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## GHANA

### Universal Periodic Review – 28<sup>th</sup> session, November 2017

Joint submission by the Ghana NGO Coalition for the Rights of the Child (GNCRC), Defence for Children International-Ghana (DCI-Ghana) and Plan International-Ghana, with the technical support of Defence for Children International (DCI) and ECPAT International

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**About Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC) / [www.gncrc.net](http://www.gncrc.net)**

GNCRC was established in 1996, and is composed of 65 NGOs and community-based organisations spread in all 10 regions of Ghana. Recently, GNCRC coordinated submissions to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2015) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2016).

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**About Defence for Children International – Ghana (DCI-Ghana) / [www.dci-ghana.org](http://www.dci-ghana.org)**

Defence for Children International – Ghana (DCI-Ghana) was established in 1996 and contributed to the creation of the GNCRC. Its work focuses mainly on violence against children, juvenile justice and the empowerment of girls and young women.

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*\*This report is submitted as part of the Girls Advocacy Alliance programme.*



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## Executive Summary

1. This report is presented by the Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRG), Defence for Children International – Ghana (DCI-Ghana) and Plan International – Ghana, with the technical support of international offices of Defence for Children International (DCI) and ECPAT International.
2. This report provides an overview of past and recent developments in child rights protection in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and other human rights instruments, and presents recommendations for the effective realization and protection of children's rights and welfare in Ghana. The report captures inputs from relevant stakeholders, non-government organizations and children, and focuses particularly on the situation of girls and young women.
3. In accordance with its legal obligation to protect the human rights of children, Ghana has adopted several legislative, policy and institutional measures. There is however a stark gap between these measures and practice as children continue to suffer violations of their rights. This is attributable to the State Party's under-prioritization of children's issues, reflected in the consistent low national budget allocation<sup>i</sup> and the absence of inter-ministerial coordination of child rights issues, inadequate human and institutional capacity, inadequate data which affects the design and implementation of targeted intervention programmes, weak knowledge and enforcement of laws and measures on children's rights especially in underserved communities.
4. There has been a comprehensive framework adopted by the Ghanaian government to be in accordance with international law on children's rights; however there continues to be a disconnect between legislation and implementation.
5. Government and Civil Society examine three general principles through discussion of non-discrimination, specifically towards females, the sensitivity of institutions to the best interests of the child, and the recognition of child participation. The civic rights and freedoms of children and the cultural practices affecting these are addressed with the data collected identifying urban areas as having the highest levels of child abuse and neglect. In this report attention is brought on issues relating to child sexual exploitation (CSE)<sup>ii</sup>, child marriage, violence against girls and access to education and decent employment for girls. Other relevant issues of interest such as teenage pregnancy, adolescent reproductive health, drugs, access to education, child labour and juvenile justice, are also evaluated on their ability to protect children from exploitation and abuse. This report concludes by strongly emphasizing the need for a coordinated, self-sustaining child protection system in Ghana.

## Country context

6. National efforts to implement child rights include the promulgation of the Constitution 1992, the Children's Act 1998 (Act 560), Juvenile Justice Act 2003 (Act 653), Human Trafficking Act 2005 (Act 694) Domestic Violence Act 2007 (Act 732) and other policy development as well as improvement of service delivery on children's rights (SPR, paragraphs 7, 8, 9-13).
7. Notwithstanding the existence of these measures, children's rights are often violated in Ghana. In 2013, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs was re-designated as the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) with a wider mandate. Although the MoGCSP is responsible for the promotion and protection of children's rights, it lacks a clear mandate for inter-ministerial coordination of child rights/welfare related activities. The expansion of the mandate of the MoGCSP also poses a risk of diverting or reducing attention from children's rights to the numerous equally important mandates of the Ministry.
8. Although the State Party continues to strive to educate the citizenry on child rights, there is limited coverage of the various steps adopted. Discussions in the media are often not accessible or tailored to the needs of underserved communities or vulnerable groups. Also, child content in the media is low as daily discussions are dominated by topics other than child related matters. Periodic events like the International Day of Women, the day of the African Child, Child Labour days, and International day of Girl Child among others has created a platform for discussions on child rights and also the days are commemorated with events mostly at the national and regional levels.

