

DELTA 8.7



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DELTA 8.7 COUNTRY POLICY RESEARCH WORKSHOP ON GHANA: WORKSHOP BRIEFING



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INTRODUCTION

On 15 December 2021, the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research project Delta 8.7 hosted a Country Policy Research Workshop. This fourth workshop focused on Ghana, bringing together policymakers from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; the Immigration Service, International Organization for Migration, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNICEF, as well as members of the private sector, civil society and researchers from Ghana and elsewhere for a closed-door discussion of “what works” to combat child labour in Ghana.

Over the last year, UN Member States, regional organizations and civil society have been working to raise awareness on the issue of child labour and share best practices in support of the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. As this year ends, and at a time when the Ghanaian Government is strengthening its efforts to combat modern slavery through its commitment as a Pathfinder country and development of a number of new National Plans of Action including for the Elimination of Human Trafficking and Child Labour, this workshop provide an opportune moment to discuss what national policies are needed to accelerate progress towards the elimination of child labour. The workshop comprised five sessions – the themes were identified following in-depth interviews with workshop participants. These themes were:

1. The modern slavery-environmental degradation-climate change nexus
2. Child labour in the cocoa industry
3. Child labour in the fishing industry
4. Social protection measures and access to education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic
5. Prevention and rehabilitation

The identified themes were points of departure for rich discussions throughout the sessions that spanned community-led initiatives to combat child labour and possible alignment between efforts to combat child labour and environmental degradation. The discussions aimed to identify what is known to be most effective to combat child labour in Ghana and to facilitate exchange between policy actors and researchers. This briefing outlines the most pertinent recommendations and questions that arose in the discussion.

Three broad themes emerged from the workshop which encompass policy recommendations, programme and project proposals as well as questions for further discussion and research. The three themes are:

1. Survivor support and prevention
2. Synergies/areas of alignment and collaboration
3. Research needs and gaps

While the subject of child labour has received both international and national attention in Ghana, the problem of child labour persists: gains have been limited in nature, and solutions unscalable. Participants stressed the importance of implementing innovative measures such as income diversification, wealth management and provision of universal basic income that target structural inequities in the system.

Given the structural drivers (namely poverty, and barriers to access to schooling and other social and health services) undergirding vulnerability to child labour in Ghana, developing and implementing robust and effective prevention and survivor support policies and programmes is imperative. The discussions throughout the workshop highlighted the necessity of centring prevention and survivor support measures to address child labour at the roots.

Additionally, the discussion highlighted potential synergies between different areas of focus and action. Limited resources – which are further diminishing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic – require

creative strategies to maximize their potential utility. Participants also underscored the importance of collaboration and sharing of best practices across issue areas. Modern slavery and child labour is a multi-causal problem that of necessity requires multi-institutional and intersectoral engagement and cooperation.

Finally, the discussions identified research and evidence lacunae that need to be addressed. Evidence-based policymaking requires robust data and analysis to determine both what works and what does not work to end modern slavery. Monitoring and evaluation of projects, specifically assessments that measure outcome and impact, are thus crucial to building the evidence base.

The path from data to evidence-based policymaking is not a straight line and requires the commitment of policy actors as well as the attentiveness of researchers to contextual realities and challenges.

In what follows, the briefing outlines the most pertinent recommendations, proposals and questions raised in the discussions vis-à-vis the three broad themes identified above.

1. SYNERGIES/AREAS OF ALIGNMENT AND COLLABORATION

SOCIAL PROTECTION

- The pandemic has unequivocally exposed the fractures in social protection and has highlighted the need to reimagine and to rebuild public policies aimed at vulnerable communities by provisioning a universal basic income and strengthening social protection programmes such as awareness-raising on child labour, livelihood programmes, child rights, child education, awareness-raising on worst form of child labour, hazardous labour, women's empowerment and girls' education programmes. Ghana's flagship social protection programme, Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), has had protective effects against poverty, countering wider trends, and positively impacted some dimensions of economic productivity and savings, increased enrolment in the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and use of health services, increased social support, and reduced frequency of intimate partner violence against women.¹ Participants discussed the importance of expanding the LEAP programme to cover a wider range of beneficiaries, including a potential extension to cocoa farmers who traditionally have been excluded from the programme.
- There is a need to prioritize the provision of basic infrastructure and services in source communities and destination towns, especially urban slums, to adequately support people on the move and/or to prevent the necessity of their movement. Participants noted that a common denominator between source and destination areas is a lack of access to social services and structures.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

