre-intervention situation in their communities and had this to say:

*I dropped out of school when I was in class six because both my parents died and there was no one to cater for my education. This school drop-out led me into galamsey for four years where at times we work without money for two weeks or more. (A 21 year old male from Chezunabe community in the Talensi district, Upper East region)*

*When I was ten years old I left for galamsey but because I was small I could not go into the pit, so I used to fetch water for them to wash the stones, I worked there for five years and living there was like hell to me because you can work for two weeks without being paid and the rate at which people die in the pit is alarming. (A 25 year old male from Tipoo community in the Talensi district, Upper East region)*

*In order to get money for my dubious activities I moved myself into galamsey. In the galamsey, I used to get at least 30-50 cedis a day even though I am small because a bucket of water used to be 2 cedis and I can fetch from 10-15 buckets a day and sometimes fetch continuously for three days, any time I get the money I don't eat in the house again. (A 13 year old male child from Kukwa community in the Talensi district, Upper East region)*

However, in the Bawku West District of the Upper East Region, the kinds of child labour activities mentioned in the MSC stories were children working on people's farm for a fee or on the farms of their parents. Those who worked in other people's farm did so because their parents could not afford to pay their school fees as well as provide them with school materials such as school uniforms, sandals, books etc. Others served as 'shepherd boys' for their parent's cattle while the girls were engaged in trading activities after school hours. In some of the focus group discussions with community leaders, they mentioned that children were engaged in “galamsey” activities. This was highlighted by NGOs working on child protection issues in the district; NGO's reported that male children were engaged in construction activities such as road patching. But this did not feature prominently in the selected stories that were collected.

## **Intervention Processes (Role of Institutions and Activities Undertaken)**

A careful study of the intervention processes in the four districts shows that a numbers of interventions are likely to have contributed to the post intervention changes that beneficiaries experienced. The MSC stories suggest that, in some communities, there were multiple child protection interventions that had been implemented in the communities to help solve the prevailing child protection concerns. It was difficult for storytellers to attribute a particular change-- either personal or communal-- to a single intervention. They, however, attributed the significant changes to all the interventions that together were implemented in their various communities by government agencies and NGOs. A number of NGOs and government institutions played a key role in facilitating the change process but the key agencies mentioned in the MSC stories included: CAMFED, NORSAAC, DCD/SW, CCFC, RAINS, NCCE and SADA in the Northern Region; and Afrikids, Action Aid, Youth Harvest, DCD/SW and NCCE in the Upper East Region. In these districts, the nature of the child protection intervention was geared towards

sensitization and awareness creation on general child protection issues. The sensitization events were often not limited or focused on child labour, but touched on all aspects of child protection.

The MSC stories from the Tolon District, Northern Region revealed that NORSAAC and CAMFED as part of their child protection intervention carried out a number of activities that included organising workshops to educate people on the harmful effects of child labour on the child. NORSAAC had a radio programme aimed at educating and creating awareness of parents on the need to stop engaging their children in farming activities that interfered with the academic work of the children. Other approaches adopted by NGOs included the use of drama and role play to demonstrate the activities that children do that constitutes child labour. One of the reasons given as to why children were engaged in child labour that keeps them out of school is the parent's inability to provide the basic needs of the child. In order to deal with this, CAMFED provided support for girls in the district in the form of school uniforms, books and bags to lessen the financial burden on parents in providing for their children.

People targeted for the education and sensitization on child protection issues were mainly the children and parents. Sensitization of the children was tailored towards empowering them to know their rights as children and to speak out against child labour so that they would not become victims. NCCE, as part of their education on child protection, formed citizens clubs in the basic schools in order to create awareness on child protection issues among children. These clubs were headed by patrons. Similarly, the Department of Community Development embarked on community sensitization and awareness creation activities across the various communities in the district. Below are comments of some storytellers on the intervention process:

*NORSAAC, CCFC, CAMFED and Right to Play came in to assist. They organise workshops to educate us on the harmful effects of child labour, early marriage, teenage pregnancy and others. CAMFED supplied uniforms, books and bags to encourage girls to continue their education. Radio programmes are even organised by NORSAAC to educate us (A male adult from Makuli community in the Tolon district, Northern region).*

*NORSAAC, Right to Play and also PTA/SMC. They have been educating our parents about the harm these issues have on we the children” (A male child from Neliqa community in the Tolon district, Northern region).*

*NORSAAC, CAMFED and World Vision. These organisations have educated our parents and they now know the harmful effects of child protection issues. CAMFED and World Vision have even supplied school uniforms, bags and books to children (girls and boys) to sustain their interest in school (A male child from Tijeviri community in the Tolon district, Northern region)*

The nature of the child protection interventions in the Tolon District was not different from what was observed in the West Mamprusi District (Northern Region). Institutions and NGOs working on child protection carried out community sensitisation and awareness creation on child protection issues. From the selected MSC stories, the Department of Community Development and SADA were seen to be the major actors in the area of child protection in the communities visited. Other organisations included: NCCE, RAINS, CRS and Brave Aurora. The use of the child protection toolkit by the Department of



Community Development in its sensitization programme was seen to be very educative as community members could easily relate to what they saw in the pictures. This facilitated a reflection on their behaviour and sometimes resulting in a change in attitude towards their children. It is important to note that the Department of Community Development mostly targeted parents for their sensitization programmes in the communities. While for the NCCE, the key target group for their child protection programmes were the children directly through the school. They did not reach communities where there were no schools.

*We were made to understand that every child is important and so both male and female children should be given equal attention and the work load of female children reassigned to both to relief the burden on the female child. The officers demonstrated these using flash cards. (A male adult from Yinduu community in the West Mamprusi district, Northern region)*

Interventions in the Upper East Region were similar to those found in the Northern Region with organisations mainly focussing on raising community awareness about child protection issues. DCDSW and Afrikids were the more visible agencies in the Talensi District and DCDSW, NCCE, Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana and CAMFED were active in the Bawku West District of the Upper East Region.

## Post-Intervention (Significant Changes)

A careful analysis of the selected MSC stories from the four districts suggests that the interventions by the various institutions and NGOs has had a positive impact on beneficiaries and resulted in some changes in their lives. Many of the parents who told child labour stories, attest to the fact that the pre-intervention child labour issues in their communities have significantly changed as a result of awareness creation and sensitization programmes they received. They also confessed that prior to the interventions, they were not aware that some activities they engaged their children in constituted child labour. Activities such as taking children to the farm, girls doing domestic chores, and children engaged in trading activities after school.

The type of changes that emerged from the selected MSC stories was largely at the individual level and resulted in attitudinal/behaviour change on the part of the adults (parents/guardians). Storytellers from the four districts said they had gained knowledge on child protection that has changed their attitudes towards their children and they are now more interested in the wellbeing of their children. These attitudinal and behavioural changes on the part of the parents had a trickle-down effect on their children particularly in the area of increasing school attendance of children. This is an important change because interviews with the female children suggested that their poor school attendance or absenteeism was attributed to the fact that their parents overburdened them with domestic chores. Parents in the Northern Region stated that the knowledge they had gained from the sensitization programmes delivered by the DCDSW, CAMFED, NORSAAC, CCFC and other NGOs had discouraged some of their children from migrating to the south to engage in “kayaye”; this had also led to a reduction in the number of girls who travel to the south in some communities. A child in the West Mamprusi District affirmed the claim that parents had made an attitudinal shift towards the girl child.

*Attitudinal change of my parents as they started to treat me with care and reduced the workload they gave me; punctual to school; improved academic performance (Girl child interview, West Mamprusi District)*

As part of the change, parents said they have accepted that domestic chores are not only the responsibility of the girl child but also the boys. Some reported that they have reassigned roles among the boys and the girls in the various homes and now both boys and girls share the workload at home, which has brought some “*relief to the girls*”.

Parents reported in the Northern Region that there has been an attitudinal and behavioural change that has led to the reduction of “*kayaye*” in the Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts. Parents in the Upper East Region stated that their change in attitude and behaviour was a result of the sensitization by organisations such as DCD, Afrikids, NCCE, and ActionAid, which has helped reduced the number of children who drop-out of school to go into “*galamsey*” or small mining activities. They reported that it is often the inability of their parents to provide the basic needs of their children that led the children into “*galamsey*”. A staff interviewed in the Department of Community Development in the Talensi District was of the view that children are slowly “*getting out of galamsey*” and going back to school. The officer disclosed that in a particular community (Kulipeliga) some boys had stopped “*galamsey*” and returned to school.

*Four young boys dropped out of school and started working in the mines. After the DCD department conducted awareness creation in the community, the boys went back to school and are confirmed still in attendance. The boys worked because their parents could not support their education and cater for them. (DCD officer, Talensi District office)*

## Changes experienced by children

The girls were of the view that the situation was gradually changing and improving as a result of education that their parents had received from the NGOs and the Department of Community Development. Some girls reported that their parents have come to the realisation that the girl child should be treated equally to the boy child and that roles that were previously ascribed to only girls has now been added to the duties of the boys. This has had an impact on some girls’ education as they now have time to do their academic work. This can be seen in the comments below:

*My school attendance improved. As I was no more going to school late or missing school because of work; I stopped carrying heavy loads” (A girl child from Liyipala community in the West Mamprusi District, Northern region).*

*The situation has changed since then. The work load has been minimized, and I am allowed to do things at the right time. I no longer wear torn uniforms to school. I am doing well in class currently and my scores are always 5/5 and 10/10. I am also punctual at school (A female child from Yiiri community in the Tolon District, Northern Region).*

The work of the National Commission on Civic Education in the schools was mentioned by girls in the Tolon and Bawku West Districts as a positive intervention to support them; a few cases in the West Mamprusi District reported that the work of NCCE brought about some changes in their lives. The formation of the citizens clubs in the schools has helped in educating them on the rights of children.

Children reported in their stories how the citizen clubs have empowered them to speak against child labour and educate their parents of their effects. In Talensi District, however, it was Afrikid's child rights club that were present in the schools. In the West Mamprusi District, a 17 year old girl reported that, because of the education they have received, they do not see why they should continue with the "kayaye" as it is not in their best interest to engage in it, but rather they are now focused on their education. She and others had this to say:

*These interventions have changed my life positively. I now concentrate on my education. My colleagues have stopped going for Kayayo. I can say it was the action of the NGOs that stopped the Kayayo, the sending of children to farm and selling on market days (A girl child from Soona community in the West Mamprusi District, Northern region).*

*I have learned a lot from all the activities carried out at the school by NORSAAC and NCCE. It has helped me to make the right choice by staying in school and focusing on my studies rather than letting my house chores lead me to drop out of school (A girl child from Kosoyili community the Tolon District, Northern region).*

On the part of the male children in some communities they reported that organisations have helped change their mind set and that of their parents in relation to child labour and child work. Boys in the Talensi and Bawku West Districts who said they used to engage in "galamsey" have stopped the practice as a result of the sensitization they received on child protection. Instead of being at the "galamsey" site, they now prefer to be in school because "education is what can guarantee them of a brighter future". Across the four districts, the boys indicated that their involvement in farming activities has reduced. Some boys explained that, even though they still go to the farms, it is not usually on school days.

*After this sensitization exercise my father changed the way he made me work in the farm. He does not send me to the farm for a whole term again (A male child form Taboba community in the Bawku West District, Upper East Region).*

*We can go to school 5 times a week without a problem in the house. I only work on the farm on Saturday. So now I have enough time to study (A male child form Gongo community in the Bawku West District, Upper East Region).*

*The programme has helped my parents to stop using me as a shepherd boy and this changed has given me the opportunity to attend school without any hindrance (A male child from Talitabisi community in the Bawku West District, Upper East Region)*

## Community level change

In all the four districts, parents and children reported that the changes occurring were mainly at the household level and that not much community level change was witnessed. The reduction in child labour was as a result of individual parents deciding to limit how they engaged their children in child labour activities. There was no evidence across the 34 sites visited that show that a community has put in place measures to deal with cases of child labour. However, what may be considered a communal change is the fact that both parents and children stated that school attendance of both girls and boys has improved along with school retention. This is a result of children no longer spending as much time either on the farms or engaged in household chores.

## Conclusion

The MSC study found that the root cause of child labour across the four sampled districts is attributed to the high levels of poverty and the parents inability to pay for the basic needs of their children. Sensitization and awareness creation campaigns on the harmful effects of child labour, the usage of the UNICEF Child Protection Toolkit by DCD, and the use of drama/ role play by NGOs were making a difference in creating awareness on the effects of child labour.

The MSC stories revealed that the awareness creation on the effects of child labour alone was not enough to dissuade parents from engaging their children in child labour activities. The children who voluntarily engaged themselves in child labour were doing so in order to earn some income to meet their basic needs; they would not otherwise work if their parents had the financial means to provide for their basic needs and keep them in school. In both the girls and boys cases the engagement in child labour was putting the girl and boy child at risk of sexual and physical exploitation. To deal with child labour and child work in these deprived communities a multi-pronged approach is needed to empower parents economically with some income generating activities as a complementary source of livelihood to subsistence farming. It is also extremely important to continue to educate parents on the need to maintain their parental love, care and control over their children despite often harsh poverty conditions.

## 6.3 Child Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (Teenage Pregnancy)

### Domain 3: Child Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (Teenage Pregnancy)

Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system. It implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life, the capability to reproduce, and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so (UNPF). Reproductive health is a broad concept that includes: fertility, STI's teenage pregnancy, safe and unsafe abortion, legal and illegal abortion, menstrual disorders, infant mortality and any other issue related to reproductive wellbeing. However, for the purpose of this study, we will be concentrating mainly on teenage pregnancy because the majority of the MSC Phase 1 stories of change were concerned with teenage pregnancy.

The Department of Community Development (DCD) together with a wide range of NGO's are among the key actors implementing child protection programmes in the two selected regions. Key among the child protection concerns is teenage pregnancy and reproductive health. This section discusses the prevailing conditions of the target regions, the trends in pre-intervention stages, the intervention processes and the appraisal of the post intervention situation depending on the kind of change experienced by the story tellers.

## Pre-Intervention and Prevailing Situation

Teenage pregnancy was widely reported and very common in the stories collected across the two regions. The MSC stories reveal that among the four districts, teenage pregnancy was reported mostly in the Bawku West District (UE) followed by West Mamprusi District (Northern). The analysis of MSC stories revealed that, from the pre-intervention situation, some children are not able to adopt behaviours that prevent teenage pregnancy nor be counselled by parents or guardians and so teenage pregnancy was widespread. A substantial number of births by teenage mothers in the sample were unwanted. In fact the FGDs with various communities reveals that the teenage pregnancy phenomenon was not only a significant problem to families and communities but was “out of control”. Some of these communities traditionally had cultural norms with a history of high fertility regulatory measures that served as barriers and controls in their fertility. This study suggests that there have been enormous shifts in these socio-cultural practices and beliefs that historically would prevent teenage pregnancy from occurring and being acceptable.

The data reveals that almost every FGD conducted mentioned teenage pregnancy as a major child protection concern across the 34 communities visited in the four districts and two target regions. To demonstrate how prevalent the teenage pregnancy situation was the following quotations are provided:

*Teenage pregnancy in my community was too high. There were even instances where siblings impregnated each other without knowing. Many children also worked at the galamsey site but misused the income as some engage in alcoholism and smoking. I felt bad as people talked a lot on the negative things by these children. I felt they were too young to be doing this and also feared for our future since these negative things could truncate our dreams. (A 17 year old female student from Tamarajili, Bawku West)*

*We have issues of teenage pregnancy, child migration, child labour, and child marriage. Most of the children get pregnant after J.H.S when they are waiting for their results. Sometimes, they will deliver and go back to school, at other times; they will just go ahead and marry. (A FGD of female opinion leaders in West Mamprusi)*

*Teenage pregnancy is an issue in the community. Children do not become serious in school hence engaging in pre-marital sex and getting pregnant. (A FGD of male opinion leaders from Talensi)*

*I grew up in this community to meet the issue of teenage pregnancy which has made a number of young girls to get married at tender ages of 15, 16 and even some at 14. This has caused so many girls of school going age to drop out of school. Other young girls get pregnant as teenagers when they go out to do Kayaye. When they get there they engage in the act and get pregnant. They will eventually get married to the men responsible (A 17 year old male student from Yoo, Tolon)*

*Before 2014, when there was no intervention, life in my community (Duu) was not the best. There was no sexual control. Most affected victims were girls less than 18 years. Teenage pregnancy had been the order of the day for both girls in school and those not schooling, it was easy for me to identify my colleagues who got pregnant and dropped out while in school. (A 14 year old female student from Matugli, West Mamprusi)*

The MSC analysis reveals that there was a consensus in all four districts regarding the causes of teenage pregnancy. Community members and parents saw it as a result of dances and therefore there is the need to regulate these types of youth events. Almost every focus group discussion conducted among the opinion leaders in West Mamprusi pointed to the organization of dances or local “jams” as the main cause of teenage pregnancy. The FGD of opinion leaders in Bawku West underscores the importance of poverty, the use of mobile phones and social media as the causes of teenage pregnancy.

The FGDs with adults in Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts suggests that the organization of dances was the key factor in high levels of teenage pregnancy; the parents and community members believe that teenage pregnancy is on the rise because of local dance events and video shows. The data from the FGDs with children between the ages of 12 to 17 however implicate the parents as part of the problem. The children believe that the prevalence of teenage pregnancy is due to lack of parental care and the inability of parents to provide for their basic needs such as books, clothing and even food. Some of the individual stories from children however admit that attending dance jams could lead to teenage pregnancy. The quotations below speak to the above findings and reflect the situation in most of the stories concerning teenage pregnancy.

*When their needs are not provided, they will follow men and get pregnant. When you are pregnant as a teenage you will marry. Because of pregnancy your parents will force you to marry. (A FGD of female children ages 12-17 in Tinawa, Bawku West)*

*There is lack of parental care and control. Teenage pregnancies are rampant. Child marriage too is rampant (A FGD of male children ages 12-17 in Bawku West)*

*In the case of the teenage pregnancy, it is because of this video shows they have been attending. Sometimes parents do not see when their children leave the house for such programs (A FGD of opinion leaders in Tolon)*

*Teenage pregnancy do occur among girls in class six because of the introduction of modern recreational facilities like community dance and Video show centres. The increased knowledge on Child rights and human rights has posed a great challenge in children's up-bringing, and leading to school drop-out (A FGD of male opinion leaders in Tolon)*

*The teenage pregnancy is due to hunger. There is no school in this community, our children walk all the way to far communities to access education and they go hungry so they give themselves to men. (A FGD of female opinion leaders in West Mamprusi)*

*There are no jobs for the youth who complete school. They are homeless and go about causing trouble and impregnating the girls. Children force themselves on the men. They follow the men and come back with pregnancy. (A FGD of male opinion leaders in Talensi)*



Some of the children's views from the Upper East are captured below:

*Initially in Bimshiwa community, when there was no ban on jams, you always see a lot of children late in the night at about 3:00 am with boys and girls engaging in sexual behaviours, smoke and slept a lot in class and others do not even come to school. (A 15 year old male student from Bimshiwa, Bawku West)*

*I have a friend who is very poor, she live with her poor parents in this community. When she asks them for money for even pad they cannot get for her. I used to share my pad with her. My parents later realized why my pad finished early every month so they warn me to stop giving my pad to friends. When I stopped giving my friend pad, she had no option than to rely on men to get money for it and her other needs. (A 17 year old female student from Sarinyakpa, Bawku West)*

*Sometimes boys at the mining site in the forest give me money and attempts to sleep with me. I normally feel very uncomfortable to collect money from boys but sometimes I have no option. I had the intention of dropping out of school and migrating to the south to search for any menial job so that I can help my grandmother. (A 17 year old female student from Tsetse-Folu, Bawku West)*

There is a cumulative effect of teenage pregnancy and other reproductive health issues across the life cycle of individuals, which has tremendous implications on the future of communities and the district as a whole. The MSC analysis found that there was consensus about the negative effects of teenage pregnancy across the communities visited and that the vast majority of story tellers were aware of the negative effects of teenage pregnancy. Adult story tellers asserted that teenage pregnancy affected the education of the pregnant girls by affecting their enrolment, retention, and performance at school often leading to school drop-out. Some adult and child story tellers argued that teenage pregnancy could pose health problems and lead to complications during delivery such as death during attempted abortions. For young story tellers, they spoke of how it could hamper their dreams and aspirations. Others spoke of how it could lead to conflict between the parents and those who are involved in teenage pregnancy cases. Several stories reported how girls who get pregnant are often forced to marry. Describing why teenage pregnancy is a problem, story tellers made the following revelations:

*The teenage pregnancies lead to school drop-out. The girls are not able to continue school while the boys continue through school. Some are not able to give birth normally but have to be operated on and it can affect the health. (A FGD of children ages 12-17 in Tolon District)*

*Teenage pregnancy leads to complications during delivery as a result most young children lost their lives. It also leads to psychological and emotional issues. It also resulted in school drop-out. I could count about five or more girls getting pregnant each time and about three girls forced into marriage before the intervention. (A FGD of children ages 12-17 in Tolon)*

*If a girl child gets pregnant, it brings extra responsibility on the girl's parents. As a parent, you have to feed and clothe your daughter as well as the child which is born (A FGD of male opinion leaders in, Tolon).*

*Teenage pregnancy leads to school drop-out; also some do not know the one responsible. This brings shame to the family and also affects the health of the girl concerned they could sometimes experience complications in delivery (A FGD of male opinion leaders in, Tolon).*

One remarkable feature of the pre-intervention situations of children and youth across the four target districts is that there was a significant disjuncture between their knowledge on reproductive health issues and the actual reproductive health choices that they could make. The general picture that emerged in the MSC analysis about the pre-intervention situation from the data collected from Bawku West District best reflects a misconception and lack of knowledge about reproductive health and teenage pregnancy. The data reveals that most girls in the Bawku West District (UE) were not privy to adolescent reproductive health information, teenage pregnancy, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and other sexual behaviours to make informed decisions. Several girls had misconceptions about menstruation including that having sex could be a way to stop menstrual pains; and second, the idea that when a girl menstruates, it meant that she has had sex. There were misconceptions that having more male friends than female friends meant that one could become pregnant. The excerpts below throw more light on these misconceptions based on the stories from the Bawku West District:

*Before the child protection programme she was a dropout student who was engaged in social activities and following men in the galamsey site and chain-saw operators in the Ziizolu forest especially last year that some contractors who were falling the trees that led to the agitation of the youth. She did not know what her sexual behavior could have led her into. (A 15 year old male student from Ziizolu, Bawku West).*

*When I became an adolescent, I thought when you have your menses you have had sex, hence a bad girl. Therefore my mind was to hide menses from my mother and grandmother. (A 16 year old female student from Buliguwan, Bawku West)*

*I had a long-held belief that menstrual pains can be taken away by engaging in sex. Also, I did not know that sex is a natural thing; i did not think it was possible to abstain from sex. I used to sit with friends to talk about boyfriends and sex. (A 15 year old female student from Bawku West)*

Rape is a reproductive health issue however a review of the MSC stories on teenage pregnancy and reproductive health reveals that only one individual story was recorded whose pre-intervention situation was about rape. The story teller did not label it as rape. However we notice from the story that the victim was not given the opportunity to either consent or not. She could not have legally and intelligently consented because she was a child at 15 years. She was not given the opportunity to decide which protection to use against STI's and to decide whether to get pregnant or control her fertility. We acknowledge from the story that this was a gang rape that went unreported and did not go through any process of recovery. After she became pregnant, she talks about the difficulty in making



a choice about the unwanted pregnancy because her parents insisted on an abortion but she said no. The 15 year old teenage rape victim gave the following story:


*Another day, I went to their house with his sister and he asked me to accompany him to his friend's house; which he said was not far from their home. I agreed to follow him. We got to a spot where he whistled for some boys who came out of nowhere, caught me and carried me on their shoulders to a different house which was far from his house and mine as well. I cried out yet nobody came to my rescue. I was sent to the unknown house where he and his friends had sex with me in turns. I became restless and weak. Then, they carried me and left me close to my home. In two months' time, I realized I was pregnant but my parents wanted me to abort it so that I can go back to school. I told my parents I was not ready for an abortion but rather to have the baby. From that day, my parents' behaviour changed towards me. They would not talk to me, neither would they cook nor serve me. I decided to move to my uncle's house to stay there (A 15 year old female student from Begyiba, Talensi)*

The MSC stories confirm that teenagers are prone to peer influence; it is therefore not surprising that peer influence was recorded as one of the pre-intervention conditions that led some girls into teenage pregnancy. The MSC stories reveal that peer influence was a consistent predictor as to whether girls' engaged in sex or not. The belief that their peers were engaged in similar behaviour influenced their own behaviour and decision to engage in sex. Although there may be variations in individual susceptibility to peer influence, the MSC data shows that all the teenage pregnancy cases pointed to being influenced by their friends in "picking a boyfriend". The MSC stories reveal that girls who a teenage pregnancy often simulated their friends' actions because they were peers. This peer pressure was heightened by the fact that there was a lack of information about reproductive health care.

There were other mediating factors related to teenage pregnancy such as transactional sex, lack of parental care and poverty. The quotations below give us a better understanding about the influence of peers as a key factor in teenage pregnancy:

*I used to have friends who had boyfriends. They were also JHS pupils. They influence me to also pick a boyfriend. We always plan and go to market together at night to have fun with our boyfriends. These boys were our seniors in school and they were deviants. We could stay at the market with them up to 10pm or over. Not long, one of my friends got pregnant through this issue. She was looking wretched and dirty; this is because the guy has no money to take care of her and my friend is 17 years old and she also has no money too to take care of herself. Her parents are not rich as well (A 14 year old female student from Bomuso, Bawku West)*

*He was influenced by his friends to get a girlfriend. Their relationship lasted for one year and most of that time they met at night just because during the day they were always shy of each other. He used to recall a lot of the imagery of whatever happens in the night with the girl even in class and does not concentrate on his education (17 Year old male student from Tinkutzuk, Talensi)*



*I used to follow bad friends and copy everything they did. Whenever a boy came to tell me that he likes me I would ask for their advice and they would tell me to say yes so that we can spend his money. Previously, I was not studying much because when you get into a relationship with a boy all your attention and focus stays on that relationship. I used to get excited whenever I got news of jams or dance. I was excited to go and meet boys who will give me money – money which I shared with my friends and spent on food for both first break and second break whilst our other colleagues only ate once (A 17 Year old female student at Salinabi, Talensi)*

## Intervention Process (Role of Institutions and Activities Undertaken)


### Community Owned Intervention Process

The MSC story analysis of the prevailing conditions of communities and the pre-intervention situations of children and other story tellers points to the dances and jams as a key enabler to teenage pregnancy. Focus group discussions at the community level suggest that some communities have put in place various interventions aimed at minimizing teenage pregnancy. The MSC findings suggest that the community based interventions focused on enacting community by-laws and/or bans on dancing, jams, “spinning” and organizing any type of dance events. Another approach by some communities was to impose fines on perpetrators.