## Priority Child Rights Issues

9. Four issues were identified among the multitudes of vulnerabilities faced by children as being the most serious and urgent issues that require action at all levels but especially by the government of Ghana. These issues are:
  - **Violence against children, in particular girls and women**
  - **Child marriage**
  - **Child Sexual Exploitation (hereinafter "CSE") and CSE in in the context of Travel and Tourism (hereinafter "SECTT")<sup>iii</sup>**
  - **Access to education and decent employment, in particular for girls and young women**

## [VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN, IN PARTICULAR GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN](#)

*In reference to UPR recommendations 123.20 (corporal punishment) 125.13, 125.19-21 (gender-based violence), 125.23-26 (domestic violence), 125.30 (protection of victims)*

10. Violence against children (VAC), in particular against girls, is an issue of growing concern. The number of cases reported to the DOVVSU of the Ghana Police Service has increased significantly from 1,128 in 2002 to 2,157 in 2013<sup>iv</sup>. It is not clear if this increase is due to higher incidents of abuse, or higher rates of reporting. Yet, recent surveys suggest that many cases go unreported and unpunished<sup>v</sup>.
11. While the government has made relentless efforts to curb down child abuse and violence, a recent study by DCI-Ghana<sup>vi</sup> has shown that socio-cultural aspects and poverty continue to be major causes of violence against children. Culturally-rooted practices such as Female Genital

Mutilation (FGM), child marriage, Trokosi and witch crafting, continue to put children's rights and well-being at risk, while supposedly safe environments, such as schools and homes, remain settings where most acts of abuse and violence occur. Poverty has equal importance in the occurrence of violence and often put children at risk of exploitation, whether in the form of child labour, child trafficking and sexual exploitation.

12. Corporal punishment remains a problem in many settings. As shown in the 2016 DCI-Ghana study<sup>vii</sup>, physical violence often continues to be rooted in cultural norms and perceived/interpreted by perpetrators as a punitive or deterrent measure rather than a form of violence against the child, hence making it socially acceptable. Moreover, in the home, corporal punishment is often a primary form of domestic violence to which both children and women are exposed. For example, findings from the 2011 MICS survey show that 70% of rural women aged 15 – 49 believe a husband is justified to beat his wife<sup>viii</sup>. In the home, in schools, in day care and in alternative care settings, corporal punishment remains lawful, in particular under provisions allowing “reasonable” and “justifiable” correction in article 13(2) of the Children's Act 1998.
13. The prevalence of sexual abuse and violence, particularly affecting girls and young women, is highly concerning: more than half of VAC cases reported to the DOVVSU in 2013 concerned defilement. According to DCI-Ghana's 2016 study<sup>ix</sup>, child respondents had experienced at least one of the following forms of sexual violence: indecent assault (39.4%), defilement (17.9%), rape (8%) and incest (5.4%). Such forms of sexual violence particularly occur in environments that are supposed to be safe for the child, such as schools and homes<sup>x</sup>. 67% of students interviewed by Human Rights Advocacy Center in 2014<sup>xi</sup> indicated that sexual comments regularly take place in their school, while 49% reported sexual touching and 19% reported defilement or rape, marking an increase from a previous study conducted by Plan Ghana in 2009. Moreover, the study found that 61% of students did not know where and who to report cases of gender-based violence (GBV), while 63% of teachers stipulated that there was a reporting procedure in place, yet not functional.<sup>xii</sup> Underreporting and stigma associated to sexual violence are major causes for concern in Ghana due to ignorance, cost, inadequate facilities and resources and delayed period resolutions.<sup>xiii</sup>
14. Acts of sexual gender-based violence (SGBV), limited knowledge on sexual and reproductive rights and inadequate access to related services have a direct incidence on the high rates of teenage pregnancy throughout the country, and subsequent high numbers of illegal and unsafe abortions.
15. Psycho-social and recovery services are inadequate and virtually non-existent in most parts of the country. State agencies like DOVVSU and DSW are supposed to provide such services but lack the resources that would enable them to fulfil their mandate and other service providers, mostly NGOs, are unable to meet the needs of all children victims of violence. Moreover, service ineffective coordination among the different actors and efficient referral mechanisms
16. Victims of (sexual) violence continue to bear the costs of medical examination that prove crucial not only for their physical and psychological recovery but also to enable them to access justice. While NGOs like DCI-Ghana provide victims with legal aid, their actions cannot cover the needs of all victims and most victims are still unable to access justice and seek redress. In this regard, and taking into account other issues mentioned above, investigation procedures and subsequent prosecution of offenders remain a major challenge, leading to a high rate of impunity.