- Access to education, specifically full-time schooling, is fundamental to combat child labour. Ghana's educational programme has been instrumental in ensuring children have access to education, coupled with initiatives such as the Free Senior High School Programme, the Ghana School Feeding Programme and Capitation Grants. However, while Ghana has seen an increase in the number of children attending school, it has also seen an increase in the number of children mixing work with school. This perhaps indicates the need for more a more comprehensive public understanding of what constitutes (illegal) child labour and what constitutes (legal) child work outside of school hours, which does not negatively impact on a child's education. Participants stressed the importance of focusing efforts on improving the quality of education. Education, they noted, must be coupled with professional training and apprenticeships to ensure adolescents acquire competitive skills in legitimate apprentice programmes. However, professional skills training should be a complement to regular schooling and not a substitute. Currently, the Government of Ghana, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, is trying to develop and implement education programs that will make university education easy and accessible to every child by reducing fees; participants supported this action and strongly encouraged it to continue.

¹ UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti et al., *Ghana LEAP 1000 Programme: Endline Evaluation Report* (Accra: Innocenti et al, 2018). <https://www.unicef-irc.org/files/documents/d-4108-LEAP-1000-Report.pdf>.

- The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the urgent need to increase investment and improve Information and Computer Technologies (ICT) facilities in schools. During the pandemic, the Government has been commended for its gender-sensitive approach and provision of distance-learning programmes, particularly the launch of the Ghana Learn Television Channel, but UNICEF Ghana and the Social Policy Research Institute found that children without access to televisions, mobile devices or internet were unable to access the programmes. Without access to schooling, many children and their families perceived work as a logical alternative. The Government must address the contextual and environmental difficulties faced by rural students who are excluded from e-learning platforms and expand their ICT integration programming.
- Participants noted the rise in teenage pregnancies, due to many factors including the impact of COVID-19 on the ability of all adolescents to access sexual and reproductive health and rights services, and an increase in sexual abuse and exploitation. Policymakers must ensure that all adolescents have access to such services, in order to prevent teenage pregnancy. Young parents, who often face stigma and discriminatory school re-entry policies, must also be encouraged to return to school and to complete their education. While the Ministry of Education has developed guidelines that support teenagers with unplanned pregnancies to continue schooling or opt to return after delivery, this must be coupled with sensitization and implementation campaigns of community members, classmates and teachers.
- Schools should monitor students' attendance and participation. They should cooperate with local child protection and/or relevant school committees to identify children who do not return to in-person classes or do not regularly attend, and they should follow up with those children to engage them and provide any support they require to continue or resume their studies.

ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS

- Initiatives currently undertaken in the cocoa sector have been unambitious and failed to target the structural issues of poverty, lack of alternative livelihoods and economic opportunities. Despite the focus on addressing child labour, there has been limited innovation in the production of cocoa. Small-scale community measures, while important, fail to address the structural issues which lead to child labour. Solutions should prioritize transformational mechanisms that increase yield but reduce the labour intensity of the work. While there have been some pilot schemes, participants noted they often work in silos and do not continue once funding for the project has ended; the result is that many pilots are not scaled up, and best practices remain unshared.
- Child labour reduction strategies must focus investment on wealth creation programmes, income diversification and alternative livelihoods; this is true in both sectors — fishing and cocoa — discussed during the workshop.