*Community night entertainment like night dance has been stopped. Community leaders usually refuse to honour outdooing of people involved in child marriages and teenage pregnancy. (A FGD of male opinion leaders at, Tolon)*

*The chief in consultation of his elders, the unit committee and assembly member have ban dance and jams at funeral. The community is also trying to ban kumkum bagya. (A FGD of female children ages 12-17 at Bawku West)*

*The communities have set up a law to regulate issues of teenage pregnancies. If a school boy impregnates a school girl, the law is that both the boy and girl in question stay out of school until the girl delivers. If the boy is not a student, he is required to take care of the girl until delivery and then take care of the child. The chief banned the organization of record dances some time ago but that phenomenon is back. People continue to organize such dances. Our chief allow us to come out in our numbers to listen to talks on child protection issues whenever an NGO or a group come to give us a talk (A FGD of female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi).*



*We don't allow record dance to play in this community. The chief has banned playing record dances, but our children go to the nearby communities to dance. However, when there is an outdooing or marriage ceremonies you can hire these record dance to come and play until 3pm (A FGD of female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi),*

Most of the communities visited had some type of by-laws on entertainment activities and regulations against teenage pregnancy offenders; there were only marginal differences in terms of the actual implementations of the legislation. For instance, fines imposed on offenders differed slightly in relation to how much they would charge the offender. One community in Tolon District placed a fine of GHC 800.00 on an offender who caused a teenage girl to become pregnant; another community in the same district impose a fine of GHC 20.00 per month on an offender. The difference was that one was payable to the traditional authority whilst the other fine was payable to the victim. In Bawku West District, a community called Sapeliga differentiates between fines imposed on students and those of adults. In the West Mamprusi district however, no such fines are imposed even though there were by-laws about teenage pregnancy. In one community called Banawa the offender was forced to quit school just like the pregnant teenager.

*A by-law was passed by the community chief and it says if a student impregnates a colleague student, the male student is made to pay GH1000. If a man who does not attend school impregnates a student he is made to pay GH2000. This by-law was passed in 2017 because the teenage pregnancies were too much (A FGD of male children ages 12-17 at Bawku West)*

*The chief together with the community leaders enacted a by-law stating that, any young boy who impregnates a girl (child) will be required to pay a fine of GHc 4000. He has also formed a Vigilante committee and they are to ensure young boys and girls don't stay out late at night in the community (A FGD of female opinion leaders at Tolon).*

*The chief and his elders have made a by-law to help in preventing such issues. For example, fine of up to GHc800.00 is levied on a boy who impregnates a girl. Imams are tasked to investigate the ages, educational attainment levels and job or employment status of boys and girls who contract marriage before performing the wedding ceremony (A FGD of male children ages 12-17 at Tolon).*

*By-lawBy-laws by the chief - Anyone who impregnate a girl will either be made to pay a fine and will also be providing the girl with GHc20.00 per month and GHc30.00 after she has given birth. And also take care of the girl education (A FGD of children ages 12-17 at Tolon).*

Almost all of the 34 communities visited had used legislation as a strategy to curb teenage pregnancy except for one community in the West Mamprusi District. They had no legislation banning the organization and hiring of jams; rather they selected a community member to undergo training on reproductive health issues in order to help counsel and direct people to go to services where appropriate information could be obtained to prevent teenage pregnancy.

*We nominated one of our very own ( the chief's wife) to go and be trained about family planning and reproductive health care when we had the opportunity to select one person so that she can help us prevent teenage pregnancies. (A FGD of opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

In some communities, the intervention is at the school level where if students are found loitering around the compound they are under detention or “caned”. There is a ban on the use of mobile phones in some communities. The PTA and the SMC are charged in some instances to monitor the activities of both teachers and students.

*Quite recently, the community elders together with the teachers come together and formed a committee in charge of caning students loitering about in the community at night especially during the hour of 10 pm and beyond. They also gave this authority to any grown-up in the community to arrest any student found at that time. (A FGD of children ages 12-17 at Tolon)*

*There is a ban on playing jams by the chief and elders in the community. Also, there is ban on the use of mobile phones by pupils especially at school and in the night. (A 15 year old female student in Kanute, Bawku West District)*

## Individual led Intervention

Our MSC story data reveals that parent led interventions were also used. This is usually done through parent-child communication about sexual decision making and parental counselling and guidance. The individual intervention approaches however did label pregnant teenagers as “problems and a disgrace” when they counsel their wards. Sometimes parents’ beliefs, knowledge, misconceptions and practice were conveyed in a negative manner. Their discomfort with sexual issues is transferred as well. The quotations below provide a vivid example of the situation:

*My parents always refer to that girl who got pregnant after her father has paid huge sums of money when advising us. He is always encouraging us to take our studies seriously (A 15 Year old female student at Tolon)*

*We are often advised not to go out at night or follow bad friend and report issues of sexual exploitation to them (A FGD of children age 12-17 at, Tolon)*

*Our parents talk to us about sex and institute sanctions, Sensitization of the importance of school by parents to their children (A FGD of female children ages 12-17 at Tolon)*

## NGOs and Organizations Spearheaded Intervention

The NGOs and organizations across the two regions put in place a range of activities targeting different stakeholders. There is, however, a shared understanding that teenage pregnancy is one of the key child protection issues to be tackled across the communities. Most of the interventions on reproductive health and teenage pregnancy are not free standing programmes and were often integrated with other child protection issues. The data from MSC participants and story tellers revealed about 12 NGOs and organizations were involved directly and indirectly in the teenage pregnancy issue. These organizations were: CAMFED, ZOFA, GPASS, Afrikids, DCD, BRAVE AURORA, PPAG, GES, NCCE, WORLD VISSION, 4-H GHANA, and MOH/GHS.

The MSC mapping data revealed that these organizations had different catchment areas of concentration and a target stakeholder outreach. The stories analysed from Bawku West mentioned the following

NGOs: GES—Girls' Education, DCD, CAMFED, Afrikids, and ZOFA. The activities of Afrikids and CAMFED seem to be the most widespread with respect to preventing teenage pregnancy since almost every story analysed on teenage pregnancy makes mention of them. The most frequently mentioned intervention change actor in Talensi was Afrikids even though other stories also mentioned GHS and World Vision. In West Mamprusi, DCD was a very popular agency but some specific communities were actively engaged by BRAVE AURORA and PPAG. NORSAAC is found only in the teenage pregnancy stories coming from Tolon District. Other NGOs in Tolon are: CCFC, CAMFED, GES, WORLD VISION, NCCE and 4-H GHANA.

These intervention organizations mainly used education and sensitization to create awareness on the child protection issues. Where Ghana Health and PPAG are involved in the sensitization, the focus is on family planning. Organizations such as DCD sensitized the communities on general child protection issues and not on specific teenage pregnancy and reproductive health issues. Sometimes these sensitization programmes targeted different stakeholders; some sensitization events targeted children especially the school based interventions, others targeted community opinion leaders such as the chiefs and Imams. It is important to note that these sensitization events were carried out across all the four target districts. The quotations below give an indication of how the sensitization was carried out by the intervention government and NGOs:

*DCD came and educated the whole community about child protection issues. Due to their sensitization, the former assembly man came to my house and asked me to go back to school but I told him I cannot bear the shame therefore I can't go back to school. My head teacher also came and spoke with my parents to allow me go back to school. My head teacher also told me to feel free and come back to school and that he will punish anyone who will mock at me. I came back to school this year, and luckily enough, I joined Afrikids club and I have learnt a lot and life have significantly changed for me. (A 15 year old female student from Tygina-Bygina, Bawku West)*

*DCD came to sensitize us on child protection issues. Ghana health service also came here, sometimes almost every year to talk to us about family planning and reproductive health issues. Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) also came to talk to us about family planning and we selected on of our own to be trained. DCD came in 2016. PPAG came about 10 years ago and still come from time to time. GHS have also been coming sometimes. (A FGD of female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

*CAMFED, NORSAC, GES, World Vision and the Development of Social Welfare and Community Development have sensitized the community to reduce these vices. Last year, we had three cases of pregnant girls at BECE sitting, but this year we have had none. (A FGD of male opinion leaders, Tolon)*

Some NGOs did not just operationalize their interventions, they adapted them to a particular setting and often visited the areas. Intervention actors that regularly visit their target population are able to track the progress and intervene accordingly. An intervention process that made use of this approach is shown in the quotation below:

*DCD came just last year 2017, Brave Aurora have been with us since 2008 and they are still in this community. Ministry of Health came here last year. Village savings came here in 2016. As for the PTA, they call for meetings every now and then. (A FGD of female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

Some NGOs used empowerment approaches in order to help parents take care of their children and prevent teenage pregnancy. In most of the MSC targeted communities, poverty was reported as the prevailing condition why girls become pregnant in their teens. Survival imperatives were key drivers for children who needed to stay in school. Some NGOs set the process in motion and provided parents with seedlings to farm in order to enable them to raise money to cater for their children. Another NGO used a savings model where savings groups were formed to enable community members to save and access money to cater for their children. This type of intervention process was seen throughout the MSC data set.


*World vision formed a savings group to help empower the women so that they can get some money to provide for children. Action Aid also provided them with seedlings to farm as well as livestock to raise money for the upkeep of their children. (A FGD of opinion leaders at, Talensi)*

Provision of schooling incentives were used to help arrest the teenage pregnancy situation. Sometimes, the provision of school supplies served as an additional incentive to keep some children in school. The pre-intervention situation of some children suggested that teenage pregnancy was closely intertwined with poverty, which had a direct effect on retention and drop-out. Parental investment in education of some teenage mothers was very rare due to poverty. Some of the NGOs attempted to reduce the family contribution to education and supported some children with school supplies and school fees. Some of these interventions targeted only girls, such as GPASS through GES and CAMFED. CAMFED operated in Tolon and Bawku West. GPASS and RAINS operated in West Mamprusi. Afrikids was a change maker in stories collected from Talensi and World Vision in Tolon. The extracts below capture the success of these interventions:

*In 2014, an organization called CAMFED came to our community to select some needy girls so as to sponsor them in school. I was lucky to be part of those selected and that change my life for me especially in terms of going to school. Through the sponsorship I benefited from the payment of school fees, sandals, bags, sanitary pads and others. (A 17 year old female student from Tsetse-Folu, Bawku west)*

*An NGO called Afrikids came to the community to educate us about teenage pregnancy and asked us to come and register with them for assistance like giving uniforms, sandals, books, pens even to children who drop-out of school. I quickly went and registered with them and started school immediately. (A 17 year old female student from Tewa, Talensi)*






*They all did sensitization and some of them like CAMFED and World Vision provided school uniform, bags and books. CAMFED's package even encouraged more girls to come to school. The girls who were not in school wanted to benefit from those packages and asked their parents to send them to school. (A 14 year old male student from Tolon)*

Another intervention process has to do with the use of the school based intervention approach such as the formation of clubs and drama groups. NGOs that have mainly used club formation at the school level to address teenage pregnancy and reproductive health issues include: NCCE, Afrikids, CCFC and NORSAAC. Through these clubs, children were sensitized about reproductive health issues and asked to dramatize these at the community level through role plays. Sometimes, club activities such as debates, quizzes and competitions help to give teenagers a focus on issues that matter. Stories about the formation of clubs and the kind of education that is provided at the club level is replete in the data. Afrikids was described in several stories as a champion in the use of clubs as a strategy to sensitize the teenagers at the school level about teenage pregnancy. The stories and FGDs collected from Bawku West and Talensi mentions Afrikids as the key change maker. In Tolon, the intervention process involving clubs was sponsored by NORSAAC and CCFC; in West Mamprusi it was spearheaded by NCCE. The quotations below describe some of the intervention activities at the school level:

*The Ghana Health Service (GHS) started an adolescent Reproductive Health Club and invited girls/boys to join. We meet every Saturday to discuss topics such as sexually transmitted diseases (STD), prevention of teenage pregnancy, etc. to date there had been 3 meetings attended by an average 13 out of 27 members. Afrikids also came to our school in 2016 and discussed the causes and effects of STD, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse etc. (A 14 year old female student from Bequino, Bawku west)*

*He got promoted to JHS1 in 2016 where his teacher introduced him to a club called Child Rights Club which was sponsored by Afrikids. This club performs activities like debate competition, drama, quiz, games and sometimes talks from the SMC chairman, nurses etc. There were talks by the club patron and a nurse on the effects and prevention of teenage pregnancy which touched him and made him realize that he was leading himself astray. (A 17 Year old male student from Tinkutzuk, Talensi,)*



*One day, an NGO called Afrikids invited the whole community to watch a drama acted by pupils of my former school. I was present and my parents were also present. The drama was about sexual exploitation and teenage pregnancy. After the drama, my parents came to apologize to me and asked me to come back home, promising to take care of me till delivery, and take care of the baby while I continue with schooling. (A 15 year old female student from Begyiba, Talensi)*

*NORSAAC through the school clubs staged a drama against child labour and child marriage. We have a Guidance and counselling institute to cater for children's safety and care in the school. (Kpalsogu, Tolon, Male, FGD). The training NORSAAC provided our teachers on school base health and on reproductive health rights. Sensitization on the awareness and prevention of child protection issues especially teenage pregnancy, child marriage, kayayo. About 2 to 3 years ago. (A FGD of male opinion leaders at Tolon)*

The extracts above shows that some NGOs, apart from the formation of clubs, also engaged teachers in the schools. NORSAAC trained both teachers and students on reproductive health care with the hope that the knowledge of the teachers would be shared with the students. Some NGOs did not only use drama and role play as the key intervention tool, but adopted the strategy of preparing peer educators at the club level. The quotation below shed light on this strategy:

*I joined a new club that was formed by Afrikids in my school in 2016. The club members meet once every term to be taken through a lot of activities ranging from adolescent reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, STDs and others. The activities of the club also include selecting two members to serve as peer educators where they are taken to Zebilla for a training workshop after which these two members return to educate their colleagues about what they have learnt. I happened to be part of the two members selected all the time and I must confess that I have learnt a lot from the Afrikids officials and this has really given me more experience when it comes to adolescent reproductive health issues (A 17 year old male student, from Sopatoa, Bawku West).*

Several communities reported that they received more than one intervention by different organizations on issues of reproductive health. The MSC story data suggests that intervention organization were not always working together to bring about the change on reproductive health and may not be aware of each other's work;

*CAMFED support we the girls with our education. The chief have put in place fines to punish boys who impregnate girls. Our parents' advice and provide our needs to prevent us from following men. DCD educated us on child marriage and teenage pregnancy. GHS educated us sexual reproductive health. (A FGD of children ages 12-17 at, Bawku West)*

*Afrikids and Social Welfare people educated us on the causes, effects and preventions of child protections issues, through this educations and the club I joined, I learnt many things and I am now a changed person. My mother and teachers use to advise me too, especially when they realize my performance was declining (A 14 year old female student from Bomuso, Bawku West)*

*NORSAAC, CAMFED, World Vision and 4-H (i.e. Head, Heart Hand and Health)-Ghana assisted in making these changes happen. They all did sensitization and some of them like CAMFED and World Vision provided school uniform, bags and books. CAMFED's package even encouraged more girls to come to school. The girls who were not in school wanted to benefit from those packages and asked their parents to send them to school. (A 14 Year old male student from Tolon)*



*The DCD offered sensitization on child protection issues of which teenage pregnancy is not excluded spelling out the causes and effects of a child getting pregnant with the use of flash cards. SADA also assisted in areas of provision of educational materials like school uniform, school bags and sandals. NCCE formed civic club and chosen a club patron as a mentor who engage in various child protection issues and effects of school drop-out. (A 14 year old female student from Yalazaa, West Mamprusi) Post Intervention (Significant Change)*

The MSC story analysis reveals several interventions being made by state and non-state actors to prevent teenage pregnancy and ameliorate its consequences; these interventions often resulted in very positive outcomes for individual beneficiaries and target districts. Most of the interventions were not standalone interventions designed purposely for tackling teenage pregnancy therefore it is often difficult to identify which intervention made the significant change. However, for the purpose of the study, the analysis team tried to link specific interventions to specific changes based on the following criteria: reduction in prevalence; knowledge creation and awareness; and changes as a result of best practices.

Keeping girls in school is still seen as the best short strategy to prevent teenage pregnancy. With respect to the intervention on the provision of school supplies, The MSC story data suggests that some children who would not have gone back to school or dropped out as a result of teenage pregnancy have gone back to school after they delivered once their basic needs were provided for (e.g. school supplies). The provision of school supplies and, in some cases, the payment of school fees reduced drop-out rates and increased enrolment among pregnant girls in some communities. Some of the interviewees who became pregnant and “had no hope of returning to school”, went back because they received some form of scholarship.

The MSC data shows that reducing the high rate of school drop-out (through the provision of basic school needs) resulted in a significant reduction in teenage pregnancy particularly in communities where the incidence of teenage pregnancy was very high. This pattern of change was seen especially in Bawku West and Tolon Districts. These two districts are the areas where the CAMFED scholarship support was very strong. In reporting on the NGOs and organizations working on teenage pregnancy issues, we reported that CAMFED and GPASS/GEU supplied children with basic school items in order to minimize parental involvement in paying for extra costs of education and to increase enrolment and retention. Interviews with school officials confirmed that girls’ school attendance had improved and that drop-out rates had decreased. The quotations below shed some light on the issue:

*CAMFED and GPASS Support of needy but brilliant students especially girls in the basic and senior high school of their school needs...Most of the girls who never like coming to school are now punctual. Girls who used to have sex with men or boys for their school needs have stopped that act through the support we received from these interventions. It has reduced school drop-out. It has made us to concentrate much on our studies (A FGD of children ages 12-17, Tolon)*

Several NGO’s across the four districts, adopted sensitization and education strategies in the communities. For example, in West Mamprusi District, almost all the communities could recall the UNICEF Child Protection Toolkits being used during sensitization events. Some MSC stories reveal that children and youth had changed their behaviours as a result of these sensitization programmes. The

interventions that used sensitization methods were found to increase knowledge among teenagers regarding early pregnancy and reproductive health.

At the individual level, child story tellers reported behaviour changes as a result of the sensitization they received. These are reflected in the following quotations:

*I now know there is no truth to our long-held belief that menstrual pains can be taken away by engaging in sex. Also, I now know that sex is a natural thing, we can still abstain from it if we want to, and if we cannot abstain we should use condom. The most significant change for me is that now I have confidence to say no to those who push me to have a boyfriend. This will keep me away from pregnancy. Avoiding boyfriends is also better because boys will never understand why I do not want to have sex. (A 15 year old female SHS student from, Bawku West)*

*Our children are healthy and strong because we space our birth as a result of the family planning. We deliver our babies and we are able to wait until they are about 4 or 5 years before we give birth again. Almost all the grownups have gone to school because teenage pregnancy has been reduced to the barest minimum. If your daughter is sexually active as a child you can go for family planning for her. (A FGD of female opinion leaders at, West Mamprusi)*

*I now know that getting pregnant at an age where you are not matured is not good. I learnt that a child has the right to go to school and learn and I also learnt that you cannot vote until you are 18 years old. Additionally, the “Tindaani” (clan head) has put a ban on the late night dance at funerals and this has reduced teenage pregnancy (A 14 year old female student from Geodatusa, Talensi)*

*They used to be high recorded teenage pregnancy in the community but it has reduced. Some time ago girls asked to carry babies to write BECE and some came to write with pregnancies but now we do not see that anymore. School drop-out has reduced. More children are now in school. (A FGD of children aged 12-17 from, Tolon)*

The school based intervention approach were found to be highly successful since they used a multifaceted approach and included several components that generated active student participation; in most cases students were asked to dramatize what they have learnt and later present this to the whole community. The school based approach also included training teachers about reproductive health issues in order for them to train their students. Students were trained as peer educators in order to teach their friends. All the stories that mention these interventions describe the NGOs as the change agents and tell of how the interventions significantly improved their knowledge about teenage pregnancy and, in some cases, knowledge on broader reproductive health issues. The change described in the MSC stories reveals that school club activities helped to change behaviour. The excerpts below are based on individual story tellers involved in school club activities.

*Because of these (school club) activities, I then opened up to be vocal, now I can talk and even demonstrate using the dummy penis to wear condom and demonstrate to my peers and the youth of the community. The confidence is there and I have a lot of experience about all the interventions that have been brought to educate us by the NGO's (A 17 year old female student from Sedimano, Talensi)*

*Now with the experience I have gained from my interactions in the club, I am able to comport myself and also educate my friends especially the girls so as to prevent them from getting pregnant. (A 17 year old male student, from Sopatoa, Bawku West)*

*Through the interventions of Afrikids club, I got to know that is natural to have menses, you do not need to have sex before getting your menses. Afrikids and Ghana Health Service educated us on reproductive health and sex education. This has helped change my way of thinking about menses. Due to the education I got from the club, when I got my first menses I alerted my mother and she bought me pad and caution me to stay away from men if not I can get pregnant and will drop out of school. (A 16 year old female student from Buliguwan, Bawku West).*

There is evidence of significant change as a result of interlocking intervention programmes, which complemented one another. Some of these significant changes was a direct result of the communities own by-laws.


*There was no single case of teenage pregnancy in this school. Thanks to NORSAAC, CAMFED and 4-H with their respective interventions girl child pregnancy in the school and in this community is now managed to the barest minimum (14 Year old male student from Tiila, Tolon)*

*The most significant change is that, the ban on dance entertainment has resulted in reduction of teenage pregnancy and school dropout in my community. There is an increase in school enrolment and retention rate, children can go to school to complete JHS, SHS and even to the tertiary level. 17 year old female student from West Mamprusi*

*There is a reduction in teenage pregnancy cases which was a problem to every house hold. School enrolment levels have increased and performance has also improved as a result of school provisions. (A 17 Year old male student from Yoo, Tolon)*

The school based approach even though multifaceted and the change was not only in terms of knowledge gained but attitudinal in nature; these interventions only reached the children in school and not those in the community apart from a few cases where communities benefited from the drama performed by these children on such issues. Most of these clubs are formed at the SHS levels therefore the teenagers at the basic and JHS level may not benefit a lot from this approach.

The MSC stories suggest that community members are not sure if the changes that they have seen in reducing the incidence of teenage pregnancy will be sustained when the NGOs leaves. A FGD in West Mamprusi District reveals the following:



*Our children go to school and are retained because they are not pregnant. Most of our girls are able to proceed to the SHS level and we are happy about it because they could become teachers, nurses and even get good jobs after school. The constraint is that Brave Aurora might not be here forever to sustain these changes. (A FGD of female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

## Conclusion

The pre-intervention situation highlighted how the individuals, community and the districts recognise that teenage pregnancy is at “crisis” level. The intervention process differentiated amongst three types of intervention. The MSC stories suggest that children and teenagers were sensitized to issues about teenage pregnancy and that in some communities there was a drastic reduction in teenage pregnancy incidence particularly where girls were provided with scholarships to attend basic education.

## 6.4 Child Marriage

Child marriage is defined by UNICEF as marriage of either a girl or a boy under the age of 18 and is condemned globally as a violation of human rights. Ghana is among countries that have signed a number of international conventions and resolutions on human rights including the Convention on the Right of the Child and has explicitly said that child marriage is a human rights violation. International conventions related to child marriage include:

- Convention on Consent to Marriage
- Minimum Age of Marriage and Registration of Marriages
- The African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child.
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child

Child marriage is among the most frequently cited child protection issue by CSOs and other NGOs in Ghana. The Child Marriage Intervention is implemented by the Department of Community Development (DCD) and partner organizations mainly CSOs including some governmental institutions with funding from UNICEF. Specifically, the child marriage intervention covers seven (7) regions: Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Brong Ahafo, Volta, Central and Western Regions.

There are a total of 12 CSO partners and two state institutions currently involved in the implementation of the Child Marriage Programmes support by UNICEF including: the Department of Community Development (DCD) and National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE). The CSOs involved are: Community Development Alliance (CDA), Youth Harvest Foundation, AfriKids, NORSAAC, Seek to Save Foundation, ATCWAR, International Needs, Action Aid, Integrated Development Centre (IDC), Child Rights International (CRI), Centre for Development Initiatives (CDI), and Christian Children’s Fund of Canada (CCFC). See annex 5 for the institutional, regional and district mapping of UNICEF interventions on Child Protection.

This section provides important insight into the prevailing child marriage situation in the Northern and Upper East Regions. The MSC qualitative analyses is based on the selected MSC stories that focussed on child marriage. There is significant evidence from the MSC stories that child marriage was mentioned as one of the prevailing child protection issues in almost all the Focus Group Discussions (FDG) conducted across the two regions. Communities had intervened through the use of by-laws,

the formation of child protection clubs, sanctions and a ban on any activity that could promote child marriage. These strategies were found not to yield much result. The sanctions that were imposed by the traditional leaders on culprits involved in child marriage did not deter the occurrence of children marriage and were often not in the “best interest of the child”.

The causes of child marriage vary across regions, districts and families. There were a few trends that emerged from the MSC analysis particularly in the Northern Region. Child marriage was often driven by socio-cultural beliefs and practices often seeming intractable in nature. There were newer patterns of behaviour that once a girl of school going age gets pregnant she should be married off immediately. In some areas of the MSC research, cases were found of children opting to enter into early marriage with partners of their choosing in order to avoid being forced to marry people they do not know or want. There are different practices related to child marriage occurring in this region but whatever the form it takes, child marriage is taking place without the consent of the children involved.

Apart from the communities own interventions aimed at reducing child marriages, other NGOs who are involved directly and indirectly in programmes that are geared towards ending child marriage in the Northern Region include: NORSAAC, DCD, CAMFED, CCFC, 4H-GHANA, Baptist Child, Brave Aurora, , NCCE, GPASS and World Vision. The focus of these organizations with respect to wider child protection issues is different; however the use of sensitization is common to all organisations.

