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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

First Person Story: Child Labor Practitioner, Turned Advocate

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Friends of the Nation



This publication is available electronically on the Coastal Resources Center's website at http://www.crc.uri.edu/projects_page/ghanasfmp/

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FIRST PERSON STORY

Child Labor Practitioner, Turned-Advocate

A Mother and Now an Advocate for Keeping Children Safe and in School



Araba Takyiwa at far left/rear with 3 of her children in school uniforms; and her neighbors - 2nd and 3rd right/rear, and their schooled children; beside them are Project staff

Photo Credit: Central and Western Fishmongers Improvement Association

"I will use my own story as a means to advocate against child labour and trafficking in Elmina."

Araba Takyiwa, 46
A mother of seven who trafficked her 13 year old daughter and allowed her sons aged 7 and 10 years to labor in fisheries instead of attending school is now an anti-child labor and trafficking advocate who is helping change the lives of her own children and those of others in her poor fishing community.

Elmina is one of the largest fishing communities in Ghana with a vast landing site that accommodates its own fisher folks as well as migrants from other communities within the same Central Region, such as Moree, Anomabo, Apam, Abandzi, Winneba, Komenda etc). The situation has resulted in a rise in child labor activities in the community and environs.

Almost 85 per cent of Elmina's population, including migrants, keeps their children out of school so they can labor in fisheries or in other hazardous work to earn income for their family. Some even push their children into sexual activities in exchange for fish, or in exchange for money, traffick them to other countries. Not only are these children's lives and health endangered, but they lose out on the very education that might help them escape this cycle of poverty and child labour.

USAID is helping change this through the Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project component on behavior change communications aimed at training community anti-Child Labor and Trafficking (CLaT) Advocates. These advocates counsel households who engage their children in hazardous work or traffick them, on the dangers that come with this way of life – health hazards and in some cases, even loss of their children's lives. And, they encourage parents to keep their children out of work and in school.

Araba Takyiwa is a beneficiary of the USAID/SFMP Anti-Child Labor Campaign; she is a 46-year old mother of seven and a fish processor in Elmina. In need of money, in 2010 Araba trafficked her 13 year old daughter to Ivory Coast and sent her young sons to work in fisheries. In spite of her efforts, Araba has not been able to locate and bring back her daughter. But it is not too late for her sons. Today, Araba sends them to school. And, she is spreading the word throughout the community, helping others see the longer term benefits to their children, their families, and their community when children stay in school and out of hazardous labour and trafficking. Araba hopes her own personal story of loss is helping others decide that they too want a brighter future for their children. And to realize that such a future starts by keeping children in school.