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Journalist Orientation in Central Region



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Cover photo: A cross section of media participants (Credit: Kyei Kwadwo Yamoah, FoN)

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SNV: <http://www.snvworld.org/en/countries/ghana>

ACRONYMS

BCC	Behavior Change Communications
CEWEFIA	Central and Western Region Fishmongers Improvement Association
CLaT	Child Labor and Trafficking
CR	Central Region
CRC	Coastal Resources Center (of Graduate School of Oceanography); University of Rhode Island
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DA	District Authorities
DAA	Development Action Association
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
FiC	Fisheries Commission
FoN	Friends of Nation
GES	Ghana Education Service
GHS	Ghana Health Service
GOG	Government of Ghana
GNCFC	Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council
ILO	International labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LEAP	Livelihood Enhancement Against Poverty
MOFAD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
MGCSP	Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection
NCCE	National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PHE	Population Health and Environment
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
FORWARD.....	1
INTRODUCTION	2
OBJECTIVE	2
PROCEEDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP.....	3
Welcome address	3
Presentation on Child labor and Trafficking (ClaT) issues in Central Region.....	3
Government agencies involvement and challenges	3
Revelations (findings) from engagements with stakeholders and households	3
Presentation by Central and Western Region Fish Mongers Association, a partners under the SFMP project :	4
OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION SHARED WITH THE MEDIA.....	5
Methodology and processes for the Pra survey	5
Scoping Visits	6
Household Survey	6
Definition of key terminology	7
Images of child labor	8
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	11

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. A cross section of the participants.....	3
Figure 2. Central Region.....	5
Figure 3. Map of Ghana.....	5
Figure 4. The elderly working for doles of fish and grandparents keeping the fort in the absence of the youth.....	8
Figure 5. Under-age children working alongside adults on the beach.....	9
Figure 6. Children gutting fish paid them to sell	10
Figure 7. Pupils loitering off school hours at the beach	10

FORWARD

The history, and magnitude of Child Labor and Trafficking (CLaT) in fisheries within the coastal fishing communities in the Central Region was determined through respondents and it pointed clearly as a fishing activity linked issue. Children from the coastal fishing communities are relatively better swimmers compared to children from other areas of the country. Culturally, these are communities that are already steeped deep into fishing and everything revolved around fisheries. Therefore, taking children from poor families (who hardly are able to put food on the table on daily basis) because are good swimmers or conversant with fish processing, or both to go do same in other geographical areas for perceived rewards was a matter of course.

Poverty and deprivation are the main causes. Declining fish harvest has seriously deepened poverty in the coastal fishing communities where there are hardly any other viable forms of livelihood activities. Many single-parent female-headed households who are among the lowest rungs of the poor send their children away to assist others for a fee, thinking they are helping both themselves and the trafficked child. Therefore the issue of CLaT has profound gender dimensions that should be paid attention to by the appropriate authorities with adequate interventions.

The gaps in law enforcement should be plugged to contribute to reducing the expenses made in rescuing and rehabilitating victims. The fact that some police post are just besides embarking points in communities is disturbing. This shows that either the law enforcement agencies are not conversant with that aspect of the law, or they are just playing into the hands of traffickers who may induce them to turn their attention to ‘more serious things’. Ignorance is however no excuse and complicity is a crime. Children’s rights are human rights and should be treated as such.

Lastly though the SFMP is about contributing to resuscitating Ghana’s fisheries, managing the fisheries is actually about managing people efforts by Friends of the Nation (FoN) and partners to bring to fore the drivers of CLaT and propose actions that will contribute to a clean, and sustainable fisheries for now and the upcoming generations.

The project is seeking collaboration with the media so that issues within the sector (challenges) could be appropriately and adequately highlighted to solicit public support and participation.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP), FoN conducted a comprehensive assessment of Child labor and Trafficking (CLaT) problem in the Central Region which aimed at identifying communities and households most susceptible to such practices to unearth the root drivers of the problem, and gather up-to-date information. This exercise was done in collaboration with Coastal Resources Centre -Ghana, Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), the Fisheries Commission, Central and Western Fishmongers Improvement Association (CEWEFIA) and Development Action Associates (DAA).