## Pre-Intervention and Prevailing Situation

The pre-intervention situation suggests that child marriage usually occur both out of sight by the public/community and sometimes in the open. In all four MSC districts, a common driver of child marriage was poverty. Girls are sometimes betrothed to a man of her families’ choosing because of poverty. The quotations below illustrate this:

*Some parents are poor they sometimes force their younger female girls to get married in order to gain an economic benefit such as cattle and money. Child marriage has affected most of our female children especially the uneducated ones, when I was not a member of civic club I did not know that a child has the right to say no to marriage if their parents are forcing them to do so. (An individual interview with a 16 year old female SHS student at Bawku West)*

*We have poverty issues. We are not able to pay fees at the JHS levels. We have issues of child marriage. They betroth the children. They will make the guy work at the girl’s family farm land and later the girl’s family will want the girl to go to school. The man will not agree and so they will impregnate the girl and marry her (A Focus Group Discussion with female opinion leaders in West Mamprusi)*

*Child marriage has been in existence for a long time. It is done when our parents force us to marry at an early age without our consent this is done for several reasons. Parents want their girl child to marry their friends as reward for those who help them on their farm, to those they receive gifts from or those who help them to perform funeral rites of a dead relative. (A 42 year old female teacher from Komsu, West Mamprusi)*



*In the case of early marriage, we have seen children who left school and got married because their parents could not take care of their needs. In some of the cases it was said that the girls got pregnant and were forced to get married to the man. (A FGD with female children at Tolon)*

Apart from the poverty factor, the MSC stories suggest that children are entering into early marriages themselves without the consent of their parents. This type of child marriage was peculiar to the West Mamprusi and Talensi Districts. The FDGs and individual interviews across these two districts suggest that the parents are not supportive of this practice of child marriage but do not have control since the children are initiating these marriage arrangements. Children are widely seen as “innocent and dependents” and they are legally incapable of consenting to marriages, which makes this practice a new anomaly in the child marriage discourse (Screenivas, 2010). There is little clarity of the manner in which the child initiated child marriage is carried out but the MSC data does suggest that, in an environment where teenage pregnancy usually leads to marriage, it is easy for children to make their own marriage arrangements. Respondents from the Focus Group Discussions and individual stories collection shed more light on the issue as follows:

*We have issues of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Sometimes the children enter into the marriage themselves when our daughters leave this community to go to JHS elsewhere, they come back with pregnancy. (A FGD of female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

*We betroth the children (girls) we are poor and that are why we allow the child marriage: sometimes the children themselves go into child marriage without the consent of their parent. They go out with the men. We are not able to pay fees for SHS and the poverty does not stop even when we give our children out to marry. Sometimes, the girls are not able to complete their education up to the J.H.S because of child marriage. (A FGD with female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

*Girls between 14 and 15 years go round to look for husbands without the consent of their parents, after marrying the man's family come to apologies but the girl's parent sometimes refuse the offer. They do this because they do not want to be forced to marry any man who is not their choice (An individual interview with a 38 year old Petty trader from Lambeli, West Mamprusi)*

Child marriage has become an adaptation strategy for teenage pregnancy. The MSC findings suggest that this form of child marriage is prevalent across all the four MSC study districts. When a girl gets pregnant, she is forced to marry the man who caused her pregnancy provided the man is willing to marry. This is usually done to “cover up” unwanted pregnancies or to protect the teenage mother’s family honour. The indirect messaging in the communities studied was that “a man is allowed to marry a girl he impregnates”, which is widespread and clouds the severity of child marriage. Parents also arrange marriage for their daughters when they suspect she is having a boyfriend. The quotations below illustrate this best:



*A girl was in JHS when her father wanted to marry her off to someone. According to the father, the girl's behavior was awkward even though she was underage that is 16 years old. He perceived the daughter was following and befriending men. The father advised her to stop the behavior and concentrate on her education otherwise he had no option than to marry her off. The father was afraid that she would become pregnant and might bring shame/disgrace to him and the family (An individual interview with a 33 year old man, farmer from Tua in the Tolon district)*

*When children involve themselves in pre-marital sex and get pregnant we marry them out (A FGD with male opinion leaders at Talensi)*

*Sometime back (about 5 years ago), the rate of teenage pregnancies was alarming. Children just got pregnant and dropped-out of school. They were forced to marry if the men who impregnated them were willing to marry. Most of the girls who became pregnant dropped out of school (A 15 year old female student from Kamansupala, West Mamprusi on PPAG activities)*

While child marriage occurs due to different practices and differs from one district to another, there is a consensus among key stakeholders that it is problematic. Child and youth story tellers suggest that child marriage compounds the unemployment situation and affects their education. Children usually stop schooling when they get married particularly when they are pregnant. They stop schooling at the time when they do not have any skills or training that will help them compete for jobs in the employment market. They are therefore totally dependent on whoever they are married to or their parents. According to UNICEF (2011), victims of child marriage have fewer chances of receiving formal education. The gender dynamics of power is further widened because their decision making power is affected. Female victims may not even have funds to access reproductive health care during pregnancy. Some respondents from a focus group discussions spoke of the possible complications during child delivery for victims of child marriage. Child marriage was found to worsen their poverty situation. The MSC data reveals that girls' right to education are not only violated but often they lose any family/ social support.

*I am a victim of early marriage. My father withdrew me from school to get married in this community. When I look at some of those I started schooling with, I get sad that it happened to me. Some of them are police women. As a single mother with many children in school life has never been easy for me, with the little money I make from my Shea butter processing business, I use that to take care of their educational needs as well as buy food for the family. (A 40 year old victim of child marriage whose daughter is now benefiting from CAMFED at Fonyili Community, Tolon District)*

*A fifteen (15) years old girl was given out by her father to an old man to marry. The parents of this girl were poor to the extent that they could not cater for their needs. The old man had being very helpful to the father of the girl and so as a sign of gratitude, the father gave out his daughter. The girl was in JHS 3 preparing for her final exams but because of the marriage, the girl had to drop out of school and move to the man's house. (A 45 year old male Assemblyman from Toshie Community, Bawku West)*

*Most of the children get pregnant after J.H.S when they are waiting for their results. Sometimes, they will deliver and go back to school, at other times; they will just go ahead and marry. (A FGD of female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

The MSC data suggests that most communities are disturbed concerning issues of child marriage and admit that it is a problem but they do not fully understand the long term effects on the child and society as a whole. For instance, FGDs in West Mamprusi reveal that “they do not have child marriage in their community” but in the same statement they admit to only marrying their girls out when they are aged 16. Some communities claim they do not allow child marriages however they marry their children out to men provided they are from a different community. The extracts from a focus group discussions captures this contradiction:

*We do not have child marriage in this community. We only give our children out to marry the men in a different community. (A FGD with female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

*Some men promise to fund our daughter's education. When they do, our daughters also give themselves to them and they get pregnant. When they get pregnant, it ends in child marriage. (A FGD with female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

Informal /forced marriages were other practices that were common and the practice seemed to be sanctioned by parents and community members. Sometimes a man or older youth might kidnap a girl, marry her and later inform the girl's parent. We can say that child marriage involves a web of ties, both direct and indirect family relations. In fact, the MSC stories revealed that girl children who have just completed or in the process of completing basic education are highly vulnerable to child marriage. This is a likely a result of the male population not fully accepting and fearing “educated women” due to the well documented belief among northern communities that educated girls may not marry easily nor submit to the men (Casely-Hayford, 2012). Two young people had this to say:

*My senior sister dropped out of school a year ago because my parents didn't have money to provide her basic needs. So she stayed at home to be assisting my mother at home. Until one day she was sent to the market to buy ingredients for an evening meal. After buying the ingredients, she was coming back when a group of boys eloped with her to a particular boy who was interested in having her as a girlfriend. But my sister didn't want anything to do with him. Now, my sister is sitting in the house, angry that she is not in school while her colleagues are in school learning. The following day, the boy's parents sent a message to tell my parents that my sister was in their house as a wife to their son. (An individual interview with a 15 year old female student from Talensi)*

*In my community one girl who had just completed JHS was abducted immediately she finished writing her BECE. The incidence of child marriage is very rampant in the community; girls who get to primary 6 up to the JHS level are normally given out for marriage. (An individual interview with a 13 year old pupil from West Mamprusi)*



Early marriage most often happens without the consent of the girl child. Perpetrators of child marriage do not bother about the age and maturity of the child they are contracting to marry. The MSC stories revealed that child marriage victims are usually very young, poor and female. Some child marriage story tellers revealed the following:

*I was betrothed to my sister's husband who lived with my sister in a farming community at Kumasi when I was in primary six. When we got there, I was not told that I was going to be married. I thought I was going to be with my sister. One day, I was sleeping with their children in one of the rooms when her husband entered the room to wake me up, almost half naked, to have sex with me and so I screamed to scare him away. (A 30 year old child marriage victim who was betrothed to her sister's husband but received Afrikids intervention, Talensi).*


*I was forced in marriage at age 12 years when I was just getting breasts on my chest. I didn't like the man given to me by my father and because my father forced me on him, he was not feeding me; he never had time for me. I hardly saw him around the house but rather with friends drinking up and down (A 46 year old child marriage victim who was forced to marry at age 12)*

*Child marriage was a practice in our community sometimes ago, to the extent that children of school going age were taken out and forced to marry at the ages of 15, 16, or 17 years. I happen to be a direct witness of some of these issues that nearly affected a close friend at JHS. Her parents forcefully wanted to marry her to an aged man who she was not interested in, so she was constantly crying and complaining to her parents that she is still young at sixteen and also attending school (A 17 year old female student who happen to be a direct witness to a forced child marriage in Tolon)*

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Many girls are not aware of their rights under the law to seek help nor do they know where to go for help other than close relations. Two respondents gave these stories:

*My older sister who had married in Kupeliga passed away leaving behind her husband and three kids. My dad asked me to go and replace my sister at her husband's house because another woman will maltreat the children. I had no option than to agree. The man does not do any work. We just sit at home. When I first came to this community, there was no development here. (An individual interview with a female student from Talnsi)*




*I completed JHS in 2009 and could not continue because I was pregnant at the age of 16 years old even though I had an aggregate of 27. So my parents were furious about my situation. They sacked me from the home and asked me to go and stay with the man who impregnated me and vow never to see me again in the house. So at that movement I asked myself what do I do now, because I was devastated, terrified, traumatized and demoralized and my parents were very angry with me because I have disgraced the family. So I had no option than to stay with the man who impregnated me and now my husband. (A 24 year old victim of child marriage who has now received CAMFED's support, Tolon)*

The above excerpts from the FGDs and individual stories provide insight into the prevailing child marriage situation in the Northern and Upper East Regions. Generally, the pre-intervention situations suggest an alarming prevalence of child marriage, which are undetected and not reported. The stories reveal that, to a large extent, child marriage takes place without the consent of the girl child. The consent of the man who impregnated the girl is sought in most cases and if he agrees to marry the girl, the girl is forced to marry. Secondly, one variable which is often not mentioned in focus group discussion is the role of parents in contracting the child marriages; responses from individual interviews reveal that parents are often fully involved and consent to child marriages often to protect the “family honour”. The MSC story analysis also reveals that for most families, a pregnant girl is seen as an “unbearable economic burden on her parents”. Some of the quotations above suggest that some poor parents see child marriage as their only option.

## **Intervention Process (Role of Institutions and Activities Undertaken)**

A range of interventions have been promoted in communities where there is awareness of the negative impact and harm child marriage causes. The analysis of interventions suggests that most interventions focus on community/family sensitization. There three key intervention process levels including: community level, individual intervention and NGO/ organizational intervention levels.

Findings from the MSC research suggest that in some communities, nothing has been done concerning protection of children from marriage. Some communities do not have the child protection committees operating nor do have any strategy or action plan to curb this menace. This means that perpetrators of child marriage often escape the law without any enforcement procedure and the victims suffer injustice. Women (opinion leaders) from Sariba, West Mamprusi made this claim:



*We do not have any action or strategy to stop the child marriage. We don't respect each other. They do not even respect the chief that is why we do not have any strategy. When we get the opportunity, we will put strategies in place. For instance culprits should be punished. (A FGD with female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

Some MSC communities and traditional leadership have put in place some by-laws against child marriage in order to counter the problem of child marriage. In some communities, offenders are called to the chief's palace and warned while others are asked to pay a fine. In a few cases, offenders are handed to the police. Some communities have vigilante committees and women's groups that monitor and act as watch dogs to make sure that children do not stay in the town late at night. Most child protection committees are made up of only men. Some community leaders invite district personnel to sensitize the community members about child protection issues. The respondents had this to say about their community interventions:

*The community has put in place some sanctions about child marriage. If any man should marry a school child they will report to the police to arrest him. The chief can also ask the man to pay some fine (A FGD with Children ages 12-17 years at West Mamprusi)*

*We have unit committee in place and they can arrest the perpetrators of child marriage. The committee members go out in the night to monitor and bring our children back to us if they are seen wandering about in town. The committee is in this town and only men can be members of this committee. We have divided the community into six sections. Each section is made of 5 members so they are 30 members in all. (A FGD with female Community opinion Leaders at West Mamprusi)*

*The chief and the entire community has passed a by-law to protect parents from given out their girl child into marriage, anybody who goes against it would be fined in the form of cash and animals. Children are not supposed to stay out up to 9:30pm. No Imam would officiate your outdooring or when given an underage child to marry. (A FGD with children from 12-17, Tolon)*

*The chief and his elders have made a by-law to help in preventing such issues. For example, fine of up to GH¢800.00 is levied on a boy who impregnates a girl. Imams are tasked to investigate the ages, educational attainment levels and job or employment status of boys and girls who contract marriage before performing the wedding ceremony. (A FGD with children ages 12-17 at Tolon)*

At the individual level, parents attempt to counsel their children on child protection issues. A close family member, a teacher or an assembly person can sometimes intervene on behalf of a child in a child marriage issue but this requires a high level of authority and negotiation skill. Below is the story of a 45 year old Assemblyman who intervened in order to stop a father from marrying his 15 year old daughter to an old man:

*I got to hear the news and as an assembly member of the community, I informed the chief about it. The chief then ordered that the father of the girl should be arrested to serve as a deterrent to other parents. The police were invited and we went to the house to arrest the father. But the father of the girl had heard the news and run out of the community. So the police arrested the mother of the girl. (A 45 year old Assemblyman from Toshie, Bawku West)*

The MSC data from the selected stories reveals that the Department of Community Development and Social Welfare (DCD/SW) is one of the few government organizations involved directly in providing interventions on child marriage across all the districts in the two regions. NCCE provides child marriage interventions in Talensi, Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts but not in the Bawku West District. Organizations such as NORSAAC, CCFC, 4-H, and World Vision were the organizational change actors identified from the MSC child marriage stories working in the Tolon District. BRAVE AURORA and PPAG were operating in the West Mamprusi District along with Afrikids, and World Vision also operated in Talensi District.

These NGO's generally organized sensitization programmes to create awareness about the harmful effects of child marriage. Apart from sensitization, a few of the NGO's use creative strategies as part of their intervention package. For instance, NORSAAAC uses drama and role plays to educate the community on child protection issues including child marriage. CAMFED provides sponsorship packages and paid for the admission fee of some child marriage victims. DCD/ SW also organize sensitization programmes using the child protection toolkits.

In the Upper East Region, specifically in Talensi District, World Vision and Afrikids sponsor the education of girls who have been affected by child marriage. Afrikids have also formed child protection clubs in the schools. The best illustration of these interventions is captured in the quotations below:

*As a child protection committee member, when I heard about the story in the community I took action to prevent it. I went to the girl's father's house with an elderly friend and had a fruitful discussion with him. He agreed with a condition that if we can advise his daughter to change her behavior. Subsequently, we talked to the girl and she promised us to adhere to our advice. (A 33 year male child protection committee member who stopped a father who wanted to marry her 16 year old daughter off, Tolon District)*

*Brave Aurora came to this community and started various interventions aimed at protecting children and end child abuses. They supported orphans and poor families they even build houses for some of them care givers of orphans are supported with funds and they pay the fees of these orphans and give them food and clothing as well they give out loans as well. They also organize sensitization programmes on the effects of child marriage and they help the community to committee to go round to talk to parents on the importance of sending children to school especially the girl child. CAMFED also came into the community also supported the children with school supplies and pocket money to encourage them to go to school. The staff of the Department of social welfare and Community development also talked proper care of children and the importance of education. (A 42 year old female teacher from West Mamprusi)*

*I personally joined the civic club on 13th March 2016, these was the time that our president of the club took us through the various importance ways by which children are not supposed to get married at an early stage which sometimes makes their lives useless in the society. (A 16 year old female student from Bawku West)*

## Post Intervention (Significant Change)

The MSC analysis suggests that there is a growing recognition that some changes in child marriage are taking place as a result of community awareness creation and child sponsorship work along with other interventions mentioned above. Some of these changes are large scale, far reaching and have a ripple effect on the individuals, families, communities and the districts. Some intervention change actors adopted best practices and there is evidence of sustainable changes taking place while other changes remain short term and appear less sustainable.

## Communities' Own Intervention Induced Change

Most of the communities own actions at preventing child marriage relate to enacting of by-laws. The MSC analysis findings indicate that the application of these by-laws have not deterred some people from engaging in child marriage. A 17 year old boy had this to say about the by-laws in his community.

*The Chief and elders of the community have passed a by-law to stop parents from giving out their girl children in marriage. Anyone who goes against the law is fined some cash and an animal (An individual interview with a 17 year old male student from Babaduu in Tolon)*

In almost every community in the four districts, there are by-laws that are enacted but there are doubts about the deterrence this will have on the population. There is no mention of the annulment of the child marriage once these fines are collected. In some communities where these fines exist there is no recorded change in the prevailing child protection issues. The three excerpts below give a picture of the prevailing condition, intervention process and post intervention situation of a community, which has recorded no change despite the communities own intervention.

*Upon all the interventions and implementation, no one have benefited from this system of by-laws and fines. In fact there is no change to the individual and the community as a whole, because the pregnancy rate have increased, child marriage is still going on and school drop-out rate is pretty much the same. (A FGD with male community opinion leaders from in Talensi)*

Charting the interaction between by-laws and child marriage is not straight forward. In fact a review of the MSC data suggests that there is no or very limited change being attributed to the community's own intervention efforts. The question remains as to how effective these child marriage by-laws are? The underlying drivers of child marriage in the two regions under study based on the pre-intervention situations shows that respondents make no mention of community by-laws. The most significant change stories are focussed mainly on change with respect to depth and scale driven by a collaboration of both the communities and the NGOs/GOG organizations.

## NGOs and Organizations Intervention Induced Change

The interventions by NGO's and organizations have made discernible progress in stopping child marriage. The interventions by the NGO sector use key strategies such as: the use of community sensitization, which has resulted in widespread awareness creation on the harmful effect of child marriage. The MSC stories suggest that the scale of change has been huge. Nowhere is the scale of change more evident with respect to sensitization than in communities where DCD has rolled out the child protection toolkits in a consistence and conscientious manner.

**Some of us have benefited from the education they (DCD) gave us on child protection issues. We know the effects of some of the practices and we are willing to protect our children from forced marriage. (A FGD with female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)**

The DCD presence in the West Mamprusi District is very high and the sensitization efforts appear more widespread compared to other districts. Some NGOs have adopted the use of providing school children with basic school supplies. The MSC data shows that money is a powerful driver and where a would-be husband in a betrothal arrangement has been working on the girl's family farm, it can create a powerful inducement for poor parents whose major consideration is to marry their daughters off. Financial support is less of an inducement in communities where girls are provided with school supplies and fees.

The change recorded in the MSC stories of change was that, when provided with their basic school needs, young girls are participating in school, retained and could even be protected. This is a strategy that certain NGOs have adopted to address the child marriage problem in the Northern and Upper East Regions. In the pre-intervention situation, we found that part of the child marriage trap was that poor families withdraw their girls from school because of teenage pregnancy. Second, girls entered marriage because they have dropped out of school. The tipping point at which time girls marry is when they have completed JHS and are not able to transition to SHS. Most of the effective intervention strategies are therefore geared towards keeping girls in school and helping others transition from JSS to SHS through the payment of fees, and the provision of school supplies (e.g. GPASS and CAMFED). This basic strategy has helped protect girls and families from using negative coping strategies such as child marriage.

*My teachers, PTA and grown up friends approached my parents and talked to them to take it easy with my situation. After I delivered, I nurtured the child for years. Even though my teacher told my parents that I can continue to the SHS if the child grew up. I was fortunate because in 2012 CAMFED heard about my situation and intervened with a sponsorship for me to continue my education at the Chereponi SHS. They footed all my school expenses like admission fees, school uniforms, books, bags, sanitary pads throughout until I completed. (A 24 year old victim of child marriage who has now received CAMFED's support from Tuma, Tolon)*

*The support brought me great relief and I could now take care of the other children and also raise money to provide food for the house. NGO, CAMFED gave my daughter all she needed for school e.g. books, bags, pens, sandal, school fees. (A 40 year old female shea butter processor who is a victim of child marriage but whose children have now benefitted from the intervention)*

The nature of the intervention process however makes the change unsustainable. School supplies are given and fees are paid but there is no provision in place to equip the community to be able to continue when the intervention is stopped or when the fees and sponsorship are no longer forthcoming. This is currently the case with GPASS ending in 2017 having assisted close to 40,000 girls up to the JHS level.

There are other NGOs and organizations that have formed clubs such as Civic Education Clubs who have been able to actively engage children and helped them change their priorities, building their self-worth/confidence needed. Individual stories from the children demonstrated an improved understanding of these child protection issues. Some of these stories of change were recorded from Tolon District.



*I heard that a certain organization (Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana) came to sensitize the community about family planning and reproductive health care I did not take part and I do not know when they came. The chief's wife later took on the sensitization programme, together with Ghana Health Service and everything changed. They organize a lot of sensitization programs for whole community (the children and the adult). They told our parents that if you have a daughter and you think that you may lose everything because she might get pregnant due to her behaviour you can take them to do the family planning. They told us the young ones that if you had an unwanted pregnancy, you can go and talk to them, you should not drink any concoction they taught us about how to calculate our safe period and they also told us about abstain and the use of condoms. I have seen some girls whose parent have to do family for them if you are pregnant and you tell them they help you but keep it confidential. If your parents want to help you abort the pregnancy they will give you a referral letter to Walewale and they actually keep it confidential. (A 15 year old female student from Kamansupala, West Mamprusi on PPAG activities)*

*NORSAAC organized a drama about child marriage, girl child education and kayayee. NCCE also did some sensitization programme at the school. They educated us about the dangers of teenage pregnancy, child marriage etc. There also used to be pregnancy, children against child marriage club but it ended with the SHS three who have completed. (A FGD with female children ages 12-17, Tolon)*

*It was only boys that our parents were sending to school. They thought it useless educating a girl as we will end up pregnant. This was a great concern because they were not providing us with uniform and books which made it difficult to stay in school and learn but that has change. More girls are completing SHS and going to training colleagues and other places. It has also reduce school drop-out and teenage pregnancy in the community. (A FGD with female children ages 12-17 at Tolon)*



The MSC stories revealed that the most successful changes have come about where community efforts have been aligned with NGO interventions. There have also been changes with respect to the reporting pattern. The number of child marriage cases is gradually being seen with more victims reporting. This is due to the widespread awareness of the specific harms of child marriage and a shift in social acceptance that child marriage can be used as an economic coping strategy. A 13 year old pupil contends that:

**The incidence of child marriage is now being reported that is why the girl who was abducted was rescued. (A 13 year old pupil, female student from West Mamprusi)**

The change above came as a result of a joint effort between the NGO and community partners involved. Another good practice in the implementation of child marriage interventions took place in the Bugy-ya Kura, a community in West Mamprusi District. Teenage pregnancy has been said to be an underlying driver of child marriage in this district. Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) tackled the issue that people had too many children and that people were poor and could not afford to provide for all the needs of their children. Some girls adopted negative coping strategies by sleeping with men for



money, which sometimes resulted in teenage pregnancy; in such cases girls were forced to marry when the men involved were willing. PPAG intervened with their reproductive health talks and family planning concept. The community agreed with the ideas and changes have occurred in the behaviour of children and their parents in relation to child marriage. Findings from the MSC stories suggest that when all partners are involved in the intervention process, the change can be enduring. In some communities, however, the change is hampered when the intervention process does not involve all partners. The quotation below paints a picture of a situation where the community has received sensitization but all key stakeholders are unwilling to be involved.

**Parents will not have to worry about somebody forcing their daughters to marry. But it is sometimes difficult when your child has been forced to marry. People will just ask you to let it go. (A FGD with female opinion leaders at Sariba, West Mamprusi)**

## Limits to the Interventions

The interventions are limited and are often constrained by a range of gender related problems and limitations. The MSC data clearly identifies the fact that men are in full control of the key mechanism to protect girls in their communities---the child protection committee. In most MSC communities visited, the composition of the child protection committees is all men even though it is not often functional. Men have a powerful role /oversight in what is decided in the community since the traditional leadership of chief and elders are made up of household heads, which are men. Girls are not fully aware of any place for them to turn if they have to disclose a problem or seek help in relation to child marriage.

**We have unit committee in place and they can arrest the perpetrators of child marriage. The committee members go out in the night to monitor and bring our children back to us if they are seen wandering about in town. We have divided the community into six sections. Each section is made of 5 members so they are 30 members in all. They are all men because only men can be members of this committee. (A FGD at female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)**

## Conclusion

Changing this practice requires sustained integrated, coordinated efforts by all partners especially the traditional leadership in the communities. Unfortunately, the DCD support is periodic, uncoordinated and limited in scope. Their interventions are targeted at parents with most of their community durbars organised during the day when the children are in school so they are not able to fully participate. Much more work is needed to have district agencies coordinate/ working together such as the Girls' Education Unit of GES, the Department of Community Development, CHRAJ, and DOVSU alongside the active NGOs in the district. First steps require a plan for putting in place public methods for girls to contact first responders at the district levels. A hot line or other methods that enable girls and others to report these child marriage cases is needed urgently.

## 6.5 Children in Conflict with the Law and Child Delinquency


The term ‘children in conflict with the law’ refers to anyone under 18 who comes into contact with the justice system as a result of being suspected or accused of committing an offence (UNICEF 2006). Most children in conflict with the law have committed petty crimes such as vagrancy, truancy, begging or alcohol use. Juvenile delinquency, also known as “juvenile offending”, is the participation in illegal behaviour by minors (juveniles, i.e. individuals younger than the statutory age of majority). Most legal systems prescribe specific procedures for dealing with juveniles, such as juvenile detention centres. Deviance is any behaviour that violates socio-cultural norms. Norms are social expectations that guide human behaviour. Deviance can be relative to place and time because what is considered deviant in one social context may not be deviant in another. Truancy is defined as the problem or situation of children being absent from school regularly without permission.

Out of the selected MSC stories, there were no recorded cases of children in conflict with the law in all the four district of the Northern Region and Upper East Region. We, however, had some stories of delinquent and deviant behaviour, truancy and indecent dressing among children.

Most of the child delinquency and truancy stories were from the Bawku West District and Tolon District. There were no stories from the Talensi and West Mamprusi Districts. This section will examine the situation of children in relation to child delinquency and truancy before and after the interventions and the impact these interventions had on the child.


### Pre-Intervention and Prevailing Situation

The MSC story data based on the pre-intervention stage suggests a high level of child delinquency in Tolon and Bawku West Districts as earlier stated. There was a high level of absenteeism among children of school going age. Students used to absent themselves from school without any permission from teachers or school authorities. Some students were engaged in “skipping class” where they attended school but did not go to class.



*I used to absent myself frequently from school. I normally follow my father to the farm and afterwards roam about aimlessly in the community with friends doing unproductive activities (Male Child, Vumya Community, Tolon, Northern Region).*

Children were seen verbally assaulting their parents who tried to correct them as we see in the quotation below.



*I used not to respect my mother. I could even shout at her in front of people. Meanwhile in our culture is not appropriate to talk to your parents in this manner (Female Child, Kandimali Community, Bawku West. Upper East).*

Some of the children were engaged in other negative behaviour such as stealing, gambling, indecent dressing and roaming aimlessly at night. This was the situation in the various communities before the introduction of any child protection intervention by either the government institutions or the NGOs.

*I was not enrolled in school. My friends used to come home and tell me stories of the school. They used to bring home items. I used to admire my friends who were in school. I told my father to enrol me in school. He also told his father (my grandfather) who sent me to school. Later he withdrew me from the school because of his farms matters. In other spheres of my life, I used to steal people's fowls, I was very disrespectful (Male Child, Wulaha Community, Tolon. Northern Region).*

*I used to roam a lot at night. We use to just sit and converse, sometimes play a lot at night without knowing the dangers we were exposing ourselves into (Female Child, Tutuchezu, Bawku West, Upper East).*

*My friends and I used to dress indecently and engaged in immoral acts (Female Child, Tinawa, Bawku West, Upper East).*

## **Intervention Processes (Role of Institutions and Activities Undertaken)**

The interventions carried out in the two districts are all centred on child delinquency and deviance as there were no stories on children in conflict with the law. The communities had no actions or plans targeted at solving the problem of child delinquency and deviant behaviour by children in their communities.