17. Witchcraft beliefs and accusations against children and/or their caregivers, in particular mothers, constitute a major form of violence against children in Ghana. These children and/or mothers seek refuge in witch camps, often resulting in the separation of children from their mothers. Children are often teased and treated like outcasts, leading to school dropouts and social exclusion, while some have to assume economic responsibilities to cater for themselves and/or their mothers living in witch camps. Those who are unable to cater for themselves and/or for whom the family refuse and/or is not able to assume responsibility for, often end up in witch camps with their mothers. While government's responses focus on closing down witch camps and reintegrating the alleged witches (mostly adults) into society, more efforts need to be taken to address the trauma, stigmatisation and potential social exclusion of children affected by the practice. In addition, children of widowed parents might be exposed to widowhood rites, especially when the surviving parent is accused of causing the death of the other, causing trauma and stigmatization, and in certain cases deprivation of inheritance.
18. Despite a 2013 UNICEF report indicating a positive decline in the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), it still persists today. This is particularly true among rural populations of the Upper East, Upper West and some parts of the central and eastern Regions of Ghana, where it is estimated to concern over 80% of girls and women. The cultural factor plays a crucial role and shows that it takes much more than legislation to effectively eradicate such harmful practice.

**To end Violence against Children, in particular Girls and Young Women, the Government of Ghana should:**

- a. Allocate sufficient financial and human resources to agencies involved in child protection, such as the DSW, DOVVSU, etc. and to enacted policies, such as the Child and Family Welfare Policy.
- b. Take practical measures to ensure access to justice for all victims of violence, including by ensuring that victims do not have bear the costs of medical examination, and allocate sufficient resources to the Police and Justice Department to enable investigation, prosecution and punishment of offenders.
- c. Strengthen collaboration among stakeholders to achieve effective coordination in the provision of child protection services by promoting the use of the M-Friend<sup>44</sup> (Most-at-Risk Friend) concept<sup>xiv</sup> to help deliver prompt services to victims and children at risk, as well as by ensuring that District Assemblies take the necessary steps and measures to live up to their obligations as stated under the Section 16 of the Children's Act 560<sup>xv</sup>
- d. Establish centres and strengthen the capacities of existing centres that provide psycho-social, rehabilitation and reintegration services for victims of violence, with the effective involvement of local communities and relevant civil society organisations
- e. Conduct, together with all relevant stakeholders, awareness-raising campaigns to educate the population on the various forms of violence against children, including those emanating from cultural practices and beliefs, and on the means for addressing such violence
- f. Support existing child-led initiatives such children's clubs, girls' clubs, peer educators' clubs, etc. in churches/mosques and communities to engage boys and girls and empower them to be active agents of change to end violence against children.
- g. Expedite the removal of provisions allowing for "reasonable" and "justifiable" punishment in the Children's Act 1998 to ensure the full and effective prohibition of corporal punishment and other forms of violence in all settings
- h. Identify gaps in the current legal and policy system to protect children from violence and strengthen law enforcement and harmonise legislations and policies on child protection

- i. Identify gaps in existing legislation and policies, and promote the collection and analysis of data emanating from both formal and informal child protection systems for policy reformulation and implementation
- j. Promote, support and strengthen policies and programmes on gender equality
- k. Support families and economically empower parents to enable them to properly support and protect their children. Unemployed parents, especially women, should be supported to engage in sustainable economic activities through skills training and the provision of capital resources to help them adequately provide for their children.