ENFORCEMENT AND PROSECUTION

- While tremendous progress has been made in training law enforcement and the judiciary, further sensitization of law enforcement will be vital to ensuring further progress. Participants discussing the fishing sector commended the criminal accountability model pursued by agencies over the last couple of years and encouraged greater focus and resources to be directed into enforcement and prosecution to deter perpetrators.

REHABILITATION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

- Survivors must be provided with emotional and mental health services, which are often not adequate in reintegration policies and programmes.

- Families of children who have experienced child labour must also undergo some level of support to ensure they are equipped to look after their children. This is one way to avoid re-traumatization/re-victimization.

ENGAGEMENT

- Engaging and involving vulnerable communities in policymaking is crucial. The innovative work and voices of vulnerable communities must be brought into the development of anti-slavery public policies and legal norms, both on the national and international level. Mobilizing community leaders and people in positions of authority by building their capacity as agents of change have proved important in efforts to reduce trafficking and unsafe migration in Ghana.
- Removing children from child labour requires ensuring that their families and communities are resilient and a space of protection for the child against child labour. Community resilience models including vigilance committees are an effective way of establishing preventive mechanisms.
- Survivors must be consulted in the design of prevention and rehabilitation measures. Often, survivors are marginalized or tokenized in the anti-slavery movement and for the most part excluded from policy development. Meaningful and sustainable support requires long-term engagement and trust-building.



2. SYNERGIES/AREAS OF ALIGNMENT AND COLLABORATION

- Anti-slavery and environmental movements often operate in silos, which results in an inefficient use of scarce resources and hinders the ultimate effectiveness of both anti-slavery and environmental conservation policies. To achieve Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7 and the environmental SDGs, a coordinated effort is required in which those with expertise in modern slavery are engaged by environmental organizations — and vice versa. Participants, therefore, proposed establishing a Government-led committee/ coalition of anti-slavery and environmental actors that could discuss cross-cutting issues and establish policy that better aligns with these movements.²
- Introduce mandatory human rights due diligence that considers close connections to, and points of difference with, other relevant sustainability risks, e.g., to the environment. France's Corporate Duty of Vigilance Law could serve as a model for robust legislation to hold corporations accountable for labour violations because it is seen as being more comprehensive and proactive than similar legislation in other countries. The Law requires companies to identify risks rather than just respond retroactively and provides avenues for remedy for affected individuals and communities. Participants cautioned, though, that due diligence laws cannot be considered as silver bullets. They warned that businesses may rely on ethical certification as a preventive model, despite burgeoning research to show these.
- Child labour should be considered in national plans to deal with the economic and social crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The choices made now for recovery must include measures to eradicate child labour. Some measures recommended by UNICEF and the International Labour Organization include providing income and food support for individuals who lost their employment in whole or in part; providing access to credit; establishing adequate minimum wages; and ensuring all children return safely to school.
- Official plans to re-open and boost the economy after the pandemic must place sufficient focus on social protection policies and their relationship with economic policies and economic growth.
- The informal sector should also be the target of recovery interventions because it is where most child labour cases take place.

² A recent study from the University of Nottingham offers insight into potential collaborative strategies to mitigate tree and prevent modern slavery. In their study they identify a "two-way cyclical relationship between modern slavery and tree loss" wherein decreases in biodiversity "due to tree cover loss" lead to increase in vulnerability to slavery, which, "in turn increase modern slavery's contributions to tree cover and biodiversity loss." In Ghana, where the UN's Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) programme is supporting national efforts to combat deforestation and environmental damage "by reducing the burden of poverty and supporting sustainable development" — in other words, the very same underlying conditions that constitute drivers to slavery — the authors suggest that antislavery frameworks be integrated into REDD+ programming.

- Government databases currently operate in silos, and despite intents to move to a centralized system, progress has been slow. For instance, COCOBOD is currently implementing a cocoa management information system, encouraging a shift towards the digitization of the cocoa farm which should achieve a full transition from cash to digital payments for all cocoa transactions in Ghana. Participants noted the opportunity to link this system to pre-existing systems such as those developed by UNICEF and the World Bank. They stressed the importance of addressing the interoperability of different databases to achieve a more coordinated approach and encouraged the Government to accelerate efforts to harmonize existing databases.