The Tolon and Bawku West Districts both experienced support from the Department of Community Development/ Social Welfare along with NCCE; NGOs, namely CCFC and NORS AAC, were active in Tolon District and World Vision in Bawku West District. Sensitization was the only intervention that took place in the MSC districts related to solving child delinquency and truancy issues. Data from the stories suggests that the Department of Community Development and Social Welfare educated parents on how to better raise their children so they did not become deviant to society. The NCCE also formed Child Protection Clubs in various schools. They educated the pupils on child protection issue and educated them on good social behaviours and norms. The MSC stories do not mention the interventions that were used by the DCDSW and NCCE aside from the general sensitization drives. Below are responses of some of the respondents who were interviewed.

*Sensitization and awareness creation by the school health club (acts (Female Child, Tinawa, Bawku West, Upper East).*


*The coming of the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development to talk to us about the need to protect our children brought me a lot of joy and some relief (Male Adult, Bokahiile, Bawku West. Upper East Region).*

*The Department of Social Welfare conducted sensitization on child protection and family wellbeing while NCCE educate us on club in my school (Male Child, Baseragya Community, Bawku).*

*I attended a children's meeting at a nearby village and the leader for that association in her speech cautioned us to honour our parents. Some people from DCD also came to advise us on so many issues concerning child protection, among them was to help our mothers at home (Female Child, Kandimali, Bawku West, Upper East Region).*

## Post Intervention (Significant Change)

The MSC stories suggest that some change has occurred as a result of the interventions that took place in the various communities. The change is both behavioural and attitudinal in nature. Individuals have attested to the fact that their behaviour has changed for the better as a result of the education and awareness delivered by DCD/SW and NCCE. Parents have adopted new ways of dealing with their deviant children and managing their home life as captured below;




*The most significant change for me is that I have a double awareness on the need to protect my children and the fact that my children now understand that I always wanted the best for them but was not just being strict. I found joy in this change. I believe this good message should be spread to all communities (Male Adult, Bokahiile Community, Bawku West, Upper East Region).*

Children who were engaged in these deviant behaviours have changed positively as captured below:

*There has been a significant change in my life as the result of the child protection intervention in the community. But thanks to DSD/CD, NCCE for their interventions which has changed my life from bad behaviour to good behaviour. It has led to good performance in the class, good school attendance and above all I have gain self-confidence and communicate well with my mates (Male Child, Baseragya Community, Bawku West, Upper East Region).*

*Academically, I have improved. I can mix well with the opposite sex. Now I do not kill people's fowls. I do not steal guinea fowl eggs. I see those actions to be unacceptable (Male Child, Wulaha Community, Tolon, Northern Region).*

*My life began to change when I joined that club. I have stopped going to the ghettos and the dances at night, I no longer keep bad friends and I have stopped playing around in the community. My performance in class has improved from 12th position to 6th position (Male Child, Vumya Community, Tolon Northern Region).*



*I changed from being a disrespectful girl to being a good girl. I was so happy my mother and some family members see me as a good girl now. My mum has started loving me more. I extended my respectful behavior to school so I respect all the teachers and my classmates (Male Child, Kandimali Community, Bawku West Upper East).*

From the above analysis, a number of cases of change have taken place in these communities. The change recorded cannot be described as fully sustainable as no measures have been put in place to ensure the lasting behaviour change adopted by both parents and children in the communities.


## 6.6 Child Abuse and Neglect

This section of the report presents the issues of child abuse and child neglect in the Tolon, West Mamprusi, Talensi and Bawku West Districts. It discusses the pre-intervention situation of child abuse and neglect, the intervention put in place to curb child labour and child neglect as well as the changes that came about as a result of the implementation of the intervention(s). Findings from this section are based on 14 selected stories on child abuse and child neglect in the four districts. The analysis of the 14 stories takes into accounts the views of both children and adults.

### Pre-Intervention and Prevailing Situation


#### Child neglect

Analysis of the pre-intervention situation of child neglect with the seven selected stories from the four districts reveals that children were often neglected by their parents by not showing interest in their wellbeing, most especially with regard to their educational needs. Parents telling their stories confessed that they did not show much interest in their children's wellbeing and this resulted in their children living undesirable lives in their communities. Children were left on their own without their parent's supervision/ guidance and the children could leave home and return late in the night without any form of cautioning or punishment. As a result of their negligence, their male children became misdirected and dropped out of school while the girls became pregnant ---eventually becoming teenage mothers.



*“My actions and inactions were mainly responsible for the failure of my two children. At my home, I did not put any structure or guidelines to govern or control the conduct and the behaviour of my children at home, my children could do what they wanted. They could roam all night with no rebuke from me as a father because of this the girl became pregnant and fell out of school the education of my boy child also hit a snag.” (A male adult from Bolu community in the West Mamprusi district, Northern Region)*

The children lamented how their parents neglected them when it came to their education. They stated that their parents did not show interest in promoting or encouraging them to go to school, their educational needs were not met with the excuse that there was “no money to keep them in school”. This situation was worse with the girls because some parents did not see the need to spend money educating the girl child. A girl from the Bawku West District narrated that her father neglected them because her mother had given birth to five children all being girls. Their father was not happy and referred to the girls as “useless” and only good for marriage.



*“My mother has five girls and my father was not too happy about the situation as he always abused my mum verbally. At times she could not even send her rival's sons as my dad reminded her that she had no son on her own. My dad also saw us as useless except for marriage. As a result he neglected us saying we could do whatever we wanted since we were of no use as girls”. (A female child from Suyotoga community in the Bawku West District, Upper East Region)*

The children intimated that child neglect resulted in many of them dropping out of school because they did not get support from their parents. Some of these children, especially boys in the Bawku West District, found themselves in “galamsey” activities.

*“Since I started my schooling my parents never showed interest in my education in the name of poverty. It was a difficult and traumatic situation for me when it came to payment of dues and provisions of school materials for me. There was nothing that could change their mind because they made their mind that, they do not have and therefore cannot provide anything for me to help me attend school smoothly.”*  
(A male child from Telemudanu community in the Bawku West district, Upper East Region)

## Child Abuse


Analysis of the seven MSC stories on child abuse across the four districts shows that children were abused verbally and physically. The verbal abuse was seen to be dominant according to the stories by both children and adults. Parents who gave their stories admitted that their relationship with their children was not a positive one because they were fond of using abusive language on their children when they did something wrong. Examples of phrases that were used on children included “stupid children” “you are good for nothing”. These and other words were used because parents/guardians thought that was the best way to discipline the child. But to the contrary, this created a social distance between the children and their parents and made the children timid. A parent disclosed that his children were afraid to confide in him due to how he treated them with insults. Below are some comments by parents:

*Using abusive words or terms against my children was my habit at home. I thought that was the most effective way of giving discipline to my children. My children were afraid to share their stories or concerns with me as their mother. They rather preferred to confide with their colleagues or mates, this attitude of mine as a mother created a social distance between my children and me, my husband was not different from me in taking part in this whole thing of abuse (A female adult from Kalibogu community in the West Mamprusi District, Northern Region)*

*The children were afraid of me because of my use of abusive terms like “stupid children” “you are all good for nothing” were always poured on them. I used to shout violently at them as well I was not also interested in matters relating to their schooling this affected their school attendance. (A male adult from Yirikura community the West Mamprusi District, Northern Region)*

Children reported in the MSC stories that their parents/guardian abused them verbally and physically whenever they did something wrong. This was the disciplinary measures that their parents employed prior to their exposure to child protection interventions. These actions did not usually yield the needed results because the children repeated whatever they did to warrant the abuse from parents or guardians. A woman attested to beating her daughter because she was always going out in the night, but this did not stop the girl or make her change her behaviour. The woman in narrating the situation had this to say:






*The truth is that I used to beat her when she came back home after staying out until late in the night she was not the only one who went out and stayed late into the night. Most girls her age did the same... they all went out in the night so this situation was not peculiar to my daughter only her father and I spoke to her several times and when she does not listen we just beat her there was one time I beat her so much that I thought something might happen to her but she still went out that night and she never came back until very late. (A female adult from Galuba community in the West Mamprusi District, Northern Region)*

## Intervention Processes (Role of Institutions and Activities Undertaken)

The MSC analysis found that four organisations carried out activities or interventions in the four districts aimed at tackling child protection issues but very little was focussed on child neglect and abuse.

The main intervention or activities carried out by the organisations, community sensitization, education and awareness creation on child protection. The Department of Community Development used the child protection toolkit to educate community members of the dangers of child abuse and child neglect. Story tellers indicated that the use of the toolkit was very helpful to them as they could easily relate to what they saw on the flash cards. With the sensitisation, they learned not to use abusive words or physically abuse children as a form of punishment but rather adopt the technique of persuasion. Parents revealed that they learned to pay more attention to the wellbeing of their wards, not to neglect them and leave them on their own without any form of guidance and supervision. Through this education parents now know that using abusive words on their children can affect them in various ways. It has an emotional effect on the child and has the potential of reducing their self-confidence. Some comments by community members about the interventions can be found below:



*Fortunately, an educational and awareness creation programme on child protection was organized in Banawa in the year 2017. I actively participated in the programme under the auspices of DCD in the sensitization on process, the people from DCD sought to use flash cards, games and other tools that teased out the abusive tendencies in me. I got to know through the education that verbal abuse on children as I was used to has the capacity to affect the emotional wellbeing of the child. (A male adult from Yirikura community in the West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

*Child protection intervention by the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, Human Rights and Freedoms Programme by NCCE, World Vision Child Protection ADAPT on child protection tools. All these programmes impacted positively on my parents' life and behaviour. (A male child from Telemudanu community in the Bawku West District, Upper East Region).*

Through the intervention of Brave Aurora and CAMFED, some children who dropped out of school as a result of being neglected by their parents had the chance to go back to school because these two organisations supported the children by paying their school fees and providing them with school items that their parents were not able or willing to provide. This was a life changing experience for the children as they were given the opportunity to be in school and study to fulfil their dreams in the future. A male child from the Bawku West District had this to say about the intervention he received:



*Things begun to change for me and my family in 2014 when a girl centered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) known as CAMFED took over the responsibility of paying the school fees of my two sisters and providing their needs (male child from Tabonu community in the Bawku West District, Upper East region)*

## Post-Intervention (Significant Change)

The stories show that some changes have evolved in the lives of beneficiaries due to the interventions or activities that were carried out. These changes were largely attributed to community sensitization, education and awareness creation, which led to attitudinal and behavioural change of parents/ or adults who were the offenders of child abuse and neglect. The sensitisation carried out by the Department of Community Development and other NGOs enlightened parents and they became aware that abusing children is a bad practice so they have resorted to the use of persuasion as a means of getting their ward to behave in a manner that the parent wants. This has created a friendly relationship between child and parent. Some parents attested that since they stopped abusing their children both verbally and physically, their children now feel comfortable to confront them with their problems, which previously they hid from them for the fear of being verbally abused. Parents saw that, as a result of positive parenting, the relationship they had developed with their children had improved along with the behaviours and attitudes of their children.

*Ever since, I participated in these sensitization activities, I have incorporated the knowledge and ideas acquired in the management of my children at home. The new ways of talking to my children has engendered cordiality between us, my children can freely exchange and share ideas with the as their father. They obey me better now than ever before. Their school attendance have also improved tremendously, I occasionally visit my children at school which I used not to do. (A male adult from Yirikura community in the West Mamprusi District, Northern Region)*

Brave Aurora and CAMFED supported children who were neglected and did not get support from their parents to go to school through the provision of school materials to the children and payment of their school fees. These children said it brought about some changes to their life because they were given the opportunity to be in school as desired. A girl who was neglected because she was not living with her biological parents and was living an immoral life was able to complete JHS and proceeded to SHS because Brave Aurora took care of all her educational expenses. Brave Aurora's intervention changed her life and she's now living a more responsible life in the Senior High School. Community Sensitization by CAMFED, Brave Aurora as well as the Department of Community Development in some communities, has helped reduce child neglect as parents now have interest in the wellbeing of children. Some children made the following comments to support their experience of attitudinal change.

*But right now, things have changed for me, my parents would even ask me whether my soap is there, are my books there, they are now doing a lot for me because they now understand their roles and responsibilities as parents. (A male child from Telemudanu community in the Bawku West District, Upper East Region)*

*He developed interest in our education and total welfare after participating in the child protection roll out by Social Welfare and Community Development. He realized the need for our education and has changed his negative attitude towards us and our mum. A female child from Suyotoga community in the Bawku West District, Upper East Region)*

## Conclusion

In conclusion, verbal abuse of children contributed to poor interpersonal relations between parents and their children that “pushed” the children away from their parents; the verbal abuse they suffered from the parents or guardians lowered their self-confidence. The sensitization and awareness creation by the DCD and NGOs has enlightened parents on the effects of verbal abuse, which they were not aware of.

The MSC analysis found that child neglect as a child protection issue contributes and results in other child protection concerns such as child labour, teenage pregnancy, and child migration. It is as a result of the parent’s inability to cater for the basic needs of their children that often leads to the above mentioned issues. The intervention by DCD and other NGOs was tailored towards awareness creation, which aimed at attitudinal change on the part of parents. Brave Aurora’s Alternative Care for Children intervention was very helpful as it provided an opportunity for orphaned children and children who were neglected to get some care and support.




## 6.7 Child Exposure to Negative Media

Out of the 220 selected stories from the four districts, only nine (9) stories had exposure to negative media content as the main thematic domain. However, from the focus group discussions across all the districts, there was evidence of children being influenced by negative media and two stories from Talensi were found to have exposure to negative media as a sub-theme. This brought the total number of stories analysed to eleven (11). This phenomenon was found to be more prevalent in the communities in the Upper East Region (Talensi and Bawku West) than in the Northern Region (Tolon and West Mamprusi); with Upper East having a total of seven stories and Northern region having a total of four. In terms of gender, the analysis showed that six of the stories were from male interviewees, while five were from female interviewees.

### Pre-Intervention and Prevailing Situation

All four selected MSC stories on exposure to negative media in the Northern districts were from male participants; three from Tolon and one from West Mamprusi. Central to the MSC stories collected in this region was the child's engagement in activities such as dance jams and gambling, often in neighbouring communities. This led to the students skipping school, not taking their studies seriously and failing in class. A student from Sayoo in West Mamprusi confessed that he was addicted to watching television, which took his attention away from his books. Another student confessed to staying out till dawn in another village.

Many parents complained of their children staying out late to watch videos and movies, going to dances organized during funerals and the child's constant use and increased addiction to mobile phones. They stated that their children were now disrespectful to them because they had phones that even their parents did not own. This is what one child admitted;



*I used not to respect my mother. I could even shout at her in front of people. Meanwhile in our culture is not appropriate to talk to your parents in this manner (Female Child, Kandimali Community, Bawku West).*

Analysis of the MSC stories revealed that exposure to the recent surge of telenovelas (Mexican and Indian series) on television was having a significant influence on children and youth in the MSC communities; Parents reported different behaviours among children since they began to copy what they saw on T.V or watched on their mobile phones.

In the Upper East Region where mining activities (galamsey) were rampant, analysis of focus group discussions showed that the boys who worked at these mining sites lured the girls into sexual relationships with mobile phones and money. The girls are easily influenced by these boys because their parents could not provide their basic educational needs so they accepted proposals "just to get some money". The girls ended up receiving calls from their boyfriends and lying to their parents that they were going for church prayers when in reality, they were going to meet these boys. One father from Kubore in Bawku West district was so concerned about his children's - especially his daughters - growing attachment to their mobile phones that, he destroyed their phones at a point in time. This was causing problems at home because his wife seemed to be on the side of the children, which ended up in arguments when he complained to her about their children.

## Intervention Process - (Role of Institutions and Activities Undertaken)


The trend across the four districts of intervention that led to a change in the life of the child or adult was sensitization programmes focussed on the importance of having an education. In Tolon District, NORSAAC organized sensitization programmes for both parents and students and formed clubs in the schools, which had the aim of educating the children on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and other child protection issues. The children were sensitised as to why it was important to pay more attention to their studies instead of participating in funeral dances or jams.

The Department of Community Development (DCD) organized community durbars to talk on issues affecting children in the community. They assist the children to understand the importance of education and encouraged them to study more and participate in beneficial activities. Some of the organizations who organized sensitization programmes about the importance of education in the Upper East Region were AfriKids and World Vision, as well as the Department of Community Development. Formation of civic clubs, youth meetings and child rights club aided in the intervention process. The MSC analysis showed that educational talks on the effects of teenage pregnancy usually led to a change in the attitude of the children who went out at night. This is because the exposure to negative media was one of the major causes of teenage pregnancy as was found in all the four districts. The parents were educated on the importance of education and how to relate to their children; this went a long way to influence their attitude and consequently that of their children.

At the community level, there was a general ban on funeral dances and spinning, which had been put in place by the sectional chief. No one was allowed to have “spinning machines” and hold dance jam sessions late into the night after funerals. Offenders were sanctioned and fined. In the Tolon District, some chiefs and their elders have made by-laws to punish boys who impregnate girls; the boy is made to pay a fine in the form of cash and sheep or in other cases is obliged to take care of the girl before and after delivery and make sure she finishes her school. The opinion leaders and the PTA, in some cases, are putting this in effort to keep the children in the community in check to prevent them from staying out at night. In Balungu, a community in the Talensi District, a committee was formed called “Night Dogs”. This committee goes round at night to check if there are children out past 9:00pm. If caught, the child is taken home and given a warning but is punished on a second count.

## Post Intervention (Significant Change)

The major change that came about due to these interventions was an improvement in academic performance of children. The students are now taking their studies seriously; staying home at night to read their books instead of going to roam with friends; and concentrating more on reading and passing their exams to attain a better position in class rankings. Sixteen year old male students from in the Tolon District stated that:



*The change is really significant because I have seen some improvement in my academic performance. I am now among the top 3 in the class (Male Child, Gobayili Community, Tolon District, Northern Region).*

There was a moderate degree of change in relation to the behaviour and attitudes of the children and parents. A few of the children/youth have stopped using mobile phones completely and choose to focus on their academic work.

*I was made to understand that I do not need to approach my children aggressively. I therefore sat my children down especially the girls to explain to them how things could be worst for them if they continue that lifestyle. I asked them to listen to me as their father and take wisdom from my advice (Male Child, Keratu Community, Bawku West, Northern Region).*

*Now, even though our new house does not have electricity, I use a flash light to study at night. And even if we had lights and a T.V. available, I would not have watched it (Female Child, Geodatusa, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

Another change that was recorded from the MSC analysis was related to the improved relationships between children and parents as a result of the child protection interventions. The children who used to disrespect their parents have changed their attitude as a result of the sensitization programmes by agents of change.

## Conclusions and Observations

The intervention strategies employed by the change organisations (e.g. DCD, AfriKids, NORSAAC, NCCE, etc.) have had a positive impact on the lives of the people across the four districts analysed. Students are performing better in school and good habits are being practised in place of truancy and “gallivanting”. The phenomenon of negative media was related and intertwined with peer group influence and teenage pregnancy. Some of the children who fell into the habit of attending funeral dances or staying out late were influenced by friends who were already involved in these activities. Some of the girls who accepted mobile phones from boys were pressurised by their friends:

*I used to follow bad friends and copy everything they did. Whenever a boy came to tell me that he likes me I would ask for their advice and they would tell me to say yes so that we can spend his money (Female Child, Salinabi Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

According to the analysis, male and female participants were equally affected by negative social media, which had an impact on their academic performance. The girls in the communities visited can be considered more vulnerable because they were susceptible to peer pressure leading to pregnancy from the negative media exposure, which also led to school drop-out and child marriage.

On the community level, the sustainability of the community bans and sanctions may pose a challenge since some communities have resumed the funeral dances called spinning although other communities have continued with to ban such activities. However, the individual changes in behaviour and academic performance can be sustained if the students make a conscious effort to continue their new habits.

## 6.8 Automated Birth Registration

The right to identity of a child is protected by article 7 and 8 of UN’s convention on the Right of the Child. This implies that once a child is given birth to, she or he may remain invisible to the state until her/he birth is registered. In fact, birth registration is a child protection issue because children without birth registration are more vulnerable to other protection issues such as child labour, child marriage, rape, sexual exploitation and may risk being treated as an adult when they come into conflict with the law. The institutions of state (Birth and Death Registry and DCD) with the support of UNICEF are thus



putting in place interventions that could shift some of the burden of birth registration from individuals to government institutions in order to make it easier to ensure every child is protected. This section will report on the findings of these interventions in the Northern and Upper East Regions.

## Pre-Intervention and Prevailing Situation

The MSC stories revealed that distance to some district capitals was a barrier to birth registration. Most of the communities are far apart and the only place that people could access these services was usually in the districts' capitals and the regional capitals. In many of these communities, the roads are very bad especially when it rains, coupled with the need to pay lorry fares; therefore, parents are often not able to access birth registration services and the birth registry is not able to reach them with their services because of lack of logistics. The birth registration was not integrated into other highly patronized services such as post natal care facilitates therefore a lot of children were unregistered. Moreover, the knowledge on registration of births was not widespread. There were some misconceptions about the birth registration and certificate. People simply did not see the registration of birth as very important. Most of the MSC stories on birth registration could not tell their actual age of the child so they provided the interviewers with a range of ages. It is important to note that most of the individual stories on the birth registration domain were from Tolon District. A few, however, were from stories collected from West Mamprusi District.

*Before my knowledge on birth certificate, I actually thought apart from the name and age on the birth certificate it had no value or importance. This was so until people I knew started losing job opportunities or the chance of furthering their education because they did not have a birth certificate. Some had to pay huge sums of money to acquire one which sometimes took a whole while or never came at all. (A 35 year old female at Akuchang, Tolon)*

*As I am sitting here, I do not know my date of birth nor my age. I have been asked of my age on several occasions but I always give a rough figure or range. Our parents never thought it necessary to register their children. They thought it was for only those who were in school that needed birth registration. When I wanted to register for National Health Insurance Scheme, I was asked of my birth details but I do not know it. Even when I was pregnant and started antenatal, they asked of my age and yet again I had to lie as always. I then promised myself I was going to ensure that every child of mine will be duly registered. My husband's uncle's daughter recently did her birth certificate and she was required to pay GH¢50 (Fifty Ghana Cedi) for registration (A 26-34 year old female from Simli, Tolon)*

The pre-intervention situation of the respondent below suggests that she might have suffered as a result of her parents inability to register her birth. Children cannot register their own births so it is up to their parents to register them. Individuals in their later years suffer the consequences when other interventions are tied to birth registration or the acquisition of a birth certificate. In this situation the lack of birth registration became a reason for a denial of opportunity. When birth registration is rigidly implemented and serves as a requirement for support, it can create barriers to unregistered children. The excerpt from the story below throws more light on this finding:

*My parents gave my hand in marriage to a young man from Kumbungu who impregnated me and in 2014 I got married to the man because of the poverty level of my parents. I also became a victim back at my school days. We were going to be supported by an NGO called CAMFED and we were told to bring our birth certificate for them to know the actual/accurate date of our birth before they will support us. I did not have a birth certificate by then. My mother later found my weighing card/booklet for me to know my actual age and it was already too late so I could not receive the support from CAMFED. I could have been selected if only I had my birth certificate at that moment. They could have supported me to complete my education and I would not have been a drop-out due to the financial situation of my parents (A 19-25 year old female at Fulsogu, Tolon)*

### Intervention Process (Role of Institutions and Activities Undertaken)

In order to increase birth registration, the Birth and Deaths Registry has increased accessibility of registration services in displacement settings or in communities that are very hard to reach. The birth registry, in collaboration with other state institutions, along with funding from UNICEF integrated the registration into frequented services such as community health centres to help mitigate the distance related problems. Community health centres are usually closer to the people so people who would otherwise not register their births because of distance and transportation cost could do so at their community health centres. In communities without community health centres, officials from the birth registry visit them during their weighing days so that they could use the information on their weighing cards to register the children. In an interview with the district officer in West Mamprusi, interviewees were let in on some of the intervention process put in place to make sure that people are able to register their births or infants:


*We have community volunteers who are usually hospital people who assist in weighing, to help us identify unregistered infants and we go there to register them (An officer Birth and death registry, Walewale).*

In some instances however, an individual can intervene. Some community volunteers on their own educate their relatives about the need to register their births and acquire birth certificate. We get a sense that in situations where volunteers are chosen to mobilize unregistered children or to go round and register children, such volunteers are chosen from the beneficiary community. The idea that it is free resonates well with the people. The quotation below sheds light on how an individual could intervene apart from the institutional intervention.

*Her husband, a community volunteer with Ghana Health Service gave her education about birth certificate. Other NGO's and Social Welfare/Community Development also came around and gave them talks about the need to have a birth certificate. A volunteer in the community was chosen to go round and register the children below 0-2years. The registration was free but children above 2years had to pay. (A 35 year old female at Akuchang, Tolon).*



The intervention organizations conduct community sensitization to talk to the community about birth registration. This is usually targeted at the adult stakeholders. Government institutions and NGOs involved in this type of sensitization are the: GHS, DCD, CHRAJ and Births and Deaths Registry, SADA and MVP. From the MSC findings, we notice that the sensitization is not limited to the registration of births alone but it includes other child protection issues such as teenage pregnancy and the education of children.




*I found myself in a community durbar where the child protection team from the district assembly (Social Welfare and Community Development, CHRAJ and Birth and Death officers) came to our community to educate us on child protection issues e.g. Registration of birth certificate of children, enrolment and retention of school going children dangers of teenage pregnancy etc. So I asked questions on the birth registration of birth certificate because I was pregnant by then I was told children from 0-12 months is free of charge and children over 12 month and above there is fee to pay. (A 19-25 year old female at Wumbihi, Tolon)*

## Post Intervention (Significant Changes)

Most of the birth registration stories are from individuals; in these stories, we are able to have a clearer picture about the pre-intervention situations, intervention processes and the post intervention situation. There is, however, an interesting observation in terms of pattern from the FGD. The only the FGD of opinion leaders from West Mamprusi District made mention of birth registration and was based mainly from the female opinion leaders.

The issue of birth registration came up when the focus groups discussed the prevailing child protection issues. There has been a general improvement in the registration of births given the interventions that have been carried out in some districts. Members of the community have access to birth certificates and are able to register their births. In almost all the FGD that were conducted with opinion leaders in the West Mamprusi District, they spoke about a plethora of problems they were facing but added that, as for birth certification, it is not a problem because they are able to access it. This is as a result of the integration of the registration with frequented services.