## **CHILD MARRIAGE**

*In reference to UPR recommendations 125.10, 125.27, 125.40, 125.44*

19. In February 2016, the government of Ghana launched the African Union’s campaign to end child marriage<sup>xvi</sup>. While recognizing efforts made by the governments, child marriage is still rampant and has been identified as a major issue of concern by children<sup>xvii</sup>. The national prevalence of child marriage has not declined but remained significantly stable between 2011 and 2014 at a rate of 27%. However, regional trends show a significant widening of the gap between the Northern and Central/Southern regions of the country. Recent data on child marriage in Ghana reveals that Upper East Region (39.2%), Western Region (36.7%), and Upper West Region (36.3%) have the highest prevalence rates in the country. Between 2006 and 2011, the following regions have seen considerable increase in prevalence: Eastern Region (+ 6.6%), Central Region (+8.3%) and Western Region (+ 9.3%).
20. Child marriage continues to disproportionately affect girls over boys: among boys aged 20-24 years, 2% were married before the age of 18, compared to 20.9% of girls (1 out of 5)<sup>xviii</sup>. Girls from rural areas are twice as likely to become child brides as girls in urban areas: for girls living in the three Northern Regions of Ghana, this percentage increases to 34% (1 out of 3 girls).<sup>xix</sup> Moreover, abductions of girls by their suitors, without prior notice, continue to occur on a regular basis. The suitor would subsequently inform the girl’s family that their child is now married to the suitor, and necessary traditional rites to finalize the marriage follow. Children in Ghana indicated that this practice is rampant.
21. Despite formal prohibition of child marriage in national legislation, including the Children’s Act (Act 560)<sup>xx</sup>, there is inconsistency between formal and customary laws: the Islamic law CAP 129 permits marriage for girls under 18 when they are menstruating and/or when reaching age 16, the age of sexual consent. So effectively, child marriage is permitted by Islamic laws in Ghana<sup>xxi</sup>. Moreover, it is noteworthy that majority of child marriage cases are not reported to the relevant authorities, leaving the practice a concealed one and where they are reported the responses are woefully inadequate and or the perpetrators are not apprehended and prosecuted.

### **To end child marriage the Government of Ghana should:**

- a. Develop a strategy and an operational National Action Plan to combat child marriage.
- b. Amend Islamic law CAP 129 to harmonize it with the Children’s Act 1998 (Act 560), the Domestic Violence Act and the Juvenile Justice Act in order to ensure that child marriage is strictly prohibited and criminalized.

- c. Put in place a comprehensive response mechanism for victims of child marriage as well as girls at risk of being subject to child marriage in order to ensure that they receive adequate support and care.
- d. Support existing child-led initiatives such as children's clubs, girls' clubs, peer educators' clubs, etc. in churches/mosques and communities to engage boys and girls and empower them to be active agents of change to end child marriage.
- e. Conduct, together with all relevant stakeholders, awareness-raising and education programmes targeting families, community and religious leaders, and all other relevant stakeholders, on the negative consequences of child marriage and on the means available to effectively address the issue.
- f. Engage with the media and ensure adequate training of staff to enable them to increase coverage on child marriage and report in a human right and gender sensitive manner, in particular with the aim to change perceptions on child marriage within the wider public.
- g. Increase generation and use of data on adolescent girls for advocacy, programming, learning and tracking progress.

### CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE) AND CSE IN THE CONTEXT OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM (SECTT)

*In reference to UPR recommendations 125.29, 125.46-48, 123.1-3, 125.1-2, 123.5*

- 22. CSE is when a child takes part in a sexual activity in exchange for something (e.g. gain or benefit or even the promise of such) from a third party<sup>xxiii</sup>, including exploitation of children in prostitution<sup>xxiii</sup>, child pornography<sup>xxiv</sup>, trafficking of children for sexual purposes, CSE in the context of travel and tourism and child marriage. CSE constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children, and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery. A recent study conducted by DCI-Ghana<sup>xxv</sup> has shown that 18.1% of child respondents had been sexually exploited.
- 23. According to ECPAT International<sup>xxvi</sup>, CSE in the context of travel and tourism includes both international and domestic travel. Offenders may be preferential travelling with the deliberate purpose of having sex with children or situational. Power imbalances and abuse of power often play a critical role while arrangements are facilitated through the Internet. It is important to distinguish the manifestation from other CSE manifestations as the role of the travel and tourism industry, Internet and the (international) mobility form specific entry points for policy and action.
- 24. To align with international standards, Ghana acceded the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons but has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.
- 25. The Ghanaian Criminal Code (Act 29) prohibits a range of sexual offences. There is however no adequate legislation to address sexual exploitation involving children who voluntarily engage in prostitution. Classification of the offence under any of the existent sexual offences obscures the peculiar circumstances of the case and creates a missed opportunity to adequately address the issue<sup>xxvii</sup>. However, classification of the offence is not sufficient, enforcement of the legal framework is paramount, and is currently not happening due to lack of resources, leading to under reporting and impunity for offenders.

