

COMMUNIQUE



Annual Knowledge Sharing Workshop on Child Protection

Theme: Child Labor and the Working Child:
Institutional Approaches to Child Labor
Remediation in Ghana

December, 2022

Background

PDA has maintained child protection as a key component of its strategies and hence introduced the annual knowledge-sharing workshop on child protection in 2017. The workshop aimed to convene stakeholders within the child protection space to share and discuss emerging knowledge on child protection to inform policy and practice. Recordings of previous editions of the Knowledge Sharing Workshops on Child Protection are available [here](#).





Child Labor in Ghana

Despite Ghana's commitment to attaining SDG Goal 8.7 by ratifying the key conventions, child labor has remained a pervasive challenge in every region of Ghana. While it often takes the form of engaging in harmful agricultural or mining activities, child labor in urban communities includes street trading, begging (for themselves or assisting adults with disabilities), manually transporting heavy loads as *kayaye*, and domestic servitude.

It has been estimated that more than one out of every five children in Ghana (21.8%) is involved in child work, and over 60% of children who are not in school are engaged in hazardous child labor. The majority of child laborers (37.2%) are 8-11 years, followed by 12-14 years (29.8%). This means that most victims of child labor are below the minimum age for employment (i.e. 15 years) and should be in school. Some 32.5% of Ghanaian children are also combining child labor with school attendance, affecting the quality of their education, with foreseeable negative effects on their socio-economic empowerment¹.

¹National Plan of Action Phase II (NPA2) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana (2017 - 2021). Accessed at [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=111212&p_country=GHA&p_count=1#:~:text=Name%3A-,National%20Plan%20of%20Action%20Phase%20II%20\(NPA2\)%20for%20the%20Elimination,Ghana%20\(2017%20%E2%80%932021\).&text=Type%20of%20legislation%3A,notice%2C%20instruction%2C%20etc.\)&text=to%20ensure%20an%20effective%20and%20coordinated%20implementation%20of%20the%20interventions](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=111212&p_country=GHA&p_count=1#:~:text=Name%3A-,National%20Plan%20of%20Action%20Phase%20II%20(NPA2)%20for%20the%20Elimination,Ghana%20(2017%20%E2%80%932021).&text=Type%20of%20legislation%3A,notice%2C%20instruction%2C%20etc.)&text=to%20ensure%20an%20effective%20and%20coordinated%20implementation%20of%20the%20interventions).

6th Knowledge Sharing Workshop on Child Protection

The 6th Annual Knowledge Sharing Workshop on Child Protection was held on the 24th of November 2022 at the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT in Accra. This workshop was a partnership between Participatory Development Associates (PDA), the Department of Children under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, and Free the Slaves (FTS).

Themed “Child Labor and the Working Child: Institutional Approaches to Child Labor Remediation in Ghana”, the hybrid event saw a total of 100 industry players participating both virtually and in-person.

The focus of this year’s workshop was to amplify the efforts of the state and the private sector in achieving SDG Goal 8.7 of eliminating the worst forms of child labor, and by 2025, ending child labor in all its forms. It also offered patrons the platform to discuss institutional approaches to child labor remediation.

The one-day workshop featured a presentation, a panel discussion, and an interactive session. A [video documentary](#) on the impact of PDA’s partnerships in child labor remediation efforts was also premiered to serve as a precursor to the panel discussion. View the recording of the full event [here](#).

Opening Remarks

The welcome and opening remarks were delivered by Florence Ayisi Quartey, the Acting Director for the Department of Children, under the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection. She began by acknowledging the Department's long-standing partnership with the organizers of the event (PDA), which has provided a platform for stakeholders in Ghana's child protection ecosystem to share knowledge on approaches to child protection in Ghana. She further entreated local authorities and parents to recognize the negative impacts of child labor on the growth and development of the Ghanaian child, and thus refrain from engaging children in activities considered child labor. Madam Quartey concluded by reiterating the need for constant collaboration among development partners in child labor remediation in order to prevent the duplication of efforts.