*We have no school in this community, our children walk far to other communities to access education. We do not have child marriage in this community. We only give our children out to marry in a different community. We do not have issues of child migration and child labour. Our children go to the farms themselves to do “by-day” work to get money. We do not engage them ourselves. We do not have issues of child abuse, we only punish the children by denying them food. If the child does something wrong we whip them very well. We are able to go for birth certificate for our children at Walewale. (A FGD with female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi). Poverty and Child marriage (when she is pregnant, she is forced to marry that boy. It is all due to poverty. We have child labour- some children engage in labour on their own volition, some are instructed by their parents to do so. There is no issue of child abuse. We are able to register our children for birth certificate. (A FGD with female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi).*

The MSC stories suggest that there are an increasing number of birth registrations from this same district. An interview with a district officer in charge of births and deaths in the West Mamprusi District suggested that the number of registered births was around 2,000 last two years but this number shot up to 3,000 in 2016 and the projected increase is more than 4,000 this year (2017).

The MSC findings suggest that, from other individual stories, there have been positive changes as a result of widespread sensitization. The individuals and, in some cases, their communities know the benefits of birth registration. Some individuals who could not tell their real ages due to their parents not registering them at birth have resolved to register their own new born babies. Also, some parents are ready to take advantage of the cost free registration to register their births on time before the time for 'cost free' elapses. Some communities know the importance of birth registration and subsequent certification as a pre-condition to educational opportunities and to ensuring National Health Insurance. The following quotations are from individual stories that demonstrates the kind of changes that youth and adults have seen at the individual and community levels:

*It is the most significant change because it is a new attitude that we have developed unlike previously all children in the community have birth registration which is an important document that is required if you are going to do NHIS, enrol your child in school and also to look for job (A 33 year old male adult from Voyagu, West Mamprusi).*

*Mothers now take infants between the ages of 1-5 years to the hospital for weighing, this helps to check the status. We are also now recording the births in the community (A FGD with male opinion leaders at West Mamprusi).*

## Best Practices and Limitations

The best practices in the area of birth registration are related to integrating the registration process with other key social services such as health. The use of community volunteers was instrumental in bringing about the changes to the birth registration process. There are, however, loopholes which that are still potential barriers to denying some children the right to be registered. First, it appears that the sensitization campaigns only target the adult stakeholders and not children at school level. The school is a key social service centre and if children are sensitized about the need to have birth certificates, they will begin to ask questions at the home. Children could pressure their parents to register them. MSC data shows that individual parents seem to know the benefits they will derive from registering their children's births but they are less aware about the linkage birth registration has to other broader child protection issues such as reporting rape, sexual exploitation, child marriage, child labour and children in conflict with the law.

From the MSC stories below, we realize if birth registration is not taken to the door steps of the people it may not be used:

*We have poverty issues. We are not able to pay fees at the JHS levels. We have issues of child marriage. They betroth the children. They will make the guy work at the girls' families' farm land and later the girl's family will want the girl to go to school. The man will not agree and so they will impregnate the girl and marry her. They give us reproductive health education because we have a clinic here. (A FGD with female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

*Some people also come from Walewale hospital to register our infants for about 10 years now, but it is not frequent. When they do not come when you give birth, and your child is one year and above then you need to pay money to register them. (A FGD with female opinion leaders at West Mamprusi)*

The MSC stories suggest that among the challenges which could make change sustainable is the ability of the community to link the birth registration and the acquisition of birth certificates to the wider child protection issues. For instance, the acquisition of birth certificates is necessary to make sure that the child in question are protected and not treated as adults in the cases of child labour, rape, sexual exploitation and children in conflict with the law. An interesting observation is that none of the MSC stories under all the child protection domains actually used the birth registration and the acquisition of birth certificates as a means to seeking justice for their children especially when telling child marriage and teenage pregnancy stories. The MSC stories revealed that parents' understanding of birth registration was limited to helping them in attain educational opportunities and NHIS for their children. In relating the birth registration to a wider child protection issue, an interviewer from Births and Deaths registry provided the following:

*We can only register infants from 0-12 months and not above. If a child has been defiled and does not have a weighing card, we cannot help. We will advise them to look for the child's weighing card otherwise nothing can be done about it (An individual interview with a birth and death registry official)*

## Conclusion

The MSC stories suggest that two districts (West Mamprusi and Tolon) where birth registration stories were recorded had a moderate knowledge of the importance of birth registration. We observed that the state institutions and some NGOs have put in place various interventions to increase birth registration in order to make it more accessible. As part of the Government's intervention process, the registration service was integrated into one key service --- the community health centres so that parents can register their births without having to pay for the cost of transportation back to a registration center. Community volunteers, who are health workers, have helped to mobilize unregistered children so that they can be registered. There has been some sensitization in these communities by NGOs about the need to register their births. As a result of these intervention processes, people have gained a fair knowledge about the need to register. The idea of cost free registration has encouraged parents to register their infants. The statistics from the district registry shows an improvement in the numbers of registered births every year for West Mamprusi District. Despite these successes, there are some challenges, which include the fact that awareness raising has mainly focused on adults with no sensitization at school levels.

## 6.9 The Right to Education

This section presents the analysis of the Most Significant Change (MSC) stories collected from participants on the theme of education. Although going into the MSC field study, education was not one of the core child protection domains around which the MSC stories were collected, the field work revealed a high proportion of stories in this domain, therefore the decision was made to isolate and analyse ‘the Right to Education’ as a domain on its own. The Right to Education as a thematic domain has MSC stories related to school access, girl child education, school drop-out, enrolment and retention. The analysis of the MSC stories in this section is based on the following key areas: pre-intervention situation, where the focus of the analysis is on what prevailed either at the individual or community level prior to the introduction of the intervention; intervention process, which focuses on the specific interventions implemented to the benefit of the individual or the community; and the changes that have occurred as a result of the intervention. This will lead to a review of the ‘Most Significant Changes’ resulting from the implemented interventions. There is also an analysis of the change actors, which refers to the institutions and individuals involved in the change process and what specific role they played in bringing about the change.

### Pre-Intervention and Prevailing Situation

The pre-intervention situation captured by the MSC Right to Education stories show a diversity of issues: lack of access to education and school drop-out, irregular school attendance due to poverty and financial challenges, and social factors including teenage pregnancy, and lack of parental and family care to progress in education.

### Lack of Access to Education

Lack of access to education featured in several of the MSC stories narrated by the participants. This was largely attributed to lack of educational facilities at the community level and lack of schooling materials by the individual (e.g. books uniforms shoes etc.). A further analysis of the stories show that this sub-theme of stories was identified in only two districts (West Mamprusi and Talensi).

In the West Mamprusi District it emerged that the lack of educational facilities, notably school buildings, meant children travelled long distances to other nearby communities to access education, or just stayed at home and engaged in other activities such as working with parents on their farms. A female adult highlighted the issues in her story this way:

*Children in this community were not going to school and this was because the community had no educational facilities and the children had to travel to neighbouring communities to attend school (Female Adult, Jerijeri Community, West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

A similar picture is narrated by another MSC participant in the same district but a different community. According to the participant:

*My community Binaka does not have a school, children from our community have to travel to the nearby community, Bugiya-paala to attend school. Children who are interested in education attend school regularly those who do not have any interest do not go to school at all (Female Adult, Binaka Community, West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

In some cases, where schools have been provided, they were rather far from the communities, resulting in the inability or refusal of the children to attend school. In the words of a participant:

*Due to the distance and fear, the children refused to go to school and joined their parents to go to the farm (Female Adult, Jerijeri Community, West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

The lack of educational facilities (schools) in the community was identified by some MSC participants as being the key cause of school drop-out. This can be linked to the issue of schools located far from communities, making it difficult for children to endure the long distance of walking to and from school every day. She further identified and linked school drop-out especially among girls to other issues in the community such as teenage pregnancy and child marriage. The views of the female MSC participant are captured below:

*High incidents of school drop-out the drop-out rate is very high because there is no school. We also have issues of teenage pregnancy and child labour children are engaged in child labour because majority of our children are not in school. We do not have a school in this community so they have to walk to far distant communities to access education. This means that the little ones cannot go to school when they grow up it is very difficult to pick up and so they just drop-out. Most of our girls also become pregnant when they themselves are still children. There is also child marriage because the girls are forced to marry when they get pregnant (Female Adult, Binaka Community, West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

Poverty, socio-cultural and family circumstances were found to be an impediment to child access to education. High poverty and financial difficulties among parents and guardians were mentioned as key reasons for their inability to enrol children in school or provide for their basic educational needs. A child participant in the Upper East Region indicated in his narrative that he lacked basic schooling items such as sandals and school uniforms and this led to him dropping-out of school since his colleagues laughed at him.

*I used to come to school barefooted. My parents could not afford to buy me sandals for school. I get to school with my feet hurting. I have to sit for a long time to be able to concentrate in class. I always wear house dress to school because I did not have a school uniform too. For two months, I stopped coming to school because my colleagues were always laughing at me because they were wearing uniforms and I don't have both uniforms and sandals (Male Child, Kpalisoya Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

MSC stories linked poverty and financial challenges to single parenting especially among women. A child narrated how her single parent mother struggled to provide for her schooling needs:

*I now live with my mother and three siblings. She is a single parent and a trader. Life was so difficult for us and we had no support. My mother works so hard so that she will be able to provide for the family but it has not been easy especially when it came to paying our school fees and providing us with other school supplies. I have been sacked from school several times because of school*

*fees. When I was in JHS 1, I was sacked from the exams hall to go home and bring my fees. My mother had to practically come and beg before they allowed me to sit for the examination. They also come from time to time to educate us about illegal abortion and child protection issues (Female Child, Farajegom Community, Tolon District, Northern Region).*

In similar cases, a 61-year old woman in Tolon described how as a result of the large family size and socio-cultural factors, she and her colleagues were prevented from schooling. Based on her experience, she vowed never to allow a similar “fate to befall her children” but would rather ensure they are well educated. In narrating her experience she stated that:

*When I was born, my father had many wives and children. The opportunity was given to the women to select one child each to be educated while the rest supported in farming and taking care of animals. Unfortunately for me I was not chosen. Now when I look at those of my sisters and brothers, they look very different from those of us who did not go to school. It makes me very sad and I have vowed to do all I can to educate my children (Female Adult, Lahaya Community, Tolon District, Northern Region).*

## Drop-out and Restricted School Attendance

A significant proportion of the MSC Right to Education stories was under the sub-theme: drop-out and restricted school attendance. These stories highlighted prevailing issues at the community and individual level that resulted in children dropping out of school or restricted their school attendance. Parents engaging children to work is identified as one of these conditions. The MSC stories revealed that child labour, child abuse and neglect were inherent and intertwined in several stories. Notable amongst them included children engaging in farm work, cattle herding and *galamsey* (small scale mining) activities. Below are excerpts from the stories.

*Parents used to send their children out with the cattle for grazing. A father would ask his child to go grazing during school hours. If you do not come back with one cow, you are asked to go back to search for the missing cow. The child often runs to a relative’s house to spend the night and in the morning when he returns home without the cow still, he is caned. Before, the children used to drop out of school and roam around in the town at night causing teenage pregnancy to be high (Male Adult, Huura Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

*When I was a kid I was not schooling and it got to a time I was a shepherd which made me careless. I was just aimless and all my colleagues were already in school before Afrikids came to talk to my parents to send me to school (Male Participant, Kwangdoli Yuwosu Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

MSC stories suggest that issues of school drop-out were directly linked to teenage pregnancy, deviant or maladjusted behaviour of children, poverty and lack of family/parental care and control. It is indicated in one of the story narrations that the children who drop-out eventually find themselves engaging in activities such as working on mining *galamsey* sites.



*The poverty in my family led to dropping out of school for two of my children who joined galamsey to provide for themselves... (Female Adult, Wozukagyi Community, Talensi District, Northern Region).*

Children who lost their parents were identified as victims of discrimination, abuse and gross violations by their families and relatives. Such children faced several difficulties in schooling and eventually dropping-out of school. This situation is captured in the story of a 14-year old child from the Talensi District, Upper East Region who, as a result of the loss of his parents at a tender age, was discriminated against and eventually had to drop-out of school. The relevant portion of his narration is given below:

*I was about ten years old when I lost both of my parents. From that time life became unbearable for me; my father's family sometimes accuses me of being a misfortune child. Sometimes when playing with my colleagues in the community, their parents stop them from playing with me because I caused the death of my parents and some call me 'Kinkirigo' (which literally means dwarf). This went on for some time, till I finally had the bad news in my life when my uncle told me he cannot take care of my education anymore and I had to drop out of school with nowhere to go (Male Child, Sobika Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

School drop-out among girls was mostly linked to teenage pregnancy and to family poverty and financial challenges. In one instance, a mother indicated how she struggled to cater for her daughter's education due to financial challenges, thus, resorting to borrowing from friends for support. The daughter got pregnant and delivered and has since not been able to return to school. MSC stories revealed that girls who get pregnant and drop-out of school are making efforts to return to the class room. Some stories suggest that other girls are learning from the unfortunate situation of their colleagues who have dropped-out of school due to pregnancy, and are making sure they do not fall victim to similar circumstances. The extracts from the two stories are presented here.

*At first I used to run to friends for assistance for food. I used to go for firewood and sell it to get money to take care of my family. Also collecting or borrowing money from friends to feed. It was difficult to take care of my children. My daughter got pregnant two years ago and could not write her examination that year. She has given birth to a son, she went back to school to write her final examination that and has completed. My daughter loves schooling but due to the baby she is still in the house. Her results are out and because of her boy she cannot go to school (Male Adult, Yokodegi Community, Talensi District, and Upper East Region). About two years ago, girls' school dropouts were getting out of hand, but most have returned back to school. Their colleagues who were with them before they dropped out have drawn lessons from their return and are now very careful with their lives. Most girls got pregnant and were intimidated to be with their colleagues in school (Male Adult, Tefepepa Community, Bawku West District, and Upper East Region).*



## Intervention Process (Role of Institutions and Activities Undertaken)

The dominant interventions implemented in relation the stories on the rights of children to education were in the form of sensitization and awareness creation, provision of educational support, including scholarships, schooling materials, school facilities, academic and financial support. There was support in terms of income generating activities and provision of technical knowledge to parents and communities especially on agriculture. MSC analysis revealed that most interventions were offered jointly, ostensibly to achieve optimum impact and sustainability. There were very few stand-alone interventions in terms of promoting the rights of children to education. For instance, interventions that focused on the provision of educational support were often complemented with sensitization and awareness creation so that children and community members would see the long term benefit of education and stand against factors that restrict children from going to school to ensure sustainability.

Sensitization and awareness creation can be described as the most common of the interventions in this domain. A significant number of the participants in their stories indicated community sensitization and awareness creation was carried out, whereby individuals and communities were consulted regarding various aspects of child protection and education. Other issues such as parental responsibilities and the importance of education were discussed during sensitization activities. A 50 year old woman in the West Mamprusi District mentioned that:

*Department of social welfare and Community development carried out sensitization programs on parental responsibilities importance of education and monitoring of children whilst they go to school (Female Adult, Binaka Community, West Mamprusi District).*


In the case of another participant in the Tolon District, the sensitization made her decide to give her children education at all cost. In her narration, she stated:

*What made me resolute in my resolve to educate my children was a demonstration by one of the educated girls (a worker with NORSA). In one of our meetings with this NGO they discussed the issue of child protection...I reflected seriously about what the lady did and said that night and I have since made up my mind that if it meant selling my last cloth to see to the education of my children I will do it (Female Adult, Lahaya Community, Tolon District, Northern Region).*

Children through the sensitization and awareness creation also learned about the need to be in school to avoid school drop-out. A 13-year old child in the Talensi district asserted that

*“...AfriKids came to my school to talk to us about the effects of school dropout, child labour, teenage parents and child trafficking. After the talk I realised that what I was doing was child labour at the galamsey...” (Male Child, Kukwa Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

Children through the sensitization and awareness creation learned about the need to participate in school and avoid school drop-out.




*...One day NCCE officials came to the school to talk to the school pupils where I went to play with my friends. They said that it was good for pupils to take their lessons or schooling serious so that in future they are able to take care of themselves and their parents... (Male Child, Basunka Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

Interventions in terms of the provision of educational support in most cases were often offered with other interventions, such as community sensitization and awareness creation. Educational support in this context refers to provision of financial support, scholarships, educational materials like books, uniform, sanitary pad (for adolescent girls), sandals, etc. It also included the provision and renovation of educational facilities to address the issue of access to education.

MSC stories revealed that the intent and purpose of providing educational support to children and families was to address issues of access and school drop-out resulting from poverty, teenage pregnancy and other factors, NGOs often found it necessary to complement such efforts with sensitization of the children, parents and the community at large in order to ensure that educational support being offered resulted in long term mind set change. A female child in Tolon District indicated in her story that she received educational support throughout her JHS education from GPASS, though it ended upon her completion. She stated:

*At JHS an organisation called “Girls Pass Scholarship” usually give sanitary pads, exercise books note books, uniforms, sandals and bags. The organisation paid the registration fees when I was going to write BECE. The help ended in the JHS but now it is only my brother who is taking care of me (Female Child, Tiiguro Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

Another female participant who was had been a drop-out returned to school after receiving the GPASS scholarship:



*GPASS official had visited my school and distributed to some students who were beneficiaries of their project. GPASS returned after a period, and my name was mentioned as a beneficiary...I was given a uniform, sandals, bag, books and math set. I was so happy that the following day I reported back to school (Female Child, Kpalisoya Community, Bawku West District).*

The MSC stories reveal the high level of interventions often in the same communities that include educational support packages and awareness creation activities. The following extracts from the MSC stories in West Mamprusi and Bawku West Districts reveal this synergy.

*School for Life programme was introduced to the community to engage the children with education they started organizing afternoon classes for the children to inculcate in them the habit of learning and this brought out the potentials in the children. Department of Social Welfare and Community Development carried out sensitization of the community on the role and responsibilities of parents, the need to counsel the children and prevent them from going out late in the night. They also educated them on the need to send their children to school and also observe personal hygienic practices. CAMFED also intervened and gave the girls school supplies and pocket money to encourage children to go to school (Female Adult, Yakura Community, West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

*Due to interventions such as efforts by PTA, by talking and advising them, provision of school needs by CAMFED, child sponsorship, where some are linked by World Vision to pals through which they provided them with money and gifts, they have returned to school. Action Aid, gave way to World Vision to continue supporting our children. Other organizations such as Ghana Health Service and Social Welfare's education on child protection has also helped the children realize the need to prevent some of these issues and as well be in school (Male Adult, Tefepepa Community, Bawku West District).*

An important observation from the MSC stories was that, in some cases, the provision of educational support was linked to birth registration. This was found in the Tolon District where children who wanted to benefit from educational support were expected to have birth certificates before being considered. In the case of a participant in the Tolon District, she nearly missed out:

*In 2013 I completed my JHS and proceeded to the Tolon SHS where I was selected in the bursary girls' selection for the needy but brilliant programme by CAMFED and I was supported for 3 years (2013-2016). And during my school days at the SHS the (DEC) District Education Committee from the District came to our school to have a talk forum with us and they gave us education on child migration importance of registration of birth and death certificate, teenage pregnancy, school dropout and as that time I did not have birth certificate. I was only considered for the CAMFED program because of my disability. I was told that without the birth certificate one cannot benefit from their programme so I took upon myself to get one –birth certificate (Female Adult, Wumbihi Community, Tolon District, Northern Region).*


MSC stories suggest that in few instances, educational support was offered in the form of construction or renovation of educational facilities in the communities in order to increase access to education and prevent drop-out among children in the communities especially for the girl-child. These interventions are captured in the following story extracts:

*An NGO called Wulugu Project constructed a classroom block for the community so children could attend school in the community. RAINS NGO also provided educational supplies to the school children and this also encouraged them to be in school. G-PASS also supported the children with educational supplies, payment of fees and provision of pocket money. Department of Social Welfare and Community development started the sensitization programmes on child protection and the importance of taking good care of the children (Male Adult, Jerijeri Community, West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

*The community appealed to the MP of our area and the District Assembly who provided us with Zinc, cement and wood. They also contributed by digging the foundation and putting up another mud building to accommodate our children from the unroofed building; that is nursery one and two and primary. We again appealed and contributed some money to put up another block to accommodate P4, P5 and P6 children. This time, the district Assembly could not assist us. The headmistress wrote letters to the Assemblies of God Relief Services and a community member was chosen to go to Accra to present the letter on behalf of the community. Lo and behold Assemblies of God Relief Service agreed to build the three classroom block for us. Every household was tasked to contribute in the form of labour (Male Adult, Sewondiga Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

The final group of interventions identified in the MSC stories was the provision of income generating activities and technical knowledge to parents and adults, but in a few cases, children. The provision of support for parents to generate income complemented the efforts of organizations providing educational support. The rationale for these income generating interventions was the need to ensure sustainability of the interventions by ensuring that children's access to education was not limited in the future. The key areas of support were in providing farming inputs (seeds, fertilizer and chemicals) to support the parents in farming. There was also the provision of technical assistance in some instances, where training was offered on fertilizer and chemical application and other best practices. The support included the provision of animals such as poultry, goats, sheep, and cows, which were given to people in order to cater for the schooling needs of their children. Another area of income generation was the formation of saving or "Susu" groups, which made it possible for members to access credit. The general expectation was that beneficiaries would be able to cater for their children's basic school needs. The provision of income generating activities is captured in the following comments:

*RESULT Ghana and ZOOTA came to assist us with fertilizer and maize and formed SUSU groups and provided us technical knowledge on how to return the soil nutrients and how to apply fertilizer without it been carried away for the soil. I belong to the village savings and loans group. I also had fertilizer and maize to fertilize the land for farming (Male Adult, Yokodegi Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*




*World Vision paid a visit to Wozukagyi community; they came to speak to us about how to start a trade and help us to farm. After the training they put us in groups and gave us materials and financial support. I myself got maize and money to start my own business, some also got goats, sheep and pigs and fertilizer. With the support of my husband we started farming with the maize and fertilizer and used the money to start Shea nut and butter trading (Female Adult, Wozukagyi Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

## Post Intervention (Significant Changes)

In this section, the changes that resulted from the implementation of various interventions in order to promote the right to education in the targeted communities are explored. The section explores what was deemed as the Most Significant Change in terms of educational support interventions. The MSC stories revealed key changes that were resulted from the interventions implemented to enhance to rights of children to education in order to increase awareness on the rights of children to education, improve access to education interventions; and enhance income security of parents and families.


Increased awareness of the rights of children to education was a result of the sensitization and awareness creation carried out in the communities. As indicated earlier, sensitization appeared to be the most common intervention offered under this theme, either independently or jointly with other forms of support. The beneficiaries were aware of the importance of the right to their children's education, and the role they should play as parents and community members. Two MSC participants described this change in the following manner:




*Many community members have seen the importance of education and are doing everything to get their children educated. As for me I will do all I can if even I have to sell my last cloth to take my children to school (Female Adult, Lahaya Community, Tolon District, Northern Region).*

*We now know the importance of education and all the parents are now forcing to put their children in school (Male Adult Participant, Huura Community, Talensi Community, Upper East Region).*

There were changes identified in respect to access to education, which included changes in increased enrolment, retention, and completion by children. Children reported improved academic performance and their ability to attend school regularly. MSC analysis suggest that these changes were linked mostly to the provision of education support in the form of schooling materials for children, scholarships, and the provision and renovation of school buildings in the communities along with sensitization and awareness creation. For example, two parents in Talensi and West Mamprusi Districts explained that:




*After the talk, we (community members) started checking for the children who come home late and who don't go to school at all. This time, when the small girl wakes up, she quickly bathes and leaves for school (Female Adult, Pakisuu Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*



*There has been increased enrolment, retention of pupils in school. Children are able to complete JHS and further their education to SHS (Male Adult, Jerijeri Community, West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

Another female GPASS beneficiary from the Talensi District of educational support suggested that the intervention saved her from early marriage and teenage pregnancy, which would have led to the premature termination of her education. She said in her narration of specific changes resulting from the support that:




*Due to the help I received from JHS I have been able to write and pass my BECE. I would have been pregnant or married if I did not get help from the Non-governmental organisation. Also the district assembly came to my aid by paying for my fees (Female Child, Tiiguro Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

MSC stories in the area of income generation that supported the rights of children to education were in terms of food and income security, reduction in poverty levels and increased parental responsibility based on their ability to provide for the educational needs of their children. MSC stories revealed that income generation and livelihood activities of parents increased the attendance, retention, academic performance and successful completion of children in school. These types of changes occurred as a result of income generating activities, where parents were provided or supported with farming inputs, animals to rear, and credit access via group loans (susu), thus, empowering them economically to cater for the educational needs of their children. These outcomes suggest some sustainability in the changes recorded, since families were empowered to assist their own children over a long term. The comments by MSC participants attest to this:

*The support helped us to reduce our poverty level in our family...Our two children are now back in school including the youngest one...(Female Adult Participant, Wozukagyi Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*

*The SUSU helps me to get loan to do business hence my Pito selling which I make money from. I had money from the SUSU to help my daughter pay her BECE registration after she had given birth. I am also enlightened on better ways of farming (Female Adult, Yokodegi Community, West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*

*At first I did not know what "susu" was but now I can save and even if I am spending, I know I have money somewhere; I can go for money in times of need. My children's school fees can now be catered... (Male Adult Participant, Yokodegi Community, West Mamprusi District, Northern Region).*



*My son completed and I had to sell some of the goats to send my son to Bolga Senior High School (Big Boss). He was successful at Big Boss and I had to sell some of the goats given to me by World Vision for him to go to training College in Takoradi. My son has completed Training College... (Male Adult, Katipega Community, Talensi District, Upper East Region).*



Changes identified or described as the most significant change relate mostly to educational attainment and outcomes among children. Thus, the provision of educational support and facilities, sensitization and awareness creation, as well as the provision of income generating activities all contributed to the realization of the rights of children to education. MSC participants mentioned changes such as their ability to cater for their children in school, improved academic performance among their children, higher retention and completion as being the most significant change in their lives.

## Institutional Involvement and Change Actors

The involvement of the various institutions and actors in bringing about the changes through the interventions discussed above cannot be overemphasized. However, the review of the MSC stories identified two broad groups of institutions and actors that participated in bringing about these changes such as: state and non-state actors. The state institutions involved are the: Department of Community Development, Department of Social Welfare, NCCE, Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service and some District Assemblies. All four districts had these institutions working individually or collaborating to provide the various forms of interventions discussed. It is, however, important to indicate that state institutions were more engaged in the provision of sensitization and awareness creation as compared to other forms of interventions. The Ghana Education Service, through GPASS and the District Assembly, had some forms of scholarships and direct support for brilliant but needy children.

The non-state institutions were mostly NGOs and CBOs. However, unlike the state institutions, the non-state actors operated in specific districts and regions, although some of them were present in both regions. In the Northern Region, the following NGOs and CBOs were identified in the Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts as key actors in promoting the right to education: NORSAAC/UNICEF, CAMFED, RAINS, Action Aid, School for Life, GPASS and Wulugu Projects. In the Upper East Region the following non-state actors were identified in the Talensi and Bawku West Districts: World Vision, BONATADO, Afrikids, GPASS, Action Aid, BONATADO, RESULT, Afrikids, ZOOTA and RESULT. Other stakeholders who were identified to have collaborated with the institutions in the implementation of the various interventions were community leaders, SMC/PTAs, and Members of Parliament (assisted in the provision of a school block).

## Conclusion

This section presented the analysis of MSC stories collected on the rights of children to education. The MSC problem context revealed that dominant issues were the lack of access to education due to the absence of school facilities, resulting further in school drop-out, restricted school attendance, and poor academic performance. Due to poverty, some children engaged in child labour activities such as small mining, while in the case of girls, they became victims of child marriage and/ or teenage pregnancy, which resulted in a termination of their formal education.