26. CSE victims have inadequate access to social services due to lack of resources. Service provision is therefore generally of poor quality, not available for hard to reach children in rural communities, with limited logistical capacity and social mobilization. Support services for victims or children at risk consist of counselling, social protection, social integration, skills training, advocacy and referral; however in practice some of these services are virtually non-existent.<sup>xxviii</sup>
27. Besides state protection, the importance of the social support that the extended family system provides its members, particularly in periods of pronounced need. Decreased levels of social cohesion and the weakening of support systems provided by extended families, lacking support networks (in cases such as the imprisonment of parents) and the poor quality of social services, contribute to the vulnerability of children.<sup>xxix</sup>
28. Country research in Ghana shows that many actors, including hotels, in the travel and tourism sector do not have official child protection policies nor campaign visually against SECTT. A few operators interviewed however said that they do make their child protection policies known to the customers verbally. Doing so involves prohibiting children less than 18 years from being accepted as customers and requesting adults accompanied by children to complete forms as evidence that they came in accompanied by a child.<sup>xxx</sup>
29. The unrestricted use of technology has increased children's risk to sexual abuse. Platforms like *Whatsapp* and *Facebook* create avenues where preferential offenders identify and connect to child victims. During the period under review, numerous media reports were made about children being lured into sexual relationships and child pornography via the internet. The State Party is yet to devise measures to protect children from internet based abuses.

**To end CSE and CSE in the context of travel and tourism, the Government of Ghana should<sup>xxxi</sup>:**

- a. Identify gaps in the current legal and policy system to protect children from CSE and SECTT and introduce higher penalties for child sex offenders.
- b. Collect disaggregated data on CSE and SECTT to better inform policy makers.
- c. Raise awareness, educate and sensitise stakeholders and the general public on SECTT, while striving to actively involve the travel and tourism sector in the reporting and prevention of SECTT.
- d. Channel revenue received from touristic regions and tourism-related activities towards service providers DSW, DOVVSU, etc. in those regions to enable them to effectively protect children from any negative consequences of the associated influx of tourists to these areas.
- e. Make resources available to local actors to help combat SECTT effectively and involve traditional authorities to review the practice of exposing children to visitors without adequate monitoring and plan for the protection of children from SECTT during celebration of cultural festivals.
- f. Establish and fund a hotline service, sufficiently staffed and trained, 24 hours available, with a broadly published number and toll free.
- g. Support existing child-led initiatives such as children's clubs, girls' clubs, peer educators' clubs, etc. in churches/mosques and communities to engage boys and girls and empower them to be active in their own protection from sexual exploitation.
- h. Work with the National Media Commission to ensure that the media, particularly the national media, prioritize the welfare of children and children related issues over money by taking off

advertises that are not child-friendly such as those alcohol and condoms and other sex-related products.

- i. Deny entry to travelling child sex offenders when notified by INTERPOL.

### ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND DECENT EMPLOYMENT, IN PARTICULAR FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

*In reference to UPR recommendations 125.14, 125.76-83 (education), 125.65 (employment) and 125.51-56 (child labour)*

30. The right to education is one of the most essential rights for the upbringing and development of children to reach their full potential to take advantage of opportunities in society. In Ghana, the right to education is established in the Constitution, in Section 8 of the Children's Act, and in the Education Act 2008, thereby guaranteeing free, compulsory universal basic education to every person.
31. The School Feeding Programme introduced in 2004 and the Education Capitation Grant, introduced in 2005 and expanded to all schools nationwide in 2006, aimed at improving enrolment and retention respectively by providing children with a daily meal at school and by providing schools with grants to cover tuition and other levies that were previously paid by households. A major challenge of the School Feeding Programme has been the inconsistent flow of educational capitation grant from the Ministry of Finance for distribution to the caterers in charge of preparing food for the children. The government budgets a paltry 40 pesewas per pupil per day hardly satisfy the nutritional needs of a growing child. This insignificant amount of money compromises the quality of food prepared to feed hundreds of children. Report from the media on July 2013 indicated that about 5,000 caterers all over the country had not been paid since the beginning of the year 2013 of which many children of school going age including girls are unable to attend school.
32. Recent data suggest that achieving universal primary education seems a near hope in the country: the net enrolment rate has steadily increased since 2004 and reached 91.1% in 2015.<sup>xxxii</sup> However, gross enrolment in Junior High School level stood at 80.5 percent in 2011/2012, with a net enrolment of 46.1% for both academic years, thereby raising questions of retention. This entails that the highest level of education attained by a significant number of children across Ghana is primary school. Junior and Senior High School graduates also face difficulties to take up further education and training, either because of limited and/or costly opportunities, lack of information or weak performance, and often end up working in low productive informal jobs.
33. Despite education playing a fundamental role in determining individuals' ability to access decent labour opportunities, education attainment in the country is extremely low, and with large gender and rural-urban inequalities. In rural areas, only 29% of women are literate compared to 52% of men: 71% of rural women did not attend primary education, while the share of men and women with secondary education is 13% and 3% respectively<sup>xxxiii</sup>. Access to education in rural regions is particularly hampered by higher costs of delivering the courses: according to UNESCO, vocational courses in rural regions can be 20 times more expensive in rural schools than in urban schools. Literacy is low and even lower in rural areas and Northern

