



PRESS RELEASE

WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR – JUNE 12, 2021

“Take stock, honour your pledge, Stop Child Labour in Ghana now!”

According to the United Nations-International Labour Organizations (UN-ILO) Report on child labour, there are 152million children engaged in work that are defined as hazardous or harmful to the health, education, and total development of these children, globally. The ILO Convention No. 182 defines the worst form of child labour that should be a priority for member countries to address immediately. These include

1. children engaged in work similar to slavery, trafficking, serfdom, debt bondage and the use of children in armed conflict.
2. Children engaged in prostitution and transactional sex and pornography
3. children in drug and illicit drug peddling.
4. hazardous work, which is work by its nature and circumstances likely to harm the health and safety morals of the child

In Ghana, 1.9million children between the ages of 5 and 17 are engaged in economic activities that impede their education, health and development. This is called Child Labour. The 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana describes child labour as a violation of the fundamental human right of children below 18years in such conditions that the state should protect. In an attempt to address the situation in Ghana, legal frameworks and policies have been developed including the current National Plan of Action (NPA) II, which served as a guiding document for the development of the Protocols and Guidelines of the Child Labour Free Zone (CLFZ) Manual

Over the years, CRADA has complemented the efforts and interventions of the government to eliminate child labour through a number of programmes, projects, policy recommendations training and research presentations including the celebration of many UN events. One notable project, the Sustainable Management of cocoa farms and Improved Life via Education in Eliminating Child Labour (SMILE) Ghana Project adopts a shared responsibility approach to create a long-lasting change in the lives of vulnerable children from marginalized families to fulfill and sustain the four (4) basic principles of MODEL, IMPACT, SUSTAINABILITY and REPLICATION. The Project has immensely contributed to support and effectively sustained actions, systems and procedures to address the worst forms of child labour elimination process, holistically, in communities through the establishment of functional Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) with high yielding and impactful results

As we commemorate this year’s Word Day Against Child Labour (WDAKL), we advocate for continuous cooperation from cooperate Ghana, the entire citizenry, including families to scale up our combined efforts towards eliminating child labour and help achieve the Sustainable development Goal (SDG) 8.7. This means the issue of child labour, which is of particular interest to Ghana because it is common at the cocoa growing areas, cannot be separated from the major challenges confronting the world. Indeed, there have been persistent calls to UN member states “to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery, human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and

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by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. Thus, eliminating child labour has become part of the UN' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and this has imposed an obligation on the world to end by 2025 (at all cost?). Ahead of meeting 2025 deadline, is the UN unanimous resolution declaring 2021 as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. The resolution enjoins ILO and its partners worldwide to take the lead in its implementation and from the perspectives of ILO, issues of poverty, unemployment, and unfair exclusion results in economic harm or social ostracism.”

In Ghana, children being used as labourers especially, in the cocoa growing areas are counted in the thousands and Ghana is under international pressure to deal with the issue as it affects the cocoa industry. Fortunately, a collaboration deal has been struck with neighbouring Cote D'Ivoire to ensure that the two countries who are the world's two cocoa producers have joined forces to end all forms of child labour to sustain the cocoa industry. The fight to win the battle against Child Labour and its Worst Forms, by all account, is a daunting task and the question has always been asked: **What Can we all do to meet the 2025 deadline to end it?**

The reality is that meeting the ILO's expectation to see “parents at work and children at school” by 2025 may not be crowned with a success story expected in four years. It is clear that the commitment being shown in meeting the ILO's expectation is grinding slowly. In fact, at a recent meeting in Accra for stakeholders working on the creation of Child Labour Free Zones (CLFZ's) in Ghana to measure progress of the framework being developed were told that “Ghana is losing the fight against the eradication of child labour”. The Honorable Minister of Employment and Labour Relations who was addressing Civil Society Organizations and other stakeholders at the validation of protocols and guidelines on the establishment of Child Labour Free Zones in Accra disclosed that, “We (Ghanaians) are losing the fight and it is an indictment on everyone, especially children who are at the receiving end”. Hon. Ignatius Baffour Awuah told the bemused gathering including representatives of some foreign donor organizations that there was “Insufficient efforts to sustain the fight.”