The MSC revealed key interventions by various actors (state and non-state institutions). The interventions included: sensitization and awareness creation, which provided education to parents, children and the community leaders and members on the importance of education and their roles and responsibilities. There was a very strong link to most significant change in the lives of children through the direct provision of educational support (facilities and materials) to boost children's access education to and improve their schooling and academic performance. Another area of intervention was where parents and community members were supported in terms of income generating activities, provision of farming inputs, and animal rearing in order to cater for the educational needs of their children. The MSC



analysis revealed that interventions focussed on sensitization had resulted in increased awareness among parents and community members on the right to education. There were changes in access to education resulting from the provisions of educational support to children and the communities. Finally, interventions on income generating activities led to increased access to income, food and income security among families, resulting in more likelihood of sustainable change in future. Overall, increased educational attainment was identified as the most significant change. These changes were implemented and made possible through the active engagement and collaboration by state and non-state actors in all the four districts.


## 6.10 Empowerment, Livelihood and Voice of Beneficiaries

Phase I of UNICEF's Most Significant Change assessment was undertaken to assess and measure the level of impact that UNICEF sponsored interventions on child protection. In addition to the domains of change outlined within the UNICEF child protection framework, other themes emerged from the MSC story analysis including empowerment, livelihoods and voice. Out of the 220 selected stories of MSC, 11 were categorized under this domain and most of the stories came from the Talensi District.

Central to the idea of empowerment is the idea of power. One way of thinking about power is in terms of the ability to make choices. Another way of looking at power is in terms of self-empowerment-- the ability to acquire positive self-esteem and confidence. The MSC story analysis revealed that women in the communities were more affected by the issues of empowerment compared to men; and this was mainly due to socio-cultural factors and patriarchal systems of decision making, which limited their ability to be involved in decision-making in the family and communities. All the MSC empowerment stories were about women: ten (10) stories out of the eleven (11) identified were from female participants about their lives while one story was from a male participant whose story was about his daughter.

### Pre-Intervention and Prevailing Situation

In the northern part of Ghana, cultural beliefs often limit women from accessing and completing primary education, consulting or having an opinion on "important matters", or acquiring and owning property. Preference is placed on boy child education because men believe that an educated woman will "try to stand shoulder to shoulder with the men in the society". Despite the recent adaptation of modern trends in some societies, it still remains a "taboo" in many communities for women to acquire property or engage in "lucrative" business. The men take ownership of all property and still make the decisions in their household regarding income from farming and other activities (even those led by women)---(see Associates for Change, 2014).



*I used to have issues with my husband in our marriage simply because my husband did not value me as woman and I too would not give in to his way of thoughts. My husband believes women in Fafoo community do not have any contribution to societal development; because of this we fight day in and day out. It even got to a time that he left everything pertaining to the family in my care, he would not pay the children's school fees, in fact he did not care about the children anymore so every day we quarrelled and made noise in the community to the hearing of every one. There was no peace in my marriage and I felt like taking my own life or calling for a divorce (A 34 year old female from Fafoo, Talensi).*

My husband used to not respect me; anytime there is an issue being discussed in the family and I uttered a word my husband will shout at me and tell me that; “don’t you know that I bought you with four cows”. I had no right to rear or own animals and livestock, even if I did I could not sell any without the consent of my husband and he determined what the money should be used for (A 34 year old female from Fafoo, Talensi).

My husband did not want me to have any work for myself so whenever I was able to buy a goat or sheep on my own, he would take it and go and sell it and keep the money (A 35 year old female from Bupayapa, Talensi).

The disempowerment of women in the household was fully linked to her major role as caregiver to the children. Although men did not respect her, women in northern Ghana were often the main person responsible for the welfare and upbringing of the children. MSC stories suggest that women were responsible for all the house management including cooking, water/firewood haulage and a substantial part of the farming activities. In many cases women took on the triple burden alongside pscho-social and physical abuse from the husband:

*My husband and I were always fighting and he used to beat me at home. I also used to fight with my children. I did not know how to communicate with my children and advise them about the family situation and the various temptations they could fall into. (A 33 year old female from Sugee, Talensi).*

Women tried to overcome their problems by placing themselves at risk:

*... it was difficult to farm because we did not have technical knowledge in farming. Yield was very bad but I could still manage to feed my family because I used to go to Kumasi to work. (A 33 year old female from Yokodegi, Talensi)*

MSC stories revealed that the inability of women and men to take care of their children due to poverty usually resulted in higher levels of vulnerability to risk for the children; children ended up being forced into marriage, drop-out of school and work to cater for themselves and sometimes the whole family: this was stimulated by the belief that “there was no other option”.

*But things were still difficult; because we hardly paid our children’s school fees, their level of education was only up to JHS. Because of this those who were females were forced into marriage resulting in early child marriage, some even got pregnant at the age of 15-16 years (A 54 year old female from Dunade, Talensi).*

*Most women used to travel to the South to work and take care of their children in school. Due to absence of most parents some children were irregular and could drop-out of school. (A 29 year old female from Shumagi, Talensi).*

*Two years ago I was a victim of poverty in Sawaliga community and because of this, there was no peace in my family at all especially between me and my husband. The poverty in my family led to dropping out of school for two of my children who joined galamsey to provide for themselves (A 50 year old female from Wozukagyi, Talensi)*

## Intervention Process – (Role of Institutions and Activities Undertaken)

The MSC analysis revealed that the child protection interventions that resulted in the most significant change were all focussed on equipping women with life skills, financial aid and knowledge to enable them to engage in more effective farming and income generation activities, which would allow them to take better care of their families. Some of the programmes aimed to educate the women, and men on the importance of living in harmony, using consultation and educating their children. Other programmes were aimed at educating and empowering children to stay in school and aim for high achievement in spite of the challenges they faced;

*AfriKids came to our school with the End Child Marriage Programme. They brought some ladies who hold high positions in the society to talk to us. I mostly admired the District Education Director who was also in a difficult situation like many of us. She said when she was a child her mother had little resources to support her and father had already died. Despite that, she avoided relationships and pregnancy, she did not drop out, performed well in all subjects even as she had to only borrow books from classmates (A JHS female student from Zaaniyoli).*

*World Vision paid a visit to Sawaliga community; they came to speak to us about how to start a trade and help us to farm. After the training they put us in groups and gave us materials and financial support (A JHS female student from Zaaniyoli)*

The key actors in charge of child protection interventions related to female empowerment, livelihoods and voice were the: Department of Community Development, Action Aid, Afrikids, World Vision, CCFC, Widows and Orphans Movement (WOM), Operation Smile Ghana, Advance Ghana and SPRING Ghana. In 2016, Action Aid Ghana implemented a project called POWER. This project sought to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in rural communities. Action Aid implemented this through community members and focus group discussions (women and men).

*They told women to respect their husbands and treat them like kings. They made the men understand that, the fact that they pay the dowry of their wives with four cows does not make them their properties or slaves to them. They told us that if we live in harmony it will guarantee a brighter future for our children (A 33 year old female from Sugee, Talensi).*

Action Aid, along with other NGO's like Afrikids, educated them on the importance of educating their children and how to take good care of their children at home so the children don't stray into bad practices. Action Aid, in collaboration with the Widows and Orphans Movement, formed women's groups and provided training to women on different skills such as soap making, pomade production, animal rearing, and bird rearing; and taught them how to prepare compost manure for their farms; as well as supporting some communities with rice processing machines to mill their rice for sale. In addition, the women groups were given animals to rear in order to support their children at school and equally help themselves.

The Department of Community Development provided sensitization on the effects of a peaceful home life on children; advising husbands and wives not to fight in front of their kids as children observe and learn from that, instead they should all sit together as a family and consult on important issues to promote a healthy family life.

## Post Intervention (Significant Changes)

The MSC stories of change under this domain suggest that many interventions were having a positive impact on women and children particularly in areas of: skills development, independence, confidence and awareness of their rights. These interventions had a ripple effect on the families and the community, in general. The women were now independent; the men allowed them to own/ rear animals and to make money for themselves.

*The women in Dunade community are now independent from their husbands; they no longer depend on their husbands. Now no one can force our children into marriage, because we will report the fellow to Widows and Orphans office in Bolga- This change is most significant to me because it has changed the constant behaviour of my husband which could have led to divorce which has the tendency of affecting the positive development of our children. We live happily with our children as a family. I can now rear and own animals and livestock which was not the case before the intervention (A 54 year old female from Dunade, Talensi).*

*The most significant changes in the community are that, most parents can stay back without travelling (migrating) and provide guidance. Most families are able to get food and provide school supplies for their children making them regular and enrolment has increased. Performance will improve because children will eat and not study with empty stomach. It has reduced children's involvement in mining. (A 29 year old female from Shumagi, Talensi)*

The sensitization programmes by the NGOs and DCD were educating people on alternatives to traditional gender roles related to work.

*I have been enlightened on many issues that I was ignorant about before. For instance, I always knew that there were specific works for boys and girls. After the education of Action Aid, I now know that all work should be done by both boys and girls (A 42 year old female from Soyingyina, Talensi)*

One story depicts how a young girl was able to gain a voice and speak out through the interactions of Smile Ghana; her self-empowerment came from the talk she witnessed from a “woman in high position”. She joined the Child Rights Club where she acquired knowledge and a new attitude to education and life.

## Conclusions and Observations

From the MSC story analysis, there is evidence of social change as a result of interventions aimed at empowering women and girls. Even though the cultural beliefs of society often limit the capabilities and power of northern women thereby affecting the safety and protection of children - the stories of change prove that there is a gradual shift from those beliefs when female empowerment programmes run alongside child protection.

*At first, I did all the house work whilst my husband went out but now he helps me; we have been going to the farm together as a family. Sometimes, by the time I return from fetching water in the morning, my husband would have bathed the children and prepared them for school (A 33 year old female from Sugee, Talensi)*

The MSC stories suggest that developing women's groups gives them a sense of togetherness and empowers them to help themselves and each other. The intervention strategies employed by the change agents have generally had a positive impact on the lives of the people in the district and this has in turn reduced poverty rates and increased standards of living.

*It has helped improve the living standards of some families by way of food, affording school supplies for children and through the intervention; education for children is now a priority (A 29 year old female from Shumagi, Talensi)*

*This has helped us reduce our poverty level; in fact we have reduced it from 90% to 20%. My two children were school drop outs but now they are back in school including the youngest ones. Life has changed for me because no parent will want any misfortune to happen to his/her children. There's no change in this world more than any other change to see your children becoming successful in the future (A 50 year old female from Wozukagyi, Talensi)*

## 6.11 Multiple Domain Category of Child Protection Issues

The MSC stories selected revealed that a large number of the selected stories included multiple child protection domains. Out of the total of 220 selected MSC stories, as many as 34 stories were categorised as having multiple domains (i.e. stories containing more than one child protection issue). The MSC team developed the multi domain category in order to study stories that were addressing two or more child protection issues.

The analysis of the selected MSC stories seeks to highlight the dynamics of the multiple domains and how they influenced one another. The section will look at the prevailing child protection issues confronting the communities and how they affected the development of the children and the communities as a whole. The analysis will review the outcomes of these interventions, which we have termed-- post intervention phase. This will entail an assessment of the changes (positive and negative) the child protection interventions had on the lives of individuals, families and the communities. Among the changes, the ones that were seen by the beneficiaries to be the most significant will be highlighted.

### Pre-Intervention Stage

The pre-intervention stage across the MSC interviews reveals that children and communities were having several child protection challenges. These child protection issues were adversely affecting the growth and development of the people especially the children and girls in particular. The common adverse effects of these child protection issues across the four districts were related to school drop-out as a result of child neglect, poverty, child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

There were stories under the multiple domain category that were related to child labour and child migration in the form of illegal mining (galamsey) and "kayayo" in communities. Child fosterage was a common child protection domain that was practiced in a lot of communities across the four districts visited. These child protection domains were interrelated --- that the effects of one domain was causing

effects on another domain. For instance, in the Tolon District, it was common to hear parents say that “girls were married off to the men early after they become pregnant”. To some extent, each of the four districts had specific child protection domains that were common in their communities. For instance, child migration to southern Ghana for kayayo/head porters was most common in Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts compared to Talensi and Bawku West. On the other hand, child labour in the form of children engaged in illegal mining was most common in Talensi and Bawku West Districts. The quotations below depict some of the responses of the MSC participants.

*The issue of child enrolment in the community before the interventions was not encouraging. My father could send us to the farm even on school days. In this community we have high incidence of teenage pregnancy and as a result there is force marriage and sexual exploitation. A girl got pregnant while in school after the father had paid huge sums of money as her school fee (15 year old Female Student, Litaa community, Tolon district)*

*My parents separated when I was very young and compelled me to live with my grandmother. I only got to know my mother when she had come to perform her father's funeral. I was fourteen years by then and as at now I do not know where she lives. All I know is that she is in Kumasi as well as my dad but for my dad, he sometimes comes home as I stay with his mum. They also neglected me and do not provide anything for me. I had to work at the galamsey site to feed myself and my aged granny (20 year old Female student, Tsiotsu community, Bawku West district).*

## Intervention Stage

Communities, government institutions and NGOs all worked towards addressing child protection issues across the four districts. The analysis examines the various interventions by individuals, communities, government institutions and NGO's geared towards child protection issues in these areas.

## Community Level Interventions

At the community level, chiefs together with their elders enacted by-laws in the communities in order to control teenage pregnancy, child marriage and child migration. This was captured in the FGDs with chiefs and elders, FGDs with women groups and children in the Tolon and Bawku West Districts. Community by-laws were enacted in almost all the communities visited in Tolon and Bawku West Districts. These by-laws included penalties imposed on offenders breaking the by-law. This by-law however were strictly against teenage pregnancy which another factor which led to child marriage as some of the girls who got pregnant were married off to the men/boys responsible for the pregnancy in order to avoid shame and disgrace upon the family.

*By-laws were enacted to solve this problem in the community. My parents always refer to that girl who got pregnant after her father has paid huge sums of money when advising us (15 year old Female student from Litaa community, Tolon)*

*Whenever someone commits an offence (especially making a teenage girl pregnant), the chief will always sanction him or call for him to be handed over to the police (Male Adult FGD at Zam Kuku community, Tolon).*



*Men and boys who impregnate girls are made to pay a fine or asked to take responsibility of the pregnancy (Male Adult FGD at, Telemudanu community, Bawku West).*

*A by-law was passed by the community chief and it says if a student impregnates a colleague student, the male student is made to pay GH1000. If a man who does not attend school impregnates a student he is made to pay GH2000. This by-law was passed in 2017 because the teenage pregnancies were too much (Male Adult FGD at Sarinyakpa community, Bawku West).*

The MSC stories revealed that as a way of controlling child marriage in some communities, community members were advised to report cases of child marriage to the police so that those who committed the act (men/boys) would be arrested. In some community cases, parents who forced their children to marry would pay a fine issued by the chiefs and elders.

*The community has put in place some sanctions about child marriage. If any man should marry a school child they will report to the police to arrest him. The chief can also ask the man to pay some fine (Male Adult FGD at Bihisi community, West Mamprusi district)*

*The chief and the entire community has passed a by-law to protect parents from given out their girl child into marriage, anybody who goes against it would be fined in the form of cash and animals. Children are not supposed to stay out up to 9:30pm. No Imam would officiate your outdoorings or when given an underage child to marry. (FDG with Female children, Kpalayili community, Tolon district)*

*We have unit committee in place and they can arrest the perpetrators of child marriage. The committee members go out in the night to monitor and bring our children back to us if they are seen wandering about in town. The committee is in this town and only men can be members of this committee. We have divided the community into six sections. Each section is made of 5 members so they are 30 members in all. (FGD with Female Adults, Buunimdi community West Mamprusi district)*

## Government Child Protection Interventions

The DCD/SW and NCCE has played a vital role in the fight against child protection issues in all the four districts. The DCD carried out sensitization in all the MSC target districts with the help of the UNICEF's Child Protection Toolkit. The toolkit demonstrated the dangers associated with child marriage, child labour and the other child protection issues in the various communities. The NCCE focussed its interventions on forming child protection clubs in various schools where they discuss child protection and child rights related issues. The quotations below depict some of the responses of the MSC respondents.



*Department of Community Development came and met the whole community to talk to them about the situation (15 year old Female student from Teche community, Bawku West district).*

*NCCCE told us about the importance of education and how to respect elders and how to read and to stay away from bad friends. My life has really changed. They said if you learn hard I will be a future leader. They used our parents as an example. They said when you have an illiterate parent who is not working your educational needs will be difficult to get especially books and pens and some parents too cannot provide food for us in the morning before we come to school (19 year old Male student from Tolikpaggi community, Talensi district).*

## NGOs Interventions

Through the support of UNICEF, several NGOs across the two regions including: NORSAAC, Baptist Child Development, Afrikids, Brave Aurora and CCFC have intervened on child protection issues in the various communities. NORSAAC, Baptist Child, and CCFC were vibrant in Tolon District in the Northern Region. NORSAAC, with the help of the UNICEF's Child Protection Toolkit, sensitized and advocated with the use of drama and role play for an end to most of the child protection issues in the communities. NORSAAC developed Girls against Child Marriage clubs in the schools where children were empowered to speak out against child marriage. CCFC started Child to Child Clubs in the schools and communities they operated in that was geared towards educating the children on their rights and responsibilities as well as grooming them to be assertive. Other NGO's like Brave Aurora supported students with school materials and money. They illustrated to students and parents the trickling effects of all child marriage and other child protection issues as captured in the quotations below.

*However with the intervention of NORSAAC sensitizing parents on the need to enrol their children many parent have seen the need to educate their children. I refused to allow Aisha to go back and be a kayaye instead I insisted she rather went to school so I put her back in school. She was re-enrolled in JHS, she wrote and made it (43 year old Female Adult from Katali community, Tolon district).*

*When we got back, I continued my schooling but my sister refused to continue and that she preferred to be in her husband's house than school because after school no job. I joined the intervention that Afrikids brought by forming us into clubs to educate us about a lot of things we did not know was against the law of this country. e.g. Child marriage, force marriage, sexual exploitation, child migration etc. (17 year old Female student from Siokoshi community, Talensi district).*

*Afrikids and Social Welfare people educated us on the causes, effects and preventions of child protections issues, through this educations and the club I joined, I learnt many things and I am now a changed person. My mother and teachers use to advise me too, especially when they realize my performance was declining (14 year old Female student from Bomuso community, Bawku West district).*

Other NGOs worth mentioning who in one way or the other contributing to the fight against child protection issues in the four districts (but were not directly implementing the UNICEF Child Protection Project) includes World Vision, CAMFED and 4-H Ghana. World Vision, who is operating in the Talensi District, provided sponsorship for girls by providing them with school uniforms, books and pens and educated students of their civic rights and child protection issue. This was done through their child protection clubs in each school.

*One day, I was sleeping with their children in one of the rooms when her husband entered the room to wake me up, almost half naked, to have sex with me and so I screamed to scare him away. My stay with them was making me feel uncomfortable so I had to look for money elsewhere to fare myself back home where I continued my schooling, through Afrikids and World Vision intervention (30 year old Female community volunteer at Badinaka community Talensi district).*

*World Vision paid a visit to Sawaliga community; they came to speak to us about how to start a trade and help us to farm. After the training they put us in groups and gave us materials and financial support. I myself got maize and money to start my own business, some also got goats, sheep and pigs and fertilizer. With the support of my husband we started farming with the maize and fertilizer and used the money to start Shea nut and butter trading (50 year old Female Adult from Wozukagyi community Talensi district).*

Plan Parenthood Association Ghana (PPAG) held a series of community durbars and sensitisation forums to educate communities on sexual reproductive health. They took some communities in the West Mamprusi District through sensitisation and training on the adoption and usage of family planning and contraceptives. This contributed in tackling teenage pregnancy, education and child marriage among others.

*I heard that a certain organization Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) came to sensitize the community about family planning and reproductive health care I did not take part and I do not know when they came. The chiefs' wife later took on the sensitization programme, together with Ghana Health Service and everything changed (15 year old Female student at Kamansupala community, West Mamprusi district).*

## Post-Intervention (Significant Changes)

A great deal of change was evident in the stories of change across multiple domains; this was happening at the level of individuals and members of the various communities.

## Individual Changes

At the individual level, the stories of change revealed how these child protection interventions implemented by both the government institutions and the NGO sector were influencing their lives positively. Some children were able to tell how some of the community sensitisations events organised by DCD and the NGOs influenced their parents and guardians to send them to school. On the part of the girls who were unfortunate to become pregnant while in school, their parents were now motivated to send them back to school after they had their babies. The quotations below depict some of the responses of the MSC respondents.

*I was removed from the mining site to Bolga, where I joined my peer group for sewing lessons. I was fed and accommodated by Afrikids (20 year old Female Adult from Nwangwadi community, Talensi district).*

*I farmed one acre and I had five bags of corn to now support my husband and his mother. Apart from farming, I joined a susu women's group at Balungu community and had a loan from the group to help boost my farming. Now I have thirteen trainees with me who are also school drop outs but are not interested in going back to school (27 year old Female Adult from Bulange community, Talensi district).*

*My dad attended a community meeting facilitated and organized by NORSAAC and a series of other such meetings. Upon his return from one of those meetings, he quickly organized himself and prepared me to be enrolled in school. I was nine years when I started schooling (15 year old Male student from Kagagli community, Tolon District)*

## Community Changes

Some of the changes that took place in the four districts are a result of the actions and strategies adopted by the communities themselves. As a result of the by-laws that were enacted by the chiefs of various communities, deviance, teenage pregnancy, and child marriage has reduced in some communities. The quotations below depicts some of the responses by MSC respondents.

*But this has reduced significantly because of the by-laws in the community. In my family my parents have become very vigilant on us. They listen to our concern and provide our needs (15 year old Female student from Litaa community, Tolon district).*

*I now know that getting pregnant at an age where you are not matured is not good. I learnt that a child has the right to go to school and learn and I also learnt that you cannot vote until you are 18 years old. Additionally, the "Tindaani" (clan head) has put a ban on the late night dance at funerals and this has reduced teenage pregnancy (14 year old Female student at Geodatusa community, Talensi district)*

*As a result of measures by the community, cases of such nature are finally over. So my colleagues and I are now punctual at school and we remain in school as well (15 year old male student from Tijeviri community, Tolon district).*

Primarily, these actions were directed mainly against teenage pregnancy and child marriage and more limited intervention scope on issues such as automated birth registration and child labour. Again, not all communities had child protection actions and plans. Very few communities had functional child protection committees. Some communities did nothing to improve the situation in relation to child protection.

## Government Led Interventions

The sensitization by the DCD/SW has contributed greatly to the changes that have taken place in the communities. Through the awareness created, individuals and communities have been awakened to the danger of some of the child protection issues in the long run. This has led to a change in attitude and behaviour by individuals and communities towards child protection issues as seen below:

*I used to beat my children severely whenever they were disrespectful but now I don't anymore except they have done something really bad. I also give them less work to do just as they advised us, the relationship between my daughter and I was strain a lot of time because I used to beat her but now it has really improved she tells me everything she does in school. The most significant change is that now my children are retained in school so I used my money to sell rice as you can see all over, I have money so I feed them well (37 year old Female adult from Salilu community, West Mamprusi district).*

*Now, I still talk to these friends but I no longer do the things they do because I know better. Now I can see that my mind is free and I have time to learn. I don't go to these jams anymore (17 year old Female student from Salinabi community, Talensi district).*

*We do not roam to places at the expense of our books. Because of the Health Club too we know how to keep ourselves clean especially when we are menstruating (14 year old Female student at Tiagyee community, Bawku West district).*

## NGO Led Interventions and Changes

The MSC stories pointed out key NGO interventions that often improved the child protection environment—these interventions were often in collaboration with the DCD/SW or in partnership with other institutions and organizations. The data from the MSC selected stories indicates that, as a way of touching several child protection issues at the same time, some NGO's adopted strategies that resulted in a ripple effect across several domains. One example of this is a story by a young lady who benefited from one of Camfed's interventions and in the process was educated on the automated birth registration by DCD in one of their visits. The birth registration was considered as a qualification criteria for the CAMFED programme which encouraged others to register their children.

The MSC analysis suggests that a wide range of changes were taking place across all the four study districts, from access and retention in schools to the reduction in teenage pregnancy and child marriage in some communities. The quotations below depict some of the responses of the respondents.

*These interventions have changed my life positively. I now concentrate on my education. My colleagues have stopped going for Kayayo. The incidence of child marriage and its associated teenage pregnancy have also stopped. There is no more peer pressure. I can say it was the action of the NGOs that stopped the Kayayo, the sending of children to farm and selling on market days. Their actions encouraged me to remain in school (17 year old male Student from Soona community, Tolon district).*

*I now have knowledge about child marriage and teenage pregnancy which I did not know before. I have learnt that if you are below 18 years it is not good for you to marry. I have also learnt from the club, that is not good for a child to abuse drugs otherwise they can go mad. Another change in my life is that now I have my own sandals to come to school. Since I joined the club, I don't go out to jams anymore because that is where girls engage in sexual acts with boys and get pregnant and I have been advised against that (15 year old Female student at Swanzioka community, Talensi district).*

## Conclusion

The MSC story analysis suggest that, within the multiple child protection domains and from the perspective of the MSC respondents, the child protection interventions having the greatest impact were having a ripple effect on needed changes across several child protection domains at the same time. A case on point is the DCD community sensitisations using the UNICEF Child Protection Toolkit, which was geared towards behavioural and attitudinal change among people in communities and to curb child protection issues such as teenage pregnancy, child marriage, child abuse and neglect.







## 7.0 Analytical Discussion of Selected MSC Stories

A deeper analysis of data from the selected MSC stories allowed some reading of the trends of change due to interventions. The following section probes further in terms of the depth of change, the type of change including societal and cultural change experienced across the 34 communities in the four MSC target districts. This section will present these findings as well as the factors that brought about these changes.

### 7.1 Depth of Change

Based on storytellers' description, changes occurred at individual, family and/or community levels. Analysis of the data showed that there were changes occurring not just at individual/family level, but also at the community levels due to interventions on child protection. The majority (50.9%) of the MSC stories reflected changes on individual/family/community levels, and the distribution of these stories across the four districts is almost even, suggesting that the trend in depth of change is the same across the districts. This finding alludes to the fact that members of the District Child Protection Committees placed priority on this criterion when rating stories for selection. Some of these stories include positive changes on individual lives that had a multiplier effect on his/her family and the whole community. In such cases, the enhanced qualities of the individual included the ability to transfer positive lessons to others in his or her family and with other members of the community. There are cases where awareness raising and empowerment from an intervention had many recipients in the community. Table 8 below shows these findings from the 220 selected stories.