Presentation on Government's Efforts in Child Labor Remediation

A presentation by Elizabeth Akanbombire, the Assistant Chief Labor Officer (Labor Department, Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations), shared with participants a snapshot of the efforts of the Child Labor Unit under the Ministry towards the elimination of child labor. Beyond outlining the legal and policy frameworks instituted to legitimize the fight against child labor, Madam Akanbombire touched on the various social interventions by the government to address its root causes. She also made mention of government initiatives like the Ghana Child Labor Monitoring System,

Child Labor-Free Zones, the review of the Hazardous Activity Framework for Ghana, and the pursuit of public-private partnerships to combat the menace. A copy of her presentation can be found [here](#).

Panel Discussion

The panel discussion, which formed the central part of the workshop, featured seasoned state and non-state experts working to remediate child labor in Ghana, and highlighted major learnings from their experiences. Addressing the theme of the day's workshop, the discussion was moderated by Aseda Mensah of PDA's Advocacy and Communication Unit, and the panelists were as follows:



- Prof Esmeranda Manful (Researcher, Child and Family Welfare, KNUST)
- Jonathan Kojo Anderson (Programmes Manager, Challenging Heights)
- Mrs Elizabeth Akanbombire (Child Labor Unit, MoELR)
- Francis Ahiamatah (Child Labor Specialist, ECOM SMS)
- Kamil Abdul Salam (Child Labor Remediation, PDA)

Below are some of the key issues which emerged from the panel discussion.

Child Labor and the Reality of the Working Child

It was noted that even though child labor is outlawed in Ghana, there is in reality a considerable number of children who are compelled to work to provide/supplement their family's income; this situation has become even more pronounced due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftereffects. Moreover, the working child is rarely protected from exploitation due to the lack of supervision at worksites even when they are accompanied by a guardian.

Another sobering reality now is that some children especially at the older end of the spectrum choose to be involved in child labor activities out of a number of different motivations, including attendant economic freedom, a basic attraction to the particular job, and/or the opportunity to avoid classes in school. These are especially difficult to remediate since their desire is to join the labor force even though they are not qualified to do so, and they are resistant to social interventions that attempt to get them out of work.

Furthermore, while there has been a lot of advocacy and awareness creation about the existence and effects of child labor, much work remains to be done in changing cultural attitudes and behaviours towards avoiding, preventing and penalizing child labor. An indigenous definition of what comprises child labor must also be crafted and disseminated, distinguishing it from acceptable work which children must do for socialization purposes and for contributing to the household.

Major Challenges in Child Labor Remediation Efforts

A major challenge for development partners has been the **paucity of comprehensive data** on child labor in Ghana. Although the Ghana Living Standards Survey gives a sense of the nature of child labor and the working child, the data available does not provide comprehensive disaggregation to highlight the key areas of need for actionable and impactful interventions, such as the communities/locations where it is most prevalent, what (if any) ongoing efforts are being made in the fight, the most urgent defaulting sectors, and the gender, age and other such statistics about working children. While it is unsurprising that this particular challenge arises due to the rife nature of child labor in the informal sector (which is practically impossible to track and report), the need for the state to commit to providing detailed data on child labor in an accessible and centralised database to help inform policy and social interventions cannot be overlooked.

Effort duplication was also cited as a major setback in child labor remediation efforts. The panelists proffered that before an initiative relating to child labor is fully implemented in a community, development partners, as part of their baseline studies, must strive to identify whether there are already existing organizations within the community undertaking similar activities. The information will help them decide on whether or how to collaborate with these organizations to implement interventions. This will also help to appropriately measure the real impact of interventions, and the nation's actual progress towards the SDG goal of eliminating child labor.

Finally, while the work of state institutions charged with the mandate to prevent child labor and implement government's policies was acknowledged, it was made evident that such **institutions are heavily under-resourced and over-tasked**. This puts a strain on the few resources available, and discourages officials from intervening in reported or observed cases of child labor within their districts.

Institutional Approaches to Child Labor Remediation

The panelists acknowledged the significant strides being made by public and private sector institutions, bringing out some of the different approaches which have been adopted by organizations to address child labor in Ghana. Some interventions focus on improving the economic wellbeing of households in target communities, in order to reduce their propensity to use their children to enhance livelihood sources. Another approach has involved skills development of former victims of child labor through teaching and learning in both formal and informal institutions. It was agreed that a combination of both approaches helps to address the issue of child labor more holistically.

