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WORLD DAY
AGAINST
CHILD LABOUR

END CHILD LABOUR IN

**SUPPLY
CHAINS**



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CHILD LABOUR IN THE FISH SUPPLY CHAIN ON LAKE VOLTA, GHANA: THE TORKOR MODEL

BACKGROUND

The ILO has provided Ghana with important technical assistance, from technical support to ratify core ILO Conventions No. 182 (2000) and No. 138 (2011) to the development of the first National Action Plan (NAP) to Combat Child Labour 2009-2015, which detailed national goals to eliminate child labour and led to significant sectoral activities in a number of supply chains including palm oil, cocoa, fishing, rice, and general agriculture. The current NAP 2016-2022 builds on the first action plan and features the success of the integrated approach to combating child labour in the community of Torkor.

Kpando Torkor, or Torkor, is a community located on the eastern coast of Lake Volta in south-eastern Ghana. Lake Volta is a manmade lake covering 8,502 square kilometres. It provides

Ghana with hydro-electric power and is the start of the domestic supply chain for much of the fish consumed by surrounding communities and beyond. Fishing communities around Lake Volta employ thousands of children, who are often traded by their parents from other parts of Ghana and Togo in return for much needed cash and in the hope that their children will learn a trade.

The dangers to these children pervade all aspects of their work. Boys paddle and bail canoes, pull in nets and dive down to untangle nets from the tree stumps on the bottom of the Lake. Death by entanglement in nets and by sudden changes in weather is not uncommon. Girls traditionally process fish (gutting, smoking, drying) and carry heavy loads for long hours. Some children try to mix work and education but in practice this rarely works out.



Torkor foreshore.

ACTION AND RESULTS

The ILO partnered with the General Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU) of Ghana and the Inland Canoe Fishers' Association to combat child labour throughout the fish supply chain.¹ The partnership implemented a successful programme that applied an integrated area based approach with a strong emphasis on empowering rights holders in the rural and informal economies through building their capacity to organize themselves to improve occupational safety and health and productivity and to negotiate with local authorities for better public services.

An effective monitoring system with direct communication to law enforcement officers is one of the major changes in the Torkor community. Four surveillance cameras have been set up to monitor activity undertaken by children on the lake and its shores. Child labourers have been replaced on the Lake with trained adult divers, who have been equipped with a safety boat. The divers' training and remuneration is under the auspices of the national youth employment scheme, which provided the train-the-trainer programme with the expectation that the community would in turn deliver the same training to 15-20 other communities along the lake. Another important result is the attitudinal change achieved through outreach to and sensitisation of community chiefs and religious leaders that influence the community's activities.

Other key elements of the Torkor programme are:

1. **the creation of "bridge" schools that target child labourers who have only partially completed compulsory schooling** to ensure that they make up the delay in their education as well as address the adverse social and psychological effects of having been in child labour. Reducing these effects helps children to re adapt to being a child in the community and education incentives, such as free school meals and sports activities, significantly increases the likelihood that they will stay in school and out of child labour.
2. **the installation of a public address system that raises the community's awareness and sensitivity to child labour.** On market days, messages are broadcast over the system stating authorities' zero tolerance of child labour and the penal consequences if detected.
3. **the establishment of women's fish smoking and processing cooperatives** that address the important social and economic role of women. In addition to this, GAWU is working to raise the level of women's participation in its workers' training sessions from 30% to 50%.



GAWU Office, Torkor.

¹ Funding for these activities was provided by Irish Aid.

The success and validity of this model has quickly become known far beyond the borders of Ghana and GAWU has received many requests for advice on the replication of the model. Even though the project led by the ILO has finished, the workers' unions in the area are continuing important activities in Torkor to systematically reduce child labour. These activities ensure that, in addition to children being removed from child labour, further recruitment of children under the minimum age is stopped and that the tasks of those over the minimum age are not hazardous by nature or by way of the conditions in which they are undertaken.



Children at school in Torkor.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- ➡ Simple removal of children from child labour does not work. It is important to ensure that systems are in place to ensure that children are not displaced into another form of child labour or worse, into a situation of the worst forms of child labour.
- ➡ Where parents are present, they must be involved in the process of eliminating child labour to provide not only support to the child but also to the culture change in the community of which they are part.
- ➡ Activities must complement (not replace) government efforts. Efforts to tackle child labour in supply chains should seek to strengthen the capacity of governments at all levels (local, regional and national), and employers' and workers' organizations to protect people.
- ➡ Raising the capacity of workers to represent themselves and increasing their agency is an important step towards sustainable solutions.



Children at school in Torkor.

For more information visit www.ilo.org/childlabour