Issues of Child Labor and Trafficking (CLaT) in the coastal-fishing communities in the Central Region of Ghana have gained notoriety since it has implications for many development issues as well. FoN as part of the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project organized a one-day orientation program on the issue for Central Region based journalists and media houses in December of 2015.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the workshop was to increase media awareness of the issue and contribute to increasing and improving media reportage on it. It was anticipated that roping in the media will increase and improved information dissemination to the public who in turn will support the drive to rid the coastal-fishing communities of CLaT.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP

Welcome address

Mr. Spencer Taylor, the Executive Director of CEDEDCOM gave the welcome address and stated his agency readiness to partner FoN and other like-minded organizations to bring development to the region (“**including the fight against CLaT, which has so many social dimensions and a barrier to development in the C/R**” – Spencer Taylor). He acknowledged the strategic relationship that the media can forge with any astute program in creating awareness and not keeping issues in the dark.

Presentation on Child labor and Trafficking (CLaT) issues in Central Region.

Mr. Kwesi Johnson, the Program Coordinator in charge of Child labor and Trafficking in central region made a presentation on SFMP’s findings from the scoping exercise and household survey conducted in central region.

FoN presentation was geared towards the findings of its literature review exercise, and scoping and field survey of vulnerable households within 35 coastal fishing communities in the Central Region which is regarded as the fourth poorest region in Ghana and has been identified as the main source of CLaT in fisheries on the Volta Lake area (generically referred to as “Yeji” amongst inhabitants of coastal-fishing communities in the C/R)where children are sent to engage in dangerous fishing practices, and are never enrolled in school; and outside Ghana to places like La Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia, Mauritania, The Gambia, Benin and Nigeria.



Figure 1. A cross section of the participants

Other issues that the media gathering were briefed on in the area of CLaT within fisheries in the C/R included:

Government agencies involvement and challenges

These include the Fisheries Commission, Department of Social Welfare, District Assemblies, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, and the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Ghana Police Service) in the anti-CLaT effort was highlighted.

According to the Fisheries Commission and the Department of Social Welfare, the problem of illegal child labor in fishing as a rather precarious one that needs to be addressed to safeguard the development potentials of children, Ghana’s fisheries, promote good governance and socio-economic advancement of inhabitants within the coastal belt and fishing communities within the SFMP. The issue has been identified as challenge within Ghana’s fisheries sector and is linked to cultural beliefs and practices, and also, to hardcore poverty.

Revelations (findings) from engagements with stakeholders and households

These show that CLaT activities are deeply prevalent especially amongst vulnerable single female-headed households with many children who are given away at ridiculously low amounts with a dire potential of maybe never going to ever see that child alive again as death amongst child laborers in fisheries is high.

Migrating male fishers often leave the womenfolk to fend for themselves and their children, without money for school fees or food. Agents come offering relief in the form of payments and promises to care for the children, but then force them into hard physical labor in the lake fisheries. *(Points 2 and 3 above paints a picture of gender dimensions within CLaT in the C/R).*

The advocacy drive (nature) of SFMP's CLaT component which aims at facilitating (implementing) a Behavior Change Communications initiative in an effort to make such practices socially unacceptable.

Livelihood support activities for “**vulnerable households but with potential to be productive**” coordinated by SNV, CEWEFIA and DAA who are also partners under the SFMP project.

Presentation by Central and Western Region Fish Mongers Association, a partners under the SFMP project :

CEWEFIA gave an overview of its anti-CLaT work in the Central Region as being concentrated in the two urban fishing communities of Moree and Elmina. They have been empowering “community champions” who in turn carry on education and awareness creation within their respective areas of abode. They mentioned that, their organisation (CEWEFIA), DAA, FoN and SNV gathering stories of interest for publication (awareness creation). They also organize community drama performances to educate the inhabitants on the disadvantages of indulging their children in CLaT.

Questions and comments dwelt mainly on what direct services to bring to the victims (e.g rescue and rehabilitation operations). The answer to this was that the SFMP was more interested in prevention but is ready to collaborate with organizations and agencies that operate in those areas by availing relevant information, sharing of experiences, networking and also assisting in building capacity of relevant community institutions and individuals.

OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION SHARED WITH THE MEDIA

This is the main information that was fed the media at the orientation program.

Methodology and processes for the Pra survey

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was employed for the assessment of the CLaT issues in the C/R. The process involved scoping visits and households survey in communities in the central region. Also key stakeholder informant interviews were conducted to gather as much as possible available information of CLaT. In all a total of 762 households were interviewed within the 35 communities (*approximately 22 households per community*).



Figure 2. Central Region



Figure 3. Map of Ghana

Stakeholders interviewed from the survey included but not limited to the following; Local Chiefs, Queenmothers, Chief fishermen, Female fishmongers, fisher folks leaders, Community Champions, opinion leaders, Assembly members, Unit Committee members,

Teachers, Social workers, etc. Also already identified households where CLaT is practiced and families identified by key informants as victims were selected and interviewed.