PDA's approach to child labor remediation by leveraging on Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) was lauded by both the panelists and other participants, as it provides opportunity both to empower households economically and improve their savings culture in a sustainable manner, and also provides hands-on facilitation to improve the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of community members and farmers towards child labor. It was however observed that few organizations focus on the mental and

emotional wellness of remediated child labor victims, leaving them scarred and traumatized for the rest of their lives.

Recommendations for Enhancing Child Labor Remediation Efforts

Participants at the workshop brought forward some suggestions to guide the way forward in tackling the issue of child labor. These included the following.

- The government must, as a matter of public interest, work toward improving economic and living conditions in Ghana, so that households are not forced to engage children in economic activities in order to make ends meet.
- State agencies mandated to protect children, especially at the local and district level, must be adequately resourced to discharge their mandate and help to reduce the menace of child labor.
- The necessity for concerted and collaborative efforts from different actors in society must be highlighted. Development partners need to involve communities and traditional authorities in the design of child labor remediation initiatives, so that they feel an ownership of interventions, and facilitate implementation rather than resisting or merely exploiting them for financial gain.
- Child labor in a multiplicity of sectors must also be addressed. While the most prevalent areas are agriculture and mining, there must be more intentional effort to deal with child prostitution and sexual exploitation for financial benefit, child domestic workers, and child hawkers in Ghana.

- The government must spearhead a common platform for stakeholders involved in child labor remediation efforts. The Ghana Child Labor Monitoring System being prepared for implementation is a great first step for tracking the state and nature of child labor, working hand-in-hand with the district and regional offices of appropriate departments, like the Department of Social Welfare. It would also enhance the coordination of development partner efforts, and provide comprehensive data that can inform policy decisions and guide resource allocation.
- Child labor remediation efforts must go beyond physically removing children from worksites and even empowering them and their households financially or with skills. Former victims of child labor must be helped emotionally to overcome the psychosocial trauma that accompanies the menace.



Outcomes of the Workshop

Participants had opportunity to comment, contribute and ask questions in response to some of the issues raised in the panel discussion. As representatives of various organizations across sectors shared their reactions to the conversations, there was commitment to the following:

1. *Building stronger networks and partnerships to enhance collaborations in the effort to eradicate child labor.* These bonds will be forged among development organizations, but also with government departments and units whose mandate borders on the issues related to child labor. Also, more intentionality will be placed on securing the buy-in of traditional authorities not only in the local communities, but also at higher levels like in the National House of Chiefs. The Department of Children, for instance, agreed to share their newsletter containing information about working children across the country with more partners.
2. *Continuing advocacy throughout the country.* The recognition that many people even in target communities have, by now, grasped an understanding of child labor and its negative effects was overshadowed by the reality that their knowledge does not translate into proportionate behaviour change. In fact, some parents and guardians in beneficiary communities take advantage of the lack of coordination at the level of intervening partners. Advocacy will therefore be more targeted at behaviour change, so that children will not be exploited for financial gain no matter how attractive the outcomes may seem.

3. *Aiming at holistic remediation of child labor victims.* Beyond physically and financially remediating children, the importance of working at their psychosocial well-being was highlighted. Some participants shared their own experiences of struggling with the psychological trauma attending child labor, and committed to drawing more attention to this side of the issue and working at it in their respective organizations.

Conclusion



In his closing remarks, Mr. Godsway Dzato of PDA noted that these knowledge sharing workshops reinforce PDA's commitment to contributing to evidence-based research on child protection, and creating sustained awareness on the role of all stakeholders in ensuring the protection of the Ghanaian child. He appreciated all guests for sharing their rich knowledge and experiences, and expressed his optimism that partners would incorporate some of the approaches discussed in their child labor remediation interventions.

PDA reiterates its commitment to working towards SDG 8.7, and the protection of Ghanaian children. Our doors are open to all interested stakeholders and potential partners to reach out to the Advocacy and Communications Unit through Aseda Mensah at amensah@pdaghana.com.