regions of the country. Disparities between men and women exist, although progress towards parity is apparent among the younger generation.

34. Girls and young women are also underrepresented in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The TVET system is highly gender-segregated, in part due to a legacy of gender-neutral research, policy, planning, monitoring and budgets that have allowed such segregation to become the normality. Girls and women too often cluster in areas such as cosmetology where pay is low and markets are saturated. Private enterprises offering training for girls are profit entities and charge very high rates that most girls cannot afford. The cost of passing out as an apprentice has become increasingly expensive.
35. Presently, the structure of the economy remains highly informal, with a shift in the country's national output composition from agriculture to low-value service activities in the informal sector. Statistics show that slowly more Ghanaian women are getting into paid jobs in addition to their work at home. However, women's participation in the labour force is concentrated in the lower echelons of economic activity. They predominantly work in the informal sector in jobs labelled as 'vulnerable employment' which is characterized by inadequate earnings, limited basic safety services, social protection coverage or other benefits. It is estimated that 73% of the female workforce is self-employed<sup>xxxiv</sup>, however making them more likely to fall under the low earnings classification. Girls and young women also experience great difficulties in obtaining credit, as they are often considered as financial risks because of their perceived socio-economic status within society. Without loans or other financial options, girls and women cannot buy land or other assets, meaning that they are forced to financially rely upon their relatives. If a relative cannot or will not support her, then she must support herself. This also causes pressure on the women to marry early and for financial reasons.
36. In light of the various difficulties to access education and decent work opportunities, children continue to be caught in some forms of child labour, in particular artisanal and small scale mining: 29.8% of children interviewed by DCI-Ghana indicated that they had experienced child labour. While child labour is explicitly prohibited in the Children's Act 1998, a number of factors enumerated in this report directly impact the effective implementation of the law.

**To enhance access to education and decent employment, in particular for girls and young women, the Government of Ghana should:**

- a. Prioritize and substantially increase the budgetary allocations in the education and social sectors.
- b. Strengthen efforts to remove barriers to secondary and higher education, as well as TVET, for all children, particularly focusing on the large gender and rural-urban inequalities.
- c. Take targeted measures to ensure that girls and young women have de facto equal access to all levels of education, including by eliminating the direct and indirect costs of schooling, providing incentives for parents to send their daughters to school and building appropriate facilities that makes schools safe environments for girls and young women.
- d. Engage with the private sector to create decent work opportunities for adolescent girls and young women, and support civil society organisations, women organizations, youth-led and child-led organisations already engaging in such activities.
- e. Engage the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations to publicize youth employment opportunities and promote them among young women and adolescent girls, including in rural areas

- f. Ensure equal opportunities for girls and young women in existing government programmes for TVET, apprenticeships and jobs, such as the Local Enterprises and Skills Development Programme, the Youth Enterprise Support and the Integrated Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency.
- g. Provide a regulatory framework for the informal sector to close the gender wage gap and ensure equal access to social security and related benefits for young girls and women.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the key issues presented in the report, the submitting organisations would like to share some final and general recommendations to the government of Ghana:

- a. Strengthen the social welfare and social protection systems to address the needs of all children, including homeless and vulnerable children.
- b. Simplify the processes and procedures for remedial systems to ensure that they are child-friendly and easily accessible by all children. The simplified processes must promote the expeditious and effective determination of child rights issues, including child maintenance.
- c. Ensure that laws on children are strictly enforced and guarantee effective access to justice for all children.
- d. Ensure that media houses have child-friendly contents and regulate the airing time for the various contents, including adult focused commercials.
- e. Strengthen collaboration with neighbouring States, particularly to halt the cross border practice of FGM and human trafficking.
- f. Expedite the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and on a Communications Procedure.