3. RESEARCH GAPS

Throughout the workshop, several primary research needs were identified to enhance effective policy responses.

PREVALENCE DATA

- While research on child labour can prove challenging to undertake, some additional data could improve policy response to prevent and remedy child labour. Particularly important will be prevalence studies of child labour throughout value supply chains to increase business accountability through subsectors. Private sector actors monitoring child labour must be willing to share data on prevalence in order to better inform policy responses. Participants discussing child labour in the fishing industry noted the challenges of measuring prevalence but highlighted its utility in assisting in knowledge curation.

THE MODERN SLAVERY-ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION-CLIMATE CHANGE NEXUS

- Over the last decade, the modern slavery-environmental degradation-climate change nexus has been gaining momentum as a research topic, accelerated by the creation of the SDGs. In Ghana, the bidirectional relationship – between environmental harm and modern slavery— can be observed specifically in cocoa, rubber plantations and mining where child labour is prominent. Despite this, participants noted limited understanding on the interconnectivity of this nexus among key stakeholders.

RESEARCH ON PANDEMIC IMPACT AND RESPONSE

- In several areas, participants noted the importance of gathering data that relates to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to collation and coordination of rapid response data on the effects of the pandemic on child labour, workshop participants expressed a need for continued surveys to understand the impact and efficacy of large-scale interventions by the Government and by other humanitarian actors.
- Participants expressed an interest in both understanding the rate of teenage pregnancy during COVID-19 and the potential impact of such pregnancies on an increase in child labour.
- In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need for research that examines the effectiveness of online learning, barriers to access and how to successfully integrate ICT in schools for online learning, especially in rural schools.
- Further research is needed on how/if the pandemic has changed perpetrator strategies and movement on Lake Volta.

CHILD LABOUR IN THE COCOA INDUSTRY

- While promising practices have been identified, participants noted the difficulty in ascertaining their effectiveness. For instance, it is too early to talk about the efficacy of the implementation of a living income in some cocoa farms, although findings from Tony's Chocolonely farms indicate a positive trajectory. They have found a positive correlation between ensuring that cooperative members are paid a living income and decreased child labour prevalence.

- Research is needed to understand why the number of children working exclusively on the cocoa farms has reduced but the number of children mixing education with work has increased.
- Another research gap is on the effectiveness of remediation of child labour. There has been little research conducted on what interventions work to ensure that children leave a situation of child labour in the long term. In addition, participants noted that common interventions implemented by the private sector – school kits, vocational training, birth certificates, etc. – should be studied in more detail to identify which ones are most effective.

CHILD LABOUR IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY

- Participants expressed an interest in research that distinguishes more between legal child work and illegal child work, including gender- and age-specific factors.

BEST RESEARCH PRACTICE

- Current child labour policies and programmes are based on census data from household surveys. Gathering updated data is urgent to refine the knowledge base about child labour, including the pandemic's impact on the scale of the problem in Ghana.
- A systematized repository of data, including criminal and labour justice processes, for all cases of modern slavery in Ghana will facilitate a proactive approach to investigations as well as allow policymakers to devise more effective plans to combat child labour, forced labour and human trafficking.
- Survivors must form an important part of the research process. Without their expertise, researchers cannot form an accurate understanding of the problem. Meaningful inclusion of survivors requires trust-building and long-term engagement to ascertain “what works” to effectively address modern slavery. This, in turn, necessitates support and funding for longitudinal research.
- Technical expertise is insufficient without local support and knowledge. Coupling academic and technical expertise with practical and contextual knowledge is imperative to formulate more pointed research questions that are relevant to a specific context.
- Fostering a culture of evidence-based policymaking requires conceiving of secondary incentives that drive policymakers to make decisions based on data. Secondary incentives can include fiscal motivations or questions of national security.

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