Scoping Visits

Scoping visits were carried out to help understand the intensity of CLaT issues in C/R and identify communities, households and actors involved in the CLaT issues or contributing to the issues in the sourced communities in the C/R.

For the scoping visits, key informants contacts were collated from the local Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC), District Assemblies and the Central Regional House of Chief.; These contacts included Chief Fishermen, Assembly members, traditional leaders and community leaders. Ten communities were visited in the scoping visits and informal conversations were held with the key informants identified in those communities. The "gossip question approach" was used during the conversation where questions such as 'have you heard people talking about CLaT in these community' and 'could you share with us households or communities that are perceived to be engaged in CLaT'? These questions brought out a lot of information from the conversations as the interviewees were made to share 'hearsay' stories. This approach was very useful to overcome interviewees' hesitation and shyness associated with CLaT surveys.

Household Survey

Household surveys were conducted in 35 identified coastal communities in the C/R and a total of 762 recommended households were interviewed. The processes for the household survey included; questionnaire development, training and orientation of field teams, pretesting of questionnaire and the household visits.

i. Questionnaire

A participatory process was used to develop a structured questionnaire. The process involved the drafting of the questions and discussions with SFMP partners and external stakeholders (CEDECOM, DSW and the Fisheries Commission in C/R). These questions were categorized under the following headings; Economic and livelihood, Child Education, Leadership, Population Health Environment, Communication and Recommendations.

ii. Training/orientation

Training and orientation was organized for the field team, Interactive PowerPoint presentation, printed notes, experience sharing and group discussions were used during the training to explain the nature of the survey, the approach and the expected output to participants.

iii. Pretesting of questionnaire

Pretesting of the questionnaire was done within coastal fishing areas of Cape Coast, where the field team interacted with households and administered (tested) the questionnaire in the Fante language. This process provided information about the duration for each interview, the challenges associated with translating the questions into the Fante language and the decoding it back into English language. This segment was largely a very useful exercise in that it gave revealed nuances and snippets of information about some of the challenges to be expected on the field. The experience gathered from the pretesting was

used to plan the household survey (i.e the pairing of the field team members, and the plotting of the number of interviews per person/community/day).

iv Interviews

The interviews involved two processes:

The **introductory session**, which involved explaining the project and the purpose of the survey to the household and a request for permission to conduct the interview; and, after the request was granted, the next process involving signing/thumb printing of the consent form by the interviewee to indicate that he/she freely volunteered the information.

Also the introduction to the interview was done in such a way that the interviewee felt comfortable to give information without much hesitation. This approach was very useful to elicit information on sensitive topics such as CLaT where the interviewee may be shy to admit or devour information. With this approach re-assurances were given to the interviewee that information given would not be used against him/her or lead to any arrest.

The **interactive conversation** was adopted whereby the person being interviewed was engaged within a friendly conversation. By this process there is no right or wrong answers. The interviewer's objective was to upload mentally and quickly put into writing as much information within the shortest possible time. For this approach, physical observations were made of the emotional, facial and physical responses and expressions during the conversation. The interview was stopped in instances where it was observed that interviewees had extreme hesitation, anger, strong emotions during the interview process. Also where the interviewee did not sign the consent forms, the interview was not conducted and the interviewee was thanked in a nice and friendly manner that he/she did not feel offended. The reason for this is that, issues of CLaT are very sensitive and people may have emotional attachments (which was demonstrated in instances), guilt or even strong support for the activity.

Definition of key terminology

During the scoping exercise informants kept on asking for the definition of 'Child Labor' and Child Trafficking. This is because in the eyes of many a community folk, it is a normal cultural practice for children to learn the family's vocations from their parents or work to support the home when necessary, even at a young age. An operational definition of:

'Illegal involvement, or clandestine migration of a child for the purpose of, and engaging him/her in exploitative work that deprives that child of his/her childhood, jeopardizing his/her future prospects as a socio-economically productive citizen''.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) definition of Child Trafficking as "*recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, and or receipt or both of a child for the purpose of exploitation,*" was critically considered in arriving at this 'operational definition'.

Images of child labor



Figure 4. The elderly working for doles of fish and grandparents keeping the fort in the absence of the youth



Figure 5. Under-age children working alongside adults on the beach



Figure 6. Children gutting fish paid them to sell



Figure 7. Pupils loitering off school hours at the beach

RECOMMENDATIONS

The situation of the prevalence of Child labor and trafficking in C/R is the result of poverty, poor inadequate resources and also inefficiency of child labor inspectors among other factors discussed earlier in this report.