**Table 8: Depth of Change Due to Interventions from Selected MSC Stories**

Depth of Change	Tolon	West Mamprusi	Talensi	Bawku West	Total
Individual	4	2	8	10	<b>24 (10.9%)</b>
Family	16	25	18	22	<b>81 (36.8%)</b>
Individual/Family/Community	29	32	24	27	<b>112 (50.9%)</b>
<b>Total</b>					<b>220</b>

A closer examination of the stories that reported positive changes across the community show the organizations responsible, on their own or together with other intervening organizations, that delivered the interventions facilitating the change. Table 8 shows the distribution of stories with the maximum depth of change by their intervening organizations. Only the top organizations are highlighted in the table. The rest of the organizations were not mentioned as much and had this depth of change less than 10 times across the 220 stories selected.



**Table 9: Frequency of Mention by Story Tellers of Intervening Organizations (n=112)**

Intervening Organizations	Tolon	West Mamprusi	Talensi	Bawku West	Total	% of 112
DCDSW	2	23	2	17	44	39.3
NORSAAC	28	-	-	-	28	25.0
CAMFED	13	4	-	7	24	21.4
Afrikids	-	-	14	3	17	15.2

The DCDSW has the most number of mentions (44 or 39.3%). Eleven (11) of the MSC stories mentioned only DCDSW as bringing change to their situation. The rest of the 33 stories (75% of 44) listed other intervening organizations that included organisations such as: G-PASS, SADA, CAMFED, RAINS, Brace Aurora, CCFC, World Vision and Afrikids, some of whom are UNICEF supported organisations. What is characteristic of these organizations is that their programme packages include financial support to children, along with other material and technical inputs to the beneficiaries who are mainly children. Specifically, these inputs were in the form of tuition support to children, school uniforms, supplies and bicycles, as well as livelihood inputs for parents. One can conclude that there was a complementarity of programme efforts by the DCDSW and these other organizations in order to bring about the depth of change in child protection experienced by beneficiaries after the interventions.

In fact, a review of the stories will show that some participants directly attributed positive changes in their lives after their exposure to the exercises under the DCDSW child protection toolkit. Thirty (30) participants mentioned this in their stories, 14 each from West Mamprusi and Bawku West, and two from Talensi District.

**An awareness creation programme on child protection was organized in 2017. I actively participated in the programme under the auspices of DCD in the sensitization on process, the people from DCD sought to use flash cards, games and other tools that teased out the abusive tendencies in me. I got to know through the education that verbal abuse on children, as I was used to, has an effect on the emotional wellbeing of the child. This can also affect his/her performance in school I also learnt how to discipline a child in a positive manner with no harm.**

**Ever since, I participated in these sensitization activities, I have incorporated the knowledge and ideas acquired in the management of my children at home. The new ways of talking to my children has engendered cordiality between us, my children can freely exchange and share ideas with their father. They obey me better now than ever before. Their school attendance have also improved tremendously, I occasionally visit my children at school that I used not to do. (Male farmer from West Mamprusi District, Northern Region)**

NORSAAC was mentioned 28 times or 25% of the total number of stories reflecting a high depth of change by the organisation from individual to community levels. Five (5) of these stories mentioned only NORSAAC as the key intervening organization. The rest of the 23 (82% of 28) listed other intervening organizations that included: the Right to Play, CAMFED, CCFC and World Vision. Again, this may be a case of complementing programmes bringing about the depth of change in child protection. These other intervening organizations have programme packages that include financial, material and technical

inputs to the beneficiaries. These inputs were in the form of tuition support to children, school uniforms, supplies and bicycles, along with livelihood inputs for parents etc.

## 7.2 Types of Change

The selected MSC stories had varying degrees of change, which were placed under ten (10) categories/types of change and each story was assigned a category as appropriate. Stories can reflect changes consisting of more than one of these categories due to the dynamic nature to inputs and the change itself. Table 9 lists the number of stories that reflected the various types of change.

MSC data reveal a high rate of success of the various interventions in terms of bringing about enhanced knowledge and awareness (91.8%) and attitudinal and behavioural change (89.1%) on child protection issues. Participants overwhelmingly attested to the positive impact of awareness-creation campaigns that the government and non-government programmes had brought to their lives. These apply to both adults and children participating in the story collection. Such finding is a confirmation of the lack of knowledge and awareness on the harmful effects of these practices that subject children to labour, early marriage, migration, trafficking and others that deprive them of their education, health and childhood. The same interventions have successes, though moderate (51.8%) in enhancing children's participation and achievement in school. This finding has to be used with care as some of the stories may not be complete in terms of documenting the entire impact.

**Table 10: Number of Stories Mentioning and Reflecting Types of Changes Due to Child Protection Interventions**

Type of Change	No. of Stories	% of 220
Enhanced knowledge and awareness	202	91.8
Attitudinal and behavioral change	196	89.1
Enhanced school participation and achievement	114	51.8
Enhanced self-confidence	43	19.5
Ability to influence others	26	11.8
Acquisition of skills	25	11.4
Enhanced income	24	10.9
Enhanced health	11	5.0
Social and cultural change (beliefs and practice)	36	16.4
Negative change	1	0.5

The MSC data analysis suggest that there was some positive achievements in bringing about social and cultural change based on 16.4% of the stories but this is an area that needs much more work if sustained change is to be achieved. Some of these changes reflect the elimination of harmful socio cultural practices at the family, community and leadership levels as described by the participants. Table 11 shows the area of impact of these social and cultural changes.

**Table 11: Selected MSC Stories that Include Social and Cultural Change**

Type of Change	No. of Stories	%
Teenage pregnancy	11	30.6
Child neglect	6	16.7
Child labour	5	13.9
Women economic empowerment/ independence/voice	5	13.9
Child migration	3	8.3
Child marriage	3	8.3
Total	36	100

Out of the 36 stories that experienced social and cultural change, 20 (55.6%) came from West Mamprusi, 10 (27.8%) came from Bawku West and six (16.7%) came from Talensi. In terms of intervening organizations and their programmes, 23 (63.9%) of these stories related to the impact brought about by the DCDSW, eight of which had DCDSW and other organizations having child protection programmes in the same communities. Changes in women’s economic and social role were mainly associated with interventions from Action Aid that partnered with the Widows and Orphans Movement to deliver a livelihood and empowerment project in Talensi District. Afrikids conducted a programme in Talensi that changed the relational dynamics between spouses and families due to their awareness-raising programme.

### 7.3 Factors Facilitating Change

The MSC analysis process of stories revealed that inputs that inform and engage people in dialogue and discussion on children’s rights, family life, sexual and reproductive health rights can bring about change, either at individual, family or community levels. In many stories, programme interventions had been facilitated by the cooperation and participation of chiefs, traditional and opinion leaders. In fact, this level of participation guarantees not only short-term success but can result in sustainable change by key stakeholders, which benefits the children. Among the formal structures at the community level, the Parents-Teachers Association/School Management Committees (PTA/SMC) had been recorded as actively supporting programmes on child protection. There is a potential to mobilize these groups for sustained child protection programming especially requiring that their capacities to implement their roles need to be enhanced.

The MSC analysis found that another key factor that pushed for greater child welfare promotion were the inputs and support directed at family livelihoods. Poverty is obviously a major driving force in placing children in harmful circumstances such as labour and marriage, and often deprives them of their education. The facts in the stories demonstrate that children were willing to place themselves at great risk in order to achieve an education and remain in school; risky behaviour and forced practices including: child migration, engaging in transactional sex and being forced to marry. Programme interventions that support livelihood skills and capital acquisition for particularly mothers created a conducive environment for greater child care and support. Support to school tuition and materials pushed many of the children to achieving higher academic performance. Child protection programming will therefore have to consider complementing the focus on knowledge and awareness creation with strategies that tackle child and family poverty particularly when tied to education.

## 8.0 Findings and Key Lessons Learned from Phase 1 of the MSC Assessment

Phase I implementation of the UNICEF Child Protection Programmes MSC Assessment was intended to collect high quality MSC stories to support UNICEF programme management and reporting, and use the story analysis and reporting structures to refine the MSC process. Phase 1 was also aimed at building the capacities of UNICEF partners on the MSC approach. This section summarizes the findings and key lessons learned from the implementation of Phase 1.

### 8.1 Key Findings

A review of the findings indicate that significant changes can be attributed to UNICEF, DCD/SW NCCE along with other NGOs working in child protection work across the four assessment districts. The other key actors found to be working on child protection at district and community levels included the Girls' Education Unit of GES and GHS. UNICEF partner NGOs who were making significant changes based on their interventions on child protection included: Afrikids, CCFC, Brave Aurora, and NORSAAC. Alongside these organizations there were several other NGOs also making significant change on child protection issues in the same communities. These organizations included: CAMFED, World Vision, Action Aid, PPAG, Baptist Child Development Programme and 4-H Ghana.

The MSC analysis of the 220 selected MSC stories revealed that there were some important child protection interventions that were having success. The main success was often as a result of synergy and complementarity of several interventions in a community, which included awareness creation and financial/in-kind support often through education scholarships. Scholarship packages such as those offered by CAMFED and the Girls' Education Unit, GES through DFID's support to GPASS appeared to be having the greatest impact. The stories of change revealed that girls who were supported by these scholarship packages were often able to escape drop-out, teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

The MSC story analysis suggests that interventions by state and non-state actors were stimulating change at various levels as a result of enhanced knowledge and awareness creation and attitudinal and behavioural change. Although moderate, the interventions were succeeding in enhancing children's participation and achievement in school. The majority (50.9%) of the selected stories reflected changes at the individual/family/community levels. Far less depth of change was being made at the level of social and cultural change, which requires attention and indicates that sustained change in relation to values and beliefs needs more effort.

The light touch analysis of MSC stories indicates that a significant change in relation to awareness creation was brought about by people's engagement with the Department for Community Development's (DCDSW) child protection toolkit. Looking at the data in terms of change factors, the child protection toolkit used by DCDSW was found to be an effective tool for raising awareness on child protection and changing attitudes and behaviour. Over 40% of MSC participants mentioned the DCDSW toolkit as having a positive effect at individual, family and community level.

Another key factor in the protection of children, particularly girls, was the focus by some NGO's and institutions on empowering women, improving their family relationships with their husband along with improving their livelihoods and savings. These interventions also focussed on improving their self-confidence and social networks with other women due to a sometimes abusive relationship with men and their inability to cope. The MSC stories revealed a critical need to empower the family as a unit in providing the basic needs especially in relation to child education in order to avoid children from not listening to their parents and engaging in risky behaviour. Poverty was a major driving force in placing children in harmful circumstances such as child labour and child marriage and depriving them of education.

The MSC stories demonstrate that programme interventions that focused on assisting the parents particularly with livelihood skills and capital acquisition created a more conducive environment for child protection. The MSC story analysis showed that interventions that inform and engage people in consultation, dialogue and discussion on children's rights, family life, sexual and reproductive health rights were bringing about significant change, at individual, family or community levels. Chiefs, traditional and opinion leaders, the PTA/SMC are local level structures that provide valuable support to programme interventions. The intervention approach that supported with school tuition and basic school materials enabled children to achieve higher levels academically and to avoid social vices. Eventually, programming will have to consider complementing the objectives of enhancing knowledge and awareness with material inputs especially for families that need them the most.

Despite the strides made across several of the 34 communities visited, there are still some key child protection gaps in programming and challenges to be addressed. Some community leaders contribute to the practice of some harmful child practices including child marriage and child abuses. The leaders are unable to stop the practices because they are themselves deeply involved.

Child Protection Committees were either non-existent or inactive at both the community and district levels. This had serious repercussions for not being able to address issues of rape and child marriage. The weak child protection structures meant that, in most communities, they did not have a plan of action, protocols nor any strategies to focus on very urgent cases of child protection abuses. It also meant that children, girls especially, did not know the line of action they should take or persons to contact when a violation or abuse was committed (e.g. child marriage, rape, etc.). Children were becoming increasingly aware of their rights but were unable to defend themselves due to limited knowledge of where to go for help.

The MSC study reveals that the girl child was the most vulnerable victim of child protection issues in the communities visited. Socio-cultural norms and patriarchal systems of governance at the community and family level were preventing the girls from fully realising their rights, particularly to education and safety. Teenage pregnancy, child labour and child marriage were the most frequently occurring child protection issues across the four sampled districts and communities.

Some communities had put in place local measures such as bye-laws and fines but these were not very effective in deterring child marriage, teenage pregnancy and child migration. Chiefs and elders attempted to enforce the banning of all forms of dance, music, video shows and entertainment. Secondly, punishment regimes and fines have been instituted by some chiefs and community leaders to punish men who impregnate school girls. A key finding from the MSC study was that often the only formal structure active in child protection in the communities was the PTA/SMCs. Findings also suggest that some community leaders were contributing to the negative practices in child protection including

child labour, rape and child marriage. The community leaders, mainly men, were unable to stop the abuses and negative child practices because they were themselves deeply involved and, in some cases, found to be controlling the child protection committees if they operated. The MSC study found that there was a significant breakdown of traditional values and social norms that in the past could have protected girls from pregnancy outside of marriage etc. Lack of parental respect and obedience was apparent throughout the communities due to negative media exposure, migration, and lack of parental care and/or neglect. There was a breakdown of parental control and guidance over young children to the point that some children were opting to marry early themselves without the consent of their parents.

## Child Migration and Child Trafficking

Child migration was found to be widespread across all four MSC districts and contributed significantly to the high rate of teenage pregnancy. However, very few child trafficking stories were collected, most likely due to the inhibitions of community members to discuss this illegal issue. Poverty and lack of parental care was commonly cited to be the main cause of child migration in most communities. The study found relatively few initiatives from households and community leaders to stop or prevent child migration; most of the interventions were focussed on community sensitisation and initiated by government agencies and NGOs. Some MSC stories' participants suggested that there was a reduction in the incidence of child migration particularly in West Mamprusi and Tolon Districts, but district stakeholders did not confirm this.

## Child Labour

Under the domain of child labour, the MSC stories revealed that engaging children in farming activities interfered with their school participation; however, parents saw this as a way of training their children on the farm and as a key responsibility for children. Deeper analysis of the MSC stories revealed that a main driver of child labour was parents' inability to provide for their children's basic needs, particularly their schooling needs. This was leading children to engage in child labour related activities such as small illegal mining "galamsey" and head portage "kayaye"<sup>5</sup> at markets in city centers. The use of the child protection toolkit by DCD and drama/ role play by NGOs was observed to be an effective method in creating awareness on the effects of child labour. Unfortunately the lack of district and community structures, and systems to ensure child protection were understood by the public and used were not found.

## Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (Teenage Pregnancy)

The study findings under the domain of sexual reproductive health rights and teenage pregnancy suggest that the majority of girls across all four districts were not well informed about their reproductive health rights particularly on issues of teenage pregnancy. The MSC data further suggests that girls were exploited because of their vulnerability. The prevalence of teenage pregnancy was mainly due to lack of parental care, neglect and the inability of parents to provide for the basic needs of their teenage girls. MSC stories also revealed that communities were attempting to deal with child sexual reproductive health rights by placing bans on communal dances called "spinning", any dance and or video shows, which they saw as the major cause of teenage pregnancy. Communities reported that keeping girls in school and providing for their basic needs was the most effective way to prevent teenage pregnancy and sexual exploitation. The NGO sector was, in many cases, attempting this strategy with the provision of school supplies and, in some cases, the payment of school fees in order to reduce the drop-out rate,

5 Kayaye- refers to head porters predominantly girls

and reduce teenage pregnancy and child marriage. They have been supporting strategies such as clubs and girls' camps to increase enrolment and improved girls' performance. Generally, there was increased knowledge and awareness in some communities about teenage pregnancy, which had resulted in the reduction of teenage pregnancy cases.

## **Child Marriage**

The MSC study found that child marriage was still a very critical problem in relation to child protection across the 34 communities visited in the four districts (Bawku West, Tolon and West Mamprusi). However, most communities had received awareness creation and put in place by-laws against child marriage with the help of the traditional leadership but were having challenges enforcing and reporting on these cases to the authorities. The traditional leader's initiative, although a positive intervention, was not enough to deter people from engaging in child marriage due partly to the fact that some influential people were engaged in the practices. The study showed that most NGOs were involved directly in providing interventions on child marriage in all the communities visited. Consequently, the parents and victims of child marriage are now making more effort to report cases due to the presence of the NGOs, the sensitization and awareness creation activities etc. The challenge that emerged from the MSC reports reveals a gap in the knowledge of the population, particularly the girls, in understanding the protocols in reporting cases on child marriage without any threat or repercussion from their families and communities. Much more public advocacy and information sharing is needed to know where the population can go to report these cases.

## **Children in Conflict with the Law and Child Delinquency**

The number of cases of children in conflict with the law were not significant, but the few stories collected bordered on child delinquency and deviant behaviour. There were only two out of 220 selected stories of children in conflict with the law across the four sampled districts. Child deviance and delinquency was a common complaint across the four districts. Perceived causes of such deviance among children and youth are the lack of parental attention and guidance through the adolescent years, exposure to vices and negative media and the impact these have on their educational outcomes. Communities in the MSC study had no actions or plans targeted at solving the problem of child delinquency and deviant behaviour. The interventions carried out in the two districts were in the form of awareness-raising on the value of education, and sexual and reproductive health rights by government and non-government organizations.

## **Child Abuse and Child Neglect**

In relation to child abuse and child neglect, the study found that the common forms of child abuse were verbal and physical abuse, total neglect, and parents not providing basic needs particularly in relation to schooling. The study further confirms that child neglect resulted in many children dropping out of school as a result of lack of parental support, teenage pregnancy etc. However, most parents were found to be ignorant about the effects of verbal and physical abuse on their children. At the institutional level, Brave Aurora is the only NGO in the West Mamprusi District that had interventions specifically tailored towards providing alternative care for children.



## Exposure to Negative Media

The MSC study found that, in relation to the exposure to negative media domain, the use of mobile phones by children has increased the practice of immoral acts and early sexual contact among children since they use mobile phones to watch pornographic images and videos. The impact of negative media imaging was found to contribute to teenage pregnancy among JHS girls due to an unhealthy peer culture being created. The exposure to the recent surge of tele-novelas on television was found to have influenced the behaviours of children because they copy what they see on T.V or watch on their mobile phones. The sensitization on the effects of teenage pregnancy at the school club level often led to a change in attitudes of the children.

## Automated Birth Registration

The findings under this domain indicate that birth registration promotion as an intervention was not easily talked about by the community members; and most of the interviewees whose stories were on birth registration could not tell their actual ages. The registration of births has, however, been increasing based on the MSC analysis. This has come about because the Birth and Deaths Registry has increased access to birth registration services in communities that were difficult to reach, together with the cost free birth registration, has encouraged parents to register the new born babies. For instance, the number of registered births in the West Mamprusi District in 2015 was around 2,000, and increased to 3,000 in 2016. The use of community health volunteers to take records of new born babies at the community level and the integration of birth registration to frequented service (community health centres) was found to be an effective way of facilitating birth registration.

## Children Rights to Education

In terms of children's right to education, the findings show that poverty, socio-cultural beliefs and the male domination of women in the family were significant impediments to children's access to education. Across several of the MSC stories, issues of drop-out were directly linked to teenage pregnancy, deviant or maladjusted behaviour of children, poverty and lack of family/parental care and control. Further, the rate of school drop-out among girls was mostly linked to teenage pregnancy, poverty and lack of financial support from parents. As a result of the child protection interventions there were significant changes in access to education resulting from the provision of scholarships, and other educational support to children and families. The MSC study revealed that the intervention on sensitization had resulted in increased awareness among parents and community members on the rights of children to education. In addition to sensitization and awareness creation, provision of educational support was linked to another core child protection domain i.e. birth registration. Supporting children to stay in school was seen as a key strategy to increase children's quality of life/safety across all the child protection domains.

## Empowerment, Livelihood and Voice of Beneficiaries

The MSC study provided clear evidence of social change and an improved child protection environment in the family as a result of the interventions targeting the empowerment of women and girls. Livelihood programming assisted women and men to provide for the basic needs of their children; sometimes these programmes changed the mind set and beliefs of men towards women's ability to assist the family, own businesses and manage capital for the benefit of the family. The intervention strategies employed by NGOs and Government have had a very positive impact on the lives of the people in the communities targeted. These strategies have reduced poverty rates and increased living standards

in some cases particularly where productive assets for farming were involved and women had more control on decision making. The sensitization efforts resulted in the abilities of women and girls to have an increased voice in the family and sometimes at the community level.

## Strengths of Government Interventions

The toolkit sensitisation/rollout was seen as an effective intervention in all the communities visited. Interviews with community members revealed that this was due to the fact that DCD/SW made use of durbars and community consultations, which enabled the toolkit to reach a large number of people. This approach should, however, be complemented with smaller group workshops particularly focussed on key stakeholder groups including youth and children.

## Weaknesses of the Government Interventions

The approach used by government, despite being effective, had some short falls. First it was observed that the roll-out of the child protection toolkit was not community driven. The techniques of using the toolkit often covered too many child protection issues and did not allow in-depth consultation of individual child protection issues. The field work revealed that there were limited visits by DCD staff to communities, which made it difficult to attribute recorded changes to the toolkit roll-out alone.

## 8.2 Key Lessons Learned

The lessons that were drawn from the success and challenges of MSC Phase I are worth highlighting to assist in the smooth implementation of Phase II. The Girls' Education Officers of the Ghana Education Service should be asked to be core members of all the district education MSC teams given their knowledge on child protection. With regards to the MSC training exercise, it was established that the number of days allocated for the regional training workshop (two days) and district training workshops (one day) were not adequate. It was therefore recommended that we hold a regional training for the core MSC team, focusing on the administration of the tools/ instruments and technical complexities of the MSC project. The selected districts in the second phase should be close to each other in order to maximise the time in the field. During the MSC story selection process, it was observed that the NGOs representatives who were part of the selection team were bias when stories were about their own interventions. The story selection process with the district child protection teams should include a half-day orientation to review the principles and approach for story selection immediately prior to the selection process.

Among the UNICEF's priority child protection issues, very few stories of change were captured on child trafficking, children in conflict with the law, and non-birth registration (automated birth registration). Phase II of the MSC Assessment should attempt to select MSC locations where interventions under these three (3) domains are given more opportunity to be explored.

Regarding the change agents and actors, the change actors who brought about significant changes in the lives of children, families and communities should be briefed on the key findings of this report in order to aid in their work as civil society agencies: NGOs who partners with UNICEF and DCD in child protection in the Northern and Upper East Regions should be targeted. UNICEF and its partnered NGOs like NORSAAC, CCFC, Afrikids, Brave Aurora and Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana should be empowered with their staff to continue the MSC process to improve their work. Other organisations such as CAMFED, World Vision, Right to Play, 4-H-Ghana, PPAG and host of other NGOs should be

engaged in learning the lessons from the study and improving coordination of their work with the DCD at district and regional levels.]

With regards to the communities, the Child Protection Committees were either non-existent or inactive in almost all the communities and districts visited. These committees need to be reorganized/reactivated and possibly motivated in a way to make them work effectively. Some community leaders contribute to perpetuate/institutionalise/legalize the practice of some child protection issues, mostly child marriages. The leaders are unable to stop the practice because they are themselves deeply involved. Paramount among others, most community members including their leaders have misunderstood the concept of child rights to mean non-exercise of basic control over their children and have allowed them to develop deviant behaviours. They are afraid that these children would send them to the police/authorities for disciplinary actions if parents attempt to discipline their children.







## 9.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This report is based on the analysis of Most Significant Change (MSC) stories in child protection interventions collected in Northern Ghana where the child protection toolkit has been implemented since 2014. The stories were collected from participants in four districts in two regions: Northern Region (Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts) and Upper East Region (Talensi and Bawku West Districts). A total of 356 stories were collected and subjected to a selection process led by district child protection members: the selection process resulted in the selection of 220 most significant change stories.

The MSC stories were collected along the following key child protection domains: child marriage, child labour, child abuse and neglect, sexual exploitation and reproductive health (teenage pregnancy), children in conflict with the law, automated birth registration and child migration and trafficking. There were three domains added during the MSC analysis process that emerged in the research as key themes and were included: the negative exposure to media, and the rights of children to education and empowerment, livelihood and voice. Stories that had more than a single domain or theme were classified as “multiple domain” stories, while those in other domains not sufficient in frequency to stand alone were grouped together as “others”.

The MSC analysis of stories across the four districts presents an urgent and critical picture of the child protection situation for northern Ghana. The MSC analysis suggests that, although some communities are aware of the issues at stake, they lack the oversight/supervision and monitoring to ensure that basic child protection protocols are followed. There is a lack of public awareness, particularly among children, on where they can find protection and safety in cases such as rape, child marriage, child labour and sexual exploitation. The study found very weak, and in several cases non-functional, child protection structures and committees at the district and community levels. Therefore issues such as child marriage, child labour, and child migration are still common in the communities and across districts. There were high levels of school drop-out recorded due to the lack of educational support by parents and communities. Among parents and other adult community members -- poverty and income insecurity, and lack of alternative livelihoods were often cited as key reasons for drop-out, teenage pregnancy, child neglect and delinquency. Several institutions including both state and non-state organisations, were implementing interventions aimed at improving the child protection situation in the communities.

The key state institutions were mostly the Department of Community Development (DCDSW), and Ghana Education Service along with non-governmental agencies (several of whom were supported by UNICEF). In most cases, children (especially girls) and women were the target beneficiaries, although in some cases adult males benefited particularly from awareness creation events. The core interventions identified in the study were: community sensitization and awareness creation, the provision of direct support such as school books, scholarships, uniforms, shoes, along with income generating activities for adults, particularly women. Another key intervention was the school clubs and mentorship programmes that enhanced the psycho-social capacities of children to overcome some of their difficulties.

The significant changes from the interventions resulted mainly in increased knowledge and awareness of community members, changes in their attitudes and behaviour towards some forms of abuses towards children (e.g. verbal abuse). The key findings was that interventions aimed at ensuring children,

particularly girls, remained in school were helping to reduce teenage pregnancy, prolonging and, in some cases, stopping child marriage, and reducing child migration and possibly child labour. Interventions that targeted support for parents by improving the sources of income, enabling them to take charge of their children by providing for their basic needs so that they do not become victims of child rights abuses, were yielding promising results. MSC reports suggest that, in communities and among children who benefited from direct school/education support, there was regular school attendance, improved academic performance, higher retention and school completion. Females who got pregnant while in school were able to re-enrol after giving birth due to the support they received.

## Key Recommendations

There is a need for the DCD to make stronger links and relationships with the Ghana Education Service to develop stronger child protection programming that can ensure children remain in school, and complete primary and JHS education. Girls' education officers should be one of the key actors in the DCD child protection programming. There is a critical and urgent need for more coordination of child protection interventions led by DCD across the districts visited in order to strengthen the child protection protocols and their visibility among children. Other recommendations related to the DCD include:

- A stronger coordination and information sharing of best practices on child protection among organizations and actors working on child protection at the district and community levels is needed to foster greater synergy and draw on the comparative strengths of each organization.
- Child Protection Committees at district and community levels need to be reorganized/ reactivated and possibly motivated in a way to make them work more effectively. The membership of these committees should proscribe, at minimum, a gender balance to ensure that women have a voice and representation on these committees.
- The formation of school-based clubs should not be limited to pupils in Junior and Senior High schools and should include children in Primary schools.
- The DCD and NGOs working on child protection issues need to be better resourced financially, and capacitated technically in order to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities.
- DCD should strengthen the district wide laws and regulations enacted by the District Assembly that infringe on the rights and welfare of children. These should be widely publicised among traditional leaders at the community level;
- Much more work is needed at the district level to create an enabling environment for child protection among and across key stakeholders including the civil society sector.
- DCD should select and train some community members who will be part of the sensitization activities to ensure sustainability of the toolkit.
- More sensitization is needed on automated birth registration as an intervention to enhance visibility /adoption among community members.