The Minister's explanation was that, “It is either our efforts are not enough or we are pretending to be working and the problem keeps surfacing and escalating,” This was his explanation. The Employment Minister's advice to stakeholders in the fight to eliminate child labour was for them to sit-up and carry-out interventions that would have bigger impacts to help reduce the occurrence and not the contrary”.

We are in 2021 and by the end of last year, the worst forms of child labour per the ILO Convention No. 182 in the cocoa sector of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire would have been reduced by 70 percent. Now to the crucial question: What has made it difficult for both government and Non-Governmental Organizations and their partners who are playing key collaborative roles to minimize child labour to make significant inroads? Somehow I agree with what the Employment and Labour Relations Minister said: “It is either our efforts are not enough or we are pretending to be working and the problem keeps surfacing”.

I have directly been involved in planning various strategies with stakeholders in the fight against child labour both on the drawing board and during conferences at home in Ghana and abroad. Besides, I have been in the bush as part of CRADA's outreach programmes in fulfilling our core mandate of supporting the government of Ghana's drive to build and improve the welfare of all children and young people, particularly those in the rural and urban most disadvantaged communities. The ultimate goal is to help them become more responsive, more interactive and more relevant to the socio economic realities and national aspiration.

CRADA is engaged in this social work because of our believe that “All children have the right to be protected against any form of exploitation and that children have the right to grow up within a loving, caring and enabling family environment and not working on commercial and cocoa plantations. Regrettably, I must admit that “We are losing the fight” as the Minister rightly pointed out. The reasons are as follows: We still have a long way to go in meeting the objectives set to achieve the sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7 because of these challenges: Remediation services which would ensure that education and livelihood services are extended to the child labour prone communities have still not been rendered thus creating a huge gap in meeting the aspirations of the key stakeholders. Also mobilizing a wide array of actors to sustain awareness and prosecute offenders of the law seems not to be working.

As part of the protective measures, those of legal working age and engaged in hazardous labour and battling with occupational safety have to be withdrawn and provided with safe and acceptable work that is in conformity with both national laws and international labour standards but this has also not been done. In the case of children who are victims of trafficking, they are yet to be provided with social protection services in the form of rehabilitation and reintegration in the communities where they live.

I am deeply convinced that the Child Labour Free Zone (CFLZ) creation whose document is in the testing stage with funding from JICA, and interventions being carried out with Consulting Agency IC Net, Action against Child Exploitation (ACE) all in Japan and its implementing partners, the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations/Child Labour Unit (MELRs/CLU) and CRADA, a local NGO is rolling-out more commitment on the part of all the stakeholders to up their game. I am further persuaded that since the government cannot make adequate provision to deal with all the challenges, the support of NGO’s, Industry Players and other partners who are engaged in field activities to end child labour and its related issues has to be forthcoming. Donor support for eliminating Child labour or child trafficking should not be limited to only the few partners.

As we celebrate the WDAFL 2021, the way forward is to ensure that children are kept away from child labour and have access to free, quality education. This opens up a myriad of possibilities for them to define their own futures, to find decent work and to change their communities for the better. Again, we should take note that the global community is not enthused at finding millions of children trapped in the worst forms of child labour/trafficking situations particularly in the cocoa producing countries such as Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire. The phenomenon is entrenched and as key stakeholders, we have an obligation imposed by the UN; The obligation is rooted in its statement which reads; “Achieving commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end child labour, forced labour and human trafficking requires that governments, business, the financial sector and civil society take strong actions to address the root causes and determinants of these human rights violations. While global supply chains have the potential to generate growth, employment, skill development and technological transfer, they have also been linked to human rights violations and abuses.”



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