



PRESS RELEASE ON WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR, 12TH JUNE 2020

“COVID-19: PROTECT CHILDREN FROM CHILD LABOUR, NOW MORE THAN EVER!”

The celebration of this year’s World Day Against Child Labour (WDACL) which falls on this day, Friday, June 12, has coincided with an era where COVID-19 has plunged the world into deepening crisis arising out of income loss and economic insecurity among families.

The present crisis in terms of magnitude is unprecedented in scope and in scale. Though it may be too early to count the total cost as far as Africa is concerned since the worst scenarios may yet to be recorded, the situation in several advanced economies where there have been huge economic losses give an idea of the extent to which its spiral effect is going to impact the less developed countries.

Relating the current situation with Africa at the Centre, the relevance of an African proverb which literally translates in Akan language: “Sɛ gua bɔ bum a, ohiani na ne de3 yera” to wit, If pandemonium breaks out in a market place, it is the poor trader who loses.

Truly in all global economic crises, it is Africa which bears the brunt most because of the over-reliance on the advanced world. This reality has again come to play. COVID-19 has worsened the economic plight of developing countries. So far a key area where the repercussion has become more significant is in education and on health.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that “the global economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 crisis including massive global losses is likely to increase rates of child labour.” This particular challenge gives the **Child Research for Action and Development Agency (CRADA Group)** a big headache. This is because in our own circumstances as a developing country, when the school system suffers a setback, the direct effect is for children to be engaged in labour and its Worst Forms especially in the rural communities. Invariably, we therefore expect the worst to happen even though ILO tells us that globally, 152 million children are already engaged in child labour- that is before the COVID-19 pandemic with 73 million forced to do hazardous work.

The big question is, **“How do we mitigate the impact of the pandemic so children would be adequately protected from Child Labour now or more than ever”** as the theme for this year WDACL indicates. Indeed, WHO has noted that the “COVID-19 has highlighted the grave weaknesses in many countries protection for children, including inadequate health care and social protection.”

Of course, this is the time to pause and ask whether our government, like the rest of the developing world who have ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Child Labour

have indeed taken immediate and effective actions to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour. In Ghana one can say that gradually we are making a headway. Recently at Kwabena Akwa, in the Atwima Mponua District of the Ashanti Region precisely on March 9, 2020 there was the National Launch of the **Protocol and Guidelines for Establishing Child Labour Free Zones (CLFZs) Manual**. Since then CRADA Group which played a key role in putting together the document has been en route to ensure effective implementation of the Manual.

Obviously we need to create more Child Labour Free Zones as documented in the **National Plan of Action Phase II** which aims at eliminating worst forms of Child Labour in Ghana by 2021 and towards achieving target 8.7 of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG, Target 8.7) by 2025.

Ghana has already benefited a lot from some international partnerships and collaborations with especially Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Deloitte Japan, Action against Child Exploitation (ACE) Japan and other multi-lateral and Bi-lateral Agencies and NGOs/CSOs to meet some of the objectives in reducing Child labour but more still needs to be done. The international collaboration notwithstanding, UNICEF in a report in 2017 concluded that one in every four children in the world's poorest countries is engaged in child labour. In Ghana it is estimated that 21.8% of persons aged 5-17 years are employed in Child Labour with most of these found in rural areas, particularly in cocoa growing areas. This is expected to be compounded the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is in view of this, that on an occasion such as this, we cast our minds back to look at what we have not as a country, done appropriately and juxtapose our finding with the new challenges that have befallen us, courtesy the novel COVID-19 pandemic. But CRADA is still of the view that, if the Protocol and Guidelines launched at Kwabena Akwa would be widely utilized by government, donor partners and NGOs we still can make Ghana a Child Labour Free Nation despite the huge impact of COVID-19 on our Economic life and well-being as a nation. CRADA will continue with our public sensitization and awareness creation efforts and try to mobilize the political will and resources **(thanks to ACE Japan, Deloitte Japan, JICA, Japan Embassy, Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR), Child Labour Unit (CLU), ILO, GAWU, and others)** to effect the needed change.



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