More work is needed to strengthen the child rights and protection environment through the on-going work of UNICEF and its partners in Ghana. Key areas where a breakthrough in child protection could be made is in the area of: child marriage, reducing teenage pregnancy and sexual exploitation of particularly girls. If focus is given to cross cutting strategies which focus on girls and possibly mothers through education, school retention and livelihood empowerment an even more significant change could be made in districts and communities.

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## ANNEXES

**Annex 1: Number of Selected Stories Per Child Protection Domain Grouped by District (Multiple Domains Allocated to their Respective Categories)**

Child Protection Domains	Number of Stories Per District				Total
	Tolon	West Mamprusi	Talensi	Bawku West	
<b>Sexual &amp; Reproductive Health Rights and Teenage Pregnancy</b>					
Singular Domain	6	14	9	17	
Multiple Domains	7	1	1	6	
Sub-Total (%)	13 (21.3%)	15 (24.6%)	10 (16.4%)	23 (37.7%)	<b>61 (100.0%)</b>
<b>Child Labour</b>					
Singular Domain	6	8	8	10	
Multiple Domains	12	1	1	5	
Sub-Total (%)	18 (35.3%)	9 (17.6%)	9 (17.6%)	15 (29.4%)	<b>51 (100.0%)</b>
<b>Empowerment, Education and Voice</b>					
Singular Domain	1	7	14	6	
Multiple Domains	1	0	3	3	
Sub-Total (%)	2 (5.7%)	7 (20%)	17 (48.6%)	9 (25.7%)	<b>35 (100.0%)</b>
<b>Child Abuse and Neglect</b>					
Singular Domain	2	13	3	5	
Multiple Domains	3	0	0	7	
Sub-Total (%)	5 (15.2%)	13 (39.4%)	3 (9.1%)	12 (36.4%)	<b>33 (100.0%)</b>
<b>Child Marriage</b>					
Singular Domain	5	7	2	2	
Multiple Domains	8	1	2	2	
Sub-Total (%)	13 (44.8%)	8 (27.6%)	4 (13.8%)	4 (13.8%)	<b>29 (100.0%)</b>
<b>Children in Conflict with the Law and Child Delinquency</b>					
Singular Domain	2	1	9	5	
Multiple Domains	1	1	0	1	
Sub-Total (%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	9 (45%)	6 (30%)	<b>20 (100.0%)</b>
<b>Child Migration and Trafficking</b>					
Singular Domain	6	4	0	2	
Multiple Domains	6	1	1	0	
Sub-Total (%)	12 (60%)	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	<b>20 (100.0%)</b>

Exposure to Negative Media					
Singular Domain	3	2	0	2	
Multiple Domains	0	0	0	1	
Sub-Total (%)	3 (37.5%)	2 (25%)	0	3 (37.5%)	<b>8 (100.0%)</b>
Automated Birth Registration					
Singular Domain	3	1	0	0	
Multiple Domains	2	0	0	0	
Sub-Total (%)	5 (83.3%)	1 (25%)	0	0	<b>6 (100.0%)</b>
Negative Effects of Child Protection					
Singular Domain (%)	1 (100%)	0	0	0	<b>1 (100%)</b>

### Annex 2: Regional Distribution of Selected Stories Grouped by Child Protection Domains (Multiple Domains Allocated to their Respective Categories)

Child Protection Domains	Region		Total
	Northern	Upper East	
Sexual & reproductive health rights/teenage pregnancy	28	33	<b>61</b>
	45.9%	51.1%	<b>100.0%</b>
Child labour	27	24	<b>51</b>
	52.9%	47.1%	<b>100.0%</b>
Empowerment, education and voice	9	26	<b>35</b>
	25.7%	74.3%	<b>100.0%</b>
Child abuse and child neglect	18	15	<b>33</b>
	54.5%	45.5%	<b>100.0%</b>
Child marriage	21	8	<b>29</b>
	72.4%	27.6%	<b>100.0%</b>
Children in conflict with the law and child delinquency	5	15	<b>20</b>
	25.0%	75.0%	<b>100.0%</b>
Child migration and trafficking	17	3	<b>20</b>
	85.0%	15.0%	<b>100.0%</b>
Exposure to negative media	5	3	<b>8</b>
	62.5%	37.5%	<b>100.0%</b>
Automated birth registration	6	0	<b>6</b>
	100%	0	<b>100.0%</b>
Negative effects of child protection	1	0	<b>1</b>
	100%	0	<b>100.0%</b>

### Annex 3: 10 Key Steps in Most Significant Change Technique

## Step 1: Starting and raising interest

This step involved the introduction of the MSC method to various stakeholders and their representatives at national and regional levels; this stage took the Department for Community Development and key stakeholders from the regional child protection teams through a familiarization process of what MSC was about and the objectives of the child protection MSC assessment. The aim is to encourage participants to be fully involved in the process.

This step is vital as it can be used as an opportunity to engage stakeholders in the identification of key focal persons/organizations that can constitute core committees at the national, regional and district levels. These core committees can assist in the vetting of employed processes and the collection of quality MSC stories. This role can be supported to serve as an anchor in the sustained promotion of the MSC approach as a tool for programme monitoring and evaluation. Stakeholder engagements can refine the sampling methodology including the criteria for selecting communities/groups and individuals who will tell their change stories, the criteria for selecting who will collect the change stories as well as the process of collecting and selecting the Significant Change (SC) stories. Stakeholder consensus on the methodology will ensure greater understanding of the findings and recommendations from the MSC process.

## Step 2: Defining domains of change

In the context of MSC, domains are broad categories of possible SC stories that are by nature indistinct or vague since they are based on the interpretations of different individuals as to what constitutes change. Defining the domains of change as a key step thus implies the setting of the parameters against which change can be measured. In most cases, the domain of change is defined based on the project objectives. Although it is not one of the fundamental steps of the MSC, Davies and Dart noted that the use of “domains of change has immediate practical value. It helps organisations to group a large number of SC stories into more manageable lots, which can each be analysed in turn. A benefit of determining the domains in advance is that they can provide some guidance to the people collecting stories concerning the kind of changes they need to be searching for without being too prescriptive” (Davies and Dart, 2005: 18).

Davies and Dart (2005) recommend between three and five domains of change when conducting MSC. Domains of change can be identified in two ways: top-down or bottom-up. By top-down, senior managers of the implementing organisation identify the domains of change based on their programme objectives, while in the bottom-up approach, programme beneficiaries and stakeholders are made to define what they perceived to be the domains of change. Domains of change can be identified before the Significant Change (SC) stories are collected or afterwards by sorting SC stories into meaningful groups. However, this depends on the extent to which the organisation wants to be open to new experiences rather than continuing to be guided by past experiences. As in other monitoring and evaluation approaches, domains of change should reflect the consequences of negative stories and unexpected results, to generate more holistic pictures of social change and provide indications of gaps in and/or suggestions for programme implementation.

## Step 3: Defining the reporting period

According to Lennie (2011), the step of defining the reporting period during an MSC involves deciding how often the process of monitoring the changes that are taking place should happen. The definition of the reporting period is based on a number of factors, the most significant being resource availability. In

most cases, however, MSC stories should be collected and analysed once per month or quarterly, and collated annually. Davies and Dart (2005) noted that a low reporting period such as yearly reporting runs the risk of staff and key project participants forgetting how the MSC process works, or why it is being used. In terms of higher frequency reporting period Davies and Dart (2005) cautions that frequent reporting will soon lead to the exhaustion of known cases of longer-term significant change and a focus on the shorter-term significant changes that can be identified. Frequent reporting will also increase the cost of the process in terms of the amount of participants' time taken up by the process

Eventually, the determination of the MSC reporting period will depend on the need of organizations and must be integral to the development of an M&E plan, either for a programme or for the whole organization. The aim is to gather stories of short-term as well as long-term changes.

#### **Step 4: Collecting significant change stories**

This step involves eliciting stories about significant change from stakeholders who are directly involved in a programme, such as participants and field staff. According to Davies and Dart (2005), "the SC story itself should be documented as it is told. The description of the change identified as the most significant should include factual information that makes it clear who was involved, what happened, where and when. Where possible, a story should be written as a simple narrative, describing the sequence of events that took place" (p.25). Thus, the collection of MSC stories should cover three main sub-themes:

- a. Information about who collected the story and when the events occurred;
- b. Description of the story itself – what happened, when, why, how and who were involved; and
- c. Significance (to the storyteller) of events described in the story – what changed significantly and for whom.

There is a need to ensure that appropriate capacities are in place to adequately facilitate the process of collecting the stories. As much as there are advantages in giving freedom to target individuals/groups to relate their stories according to their experiential perspectives, preparation of indicative guidelines for them to cover in their narration will help in the selection and analysis phases. Collectors or enumerators need to have the skill and the proper behaviour to facilitate this story generation, including the ability to take down notes from informants who do not have literacy skills. The resources to support varied approaches for story collection should also be assured. This may include fees for interpreters, voice recorders, logistics for focus group discussions, among others.

#### **Step 5: Selecting the most significant change stories**

The selection of stories usually involves a group of people who sit collectively to consider documented stories that may or may not be assigned to domains, with the main aim of reducing the pile of stories per domain to one. For each domain, the group will select a story that they believe represents the most significant change of all. If the stories have not been assigned to domains, this is one of the first jobs to be done by the group. The guiding processes in the selection of MSC stories, as identified by Davies and Dart (2005), include the following:

- a. everybody in the group reads the stories;
- b. the group holds an in-depth conversation about which stories should be chosen;
- c. the group decides which stories are considered to be most significant; and
- d. the group documents its reasons for the choice(s) of story and the selection criteria.

Davies and Dart (2005) have identified the following as the methods for the selection of MSC stories:

- **Majority rule:** Group to read the stories, make sure everyone understands them, and then vote by show of hands.
- **Iterative voting:** After a first vote, group members discuss why they voted as they did. This is followed by a second then a third vote ideally with some movement towards consensus.
- **Scoring:** Participants can rate the value of a SC story. The ratings for each of the stories are then aggregated and the story with the highest rating is selected as the most significant.
- **Pre-scoring:** Participants are asked to read SC stories and rate their significance. These ratings are summarized in a table and presented to the participants when they meet face-to-face.
- **Secret ballot:** Each person writes their choice of SC story on a paper, and then the total votes are presented, followed by an open discussion of the reasons for the choices.

The Most Significant Change stories shared by the stakeholders and participants were analysed, thematically filtered and reviewed at varying levels. The review of the shared MSC stories were hierarchical in approach as recommended by Davies and Dart (2005). In this respect, the MSC stories shared by participants at the school level, for instance, were reviewed by the district level stakeholders, along with the community level MSC stories. Similarly, the district-level MSC stories were reviewed by the national level stakeholders. The review of the shared MSC stories aimed to make explicit what the individuals and stakeholders value as significant change in the context of child protection interventions, measures and practices. The review process serves to broaden individual views towards a more unified understanding of significant change in the context of child protection. Furthermore, the review process is useful in synthesizing common themes and/or elements of significant change as contained in the stories shared by the participants and stakeholders. The process is a potential source of additional evaluation information.

The significance of the story selection stage in the whole MSC process cannot be overemphasized. The level of facilitation skill required to maximize the learning from the selection stage is critical. However, the observance of the hierarchical approach depends on several factors including the socio-cultural context within which child protection stories are shared. Concerns such as privacy and security risks to children should be seriously weighed. Limitations in institutional resources have to be considered in determining the scope and depth not only of the selection process but also the collection of stories.

## Step 6: Feeding back the results of the selection process

This step involves relaying information on the selection of the MSC stories to the individuals and stakeholders who provided the stories. According to Davies and Dart (2005), the feedback at the very least should explain which story was selected as most significant and why. Lennie (2011) comprehensively described the feedback step of conducting MSC in the following context:

*“After MSC has been used for a period of time (say a year), a document is produced that includes all the stories selected at the highest level over that period of time in each domain of change. The reasons for selecting the stories are attached to each story. Donors can then be asked to assess the stories in this document and to select those that best represent the kind of outcomes they want to fund. They also document the reasons for their choice. This information is fed back to program managers and those who provided the stories, using various methods such as*

*verbal feedback, newsletters or formal reports. Knowing that a particular type of change is valued can lead to further searches for similar changes in that area” (Lennie, 2011: 12).*

Thus, each level of stakeholders was given feedback on which stories have been selected and which have not been selected, explaining the reasons adduced for the selection or otherwise of an MSC story. Providing such feedback about why an MSC in child protection was selected will help in expanding participants’ views of what is significant, while offering them an opportunity to challenge or express dissenting views. The feedback provided about the selection process of the MSC would invariably assist participants to assess the quality of the collective judgments that were made. The feedback process creates an on-going dialogue between the participants and stakeholders about what is significant change.

### **Step 7: Verification of stories**

This entails the accurate and proper scrutiny of the significant change stories that have been reviewed and selected at each level. This will ensure that the stories selected have been reported accurately and honestly. Importantly, the verification process serves as an opportunity for the gathering of some vital information on the selected significant stories. The verification process was very useful to the research team in its quest to come out with the most significant change story. The verification helped identify and do away with stories found to be deliberate fictional accounts, designed to save time or gain recognition and social desirability, and stories that exaggerate the significance of events. The verification process helped in describing real events that have been misunderstood in context or construction. However, care was taken in the verification process in order not to create the impression that we do not trust the significant change stories shared by the stakeholders.

### **Step 8: Quantification of the stories**

Although the Most Significant Change is qualitative in approach, there is an opportunity to include some quantitative data. This data can include the number of people involved, how many activities took place and, most importantly, the number of times a particular change is recorded.

It should be recognised, however, that when faced with large numbers of stories, one had to be realistic about the expectations regarding quantification of information. The quantification was carried out based on the number of child protection stories collected across different categories at a community level along with the number of thematic areas emerging based on attitudinal and behaviour change.

### **Step 9: Conducting secondary analysis of the stories**

According to Davies and Dart (2005), “secondary analysis involves the examination, classification and analysis of the content (or themes) across a set of SC stories, whereas meta-monitoring will focus more on the attributes of the stories”. This process should lead to the identification of emerging themes and factors, analytically derived constructs, and differences in opinions of change in relation to child protection as shared by the stakeholders. The analysis of the significant change stories facilitated the possible theorization of change in the perspective of the stakeholders within the framework of child protection.



Aside from highlighting the causes and effect of change, analysis focused on citations of individual and community aspirations, isolating the emerging constraints as well as facilitating factors in realizing these aspirations. The identified constraining and facilitating factors added information for programming.

## Step 10: Revising the methodology system

Lennie (2011) identified that evaluating and revising the system in an MSC involves reviewing the design of the MSC system and then making any changes to the system that will make it work better, based on what has been learned as a result of using the MSC technique. This step should benefit not only from the actual implementation of MSC collection and selection process, but also taking lessons from all the preliminary consultations, training of story collectors or recorders and key stakeholders' review. In other words, deliberate measures should be taken to note how the MSC technique is able to respond to the needs of assessment while identifying the gaps and areas for improvement.

### Annex 4: Key Findings from the MSC Phase 1 Study

#### Child Migration and Child Trafficking

1. Child migration was found widespread across all four MSC districts contributing to the high rate of teenage pregnancy.
2. Very minimal child trafficking stories were collected and this can be due to inhibitions of community members to discuss this highly legal issue.
3. There is relatively low initiative from households and community leadership to stem the tide of child migration, instead, much of the interventions were initiated by government agencies and NGOs.
4. Poverty was cited to be the main cause of child migration in all the communities.
5. Community sensitization is a major strategy used by NGOs, DCD and other organisations to tackle child migration and child trafficking.
6. There was an observation from participants and community leaders that there has been a reduction in incidences of *kayaye* especially among girls from the Tolon and West Mamprusi Districts.

## **Child Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (Teenage Pregnancy)**

7. The majority of girls across all four districts were not well informed about their reproductive health rights and issues of teenage pregnancy.
8. Boys and men were found to be exploiting the vulnerability and lack of sexual and reproductive health awareness of girls.
9. The prevalence of teenage pregnancy is due to lack of parental care and the inability of parents to provide the needs of their teenage girls. There is very limited protection from schools.
10. Many of the communities attempt to deal with teenage pregnancy and poor academic performance by putting a ban on nighttime jams and dances as well as video showings.
11. Programme interventions that support children's school fees contribute to the reduction in drop-out rates, increased enrolment and improved performance.
12. The increased knowledge and awareness in some communities concerning teenage pregnancy, was changing behavior and resulted in a drop in teenage pregnancy.
13. Religious and opinion leaders were not to take part in the outdoor/ naming ceremony of any baby born as a result of a teenage pregnancy. This was to dissuade others from doing the same.

## **Child Marriage (Early or Forced)**

14. Child marriage was a dominant child protection issue in the communities across the four districts as confirmed in focus group discussions.
15. Many communities have put in place by-laws against child marriage with the leadership of the chiefs. Enforcement of these by-laws have not deterred people from engaging in child marriage.
16. Several NGOs were found to be involved directly and indirectly in providing some kind of intervention on child marriage in all the communities visited.
17. Parents and victims of child marriage are now reporting child marriage cases to authorities due to the sensitization and awareness creation by the NGOs and the DCDSW.

## **Children in Conflict with the Law, Child Delinquency and Exposure to Negative Media**

18. There were only two out of 220 selected stories of children in conflict with the law across the four sampled districts, and they were cases of petty theft.
19. Child deviance and delinquency is a common complaint across the four districts. Many of the causes of such deviance is the lack of parental attention (thus guidance) through the adolescent years, and exposure to vices and negative media made more available through mobile phones and limited awareness of children on the value of education to their future.
20. The communities do not have a clear plan to address child delinquency preferring to dismiss the child as stubborn and the causes of their own problems.
21. Awareness-raising on the value of education, sexual and reproductive health rights by government and non-government organizations have been helpful as intervention to child delinquency.

## **Automated Birth Registration**

22. Most of the interviewees whose stories were on birth registration could not tell their actual age.
23. Birth registration promotion as an intervention was not easily talked about by the community members. It was learned, however, that there are volunteers stationed in the communities who educate especially women on birth registration.
24. The Department of Birth and Deaths Registry has increased accessibility of registration services in communities that are very hard to reach.
25. The free birth registration has encouraged parents to register the new born babies. The number of registered births in the West Mamprusi District in 2015 was around 2,000, and increased to 3,000 in 2016.
26. The use of community health volunteers to take records of new born babies at the community level was seen to be an effective way of facilitating birth registration.

## **Children Rights to Education**

27. Poverty, negative socio-cultural and family beliefs and practices were impediments to children access to education.
28. Cases of school drop-outs are closely linked to teenage pregnancy, deviant or maladjusted behavior of children.
29. There were changes in access to education resulting from the provisions of NGO educational support to children and the communities.
30. Intervention on sensitization had resulted in increased awareness among parents and community members on the rights of children to education.

## **Empowerment/Voice of Beneficiaries Especially Women and Girls**

31. There was evidence of social change as a result of the various interventions implemented in relation to empowerment of women and girls.
32. Some men are gradually adapting to the ideology of women being involved in lucrative business, and they now help in household activities that have been culturally indoctrinated to be women's work.
33. The intervention strategies employed by the change agents have generally had a positive impact on the lives of the people in the district and this has consequently reduced poverty rates and increased standards of living.

## General Findings

34. Significant changes can be attributed to UNICEF, DCDSW NCCE and other state actors in child protection, such as Department of Children, GES and GHS. Partner NGOs of UNICEF also generated impact from their interventions. This includes NORSAAC, CCFC, Brave Aurora and Afrikids. Alongside these organizations are other NGOs supporting the same communities and contributing to positive change. These organizations include, among others, CAMFED, World Vision, Action Aid, PPAG, Baptist Child Development Programme and 4-H Ghana.
35. The majority (50.9%) of the selected stories each reflect changes on individual/family/ community levels. This can allude to the fact that members of the District Child Protection Committee placed priority on the depth of change as a criterion when rating stories for selection.
36. Child protection interventions have been successful in terms of bringing about enhanced knowledge and awareness (91.8%) and attitudinal and behavioural change (89.1%). Although moderate (51.8%), they succeeded in enhancing children's participation and achievement in school.
37. Out of the 36 stories that experienced social and cultural change, 20 (55.6%) came from West Mamprusi, 10 (27.8%) came from Bawku West and 6 (16.7%) came from Talensi. In terms of intervening organizations and their programmes, 23 (63.9%) of these stories of impact were brought about by people's engagement with the DCDSW child protection toolkit.
38. The child protection toolkit used by DCDSW was found to be an effective tool for raising awareness on child protection and changing attitudes and behaviour. Forty percent of participants mentioned DCDSW intervention as having a positive effect at the individual, family and community level; and 63% of the 36 stories that reported social and cultural change had described engagement with the DCDSW technique.
39. MSC story analysis showed that inputs that inform and engage people in dialogue and discussion on children's rights, family life, sexual and reproductive health rights can bring about change, either at the individual, family or community level. Chiefs, traditional and opinion leaders, and the PTA/SMC are local level structures that provide valuable support to programme interventions.
40. Another important factor that pushed for greater achievement of child welfare promotion is the input to livelihood of families. Poverty is obviously a major driving force in putting children in harmful circumstances such as labour and marriage, and deprive them of education. The facts in the stories demonstrate that programme interventions that support livelihood skills and capital acquisition create a conducive environment for greater care for children. Support to school tuition and materials pushed many of the children to achieving more academically. Eventually, programming will have to consider complementing the objectives of enhancing knowledge and awareness with material inputs especially for families that need them most.
41. Child Protection Committees were either non-existent or inactive in almost all the communities visited and at the district level.
42. Interventions that were meant to effect attitudinal change are not easily recalled. It was easier for community members to remember programmes that produce tangible results such as a school.
43. The girl child was most vulnerable and often the victim in child protection issues.

44. Teenage pregnancy, child labour and child marriage were the most frequently occurring child protection issues across the four sampled districts and communities.
45. Chiefs and community leaders have put in place measures to support some of these key child protection issues including banning all forms of dance, music, video shows and entertainment.
46. Punishment regimes and fines have been instituted by some chiefs and community leaders to punish men who impregnate school girls.
47. The only formal structure active in some communities was the PTA/SMCs that are active in the child protection change process.
48. Some community leaders are actually contributing to the negative practices in child protection including child labour, and child marriage. The leaders are unable to stop the practice because they are themselves are deeply involved.
49. There is still misunderstanding among communities regarding the meaning of child rights and protection.
50. A breakdown in social norms is apparent in some of the communities due to negative media exposure, migration, and lack of parental support.

### **Strengths of Government Interventions**

51. The toolkit sensitisation/rollout was seen as an effective intervention in all the communities visited.
52. The use of durbars and community consultations enabled the toolkit to reach a large number of people; however, this should be complemented with smaller group workshops

### **Weaknesses of the Government Interventions**

53. As observed, the roll-out of the child protection toolkit was not community driven.
54. The toolkit often covered too many child protection issues and did not allow for in-depth individual child protection issues.
55. Limited visits by DCD staff to communities made it difficult to attribute recorded changes to the toolkit rollout.

**Annex 5: List of Child Protection Representatives who participated in the MSC Story Selection Process at District Level**

SN	Name	Institution	Designation
<b>A: Tolon District, Northern Region</b>			
1	Elvis A. Mahama	NCCE	District Director
2	Issah A. Danaa	NORSAAC	M&E Coordinator
3	Harriet M. Nutsugah	GES	Girls Education Coordinator
4	Mahama Ayisha	Tolon District Assembly	Assistant Director
5	Abdallah	Tolon District Assembly	ADPO
6	Abdulai W. Fouziatu	DSW/CD	Unit Head, DSW
7	Yussif Abdul-Rauf	CHRAJ	District Director
8	Akurugu Sumaila	DSW/CD	Unit Head, DCD
9	Abdulai Nasir Mumin	DSW/CD	ACDO
10	Mustapha H. Tunteeya	DSW/CD	M E O
12	Mohammed Sumaila	NORSAAC	Project Officer
<b>Facilitators</b>			
	Imranah Mahama Adams	Associates for Change	Research Manager
	Dr. Leslie Casely-Hayford	Associates for Change	Executive Director
	Humu-Heira Issifu	Associates for Change	Assistant Facilitator
<b>B: West Mamprusi District, Northern Region</b>			
1	Wundo Sammed	Births and Deaths Registry	Head of Department
2	Issahaku Abdallah I.	NCCE	District Director
3	Boateng R. Kwame	GES	Guidance and Counselling Coordinator
4	Abdul-Wahab Ibrahim	Department of Social Welfare	Head of Department
5	Galle Judith	Department of Community Development	Field Officer
6	Helen Ayaro	West Mamprusi District Assembly	Gender Officer
7	Rashid Jabir	West Mamprusi District Assembly	H. R Unit
8	Salifu Ibrahim	West Mamprusi District Assembly	Senior Ex. Officer
9	Mohammed R. Jabaah	West Mamprusi District Assembly	Social Sub-Sector Committee
<b>Facilitators</b>			
	Enock Dery Pufaa	Associates for Change	Research Officer
	Mohammed Awal Iddrisu	Associates for Change	Research Officer
	Gertrude Akuffo	Associates for Change	Research Officer
	Rose Assan	DCD	Greater Accra Regional Director



### C: Talensi District, Upper East Region

1	Augustina D. Achigibah	Youth Harvest Foundation	Project Supervisor
2	Edmund Hagpulinja	CHRAJ	Principal Investigator
3	Asaah Barthelomew	DCD	Comm. Devt. Assistant
4	Tobie A. Mary	G.E.S	Club Patron
5	Martina Awuni	SW/CD	District Director
6	James A. Ayesake	DSW	Programme Head
8	Yakubu Vitus	DCD	C.D.O
9	Mollydean Zong B.	G.E.S	District Girls Education Officer

### Facilitators

1	Enock Dery Pufaa	Associates for Change	Research Officer
2	Charity Bukari	Associates for Change	Team Leader
3	Mona Darko	Associates for Change	Programmes Officer
4	Ruby Annang	UNICEF	Child Protection Officer
5	Amoaba Emmanuel	DCD	Development Officer

### D: Bawku West District, Upper East Region

1	John Atampure	CHRAJ	District Investigation Officer
2	John B. Yasmon	Births and Deaths Registry	District Director
3	Ayariga Issah	DSW/CD	Community Development Officer
4	Ayeebo Jacob A.	DSW/CD	Community Development Officer
5	Laadi Bawa	G.E.S	Girls Education Coordinator
6	Adongo Robert	DSW/DCD	District Director
7	Ayariga Gideon	DSW/CD	Social Welfare Officer
8	Laari Emmanuel	NCCE	Civic Education Officer
9	Ayamwego James	CAMFED	Field Officer

### Facilitators

1	Aminu Akparibo	Associates for Change	Lead Facilitator
2	Mr Paul Avorkah	DCD	National Director
3	Habiba Alhassan	Associates for Change	Facilitator



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