Several laws have been passed by the government of Ghana on child labor and trafficking also Ghana has signed three (3) key international treaties that ban certain practices of child labor. There is also the Children's act of 1998 and the labor act of 2003, both of which address child labor in detail. Article 28 of the 1992 constitution prohibits labor considered as injurious to the health, education or development of the child. Adequate measures should therefore be put in place to implement and enforce the laws and treaties, this will contribute to addressing the issues of CLaT in Ghana.

Addressing the fundamental cause of poverty in Ghana especially in Coastal Fishing communities in the C/R is key to halting these CLaT practices. Poverty and related conditions will only contribute to a situation where poor parents who can hardly fend for themselves and their children will continue to send their under-aged children to work under unfavorable conditions.

Rigid enforcement of fisheries laws in all coastal fishing communities will contribute to sustaining the fishing livelihoods and improve the fortunes for coastal dwellers who can in turn invest income in education, quality child care and training of their children.

Responsible parenting, manageable family sizes via child birth spacing, etc. are very important to addressing the problem. Parents should also be held responsible for their children. Stakeholders including; Government, traditional leaders, CSOs, Media, private sector, etc. should support public education and sensitization to make child labor and trafficking socially unacceptable. There must also be the increase in the number of child labor and trafficking inspectors to check CLaT cases. Prosecution of CLaT cases should be strengthened to ensure that culprits are duly punished by the legal processes. Therefore a comprehensive approach to address prevention, protection and prosecution of CLaT is recommended. This approach could include an educational component to inform people about the elements of the crime of trafficking. Educational programs for stakeholders, community champions and the media to eliminate all ambiguities on CLaT. It will be helpful for all involved in the fight against CLaT to have an identical or unified set of jargon for operation (e.g. If people are not clear on the "definition" of CLaT as I understood from the surveys, it might be useful to educate them. For instance, it might be helpful to categorize the crimes of CLaT into:

1. "Actions," such as recruiting/transporting
2. "Means," such as fraud/coercion
3. "Purpose" being labor exploitation.

It will be useful for stakeholders at the grassroots especially and educate perpetrators to understand how the elements and their involvement violate national and international laws.

The problem of insufficient labor inspectors or labor inspectors not doing their work well also thwarts efforts to eliminate child labor. Better-trained and well-resourced labor inspectors must be in place to address the problem. Also a multi-sectorial approach should be adopted to address the issues of CLaT.

To eliminate child labor and to improve human capital in Ghana, the government must improve schooling and formal education. The recent school feeding program is a good step

taken by the government of Ghana to reduce child labor to some extent. The free basic school uniform given out to pupils will go a long way to reduce child labor, also reduction in the cost of schooling and expanding the School feeding program to all schools in coastal communities in C/R by government will put more children in school and reduce the burden on parents. Educational system must also be made relevant to the needs of the labor market. When the country's schooling system provides all these things, more families may decide that schooling is viable option as opposed to child labor.

With children not very interested in remaining in school or continuing beyond the first-cycle, educational facilities should be made more child-friendly and incentive-driven for teachers therein to give of their best. The Integrated approach of development through the "*Population Health and Environment*" (PHE) model should be promoted to foster inter-agency collaboration amongst the sectors. Capacity enhancement of the coastal fishing communities/Districts to plan, implement and carry out demand-driven integrated programs in health and conservation should be paid attention.

The Central Region where this survey took place in June 2015 is reputed to be the fourth poorest region in Ghana after the three Northern regions. Coupled with the resource of availability of the sea, it is not surprising that, children from this area coming from backgrounds of seething poverty end up being trafficked to engage in child labor in fishing in other areas.

The Millennium Development Goals expires in 2015. The UN system has begun efforts at determining the next development agenda. The UN has targeted 50 countries, including Ghana, for national consultations on the post MDG agenda. It is an expectation that Ghana will push the issues of children without parental care to the fore.

Clearly the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, has a responsibility of ensuring that Ghana's voice is heard in the Post-Millennium Development Goals agenda. The UN then set targets around poverty reduction, universal primary education, gender equality, reducing child mortality, and improving maternal health among others.

A few policy options are proposed as possible solutions to CLaT in the coastal fishing communities in Central Region. These include:

1. Improving access to quality basic education.
2. Implementing social protection schemes such as:
 - unconditional transfers, and
 - conditional transfers.
3. Improving access to services such as potable water, schools and clinics to reduce the time spent by children and their families in accessing them.
4. Improved child care, responsible parenting and improving family planning education and services to poor and rural communities.