## END NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Currently, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection receives less than 1% of the national budget to undertake their core-mandated activities

<sup>ii</sup> The used term is in line with the recently widely adopted Terminology Guidelines. ECPAT International (2016), "*Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, adopted by the Interagency Working Group in Luxembourg, 28 January 2016*", Bangkok: ECPAT, accessed on 4 March 2017, <http://luxembourgguidelines.org/>.

<sup>iii</sup> The used term is in line with the recently widely adopted Terminology Guidelines. ECPAT International (2016), Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Data from DOVVSU. This includes cases of defilement, indecent assault, causing harm, incest, trafficking, abandonment, unlawful removal, stealing/abduction, exploitive labour and forced marriage etc. but not non maintenance.

<sup>v</sup> DCI-Ghana (2016), "A study on violence against children with special focus on sexual exploitation and child sex tourism", accessed 8 March 2017: <https://defenceforchildren.org/study-violence-children-ghana-2/>

<sup>vi</sup> DCI-Ghana (2016), Ibid.

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vii DCI-Ghana (2016), Ibid.

viii Government of Ghana (2011), Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

ix DCI-Ghana (2016), Ibid.

x A 2009 study by PLAN Ghana/CRRECENT (“Report on Child Sex Abuse in Schools”) found that 14% of school children surveyed had been sexually abused, either in school (53%) and/or at home (47%)<sup>x</sup>.

xi Human Rights Advocacy Center (2014). Report on Gender Based Violence in Ghanaian Schools, accessed 8 march 2017: <http://www.hracghana.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/GenderBasedViolence-Final1.pdf>

xii Idem.

xiii A survey conducted in 1999 found that 20 per cent of women and girls across all regions of Ghana had their first sexual intercourse forced upon them (including 17 per cent of girls aged 10–14 and 64 per cent of girls aged 15–18). The majority of cases of sexual violence went unreported due to stigma and feelings of shame, advice to be tolerant or the view that little or no action would be taken (Appiah, D. and Cusak, K. (1999), Violence Against Women and Children in Ghana, Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre, Accra).

xiv M-Friend is a network of personnel in key service provider or stakeholder institutions, who have been trained or sensitised on child-friendly issues and need to work to ensure that cases involving children are not overly delayed. For instance, if there is a need to refer case to another service provider institution, you can inform the M-Friend partner there so that even if he/she is not in charge or the boss, he/she can still push for the case to be dealt with as soon as possible.

xv District Assemblies are to ensure inter-agency coordination in promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of children.

xvi The CEDAW Committee defines any marriage under the age of 18 as being contrary to the Convention, regardless of a State’s customs and traditions, and gives recognition to the fact that child marriage has serious detrimental consequences on children’s health, education and economic autonomy. Moreover, any betrothal of a child is a clear violation of one’s right to choose a spouse and enter into a marriage with full and free consent.

xvii According to children interviewed by DCI-Ghana (2016), Ibid.

xviii DHS 2014. If the sample extends to women in between the age of 20-49 years, the rate expands to 27%.

xix MICS 2011

xx See as well the Marriages Act 1884-1985, the Criminal Offences act (1960), Act 29.

xxi Both the CEDAW and CRC Committees have called for the harmonization of civil, religious and customary laws.

xxii Ibid., 24.

xxiii Ibid., 29, often referred to as ‘child prostitution’.

xxiv Ibid., 35, more appropriately called child sexual exploitation material.

xxv DCI-Ghana, “A study on violence against children with special focus on sexual exploitation and child sex tourism”, July 2016, accessed 8 March 2017: <https://defenceforchildren.org/study-violence-children-ghana-2/>. Over 700 children were interviewed for the study.

xxvi ECPAT International (2016), “Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism”, accessed on 4 March 2017, <http://globalstudysect.org/global-report/>

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xxvii GNCRC (2015), Complementary Report to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, par. 6.

xxviii GNCRC (2015), “Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism, Country-Specific Report Ghana”, accessed on 4 March 2017, <http://globalstudysectt.org/category/countries/Ghana/>, 25

xxix Ibid., 24-25.

xxx Ibid., 38.

xxxi Most of the recommendations made above on violence against children also apply here.

xxxii World Bank: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.NENR?locations=GH>, accessed 10.03.2017

xxxiii Gender inequalities in rural employment in Ghana, an overview, (FAO 2012)

xxxiv National Employment Policy, 2015